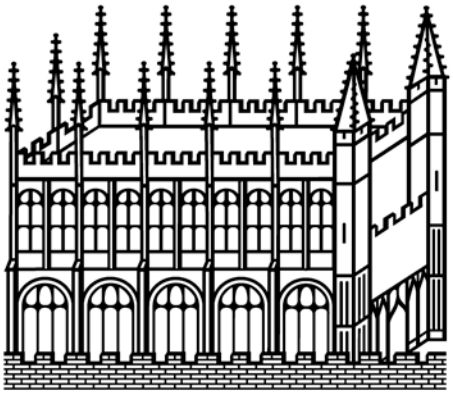

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A DESPERATE VOYAGE

BY E. F. KNIGHT.

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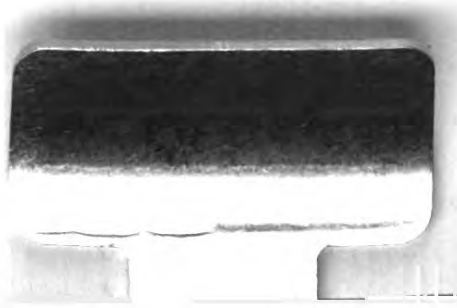

MILNE'S EXPRESS SERIES

A DESPERATE VOYAGE

THE EXPRESS SERIES

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MAJOR ARTHUR GRIFFITHS

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JOHN MILNE
12 NORFOLK STREET, STRAND, LONDON

A DESPERATE VOYAGE

BY

E. F. KNIGHT

AUTHOR OF "THE CRUISE OF THE FALCON"
"WHERE THREE EMPIRES MEET"
ETC. ETC.

JOHN MILNE
12 NORFOLK STREET, STRAND, LONDON
1898

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A DESPERATE VOYAGE

CHAPTER I

IN Carey Street, Chancery Lane, on the ground floor of a huge block of new buildings facing the Law Courts, were the offices of Messrs. Peters and Carew, solicitors and perpetual commissioners of oaths. Such was the title of the firm as inscribed on the side of the entrance door in the middle of a long list of other names of solicitors, architects, and companies, whose offices were within. But the firm was now represented by Mr. Carew alone; for the senior partner, a steady-going old gentleman, who had made the business what it was, had been despatched by an attack of gout, two years back, to a land where there is no litigation.

Late one August evening Mr. Henry Carew entered his office. His face was white and haggard, and he muttered to himself as he passed the door. He had all the appearance of a man who has been drinking heavily to

drown some terrible worry. His clerks had gone; he went into his own private room and locked the door. He lit the gas, brought a pile of papers and letters out of a drawer, and, sitting down by the table, commenced to peruse them. As he did so, the lines about his face seemed to deepen, and beads of perspiration started to his forehead. It was for him an hour of agony. His sins had found him out, and the day of reckoning had arrived.

One might have taken Henry Carew for a sailor, but he was very unlike the typical solicitor. He was a big, hearty man of thirty-five, with all a sailor's bluff manner and generous ways. His friends called him Honest Hal, and said that he was one of the best fellows that ever lived. We have it on the authority of that immortal adventuress, Becky Sharp, that it is easy to be virtuous on five thousand a year. Had Mr. Carew enjoyed such an income, he would most probably have lived a blameless life and have acquired an estimable reputation; for he had no instinctive liking for crime; on the contrary, he loathed it.

But one slight moral flaw in a man's nature—so slight that his best friends smile tolerantly at it—may, by force of circumstance, lead ultimately to his complete moral ruin. It is an old story, and has been the text of many a sermon. The trifling fault is often the germ of terrible crimes.

Carew's fault was one that is always easily condoned, so nearly akin is it to a virtue; these respectably connected vices are ever the most dangerous, like well-born swindlers. Carew was a spendthrift. He was ostentatiously extravagant in many directions. He owned a smart schooner, which he navigated himself, being an excellent sailor, and the quantities of champagne consumed by his friends on board this vessel were prodigious.

When his steady old partner died, Carew began to neglect the business for his pleasures. Soon his income was insufficient to meet his expenses. Speculation on the Stock Exchange seemed to him to be a quicker road to fortune than a slow-going profession. So this man, morally weak though physically brave, not having the courage to curtail his extravagances, hurried blindly to his destruction. He gambled and lost all his own property; for ill-luck ever pursued him. Even then it was not too late to redeem his position. But he was too great a coward to look his difficulties in the face; therefore, having the temptation to commit so terribly easy a crime ever before him in his office, he began — first, timidly, to a small extent; then wildly, in panic, in order to retrieve his losses—to speculate with the moneys entrusted to him by his clients. He pawned their securities; he forged their names; he plunged ever deeper into crime—and all in vain.

When it was too late, he swore to himself, in the torments of his remorse, that if he could but once win back sufficient to replace the sums he had stolen, he would cut down all his expenses, forswear gambling and dishonesty, and stick to his profession.

At last it came to this. He sold his yacht and everything else he possessed of value. He realised what remained of the securities under his charge, and then placed the entire sum as cover on a certain stock, the price of which, he was told, was certain to rise. It was the gambler's last despairing throw of the dice. The stock suddenly fell; settling day arrived, and his cover was swept away—he had lost all!

So he sat in his office this night and faced the situation in an agony of spirit that was more than fear. For this was no unscrupulous, light-hearted villain. An accusing conscience was ever with him, and every fresh descent in crime meant for him a worse present hell of mental torture.

He felt that it was idle to hope now, even for a short reprieve. Clients were suspicious. In a day or two at most all must be known. Disgrace and a felon's doom were staring him in the face. It would be impossible for him to raise even sufficient funds to escape from England to some country where extradition treaties were unknown. Carew realised all this. He had forced himself to look through his

papers and discover the total of his liabilities It was a sum he could by no effort refund.

He laughed aloud — a savage, discordant laugh, as might be that of some lost soul.

"Yes, it is all over," he thought; "I throw up the cards. But I will not endure the disgrace of a public trial, the ignominy of a convict's life; and after that to come out of jail with my soul eaten out by long years of penal servitude, with the brand of a felon on my name. Oh no—not that! After all, a man has always one last privilege left him; he holds in his own hands the power of terminating his own miserable existence. Yes; I will kill myself, and have done with it all!"

In the contemplation of suicide he became calmer. Now that he had determined on death, his terrible anxiety left him, and the heroism of despair supported him.

"I feel a peace of mind at this moment such as has not come to me for many wretched months," he said to himself. "There is almost a pleasure in knowing that one has got to the bottom of one's cup of suffering, that there can be nothing worse to come."

He meditated quietly for some time as to how he should take away his life. At last he came to a decision, and a strange smile lit up his face. "Yes, that is an admirable plan; now for the means of carrying it out. First, I must have a sovereign or so. I can pawn my

watch. Now for the ballast." He glanced round the room. "Yes, that will do." He rose and collected several heavy leaden paper-weights from the different desks in the offices and put them into his pockets. "That will be sufficient. Now I will go to Brighton. It is a glorious evening. I will smell the sea-air once more. I will have a last dinner at an hotel; and then at night, when the tide is high, I will throw myself off the pier; this weight of lead will keep me down. And the next morning my creditors may seize my body: they are welcome to it."

At that moment a loud knock came at the outer door. He turned pale and nearly fainted at the sound. Was he to be balked of those last few hours of freedom which he had promised himself? Were these the officers of justice who had come to apprehend him? Once more the dew of agony burst out on his brow; he groaned aloud; then, summoning resolution, the desperate man approached the door.

But it was only the postman, after all. "Idiot that I am not to have known the knock! but my brain swims to-night. A letter for me. What is this?"

He read the letter slowly through; then he put his hand to his forehead. A revulsion of feeling had suddenly come to him that confused and stunned him. "Oh, merciful Heaven!" he said, "is this but a cruel trick of Fortune to

tempt me with a vain hope? I had quite reconciled myself to death — and now this comes. Perhaps it is but a short reprieve, and its price will be all that agonising suspense again. No, let me die; and yet"—he glanced at the letter again — "surely I have here a means of escape. If I can but collect my scattered wits and recover my cunning, I can save myself. I can live, but it will mean crime again—always crime! Oh, is it worth it?"

After a painful mental struggle, he came to a determination. "Yes, I will live," he said.

The letter was as follows:—

"DEAR CAREW,—You have often promised to cruise with me in my boat. I am off to-morrow for Holland. Can you join me? Come and look me up to-night, and arrange it all.—Yours sincerely,

"ARTHUR ALLEN."

CHAPTER II

ARTHUR ALLEN, barrister-at-law, was of about the same age as his friend Carew; a man possessed of private means sufficient for his needs, into whose chambers so few briefs found their way that he had for some years dispensed with the services of a clerk. But, as one would have surmised after glancing at the strong, intelligent face, he was a man by no means lacking in energy, and not of idle disposition: as a matter of fact, a scholar, and one who had taken high honours at his university, he still maintained his studious habits, and, having practically abandoned a profession that was uncongenial to him, he devoted himself to literary pursuits; and his thoughtful articles in the reviews and in the newspaper to which he was attached brought him in no insignificant addition to his income.

No mere bookworm, he had been an athlete in his youth; but now his one outdoor form of amusement was the sailing of his little yacht, on which, always acting as his own skipper, he had taken many a delightful cruise in home

and distant waters. He was an enthusiastic lover of the sea. This was the one taste he had in common with Carew. It was at some yacht club, of which they were both members, that they had become acquainted.

It was a lovely August evening. The windows of Allen's bachelor chambers in the Temple were open, and through them could be seen that fair oasis of London's desert of bricks and mortar, Fountain Court, with its stately buildings, ancient trees, and quiet garden with splashing fountains in its midst. Nor was the view confined; for, beyond the chapel and the green, could be perceived the broad, gleaming Thames, and the distant Surrey shore, glorified by a faint mist; a peaceful, old-world spot, with a contemplative air about it, for it is haunted by the memories of much departed greatness. Allen was reclining in a comfortable arm-chair, drawn up to the open window, in whose recesses geraniums bloomed, their vivid blossoms occasionally shaking beneath the breath of the soft south wind that had come directly from the cool river.

He smoked his pipe as he looked out upon the sweet sunset scene, his mind happily occupied in planning his coming cruise, when his meditations were interrupted by a knock at the outer door. He rose to admit his visitor, opened the door, and there stood before him

Henry Carew in serge suit and yachting cap, a small Gladstone bag in his hand.

"Hallo, Carew, old man! you have not been long replying to my letter. I was afraid you would have left the office before it reached you. Come in."

"Are you alone?" inquired Carew, in a low voice.

"Yes, quite alone. I am smoking a pipe of peace by myself. You have just come at the right time."

They entered the room, and then, as the light of the sunset fell upon the solicitor's face, Allen perceived its haggard expression.

"How queer you look, Carew!" he exclaimed. "Are you ill?"

"Ill—no, not at all; but worried—worried almost out of my life," replied Carew wildly, throwing himself into a chair, and putting his face between his hands.

Allen sat in a chair opposite to him, refilled and lit his pipe, and, as he smoked, gazed at his friend with feelings of perplexed compassion.

"Have a pipe, old fellow; there is nothing like a pipe for worry."

"A pipe?" cried Carew, with contemptuous bitterness. "No; but have you some brandy? Give me some brandy."

"Certainly, Carew," and the barrister produced a spirit-case, some glasses, and water.

Carew poured a quantity of spirit into a glass

and drank it neat. He was usually a temperate man.

"That is not the way to clear one's brain for confronting one's troubles," remarked Allen.

"No, you are right. It is foolish of me. Allen, I have come to say that I shall be very glad to accompany you on your cruise."

"I am delighted to hear that. A good blow in the North Sea will do you good, if your mind is so upset."

"Allen," said Carew, pulling himself together and speaking with more self-possession, "I wish I could speak to you of the business that is troubling me, but I am not at liberty to do so. It concerns others."

"I don't want to know anything about it, old man; but I am sure you will soon get out of your trouble, whatever it is. With an easy conscience no man is miserable for long. And now that I have secured you as a hand, I have a sufficient crew. So we will start to-morrow morning. Will you be ready by then?"

"I am ready now. You see I have brought my baggage with me."

"Then, as we have to catch an early train to-morrow, you had better sleep to-night in my chambers; I can put you up. Our destination is the Dutch coast, old man, and we should have a jolly time of it. You have not yet seen my new boat, the *Petrel*—a yawl of twenty-eight tons, yacht measurement; a splendid

sea-boat. I would go anywhere in her. She is now lying off Erith."

Carew had been listening attentively. "What crew do you carry?" he asked.

"Ah, let me tell you that you will have lots of work to do. We shall be but three all told. I have shipped one hand only—Jim, the fisherman, who was with me last year. Another friend was coming with me, but he has disappointed me."

"For how long will you be away?"

"About a fortnight. I have been a bit fagged of late, and want a holiday. I only made up my mind to take this cruise this afternoon. Not a soul but yourself knows we are going."

On hearing this a sigh of relief escaped Carew. Yes, if he were once on board the yacht all trace of him would be lost. He felt almost jubilant as he thought of it; the recent acute tension of his mind had left a sort of hysterical weakness behind, and he alternated easily between exultant hope and profoundest despair.

He reflected that if he could but contrive to reach Erith without being observed by any who knew him, he was safe, at anyrate for some time. But how to do so? It was possible that even already detectives had been set to watch his movements. He must take his chance of that, use all his wits, and incur

no risk that could be avoided. Fearing to show himself in the streets, more especially in the Strand or Fleet Street, where so many would know him by sight at least, he suggested to Allen that they should send to a neighbouring chop-house for their dinners, and remain quietly in the chambers, instead of dining, as was their wont, at a club. The barrister agreed to this, and therefore had no opportunity that night of meeting any of his friends, and he communicated to no one his intention of sailing on the morrow. He merely left a note for his housekeeper on his table, informing her that he would be out of town for a fortnight, and that his letters were not to be forwarded.

. . . . . .

At an early hour on the following morning a cab was brought round to the door of the barrister's chambers, and the two friends drove off to Charing Cross Station, arriving there but a few minutes before their train started. The chances of anyone who knew him recognising Carew on the way were thus reduced to a minimum. At Erith Allen's man, Jim, was awaiting them with the dinghy. He was a very broad-shouldered, florid-faced man of forty, with a protuberance in one cheek indicating the presence of a quid. He looked exactly what he was—a hardy, North-Sea smackman.

Jim pulled them off to the yacht, and when the solicitor, who was thoroughly at home on a

boat, a keen lover of the sea, with yachting as his one innocent pleasure, stood on the white deck, and, looking around, saw how glorious was that summer's day, beheld the river sparkling in the sunshine, thronged with stately ships and picturesque barges tacking up with the flood against the soft south-west wind, a delightful sense of freedom rushed upon him.

Oh, what a thing it was to have left behind him that accursed city, with its weariness, its anxieties, the endless jangles of the law, the feverish play, the guilt, the terrible dread of detection—to have left it for ever!

"Now, Jim, off we go!" cried the skipper. The dinghy was lifted on board, the mainsail was hoisted, then the jib; the moorings were slipt, up went the foresail, and the yacht shot out into the stream; then, obedient to her rudder, bore away, and tore down the river before the freshening breeze on the top of the strong ebb tide. Needless it is to describe that pleasant summer day's sail. Allen was in the highest spirits, and for him the happy hours flew rapidly by. Even Carew, intoxicated with the pure air and sunshine, and the delightful sight of dancing waters, forgot his sin and misery, and felt almost light-hearted for the first time for months; and at last, when the yacht reached the broader water, thinking over his position, he gave a sigh of infinite relief.

Now, indeed, he was safe. No fugitive had ever left so little trace behind him.

They were well outside the Thames, in the East Swin Channel, before dark. The sun set in a golden haze, ominous of storm on the morrow, and then the wind dropped. The yacht sailed very slowly down the English coast during the night, the three men taking it in turn to steer and sleep. At sunrise they were off the Naze, and the sky looked so stormy and the glass fell so rapidly that there was some discussion as to whether it would not be well to put in to Harwich. But Carew was so earnestly opposed to this that the owner decided to push on, and the vessel's head was turned seaward towards the mouth of the Maas. The English coast loomed less and less distinct; but so light was the wind that it was not till midday that they lost all sight of the land. Then the wind began to pipe up suddenly, and seeing nothing but stormy clouds and heaving water around him, Carew's spirits rose wonderfully; a reaction of wild gaiety succeeded his anxiety.

At four it was blowing so hard that they took two reefs in the mainsail and shifted jibs. Shortly before sunset, Carew was taking his turn at the tiller; the others were below. After a while the motion of the yacht became so violent that the owner came on deck to have a look round.

"The wind has freshened a lot this last half-hour, and there's a nasty sea getting up," he said. "It will be blowing a gale of wind before the morning. Well, we have a good craft under our feet."

"She steers wonderfully easily," replied the solicitor. "She's a beautiful boat. I would not mind crossing the Atlantic in her."

"I should think not," said the proud owner. "But look at that vessel across your lee-bow, Carew. What the dickens are they up to on board of her? She's yawing all over the place. First I thought she was on the port-tack; then she seemed as if she was in stays; and now—ah, I see it—she is hove-to."

"She is a small brig," said Carew. "Get the glasses up and see what you can make of her."

Allen dived below, brought up the binoculars, and scanned the vessel. "By Jove!" he cried, "she's in a nice mess. Her bowsprit is carried away, her foretopmast too, and her jib's streaming away like a flag. Hallo! and part of her stem and bulwarks have gone."

"Collision." It was Jim's voice. He had just come on deck, and his quick eye at once realised the brig's mishap. Then he looked at her intently for some moments, and spoke again, in eager tones for him—

"Derelict."

"So she is," cried Allen. "We'll get out the

boat and board her. Do you think the sea is too high, Jim?"

Jim said nothing. He was quite ready to risk his life in a cockle-shell in a heavy sea, as all fishermen of the Doggerbank must be. He was not the man to refuse to do what his employer wished, unless the danger were very great indeed. He looked round at the sea, then nodded his head affirmatively.

"I don't think it's safe," said Carew. "In the first place, see how low that brig is in the water; she may go down at any moment, and the sea is very tricky to-day. I grant you it does not seem so very rough just now, but every half-hour or so there have been some rather dangerous rollers. One passed by us just before you came on deck."

But Allen's spirit of adventure was up. "Oh, nonsense!" he cried; "I'm going to see what she is. She may be worth standing by for salvage. Run down a bit nearer to her—that's it. Now let's heave-to — so. Now overboard with the dinghy, Jim. You stay behind and mind the yacht, Carew."

Jim and Allen waited for a "smooth," seized the dinghy, dexterously launched her, and leaping in nimbly, pulled away from the yacht—a feat that looks easy on paper, but requires nerve and skill to perform in a heavy sea.

"If you drift away too far, let draw your jib and sail up to us," shouted Allen, as he went away.

Carew stood on the deck of the yacht, which now rose and fell on the seas with the easy motion of a vessel that is hove-to, and watched the tiny boat, so frail and yet so buoyant, so far safer than she seemed, as she leapt from wave to wave.

The dinghy was close to the brig. In another moment the men would have boarded her, when Carew perceived, to his horror, a huge roller coming up—a steep mass of water, with overhanging, breaking crest, such as are met with on the edge of shallows. It reached the yacht and hurled her high up; then dropped her again into the trough of the sea with a shock almost as violent as if she had struck a rock. The giant wave thundered by the sturdy little vessel without injuring her. But the dinghy—where was she?

Carew strained his eyes in her direction. First the boat was hidden from him by the intervening wave; then he saw her for a moment floating on the top of a sea, some forty yards away, bottom up. He thought, too, he could distinguish a man's head in the water near her. The derelict had disappeared. Waterlogged as she was, it had only needed that last great sea to send her down bodily.

But all this while his two companions were drowning. Why did Carew stand there idle? He was sailor enough to know his duty. He could have sailed the yacht close to the men, thrown

a life-buoy to them, and have possibly succeeded in dragging them on board. He stood on the deck, as if dazed. Had he lost his head for a time? He only hesitated for two or three seconds, but they were invaluable — then it was too late!

A sudden squall of wind and rain swept down upon the sea, and all was obscured in a whirling smoke of spray and vapour. It was impossible to see even a few yards through it; and when the squall had passed, there were no men and no dinghy to be seen.

The dark and stormy night settled down upon the waters, and Henry Carew was left alone in the middle of the North Sea!

CHAPTER III

"AM I a murderer?"

So asked of his conscience, in fear and trembling, Henry Carew, as he stood alone upon the deck of the labouring vessel, surrounded by a waste of tumultuous waters.

"Not a murderer!" he cried aloud. "Oh no, not that!"

Then he argued with himself. "Had I done all that a man could, I think I should have been unable to save them. True, I lost my presence of mind. I did not stir a hand to help them; but that is not murder. Poor Allen! poor Allen! But no; this is a morbid fancy. At least I am innocent of that crime."

He looked round at the wild sea, invisible on that starless night save for the white foam that hissed on the tops of the waves.

"And now to make the best of my position. How fortune has turned! I, who two days back was surrounded by dangers, have nothing to fear now."

Then he broke into a wild laugh, not of merriment or exultation, but a sort of hysterical

effervescence that came of a mind that had long been tasked beyond its strength by violent emotions.

But he fully realised what a great advantage the loss of his two companions signified for him. Yes, even at that moment when he beheld them drowning before him, the profit their death would bring him had flashed across his brain. Little wonder that he asked his conscience that terrible question, "Am I a murderer?"

How simple his course seemed now! It needed little thought to decide on it. He knew that Allen was accustomed to undertake long cruises, and therefore would not be missed for some time. Again, the barrister was somewhat careless in his correspondence; so the fact of his neglecting to write to his friends would surprise and alarm no one. How easy, then, for Carew to impersonate him! He would sail the yacht into some Dutch port — no very difficult task; and once there, he could rely on his wits to make the most of the opportunities chance should throw in his way. Most probably he would sell the yacht and take a passage on some vessel bound for a South American harbour. Like most educated fugitives from justice, he turned to the Argentine Republic as being the safest of sanctuaries.

Carew's eyes, accustomed to observe the signs of the weather, told him that the wind was likely to freshen; so he set about making

himself as comfortable as possible for the night. He lowered the foresail, and still further reduced the mainsail by tricing up the tack. Then, with jib-sheet hauled to windward and tiller lashed, the yacht lay hove-to. After watching her for a few minutes, Carew saw that she was behaving admirably, and that he could with safety stay below the whole night if he chose, and leave the little vessel to take care of herself.

"It will have to blow a good deal harder to hurt her," he thought; "it's only collision I have to be afraid of now. Well, I can considerably lessen the chances of that."

So he went below, found the side-lamps, lit them, and fastened them to the shrouds.

So dark had become the night that nothing could be distinguished from the yacht's deck, save when, as she rolled from side to side, the port and starboard lights cast an alternate ruddy and sickly green glare on the foaming water. To be out in the North Sea on so small a craft during a gale is terrifying in the extreme to one not inured to the sea; the roaring of the waves and the howling of the wind sound so much louder than on a larger vessel, and the quick, violent motion often confuses the brains even of sailors if they are accustomed only to big ships. But Carew was, as Allen had said, a smart man on a fore-an-after. He felt that, with this

good boat under him, he was as safe as if he had been on shore.

"She's snug enough," he said. "I'll go below and try to make out from the chart where I am; then I'll turn in and sleep—if I can."

He looked at the chart, roughly calculated the distance the yacht had run since Allen had taken his "departure" from the Naze, and found that he was about half-way between the English and Dutch coasts. "That is good," he thought; "I have no lee-shore near me; I have plenty of room. I'll just stay where I am, hove-to, till the wind moderates, then make sail for Rotterdam."

He lay down in his bunk and tried to sleep, but all in vain. His brain was too excited with thoughts of what had passed and what was still to happen. Plans to secure his safety, and visions of possible accidents, passed through his mind, weaving themselves in delirious manner into long and complicated histories of his future life — some happy, some terrible with retributive calamity. Unable to stay the feverish activity of his brain, he came on deck at frequent intervals to see that all was well.

The vessel plunged and rolled throughout the night, her timbers groaning, and the wind shrieking through her rigging. But towards daybreak the gale began to moderate, and the glass rose slowly. Carew saw that the bad

weather was over and that the heavy sea would soon subside. On the shallow German Ocean the sea rises quicker than elsewhere, and with its steep and breaking rollers is more perilous than can be experienced on any other of our home waters, as the fishermen of the Dogger-bank know to their cost. On the other hand, here it soon becomes smooth again as the wind drops.

An hour or so after dawn the sky was almost cloudless, and only a fresh breeze was blowing. The waves, no longer dangerous, broke into white foam that sparkled in the sunshine. It was a day to gladden a sailor's heart.

Carew stood on deck, and under the joyous influences of that bright morning a calm fell on his soul, and his conscience ceased to trouble him. There is a sort of magnetic relation between a man and his surroundings. Out at sea, far away from land, with nothing but pure air and pure water near, even a great villain is wont to forget that he himself is not pure as well. In London, as he walked through the crowded streets, Carew knew that he was constantly jostling against men as bad as himself. In them he saw his own vices and crimes reflected as in a mirror, so that he could never put his guilt out of his mind. Again, fearful as he had been lately that those around him suspected him, he was unable to feel, even for one delusive moment, the sense of innocence.

But out here on the great sea, so far removed from human passion, with nothing to remind him of his offences, it was, on the contrary, difficult for him to realise what manner of man he was. He was conscious of what he imagined were virtuous impulses. He began to flatter himself that he was naturally a good man, that he was more sinned against than sinning, and that it was foolish of him to allow a sensitive conscience to torment him about occurrences, regrettable indeed, but the blame of which was scarcely his. The fact was that he mistook the joyous feelings inspired by a sunny day at sea for the reawakening of his better self — a frequent mistake that. His soul was in complete harmony with the Nature around him; and Nature, whatever her actions, knows nothing of crime or remorse.

So Henry Carew, in no unhappy frame of mind, began to consider what he should do next; and as he pondered, all his pluck and energy returned to him.

"In an hour or so," he said to himself, "the sea will have gone down still more; then I can get the vessel under way again. In the meantime, I will make a thorough inspection, and discover what my resources are; for I must have money, or the means of raising it."

He went below, and after lighting a fire in the stove to boil some water for coffee, he looked round the walls of the cabin. Among

other valuables were a rifle, a revolver, a clock, and an aneroid; and Allen's gold watch and chain were hanging on a nail. "I can raise fifty pounds on these to begin with," he thought; "and now to see what there is in the lockers and cupboards." He rummaged everywhere; but, with the exception of the sextant, there was no article of any value that could be easily sold.

At last, in a small drawer, he found the barrister's money and papers. There were about twenty-five pounds in gold. There was also a cheque-book; and on turning over its pages, Carew found that Allen had made a note of the balance to his credit on the counter-foil of the last cheque he had drawn, showing that he had the sum of fifty pounds at his bank. Then the solicitor glanced at the yacht's Admiralty warrant, which authorised Arthur Allen to fly the blue ensign of Her Majesty's fleet on his yacht, the *Petrel*, of sixteen tons register; a most valuable privilege, as Carew knew, which would serve him as passport into whatever foreign port he should go.

He was not altogether satisfied with the result of his search, and, as he sat on the bunk sipping his coffee, the more he thought of his prospects the more gloomy they appeared to him. He felt that it would be very hazardous to attempt selling the yacht in Rotterdam. To do so would require time; and as it was the

long vacation, and so many lawyers and others who knew him were taking their holidays, his recognition by someone in so favourite a haunt of tourists as the Dutch city would be a highly probable event. He dared not risk that. He must not stay in Holland a moment longer than was necessary. Then what could he do with so small a fund at his disposal?

His eye fell on the open drawer, and he rose to close it. He happened then to notice the barrister's diary among the papers, and though he did not imagine that there could be anything in it of the slightest interest to himself, he took it up in a casual way and opened it at the first page. Suddenly the indifferent look vanished, he started visibly, and read with intense eagerness. "Oh!" he cried, "now it is all plain sailing for me. I know what to do." A triumphant light came into his eyes, and then, putting away the diary, he ran on deck, let the foresheet draw, and as he steered the vessel on her course over the dancing waves, the expression of his face indicated a happy confidence in the future; all doubt and fear had fled.

The first page of the diary was devoted to memoranda; and, among other things, the barrister had here written a list of the investments from which he derived his income. The bulk of these consisted of foreign bonds and other easily negotiable securities, which Allen had deposited with his banker.

It was the perusal of this list that had suggested to the quick and ingenious mind of the solicitor a scheme not difficult of execution, the very thought of which made his heart beat quick with anticipation. Carew shrank from the peril of forging cheques or letters of instructions to Allen's bankers; but now that he knew exactly how the barrister's account stood, a simpler and safer method of appropriating to himself a large proportion at least of the dead man's fortune occurred to him.

