Jack Harkaway and his son's Escape From the Brigands of Gree

Bracebridge Hemyng

Table of Contents

Table of Contents

Table of Contents

Jack Harkaway and his son's Escape From the Brigands of Greece

Bracebridge Hemyng

Produced by Michelle Shephard, Charles Franks and
the Online Distributed Proofreading Team.

JACK HARKAWAY AND HIS SON'S ESCAPE FROM THE BRIGANDS OF GREECE.

BEING THE CONTINUATION OF “JACK HARKAWAY AND HIS SON'S ADVENTURES IN GREECE.”

BY BRACEBRIDGE HEMYNG

[Illustration: Bother the beggars”—said Mr Mole”—Adv in Greece, Vol II—*Frontispiece*]

CHAPTER I. THE CONTESSA'S LETTER TO MR. MOLE—ON PLEASURE BENT—THE MENDICANT FRIAR—MIDNIGHT MARAUDERS—HOUSE BREAKING.

When Mrs. Harkaway's maid returned to the villa, she got scolded for being so long upon an errand of some importance with which she had been entrusted.

Thereupon, she was prepared with twenty excuses, all of which were any thing but the truth.

The words of warning which the brigand had called after her had not been without their due effect.

"She had been detained," she said, "by the Contessa Maraviglia for the letter which she brought back to Mr. Mole."

The letter was an invitation to a grand ball which was to be given by the contessa at the Palazzo Maraviglia, and to which the Harkaways were going.

Dick Harvey had been at work in this business, and had made the contessa believe indirectly that Mr. Mole was a most graceful dancer, and that it would be an eternal shame for a *bal masque* to take place in the neighbourhood without being graced by his—Mole's— presence.

The result was that during lunch Mr. Mole received from the maid the following singular effusion.

"Al Illustrissimo Signor Mole," which, being translated, means, "To the illustrious Mr. Mole."

"Hullo!" said the tutor, looking around him and dropping his eye on Dick, "who is this from?"

"From the Contessa Maraviglia," replied the girl.

Mr. Mole gave her a piercing glance.

The contessa's letter was a sort of puzzle to poor old Mole.

"The Contessa Maraviglia begs the honour of the Signor Mole's company on the 16th instant. She can accept no refusal, as the *fete* is especially organised in honour of Signor Mole, whose rare excellence in the poetry of motion has elevated dancing into an art."

Isaac Mole read and re−read this singular letter, until he grew more and more fogged.

He thought that the contessa had failed to express herself clearly in English on account of her imperfect knowledge of our language; but he was soon corrected in this impression.

The lady in question, it transpired, was English.

So poor Mole did what he thought best under the circumstances, and that was to consult with Dick Harvey.

"Dear me!" echoed Dick, innocently; "why, you have made an impression here, Mr. Mole."

"Do you think so?" said Mole, doubtfully.

"Beyond question. This contessa is smitten, sir, with your attractions; but I can assist you here."

"You can?"

"Of course."

"Thank you, my dear Harvey, thank you," replied Mr. Mole eagerly.

"Yes; I can let the contessa know that there is no hope for her."

Isaac Mole's vanity was tickled at this.

"Don't you think it would be cruel to undeceive her?"

"Cruel, sir!" said Dick, with severe air, "no, sir; I don't. It is my duty to tell her all."

Mr. Mole looked alarmed.

"What do you mean?"

"That you are a married man."

"I say, I say—"

"Yes, sir, very much married," pursued Dick, relentlessly; "that you have had three wives, and were nearly taking a fourth."

"Don't, Dick."

"All more or less black."

"Dick, Dick!"

"However, there is no help for it; you will have to go to this ball."

“Never.”

“You will, though. The contessa has heard of your fame in the ball room—”

“What!”

“In bygone years, no doubt—and she does not know of the little matters which have happened since to spoil your activity, if not your grace.”

As he alluded to the “little matters,” he glanced at Mr. Mole's wooden legs.

Mr. Mole thought it over, and then he read through the letter again.

“You are right, Harvey,” he said with an air of determination; “and my mind's made up.”

“Is it?”

“Yes.”

“So much the better, for your absence would be sadly missed at the ball.”

“You misunderstand me, Harvey; I shall not go.”

Dick looked frightened.

“Don't say that, Mr. Mole, I beg, don't; it would be dangerous.”

“What on earth do you mean?”

“I mean that this lady is English by birth, but she has lived in the land of the Borgias, where they yet know how to use poison.”

“Harvey!”

“And if her love were slighted, she might recollect it.”

Mr. Mole looked precious uncomfortable.

“It is really very embarrassing, Harvey,” said he; “my personal attractions are likely to get me into trouble.”

And yet, in spite of his embarrassment, Mr. Mole was not altogether displeased at the fancy.

He strutted up and down, showing the fall in his back to the best advantage, and was very evidently conscious that he was rather a fine man.

“Yes, sir,” said Harvey, with great gravity; “your fatal beauty is likely to lead you into a mess.”

At the words “fatal beauty,” Mr. Mole made a grimace.

It was rather a strong dose for even him to swallow.

“Draw it mild, Harvey,” said he, “pray draw it mild.”

Dick shook his head with great seriousness.

“Don't you be deceived, Mr. Mole,” said he; “use the greatest care, for this poor countess is to be pitied. Her love is likely to turn to violent hate if she finds herself slighted—the poignard or the poisoned chalice may yet be called to play a part in your career.”

Mr. Mole turned pale.

Yet he tried to laugh.

A hollow ghastly laugh it was too, that told how he felt more plainly than words could have done.

“Don't, Harvey; don't, I beg!” he said in faltering tones; “it sounds like some dreadful thing one sees upon the stage.”

“In all these southern countries you know, Mr. Mole, a man's life is not worth much.”

“Harvey!”

“A hired assassin or bravo will cut a throat or stab a man in the back for a few francs.”

“Oh!”

“I should advise you not to keep out after dark—and avoid dark corners. These people can poison you, too, with a bouquet or a jewel. Accept a flower or a nosegay, but don't smell it.”

“Harvey.”

“Sir?”

“Is it your wish to make me uncomfortable?”

“How can you think it?”

“Do you wish me to dream all night, and disturb Mrs. Mole, and not to get a wink of sleep?”

“Certainly not; that's why I am giving you advice; but pray understand the contessa thinks you are a single man.”

“Good gracious me; it is very unpleasant to have a contessa in love with one.”

“I don't know that; most men wouldn't say so. There are, I'll be bound, forty men within a mile of this house who would give their ears to have received such a letter.”

Mr. Mole smiled—a self−satisfied, complacent smile,

“Do you think so?”

“I know it.”

Mole lifted his collar and shot his cuffs over his hands, as he stomped across the room, and looked into a glass.

“Well, well, Harvey, I suppose I must go to the ball; but you will bear me witness that I only go for reasons of prudence, and that I am not going to be led away by any little silly reasons of vanity?”

“Of course,” returned Dick, gravely.

“Besides, I go disguised.”

“Certainly”

“And what disguise would you recommend?”

“Why that is a matter for reflection,” said Dick. “I should think that you ought almost to keep up the character.”

“The character!” said Mole. “What character?”

“A Terpsichorean personage,” replied Dick, with the air of one discussing a grave problem. “Say, for instance, a ballet girl.”

Mr. Mole gasped.

“No, no; not a ballet girl.”

“A fairy queen, then.”

“Don't, Dick; don't, I beg.”

“Or, if you object to the costume of the gentler sex, what do you say to the spangles and wand of a harlequin?”

“Do you really think that such a costume would become me?”

“Do I think?” iterated Dick. “Do I *know!* Of course it would become you. You will look the part to the life: it wants a figure to show off such a dress and to be shown off by it.”

“But what about my—my wooden legs, Dick?”

“Oh, I'll provide you with cork ones, and here they are,” said Harvey, producing a pair.

And so it was settled.

Mr. Mole was to go to the ball, and his disguise was to be well−known spangles and colours of a harlequin.

Harvey himself chose a clown's costume and carried over his shoulder Mole's wooden legs, in case any thing happened to the cork ones he was walking on for the first time.