Said this accomplished scoundrel to himself: "I have here a stout, seaworthy boat, that can easily take me across the Atlantic. I will ship a crew in Rotterdam, and sail for Buenos Ayres. By selling the watch and chain and one or two other little things I shall have enough money to buy stores and pay all other expenses of the voyage. Once in Buenos Ayres, I will go to the agent of the —— Bank. There is sure to be one. I will show him my papers. I will prove to his satisfaction that I am Arthur Allen, barrister-at-law, owner of the yacht *Petrel*. I will explain that I have run short of money, and require a considerable sum at once. The agent will telegraph to the bank, learn that I have there securities to a large amount, and then he will be ready to advance to me as much as I want; and I will want a good deal. I will say that I am about to buy land, or tell some such plausible tale, get my money, and

away. Oh, most excellent plan! Who on earth is likely to suspect that the yachting barrister is no other than Henry Carew, the defaulting solicitor?"

He steered the vessel towards the Dutch coast, and soon the wind fell so much that he was able to shake out all his reefs.

At ten he passed through a large fleet of fishing boats that were riding to their nets. He hailed an English smack, asking her skipper if he could tell him his position.

"You'll get hold of the land in an hour or so," shouted the man; "and, as you are going now, you'll about fetch Goeree."

Carew, after consulting the chart, steered in a more northerly direction. At midday he saw the loom of the land ahead of him; so, as the sky was clear, he brought up the sextant and took an observation of the sun, thus ascertaining his exact position.

"Lucky it is that I taught myself navigation," he thought; "it will come in useful now."

At last he could plainly distinguish the features of the coast, which was low and flat, with white sand-hills here and there that gleamed like snow in the sunshine.

Then he saw a steeple, a lighthouse, and a group of cottages, with bright red roofs, and he knew that he was off the village of Scheveningen, which is a few miles to the north of the Maas. Sailing to the southward,

he soon reached the mouth of the river, and at once some of the ever-watchful pilots pulled off to him in a small boat.

Carew hove the yacht to, and waited for them. The boat was soon alongside. Four little old men, all fat and rosy, were in her. One who understood English well was the spokesman. Standing up in the stern he shouted—

"Captain, you want pilot, sar?"

"Yes; how much do you want to take me to Rotterdam?"

Carew felt how necessary it was to husband his funds, and he suspected that Dutch pilots consider a yacht fair prey for extortion.

The man named an exorbitant sum.

"Nonsense! Too much. I'll sail her in myself."

"Right, captain," replied the Dutchman calmly; "that better for me and my mates. You try and go in alone, you sure to run ashore. Then we help you off, and you give us plenty money for salvage instead of small pilot-fee."

Carew felt that it might happen as the old man had said. The Maas is encumbered with shoals, and the navigation is difficult for a stranger.

"Now, how much you give me, captain?"

The solicitor mentioned a moderate sum.

"Ah, you rich man with yacht to be hard on

poor pilot! Now, I pilot you for the middle price."

"Come on board, then," said Carew.

The pilot leapt on to the yacht's deck, and the other three pulled away in their boat.

"Now, captain. Tide in river running strong, wind is light; so we want all sail, or else we no move. Call up your hands and hoist topsail."

"There are no hands below. I am alone," replied Carew.

"Alone? What do you mean? You come from England all alone?" exclaimed the man in great astonishment.

"Yes; my crew got drunk and were insolent just before I sailed. They thought I could not do without them, and they knew I was in a hurry. But I put them all on shore without hesitation, and I have come across alone."

"You a very mad Englishman, but you a brave man. I never hear anything like that."

"Pilot," said Carew, later on, as they were sailing up the river, "I don't want to be followed about Rotterdam as if I were a curiosity; so I should like you not to mention the fact of my having sailed across the sea alone."

"All right, captain; my mouth close."

"I shall want a crew of two or three good, honest Dutchmen, pilot. Can you recommend me any men?"

"This very night you shall have one—my cousin Willem—a very good boy, captain."

"And there is another thing, pilot. What sort of a berth are you going to put me in in Rotterdam?"

"I will moor you along the Boompjees; nice quays them. Plenty good Schiedam shops on shore there. All yachts go there."

"I thought so; that's why I asked. Now, pilot, I do not want to be moored along the Boompjees. Take me to some quiet canal, out of the way; you understand—a place where no yachts or foreign vessels go."

"Ah, I know, captain, just the place: nothing but Holland schuyts there; no yachts like it, no captains like it; I not think you will like it."

"I will go there. But why don't you think I shall like it?"

"You no have Dutch nose; and that canal plenty smellful, captain."

CHAPTER IV

A NARROW canal that pierces an out-of-the-way corner of old Rotterdam. Mediæval houses —narrow, lofty, terminating in quaint, pointed gables — overhang the sluggish waters. It is only frequented by the picturesque native canal boats, with their lofty masts and varnished oak sides, so marvellously clean, for all their dirty work. In this quiet spot, with its old-world, decaying look, it is difficult to realise that close at hand are the busy quays of the Boompjees, crowded with vessels from all parts of the world, noisy with the haste of modern commerce.

It is a bit of Rotterdam that does not change. The British tourist, unless he has lost himself, never explores the narrow alleys that lead down to the slimy water—a gloomy, dead quarter of the city, pervaded by a smell that is ancient and fish-like and something worse.

It was a sultry August midday. No breath of air stirred the water of the canal, which seemed to be fermenting under the fierce sunshine, and foul gases bubbled up on its surface.

Only one of the many vessels moored along

the quay flew a foreign flag. The blue ensign of Great Britain hung motionless from the mizzen of the yacht *Petrel.*

On the deck was a sturdy little man in baggy trousers, who, despite the languid influence of the day, was employed in polishing the brass-work on the vessel with an extraordinary energy. This was Willem, the pilot's cousin, who had entered into Carew's service, and who had, with Dutch diligence, set himself the task of scrubbing the yacht up to his high standard of Dutch smartness as quickly as possible.

The owner—by right of undisputed possession—was below, looking over some charts of the South Atlantic, which he had just purchased. The solicitor had been making all his preparations as rapidly but as quietly as possible. But little now remained to be done. So far, honest Willem was the only hand he had engaged; but he knew that he could easily ship as many men as he needed at a moment's notice in so large a seaport as Rotterdam. He told no one of his projected voyage across the Atlantic, knowing that to do so would at once attract attention to him; and he naturally dreaded that publicity should be given to his doings.

He showed himself in the streets as little as possible, and he always went forth to make his purchases in the early morning before English tourists were likely to be out of their

beds. He had only been in port two days, but he was almost ready for sea. He had some tanks fitted into the cabin, so that he could carry sufficient water for a long voyage; he had filled all the lockers and bunks with a large quantity of tinned meats, biscuits, and other necessary stores; he had procured his charts; and all this had been done in the least conspicuous manner possible.

Though he had never before undertaken an ocean cruise of this magnitude, he knew what was requisite, and forgot nothing. There was no chronometer on board the yacht, and he could not afford to buy one; so, as his watch was not to be depended upon, he saw that he would have to navigate his vessel after the fashion of the good old days before chronometers were known. The ancient navigators carried with them their astrolabes — rough instruments, long since superseded by quadrants and sextants — which enabled them to find their latitude accurately enough. But having no timepieces, they were unable to ascertain their longitude by observation of the heavenly bodies, and had to rely on dead reckoning alone. So the mariner of old, after a long voyage across ocean currents of unknown speed and direction, was possibly many hundreds of miles out of his reckoning as regards longitude, though he knew his latitude to within a few miles.

Thus, supposing, for instance, he was bound for Barbadoes, he would sail boldly on until, according to his calculations, he was some few days' journey to the eastward of his port. Then he would steer for the exact latitude in which it lay, and follow that line of latitude till he reached his destination ; which he was, of course, bound to do sooner or later. Moreover, it was his invariable custom to heave his vessel to every night while running down the latitude ; as otherwise he might pass by the island without seeing it in the darkness, and lose himself entirely.

It was a slow method of navigation—not to say a risky one. But Carew would not have to encounter so many difficulties as the sailors of old ; for ocean currents are better understood in these days, and the opportunities of speaking vessels at sea and ascertaining the exact longitude from them are very frequent.

Carew had spent all the money he had found on board the yacht, and there were still some necessary purchases to be made. The most expensive of the articles yet to be bought was a dinghy, to replace the one that had been lost. This very morning he had found his way to the Mont de Piété and pawned everything he could well spare: Allen's watch and chain, the rifle, and one of the two binocular glasses. With that easy forgetfulness which was an attribute of his conscience, he had by this time almost

come to believe that the barrister's yacht and fortune were rightfully his. The sum he thus raised was not a large one; but he calculated that it would enable him to meet every expense, though he would have to put to sea almost penniless, if not quite so.

While Willem was still busy on deck a tall, good-looking gentleman, with an honest but shrewd eye and tawny beard, came along the quay and stood in front of the yacht, inspecting her critically for a few moments.

"Is the owner on board?" he inquired of the sailor in Dutch.

"The English captain is in his cabin, sir," replied the little man in a solemn, nasal drawl.

"I should like to see him. Will you give him my card?"

Willem, taking the card, descended to the cabin. "Von man here for see you, captain," he said in his broken English.

Carew started. "A man to see me? What sort of man?" he asked.

"Him a gentleman man, for him has von tall black hat. Here was his paper," and he handed Carew the card.

The solicitor felt the blood forsake his heart. Some English acquaintance had found him out. He looked at the card with dread; then a sigh of relief escaped him; the name was certainly Dutch—Hoogendyk.

Carew went on deck and politely invited his visitor to come on board. Mynheer Hoogendyk stepped down from the quay, and introduced himself in excellent English.

"I am a resident of Rotterdam," he said, "and I am a leading member of our Yacht Club. I have come to inform you that, with your permission, we shall be highly delighted to make our English *confrère* an honorary member of the club during his stay in our city."

"I am very grateful to the club for the honour they confer upon me, and shall gladly avail myself of the privilege," replied the lawyer, who, as he spoke, made a resolve never to put his foot inside the club premises, but to ship his crew and sail from Rotterdam without delay. It was dangerous for him to stay longer, now that his retreat had been discovered.

"I only heard of you by accident yesterday," said the visitor, who, unlike most of his countrymen, was garrulous and inquisitive, though a good fellow. "Why have you picked up a berth in this dirty, out-of-the-way hole?"

"It is picturesque and quiet."

"And filthy and unhealthy. We must move you to a better spot. There is a capital berth just in front of the English church. You'll see lots of your countrymen there. How many hands have you on board? I see you have shipped one Dutchman."

"My two men were drunken ruffians, and I discharged them."

"I will undertake to get you a good crew of my countrymen if you like. I suppose you are going to cruise about our coasts. Where are you going to from here?"

"To Amsterdam," replied Carew, who was on tenterhooks of impatience. He felt how dangerous this man would be with his gossiping habits.

"And now, sir," said Mynheer Hoogendyk, drawing out a pocket-book and pencil, "I will take your name and enter it on the club books."

"Here is my card." Carew handed to him one of the barrister's cards.

"'Mr. Arthur Allen, Fountain Court, Temple!'" read the visitor. "Ah, you live in the Temple! I know it well. Are you a lawyer by chance?"

"I am a barrister."

"Ah! How delightful! We are chips of the same block, Mr. Allen. I, too, am a barrister, in practice in Rotterdam. Both yachtsmen, both advocates, what a bond of friendship there should be between us! You must come and see my yacht—such a pretty little schuyt—and also our law courts."

They sat together in the *Petrel's* cabin, and the Dutch advocate commenced to question the solicitor on English law, comparing it with that in force in his own country. Carew was hugely

bored and weary of his visitor's chatter, but did his best to be civil.

"And, by the way," cried the Dutchman at last, "there is a trial now proceeding which I am sure would be of the greatest interest to you; for you say that the criminal law is your particular line."

"What is it about?" asked the solicitor indifferently.

"Piracy: the seizure of a vessel and the murder of her officers by the crew."

All Carew's indifference vanished now. He let the cigar he was smoking drop from his fingers, and, turning his head, he looked at his visitor's face with a steady, fierce look, as of some wild beast that awaits the attack of another, and has strung all its nerves to resist its foe to the death. The Dutchman, whose eyes were directed downwards at that moment, did not observe that look.

The slumbering conscience had been awakened again with a rude start by those words. For a moment Carew lost his head and fancied that this garrulous man was a police detective who knew everything and had been playing with his prisoner all this while. Then he looked at his visitor's face again, and felt reassured, realising the absurdity of such a supposition.

The advocate, quite unconscious of the perturbation he had caused, continued—

"Yes, it was a terrible story. Perhaps you

remember reading in the papers some months ago of an act of piracy in the Spanish Main. A vessel trading from Curaçoa under the Dutch flag was seized by her crew—a lot of Spanish and Mulatto cut-throats. They murdered the captain, the mate, and a few honest Dutch sailors who stood by their officers. Then the mutineers sailed for Puerto Cabello, where, as usual, there was a civil war, with the intention of selling the vessel to the revolutionary party, which was in need of transports. When they arrived there the revolution was over; the Government seized the vessel, but the ruffians contrived to escape up country."

"I remember all that well," said Carew. "The story made a great noise at the time."

"Now it happens," said the advocate, "that three of these ruffians shipped as sailors in a South American port on board of a vessel bound for Rotterdam. One day a Dutch sailor from Curaçoa enters a drinking shop on the Boompjees, and sees, sitting down at a table over a bottle of schiedam, three men whom he recognises as part of the crew of the ill-fated *Vrouw Elisa.* He calls in the police, and now these gentlemen are being tried for their lives."

"To be hanged if found guilty, I suppose?"

"I hope so; but I am afraid that they will be acquitted. Everyone is morally sure of their guilt; but, unfortunately, the evidence for the prosecution has been so confused and con-

tradictory that their identity has not been satisfactorily settled. The counsel for the defence is a very able fellow too."

"What countrymen are they?" inquired Carew.

"Two are Spaniards and one is a Frenchman. I think the Frenchman was the ringleader of the mutineers, for he looks a clever rascal. And now, Mr. Allen, the trial will probably conclude this afternoon. The court is very crowded, but I can get you in. Come along, and you will be able to compare the Dutch and English criminal procedure."

Carew would have preferred to decline the invitation, but in ordinary politeness found it difficult to do so; and he accompanied the native lawyer—who undoubtedly possessed the gift of the gab, if no other qualifications for his profession—to the law courts.

Carew felt anything but easy in his mind as he walked through the main streets of the town, at this hour of the day crowded with a motley throng, including not a few of his own countrymen, bent on pleasure or business. Pretending to listen to his companion's unceasing gossip, the solicitor looked anxiously about him as he went, fearing at each step to see some well-known face from Fleet Street. The glaring sunshine had rejoiced his soul when he was out on the lonely seas, but in the hives of his fellowmen he shrank from the all-searching light, and experienced guilt's instinct for safe obscurity.

But he saw no one he knew on his way, and was much relieved when Mr. Hoogendyk procured for him, after some difficulty, a seat in a remote and dark corner of the court, where he could see and hear, himself unseen.

Carew soon became so interested in watching the faces of the three men who were being tried for their lives that, in spite of the advocate's whispered suggestions on the subject, he paid no attention to the procedure, and did not endeavour to compare the Dutch and English legal systems. He took no interest in law now; he was indeed heartily sick of it, and hoped that he had washed his hands of it for ever.

Of the three men only one had a really unprepossessing and murderous countenance. A murderer looks much like any other man, though people who take their ideas from wax-work shows think otherwise. That this should be so is obvious enough. A few only of murderers have homicidal proclivities as a part of their nature, and these indeed may betray their character in their physiognomy. All the other passions and vices of disposition can, under certain circumstances, compel the man who has the greatest horror of bloodshed to kill a fellow-being. In the large majority of cases, murder is not a tendency but the result of other tendencies.

But one of the three prisoners had indeed a

villainous appearance. He was a big, clumsily built Spaniard from the Basque countries, with a heavy, animal face and an evil mouth, indicative of the stupid cruelty of some savage beast.

The other Spaniard was a short, stout man, with a jovial face and an enormous black moustache, which he twirled occasionally with a complete *nonchalance.* There was nothing of the murderer in his appearance.

Neither of these two men exhibited any signs of fear. The first faced death with the dogged pluck of an animal, the second with a somewhat higher sort of courage.

The third man alone, the Frenchman, showed that he was suffering the agonies of acute terror. The little Spaniard, observing this, nodded to him now and then, smiling maliciously, and the big man scowled at him with surly contempt. The Frenchman's face was quite white, and the perspiration poured down it in streams ; his lips quivered, and, holding on to the rail of the dock with hands tightly clenched, he listened with intense attention to every word of judge or advocate.

The features of this man, though distorted with fear, were delicate and refined. His handsome face was more like that of a Provençal gentleman than of a rough sailor. He was a well-knit man of about thirty, with the blue-black hair of the South. Over his fine and

expressive eyes were bushy black brows, which almost met on his forehead, giving him a somewhat sinister appearance.

Carew found himself taking a strange, morbid interest in watching these three faces. In some way he identified himself with the prisoners. Had not they committed a crime only in degree differing from his own? The day might come when he too would be tried for his life. He wondered whether he would then look like the dogged Basque, the cowardly Frenchman, or the other. He had always flattered himself that he did not fear death; but how difficult to know how he would face it until his time came!

At last, amid complete silence, judgment was given. Carew could not understand the words, but he knew their import—

"Not guilty!"

The spectators groaned and hissed when they heard this decision. The Frenchman fell back fainting. The big Spaniard glanced boldly round the court with a ferocious scowl, and he made an involuntary motion with his right hand, as if he held his knife in it and was longing to rip up a few of his enemies. The little man smiled, and bowed pleasantly to the court, after the manner of an actor who is acknowledging his tribute of applause.

CHAPTER V

THE attorney and Carew left the court, the former volubly indignant at the miscarriage of justice, the latter moody and thoughtful.

"And now," cried the Hollander, "here we are at the best café in Rotterdam. Come in, and let us wash out the taste of crime with some beer."

They sat down at one of the little round tables, and two tall glasses foaming at the brim were placed before them.

"They have all the English papers here," said the advocate. "I will ask the waiter to bring you one."

Carew looked round the room, and suddenly his face paled, for he saw sitting at a table at some distance off a fellow-countryman, whom he recognised as a tobacconist in Fleet Street, a man who, no doubt, knew Carew's name and profession well, for the solicitor had often made purchases at his shop.

Carew did not lose his presence of mind. The man was reading the *Times*, and had, in all probability, not yet observed him.

"Mynheer Hoogendyk," he said, "I am sorry that I must leave you now. I hope you will excuse me. I have an engagement, and in your agreeable company I had forgotten all about it."

"You flatter me, sir," replied the advocate with a bow. "I trust that you will honour me by dining with me to-morrow at eight, your English hour, I believe, for that repast. My wife speaks English well, and will be delighted to see you."

"I accept your invitation with the greatest pleasure, mynheer."

Then they rose to go, and Carew contrived to keep his lively companion between him and the man from Fleet Street as they walked out of the café.

The solicitor felt ill at ease until he had left behind this bright and crowded portion of the city, and was once again in the region of the gloomy and malodorous slums where the yacht was lying.

He saw how necessary it was that he should leave Rotterdam the next day if possible. It was no place for him. His recognition by some one or other must occur sooner or later if he stayed here. So, having dined in a dingy little hostelry on the quay opposite to the yacht, he visited some of the least-frequented streets, and purchased the few necessaries for the cruise which he had not already procured. He came

across a fisherman on the canal who was willing to sell him a small, clumsy boat which could serve him as dinghy. After some bargaining in pantomime—for neither understood the other's tongue—Carew secured this for the sum of three pounds.

Passing an apothecary's shop, it occurred to him that it would be well to take some of the more necessary medicines with him, seeing that he might be some months at sea without calling at any port. He entered the shop and proceeded to draw up a list of his requirements, to which, as an afterthought, he added some drugs in less common use.

"These last are poisons," said the chemist in broken English. "I cannot supply you with these unless you are a doctor."

Carew, with bold invention, explained that he was the captain of a vessel, and as such was the ship's doctor, and had a right to any drugs he might choose to ask for; and he produced his Admiralty warrant in proof of his statement.

The man was puzzled, perused the warrant without understanding it, and at last, reluctantly waiving his scruples, gave the solicitor all that he required.

His vessel was now completely fitted out; nothing was wanting but a crew, and here a difficulty presented itself. He felt that it was highly important that no one in Rotterdam should know that he was sailing for Buenos

Ayres, else the report that so small a yacht was about to undertake so long a voyage would spread rapidly, and would soon appear in the English papers. He wished it to be supposed that he was merely taking a few weeks' cruise in Dutch waters.

But then, how would his men take it were he only to divulge his destination to them when they were well out at sea? The probability was that they would refuse to obey his orders, and insist upon returning. Professional sailors are not fond of ocean voyages in tiny craft.

Evidently his only plan was to prowl about the docks that night, select with care three likely-looking men for his purpose,—men without wives or ties of any sort,—bring them on board the yacht, offer them good pay, and at the last moment tell them where he was bound for. Then, if they still consented to accompany him, he would sail away at once, allowing them no opportunity of gossiping with their friends on shore. Willem, he knew, was not the man for him. The honest Dutchman must be discharged at once on some pretext or other.

Carew sat on deck, pipe in mouth, meditating on these matters. He was alone on the yacht, for Willem had gone off on leave for a few hours to visit some of his relatives.

The sun was setting into a bank of rosy vapour that promised a continuance of fine weather. The hot day was closing with a

sultry eve. On that quiet canal, and on the narrow quay beneath the lofty houses, there was no sound or sign of life. It was almost as if he were in the midst of some dead and long since deserted city.

But of a sudden the peacefulness of that mediæval scene was rudely disturbed. First was heard a confused noise in the distance, as of angry human voices and the trampling of many wooden shoes. Louder, nearer was the sound, and then Carew perceived a man rush out upon the quay from a narrow alley, some hundred yards away, that led towards the principal docks. The man, who seemed frantic with terror, stood still for one brief moment, looked quickly around him, as if uncertain whither to hurry next: whether to plunge into the canal, or run along the quay to left or right.

Then arose a loud yell of many voices behind him, as of hounds that at last have caught a view of the hunted creature; and the man, hearing it, darted off again at full speed along the canal bank in the direction of the yacht.

Immediately afterwards there poured out of the alley a crowd of nearly a hundred men, women, and children, mostly of the lowest orders; denizens of the slums, though some were of a more respectable class; a crowd of Hollanders who had lost all their native phlegm for the nonce; a crowd gesticulating, howling, execrating, thirsting for the blood of the man

they were pursuing; mad and fierce as a mob of Paris in revolutionary days when an aristocrat was scented by the sovereign people.

The wretched man was hatless; his coat and half his shirt had been torn from his back; the blood was trickling down his face from the wounds on his head where the stones that had been hurled at him had hit.

On he came, running wildly before them, his face livid, his mouth open, his teeth set, eyes starting from his head with mortal terror, panting as if his heart must burst, ready to fall with exhaustion, but still hurrying on for his dear life's sake.

When he was close to the yacht his strength failed him; he stretched out his arms wildly, and staggered. With a yell of triumph the cruel crowd was on him. A man struck him over the head with a stick. Then, with one last despairing effort, he threw himself from the quay on to the yacht's deck, and fell a helpless mass at Carew's feet, clutching him by the legs, as if to implore his protection, but unable to speak or move.

His pursuers stood on the quay above, muttering angrily to each other, but hesitated a moment or so before they ventured to board the yacht, each waiting for someone else to lead the way.

Those few moments saved the hunted man.

"Below there!" cried Carew, pointing to the cabin. "Quick, man, or you will be lost."

Seeing that the poor wretch was too exhausted to rise by himself, he seized him by the arm, thrust him down the cabin hatchway, closed the cover over him, locked it, and put the key in his pocket. It was all done in a few seconds, and then the solicitor turned round and stood calmly facing the mob.

The people had not realised at first that Carew was about to rob them of their victim. Now that they did so, a howl of rage burst from them, and some shouted to him, what were evidently commands to give the man up to them, and menaces of what they would do if he refused, though he could not understand the words.

One man began to clamber down to the yacht; but Carew seized his leg and threw him on the quay again, not over-gently. "Silence!" the solicitor called out, leaping back on the hatchway; and the Dutchmen, impressed by the Englishman's resolute bearing, paused and listened to what he had to say.

"Does anyone here understand English?" he asked.

As might be expected from a crowd in a Dutch city, several men cried out, "Yes, Englishman; yes, we know English."

"Then, what is all this disturbance about? Are you all mad?"

"We want dat man," replied a surly voice.

"You can't have him."

"Den ve vill take him."

"Oh, will you?" Carew drew from his pocket Allen's revolver, which he always carried about with him now. "Look you here, my friends; I don't want a row, but if any man tries to come on board my vessel without my permission I will shoot him."

They were awed by the quiet determination of his manner, and felt that he would carry out his words.

"Does you know who you has down dere below?" asked the man who had spoken before.

"I don't know, and I don't care; but he is not going to be murdered by you cowards on board my vessel. If he has committed some crime, call the police. I will deliver him over to them only."

The passions of the mob had now cooled down considerably, and the men began to light their pipes, and looked once more the staid Dutchmen they naturally were.

At this juncture five or six of the sturdy Rotterdam police arrived on the spot, and commenced to disperse the crowd so effectually that in a few minutes not a soul was left on the quay.

One of the policemen, who understood a little English, came on board the yacht and inquired from Carew how the disturbance had commenced.

Carew told him all that had occurred.

"I should like to see the man," said the officer.

They entered the cabin, and there, sitting in the corner of the bunk, trembling, haggard, his face still quite white, save where it was smeared with blood, was the French sailor who had that day been tried for murder on the high seas, and been acquitted.

"I thought so," said the policeman. "It is the accused, Baptiste Liais. His case caused great excitement. The people are very bitter against him, for they all believe he was guilty. He is not safe in Rotterdam. We must find a way of getting him out of the country."

"You can leave him here for the present," said Carew. "I will see that the poor wretch is safe for the night."

"It is very generous of you, sir," exclaimed the astonished policeman; "but I think it is very unwise of you"—

"I am not afraid of him," interrupted Carew, in peremptory tones. "Leave him with me."

The officer shrugged his shoulders. He had always been taught to believe that Englishmen were eccentric creatures; so he went away and told his comrades that the owner of the yacht was a splendid speciman of the mad island race, and Carew and the Frenchman were left alone in the cabin facing one another.

CHAPTER VI

FOR some few moments Carew sat on the opposite bunk, watching the sailor's face musingly. Then, rising, he addressed him in French. "I will fetch you a glass of rum. It will do you good."

"I thank you much, sir," said the man, in the same language; "I should like it, for I still feel very faint."

He drank a rather large dose of the spirit, and under its influence the colour quickly returned to his cheek, and the scared look left his face.

"You can now go into the forecastle and wash yourself," said Carew. "You will find a jersey and a coat hanging up there; put them on." These had belonged to the drowned sailor, Jim.

When the Frenchman returned to the cabin cleansed of bloodstains and decently clothed, the solicitor was surprised to see what a respectable-looking fellow he was. He might well have been a gentleman from his appearance, and his hands, though brown and

roughened by work, were small and finely shaped.

"How do you feel now?"

"Thanks to you, sir, I am now quite myself again."

After a pause, Carew said, with a smile, "I never before saw such abject terror in a man's face as there was in yours when you were running down the quay."

"That bloodthirsty *canaille* was enough to inspire terror. Ah, if I could but get hold of that man who hit me with the stick! It was horrible, to run down all those streets for life with that yelping pack after me. I had no chance with them, though I am a good runner; for so soon as the brutes wearied and lagged behind, fresh ones joined the crowd at every corner. Ah, monsieur, I think you would have exhibited as much terror yourself."

"Not quite as much, I think," said Carew quietly.

"Perhaps not, monsieur. I am brave enough in some ways—braver, perhaps, than you would be; but I have not that animal contempt for death that my comrade, El Toro, for instance, possesses. Delicate fibres suffer the most."

"Then you are hardly a fit person to be a ringleader of mutineers. Murderers should have no nerves."

Baptiste Liais was a very calm person when he was not in fear, and he had now entirely

recovered his self-possession. He shrugged his shoulders, and replied carelessly, "There are assassins and assassins, monsieur. There is courage and courage. There is the blind bravery of the soldier, who, shrinking not from bloodshed, risks his life in battle; and there is the cool nerve of the educated man, who, in cold blood, removes with poison those who stand in his way. I suppose you allow that this last is also a species of courage?"

"Is that your sort of courage?"

The Frenchman shook his head in a deprecatory way, and exclaimed, in tones of playful remonstrance, as if he were only rebutting a charge of one of those offences which are tolerated, and even fashionable, "But, monsieur, monsieur! you speak of me as if I had been proved to be an assassin. You forget that I was acquitted."

"You say that you are innocent?"

"Certainly. I am sure that I am a very inoffensive fellow." The man spoke with the quiet ease of one gentleman to another. It was plain that he had been used to decent society at some period of his life.

"Were you never on board the *Vrouw Elisa*?"

"I had never heard of the vessel till they arrested me here."

"And your companions, the two Spaniards?"

"As innocent as I am myself—no more, no

less. But I see that you have some of that excellent English tobacco on the table. Permit me to make myself a cigarette."

"You are a cool fellow, Baptiste Liais. I can see that you are a man of education. You were not always a common sailor?"

"Your perception flatters me. You have divined the truth," said the Frenchman, bowing. "I am a gentleman by birth and education. My family is one of the most ancient and respected of the Provençal aristocracy. I need not tell you that the name I now go by is an assumed one. And I—well I, to be candid, am the scapegrace of the family."

He rolled himself up a cigarette, lit it, and, looking up, his eyes met those of Carew in the frankest way possible. And yet the solicitor had no doubt in his own mind that the man had committed the crimes imputed to him; and the Frenchman, on his part, did not imagine for a moment that Carew believed in his innocence.

"I suppose you will now look out for another ship?" the solicitor said.

"How can I do so in Rotterdam? My face is known here. I am execrated—hunted down. No captain would ship me, no crew serve with me."

"Won't your consul assist you?"

"I don't think so," replied the Frenchman drily.

Neither spoke for some time; then Carew said, "I realise your position, and am sorry for you. Now supposing I were to ship you on board my yacht, I imagine that it would be a matter of indifference to you to what part of the world we sailed?"

The Frenchman looked curiously and keenly at Carew out of the corners of his eyes. "I don't care a rap where I go to so long as I get out of this detestable Rotterdam," he replied.

"And your friends—would they come too?"

"Gladly. I will answer for them."

"What sort of men are they?"

"The little one, a Galician from Ferrol, is not at all a bad fellow, and he is an excellent sailor; but the big Basque is a savage brute—one of such is enough on a vessel. However, he can't do much harm by himself, unless he makes the rest of your crew discontented. Are they Englishmen?"

"I am alone. I have discharged my crew; and there would only be you three and myself on board."

"That would be a sufficient number to navigate this little ship. Do you really mean that you wish us to come with you?"

"I do," replied Carew, after a slight hesitation; and the Frenchman eyed him with a not unnatural astonishment.

The solicitor had rapidly surveyed the situa-

tion in all its bearings, and he had decided that it was his wisest and safest plan to engage these ruffians as his crew. Morally weak, acutely fearful of disgrace, and cowardly of conscience as he was, Carew had plenty of physical courage. He was not the least daunted by the idea of venturing across the wide ocean on a small yacht accompanied by these murderers.

Here was a crew ready to sail with him at a moment's notice and ask no questions. He felt that he ran but very little risk, after all; for these ruffians would gain nothing by murdering him. Piracy, in the old sense of the term, is almost impossible in these days. These men by themselves could do nothing with the yacht; they could not take her into any civilised port and dispose of her; neither of them could impersonate an English barrister. The seizure of the *Vrouw Elisa* was a very different matter; for the mutineers then knew that there was a revolutionary party ready to purchase the vessel they had stolen.

Again, he would make them acquainted with the fact that he was taking no money with him on the yacht; and he would promise to pay them, on their arrival at Buenos Ayres, a considerably larger sum than sailors ever receive for such a voyage. Under these circumstances, it could not possibly be to their

interest to do away with him. On the contrary, it would be to their manifest advantage to serve him faithfully. Unless the men were absolute idiots, they would see all this; and he knew that the Frenchman, at least, was far too intelligent a man to commit a senseless crime that could do him no good.

So argued the solicitor; and there was yet another more subtle motive that urged him to engage these three men in preference to honest sailors—a motive of which he himself was only dimly conscious. When a man has a sentimental objection to being a villain, and yet is one, and has no intention of reforming, he likes his surroundings not to be of a sort to reproach him and remind him of his crimes. It is painful to him to associate with good men. He prefers to be in the company of the bad; in their presence he does not feel the shame of his wickedness. So this man, with his strangely complex mind and conflicting instincts, was glad to take unto himself men worse even than himself as his companions across the ocean.

"And to what port did you say you were sailing?" asked the Frenchman.

"I will not tell you that until we are out at sea."

"Oh, very well," said the man, again casting a keen glance at Carew's face, and smiling, as one who should say, "Have you too your

secret — have you too committed a crime? If so, there should at once be an agreeable bond of sympathy between us."

"How soon do you sail, sir?" he asked.

"If you are all on board to-night we will sail at daybreak. I am ready for sea. You need not trouble about getting an outfit, for I have plenty of clothes in the yacht for the lot of you." Carew was thinking of the effects of Allen and his man Jim.

"Oh, that is excellent!" cried the Frenchman. "And, excuse me, sir; what pay will you give us?—not that I wish to chaffer with one who has come to my rescue in so generous a manner."

"And I do not wish to stint you," replied Carew. "You, as mate, shall have seven pounds a month; your comrades five pounds a month each."

"That will do very well; but I should like you not to let the others know that I am receiving a higher pay than they. They might be jealous — not to say dangerous," said the cunning fellow. "Ha! what is that?" The Frenchman started, gripped Carew by the arm, and his cheeks again became white with fear.

There was a sound of footsteps on the deck, and the next moment the tub-shaped Willem entered the cabin. When he saw who was sitting opposite to his master he stood stock

still, his jaw dropped, and an expression of extreme astonishment, which amounted to horror, settled on his stupid, honest face.

"What is the matter with you, Willem?" asked Carew, knowing well what was about to happen. "This the mate I have engaged for the yacht."

Dat — dat man!" cried the Dutchman, finding his voice with difficulty. "You know who dat man is?"

"I do. He has just left the court-house. He was unjustly accused of murder, and has been found innocent."

"Vat—you take dat man for mate! Oh, den I go—I go at vonce! I not stay on board vid dat man."

The usually stolid Dutchman trembled with excitement, and his broad face was scarlet with indignation. After a few minutes, finding that Carew was obdurate and would insist on engaging the most loathed man in all Rotterdam as mate, Willem rolled up his scanty luggage into a bundle, demanded and received the few guilders that were owing to him, and hurried on shore, grumbling uncouth Dutch oaths to himself as he went.

Then the Frenchman, who had been observing the scene with a cynical smile, laughed bitterly.

"Had I been the fiend himself that fat idiot could not have been much more terrified at

the sight of me. Ah, how they love me—these worthy people of Rotterdam!"

For a moment there was a troubled look upon Carew's face. With his usual inconsistency he half regretted, when it was too late, that honest Willem had left him. It seemed to him that he had now broken the last tie between himself and the world of law-abiding men. He felt a vague sense of something lost to him for ever; as if his guardian angel, despairing of him, had forsaken him. But he quickly shook off the feeling as a foolish fancy, and turned his attention to the business he had on hand.

"Now, Baptiste," he said, "we must find your two comrades. Do you know where they are?"

"I think I can find them. Anticipating a separation, we arranged a rendezvous. But I dare not walk through the streets to look for them; I should be recognised and murdered."

"Nonsense! we will soon disguise you. Shave off your moustache and put on a suit of clothes that I will lend you, and your own mother would not know you."

The Frenchman obeyed these instructions, and was so satisfied with the change effected in his appearance by a hairless lip and a suit of poor Allen's clothes that he no longer hesitated to go forth in search of his two shipmates.

Left alone, Carew pondered, with satisfaction, on his day's doings. All was going on well so far. "Lucky it is for me," he thought, "that there is an Admiralty warrant on the yacht. Provided with that useful document, I sail under the blue ensign of Her Majesty's fleet, and can do pretty well what I like. No authorities in any port will trouble me in the least. I can avoid the formality of taking my crew before the consul to sign articles, and I will dispense with a bill of health from this port. I may get quarantine for a few days in consequence of this last omission; but what is that to the peril of informing our consul here of my destination? And, by the bye, I am engaged to dine with Mynheer Hoogendyk to-morrow. I am afraid I shall keep him waiting, and over the spoiling dinner his cook will lose her temper; for by that time I ought to be well out in the North Sea."

After about an hour's absence the Frenchman returned, accompanied by the two Spaniards. They entered the cabin, the little Galician all smiles, the big Basque awkward, vainly attempting not to scowl; but, do all he could, he still looked the brutal ruffian he was.

"I have been very lucky," said Liais. "I soon found our lost lambs."

"Have you explained my proposal to them?" Carew asked.

"I have, and they are quite content with the

pay you offer. They don't care a straw where you take them to, so long as it is not to a Spanish port. It seems that the lads are somewhat weary of their native land, and they tell me that they have some officious acquaintances among the Spanish police whom they would prefer not to meet."

"I understand. I shall not call at any Spanish port; so they may set their minds at ease. And now I will inscribe your names in this book, if you please." He took Allen's diary out of the drawer. "First of all, there is Baptiste Liais, mate."

"No; put me down plain Baptiste. My name is so well known now that I should like to leave half of it out."

"Very well," said Carew, as he wrote. "And who is this big fellow?"

"His name is Juan Silvas. But he, too, would rather be called by any other name, after the unpleasant publicity of the trial. His nickname among us is El Toro — the bull — because of his goggle eyes, his bull-like features and strength, and his blind, bovine rage. Put him down as Juan Toro."

"Good; it is done. And what is the other man's name?"

"José Rodez, known among his intimates as El Chico, or the little one."

"Then, following your system, I will inscribe him as José Chico. Will that do?"

"One name is as good as another," replied the Frenchman; "but oh, *mon capitaine*, this has been a somewhat trying day for us, and we are all very hungry."

"There is plenty of food on board. I will show you where to find it. Give the lads some supper; then turn in, all of you. The tide is early, and we sail at daybreak."

The next morning, just as the first slight murmuring sound arose from the big city, telling that the giant was awaking to its restless life, the canal lock was opened, and the yacht shot out into the tideway.

Carew, who had taken mental notes of the navigation when sailing up the Maas, refused the assistance of a pilot, and took his vessel safely down the rapid river, across the shoals that encumber the estuary, and out into the open sea. The weather was splendid, and the wind favoured him, as it blew freshly from the south-east.

Then Carew's pulse quickened; a wild exultation thrilled him, as the yacht, leaning well over to the steady wind, all her canvas set, rushed with pleasant sound through the smooth water. At that moment he felt happy, even proud of himself. He was safe at last, free from all anxiety. How Fortune had befriended him! That fatal superstition in luck that comes to the criminal and the gambler possessed him. Whom the gods wish to destroy they first make mad.

"Baptiste," he said, "I have heard it is a custom of Spain for the captain of a vessel, as soon as she is well outside the harbour, to call all hands aft and serve round grog, so that they can drink to the prosperity of the voyage. Fetch up some rum, and give each a glass."

The Frenchman obeyed the order. Carew was steering at the time, and the men stood round him, glasses in hand, awaiting the toast. Then the captain raised his glass in his disengaged hand, and called out in French—

"Comrades, here's to a prosperous voyage—*to Buenos Ayres!*"

When the men heard their destination they seemed dumb with surprise for a moment; then they raised a joyful shout. The prospect was evidently an agreeable one to them.

"To Buenos Ayres," said the Frenchman, bowing to Carew with a knowing smile, "the land where there is no extradition."

CHAPTER VII

IT was mid-ocean, and no land was in sight. The glassily smooth surface of the sea was not broken by the faintest ripple, but it rose and fell slowly with the long, rhythmical swell of the Atlantic. Gentle now was the massive heaving of the giant's bosom, showing that he was slumbering only, and that the strong, fierce life was there, ready to be awakened at any moment to its energy of cruel destruction.

Though the swell must have been of considerable height, yet so gentle was the undulation that no motion whatever would have been perceptible to one on the deck of a vessel, unless he had observed how the horizon was withdrawn from his sight at regular intervals by the intervening hills of water, as the vessel softly glided down the easy slopes into the broad valleys between. The wind was quite still. The sky above was clear and of a deeper blue than is known in northern climes; but on the eastern horizon lay a long, low bank of very dark cloud, seeming almost black in contrast to the elsewhere dazzling glare.

The sea, to one looking across it, would have appeared of a beautiful indigo tint; but if one gazed straight down into the water, it seemed opaque in the purple blackness of its profundity, as if the perpetual night that reigned in the mysterious depths below were sending its shadow upwards to the surface. Yet so perfectly translucent was that ink-like water that any bright object, such as a plate, thrown into it would remain distinctly visible as it slowly descended—yes, even till it was so far down that it seemed no larger than a small coin.

The yacht *Petrel* lay becalmed on the tropical sea. All her canvas had been lowered, and she floated idly, while the fierce, vertical sun was blistering the paint on her sides, and the melting pitch oozed from the seams of her decks.

For thirteen days she had been drifting thus on a windless ocean, her crew languid and irritable from the stifling heat, which it is impossible to mitigate on a small craft, waiting for the breeze that never came.

For thirteen days of unbearable calm, broken only by occasional brief squalls, accompanied by torrential downpour of rain, and thunder and lightning of appalling grandeur—squalls which raised the flagging hopes of the men for a space, and to which they hastily hoisted their canvas, that they might be carried out of this dismal tract of the ocean; but after they had been driven on their way a mile or two only,

the wind would suddenly drop again, the dark clouds would clear away, and the sun would blaze down fiercer than ever out of the implacable sky.

The *Petrel* had reached the region of the equatorial calms, the sultry Doldrums dreaded by the sailor, that broad belt of sluggish sea that divides the tract of the north-east trade wind from that of the south-east. Here the aërial currents neutralise each other and are at rest—a desolate, rainy ocean that lies under an almost stagnant atmosphere of steaming heat, where vessels have lain becalmed for wearisome week after week; even, in many cases, until the supply of fresh water had been exhausted and the men perished of thirst. And yet to the northward and to the southward the fresh trade winds blow perpetually in one direction, across vast stretches of ever-tossing waves.

The voyage of the *Petrel* had been a very prosperous one up to this point. She had met with fair winds for the most part until she reached the limits of the north-east trades, which, blowing right aft, had carried her on her way at the rate of nearly two hundred miles a day. Carew had sighted Madeira and the westernmost islands of the Cape Verde archipelago; but as the yacht was well provided with provisions, he had not called at any port. After having been a little over a month at sea, he had entered the calm region about the

equator, and here, as I have said, scarcely any progress was made for a fortnight.

By this time the crew had settled down to the regular routine of ship-life, and Carew was, on the whole, well satisfied with the men. The savagery of the big Basque would occasionally assert itself, and he was ever ready to pick a quarrel with his mates. The only one on board whom El Toro respected and feared was Carew himself; for he felt that the Englishman combined a physical courage, at least equal to his own, with a superior education; and the man who possesses these two qualities can always master a merely brute nature. El Toro did not conceal his contempt for Baptiste, who excelled him in mental ability alone; and again, he could not converse ten minutes with the little Galician without an altercation arising; for the latter, who had all the pluck of his big comrade, was fond of wagging his sharp tongue, and could not refrain from malicious banter, despite the long sheath-knife which was always so ready to the Basque's right hand.

Carew, who had quickly gauged the character of his companions, took El Toro on his own watch, leaving El Chico to the French mate. Thus, as watch and watch was observed in the regular ship fashion—that is, one watch relieving the other every four hours—the cantankerous Basque had but few opportunities of associating with the other men.

But during the fortnight of calm the discipline of the yacht had been relaxed. As there was no need for it, the usual watches had not been set; and, after they had completed the small amount of necessary work each day, the men were allowed to employ the rest of the time much as they liked. A prolonged calm on the line is trying even to the most amiable tempers; so that it is not to be wondered at that, on one occasion, El Toro, being modest as to his own powers of repartee, preferred to reply to a chaffing remark of El Chico's with a practical retort in the shape of a vicious stab, which might easily have diminished the ship's company by one had not the quick-eyed little man, leaping nimbly backwards, escaped with a slight scratch on his arm.

For this offence Carew, knowing his man and how best to punish him, informed the Basque that a fine of a fortnight's pay had been entered against his name in the log-book.

It was nearly midday, and the heat of the still, moist air was intense. The French mate lay reclined under an awning on the after-deck, rolling up cigarette after cigarette, and smoking them with half-shut eyes as he dreamily meditated.

In the bows, under an awning extemporised out of an old sail, were squatting the two Spaniards, playing at *monte* with a very dirty pack of cards. Now and then would be heard

the sonorous oaths of the Basque, as he savagely reviled his bad luck, or the triumphant chuckle of El Chico, whom fortune was favouring. These two had been gambling almost incessantly during the calm, for the money they were to receive from Carew on their arrival at Buenos Ayres. The Galician had already succeeded in winning El Toro's pay for many weeks in advance. Neither of the men could read or write, but they kept a tally of their debts of honour—over which there was much wrangling—by cutting notches on a beam in the forecastle.

A few minutes before noon Carew came on deck, sextant in hand, and the mate rose to his feet lazily. Carew's face was now bronzed by the tropical sun, and was fuller than it had been two months back. The haggard expression, the restless anxiety of his eye, had gone. He looked like a man with the easiest of consciences.

He glanced at the two card-players forward. "Have you taken the precaution I ordered?" he asked the mate.

"I have, captain; here they are," and Baptiste produced two formidable knives from his pocket.

Since the incident I have mentioned, Carew had instituted a rule, to the effect that the men should not play at cards or dice unless they had previously delivered their weapons to one of the two officers.

El Chico overheard the mate's reply. "Ah,

captain," he cried, "you'll have to hand both knives over to me at the end of this game. I shall have won everything El Toro possesses in the world if my luck holds as it is doing now."

"*Caramba!* it is too much; a plague on the cards!" cried the Basque furiously, hurling the pack across the deck. "I'll have no more of them. If I have no knife, I have these hands," and he opened them out with a gesture of rage in front of the Galician. "I could circle your little neck with these, and throttle you in half a minute, El Chico."

El Chico said nothing, but shrugged his shoulders with a provoking coolness.

"El Toro, come aft," cried Carew, who had acquired enough Spanish to give his orders in that tongue; "come aft, and set up that mizzen rigging; it's as slack as possible."

The wild beast acknowledged its master and proceeded to obey his orders in a surly fashion, even as Caliban might have reluctantly carried out some behest of the superior intelligence that had enslaved him.

"This calm seems as if it would never end," said Carew to the mate. "It looks black yonder. Another squall, I suppose. Just enough to entice us to hoist our sails, and then to die away again."

"I don't see anything like the trade-wind sky about," said Baptiste, who had sailed the tropical seas before.

Carew took his midday observation of the sun; then, lowering his sextant, called out, 'Make it eight bells, Baptiste," and went below to work out his position.

He found that the *Petrel* had only travelled five miles in the last twenty-four hours. He was seventy miles north of the equator, and his longitude by dead-reckoning (he had, as has been explained, no chronometer on board) was about 30° west, so that he was distant some five hundred miles from Cape St. Roque, the most easterly point of the New World.

Soon after noon the dark bank of cloud rose rapidly from the horizon and overspread the whole heavens; the rain began to pour down as it only can in these equatorial regions, and a fresh breeze from the south-east cooled the heated atmosphere.

The sails were hoisted, and the yacht ran some two or three miles; then the hopeless calm fell again, and there was not a cloud to be seen in the blue vault above. The sails flapped to and fro with a loud noise as the vessel rolled in the swell which the breeze had left behind it.

"Oh, this accursed calm!" cried Carew impatiently; "down with all your canvas again."

The men obeyed, grumbling at their ill-luck, and then resumed their game of *monte*.

In the afternoon the heat became more

oppressive than ever, and it was impossible to stay below; so all hands remained under the awnings on deck.

The mate, after pondering for some while, said to Carew, "We shall run short of water if this continues much longer."

"I have thought of that. We must serve out a smaller allowance."

"Buenos Ayres is a long way off yet, captain. Would it not be well to put into some Brazilian port for water and vegetables? This heat is very trying on a small vessel like this. We shall have illness on board if we are not careful."

"I do not wish to break the voyage anywhere, unless it is absolutely necessary," Carew replied.

"I know these countries," Baptiste continued; "and there is one very good reason why you should call at some port on the way."

"What is it?"

"You have no bill of health with you. Now in Buenos Ayres the authorities are very afraid of yellow fever, and if you arrive there with no papers to show where you are from, they will take it for granted that you have come from some infected port, and that you have probably lost some hands on the voyage and wish to conceal it. They would, therefore, put you in quarantine for who knows how long. They

might, under the suspicious circumstances, refuse even to give you pratique at all, and send you off to sea again."

"How will calling at a Brazilian port remedy that?"

"Because in Brazil they are not afraid of yellow fever, as they always have it there. At Rio they won't trouble you at all, and your consul will give you a clean bill of health for Buenos Ayres. Then, being satisfied that you have had no illness on board, the Buenos Ayres people will grant you pratique after, let us say, a quarantine of four days, even if yellow fever were raging at Rio."

"A queer plan to avoid quarantine for Yellow Jack by calling at the headquarters of the fever!" said Carew; "but I see that you are right. I will put into Rio."

After a pause the Frenchman said thoughtfully, "I shall be sorry to leave this vessel, sir. I suppose you still think of selling her in the River Plate. I should like to continue the cruise for another year."

"So should I, but I can't afford it. Yachting is an expensive amusement."

"Oh, I don't know that. A cruise may be made to pay its way even in these days, especially if one carries a warrant from the Admiralty of one's country like you do. The authorities are always civil to one who sails under the Government blue ensign, and never

trouble him with the tedious formalities the common merchantman is subjected to."

"I don't know what you mean," said Carew. "There is no money to be made now by legitimate trade at sea. Besides, a yacht is not allowed to trade at all."

"I said nothing about legitimate trade," said the Frenchman quietly, as he rolled himself another cigarette.

The eyes of the two men met, and they understood each other.

The mate had never let drop so broad a hint before; but he knew that he was safe in doing so. There had existed for some time a sort of freemasonry of crime between himself and Carew. They had been thrown altogether upon each other's society of late. Both were educated men, and gentlemen by birth; both were shrewd readers of character; and it is so far easier for the bad than for the good man to recognise a kindred nature.

Carew did not exactly entertain a liking for his mate, but he found his companionship far pleasanter than that of any other man could have been. The Frenchman's tolerant way of looking at crime was peculiarly gratifying to the ex-solicitor. It acted as a most soothing salve to his conscience.

He liked to hear the man's cynical talk—the superficial philosophy with which he defended crime as being the least hypocritical way of

obeying nature's law of the struggle for existence. The very presence of this villain seemed to exert a strange, magnetic influence on Carew's pliable soul, lulling it into a fool's paradise.

Such an affinity for evil between two men who are much together will soon destroy any conscience that either of them may happen to possess.

So Carew, having become accustomed to an atmosphere of crime, no longer shrank from the thought of it, and, with an amused smile, replied to the mate's remark, "What piece of villainy are you going to suggest now, Baptiste?"

"I don't think you ought to use that word villainy," protested the Frenchman, with an air of comic indignation. "As a matter of fact, I was not at that moment thinking of any one particular 'piece of villainy,' but vaguely of a great number of feasible schemes I know of for transferring the wickedly-earned riches of others into our own deserving pockets."

"This is highly interesting," said Carew, in a bantering tone. "Explain one of these notable schemes of yours, Baptiste."

But the Frenchman did not reply. He looked round the horizon with a puzzled expression, and, putting his hand to his ear, appeared to be listening intently.

"Hark, captain! What is that?' he cried.

CHAPTER VIII

CAREW listened, and heard a low, rumbling sound like distant thunder.

"Thunder out of a cloudless sky! That is strange."

"That is no thunder, captain," said Baptiste, with a scared look, "but what it is I know not."

The sound became louder. It did not seem to be approaching from any direction, but to be everywhere—around, below, above—filling all space. Then it swelled to a great roar, as of the rolling of thousands of drums. The air trembled at the sound, and the surface of the sea no longer reflected the blue sky above, but, appearing like a mirror over which one has breathed, vibrated into myriads of wrinkles and gyrating rings. Soon the water began to be greatly disturbed, and raved and foamed about the vessel as if she were floating in a boiling caldron. Then occurred an appalling prodigy. First, louder than loudest thunder, was heard a deafening explosion, and immediately the sea leapt up, not in waves, but in steep pyramids of water, piling itself up in domes, as if some

mighty force were thrusting it up from below. The yacht pitched wildly into the confused whirl till she was nigh to break up with the violence of the shocks, and the water poured over her decks in masses, threatening to swamp her. Hollow whirlpools opened out suddenly in front of her, seeking to engulf her: a fearful spectacle to behold, which might make even the bravest men go mad with fright. Then came another explosion, and the superstitious Spaniards, holding on to the rigging for dear life, shrieked with abject terror as they saw the limpid sea suddenly thicken and change its colour to a dark, sulphurous yellow. There was an odour of sulphur in the air, and the sun was shining through a sickly yellow haze.

The crew, who would have done their duty with cool courage in a hurricane, were completely unnerved by this alarming portent. The two men forward thought that the fiend himself had opened hell under them to swallow up their sinful souls; they prayed and blasphemed in turns. The French mate, white to his lips and trembling, clutched the rigging, with his eyes closed. Carew alone, though his cheeks were pale, was calm. Holding on to the bulwark to prevent himself from being thrown overboard by the violent leaping of the yacht, he looked around him with a resolute expression. He would fight bravely for his life, but he had no fear of death.

In the midst of this turmoil a strong wind suddenly arose.

"Hoist the foresail!" he shouted; but none of the terrified men obeyed the order. "Cowardly idiots!" he cried, and scrambling forward as well as he could to the mast, he seized the fore-halyards and set the sail. Then he returned to the tiller, after having been nearly washed overboard by a sea on the way, and steered the vessel dead before the wind.

In ten minutes he had sailed, not without danger, outside the circle of raging water; and looking back he saw that the disturbance had already commenced to subside, and the loud roaring had lessened to a distant moaning.

"*Locos!*" he cried; "madmen, cowards, hoist the mainsail! Are you women to be so scared by a slight *terremoto*?"

"I didn't know that there were earthquakes in mid-ocean," said El Toro, who was the first to recover somewhat from his fright. "But, captain, you are a curious one. I knew you feared no man; but, *caramba!* it seems you don't fear the devil himself."

"Up mainsail," cried Carew again, "and don't jabber, thou great coward! Hurry up. We have a fair wind."

The mate was now himself again. "Aha! the *terremoto* has brought us luck," he cried. "Look yonder, captain," and he pointed to the east, where the sky had become suddenly covered

with small fleecy clouds. "I know that sign—that is the trade wind."

They put all sail on the vessel, and were soon bowling along before the ever-freshening wind. They had left behind them the dreary region of the Doldrums, with its stifling heat, and the air above the dancing waves was cool and bracing.

The mate, who was steering, began to chaff his companions. "Say, El Toro, you thought the authorities below had sent for you when you felt that trembling of the sea."

"Trembling?" replied the Basque gruffly. "There was more trembling of thee than of the sea itself, thou white-gilled Frenchman."

"So there was," drawled the sarcastic El Chico. "But let us remember that our mate is a man of education—of soul. His nerves are in harmony with Nature. When Nature is merry he is merry; when Nature trembles; he trembles. But that is poetical sympathy, not fear, my friend El Toro."

And so these three reviled each other's cowardice, until Carew, fearing bloodshed, called out, "Now, then, stop that discussion, or all of you bring me your knives here."

Then this amiable crew smoked and sulked in silence for a while.

Shortly afterwards, Carew was below studying a chart of the South Atlantic. To him came down the mate, who looked over his shoulder and asked, "How far are we now from Rio, sir?"

"About sixteen hundred miles," was the reply. "That means a run of nine or ten days at the outside with this wind."

"You are a man of great nerve," said the mate, filled with a genuine admiration. "I thought the bravest man would have lost his head in that horrid earthquake."

Carew laughed. "Mine was only the courage of science at the best, Baptiste. You see, the phenomenon did not take me by surprise. I half expected something of the sort."

"Indeed!"

"Oh, it is very simple. See here," — he pointed to the chart,—"read that." The words, "Volcanic region of the Atlantic," were printed across a large tract of ocean in the vicinity of the equator. "Now, if you will turn over the pages of the *South Atlantic Pilot Directory*, you will read that this part of the Atlantic is peculiarly subject to volcanic disturbance; so much so, that mariners are in this book warned on the subject. There are no soundings hereabouts with two thousand fathoms of line, and yet the disturbance is transmitted upwards through all those miles of water; so you can imagine the violent forces that are at work below us. It is rare that a vessel crosses this strange corner of the sea without experiencing some manifestation or other of this nature. Sometimes it may be only a discoloration of the water that is noticed; sometimes a shock

is felt as if the vessel had struck a rock, or she shivers till the masts are like to be thrown out of her. It is a region terrible to superstitious sailors; but I believe it is rare that a vessel has sustained any serious damage from these convulsions."

"Even if I had known all that I should have lost my nerve; for, say what you like, captain, our danger was a very real one. The *terremoto* has done one good thing, anyhow: it has inspired El Chico and El Toro with an immense respect for your courage. We won't tell them that you were forewarned by the pilot book. You can do what you like with those men after this, Captain Allen. For the future they are your obedient slaves."