Harkaway was to go as a knight of old.

Magog Brand selected the character of Quasimodo, the hunchback of Notre Dame.

Jefferson selected the character of Julius Caesar, a costume which his fine, stalwart form set off to considerable advantage.

Mrs. Harkaway was to go as Diana, the huntress, and Mrs. Harvey made Marie Stuart her choice.

Little Emily and Paquita went in dresses of the Charles the Second period.

These young ladies were escorted by young Jack and Harry Girdwood, who were richly habited as young Venetian nobles of the sixteenth century.

As they passed through the garden door a man stood in their path.

He wore a long serge gown, with a cowl, like a mendicant monk, and as they approached he put out his open hand for alms.

“Bother the beggars!” said Mr. Mole, tartly.

The monk shrank back into his cowl, and stood aside while the party went by.

The garden door was held by the maid servant while they passed on, and when they were out of hearing, she dropped a small silver coin into the mendicant friar's hand.

“There,” she said, “I can spare you something, father, although those rich English cannot or will not, the heretics and pagans!”

The friar, who was seemingly an aged man, muttered his thanks, and the girl retired and closed the door,

locking it behind her.

No sooner was the door closed than the mendicant monk whistled a low but very distinct note, and lo! two men appeared upon the scene.

It looked as though they had just come up trap−doors in the earth, so suddenly did they show in sight.

“Captain Mathias,” said the disguised monk to the first who came up, “I have learnt all we wish to know.”

“You have?” ejaculated, not the man addressed by the mendicant monk, but the other. “Out with it, then.”

“Still your impatience, Toro, if you can.—”

“Bah!”

“Well, then, learn that Mole goes as—”

“Bother Mole!” interrupted Toro, harshly. “How does our great foe go?”

“Harkaway?”

“Yes.”

“An English knight of old.”

“It shall be my task,” said Toro, “to keep up his character, and give it a realistic look by a hand−to−hand fight.”

“Don't be rash,” said the mendicant friar, “or you may chance to be beaten.”

“I can risk my life on it.”

“You have—you do; every hour that you live here imperils it. Did you see the party go?”

“I did,” said Mathias.

The latter was no other than the captain of the brigands. Already they were upon a footing of equality, for the two adventurers had had opportunities, which they had not failed to seize.

They had courage, ready wit, presence of mind, boldness daring, and cunning, and so it fell out that they who had made the acquaintance of the brigand's gang under such very unpleasant auspices, became two of the principal members of it within a few days.

But to resume.

“Tell me, Hunston,” said Toro, “does Jefferson go to the ball?”

“Yes.”

“How disguised?”

“Julius Caesar.”

The Italian said nothing, but his lips moved, and his lowering brow was as expressive as words could be to his old comrade.

It boded ill for Jefferson.

They had met in fair fight, and he, Toro, had been defeated.

That defeat was as bitter as gall to him.

He would be avenged.

And if he could not cope with the doughty Anglo−American, then let him look to it.

What strength and skill failed to achieve, the assassin's knife would accomplish.

“Did you see the girl that attended him to the gate?” demanded the mendicant friar, or Hunston, as it would be better to call him, since there is no further need of concealment.

“I did.”

“And recognised her, Mathias?” he asked of the brigand captain.

“Yes; it is the pretty girl we stopped with her lover, the coy Marietta.”

“Now that they are well off, we may as well set to work,” said Hunston.

“Good.”

Hunston threw back his friar's cowl and produced a key.

“They have had many a good hunt for this,” he said, with his old sinister laugh,

“I dare say.”

“It was a lucky thing that the dainty little Marietta dropped it.”

“Yes, it makes matters much easier for us to begin with.”

The door yielded to the touch of the sham mendicant friar, and the three worthies entered the grounds.

Silently they stepped across a grassplot, keeping a thick shrubbery between them and the house as far as they

could, when just as they gained the shelter of a trellissed verandah, a dog within set up a most alarming noise.

The three robbers exchanged uneasy glances.

“Curse the beast!” muttered Mathias the captain; “he will ruin us.”