The brave trade wind blew without intermission for ten days, and then Carew, being in the latitude of Rio de Janeiro, steered due west for the land, which, according to his dead-reckoning, was not two hundred miles distant. It was night, and the wind having fallen light, the yacht made little progress. At midnight Carew came on deck to relieve the mate.

"Look over there," said Baptiste, pointing across the vessel's bows to the westward. "Those are the lights of Rio."

"What! so soon?" cried Carew; and turning his eyes in the indicated direction he perceived, not indeed the gleam of a lighthouse or other

ordinary sign of approaching land, but an appearance as of a stormy dawn. High above the horizon hung masses of clouds whose lower surface was of a faint red, as if they were reflecting some immense conflagration too far away to be yet visible.

"You cannot distinguish any other city in the world from such a distance," said the mate. "When you are one hundred miles—yes, and more than that—away, you can tell the position of Rio de Janeiro by the glare that hangs over it at night. The gaslights there are innumerable. I have heard that it is the best lighted city in the world, and I believe it. At midnight the streets are illuminated as if for a fête; and, what is more, all the roads and paths that lead out into the country and up to the tops of the mountains are better lit than any of the streets in your London. Ah, the capital of the Brazils is a wonderful place!"

As Carew discovered later on, Baptiste had not exaggerated the facts.

At daybreak Carew was still on deck, being anxious to catch a first glimpse of the New World after so many weeks upon the desert seas.

When the sun rose the blue sky was cloudless, but the western horizon was obscured by a white fog, which, Baptiste said, nearly always hovered over this coast at early morning.

Of a sudden the upper portion of the mist lifted, and high above them there appeared,

as if floating in mid-air, the summit of a huge mountain. It was of cubical shape, with perpendicular sides of bare, smooth stone, like the altar of some giant race — a marvellous sight to thus burst suddenly upon men who had for so long seen nothing but sky and water.

"That is the Gavia Mountain," cried Baptiste; "it lies to the left of the entrance of the Bay of Rio."

Then the morning breeze came down upon the land, and, as by enchantment, the mist vanished, and all the features of that wonderful coast were revealed to them.

Lofty mountains of the most fantastic forms rose sheer from the sea. Some were great pyramids or peaks of ruddy granite gleaming like molten gold in the sunshine; others, sloping more gently, were covered with great forests of tropical vegetation. Along the whole shore extended a white line of foam, where the Atlantic swell, piled up by the fresh trade winds, perpetually thundered at the base of the cliffs. In places the ravines terminated in beautiful bays, where on beaches of silver sand the cocoa-nut trees waved their rustling branches. The tropical seas wash no lovelier a land than this; and at that moment, with the sun still low in the east, there were a softness and translucency in the gorgeous colouring that gave an unreal and fairy-like aspect to the scene. Close under the conical mountain known as

the Sugar Loaf a gorge opened out, and through this was seen the vast expanse of the Bay of Rio, which the old navigators, in their admiration for its beauty, likened unto the gates of heaven.

The yacht crossed the tumbling waters on the bar, sailed through the majestic gates, and floated on the still, pale green water of the inland sea.

The Bay of Rio is considered to be the fairest of all the harbours of the earth, and one who has seen it can well believe that it is so. Imagine a vast lake, some eighty miles in circumference, surrounded by grand mountains, indented with many winding bays, and studded with islands of all sizes, on whose shores are many towns and villages, chief among which is the empire city of South America, the white Rio de Janeiro. A luxuriant vegetation comes down to the very edge of the water, even up to the streets of the city; the varied foliage of many species of palms, the luscious blades of the bananas, the spreading mangos, and bread-fruit trees giving a cool appearance to the torrid land.

About a mile from the city of Rio, at the entrance of the bay, is the fortified island of Villegagnon. The yacht was sailing close under its shore, the mate steering. Carew was gazing at the grand scenery around him with deep emotion. Under the influence of this

lovely nature, his thoughts became tender and pure; his soul was strangely subdued, and his mind sank into a happy reverie, such as good men who feel secure in their innocence are supposed alone to enjoy.

The mate was watching Carew's face; then he said, in a casual manner—

"I know this port pretty well, Mr. Allen, though I have only been here once before; and, by the way, I was sailing then in an English barque. Let me see, what was the captain's name? Captain Grou — no, it was not that—Garou—Carou—oh yes, that was it—Captain Carou."

Carew started visibly and looked steadily into the mate's face, but he could read nothing in those impassive features. "It is but a coincidence," he said to himself. "It is impossible that Baptiste can have discovered my real name. There are many Carews in the world, after all." Nevertheless, the sound of the name he had put away from him for ever disturbed him greatly. He was awakened from his pleasant reverie, and the beautiful scenery had no more delights for him. All the evil things which he had done and had yet to do were unpleasantly brought to his mind. Now that he saw the great city before him, he shrank from the idea of mixing once more with his fellow-men. He wished he were out on the open sea again.

"Baptiste," he said, "I should like to bring up some way from the quays; it will be quieter."

"Certainly, captain. Let us bring up here under Villegagnon; it will be cooler and healthier than farther in. Look yonder at the merchantman anchorage. I see the yellow flag flying from at least a dozen foremasts. The yellow fever is evidently playing mischief at present."

Baptiste had not been unobservant of Carew's start and change of expression at the mention of his name. The wily Frenchman had a game to play: he had put down his first card with a result that satisfied him.

The anchor was let go under Villegagnon and the sails were stowed; then Baptiste, looking around him, happened to perceive a barque anchored about half a mile off. "Ho, El Toro," he cried; "look at that barque. Is she not the very sister to the old *Vrouw Elisa*?"

"Baptiste," said Carew sternly, "you told me that you had never been on board the *Vrouw Elisa*."

The mate, not in the least disconcerted, laughed, and replied, "That does not prevent my knowing her by sight, surely, Captain Carou—I mean—how stupid of me!—Captain Allen."

CHAPTER IX

SHORTLY after the *Petrel's* anchor had been let go, under the island of Villegagnon, a galley, manned by brawny blacks, came off to he yacht; a Brazilian gentleman in uniform leapt on deck and introduced himself as the doctor of the port. On hearing that the vessel was an English yacht sailing under an Admiralty flag he raised no difficulties, but granted Carew pratique at once, despite the absence of a clean bill of health from Rotterdam.

When the health boat had gone off again, Carew ordered the dinghy to be lowered. "I will go on shore at once, Baptiste," he said. "I will call on the British consul, and ask him for a clean bill of health for Buenos Ayres. We won't stay longer than is necessary in this unhealthy place."

"May I suggest," replied the mate, "that you should give the lads a few dollars of their pay, and allow them a run on shore to stretch their legs after having been cooped up so long in this little craft?"

Carew remembered the empty condition of the ship's treasury, and did not see his way to paying his crew any portion of their wages at present.

"If they go on shore they will drink rum in the sun, and catch Yellow Jack," he said.

"Not they, sir. These are sober Spaniards, and they are too acclimatised to run much risk of fever."

"I'll think the matter over. But we'll leave the two men in charge this afternoon. You come on shore with me, Baptiste. You know Rio, and can show me the way about."

So Carew and the mate got into the dinghy, and the latter, taking the oars, pulled off towards the Mole. They landed on a quay bordered by a negro market, where fish, fruit, rags, and all manner of odds and ends were sold by very fat negresses in huge yellow turbans; a filthy and malodorous spot. After leaving the dinghy in charge of a custom-house officer, they hustled their way through the jabbering crowd of blacks, and entered the chief streets of the city.

Baptiste, who evidently knew his way well, brought Carew to the door of the British Consulate. "I will leave you now, captain," he said, "to transact your business. Let me have a dollar or so to amuse myself with, and I will meet you in an hour's time at the corner of the

chief street, the Rua Ovidor, in front of the big jeweller's shop."

Carew gave him a ten-shilling piece—he only had two more in the world now — and they separated.

Having obtained a bill of health from the consul, Carew strolled through the hot streets until the appointed time, when the mate, punctual to a minute, met him at the corner of the Rua Ovidor.

"Captain," said Baptiste, "it is stifling in these streets. Let us get on a tram and drive out of the town to the Botanical Gardens. It will be cooler there, and I wish to speak to you in a quiet place where there are no eaves-droppers about. I have made an important discovery since I left you."

With a noise of jingling bells the mules carried them rapidly through the suburbs of the city; past fairy-like villas that seemed to be built of delicately tinted porcelain, surrounded by gardens that were paradises of exquisite plants, with cool fountains splashing under the feathery palms; past groves of marvellous trees that bore no leaves, but were covered instead with blossoms of purple and vivid crimson, so that the eye was pained by the excess of glory; past pleasant inlets of the great bay, where the tiny waves dashed on the white sands under the cocoa-nut trees; and around them rose the great amphitheatre of granite peaks and forest-

clad mountains glowing under the cloudless sky.

They reached the gate of the Botanical Gardens, and the mate led Carew to an avenue of oreodoxas—the most majestic of the family of palms. These rose straight and smooth as marble columns to an immense height, and far overhead their graceful leaves met in regular arches, forming a great aisle as of a cathedral of giants. A solemn spot, fitted to exalt the soul of man and inspire lofty thoughts, but which Baptiste, with an unconscious irony, had selected as a safe place to discuss with Carew a scheme of detestable crime which his lust for gold had suggested to him.

They sat down on a bench under the polished trunk of one of the huge palms. Carew was silent. He was impressed by the marvellous nature around. Everything was so unfamiliar to his senses. The rich colouring of the beautiful and sometimes grotesquely shaped vegetation, the birds of brilliant plumage that flashed by him, the metallic lustre and monstrous forms of the beetles and other insects, the shrieking of the paroquets, and other noises of the intense and teeming tropical life — all bewildered his brain. The very air, heavy with the pungent odours of many flowers, seemed intoxicating. He could scarcely realise that this was not all some fantastic dream.

But Baptiste, who had important business on

hand, cared little for the wonders of Nature. He rolled himself a cigarette, lit it, then, sprawling himself in a lazy fashion on the bench, commenced—

"The other day, captain, we were engaged in an interesting conversation, which was rather rudely disturbed by an earthquake. Have you forgotten the subject of it?"

"I remember that you were talking some nonsense about making yachting pay its expenses by smuggling, or something of the sort."

"I said nothing about smuggling, captain, and I was not talking nonsense. I said that the master of a yacht sailing under Government papers has many opportunities of putting gold into his pockets; that is, if his liver be sound and he is not troubled with a morbid conscience. Now, I only left you for one hour, captain, and in that time I picked up all the news of the port by calling at one or two rum shops—old haunts of mine; and, as luck would have it, I have discovered an easy way for us all to make our fortunes."

"Silence, man!" angrily ejaculated Carew. "I don't wish to hear your rascally plans. You mistake me; I am not one to seek a fortune by illicit methods."

Carew meant all he said. He intended to commit one more crime only—to telegraph in Allen's name to the bank for the bulk of Allen's

property. After that, sick of sin, he would live an exemplary life, and appease conscience by good works in some far country. But he forgot that he who once starts to run down a steep hill cannot stop himself exactly when he wishes.

"What virtue—what righteous indignation!" sneered the mate. "But, captain, you will have to listen to me. Whether you wish it or no, you *shall* make a fortune in the way I am going to suggest."

There was a menace in the man's tone and a malicious twinkle in his eyes.

Carew looked at him. "Explain yourself, if you please," he said coldly.

"So I will," cried Baptiste, with energy, abandoning his lazy drawl. Then, throwing away his cigarette, he rose from his recumbent position and stood before Carew, who still remained sitting on the bench.

"Do you think that I am blind—that I am an idiot, captain? Do you imagine that I don't know who you are and what you have done,—with all your virtuous talk,—eh, Mr. Carew?"

As he uttered these words rapidly the mate closely observed their effect upon the Englishman, whose face turned ghastly white, and whose right hand stole round to his back.

"No shooting, if you please," cried the Frenchman, in a bantering tone. "Don't draw that revolver. Remember that there's a fine for

carrying firearms in Rio. Coward though I may be, you don't frighten me here, captain. I know you dare not kill me on shore. The inquiry afterwards would be fatal to you. Besides, you are wise enough to grasp quickly the fact that our interests are coincident. At sea it was otherwise. There I held my tongue. I was aware that you would have thrown me overboard some dark night had you guessed that I knew so much. Here on shore I am safe."

Carew felt that he was in the man's power, and saw the futility of denial. "What do you know?" he asked, in a dry voice, bringing his hand in front of him again.

"That your name is not Allen, but Carew."

"What else?"

"That you are impersonating a man whose property you have stolen."

Carew felt as if his heart had stopped; the tall palms swam around him. He closed his eyes, and was only conscious of the cataract of sound raised by the shrieking paroquets and the manifold hum of insects. It was only for a moment; then he recovered himself, and, opening his eyes, again saw before him the cynical face of the Frenchman. "What else?" he asked, with a deep sigh.

"Surely that is enough, captain. But, in short, understand that I know all about you."

"How have you learnt this?"

"Suffice it that I know it. I don't wish to spoil your little game, captain, but you must help me in mine. I will now sit down and silently smoke a cigarette, so that you can ponder a while on what I have said. I perceive that I have somewhat disturbed your mind. Now, as violent emotions are very bad for the health in this hot climate, it will do you good to rest for a few minutes; for I have more exciting news to communicate."

The Frenchman resumed his former lazy position, and proceeded to smoke, as he smiled contentedly at his own reflections; while Carew sat with knit brows, the perspiration streaming down his face, unable to collect his thoughts, but terribly conscious in a vague way that he could never extricate himself from the network of crime into which he had voluntarily thrown himself; that for him there was no hope of putting the past away; that one sin would lead irrevocably to another; that Nemesis had made all his future life as one long chain of iniquity, even to the unknown dreadful end of it.

The Frenchman was very pleased with himself. He had succeeded beyond his expectations in gaining a hold over Carew, whom he could now compel to subserve his purposes. The mate had played a bold game of "bluff"; he had made Carew believe that he was acquainted with his history, whereas he knew nothing of it, possessed no proofs of what

he had so boldly asserted, and had merely made an ingenious guess at the truth.

At a very early stage of the voyage, Baptiste had come to the conclusion that the conscience of the Englishman was burdened with some crime, and that he was a fugitive from justice.

A variety of circumstances had led him to this belief. That Carew had shipped three men who were known to be murderers, and had sailed away with them across the ocean at a moment's notice, was in itself highly suspicious. So the wily Frenchman, bethinking himself how useful it often is to know another man's disagreeable secrets, set himself to discover all he could of his employer's past.

Many a night, when it was Carew's watch on deck, Baptiste employed himself in rummaging the drawers and lockers of the saloon. For a long time he discovered nothing to his purpose; but he was patient and minute in his investigations, and at last he got on the right scent in the following wise.

He found that the handwriting in the ship's log-book and on the agreements which the captain had drawn out for his crew was not in the least like that in the diary and in the cheque-book, in which entries had been inscribed at a date prior to the yacht's departure from Rotterdam. Thus it seemed highly probable to Baptiste that his captain was not the Mr. Allen whom he pro-

fessed to be, and whose name was on the ship's papers.

If not Mr. Allen, then, who was he?

Baptiste searched diligently night after night without finding any clue to this; but at last one of those slight circumstances which seem to be arranged by Providence to expose the crimes of the most clever and cautious villains, led the persevering Frenchman to the knowledge he was seeking.

Baptiste was not a good English scholar; but he proceeded with infinite labour little by little to decipher Allen's diary. A few days before reaching Rio he came to the last page but one, and here he read the following entry: "Wrote Carew, asking him to come with me to Holland." On the next page, under the date of August the 8th, was the final entry: "Sail for Holland with Carew."

"It is just possible," said Baptiste to himself, "that this mysterious captain of mine is Mr. Carew. I have no reason to suppose that he is so, but the point is worth testing."

The mate applied the test in the manner that has been described, when, on entering Rio, he casually remarked that he had sailed into that harbour before under an English captain called Carew.

His employer's sudden start and evident perturbation on hearing this name mentioned convinced Baptiste that he had hit the right nail on

the head. The deduction from what he had discovered was natural enough. "If this is Carew," he reasoned, "he must have stolen Allen's yacht. He has in all probability committed other crimes; but this is enough for my purpose. I may be altogether wrong in my conjectures, but I think not. I will tax him boldly with this. If I have guessed his secret, I have the game in my own hands. If I prove to have been on the wrong scent, I shall have made an idiot of myself, but no great harm will have been done."

So with a matchless effrontery the Frenchman opened his game under the shade of the great palm trees with the success that has been seen.

Having smoked several cigarettes with an expression of great enjoyment, without speaking, Baptiste turned to Carew and said—

"You are looking pale, *mon capitaine.* It is dangerous to walk about on an empty stomach in this climate; the fever fiend is ever watching his opportunity. Come with me. I will take you to a tavern I know of,—rough, but cheap and good,—and we will have something to eat. It is hours after our usual dinner-time. Afterwards I will expound to you the excellent scheme that is in my head—a scheme that will make us all rich men."

Carew had by this time recovered his power for cool and rapid thought. He had been in vain cudgelling his brain to explain to himself

in what possible way the mate had contrived to discover his secret.

"Baptiste," he said firmly, "before moving from here, I wish you to clearly understand that you are not going to be my master because you happen to know something about my affairs; so put aside at once that insolent and familiar manner. If you presume too much on your knowledge and make me desperate, it will be the worse for you. Now tell me how have you acquired this knowledge?"

The mate replied in his old respectful tones. "I know you too well to seek to be your master. But I would rather not answer your question at present, captain. I promise you, when you have helped me to carry out my plan, that I will tell you everything."

"Does anyone else know as much as yourself concerning me?"

"Not a single individual. Have no fears on that score. No one suspects that you are other than you represent yourself to be. You are as secure from discovery as you were before I happened to learn the truth. I alone know what you are, and the price of my silence is a mere bagatelle. All I ask is that you benefit yourself and me by casting away from you some of your foolish scruples. Where is the logic of going so far and no farther? You have committed great crimes for a trifle. A large fortune is now within your grasp; but

one little sin more, and you will be rich. Then you can afford to be virtuous for the rest of your life. You can endow churches; you can obtain absolution; you can—but I forget; you are a Protestant, and so must patch your soul up in your own way."

Carew shuddered, not in fear of the man before him, but at the thought of the relentless fate that was pursuing him. It seemed to him that this unscrupulous villain was the instrument of an offended Heaven, sent to hasten his destruction. It was vain for him to strive after repentance.

A wild despair, a feeling of angry revolt against the powers of good, possessed him. What did it matter now? the man argued, in his reckless mood. Destiny drove him to crime. Why resist in agony? Whatever new wickedness he should have to do, not his the fault, but that of this pitiless and unjust Fate.

"Baptiste, what is this plan that you propose?" he asked.

"Let us dine before we talk business," replied the mate, rolling himself another cigarette. "I am as thirsty as an Englishman and as hungry as a German."

They entered a tram and drove back towards the city; but while they were yet in the suburbs, Baptiste made a sign to Carew to descend, and they walked, the mate leading the way, down a narrow street of negro shanties, each surrounded by its little provision ground of bananas, yams,

and cassava. Then they came to a very rough and disreputable neighbourhood, abounding in low grog shops, in which European sailors were courting Yellow Jack, by drinking poisonous rum. They reached a street which skirted the shores of the bay; and here, on the very edge of the water, there stood a stone house by itself.

"That is the tavern I spoke of," said the mate. Then assuming his usual bantering tone, "It is a queer place. It will interest you, as an English milord travelling for his pleasure and instruction, to observe the humours of the place. It is the resort of the greatest villains of Rio—robbers, smugglers, and the like. The result is that it is an exceedingly quiet and respectable house. They dare not have rows in there; no drunkenness or thieving or kniving is allowed on those premises. Men frequent this café when bent on business, not on pleasure."

The interior of the house did not seem to be used for purposes of entertainment, for all the customers were congregated in a large arbour that lay against one side of the building, and faced the sea.

They entered this arbour, and sat down at one of the bare deal tables, and the mate, calling one of the waiters, a very evil-looking mulatto with one eye, selected some of the dishes out of the bill of fare.

The sun was setting, and the darkness came on with the suddenness of tropical latitudes. Two negroes proceeded to light a number of Venetian lanterns that festooned the café, and Carew, while he waited for his dinner, gazed with amazement at the scene before him.

A number of men were sitting at the tables, eating, drinking, and smoking. There were negroes, whites, and mulattos. They appeared to be of many nationalities. It would be almost impossible to see elsewhere a collection of more villainous faces. They sat for the most part in silence, as if avoiding each other's companionship; but at some of the tables were small groups, and here conversations were carried on in a low voice. There were no smiles to be seen; there was no noise; there were no signs of hilarity in all this assemblage. An atmosphere of gloom and fear seemed to pervade the place. Occasionally one of these taciturn beings would glance suspiciously at the table where Carew and the mate were sitting. Guilt, dread, and hopelessness could be read on many a face. It might have been a supper of lost souls in the shades of Hades, but then — and it was this that, by its mocking contrast, lent a strange horror to the scene, as if it were some fantastic and dreadful nightmare—the melancholy feast was taking place in a very paradise.

The arbour was supported by lofty palms, and the sides of it were formed of a network of

the most beautiful creepers, heavy with sweet blossoms and luscious fruits. The glittering sands of the seashore formed the floor. Through the roof of feathery palm leaves the innumerable and brilliant stars of the Southern Hemisphere could be seen glowing out of the depths of night. A number of small tame birds of lovely red and yellow plumage fluttered about the arbour, and alighted on the tables in search of food. Glow-worms and fireflies gleamed like diamonds among the foliage, and outside was heard the splashing of the tiny waves and the shrill cry of the cicala. The lavish tropical nature had made of this a fit palace for a fairy queen, and lo, it was a thieves' kitchen!

CHAPTER X

HAVING dined off some very greasy dishes served up with cassava or lentils, and seasoned with hot peppers in the Brazilian fashion, Carew and the mate lit their pipes, and the one-eyed negro brought them cups of black coffee and glasses of white native rum. The table at which they sat was at some distance from any other, so all risk of their conversation being overheard was obviated.

"All these men are thieves, you say?" said Carew, looking round at the strange assembly, on whose faces the Venetian lanterns cast a ruddy glow.

"Yes, thieves and murderers, all of them," replied the mate, "but well-behaved, quiet folk, as you see. One is safer here than in some of the flash cafés in the main streets of Rio."

"They carry their characters on their faces. I only see one in the whole crowd whom I would not instinctively distrust. Who is that tall, handsome old man with the long white hair and beard?"

"That is our worthy host," said Baptiste. "He looks like a mild, mediæval saint, but there is much blood on his hands. I must introduce him to you, for he is a celebrated character in his way."

Baptiste caught the old man's eye, and beckoned to him to approach the table.

"Good-evening to you, Father Luigi. I think you understand French?"

The old man nodded an assent.

"I don't suppose you remember me? I have not been here for a very long time."

"I never forget a face that I have seen in my café," replied the host in French, with a strong Italian accent.

"This, Luigi, is my present captain, an English milord, travelling in his yacht; and this, captain, is the once well-known Roman brigand, Luigi Querini. Oh, an awful cut-throat in his time, I assure you."

Querini shook his head sadly. "But not so now, signor. I am getting old. Heigh-ho, but those were grand days we had in the Abruzzi Mountains before Victor Emmanuel's gendarmerie spoilt Italy."

"Sit down and have a glass with us, Luigi," said the mate. "*Salud y pesetas*—health and dollars to you; that's an old River Plate toast. Luigi knows Buenos Ayres well, captain. He'll tell us all about it."

"Yes, I know it too well," said the old man.

"I was a soldier of the Argentine Republic, and lived on mare's flesh on the Indian frontier for four years."

"What made you do that?" asked Carew.

"I see you are a stranger to South America, sir. Understand, I was not a volunteer. I had a misfortune, and therefore was pressed into the army for punishment."

"To have a misfortune is a Pampas euphemism for having murdered a man," explained the mate.

"There is, as you know, no capital punishment in the River Plate," continued the Italian; "if a man kills another the penalty is so many years' service in the army."

"What a respectable army it must be," remarked Carew.

"It is so," said Baptiste. "They are wise people, those Argentines. If a man is addicted to homicide for his private ends, they turn him into a wholesale homicide for the public good. That may be called the homœopathic treatment of murder; like curing like."

Carew laughed boisterously at the mate's witticism, and the silent men at the tables round, hating the sound of merriment, turned their faces towards him and scowled savagely.

A species of intoxication had come to Carew. The strange sights and strong emotions of the day, the grotesque contrast presented by this

lovely bower of pure blossoms and the foul and evil men who sat beneath it, confused his brain. His surroundings seemed so fantastically inconsistent—so unreal—that he felt as if he were some irresponsible being in a land of dreams, that it mattered not what he did. He was filled with a reckless joviality.

The mate had been watching him with his keen eyes. He knew what this exaltation of spirits indicated, and divined that the moment was opportune for the mooting of his diabolical scheme. In the present condition of his mental faculties, the captain's obstructive conscience would be partly paralysed, and he would be able to listen to the mate's proposals without overmuch shrinking horror. So the shrewd Frenchman, losing no more time, hinted to the host that his presence at the table was no longer needed, and Querini took himself off to hobnob with another acquaintance.

Baptiste then stretched out his legs and said—

"This is very comfortable after having been cramped up so long on board that little boat of yours; but I hope, sir, to see you captain of a much larger vessel in a week or so at the latest."

"So we are coming to your wonderful scheme. Let me hear all about it."

"You remember, sir, that as we sailed into the bay this morning I pointed out a small

barque to El Toro, and remarked how much she resembled the old *Vrouw Elisa.*"

"I remember your words perfectly. You betrayed yourself."

"Intentionally, captain. We understand each other now; there are no secrets between us. Away with hypocrisy! Of course El Toro, El Chico, and myself formed part of the crew of the *Vrouw Elisa.* But it is unnecessary to recount to you our adventures on board that vessel."

"They do not interest me."

"I don't think you'd care to hear them," said Baptiste, showing his white teeth with a grim smile. "Well, to proceed. When you were at the consul's this morning, I entered a little drinking shop on the Mole, and there I overheard some sailors speaking about their vessel, which I soon made out to be the barque lying near us under Villegagnon, the one like the *Vrouw Elisa.* Said one man to the other in French—

"'I suppose she's got the most valuable cargo on board of any vessel in Rio.'

"I pricked up my ears on hearing this.

"'She'd be a fine prize for a pirate,' replied the other man.

"'If there were pirates nowadays,' said the first.

"Feeling interested, I made inquiries about this vessel — Waiter, stand off another few

yards. I am talking over some private business with this gentleman."

The negro, not unused to such commands, promptly removed himself.

"I discovered that the barque comes from a little harbour down the coast, near Santa Catharina. It seems that some prospectors have discovered gold in the neighbouring mountains. The quartz is exceptionally rich; the cost of importing the necessary machinery would be great. They are consequently shipping a large quantity of this quartz to Europe to be crushed. That barque, sailing under the French flag, is bound for Swansea with a cargo of this: no ordinary auriferous quartz, let me tell you, but containing a hitherto unexampled percentage of gold. She has put in here for some slight repairs, and will sail in two days. The barque is a new vessel, and is worth a lot of money; but the value of the cargo is enormous. Now, my little plan is that we four, the crew of the *Petrel*, seize this vessel and make our fortunes."

Carew laughed scornfully. "Idiot!" he said; "is this your precious scheme? I took you for too clever a man to talk such nonsense. Even if we did succeed in seizing this vessel, what could we do with her? In what port could we dispose of her cargo? Piracy is impossible in these days. Don't you know that?"

"Who talked of piracy? Surely, captain,

you know me by this time. Am I not a coward? Am I one to commit a risky crime? I would break no law unless I felt that I was absolutely secure from detection; and when I do feel that, upon my soul, I don't know what villainy I would shrink from; for, as for conscience—bah! I have none. Now please follow the outlines of my scheme. I will leave it to your ingenuity to fill up the details."

Carew, in his present mood, felt a reluctant admiration for the cool and cynical ruffian before him.

"Piracy, in the ordinary sense of the term, is of course out of date," continued the mate, as he sipped his fiery rum; "but the intelligent man adapts his method to the age he lives in. I will now tell you a little story. An English yacht, manned by four worthy fellows, sails out of Rio one fine day. In the night, when she is some leagues from the land, a dreadful accident of some kind happens—say she runs into a large fragment of wreckage, and staves herself in. Anyhow, she founders. Happily, her crew have time to lower the boat, and getting into it they pull away, weeping to behold the vessel, that has been their home for so long, go down. But they feel happier and dry their eyes when their brave captain tells them that the yacht is well insured. Providence assists them, for at daybreak they sight a French barque. They signal to her,

are seen, are soon taken on board, and the barque resumes her voyage to Europe. After some days our four shipwrecked mariners, who have been watching their opportunity, and who are well armed, surprise the crew, take possession of the vessel, sail her into the nearest port, and claim salvage for the derelict which they have had the luck to pick up; and their lives for the future are happy, wealthy, and respectable. Do you follow my story, captain? Hi! waiter, bring us some more rum and some Bahia cigars."

Carew sat quite motionless for some time, looking downwards, so that Baptiste could not see the expression of his face. The black brought the rum to the table and went away again. Then Carew raised his head. "I follow your story," he said, in a low, husky voice; "but you did not mention what became of the crew of the barque."

"Ah, yes! What did become of them?" exclaimed the mate in an airy way. "I forget. They were lost somehow, I imagine — were disposed of in some convenient fashion — who knows? But that is a detail."

Carew's face had turned fearfully white. "Thou devil!" he cried passionately, between his set teeth. "Not that — not that! Speak no more of this. It is impossible."

"Understand me, captain," said the mate, abandoning his bantering tone for one of

serious determination. "You are not going to have everything your own way. I must have money, and plenty of it. El Chico and El Toro must have money. Join us in carrying out this scheme, and we will share the spoil between the four of us. If you don't agree to this, I will expose you at once, Mr. Carew, and you will know what a nasty hole a Brazilian prison is. I am sorry to use this language, but business is business, captain."

Carew looked down again, and Baptiste, furtively watching him, saw that his mouth was twitching and the perspiration breaking out on his forehead.

The wretched man endeavoured to think his way out of the terrible dilemma before him. He had to choose between the commission of a crime more atrocious than any he had ever conceived, and a disgrace and punishment infinitely worse than death. He tried to realise his position, but his brain seemed numbed. The two alternatives kept crossing and recrossing his mind in rapid succession. He was conscious of them, but he could not reason upon them. He was incapable of consecutive thought for the time.

Suddenly a discordant brass band in a low dancing saloon hard by burst out into a triumphant march, as a prelude to the night's riot of drunken sailors. It was a fragment of some French opera-bouffe, suggestive of

feverish joy heedless of the morrow, of mad and reckless orgie. The sound was in accord with the man's distracted state. It at once awoke his mind from its lethargy. A wild and fierce impulse rushed upon him. Blindly he abandoned himself to what he considered to be his destiny, and a tempter seemed to whisper to him, "Trust to your luck. See how luck has been with you so far. Fortune will certainly find some way of relieving you of the crew of the barque, so that it will not be necessary for you to have their blood on your head. Arthur Allen stood in your path. He was removed from it; yet you were not his murderer. So will it be now. Trust to chance."

Then Carew looked up. His features were calm and rigid, but had a ghastly expression. He opened his mouth as if to speak, but appeared to be unable to articulate. He poured himself out a quantity of the white rum into a glass and swallowed it. "And the other two men?" he whispered hoarsely.

Baptiste understood his meaning. "El Chico and El Toro can be relied upon for this business. I know them," he said.

The eyes of the two men met. There was a long pause. Then Carew muttered the two words—

"I consent!"

CHAPTER XI

CAREW and the mate left the café, traversed the brilliantly lighted city, and returned to the yacht. At an early hour on the following morning, Carew, too restless to sleep, came on deck. The sky was cloudless and the rising sun illumined the romantic scenery of the bay. A cool breeze blew seaward from the wooded mountains, odorous of spices and tropical blossoms. The sight of a world so glad and fair, so fresh and ever-young, might well make the saddest soul feel the joy of mere existence and look to life as a treasure worth the possessing.

A few months before this Carew had contemplated suicide—had regarded death as a welcome deliverance from his troubles. Now it was otherwise; he set a value on his life. The causes of this change were commonplace enough, as are most of the motives that decide the momentous crises of a man's history. A healthy life in the open air at sea tends to develop the instinct of self-preservation and banishes morbid meditations. Again, the

longer one has been contesting some keen game of chance and skill, the more anxious one is to come off the victor. This man had been playing a clever and desperate game for freedom—which for him meant life—ever since he had left England. Fortune had favoured him so long that he would not abandon hope and acknowledge defeat now. The ultimate victory had become so dear to him that he was not likely to be very squeamish as to the means he should employ to obtain it.

So Carew had hardened his heart, or rather, having resolved on a course of action, he closed the avenues of his mind to certain unpleasant thoughts on the future. Not being as unscrupulous as his French associate, he found it necessary to employ an immense amount of self-deception. He allowed himself to drift, as it were, from one crime to another, trying to believe that his fate was compelling him; but he carefully avoided looking beyond the immediate present. He would not think of the far greater iniquities to which he was committing himself by the action he was now taking. He wilfully closed his eyes, and let the morrow take care of itself.

When Baptiste joined the captain on deck he was exceedingly surprised to find him in a cheerful mood, and anxious to arrange as quickly as possible the plan for the seizure of the barque. Carew found a relief in the active

employment of his brain, and he now exhibited considerable ingenuity. He described his views in detail to the mate, who looked with wonder at this inconsistent Englishman, whose complex nature he felt that he was very far from understanding. With all his vacillation, when Carew had made up his mind one way or the other, he acted promptly and with energy.

"Baptiste," he said, "in the first place, we ought to be armed. We all have knives, but there is only one revolver on board. I want you to take my watch and chain on shore, pawn or sell them, and buy three revolvers and some ammunition. You can take charge of your weapon at once, but I will keep those of the two men until the time comes."

"That is right," said the mate; "those children are not to be trusted with firearms. The first time they played at *monte* they would be scattering each other's brains over the cards. I know a slop shop where there are generally some good six-shooters on sale. I will barter your watch there."

"Also ascertain the hour of the barque's departure," said Carew. "This is what I suggest. You know that the south-east trade wind does not blow home on this coast, but is deflected and becomes a north-east wind. In consequence of this, all vessels bound for Europe from Rio are obliged to take a long board of several hundreds of miles to the east-

ward before they fall in with the true trade wind, and go about on the other tack. Thus we know the exact course the barque will take. She will sail away close-hauled on the port-tack. We will put to sea six hours before her, and await her some ten leagues from the land. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly. I see you know what you are about, sir."

"Now call the crew aft," said Carew, "and let us learn at once what they think of our proposal."

Baptiste raised the hatch of the forecastle and roused the men. They quickly tumbled on deck.

"I am sorry to say, comrades, that you can't go on shore here," said the mate in Spanish.

They swore and grumbled in sonorous Castilian phrases that had best be left untranslated.

"Now no insubordination," continued Baptiste; "the captain would not deprive you of a day's holiday after so long a voyage unless he had urgent reasons for doing so."

"Reasons indeed!" muttered El Toro. "He who wants reasons can always find them."

"Silence, you old calf! Listen! We shall most probably sail to-day, for there is a treasure waiting for us outside."

El Chico pricked up his ears. "What! another *Vrouw Elisa*?" he asked.

"Something of the sort; but this is a safer

scheme. Our necks will not be in danger this time."

"That's well for you, Baptiste," exclaimed El Toro, with his brutal laugh; "for your neck must be the most precious on this ship if we may judge from the value you set on it. Ha! ha! I never shall forget your white face and your starting eyes in that Dutch law court."

"My neck supports a head of brains and not a pig's head like thine, with only three ideas in it—rum, grub, and tobacco," retorted the mate. "But no more nonsense; listen to me, men."

Then he briefly disclosed the plan.

"Bravo!" grunted El Toro. "That sounds a likely bit of business. I will go and sharpen my knife at once. And so our English milord is a game-cock, after all, like the rest of us."

"He is worth fifty of you," said Baptiste. "He has the clever brains that can devise; and he is braver than you, El Toro."

"I acknowledge him to be my superior, even in courage. I have not forgotten how he defied the devil himself in the *terremoto*," replied the Basque.

Baptiste turned to Carew, and proceeded to speak in French. "The lads are ready to follow you anywhere, sir."

"They did not seem at all surprised, and received your communication in a very matter-of-fact way," said Carew.

"They are accustomed to strange jobs of this kind. But I don't think they quite realise what a vast sum we are going to make. Idiots! It would be a pity to give them too much. We must settle later on, captain, how to divide the spoil."

"Last night you said that it should be divided equally among us."

"I spoke hastily. I don't think so now. You and I appreciate money and know how to use it. These pigs would squander it. We will give them just enough to keep their mouths shut. You and I will divide the bulk. If we fill their hands with bright gold pieces, the ignorant wretches will imagine that they have got an inexhaustible fortune, and they will go away perfectly satisfied. I know the animals."

The mate, taking Carew's watch and chain with him, rowed on shore in the dinghy, and returned in an hour with three revolvers, some cartridges, and a quantity of plantains, yams, and other vegetables.

He leapt on deck. "Captain," he cried, "there is not much time to be lost. I have learnt that *La Bonne Esperance*—that is the barque's name—will sail without fail this evening as soon as the land breeze springs up."

"Then we will get under way immediately after breakfast," said Carew; "for the wind seems to be light outside, and we shall not travel fast."

The land breeze, which blows all night at Rio and refreshes the heated atmosphere, died away before the necessary preparations had been made on the yacht, and the usual calm succeeded it. So Carew had to remain at anchor until midday, when the sea breeze, that prevails throughout the hottest hours of the day, sprang up; and all sail being hoisted, the *Petrel* tacked out of the bay.

The yacht sailed out to sea, close-hauled on the port-tack; but the wind was very light, and she did not make more than two knots an hour.

At sunset the land was still in sight, and Carew took cross-bearings, so as to ascertain his exact position. Throughout the night the navigation of the yacht was conducted with unusual care. The helmsman steered "full and by" with as much nicety as if he had been sailing a race.

Every few minutes the officer of the watch looked at the compass, in order to detect the slightest change in the direction of the wind. Without these precautions it would have been impossible on the morrow to calculate with sufficient precision the track of the following barque.

At daybreak Carew made out that he was about forty miles from the land. "We have gone far enough, Baptiste," he said. "The next thing is to calculate how much nearer this

yacht sails to the wind than a clumsy, square-rigged vessel like *La Bonne Esperance*."

"Our steering has been so good," replied the mate, "that we must have been sailing at least a point and a half closer than the barque."

"About that, I should say. We will run down to leeward some ten miles, and then, I think, we shall be lying right across her track."

The sheets were eased off, and the vessel was steered at right angles to her former course. As the wind was stronger, she covered the ten miles in less than two hours. Then Carew gave the order to heave-to.

While the yacht, her jib to windward, rose and fell on the ocean swell without making any progress, everything was got ready for the carrying out of their design. The dinghy was lowered; the men placed in it their baggage and some of the more portable valuables belonging to the yacht. Carew put into the sternsheets a portmanteau containing, among other things, the ship's papers, Allen's diary and cheque-book, the revolvers, and the drugs which he had purchased in Rotterdam.

Carew himself undertook to scuttle the yacht. He cut away a portion of the panelling in the main cabin; then, having bored a large hole with an auger through the vessel's skin, he stopped it with a wooden plug. To this plug he attached a piece of strong cord, which he led up on deck through the skylight.

The men stood by watching him.

"You see, Baptiste," he explained, "I have but to pull this cord, out comes the plug, and the vessel fills and sinks."

"That is all very well so far," replied the mate; "but suppose you have pulled out your plug, and your vessel is three parts full, and the barque won't stop to pick us up,—anything is possible at sea; such inhumanity among sailors is not unknown,—what will you do then? How are you to get at that hole again to stop any more water coming in? A wise general secures his retreat, captain."

"I have thought of all that, Baptiste," said Carew; "you have not seen half my arrangements yet. Follow me into the after-cabin."

Baptiste obeyed.

"Now take up the flooring," continued the captain.

When the boards were raised a long piece of lead piping was disclosed, which was connected with the end of one of the ship's two pumps.

"Cut that piping off as close as you can to the pump, and bring it on deck."

This was done; then Carew, to the astonishment of his crew, proceeded to bend the piping until it assumed the form of a lengthened U. Putting a bung into one end of it he poured water into it from the other end until it was full. Dipping the open end into the sea, he passed the other arm through one of the

ports, so that it depended into the cabin below the level of the water-line.

"Hah! I see now; it is a syphon," exclaimed Baptiste.

"Exactly so. Now follow my plan. As soon as we sight the barque, I take the bung out of the inner arm of the syphon and allow the sea to pour in, until I bring the yacht down as near the water's edge as I safely can. Then I haul my syphon on board again and so stop the flow. We hoist signals of distress. If *La Bonne Esperance* won't pay any attention to us and sails by, all we have to do is to pump the water out of the yacht, and try our luck elsewhere. If the barque replies to our signals, and there can be no doubt about her intention to pick us up, I pull this cord, out comes the plug, in rushes the sea again, we jump into the dinghy, and as we are rowing off to the French vessel the old *Petrel* goes down. What do you think of that, Baptiste?"

"Excellent—excellent!" exclaimed the mate.

"And to avoid all chance of a hitch," continued Carew, who was interested in his work, "I am going to scuttle the yacht in another place, and lead another cord from the second plug on to the deck. Thus we will be doubly certain; for one plug may get jammed and refuse to come out, or a fish may get sucked into the hole and choke it. I have heard of such things happening."

"You are a very clever man, captain. When you do start on a job you carry it out in a thorough manner. With your pluck and ingenuity you'd make a splendid pirate, were it not for your unfortunate scruples;" and the mate sighed regretfully when he thought of the useful talents wasted on this Englishman.

At midday Carew took the latitude, and found that he had not misjudged his position. As the wind had not varied a quarter of a point since the yacht had sailed from Rio, it was almost certain that the barque would pass within a mile or so.

El Chico, who had the keenest eyes of any on board, had been sent aloft to keep a good lookout for vessels. He sat on the crosstrees, and in the course of the day reported several craft, but none answered to the description of the French barque.

Much as Carew had shrunk from the enterprise, he was now carried away by the excitement of the chase; and as the hours went by he became acutely anxious. He feared that he had sailed too far out to sea, and that the barque would pass him unobserved in the night.

They waited in silence, staring eagerly across the expanse of glaring water.

At last, at three o'clock in the afternoon, El Chico called out—

"There is a barque yonder that looks something like her."

"Where away?" said Baptiste.

"She's coming up close-hauled on the port-tack."

"Has she brown topsides and some bright green about her figure-head?"

"I can't make any colour out yet."

Then the mate went aloft with the binocular. After some minutes he scrambled down the rigging again. "Hurrah!" he cried, with a triumphant glitter in his eyes. "We have her safe! That is *La Belle Esperance*!"

"If we run a mile more to leeward we'll be right in her track," shouted El Chico from aloft.

All was now bustle on board the yacht. Letting the foresheet draw, they ran before the wind for about a quarter of an hour; then, heaving-to again, the cork was taken out of the syphon, and the yacht began to fill gradually. The barque was still more than three miles off, so there was ample time to prepare everything.

"Now for the signals of distress," cried Carew; "bring up the flags."

The two flags of the international code—N and B—were hoisted to the gaff end, which indicate that a vessel is in need of assistance.

"They won't be able to see that for some time yet," said Baptiste. "Your signal flags are too small."

"Then rig up the long-distance signal," cried Carew. "It is a square flag at the masthead with something like a ball beneath it. Hoist the

large ensign, and fasten the life-buoy to the mast; that will look like a ball."

The barque was now heading straight for the yacht. When she was about a mile off Carew loaded the small brass signal gun and fired it.

About a minute afterwards a wreath of smoke was seen to issue from the barque's side. Then the report of a gun was heard.

"We are safe now. They will pick us up," said Carew. "Hallo, there! Inboard with that syphon at once, or the yacht will go down under our feet."

The men had been watching the approaching barque so intently that they had not observed how low in the water their own vessel now was. The cabin was three parts full, and all the movable articles in it were afloat. The syphon was brought on board, and they waited yet a little longer before taking the final step; for the wind had fallen light again, and the barque was making but slow progress towards them.

"Up goes some bunting yonder," said El Chico.

Carew looked through the telescope, and saw that the vessel had hoisted the signal H F, which signifies, "We are coming to your assistance."

"Now, then, all hands tumble into the dinghy," said Carew, as, seizing the cords, he pulled both plugs out of the yacht's side. "Good-bye, old *Petrel*!" he cried, leaping into the boat after his men. "Now, pull away, lads."

Carew's experience in scuttling vessels was naturally limited, so he had miscalculated the rapidity with which an already water-logged craft will go down if two large auger-holes are opened in her sides.

The men had not pulled a couple of strokes before the yacht's bow rose suddenly, her stern dipped, and she sank with a gurgling sound. So near was the dinghy that she narrowly escaped being sucked into the vortex.

They rested on their oars and gazed silently at the spot where the smart little yawl that had been their home for so long had floated but a moment before. Then, as the water smoothed over her grave, they looked over the side of the dinghy and beheld a strange sight. With all her white sails set and her flags still flying, the *Petrel* went slowly down, with a gentle, oscillating movement, into the depths of that marvellously pellucid sea. Two sharks accompanied her, swimming round and round her; one thrust his evil snout for a moment into the cabin hatchway, as if to see if there were men below. Lower and lower the yacht descended into depths where the sharks could not support the increasing pressure of the water, so, deserting her, swam upwards; still lower, till she appeared no larger than a toy boat, and they could still distinguish her; still lower, and at last she disappeared into the blackness of the still, under ocean.

CHAPTER XII

CAREW gazed silently downwards into the clear, dark sea for some moments after the yacht had sunk entirely out of sight; then, raising his head, he looked towards the barque, and saw that she was lying hove-to, with her mainyard laid aback, about a quarter of a mile distant.

"Pull away, lads," he said. "Let us get on board the Frenchman, and don't forget that we ran into a bit of wreckage last night and so sprang a leak. Say as little more as you can help, and don't give conflicting accounts of our accident."

They soon came alongside the vessel, and clambered on to her deck by a rope's end that was lowered to them. The captain of the barque gave the order to sling the dinghy on deck and square away again.

This being done, he turned to Carew and said in French, "I am very happy, sir, that I was so near at hand when your vessel sank. She went down very suddenly. Pray what was the cause?"

Carew gave the very probable explanation of the mishap which had been decided on.

"You must have run into that bit of wreckage with considerable force," said the captain. "What was it—a large spar?"

"Something of the sort, I imagine," replied Carew; "but we could see nothing. It must have been floating just below the level of the water."

"It is a lucky thing for you that this happened so near to the Brazilian coast and in the track of shipping, instead of in the middle of the Atlantic. You should have under-girded the vessel when you found that she had sprung so serious a leak."

"So we did," broke in Baptiste. "We got a jib under her bows. But it was no good. She was strained along her whole bilge. I wonder she did not fall to pieces."

"Let me introduce myself to you," said Carew. "My name is Allen. I was the owner of the unfortunate little yacht which is now so far below us. I think I recognise your vessel. Were you not lying near us under Villegagnon?"

"That is quite right, sir, and I recognised your yacht as soon as I saw your signal of distress. My name is Captain Mourez, and this is the French barque *La Bonne Esperance*, bound for Swansea. And now, sir, what would you like me to do with you and your crew? I see smoke ahead, which should come from some steamer bound for Rio. Shall I signal her and

put you on board, or do you feel inclined to come on with us to Swansea?"

Carew did not look in the captain's face, and his voice shook as he replied, "I should esteem it a great favour, Captain Mourez, if you would allow us to be your passengers as far as Swansea. I will of course repay you for this when we reach England."

"Say nothing about that at present," replied the captain proudly. "You can do what you think proper when you reach port. A French sailor is always glad to assist other sailors in distress without the inducement of a reward for doing so."

The boastful speech of the patriotic captain stated no more than the truth. French sailors rarely hesitate to risk their lives at sea in going to the rescue of their fellow-men; in this respect differing considerably from the mariners of some other European nations, who have acquired an unenviable notoriety for a selfish indifference to the sufferings of others.

The captain looked from Carew to Baptiste. He could distinguish from the latter's accent and appearance that he was no common sailor. "This gentleman is your friend, I suppose?" he said.

"My friend, and the mate of the yacht," replied Carew. "I was my own captain."

"I see that you are a genuine English yachtsman. But surely this is a French gentleman?"

"No, Captain Mourez," broke in Baptiste quickly; "I am an English subject, but I am a Creole of the Mauritius, and of French origin. Permit me to introduce myself. My name is Baptiste Fortier."

"Very well," said the captain. "We can find room for your two men in the forecastle. You, Mr. Allen and Mr. Fortier, will occupy cabins aft. We have plenty to spare. Come below and I will show you round."

They entered the saloon—a spacious one for a vessel of her size. There were four cabins on each side of it. Only two of these were occupied; one by the captain and another by his mate. Two others were now placed at the disposal of Carew and Baptiste.

The captain made his two guests sit down with him at the saloon table, and produced a bottle of Bordeaux for their refreshment. The mate of *La Belle Esperance* soon came below and joined the party. Though no drunkard, he was never far away when there was a drawing of corks. His name was Duval; he was a wiry, red-headed Norman, somewhat hot-tempered, but very garrulous and merry. Captain Mourez was a tall, handsome man, with black hair and beard, a Breton by birth, taciturn as a rule, but very courteous in his manners.

While these four were sitting in the saloon talking over the wreck of the *Petrel*, there was suddenly heard the sound of something falling

heavily on the deck just overhead; then a cry and a scuffling of many feet.

Duval hurried on deck to learn what the noise signified. Shortly afterwards he returned again. "It is that imbecile young apprentice, Hallé, again. What an awkward cub it is! He has fallen from the mizzen rigging this time; not from a great height, luckily. He has not hurt himself seriously, but he seems rather sick and dizzy."

The crew of the *Petrel* were soon at home on their new vessel. El Toro and El Chico were made much of by the kindly Frenchmen in the forecastle. As luck would have it, none of the crew of the barque understood Spanish; so the two Spaniards, who knew no French, had not to reply to questions as to the details of the yacht's misadventure. El Toro especially, whose dense head was entirely devoid of imagination, would have been certain to come to grief in attempting to lie in an ingenious and consistent manner.

In the afternoon the loquacious Norman mate insisted on taking Carew and Baptiste all over the vessel and showing them everything. He was gratified by the keen interest the two passengers seemed to take in his explanation. They listened attentively to all he said, for reasons of their own. They learnt that the vessel's company, officers included, numbered seventeen souls; that there was no second

mate, but that the boatswain took the port watch and lived with the carpenter in the small deck-house.

Duval also took them into the forecastle, where some of the watch off duty were sleeping at the time. Among them was the young apprentice who had fallen from the rigging. He was tossing about restlessly in his bunk, and his face was very flushed.

Baptiste as he passed by glanced casually at him, then scanned his face earnestly for some time. "Come out of this," he said to Carew. "It is too hot down here. Let us go on deck."

That evening the wind freshened considerably, and the barque, with yards braced up, was making good way through the water. Carew, unable to sleep, came on deck shortly before midnight, and sat down in a dark, quiet corner to meditate. Now that the excitement of the preliminary preparations was over, he began to realise to the full what was before him; and an intense abhorrence of the crime he had undertaken once more oppressed his soul. He could not retreat now. He must be the cause of the death of all these innocent men, who had come to the rescue of his life. If he spared them he would be carried on to England to pay the penalty of his offences.

As he sat brooding thus miserably, a man walked towards him from the fore part of the ship. Carew saw the red glow of his cigarette

before he could distinguish the man in the darkness, and he knew that it was his evil genius.

"Baptiste, is that you?"

"Here I am, captain. A lovely night, is it not?"

"Sit down here," said Carew, "and speak to me. No one can overhear us here, I think."

"No; it will be all right if we do not raise our voices," replied Baptiste, looking round.

"How is this going to end?" whispered Carew.

"What do you mean, captain?"

"How are we four to seize a vessel with a crew of seventeen strong men on board?"

"Strong men, indeed!" replied the Frenchman. "They will be as weak as babies in a few days' time. By the way, I see that you did not omit to bring your medicine chest on board with you."

Carew shuddered. "Poison!" he whispered, in a terrified voice. "Do you mean that?"

"Why not, captain? It is a merciful and painless death if the right stuff is used."

Carew said nothing for some time. "Whatever is done must be done soon," he muttered.

"That is so, captain. This vessel must be ours while we are still in the trades and within a few days' run of a South American port. It will be difficult enough for four of us to work her, even in these calm waters. We must not

postpone action till we get into the region of rougher weather."

"Oh, that this dreadful thing were not necessary!" Carew groaned.

"Ah, sir, don't allow those fatal scruples of yours to torment you. If I had some of your courage, and you some of my philosophy, what a fine couple we should be! But as it is at present, I am the more useful man of the two, despite my physical cowardice. Believe me, Mr. Carew, the ancient was right who said that to know oneself is the secret of happiness. If a man has a conscience at all, it ought to be a stable one that does not vary. You have got a set of moral principles of a sort, but you have not the slightest idea of what they are. One day you will commit an action with a light heart; on the morrow your remorse will madden you. Such inconsistency means misery. Know thyself. If you will have a code of ethics, know it and stick to it, and be happy. But now that you have gone so far, I recommend you to abjure conscience and moral principles, and substitute for them my beautifully simple code of ethics, which is summed up in three words—fear of consequences."

"I wish, indeed, that I could do so, Baptiste."

"If you wish it, this satisfactory result will come in time. All changes in the moral sense are arrived at by wishing. *Experto crede*, as they taught me in the *lycée* at Nimes."

Neither spoke for some time; then Baptiste said—

"You were born under a lucky star, captain. I think that Providence has found a way of sparing your sensitive conscience. She will do most of the killing for you."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Carew.

"Hush! not so loud. You remember that a young man fell from the mizzen rigging while we were below drinking with the captain?"

"Yes."

"He is our unconscious ally. He will kill off a good many of his comrades for us. But I will not mystify you any longer. Why did he fall off the rigging—because he was awkward, as Duval said? Not a bit of it. He fell because he was dizzy. Why was he dizzy? Because he was ill. This afternoon, when I saw him first, I more than suspected that a fall could not account for all his symptoms. I have just examined him again. I know the signs well. He is in the first stage of *yellow fever*!"

"Yellow fever?"

"Yes, yellow fever has come to help us. The man has been very sick and is now delirious. The stupid captain has seen him, and puts it all down to his fall; says he must have injured his spine. How lucky for us was that fall! Led off the scent by it, the idiots will not suspect what is the matter with the man until the *vomito negro* declares itself. They

have not separated him from the rest. He is now lying in his bunk in the forecastle. All the watch below are sleeping round him. It is a small forecastle, and the crew, imagining that fresh air is bad for a sick man, have closed the ports. It is stifling down there at present. It is a pest-house. All those men are breathing in contagion. Do you know that it is the worst form of yellow fever that is now raging at Rio—very contagious, very fatal? If it breaks out in a vessel like this it will spread like wildfire. Man after man will fall sick and die."

"Ourselves included," said Carew recklessly.

"No, sir. We will take precautions in time. I have had the fever once, and am not likely to have it again. I have hinted the truth to El Chico and El Toro, and they have suddenly developed a hygienic craze for fresh air, and insist on sleeping on deck to-night, to the amazement of the French sailors. I would not like to insure the lives of the men who sleep in that forecastle; most of them are doomed by this time."

Carew felt his skin turn cold and tingle with horror as he listened to the Frenchman's cold-blooded exultation in the dreadful prospect.

"Good-night, captain. I am going to turn in now; and, by the way, let me advise you to keep on deck in the cool wind as much as possible, and smoke perpetually. Tobacco is a splendid disinfectant."

CHAPTER XIII

ON the day after the crew of the *Petrel* had been taken on board the barque the wind freshened and was so much to the south of east that the vessel was enabled to sail in a north-easterly direction, a course which would bring her to the vicinity of the Trinidad and Martin Vas Archipelago.

When Carew came on deck in the morning he found Baptiste there before him. The Provençal walked up to him jauntily, twirling his long black moustache, and looking jubilant. "I have seen young Hallé again," he said, in a low voice. "He is very bad. The symptoms are unmistakable; but no one suspects the truth so far. Two other men are complaining of headache."

"Let the accursed plague work its way," said Carew gloomily, "but tell me nothing about it."

"So be it, sir," said Baptiste, with a shrug of his shoulders.

The springing up of so favourable a wind put the captain of *La Bonne Esperance* in a

very contented frame of mind. In his delight he became more talkative than was his wont, and at frequent intervals during the day sought out Carew in order to converse with him.

Carew, for his part, did his utmost—without appearing churlish—to avoid the company of Captain Mourez; for he recognised him as being a kind-hearted and an honest man.

The captain observed his passenger's unsociable mood, and, attributing this to his sorrow at the loss of his yacht, endeavoured to cheer him with lively gossip, but produced the opposite result.

Nothing noteworthy occurred during the day; the wind held steady, and the vessel made good progress. At about ten o'clock that night, Carew was sitting alone in the saloon, killing thought by reading a French novel which the captain had lent him, when Mourez himself came in. His face bore a very anxious expression.

"Mr. Allen," he said, "I am seriously alarmed about that man Hallé. I fear that he has the fever."

"The yellow fever?" exclaimed Carew, not raising his eyes from his book.

"It seems so to me; but I have never seen a case of yellow fever. Do you mind coming with me to the forecastle and giving me your opinion?"

"I will do so with pleasure," replied Carew,

rising from his seat; "but my opinion is not worth much."