Toro got ready his long hunting−knife and looked about.

But the dog was out of sight.

A lucky thing it was too for our old friend little Mike, for a touch with that ugly instrument would soon have stopped his singing.

Now, just above the verandah was a half−opened window, and into this Mathias peered anxiously.

No signs of Mike.

A voice was heard now calling to the faithful guardian of the house to be silent, but Mike refused emphatically to be comforted; thereupon, the person very imprudently called the dog to her and tied him up.

This did not quiet him.

So the person in question tripped down the garden to see if there was really any reason for the dog's singular beheaviour.

In passing down the path she went so close to the verandah, that the skirts of her dress actually brushed aside the creeping plants which garnished the trellis work.

“Snarling, barking little beast!” quoth Marietta to herself, “and all about nothing; I wish they would lose him.”

But when she got to the bottom of the garden and discovered the garden door open, she altered her tone.

“How very silly of me to leave the door unlocked,” she said to herself. “Poor little fellow, poor Mike, I'm coming, good dog. Heard someone, I suppose. Good gracious, what's that? I thought I saw something move there. I'm getting as nervous as a cat ever since those men stopped us and made me kiss them, the beasts. Ugh I how I loathe them, although there was one of them that was really not very bad−looking. I wonder where that poor old friar went to. What was that? Oh, how nervous I feel. I wish they had left me some one in the house besides that old deaf Constantino; he's nice company truly for a girl. Bother the dog, what a noise he is kicking up.”

And chatting thus, Marietta re−entered the house.

Meanwhile Mathias had clambered up the iron balcony and pushing open the glass door, or rather window, he entered the room.

It was the dining−room, and the remnants of a very sumptuous repast were yet upon the table.

“I'll just take a glass of wine.”

He did, too.

He took several glasses of wine, and then, as the fumes of the good liquor mounted to his brain, he grew generous, and he lowered a bottle out of the window to his two comrades beneath.

Toro grasped it, and sucked down a good half of it before it left his lips.

Then Hunston finished it off at a draught.

When Mathias had regaled himself, he made a move to the door.

There was no one about.

Not a sound.

Now was his time.

His object was to explore the house, and ascertain in what particular part of it the cash, the jewels, and the plate were kept.

When they had secured these, they could content themselves for the present at least.

Firstly, therefore, he tied up the silver spoons and knives and forks from the dinner table in a napkin, and dropped the bundle into Toro's hat below.

Then he crept back through the room into the passage.

This done, he waited for a while to listen, and assuring himself that the coast was clear, he crept up.

On the next landing there were seven doors.

Six were shut, so he peeped into the seventh room, and just then he heard a noise below.

Someone coming up stairs.

What could he do?

He stole back to the stairs and listened. It was Marietta.

It was really a most embarrassing job now, for there was no retreat, so he crept upon tip−toe into the room, of

which the door stood ajar.

It was a bedroom, dimly lighted by an oil lamp.

A cursory glance showed him that this room had only been lately vacated, and that one or more of the ladies had been dressing here for the ball.

Within a few feet of the door was a looking−glass let into the wall as a panel, and reaching from floor to ceiling.

Mathias listened in great anxiety for the footsteps on the stairs, and every moment they sounded nearer and nearer.

“I hope she will not come in here,” thought the robber, “else I shall have to make her sure.”

He showed how he meant to “make her sure” by toying with the hilt of his dagger.

Mathias crouched down, and crept under the bed, just in time, as the pert young lady skipped into the room.

Her first care was to turn up the lamp, and by its light she looked about her.

“I think they might have taken me to the ball with them,” she said, saucily shaking her curls off her face. “I should have looked better than some of them, I'll be bound. I'm dead beat with fatigue. I've had all the work dressing them, and they are to get all the fun.”

She was silent for some few minutes, and Mathias grew anxious.

What could be going forward?

He would vastly like to know.

Unable to control his curiosity, he peeped out, and then he saw pretty Marietta's portrait in the long looking−glass panel.

She looked prettier than ever now, for, shocking to relate, the young lady was undressing.

Mathias was not to say a bashful man, so he did not draw back.