They entered the forecastle, which was dimly lighted by a small lantern. Hallé was lying on his bunk, keeping up a constant delirious chatter. The other men, instead of sleeping soundly through their watch below after the manner of sailors, were sitting together in a group at the corner of the forecastle farthest removed from the sick man, looking scared and talking to each other in subdued voices.

Carew stood by Hallé's bunk and looked at him. A change for the worse had recently come on. His face wore an expression of intense anxiety. His skin was wrinkled and of a dark yellow colour.

The captain made a sign to Carew, and they went on deck again. "I have never seen yellow fever," said the latter; "ask my mate, Baptiste Fortier, what he thinks about it; he has had the fever himself." Thus did this strange man trifle with his conscience as usual, and attempt to shift the responsibility for the next step in the tragedy on to his companion.

Baptiste was found, and was sent into the forecastle. It would be quite useless to lie about the facts now, so, returning to where Carew and Mourez were standing, he said, "It is yellow fever. I am sure of it."

On hearing this the captain began to pace up and down the deck in a state of great

agitation, wringing his hands. "Good heavens! this is a terrible affair," he cried. "For thirty hours Hallé has been spreading contagion in the forecastle. Who knows where this will end?"

Then Captain Mourez stood still, and after pondering a little while addressed Carew. "I must at once convert some portion of the vessel into a hospital. The forecastle is no longer a fit place for the healthy men, so we will give it up to the sick. Sir, we must pray for a fresh breeze to carry us quickly into northern latitudes, where the cold will kill the plague that has come to us."

At that moment the boatswain came on to the quarter-deck, and Mourez ordered him to call up the watch below.

The men reached the deck with unusual promptitude. They were summoned aft, and the captain in a few words explained to them how matters stood, and exhorted them to be courageous as French sailors should be. He ordered them to rig up a large awning forward, under which the crew were to live so long as the vessel was in warm latitudes. He also instructed the boatswain to ventilate the forecastle as thoroughly as was possible by means of wind-sails, so that a cool temperature might be obtained for the sick men.

On the following day two other men fell ill, and were admitted into the hospital In the

afternoon Hallé died, and his body was immediately lowered into the sea.

Before sunset the loom of land was visible over the ship's bows. It was the desert island of Trinidad, situated near latitude 20 deg. south, about six hundred miles from the coast of Brazil.

And now a most unfortunate calamity befell the pestilence-stricken vessel. The wind completely died away, and she lay motionless on a sea of oily smoothness for three whole days. The vertical sun blazed down upon her out of the cloudless sky, and the intense sultriness of the atmosphere lowered the energies of those who were still in good health, and predisposed them to contagion, while it hurried on the fatal termination of the fever for the sick. A gloom fell on the ship's company. The men looked into each other's faces with helpless terror, for what could be done against this invisible foe? One after another sickened, died, and was lowered over the side in shotted shroud. Baptiste and the two Spaniards, though they considered themselves acclimatised to the tropics, and almost proof against contagion, shared the prevailing sense of terror.

On the second day of the calm, the captain, who had doctored all the sick men to the best of his ability, was himself attacked by the fever.

Carew, who had some little knowledge of medicine, volunteered to take his place, and as

the mate gratefully complied with his request, employed all his time in attending upon the patients in the forecastle and the captain in his cabin.

On the third day of the calm the contagion seemed to have spent itself. No fresh cases were reported, and those who were lying sick became no worse.

Up to this date eight men out of the seventeen that composed the ship's company had died. Among these were the boatswain and the ship's cook. It was necessary to appoint some other man to take charge of the port watch; so the mate, after consulting with Carew, gave this post to Baptiste, as being the best educated man on board. The Provençal asked that the two Spaniards should be put upon his watch. El Chico, acting under Baptiste's orders, offered to undertake the duties of ship's cook.

On this morning, being the fifth since the *Petrel's* crew had been received on board, the mate came up to Baptiste and made some remarks to him which set the wily ruffian thinking. Duval had asked him whether he did not think the fever showed signs of abating.

"It is impossible to say yet," replied Baptiste. "Yellow fever always comes in waves; it subsides and intensifies alternately."

"You see, comrade," said Duval, "that even if we include you four, we are now very short

handed. If we lose a few more men, we cannot sail this barque to Europe. I have decided to run back to Rio as soon as a breeze springs up."

When the mate left him, Baptiste went in search of Carew, and found him in the captain's cabin, watching the sick man, who was now lying insensible in the last stage of the fever.

Baptiste looked into the pain-distorted face. "He will go soon," he whispered to Carew.

Carew nodded.

"That was a clever idea of yours, sir," said the Frenchman.

"What idea?"

"To constitute yourself ship's doctor."

Carew made no reply, but he understood what the remark signified. Baptiste, however, had misjudged him. With his usual inconsistency in crime, far from availing himself of his opportunities to poison the men, he had, on the contrary, risked his life and done his utmost to save the captain and the others under his charge. He was happier and was pleased with himself while acting thus, though he was also glad to find that his patients died despite his efforts. He seemed to imagine that he was driving a bargain with avenging Heaven —that he could set off his present righteous conduct against his other crimes. Men who reason with the greatest clearness on all other matters, often become insanely illogical when a guilty conscience asks for soothing casuistry.

"How are you treating him?" asked Baptiste.

"Not in the way you are thinking of," Carew replied, looking into the other's eyes.

Baptiste saw that he had been mistaken in his surmise, but said no more on the subject.

Carew's box of medicines was by his side. Baptiste looked into it, and drew out a bottle. "This is not poison, is it?" he asked.

"No; but if you took a good dose of it it would make you feel very ill."

"What is a good dose of it?"

"About ten drops; it is in a concentrated form."

"That will answer my purpose, then," and Baptiste put the bottle in his pocket. "And now, sir, I want some stuff that will prevent insomnia."

The eyes of the two men met. Carew asked no questions, but merely said, "Take this bottle, then. Half a teaspoonful is a large dose."

"Let us go into your cabin for a few minutes," said Baptiste, glancing at Mourez. "This man seems quite unconscious; but a man may hear as long as he has breath in him. I will not trust him."

They crossed the saloon to Carew's cabin.

"Well, what is it?"

"The fever and the hot calm have done our work well while we have been standing by

idle," said the Frenchman ; "but now the time has come for us to act. We must seize this vessel to-night. There is a look of wind in the sky now, and Duval will set sail and make for Rio as soon as a breeze springs up. We must wait no longer."

"Let it be to-night, then."

"Come on deck at ten o'clock this evening. Bring the revolvers with you. Leave all the rest to me. You dislike details, so I will arrange everything."

Carew bowed his head in assent, but said nothing.

"You have two sick men in the forecastle, I think," said Baptiste; "are they strong enough to make any resistance?"

Carew shook his head.

"That is well. The captain will certainly not have much fight in him. So that leaves us only six healthy men to deal with; one on my watch, five on the other watch"

The mate now went on deck, and Carew returned to the captain's cabin. He found that brave sailor lying on his bed dead.

"I am glad—for his sake and for mine," muttered the Englishman to himself.

CHAPTER XIV

IT is no pleasant task to describe the events that now took place on the French barque. This is no tale of daring buccaneers, of exciting hand-to-hand combats of desperate men ; but a narrative of cold-blooded and dastardly crime.

Now that the time for carrying out his devilish scheme had come, Baptiste had taken the lead of the conspirators. Being a pacific person who hated fighting and feared danger, he determined to omit no possible precaution to obviate the risk of failure. His brain, fertile of ingenious villainy, was not long in devising how to do this.

In the first place, he instructed Carew on no account to leave his cabin between eight and ten that evening. Then he called aside the two Spaniards and explained his plan to them. He gave El Chico the first bottle which he had taken from Carew's medicine chest, and directed him to mix a certain quantity of the contents with the soup he was about to make for the men's dinner—a quantity which he calculated would be insufficient to produce a pronounced

taste in the soup, but sufficient to cause unpleasant sensations in those who partook of it.

At eight bells that evening the port watch relieved the starboard. There was absolutely nothing for the men to do, as it was still a flat calm, and all the sails had been furled. Duval had taken this precaution on the previous day, fearing that the fever might spread still further, and that he would not have enough hands left to shorten sail were a strong breeze to spring up suddenly.

Duval, however, insisted upon the watches being set and the discipline of the vessel being carried on as usual, more with the object of employing the men's time and distracting their attention from the horrors of the situation than for any other reason.

When Baptiste came aft to relieve Duval, as officer of the watch, the latter said, "Do you know if Mr. Allen is in his cabin, Fortier? I wish to see him."

"I think it would be better not to disturb him. He is quite worn out from want of sleep. He has sat up with poor Mourez two nights in succession; and now that the captain is dead, and the other two sick men are getting better, he is having a long sleep."

"Are the other men getting better?"

"So Mr. Allen thinks," replied Baptiste. "With our brave captain's death the fever seems

to have expended itself. We have no fresh cases to-day."

"I am not sure of that," said Duval gloomily. "I wished to see Mr. Allen in order to tell him that I, and no less than three of the other men, have been feeling very unwell for the last half-hour."

The drugged soup had done its work.

"Indeed!" said Baptiste. "And, now that I look at you, your cheeks are somewhat pale, sir. But we will not wake Mr. Allen; it is unnecessary. He left a bottle of medicine with me this afternoon. It is a powerful febrifuge, and he instructed me to give a dose to the sick men below, and to any others who should feel in any way indisposed. I think it would be a prudent course to serve some round to all hands. It can do no harm."

Duval approving of this measure, Baptiste went into his cabin and brought out the bottle of opiate which Carew had given him, and served out a very strong dose to Duval, and to each of the four men on his watch. Duval then retired to his cabin, and the men lay under the awning forward, all to sink, under the influence of the drug, into a heavy slumber, from which it would not be easy to wake them; while Baptiste was left in charge of the deck, with the two Spaniards and the remaining Frenchman.

"You feel all right, Léon, I hope?" said

Baptiste to this man, a sturdy Breton, who had not been affected by the drugged soup.

"Yes, thank you, sir," he replied; "there's nothing the matter with me."

"Won't you take a dose of the medicine as a precaution? Prevention is better than cure."

"Not for me the filth. Time enough for medicine when one is ill, and not much good it does then if we may judge from the results on this unhappy vessel."

It was necessary for Baptiste's purpose to get this man out of the way before anything could be done. First he thought of asking the Spaniards to despatch him with their knives; but this might create a disturbance and awake the sleepers; so the cautious Provençal waited until a safer plan should suggest itself.

An hour of the watch had passed, and it was now nine o'clock. The sky became overcast, and a drizzling rain began to fall.

"We shall have wind soon," said Léon. "Would it not be well to wake Mr. Duval?"

"Not for a few minutes," replied Baptiste. "Come, now; this damp is the very thing to bring on fever. We ought to take something to keep the enemy out. If you don't like medicine, what say you to a drop of genuine old cognac? I have some in my cabin."

"That is more in my line," said the Breton, smacking his lips; "a fig for your doctor's stuff, I say."

"Then follow me, but step quietly. Mr. Duval's cabin is next to mine. If he finds you drinking brandy aft, though it is only for medicinal purposes, you can guess what a row there will be."

Baptiste led the way to his cabin, and produced a bottle of brandy. He helped the man freely, but he did not attempt to drug the drink with the opiate, for its taste was too unmistakable.

The brandy was strong, and even the Breton's hard head soon succumbed to it. He began to exhibit signs of intoxication, and was chattering in a disconnected fashion, when Baptiste suddenly rose from his seat and placed his hand on the man's shoulder. "Hush!" he whispered; "hush, you idiot! I hear Mr. Duval moving in his cabin; your noise has roused him. He will catch you if you don't hold your tongue. Remain here while I get him out of the way, under some pretext or other. Then I will return for you."

Baptiste darted through the cabin door, and locked it on the man within, who, after awaiting him for some time, helped himself to some more brandy, and at last fell into a drunken sleep on the bed.

Baptiste then entered Carew's cabin, and found him sitting up, reading the French novel which Captain Mourez had lent him.

"Come along, sir; the time has arrived," said the Provençal. "Bring the revolvers with

you, and first see that they are loaded. I don't suppose we shall have to use them, but *Quien sabe?* as the Spaniards say."

Carew made no reply, but taking the pistols from the locker in which he kept them, he followed his accomplice on to the deck. As they walked towards the fore part of the vessel Baptiste described his preparations for the *coup*. "The crew are at our mercy," he said; "Duval in his cabin, and the four men of his watch under the awning forward, are sleeping the heavy sleep of opium. Léon is a prisoner in my cabin, drunk or nearly so, in the company of an open bottle of brandy, and you say that the two sick men in the forecastle are too weak to move. Now, first of all, we must deal with the four men under the awning, for they are the most dangerous."

Still Carew said not a word.

The two Spaniards now joined them. Baptiste looked round the horizon. "We shall have the wind down on us soon," he said; "we must do our work quickly."

The rain was falling more heavily than before. The night was very dark, and there was not a star visible in the heavens. Though as yet there was not a breath of wind, the ocean, as if in anticipation of its coming, was heaving in a long, high swell, and the vessel rolled uneasily, her spars groaning dismally aloft.

Baptiste took two of the revolvers from Carew's hands and handed one to each of the Spaniards.

"Don't use them, lads, unless it is absolutely necessary; we don't want noise. You have your knives," he whispered.

"I have brought the bits of line you asked for," said El Chico, producing several lengths of small-sized but very strong rope.

"What do you intend to do, Baptiste?" inquired Carew, in a hoarse voice, speaking for the first time.

"Pinion those sleepers securely with these cords, fasten a weight to each man's leg, and heave them overboard," replied Baptiste.

"It would be easier to knife them as they lie there," muttered El Toro, whose blood-thirsty instinct was up.

"Yes," sneered Baptiste; "you love the sight of blood, you mad bull. You would like to have a brutal fight now. But that plan will not suit me. I am a man of peace; I hate unnecessary disturbance. Now to work."

Then Carew spoke firmly, once more asserting his right to command. "Secure those men with the cords, but do not kill them. Let them live till to-morrow. Then I will decide what shall be done with them."

"What absurd folly is this?" hissed the Provençal savagely. "Do you wish to en-

danger all our lives? They may free themselves in the night and retake the ship. No, they must die."

"Silence! You shall know that I am still your master. These men shall not die to-night," said Carew resolutely.

"This is too much," cried Baptiste, with impatient fury. "I have arranged everything so well, and now you interfere to spoil all. Curse that intermittent conscience of yours. It is like a geyser spouting out tepid water at intervals, and always at the most inopportune moment."

"I will not discuss this with you," replied Carew doggedly; "but you know me, you coward. If you kill one of these men without my orders, except in self-defence, you will have to deal with me—you understand?"

The Provençal did understand. He swore some horrible oaths to himself, and said—

"There is no time to argue now. We will humour your fancy. Come on, El Toro and El Chico. Let us tie those fellows up as quickly and as quietly as we can."

The three men crept noiselessly to the awning beneath which the French sailors lay breathing stertorously under the stupefying influence of the strong narcotic.

Carew, meanwhile, stood outside under the rainy sky, motionless, taking no part in the proceedings, and at that moment wishing that

the fever had seized him also and that he were dead and quit of it all.

Baptiste and the Spaniards stooped over the sleeping men, and with the skill of sailors bound their limbs in such a manner that it was impossible for them to stir, far less to free themselves. In so complete a state of coma were they that the tension of the tightly drawn cords did not rouse them, though they murmured in their sleep. Carew almost hoped that they would awake. If they defended themselves and were killed in the heat of a mortal struggle, it would not have seemed so horrible to him as this silent, passionless piece of villainy.

When the men were all secured, Baptiste said, "If you will stand by here and guard the prisoners, captain, we will go aft and see to the others."

So leaving Carew behind, Baptiste and the two Spaniards went to the other end of the vessel and entered the saloon. First they softly opened the door of Baptiste's cabin, and there they found the Breton sailor sleeping soundly, the half-empty brandy bottle by his side.

The two Spaniards held him while Baptiste bound him firmly. It was not till the operation was concluded that he awoke. He opened his eyes and looked about him in a bewildered way for a few moments; then he tried to raise

himself and could not; and, perceiving the cords that restrained him, he suddenly realised the situation, and called out at the top of his voice, "To the rescue! A mutiny! A mutiny!"

"Quick! away! leave him!" cried Baptiste rapidly. "To Duval's cabin, and secure him before this fellow's row wakes him. Quick! Quick!"

They ran across the saloon and burst into the mate's cabin, the two Spaniards leading the way; for Baptiste, like a prudent general, gave his orders from the rear.

There was a lamp burning in the cabin. Duval, roused by the din, was sitting up in his bed, half awake, still confused by the heavy dose of opium that had been administered to him. Just as the men violently swung the door open, Léon again raised the shout of "A mutiny! A mutiny! Mr. Duval, defend yourself!"

The Norman heard that terrible cry, and all his senses returned to him in a moment.

"Grapple with him at once," cried Baptiste.

The two Spaniards precipitated themselves upon him; but though not a big man, he was a strong and wiry one. Leaping from his bunk he thrust the men aside, and seizing the only weapon within his reach, an iron water-can, he swung it round and brought it down on Baptiste's skull.

"Oh, you treacherous wretch, take that!" he cried.

The Provençal's evil career would have been terminated there and then had it not been for El Toro, who seized Duval's arm and broke the force of the blow. As it was, the sharp edge of the can inflicted an ugly wound, and Baptiste staggered back, the blood pouring all over his face.

"Kill him!" he hissed, sick and faint with pain and fear, but mad with rage.

El Toro needed no second bidding. He thrust his long knife quickly between the unfortunate man's ribs. Duval uttered one groan, and fell to the ground dead.

"That was deftly done," said the Basque, wiping the blade. "Ho! my little Baptiste. How dost thou feel with that cracked pate of thine?"

The Provençal was sitting on a chest, his head in his hands, trembling with fear. "Look at my head, good El Toro, I beseech you," he cried. "See if it is a dangerous wound."

"A mere scratch," replied the Basque, after a cursory examination. "What a timorous woman thou art!"

His comrades washed the wound and bandaged his head; then Baptiste recovered his presence of mind, and gave his orders. "Put the body over the side at once, but first fasten a weight on to it. It must not

float about to tell tales to some passing vessel."

When this had been done, he said, "Now carry that noisy Léon out of my cabin. Take him forward to where the other prisoners are."

The Spaniards raised the helpless Breton, who, understanding that there was no one to whom he could give the alarm by crying out, now resigned himself to his fate, and uttered not a word as they laid him by the side of his four comrades.

"The vessel is ours!" Baptiste called out in a loud voice when he approached Carew. There was no further reason for the avoidance of noise. "I salute you, captain of *La Bonne Esperance*!"

"But where is Duval?" asked Carew.

"Killed, captain; but in self-defence. Look at my unfortunate head: that was his doing. Had it not been for our brave El Toro you would have lost your trusty mate."

Carew looked down at the five men lying on the deck. They were all awake now, the pain caused by the tightness of their ligatures having at last dispelled the lethargy of the drug. They realised all that had happened; they knew that they were doomed to die at the hands of this treacherous band. A lantern swung from the awning-pole above them, and by its dim light Carew saw that their faces wore an expression of dogged resolution, which

changed suddenly to one of loathing and contempt when their eyes met his. Thus they stared at him in silence. He hastily turned his face away.

"What next, captain? It must be done sooner or later. Why not at once?" said Baptiste.

"Take them into the forecastle for to-night. Secure the two sick men as well," was the reply.

"Just Heaven, what a cruel thing a British conscience is!" exclaimed Baptiste, with a loud, scornful laugh. He was intoxicated with the successful issue of his scheme. "I, the man without scruples, would have mercifully killed these men outright. You, the man of conscience, shrink from doing so, but are willing to shut them up in the pestilential hole yonder, so that an agonising fever may kill them for you. Do you really flatter yourself, oh, self-deceiver, that you in this way absolve your soul from the guilt?"

"Silence!" cried Carew angrily. The man's words had hit the mark. Some such vain idea had indeed crossed the warped mind. Arguments of a like sophistical nature were always now vaguely occurring to him, and he took care not to reason them out, being conscious of the fallacy of them, yet cherishing them. A form of moral insanity this, and not an uncommon one.

El Chico, who was standing by, heard Carew's last words. "Do you want us to die of the fever too, captain?" he grumbled. "Who's going to stand sentry over the prisoners in that poisonous forecastle?"

Carew saw the force of this objection.

"Then put them in a row along the bulwark and lash each one to a ring-bolt," he said.

"That is a better plan," remarked Baptiste; "we can thus keep our eyes on them without leaving the deck. El Chico, you keep watch for two hours, while the rest of us sleep. We require rest after our exciting day's work; and as for me, that cut over the head makes me feel rather queer."

"See, here comes the wind," cried Carew.

The clouds towards the east had opened out, revealing a patch of starry sky, and a light breeze had sprung up.

"There won't be much of it," said Baptiste, after he had scanned the heavens. "Let us shake out the spanker and lie-to under that for the night. And to-morrow morning, captain, you must decide how you are going to rid us of these men. We are too few to work the vessel, and cannot be bothered with guarding prisoners to please you."

CHAPTER XV

HER capture having been effected, the barque lay hove-to under her spanker for the night.

The south-east wind died away about midnight, and a light south-westerly breeze sprang up. A strong ocean current must have been setting from the same direction; for, though the islet of Trinidad had been so far distant at sunset as to be barely visible, the sound of breakers roaring on a beach could be plainly distinguished towards the end of the middle watch.

At daybreak Carew was left alone in charge of the vessel, his three men being asleep under the awning. He paced the deck restlessly, his heart aching with despairing misery.

The five prisoners, who were lashed along the foot of the port bulwarks, as if by one consent, observed a complete silence. They were too far apart to hold any communication with each other, and they knew how useless it would be to appeal to the mercy of the villains who had surprised them; but they all remained awake, watching intently for what they felt was

not at all likely to occur—an opportunity to regain their freedom and fight for their lives.

The rain had ceased, the clouds had cleared away, and out of the calm night gleamed the brilliant constellations of the southern hemisphere. There was a transparency, a depth in the heavens, such as is not apparent in northern latitudes. Through the nearer archipelagos of stars one could perceive others farther back, and beyond these others; stars behind stars up inconceivable distances into the depths of space; so that they were so crowded together as to almost unite in forming one continuous sheet of silver light, save in one spot, where, amid that most luminous portion of the firmament known as Magellan's Cloud, there opened out, like to a black pit, a starless void, an infinite abyss of nothingness.

There came a faint emerald light in the east, which quickly changed to the pale blue of the turquoise, and the stars faded away before the rapid dawn of the tropics.

Then Carew saw, about ten miles off, standing out darkly between him and the sunrise, in sharp outline against the clear sky, the desert island of Trinidad.

It seemed to consist of a confused mass of barren mountains, most fantastic in their shape, falling everywhere precipitously into the ocean, and terminating in huge pinnacles of rock, the loftiest of which were crowned with wreaths of

vapour. Elsewhere there were no clouds visible in the heavens. As the sun rose higher, its rays illumined these rugged summits, and they glowed as with the dull red of molten iron; for this island is a burnt-out volcano, and a considerable portion of it has been calcined into brittle cinders of a ruddy colour.

It being now broad daylight, Baptiste woke up, and coming from under the awning gave himself a shake by way of making his toilet, glanced down the row of prisoners to satisfy himself that they were still safely secured, and then turned his face towards the dreary coast.

"Hallo!" he cried, "we have drifted a long way in the night. That is an ugly-looking place yonder, captain. We must not get too near those black rocks; so we had better wake up those sleepers, and get some canvas on the barque at once. I suppose the next thing to be done is to make sail for the nearest Brazilian port."

"No, Baptiste, not yet," said Carew; "I shall come to an anchor under that island, and wait there for a few days."

"Indeed! What for?"

"I have various reasons. To begin with, look at the sky. There is every appearance of another long calm setting in. Remember that we have yellow fever on board. If we land our prisoners to-day, we shall lessen our own risks of catching it."

Baptiste whistled softly to himself.

Carew stood before him, and looking steadily into his face, said, "Baptiste, I have determined that no more blood shall be shed on this vessel. I intend to put these Frenchmen ashore; then we will sail for Brazil."

"Captain, we do not mind humouring your whims to a certain extent, but we are not going to put our necks in the noose to please you."

"It is quite useless for you to attempt to dissuade me from my purpose. I have made up my mind," said Carew doggedly.

Baptiste at once abandoned his threatening tone, and spoke in a respectful manner. "You have been very lucky so far; but don't be rash. Remember that luck assists him who assists himself. Consider how recklessly imprudent it would be to leave these men on the island. They would soon signal to a passing vessel, and be taken off; and pray, what then would our poor heads be worth?"

"Vessels constantly sight Trinidad," replied Carew, "but they never pass very near it. For the other side of the island is fringed with dangerous rocks far out to sea, as the chart will show you; and, since the prevailing wind hereabouts is south-east, a ship would give this side also a wide berth, for fear of being becalmed under the lee of the mountains. How could the men signal to a vessel miles out at sea?"

"Necessity finds a How. What is to prevent them from lighting a large fire?"

"We will not leave them the means of lighting a fire."

"They would soon discover the means. Suppose, for instance, they picked up some empty bottle that had been washed on shore, they could use the bottom of it as a burning-glass. I have heard of such a thing being done."

"I will not argue the question with you. Those men shall be landed on that island; they shall not die on board this vessel."

"Even if I agreed to run so great a risk, I know that the other two would not. You do not want a civil war on board, do you, captain?"

"I do not fear one. You cannot do without me, and you all know it. If you murdered me and took this vessel into port, do you imagine that the salvage would be handed over to you without demur, as it would be to me if I applied for it? Grave suspicions would be raised, and there would be a minute investigation. Those two idiots would contradict each other in their evidence. It would all end in one of you turning Queen's evidence and the other two being hanged. Is not that right?"

"I cannot deny that there is reason in your remarks," said Baptiste coolly. "Now am I to understand that you wish these men to live?"

"I repeat that they shall not die on board this vessel!"

Baptiste's keen eyes scanned Carew's care-worn face; then the Provençal smiled, for he fancied that he now understood the working of the Englishman's mind. "This clever idiot must be humoured," he said to himself. "This is a new 'fixed idea' of his. He shrinks from bloodshed; he will not sanction it. But if we take these men on shore for him, knock them on the head there without consulting him, and then return to him with some fine excuse about their having resisted us and so compelled us to kill them in self-defence—why, he will pretend to believe us; he will ask no questions, and be glad that the danger has been removed. I understand this strange man now."

Not exactly these ideas, but others somewhat similar to them, had indeed crossed Carew's mind. He was quite aware that it would be the height of folly to leave the prisoners alive on the island, but he wished to postpone as long as possible the murder which he felt was inevitable, hoping that yellow fever or some other interposition of Providence would solve the difficulty for him in the meanwhile.

Baptiste now roused the two Spaniards, and sail was made as quickly as possible, so that an anchorage might be reached before the wind dropped, for there were sure signs of calm in the sky.

Being so few in number, they dared not put much sail on the vessel. As Carew was unacquainted with the management of square-rigged craft, Baptiste gave the orders. First the foretopmast staysail was set and the sheets hauled aft so as to pay off before the wind. Then the two Spaniards were sent aloft to loose the fore upper and lower topsails, while Carew and Baptiste squared the yards. After this the maintopsail was also set.

"That will be enough canvas for her," said Baptiste. "Now, sir, if you'll take the wheel, we will get her all ready for coming to an anchor."

So going forward the mate saw that an anchor was got over the bows and that a sufficient length of cable was ranged in front of the windlass.

The vessel sailed slowly towards the island until midday, when the expected calm fell upon the sea. However, as the current was setting straight on shore, the barque drifted on till four o'clock in the afternoon, when she was about half a mile from the breakers, and the anchor was let go in twenty fathoms of water.

The scene that lay before them as they approached was appalling in its grandeur. They could perceive no vegetation of any description on the lofty mountains, which rose almost perpendicularly from the sea-foam into a bank of dark clouds that had now gathered

on the summit of the island. The fire-consumed crags were often of strange metallic colours,—red and green and coppery yellow,—which gave the scenery an unearthly appearance, but most of the island was of a dismal coal-black.

Some of the mountains seemed to have been shaken to pieces by the fires and earthquakes of volcanic action; for they sloped to the sea in huge landslips of black stones. Gigantic basaltic columns many hundreds of feet in height descended into the waves along a considerable portion of this savage coast, a formidable wall that defied the mariner to land. In a few places only a narrow margin of shore divided the sea from the inaccessible cliffs, and this was encumbered with sharp coral and great boulders that had fallen from above.

The barque was anchored off the entrance of a profound and most gloomy ravine, from which a stream of water fell as a cascade into the sea. The head of this ravine, high above, was lost in dense clouds. It looked like the road to some mysterious and unknown world.