On the contrary, he stared with all his eyes.

Pretty Marietta little thought, as she stood before the glass, that such a desperate villain was watching every movement.

Marietta, wholly unconscious that she was watched by the vile brigand chief, walked up and down before the glass, shooting admiring glances at herself over her white and well rounded shoulders.

“Dress, and rank, and money do wonders,” she said. “Why are we not all about equal? I'm as good as the best of them, I'm sure, and very much better looking.”

With this mixture of feminine vanity and republican sentiments, she bustled about, putting the room a bit in order.

Now her first job was to put away several dresses.

The first of these was a short Spanish skirt of pink satin, with deep black lace flounces.

“I wonder how I should look in this?” she murmured.

She held up the dress beside her to test the colour against her complexion.

“Beautiful!”

Beautiful; yes, this was her frank opinion, and, really, we are by no means sure but that her own estimate was very near the mark.

On went the dress.

She strutted up and down, and then, when she had feasted her eyes enough upon her own loveliness, she plaited her hair, and, twisting it up into a rich knot behind, she stuck a high comb into it, and fastened the thick lace veil about her.

Mathias watched it all.

He gloated over that pretty little picture, and, shameless rascal! chuckled to think how little she suspected his presence.

“There,” she said, folding the veil about her head with the most coquettish manner, “if I don't look the prettiest senorita alive, why, call me—call me anything odious—yes, even an Englishwoman—ha, ha, ha! How that would please my mistress!”

And then she figured about before the glass, and capered through a Spanish bolero with considerable grace and dexterity, while she sang an impromptu verse to an old air.

The verse was naturally doggerel, and maybe given in English as follows—

"Sweet Marietta,
Rarely has been
A sweeter or better
Face or form seen;
My chestnut tresses,
And my Spanish fall,
Would eclipse all the dresses
At the masked ball.
Then why, Marietta.
Dally?—ah, no!
Pluck up, you'd better,
Your courage and go!"

And as she came to the last line, this impudent little maid whirled round, spinning her skirts about her like a top.

Mathias was enraptured.

With difficulty he kept himself from applauding.

"She'd make her fortune upon the stage," he said to himself.

Marietta had made quite a conquest; a double conquest, it might almost be said.

The hidden robber was enraptured, and she was scarcely less pleased with herself.

"I'll go," she said to herself, "Why should I not? They'll never find it out; I can do just as Cenerentola (Cinderella) did, and who knows but that some prince might fall over head and ears in love with me? I can get back long before they do."

Out she skipped too, and tripped down the stairs.

She was off to the ball.

Little dreamt she that for the last half hour her life hung upon the most slender thread.

And now, the coast being clear, the three brigands prepared to carry out their plans.

CHAPTER II. AT THE CONTESSA'S FETE−A ROMANTIC ADVENTURE BETWEEN CERTAIN OLD FRIENDS.

The most brilliant fete of the year was that given by the rich Contessa Maraviglia at her palazzo.

All the rank and fashion of the land were there.

The palazzo itself was a building of great beauty, and stood in grounds of great extent.

The contessa, who was a widow, had a princely fortune, and she spent it lavishly too.

Upon the night of the masquerade the gardens were brilliantly lighted.

Upon the miniature lake there was a fairy gondola, with a coloured lantern dangling at the prow, and hung with curtains of pale blue silk gauze.

In this gondola a lady was seated.

She had taken to the gondola, not alone for the sake of the freshness of the breeze upon the water, but to read without interruption a letter she had received from a mysterious man who professed to be deeply smitten with her charms, and who, the messenger of love let fall, was a prince.

She wore a black domino, but was not masked, for as she threw back its folds to breathe more freely, you could see that her only veil was a thick fall of black lace, fastened to a high comb in the back of her head.

“I hope he will not be long,” said she to herself, while her heart beat high with expectation. “His note says clearly enough on the lake in the fairy gondola. Well, it will certainly be nice to be a princess, but I do hope that his highness may prove to be a dashing, handsome youth, such as a Cinderella might sigh for. Hush, boatman!”

“Lady?”

“Do you hear?”

“Someone singing on the bank yonder? Yes! I hear, lady.”

“Row that way.”

A voice was heard carolling gently the serenade—“Fair shines the moon to−night.”

The voice meant well, evidently, but something rather spoilt the effect.

It was not altogether in tune, nor had the singer the best idea in the world of time.

Perhaps his singing was spoilt by excess of love.

Perhaps by liquor.

The latter idea was suggested by a certain unsteadiness that would appear to indicate both love and liquor.

Be that as it may, the singer was not at all aware of the disadvantages under which he laboured.

On the contrary, he had the greatest belief in himself.

“Boatman,” exclaimed the lady, impatiently, “row me ashore.”

“Yes, lady.”

He obeyed, as he spoke, and as the boat grounded, the hidden minstrel stepped forward.

The gallant was rather a tall man, masked and habited in a long cloak, which almost concealed a glittering and gorgeous costume beneath.

This cavalier hastened to tender the lady his hand and to assist her to disembark.

As soon as she was fairly upon *terra firma* the gentleman led her away to a more secluded part of the garden, and then ensued a brief but highly interesting conversation.

It took place in the Italian language.

That beautiful tongue was not to say elegantly spoken upon either side.

The gentleman spoke as a foreigner, but imperfectly acquainted with the idiom.

“Sir,” said the lady, after an embarrassing silence upon his part, “I scarcely know if I ought to be here.”

“Nor I either, my dear lady,” began the gallant.

But then, aware that this was not exactly what might have been expected of him, he stammered and broke down.

“Poor prince,” thought the lady, with a very unladylike chuckle to herself. “How embarrassed he is.”

The cavalier stared at her through the great eyes in his mask, as he muttered to himself—

“She is evidently in love with me very badly; I am curious to learn how a princess makes love. I am anxious

only of course to study it as a matter of curiosity."

"I ought not to have come here, prince," said the lady, in a nervous tone.

Prince!

The word made the masked gentleman stare.

"Prince! I suppose that she can't know I am a married man, and goes straight to the question. This is popping the question sharply."

He had never been made love to before by a lady of any degree, much less by a princess, so he was exceedingly anxious to see how she would begin upon this occasion.

But after they had got to a quiet and remote part of the garden, they came to a dead lock.

Not a word was spoken upon either side.

"I wish he would say something to me," thought the lady.

She was not used to such bashful suitors.

"I have kept your appointment, sir," she said, "although I fear I am very wrong."

"My appointment," muttered the cavalier in English, "Come, I like that."

However, he added in the softest tones he could assume—

"Fear nothing, princess, I am not a dangerous man."

She thought he was, though, for as he said this he chuckled.

The lady dropped her eyes before his bold glance and looked as timid as you could wish.

Now this appeared only to encourage the gentleman, for he seized her round the waist and pressed a kiss upon the only part of her cheek which was left uncovered by her veil.

She struggled feebly, oh, very feebly to release herself; but that libertine masker held her firmly; that is, as firmly as possible, for he was not very strong upon his pins.

"Sir, you must not take advantage of my unprotected situation," she faltered.

"I should be very sorry to, my coy princess," said the gallant.

These words set her heart beating like clockwork.

"He means well," she thought, growing quite easy in her mind.

Meanwhile the ardent young lover, growing bolder by encouragement, wanted to remove her veil.

"Grant me one favour, my princess," he said. "Let me bask in the sunshine of your eyes; let me feast my vision upon your rare beauty."

The lady was enraptured at such poetical imagery.

"It sounds like a lovely book," she murmured in ecstasy.

But she would not accede to his request.

She was so filled with joy, so supremely happy, that she feared to break the enchanting spell by any accident.

"Desist, prince," she said, struggling gently in his embrace,

"I must gaze on that angelic face," said the passionate Adonis.

"Why," exclaimed the lady, "since you know it so well?"

"Know it!" exclaimed the gallant in surprise.

"Yes."

"I have never seen it."

"Yet your letter praises each feature to the skies."

"My letter!"

He was staggered evidently.

"Undoubtedly."

"I sent no letter."

The lady was amazed "If you sent no letter, why are you here?" she demanded.