Not only were the sights of this coast such as to terrify the imagination, but so likewise were the sounds. Though this was the lee side of the island, and was protected from the high swell which, raised by the south-east trade wind, breaks so furiously on the back of Trinidad, yet the sea rolled in very heavily with

a stupendous roar that was echoed with dismal, hollow reverberations among the rocky ravines. After the breaking of a higher wave than usual, great masses of water would be dashed up the sides of a cliff to a great height. Deep fiords opened out in places; but even these afforded no shelter. Within them the sea raged as furiously as it did outside.

This remote and rarely visited island was evidently a favourite breeding-place for several varieties of sea-birds. Vast numbers flew through the rigging of the vessel, uttering savage cries. So unaccustomed were they to the sight of man that they showed no timidity, but rather indignation, at his invasion, and a disposition to drive him off again. Many of them wheeled round the heads of the sailors with angry shrieks, approaching so near that they could easily have been caught with the hand.

"I don't at all like the look of the island of Trinidad," said Baptiste. "It is the most inhospitable place I have ever seen. I am not surprised that no one cares to live here. How large is it?"

"It is about fifteen miles round," Carew replied. "The Portuguese tried centuries ago to establish a settlement here, but they soon abandoned it. It is very barren, and so dangerous a surge breaks continually round every part of it that it is often impossible to effect a landing for weeks at a time."

"It seems to me that it will be impossible to land to-day," said Baptiste.

Carew went up into the maintop with a telescope, and after having closely examined the features of the shore, descended on deck again. "I thought I was right, Baptiste. We are anchored off what the pilot-book calls The Cascade, and I can see the landing-place described by former visitors to the island."

"I can see nothing but a mass of foam. I can see nothing like a landing-place."

"It is not visible from the deck. To the left of the cascade over there a long black rock stretches far out to sea beyond the breakers, forming a sort of natural pier. That is the easiest landing-place in the whole island. We will lower a boat at once, and put the prisoners on shore."

Baptiste again looked keenly into Carew's face as he put the question. "Do you wish us to release them when we have landed them, and allow them to run wild over those picturesque crags like a lot of goats — or what do you wish?"

"Let them have food before you take them off; and leave them, bound as they are now, on the beach for this night. To-morrow I will decide what is to be done with them."

"It is always to-morrow with you, captain; but it matters not. We are becalmed, and are, therefore, not wasting time by this ridiculous

trifling. It is a pity that there are no wild beasts on these desert islands who would kindly eat up these men for us in the night. They are becoming a nuisance."

The Spaniards grumbled a good deal when they heard that they were to take the prisoners alive on shore; but they did not dare to disobey Carew.

The two sick men, who were now recovering from the fever, were brought on deck, and they, together with the other prisoners, were lowered into one of the boats. All were still so securely bound that they could not move a limb.

Carew stayed on board the barque while his three men pulled off to the island.

They reached the projecting rock, and found that its sides were perpendicular, so that the boat could be brought alongside. The prisoners were not landed without considerable difficulty, and even danger, for they had to be dragged quickly on shore at the moment when the boat rising to a wave had her gunwale on a level with the summit of this natural jetty, before she dropped down again into the trough between the seas.

At last the disembarkation was safely effected, and the painter having been made fast to a large stone, the boat was left to tumble about against the rough side of the jetty, in imminent danger of staving herself in, while the prisoners were carried one by one up the rugged shore.

Then they laid the helpless men down. Even the brutal Spaniards, when they looked around them, were impressed by the weirdness of the scene. Whenever the sides of the ravine or of the mountains were not too steep they were densely covered with trees, which had not been visible from the vessel's deck. Now every one of these trees was dead; there was not a live one among them. They were of all sizes. Some stood erect as they had grown, some lay prone on the rocks; but all had been dead for long ages. On all the skeleton branches of this forest of desolation were sitting large sea-birds of foul appearance, who raised discordant cries, as if to repel the intruders, and did not take to flight, but fought savagely with any of the men who came near to them. There was no live vegetation to be seen, with the exception of certain snake-like creepers, which clung to the surface of the ground, and which bore large seed-pods of vivid green—sinister and poisonous-looking plants, that seemed well suited to this forlorn region. It was a scene appalling to the imagination, and the whole of Trinidad is of a like gloomy character. The same dead trees cover it throughout. It seems probable that at some remote period a terrific volcanic eruption destroyed every living thing on the island with its showers of poisonous ash; and where once rose from the tropical ocean a fair land, green with pleasant woods, is now a

hideous wreck, more sterile than the desert itself.

"It might be the gate of hell," said El Toro in an awed voice, looking up the ravine.

"Now, comrades," cried Baptiste, "there is no time to lose. I don't like to leave the boat long where she is. As our merciful skipper objects to bloodshed, we must lash our prisoners to these trees."

"What are you going to do with us — kill us?" asked one of the captives gruffly.

"No; we are going to leave you here, tied up," replied Baptiste.

"What! to starve to death?"

"Indeed I don't know," said Baptiste, with a shrug of his shoulders. "This is not my doing. Our captain is a cruel man. It seems that it amuses him to play with you poor fellows as a cat does with a mouse. This is his scheme, my children, not mine. I am merciful."

The men were now secured to the dead trees, and the three villains were moving off to their boat when one of the Frenchmen—the only one who did not meet his fate with fortitude, and who showed signs of the most abject terror—screamed out—

"Oh, Monsieur Baptiste, let me go—let me go! I will join you. I will not betray you. I will help you work the ship. I will be your slave if you spare me!"

His comrades reviled him for his cowardice, but he still continued his piteous entreaties.

Baptiste turned round and gazed with a sardonic smile into the man's white, fear-distorted face. He felt that this was very much the way he would behave himself in similar circumstances, but he did not spare his own faults in others; few men do.

"So you would join us, would you? But how do I know if I can trust you, my friend? You may betray us when we get into port. Will you give me a proof of your fidelity?"

"I will give you any proof you wish," cried the wretched man, writhing in his bonds, but quite unable to move.

"Now, if I see you commit a far greater crime than any that I and my crew have committed, I shall know that you dare not tell tales. If I release you and give you a knife, will you kill all your comrades for me?"

The man burst into hysterical tears. "Yes!" he shrieked—"yes! Anything for my life."

Baptiste laughed contemptuously.

"Miserable man! Your answer is sufficient for me. We do not want such cowardly traitors among our crew. You shall stay here and die by the side of your braver comrades."

Baptiste and the two Spaniards then hurried off to the boat, for the sun was just setting. They pulled off to the barque, and the mate reported to the captain what he had done.

About an hour after their return—the night having settled down upon the ocean—Carew was sitting by himself on the quarter-deck The hollow roar of the waves upon the beach sounded louder than in the daytime, and the vessel rolled in the swell caused by the recoil of the distant rollers.

All manner of strange and frightful noises came from the direction of the mysterious island. It seemed to Carew that he heard groans and wails echoing among the ravines, but he put this down to his imagination—to the now greatly unstrung condition of his nerves.

Suddenly he started to his feet, his heart beating violently. What was that he heard? Surely that last dreadful cry did not exist only in his fancy.

"Baptiste, come here!" he called out.

The mate sauntered up.

"Listen!" whispered Carew; "do you hear nothing?"

"Nothing but the noise of the breakers."

Once more arose that awful cry. It was as a shriek of unutterable despair and agony; faint, but easily to be distinguished when the lull came between one roller and another.

"What is it?"

Baptiste himself turned white at the sound. "I know not; it makes one's blood run cold. See, they too have heard it."

The Spaniards came up.

"Oh, sir!" cried El Toro, his voice indistinct with terror, "let us make sail at once and leave behind us this horrible place. Hark! that cry again! It is as the shrieks of the doomed in hell. That island is the abode of evil spirits who are mocking us."

"We cannot set sail in a flat calm. We must wait," said Carew, in a low voice.

They stood on the deck and listened in silence. For half an hour or more those appalling cries continued; then they died away, and nothing was heard but the roaring of the ocean upon an iron-bound coast.

CHAPTER XVI

ON the following day the fiery sun again blazed down upon the guilty ship out of a cloudless and windless sky. It seemed probable that one of those oppressive calms that are so frequent on this portion of the ocean would detain the barque for some days longer at her present anchorage.

In the early morning, when the west side of the island was still plunged in shade, Carew approached the mate, who was enjoying his matutinal cup of coffee and cigarette on the quarter-deck.

"Baptiste," he said, "I want a boat lowered; I am going on shore."

"Good, sir. How many of us do you wish to accompany you?"

"Thank you; I want none of you. Put the yacht's dinghy over the side. She is the handiest boat on board; and I will pull off by myself."

"That will not be safe," objected Baptiste; "there is no place to beach a boat yonder, and she would smash up if you left her banging

about alongside that rocky landing-place; we nearly lost the cutter in that way last night. If you desire to take a solitary promenade on that cheerful island, I will pull you off there myself in the dinghy, leave you, and return for you at any hour you mention."

Carew assented to this proposal, and prepared himself for the journey by placing his sheath-knife and loaded revolver in his belt. Baptiste watched him curiously, and wondered whether this eccentric Englishman had at last summoned up resolution, and was about to despatch the prisoners outright, as being a more merciful proceeding than allowing them to starve to death. Baptiste ventured no remark on the subject, for he observed that his captain was in a taciturn and absent-minded mood; and there was a peculiar, far-off look in his eyes that the Frenchman could not understand, not knowing that Carew had been dosing himself for the last few days with laudanum from his medicine chest, in the vain hope that the drug might numb the tortures of his conscience.

The dinghy was got overboard, and while Carew sat in the sternsheets, Baptiste took the oars and pulled leisurely across the smooth ocean swell.

While they were yet half-way to the shore, the boat shot suddenly out of the fervent sunshine into the cool dark shadow cast by the lofty mountains.

Baptiste, feeling the rapid change, rested on his oars, and looked round towards the pile of barren hills. "Ugh, what a horrid place!" he cried. "I have a sensation as if I were passing into the mouth of a tomb. I should not like to explore that island alone."

"Pull away!" said Carew impatiently. "Are you superstitious, like those two Spanish brutes?"

"Superstition is not one of my failings, captain," replied the Provençal, as he rowed on again; "but those dreadful cries we heard last night seem to be still ringing in my ears. I wonder what they could have been?"

"When you have put me on shore," said Carew, paying no heed to Baptiste's words, "you can go back to the barque. I shall probably remain on the island three or four hours. Then I will return to the landing-place, and stand on the end of it till you come off for me. So see that someone looks out for me with a telescope occasionally."

"We won't keep you waiting, for I know that you will soon have had enough of Trinidad. But perhaps monsieur has a scientific mind, and desires to study the botany, zoology, geology, and so forth, of the island?"

Carew made no reply to this. They came alongside the promontory of black coral, and found that the sea was not rolling in so heavily

as on the previous day. The Englishman landed without any difficulty.

"Good-bye, sir," Baptiste called out. "You will find the prisoners behind the first big boulder up the ravine." Then he pulled lazily back to the vessel.

Carew was now alone on the desert island with his captives. He looked to his knife and pistol to see that they were ready to his hand, and proceeded to clamber cautiously along the narrow, slippery ledge.

At the farther end he found a loathsome monster standing in his way, seemingly quite indifferent to his approach; for it did not budge, but remained quite still, its ungainly form spread across the causeway, so that he had to step over it to pass by. Carew had never before seen one of the species; but he recognised this as a tropical land-crab—one of a hideous race of crustacea that swarm on this island, sharing the possession of Trinidad with the sea-birds and the snakes. In his present nervous state, Carew was startled by the sight of this repulsive-looking creature. It must have extended two feet across from claw to claw. Its colour was a bright saffron, and its grotesque features, which were turned towards the man, seemed to be fixed in a cynical grin. Its cruel-looking yellow pincers, hard as steel, could have bitten through an inch board, and between them was clutched—Carew sickened

when he saw it—a fragment of the flesh of some animal.

Reaching the rugged shore, he found it covered with these land-crabs. They crawled over the rocks and the dead trees, and the air was full of a multitudinous crackling noise, produced by the small particles of stone dislodged by their motion—a sound as of a distant bonfire, or as of an army of locusts settling on a field of maize.

On the evening before, when the men had landed, they had seen none of these creatures; now there were thousands of them on the mountain-side. But it is well known that land-crabs at certain periods of the year migrate in immense hosts from one district to another.

Even on the previous afternoon, when the coast was illumined by the full glory of the setting sun, Baptiste and the two Spaniards had been impressed by the desolate aspect before them. But now that a dark shadow was thrown over the chaotic masses of volcanic rock, the scenery was inexpressibly dreary and forbidding. Had there been no signs of life on the land, it would have appeared less terrible than with that ghastly vegetation of dead trees and snake-like creepers, and the teeming generation of silent crabs and foul sea-birds perpetually raising their hoarse cries.

Carew looked round with the sense of vague terror that is experienced in a nightmare. He

felt all the influence of this stern nature so hostile to the life of man. It seemed to him that at any moment some fearful cataclysm of the earth, or some unexampled calamity of any sort, might occur. It would not have appeared strange to him to behold a fire-breathing dragon or gigantic snake—such as are supposed to live in fable only—issue from that gloomy ravine. Nothing could have appeared too strange to happen on this mysterious shore.

The prisoners could not be seen from the landing-place, as the clump of trees to which they had been lashed was some little way up the ravine, and a huge boulder of black rock stood in front of it. Carew heard no sound of voices as he approached. He considered it very unlikely that the men had succeeded in freeing themselves from their bonds; but, prepared for any emergency, he held his revolver in his hand and walked round the corner of the rock.

He looked towards the clump of dead brown trees.

His hand relaxed its grasp, and the revolver fell with a ringing sound on the rocks. He was struck motionless with a great horror. He stood fascinated, staring before him with wide-open eyes, unwincing. He would have given worlds to have closed his lids and shut out what he saw, but he could not. It was as if some irresistible power was holding him there,

compelling him to look until every horrible detail of the scene should be burnt into his brain for ever.

It was only for a few seconds, and then the spell was broken. He covered his face with his hands and staggered back. Then turning from the sight, he rushed away, not caring whither, sobbing such sobs as the lost souls in hell may sob in their despair—a dreadful sobbing, that told of a hopeless agony too intense to be endured for long by weak human flesh. Suddenly he stopped short, looked wildly round him, raised his hands towards the skies, and, uttering shrill shriek upon shriek, threw himself on the ground. He rolled down the steep incline for some way, cutting his hands and face with the sharp rocks, and when at last a projecting stone prevented his farther descent, he lay foaming at the mouth and writhing convulsively in an epileptic fit.

. . . . . .

The tragic spectacle the man had suddenly come upon might indeed well have made him, the guilty cause of it, go mad with horror. The fearful cries that had been heard from the vessel were now explained. The voracious land-crabs had done his work. He had gazed upon his victims, and he felt that his limbs were paralysed; but his brain was intensely, unnaturally active. It seemed to him that a voice had said, "Look, and grasp all that there is to see, and remember,

before the relief of madness is allowed to thee. Thou hast murdered sleep, and shalt never know peace again. For ever, in the worlds to come, the picture of this that thou hast done shall be branded on thy soul!"

And he had been forced to look; not a detail of the horror was spared him. The surroundings of the scene, the weird black rocks, the gaunt dead trees, everything about the accursed spot entered into his brain. He even noticed with what callous indifference Nature seemed to contemplate the hideous evidences of the crime. Quite heedless, the huge crabs dragged their clumsy bodies slowly over the stones. The sea-birds fought noisily with each other for morsels of fish among the skeleton branches of the trees, careless of those ghastly relics of poor humanity beneath them. He felt how fitting a scene for such a tragedy was this doleful corner of the earth, this island that a malevolent fiend might have created, where Nature had no beauty, no love, no pity, and where, like some foul witch, she could only conceive forms of life cruel and repulsive, and become a mother of monsters.

. . . . . .

The sun was low in the heaven, and Carew woke out of a profound slumber, weak, parched with thirst, his mind dazed. He raised himself on his elbow, and, looking round him, he found that he was lying on a beach of beautiful golden

sand that fringed an extensive bay. From the sands there sloped up to a great height domes of loose stones of red volcanic formation, of all shapes and sizes, the débris of shattered mountains, and from the summits of these slopes there rose what the earthquakes had still left of the solid hills—dark red pinnacles: some squared like gigantic towers, others pointed like pyramids. The bay was enclosed by two huge buttresses of rock that stretched as rugged promontories far out into the ocean. There was no vegetation, not even a blade of grass, visible anywhere on this savage coast. Looking seawards he saw that a vast number of black rocks, among which raged a furious surf, bordered the shore. Beyond these were the outer reefs on which the sea broke heavily. And still farther out, on the horizon, rose three rocky islands of considerable size, glowing red as the sun's rays fell full upon them.

Carew could not imagine where he was and how he had reached this place. He tried to think. By degrees he called to mind the dreadful sight he had seen in the ravine; but he could remember nothing that had occurred since then. As the sun was to the back of the hills, he fancied that it was still early in the forenoon, and that he had wandered a short distance only from South West Bay; though the presence of the distant islands and the different character of the coast perplexed him.

But he could think of nothing at that moment except the satisfaction of the fearful thirst that was tormenting him.

He rose to his feet, eager to reach the cascade as soon as possible. He felt that he should die if he could not procure water soon.

But in which direction had he to go—to the left or to the right? He could not tell.

Then he saw his footprints on the soft sand, showing the way that he had come. He had but to follow them.

Dizzy and faint, and often stumbling, he wearily retraced his steps. The footprints led him along the shore to that extremity of the bay which would have been on the left hand of one looking seaward. Reaching the promontory of rock he clambered to the summit of it; and then, to his dismay, he looked down upon another extensive bay, at the farther end of which was a mountain of square shape falling perpendicularly into the surf, and preventing all further progress in that direction. An ocean current must be perpetually setting into this bay, for he perceived that the shore was strewn with a prodigious quantity of wreckage. The spars and barrels were heaped up together in places. There were vessels lying crushed among the sharp rocks; others were sunk in the sand, their skeleton ribs alone showing; there were vessels of all sizes, and some of very antique construction—relics of disaster that had

been collecting gradually on this desert coast unvisited by man through all the ages since European keels first clove the southern seas: a melancholy record of much suffering and the loss of many gallant men.

Then Carew began to suspect the truth, and a great dread fell on him. Lying down he placed a small stone on the edge of a shadow cast by a pointed rock, and watched it with a breathless suspense.

Yes, it was as he had feared. *The shadow was slowly lengthening!* He laid his face on the ground and wept hysterically in his despair.

The shadow was lengthening, therefore the sun was setting. It was setting inland over the mountains, and thus the sea was to the east of him. So — unconsciously, by what road he knew not—he must have traversed the whole island, and he was now on the coast the most remote from South West Bay. The cascade, the water he was dying for, was miles away, beyond those great hills. He could never reach it in his present state.

He was on the weather side of Trinidad.

Those heavy breakers on the reefs were caused by the high swell of the south-east trades, and there on the horizon were the three islands of Martin Vas, twenty-five miles away.

So he despaired and lay down on the rocks, and longed for the release of death. Then he became delirious, and fancied that he was in

Fleet Street again, and was going into a tavern with some comrades to drink a glass of wine. But once more the agony of thirst woke him to a consciousness of his position. He staggered to his feet, and ran on blindly a few yards; then he stumbled, and fell to his knees.

Ah! what was that gleaming so temptingly before him?—an illusion only to mock him into madness with its lying promise. He stretched his hand to it—touched it. He plunged his face into it.

It was water—fresh water; a small pool left in a hollow of a rock by the last rains. It was nauseous to the taste, and heated by the tropical sun; but it was water, and infinitely more precious to him at that moment than all the gold quartz in his vessel's hold. He drank fiercely and long, before his craving was assuaged; then his senses returned to him, and, though still very weak, he felt capable of making an effort to save his life.

He descended the farther side of the buttress of rock that divides the two bays, and again followed his footprints, which led him across the wreck-strewn sands to the entrance of a ravine that clove the mountains, and seemed to afford the only practicable pass across them.

He looked upwards, and wondered how he could have possibly found his way with safety down that perilous place; for he supposed that he must have been in a trance-like condition

when he made that journey, of which he was now so entirely oblivious.

With great pain and labour he accomplished the difficult ascent. This ravine had the same character as most of those in Trinidad. The bottom of it was encumbered with masses of fallen rock, among which stood the mysterious dead trees. Here the foul sea-birds were very numerous. The air stank with the fish on which they fed; and as it was now the breeding season, the mothers were very fierce, and attacked Carew with their wings and beaks as he advanced, so that he had to arm himself with a piece of wood, and fight his way through them.

After much weary climbing, often in places where a false step would have meant death, he reached an elevated plateau covered with tree-ferns—the only vegetation on the island which was fair to the eye.

Crossing this plateau, he found himself on the summit of a precipitous cliff, and he looked down upon the ocean into which the sun was just setting. At his feet, far below, the barque lay at anchor.

Proceeding along the edge of the precipice, he came to the head of a ravine, which he knew must be the one from which the cascade falls into the sea. After clambering down a little way, he reached the source of the stream. The cool clear water rushed out with a pleasant sound

from a hole in the rocks. Here he lay down and drank greedily, for his throat was again parched with fever.

Feeling too exhausted to make any further exertion, and knowing that the darkness would soon render it impossible to continue the descent down those perilous slopes, he determined to pass the night where he was.

Lying on a narrow ledge of rock he fell into a profound sleep.

After a while he dreamt a frightful dream. He thought that his victims had come to life again, and, having surprised him in his sleep, were holding him by his arms with a grip of iron, and were about to put him to the torture.

He awoke with a start, and for a moment fancied that he saw their skeleton forms leaning over him in the starlight.

But was it all a dream? What was that sensation of pain in his right arm, as if a vice were tightening upon it?

He sprang to his feet, and with his arm dragged up a heavy weight that was clinging to it.

Shuddering with horror, he shook it violently from him, and a large land-crab fell with a crash on the stones.

The wretched man looked round, and could distinguish in the dim light that the rocks were covered with the brutes. They had come out

of their holes at sunset, and were about to devour him alive.

He seized a large stone, and hurled it at one of them. It broke through the creature's armour and killed it. But the others paid no heed to the death of their fellow, and crawled on with a deliberate slowness. He pulled a branch off one of the dead trees, and with this he was able to thrust them away as they approached. He was obliged to keep watch and defend himself thus through all that long night. Once or twice he dropped off asleep in sheer exhaustion, only to be awakened again a moment afterwards by the closing of sharp pincers on some portion of his body. It was a night the realities of which equalled in horror the worst illusions of a nightmare. Several times he thought of throwing himself off the cliffs and putting an end to his misery, but still he clung to life, and fought for it, as men who value it the least always will when in the presence of a merely physical danger.

At daybreak Carew, his eyes bloodshot, his limbs shaking, having the appearance of one who is recovering from an attack of delirium tremens, descended the ravine as hastily as his weak condition permitted. He turned his head aside as he passed the fatal clump of trees. He reached the landing-place, and there found Baptiste and El Chico awaiting him with the cutter

Carew stepped into the boat without saying a word.

Baptiste glanced at the haggard face of the captain, but made no remark on his altered appearance. He merely said, "We were anxious about you, so have been off here since daybreak waiting for you."

Carew looked inquiringly into the mate's face, but did not dare to utter the question that was on his lips.

Baptiste understood. "Yes, I have seen it," he said, in a low voice. Even that callous villain had been awed by the sight at the foot of the ravine.

CHAPTER XVII

FOR two more days the barque lay becalmed off the desert island, but not one of the crew ventured on land again. The two Spaniards shrunk with a superstitious terror from further contact with that accursed shore — that *costa maldita*, as they invariably spoke of it.

Carew's experiences on Trinidad produced an ineffaceable impression on his mind. His melancholy deepened into a dull despair. He passed most of the day alone in his cabin, avoiding as much as possible even the sight of his companions. By means of ever-increasing doses of laudanum, the miserable man stupefied his brain into a lethargic condition, which was, however, frequently broken by frightful dreams when he was asleep, and by nervous seizures of acute and causeless terrors when he was awake.

Baptiste, observing these symptoms, began to fear for Carew's reason, and tried in various ways to rouse him, but in vain.

At last one morning a fresh south-east wind sprang up. Carew did not even seem

to notice the change, and he gave no orders to get under way. So Baptiste approached him—

"The sooner we have the anchor up and are off the better, captain."

Carew assented in an apathetic way, and assisted the men in weighing the anchor and setting the sails; but he worked with a sullen silence, making no suggestions, leaving everything to Baptiste.

After paying the vessel off before the wind with the foretopmast staysail, they set the fore and main topsails, an amount of canvas which the prudent mate considered sufficient for a barque so undermanned.

As soon as the last yard had been squared, and there was no more for him to do, Carew again went into his cabin.

A few minutes later Baptiste followed him there.

"Sorry to disturb you, captain," he said, seeing the expression of annoyance on Carew's face, and also noticing the bottle of laudanum standing on the table; "but now we are off, running merrily before the wind, away from that accursed island. If you please, what is our course — where are we bound for — and have you thought of a plausible explanation of how we picked up this derelict? Rouse yourself, sir. Think, act, and be a man again."

Carew had drunk a quantity of laudanum

that morning, and he replied in a dreamy voice, as if he had lost all interest in life, and was heedless of the future—

"Do what you like. I leave it all to you. I am unable to think."

"Sir, this is cowardly of you!" cried Baptiste vehemently. "Everything has gone so well with us thus far, and now you lose heart when an immense fortune is almost in our hands. Remember what we have done for you, and do not risk all our lives by neglecting your duties to us."

"What do I care for your lives?" replied Carew with a bitter laugh, that had an insane ring in it. "What is it to me where we go, even if it be to the bottom? Leave me."

"Good-bye, sir; I will take charge of the vessel until you come to your senses." As he spoke, Baptiste contrived to slip the bottle of laudanum into his pocket unperceived by Carew.

The mate went on deck and threw the bottle into the sea. "That coward will go mad if he drugs himself much longer," he said to himself. "When he got on shore he would ruin us all in some silly fit of garrulous remorse. He would disburden his conscience and hang us in his present temper. He shall have no more laudanum. I must look after him and cure him before we get into port. If I cannot do so, well, then, he must die. A pity that; for he is useful, almost necessary, to us."

Baptiste consulted the chart, and determined to run for the port of Bahia, which is about seven hundred miles to the north-west of Trinidad. Having quickly formed his plans, he carried them out with considerable cleverness.

He collected a quantity of combustible matter, and proceeded to set fire to some of the storerooms and other portions of the vessel in such a way that he could always keep the fires under control and extinguish them at will. It was a hazardous undertaking, but he omitted no precaution; and after the vessel had been three days at sea, and was still three hundred miles from Bahia, the effect he desired was satisfactorily produced. She appeared to have been ablaze almost from end to end, and so there was manifest a sufficient reason for the desertion of the crew at sea.

The last spark having been extinguished, Baptiste hove the vessel to while he completed his preparations. He lowered two of the boats into the sea and sank them.

"And now," he asked himself, "what things are the crew likely to have taken with them in the boats? For we must preserve the verisimilitude. Our story must be above suspicion; every circumstance must corroborate it."

So he threw overboard a chronometer, a valuable sextant, a compass, and other articles which a captain deserting his ship would most certainly have carried away. The Spaniards

ridiculed this excess of caution. "Thoughtless children!" Baptiste explained; "it is most probable that there are people on shore who know exactly how many chronometers, compasses, and so on, were on board this vessel. These things will be counted up, and if none are missing, the minds of men will be puzzled at the strange conduct of the captain. Now I do not want to puzzle people; very much otherwise, my imprudent children. For the same reason I am now going to burn the ship's papers. No captain ever leaves those behind him on a derelict."

Carew had watched these preparations listlessly, assisting when asked to do so, but still suggesting nothing. He never alluded to the loss of his bottle of laudanum, and very probably he knew that Baptiste had taken it away.

Early on the sixth day of the voyage the Brazilian coast was sighted, and the mate recognised the palm-clad hills that border the entrance to the Reconcava of Bahia—a beautiful inland sea, as extensive as that of Rio de Janeiro.

And now Baptiste, feeling how great a risk would be incurred by entering the port while the captain was in his present demented condition, dared not sail into the bay; and, after a consultation with the men, braced up the yards, and steered the vessel along the coast to the northward, with the intention

of making Pernambuco, which is nearly five hundred miles distant from Bahia. By this a delay of about three days would be gained; and should Carew not recover his senses in that time, he must be put out of the way. There was no help for it.

But Baptiste and the two Spaniards knew well that if they went into port without the owner of the yacht, their tale would be received with suspicion. It would be necessary to account for his absence. Their own histories would be closely inquired into; the well-elaborated scheme might end in failure after all. The gloom of the captain seemed to communicate itself to the crew. The usual cheeriness of sailors was altogether absent during the voyage. A vague foreboding of calamity oppressed the men; and on board that guilty ship all went about their work with dismal faces, never smiling, sullen and silent, suspicious of each other.

On the second day, the vessel was slowly sailing up the coast near Alagoas Bay. Baptiste was sitting on deck, rolling up and smoking his innumerable cigarettes as he contemplated the beautiful panorama that opened out before him —a land of forest-clad mountains and fertile valleys, down which broad rivers poured into the sea, while among the cocoa-nut groves upon the sandy beaches were the numerous bamboo villages of the negro fishermen. But Baptiste,

though gazing at it, was in no mood to admire beautiful scenery; he was looking forward with alarm to the perils before him.

At last, after pondering over it for some while, he determined on a course of action. It was a desperate thing to do, but it would bring matters to a crisis at once.

He threw away his cigarette, loaded his revolver and placed it in his breast, and then, with face pale with fear but determined in expression, he entered Carew's cabin.

The Englishman was reading a book, or pretending to do so. Baptiste took a seat in front of him, and commenced abruptly—

"Do you wish to live, sir?"

Carew looked up. "Why do you ask? If I wished to die, I could take away my life at any moment."

"You will probably be saved that trouble. I will be perfectly frank with you, because I understand you. You see that we are afraid of going into port in your company. We think you are losing your senses, and we cannot allow a madman to rave our secrets in Pernambuco. We wish you to live, because you might be very useful to us. But if, before we are in sight of port, you don't satisfy us that you are sane, by ridding yourself of your melancholia and taking an interest in this business, we shall be under the painful necessity of despatching you for our own protection. We

will have to kill you, not in any ill-feeling, I assure you, but with real regret."

Baptiste had rightly imagined that this cool and almost ludicrously matter-of-fact way of broaching the subject was the best in the circumstances.

Carew first appeared to be lost in astonishment; then he smiled sadly, and said, "You are a strange man. You come here to tell me that I am mad, and that I must become sane in two days or die—is that it?"

"I don't think that you are exactly mad, but"—

"I know what you mean," interrupted Carew, "and you are right. I have been ill for several days; but I am not mad, as you will soon discover. I will allow that I might soon have become so had you not stolen my laudanum."

From that moment Carew changed his mode of life, and became much as he had been before his visit to the desert island. Though melancholy in his manner and miserable in his mind, he shook off his lethargy, bestirred himself, took an interest once more in the working of the ship, and exhibited all his old ingenuity in improving upon Baptiste's preparations for deceiving the authorities as to the fate of the barque.

"Talented and unfathomable being," exclaimed the Frenchman admiringly, "what could we do without you?"

. . . . . .

The voyage was over, and the *La Bonne Esperance* was lying under the Recife, that marvellous natural breakwater built by myriads of diminutive coral insects, which, running in a parallel line to the shore, forms the harbour of Pernambuco. In front of her stretched the long and crowded quay, with its pleasant boulevard and lofty white houses.

The barque had been an object of great interest to the people of Pernambuco ever since the tug had towed her in from outside. The romantic story of the little English yacht that had foundered at sea, and of her shipwrecked crew, who had been so fortunate as to come across such a valuable prize, was on everybody's lips. The English residents had been profuse in their offers of hospitality to Carew, but under the pretext of ill-health he refused all these; and as soon as he had handed over the barque to the proper authorities he hired a room in a French hotel on the quay, and lived there as quietly as possible with Baptiste, while the Spaniards were lodged in a neighbouring tavern.

The torments of his accusing conscience having now subsided, life once more appeared of value to this mutable-minded man, and his anxiety and dread of discovery returned. It caused him great uneasiness to learn how long a time must elapse before the settleemnt of the salvage would be completed. He

found that he might have to wait many months in Pernambuco before receiving his share of the vessel's value.

The barque had been in the Recife for about three weeks when one morning a coasting steamer from Rio entered the harbour. Among her passengers was an Englishman. When he stepped on shore he disregarded the importunate crowd of hotel touts, and handing his portmanteau to a black porter, said merely, "English Consulate!" The negro understood, and led the way.

The Englishman found the consul in his office, asked if he could speak to him alone on urgent business, and was shown into a private room.

He placed a letter in the consul's hands. "This," he said, "is from the British Consul at Rio. It will serve to introduce me."

It was a somewhat lengthy letter, and as he read it an expression of extreme surprise came to the consul's face. "This is a most extraordinary story!" he exclaimed. "Tell me what more you know of this man."

The interview was a long one. At its termination the consul said:—"Of course I can do nothing until an extradition warrant arrives from England. In the meanwhile, we must not rouse his suspicions. Let him still consider himself safe. He applied to me for an advance of money yesterday; I will let

him have it if he does not ask for too much. But he must not see you. I recommend you to go to Caxanga — a pretty watering-place about half an hour from here by train. I will give you the name of a good hotel there. Do not come into town unless I send for you. Keep out of his way. I should like you to be here to-morrow morning at ten; for, shortly after that hour, his crew are going to make some depositions. I will conceal you in the next room in such a way that you can see them; for it will be well for you to know these men by sight. Of course you will pass under an assumed name while you are here."

"I will call myself John Rudge," said the stranger.

In spite of these precautions, the ever-watchful Baptiste soon came to suspect that there was mischief brewing. One day that he accompanied Carew to the Consulate he at once observed that the consul's manner had undergone a change. There was a reserve and a lack of his usual heartiness in his greeting of Carew. It was but a slight and involuntary change, and it escaped Carew's notice.

A few days after this, Baptiste was sent to the Consulate with a letter. As he came to the door John Rudge was going out. The stranger seemed startled at finding himself thus

suddenly face to face with the Frenchman, and walked hastily away.

"A trifling circumstance," said Baptiste to himself; "but the lightest trifles show best the direction of the wind. Why did that man start at seeing me? Who is he?"

A week passed, and Baptiste saw no more of the stranger; but at last he came full upon him in front of the post-office. Again Rudge seemed as if he wished to avoid being seen by the Frenchman, and turned his head aside as he passed.

But Baptiste was quick in resource. "Stay a moment, if you please, sir," he called out in French; "I wish to speak to you."

The Englishman stood still.

"Pardon me for detaining you," continued Baptiste, "but you understand French?"

"I do."

"Ah, sir, what chance! I know not a word of this horrid Portuguese tongue, and I wish to inquire at the post-office if there is a letter for me. Would you oblige me by interpreting for me?"

"I don't know Portuguese myself; but the clerk in the post-office understands French."

"Thank you, sir. I am a stranger here, you see. I am one of the crew of *La Bonne Esperance*, the dereliet. No doubt you have heard our story?"

"Oh yes, I know all about it. You were

very fortunate. But excuse me, my friend; I am in great haste," and he hurried off.

Baptiste returned to the hotel and found Carew. "Captain," he asked, "have you committed some peccadillo in England on account of which they are likely to be hunting after you here?"

"It is almost impossible that any enemies I may have can have traced me here."

"All dead, I suppose," remarked Baptiste coolly. Then he proceeded to explain the reasons that had prompted his questions.

"You are full of foolish fears, Baptiste. I see nothing in all this."

"Ah, sir, I have lived for so many years in the midst of alarms that I perceive the first indications of danger. When I told this Englishman that I was one of your crew, he exhibited no interest. He did not question me about our adventures, and make much of me, and take me into a café to give me drinks, as all the other Englishmen in Pernambuco do when they meet one of us heroes of the hour."

"I do not see anything very alarming in his neglect to make a fuss over you."

"I do, because I understand human nature. I see dangers ahead, and I intend to secure my retreat in case of disaster. I shall arrange how to slip away if necessary. I advise you to do the same, captain."

"I have done so, Baptiste."

CHAPTER XVIII

CAREW had been nearly six weeks in Pernambuco, when a British mail steamer happened to land an English passenger, who at once called on the consul, and introduced himself to that functionary as Mr. Norton. He had that to say which considerably astonished the consul, and the result was that on the following morning a letter was brought to Carew as he was sitting down to his breakfast at the hotel with Baptiste. It was from the consul's clerk, and ran thus:—"*Sir, will you kindly call here to-day? Your business is practically settled.*"

"Practically settled?" repeated Baptiste, when he heard the contents. "Those words have an unpleasant ring somehow. I know not why, but I cannot help fearing that something is wrong."

"I too have my presentiments," said Carew, "but I am prepared."

At the appointed hour Carew called at the Consulate. He found the consul and Lloyd's agent awaiting him in a room adjoining the principal office.

There was a constraint in their manner, which he, watchful for the slightest suspicious indication, detected at once. They were as men who anticipated some momentous event, but who endeavoured to conceal their anxiety.

The consul produced a document, and laid it on the desk. "Read this over, please, Mr. Allen, and see that it is correct."

Carew glanced down it quickly with an eye trained to legal forms. "It is perfectly correct," he said.

"I have a gentleman in the next room who will witness your signature to this statement," proceeded the consul. He opened the door, and Mr. Norton entered the room.

The consciousness of impending peril came over Carew's guilty soul, but he seized the pen, and in a firm hand wrote the signature, "Arthur Allen, Barrister-at-law."

Mr. Norton now approached the table. He took up the pen as if to sign his name, glanced at the document, and then, raising his head, looked Carew full in the face. "I cannot witness this signature," he said. "It is a forgery!"

There was a complete silence for a few moments; then Carew, whose face was pale, but who betrayed no other signs of emotion, said quietly, "Explain your strange words, sir."

"It is no good; the game is up, Mr.

Carew," replied Norton. "I have a warrant for your arrest, and the police are at the door."

"A trap has been laid for me, I see," said Carew, as quietly as before. "This is one of the absurd mistakes you detectives so often make; but I will soon clear it up. Of what am I accused?" Carew was astonished at his own courage in the presence of this extreme disaster, or rather—for it can scarcely be called courage — at his indifference to his fate. He felt as if he were the spectator of a tragedy which was being played by other men, and in which he was not himself an actor—a common state of mind with men in utmost peril.

"The charge with which I am immediately concerned," replied the detective, "and on account of which an extradition warrant has been issued, is the forgery of a client's name by the solicitor Henry Carew. In the meanwhile, look at these," and he threw on the table two photographs. Carew took them up. One, he saw, was a portrait of Arthur Allen, his friend whom he left to drown in the North Sea; the other was a photograph of himself which had been taken eight years back, when he was another man, when his conscience was still clear, and before his gambling losses had driven him from crime to crime; sin and suffering had yet drawn no lines on the face, the brow was free from care. He gazed gloomily at this presentment of what he had

been and could never be again, and his mind wandered back with despairing regret to memories of guiltless days.

"On the 15th of August last," continued the detective, "a solicitor, Henry Carew, absconded, disappeared, leaving no trace. For some time I, who was entrusted with the case, was altogether at fault; but at last, as often happens, a coincidence threw me on the scent. I came across an advertisement inserted in the papers by the relatives of a missing man, Arthur Allen. He had left his chambers on the 15th of August, and had not since been heard of. Carew and Allen thus disappeared from London on the same day, mark you; but there was no very remarkable coincidence in that fact. However, I happened to remember that, while searching the papers of Carew to discover what were his habits, who were his acquaintances, and so forth, I had come across the name of this Arthur Allen, apparently a friend of Carew's. The clue was worth following up. I soon ascertained that Allen had that day sailed from the Thames in his yacht; that his last known port of call was Rotterdam. I went to Rotterdam, and there, from a Mr. Hoogendyk and others, learnt that the man who called himself Arthur Allen had conducted himself in a somewhat curious manner for an English yachtsman, and had suddenly sailed from that port, bound no

one knew whither, with a crew of Spanish desperadoes."

The detective now took the two photographs from the hand of Carew, who was still gazing at them in a dazed way, apparently not listening to the words of his accuser.

"I procured these," Norton went on. "I brought them to Mr. Hoogendyk. First I showed him the portrait of Arthur Allen; he did not recognise it. Then I gave him the portrait of Henry Carew. 'This, of course,' he at once said, 'is the photograph of Mr. Allen, the Englishman who came here with the little yacht.' Then I knew that I was on the right track. Shortly afterwards, a paragraph which appeared in a London evening paper brought me promptly here, armed with an extradition warrant. I have the paragraph here. It is headed '*A Strange Story of the Sea.*' I will read it to you. '*A telegram from Pernambuco states that a French barque, the* La Bonne Esperance, *has been brought into that port a derelict. She was picked up by the crew of an English yacht, the* Petrel. *The* Petrel *had foundered in the South Atlantic. Mr. Allen, the owner, and his three men took to the dinghy, and, after drifting for several days, encountered the deserted barque, which they sailed into Pernambuco. The salvage is likely to far more than compensate Mr. Allen for the loss of his yacht.*' That is all I need say at present."

The consul spoke next. "There is a Mr. Rudge here, who has been in Pernambuco for some weeks, who can also throw a light on this matter." The consul touched the bell, and the man who had assumed the name of Rudge was shown into the room. He closed the door behind him, and stood with his back against it.

"This gentleman," said the consul deliberately, "affirms that *he* is Arthur Allen, the barrister, the owner of the lost yacht."

All in the room now turned their eyes upon Carew, to watch the effect upon him of this sudden presence.

Yes, it was indeed Allen, though pale and thin, as if he had but just recovered from a sudden illness, that Carew saw before him. And now this strange being, who had fallen into such depths of crime, and who yet loathed crime so intensely, behaved in the manner that might have been expected from him. The better man declared himself at last. On beholding this accuser, who had risen thus suddenly from the dead, he displayed no guilty terror. On the contrary, an expression of great relief, of joy, almost of triumph, lit up his face, and the lines of care faded away from it.

They all watched him with wonder.

Then he spoke quietly, in tones that carried conviction. No one could doubt but that the words were from his heart.

"Yes, I am Henry Carew. I am guilty of

all that I am accused of, and of more, and worse things. But I am glad, indeed glad—and little gladness has been my lot of late—to see you, Arthur Allen, standing there alive before me. There is one less crime on my soul. Yes, I am now happy ; happier than I deserve to be. I am quite ready to pay the penalty of my sins."

There was a nobility in his countenance as he stood up erect, with none of the shrinking criminal about him. He felt as if he were out of the world already; he was free from petty fears now.

Then the consul, impressed by the man's manner, said, in an almost respectful tone, " It is better that you should go on board the English steamer at once. I have arranged everything."

The detective whispered something into the consul's ear, and then slipped out of the room quietly.

Carew looked through the window at the fair tropical world without. He could see the busy quay, with its green trees waving in the fresh trade wind, and the breakers dashing upon the coral reef. Beyond that, between the blue sea and the blue sky, there loomed a dark mass. Carew knew that this was the vessel which was to be his prison, lying at anchor in the outer roads. He shivered; then turning to the consul said—

"Grant me one last favour before I go: let me have paper and pen. I wish to write a letter."

The consul hesitated.

"Give it to him," whispered Allen, who had been eyeing Carew intently; and Carew rewarded him with a grateful look.

The writing materials were put on the table. He sat before them with his back to the spectators, and as he held the pen in his right hand, he placed his left elbow upon the table, stooping over it, his face buried in the open palm as if he were meditating deeply what he should write. And so he remained for quite a minute without writing a word. Once a slight tremor passed through his frame. After that he sat quite motionless.

The detective again entered the room, followed by two officers of police.

"Come, sir," he said, "we must go now," and he put his hand lightly on Carew's shoulder.

As the hand touched him, Carew's elbow slipped, his head dropped heavily upon the table, face downwards, and from his left hand, which had been over his mouth, there fell on the table, and rolled slowly across it, a small empty bottle.

He was quite dead! He had found a use at last for the poisonous drug which the Rotterdam chemist had grudgingly sold him.

. . . . . .

"The prisoner has slipped away from us," said the detective; "but, after all, I am not sorry for it in a way, for there was good in the man."

And so ended the misspent life of Henry Carew—a man by nature probably no worse than many of the most respectable-seeming among us. But he was morally timid; and such a one, however benevolent be his disposition, however opposed to vice be his inclinations, is the slave of circumstances, and is quite as likely to develop into a villain as a saint. A weak will is the devil's easiest prey.

Arthur Allen's narrative will be given in his own words:—

"The last thing I remember, after Jim and myself were capsized, is that I was holding on to the dinghy, and that I lashed myself to her with the painter. Poor Jim must have gone down at once. I don't remember seeing him after the boat turned over. The seas must have driven the sense out of me. I came to, days afterwards, in the cabin of a German barque. She had picked me up — still lashed to the dinghy — in an insensible condition. The barque was bound from Hamburg to Rio. My long exposure in the water brought on a serious and tedious illness. I was more dead than alive when I landed at Rio, and was at once taken to the hospital. There the English

Consul called to see me, and behaved with great kindness. When I told him my story, and who I was, he said, 'A man of your name came here with a yacht a short time back—an eccentric man, for he only stopped two days here and was off again; so I did not see him.' I asked what the name of the yacht was. 'The *Petrel*,' he replied. Then, of course, the whole truth dawned upon me, and I satisfied the consul that someone had stolen my yacht and had assumed my name. The consul then advanced to me the money I required. I was still lying in the hospital when the news came to Rio that the *Petrel* had been lost at sea, and that her crew had found a derelict, and sailed her into Pernambuco. In spite of the doctor's warnings, I left the hospital, and hurried here at once. I was awaiting an extradition warrant from England, when Mr. Norton anticipated my own action, and arrived with a warrant that had been obtained on account of former felonies committed by Carew."

The true story of the French barque and her crew was never known. Baptiste and the two Spaniards took alarm and disappeared from Pernambuco. Not that they were in danger, for they were not implicated in the felonies which had been brought home to Carew. But the guilty wretches knew not what would be discovered next, they so completely distrusted each other, each knowing that he himself would

readily betray his comrades, either for a price or to secure his own safety.

What ultimately happened to these three villains I do not know. Baptiste being a criminal of the educated, cunning, and cowardly-cautious order, possibly enriched himself by iniquity for many years more, and, escaping his deserts in this world, may yet have died in his old age, a respected citizen in his native land.

The other two more vulgar scoundrels were no doubt hanged, or stabbed in a brawl, or despatched in some such summary fashion sooner or later — a penalty for their crimes which seems light indeed to men of this brutal stamp, who consider a violent death as the most desirable and indeed only legitimate termination to existence.

THE END

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A GIRL OF GRIT

CHAPTER I

MY AMERICAN MILLIONS

IT was the middle of the night (as I thought) when Savory—my man, my landlord, valet, and general factotum—came in and woke me. He gave me a letter, saying simply, "The gentleman's a-waiting, sir," and I read it twice, without understanding it in the very least.

Could it be a hoax? To satisfy myself, I sat up in bed, rubbed my astonished and still half-sleepy eyes, and read it again. It ran as follows:—

"GRAY & QUINLAN,
Solicitors.

"101, LINCOLN'S INN,
July 11, 189-.

"DEAR SIR,—It is our pleasing duty to inform you, at the request of our New York agents,

Messrs. Smiddy & Dann, of 57, Chambers Street, New York City, that they have now definitely and conclusively established your claim as the sole surviving relative and general heir-at-law of their late esteemed client, Mr. Aretas M'Faught, of Church Place and Fifth Avenue, New York.

"As the amount of your inheritance is very considerable, and is estimated approximately at between fourteen and fifteen millions of dollars, say three millions of sterling money, we have thought it right to apprise you of your good fortune without delay. Our Mr. Richard Quinlan will hand you this letter in person, and will be pleased to take your instructions.—We are, sir, your obedient servants,

"GRAY & QUINLAN."

"CAPTAIN WILLIAM ARETAS WOOD, D.S.O.,
21, Clarges Street, Piccadilly."

"Here, Savory! who brought this? Do you say he is waiting? I'll see him in half a minute;" and, sluicing my head in cold water, I put on a favourite old dressing-gown, and passed into the next room, followed by Roy, my precious golden collie, who began at once to sniff suspiciously at my visitor's legs.

I found there a prim little old-young gentleman, who scanned me curiously through his gold-rimmed pince-nez. Although, no doubt,

greatly surprised,—for he did not quite expect to see an arch-millionaire in an old ulster with a ragged collar of catskin, with damp, unkempt locks, and unshorn chin at that time of day,—he addressed me with much formality and respect.

"I must apologise for this intrusion, Captain Wood—you *are* Captain Wood?"

"Undoubtedly."

"I am Mr. Quinlan, very much at your service. Pardon me—is this your dog? Is he quite to be trusted?"

"Perfectly, if you don't speak to him. Lie down, Roy. I fear I am very late—a ball last night. Do you ever go to balls, Mr. Quinlan?"

"Not often, Captain Wood. But if I have come too early, I can call later on."

"By no means. I am dying to hear more. But, first of all, this letter—it's all *bonâ fide*, I suppose?"

"Without question. It is from our firm. There can be no possible mistake. We have made it our business to verify all the facts—indeed, this is not the first we had heard of the affair, but we did not think it right to speak to you too soon. This morning, however, the mail

has brought a full acknowledgment of your claims, so we came on at once to see you."

"How did you find me out, pray?"

"We have had our eye on you for some time past, Captain Wood," said the little lawyer smilingly. "While we were inquiring—you understand? We were anxious to do the best for you"—

"I'm sure I'm infinitely obliged to you. But still, I can't believe it, quite. I should like to be convinced of the reality of my good luck. You see, I haven't thoroughly taken it in."

"Read this letter from our New York agents, Captain Wood. It gives more details," and he handed me a type-written communication on two quarto sheets of tissue paper, also a number of cuttings from the New York press.

The early part of the letter referred to the search and discovery of the heir-at-law (myself), and stated frankly that there could be no sort of doubt that my case was clear, and that they would be pleased, when called upon, to put me in full possession of my estate.

From that they passed on to a brief enumeration of the assets, which comprised real estate in town lots, lands, houses; stocks, shares, well-

A DESPERATE VOYAGE

CHAPTER I

IN Carey Street, Chancery Lane, on the ground floor of a huge block of new buildings facing the Law Courts, were the offices of Messrs. Peters and Carew, solicitors and perpetual commissioners of oaths. Such was the title of the firm as inscribed on the side of the entrance door in the middle of a long list of other names of solicitors, architects, and companies, whose offices were within. But the firm was now represented by Mr. Carew alone; for the senior partner, a steady-going old gentleman, who had made the business what it was, had been despatched by an attack of gout, two years back, to a land where there is no litigation.

Late one August evening Mr. Henry Carew entered his office. His face was white and haggard, and he muttered to himself as he passed the door. He had all the appearance of a man who has been drinking heavily to

drown some terrible worry. His clerks had gone; he went into his own private room and locked the door. He lit the gas, brought a pile of papers and letters out of a drawer, and, sitting down by the table, commenced to peruse them. As he did so, the lines about his face seemed to deepen, and beads of perspiration started to his forehead. It was for him an hour of agony. His sins had found him out, and the day of reckoning had arrived.

One might have taken Henry Carew for a sailor, but he was very unlike the typical solicitor. He was a big, hearty man of thirty-five, with all a sailor's bluff manner and generous ways. His friends called him Honest Hal, and said that he was one of the best fellows that ever lived. We have it on the authority of that immortal adventuress, Becky Sharp, that it is easy to be virtuous on five thousand a year. Had Mr. Carew enjoyed such an income, he would most probably have lived a blameless life and have acquired an estimable reputation; for he had no instinctive liking for crime; on the contrary, he loathed it.

But one slight moral flaw in a man's nature—so slight that his best friends smile tolerantly at it—may, by force of circumstance, lead ultimately to his complete moral ruin. It is an old story, and has been the text of many a sermon. The trifling fault is often the germ of terrible crimes.

Carew's fault was one that is always easily condoned, so nearly akin is it to a virtue; these respectably connected vices are ever the most dangerous, like well-born swindlers. Carew was a spendthrift. He was ostentatiously extravagant in many directions. He owned a smart schooner, which he navigated himself, being an excellent sailor, and the quantities of champagne consumed by his friends on board this vessel were prodigious.

When his steady old partner died, Carew began to neglect the business for his pleasures. Soon his income was insufficient to meet his expenses. Speculation on the Stock Exchange seemed to him to be a quicker road to fortune than a slow-going profession. So this man, morally weak though physically brave, not having the courage to curtail his extravagances, hurried blindly to his destruction. He gambled and lost all his own property; for ill-luck ever pursued him. Even then it was not too late to redeem his position. But he was too great a coward to look his difficulties in the face; therefore, having the temptation to commit so terribly easy a crime ever before him in his office, he began — first, timidly, to a small extent; then wildly, in panic, in order to retrieve his losses—to speculate with the moneys entrusted to him by his clients. He pawned their securities; he forged their names; he plunged ever deeper into crime—and all in vain.

When it was too late, he swore to himself, in the torments of his remorse, that if he could but once win back sufficient to replace the sums he had stolen, he would cut down all his expenses, forswear gambling and dishonesty, and stick to his profession.

At last it came to this. He sold his yacht and everything else he possessed of value. He realised what remained of the securities under his charge, and then placed the entire sum as cover on a certain stock, the price of which, he was told, was certain to rise. It was the gambler's last despairing throw of the dice. The stock suddenly fell; settling day arrived, and his cover was swept away—he had lost all!

So he sat in his office this night and faced the situation in an agony of spirit that was more than fear. For this was no unscrupulous, light-hearted villain. An accusing conscience was ever with him, and every fresh descent in crime meant for him a worse present hell of mental torture.

He felt that it was idle to hope now, even for a short reprieve. Clients were suspicious. In a day or two at most all must be known. Disgrace and a felon's doom were staring him in the face. It would be impossible for him to raise even sufficient funds to escape from England to some country where extradition treaties were unknown. Carew realised all this. He had forced himself to look through his

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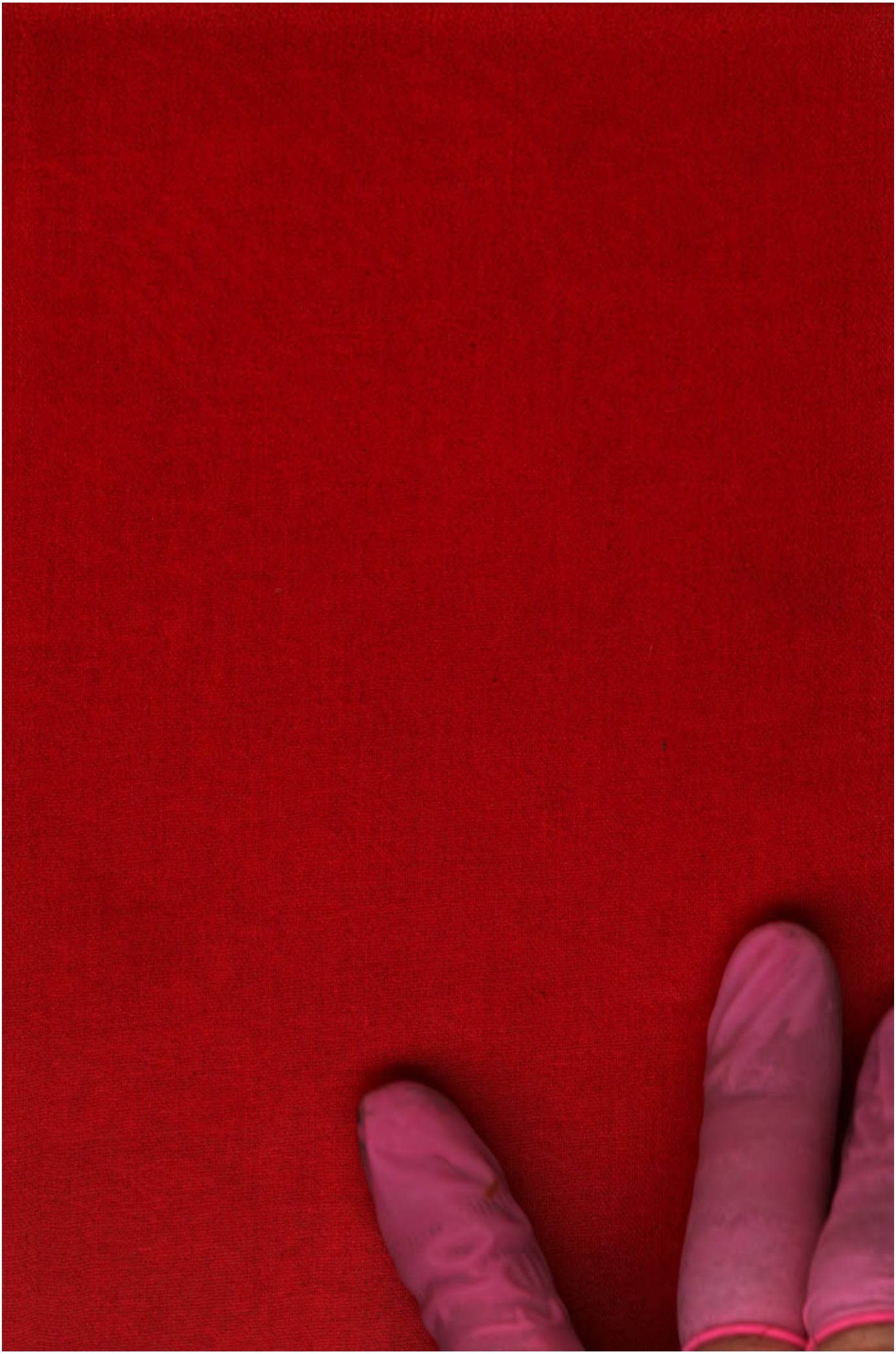
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