"In obedience to yours," responded the gallant.

"My what?"

"Your note—your ever−to−be−treasured missive," gushed the swain.

Now what would have followed in the way of explanations it is impossible to say, for at the momentous crisis, a voice close by was heard repeating softly a couplet heard before—

"Dear Marietta,

Never had been
A sweeter or neater
Face or form seen.”

The lady started and screamed, and would have fallen had not the protecting arm of the gentleman been there to catch her.

But her veil fell aside.

When the lover saw her face, he was staggered, and he nearly let her fall,

“Marietta!” he exclaimed, “Marietta! Mrs. Harkaway's maid, by all that's wonderful.”

“Oho,” screamed the lady, “you're standing on my toe!” saying which she jerked herself back, and dragging his foot away too, down he went.

“It's Mr. Mole,” shrieked the lady; and catching up her pink skirt and black lace flounces, she fled precipitately along the path, leaving her admirer scrambling in the most undignified manner upon the gravel walk.

Poor Mr. Mole.

But oh, poor Marietta; how sadly was she disappointed with her prince.

CHAPTER III. MR. MOLE—THE THREE DEVILS AND THEIR DEVILMENT—THE CONTESSA'S JEWELS—AN ALARM.

“Mr. Mole—Mr. Mole!”

It was Harvey's voice.

Now Mr. Mole was convinced at once that Dick was at the bottom of this comical conspiracy in which he had been made to look so ridiculous. So he resolved at first not to make any reply.

But Harvey was guided to the spot by information which had been furnished him concerning Mr. Mole, and soon he appeared in sight.

“Mr. Mole—Mr. Mole!” exclaimed Dick, in grave reproof.

“Help me up, Harvey,” said Mole, “and don't be a fool.”

“Well, that's polite.”

“Quite as polite as you can expect.”

“What do you mean?”

“Oh, you know what I mean well enough.”

“I'm hanged if I do!” protested Harvey, stoutly.

His manner caught Mr. Mole immediately.

So this led the old gentleman to reflect.

If Dick did not know, it would be as well to keep the adventure to himself.

“Is it possible, Harvey, that you don't know what has occurred?”

“No.”

“You don't know about Marietta?”

“No.”

This decided Mole.

“Marietta is here.”

“Never!” said Dick, in accents of deep mystery.

“A fact.”

“Never! And who the dickens is Marietta when she is at home?”

“Mrs. Harkaway's maid, to be sure.”

Dick burst out laughing at this.

“Why, Mr. Mole,” he cried, “what a sly old fox you are.”

Mr. Mole stared again.

“I don't quite understand what you are driving at, Mr, Harvey,” said he.

“Don't you, though?—well, I do, old Slyboots.”

“Harvey!”

“Oh, don't you try to come the old soldier over me.”

“Sir!” said Mr. Mole, rearing himself up to his full height upon his timbers, “I don't understand your slangy allusions to the ancient military.”

“Why, it is clear enough that you brought her.”

“I what?” almost shrieked Mr. Mole, indignantly.

“Brought her, and your poor wife ought to know of it.”

“Sir?” said Mole, “if you are bent on insulting me, I shall leave your company.”

“Go it, Mole,” said Dick, laughing until the tears came into his eyes; “go it. The fact is, you have been sneaking about after that little girl for a long while past; there can be no doubt about it.”

“Harvey, I repudiate your vile insinuations with scorn, The fact is, that in your anxiety to fix some wickedness never contemplated upon me, you forget all the most important part of the tale.”

“What?”

“Why, that girl has left the villa unprotected.”

“Nonsense! there's old Constantino there.”

“Useless.”

“And Mike.”

“He barks, but don't bite.”

“Besides; you may be mistaken,” urged Dick.

“Not I. I knew her at once, and what's more, she recognised me.”

“The deuce!”

“And she bolted directly I pronounced her name.”

“How was she dressed?”

Mr. Mole gave a hurried description of Marietta's dress, and they want off in search through the house and grounds after the flighty Marietta.

* * * * *

In another part of the grounds three men met.

“Hunston.”

“Toro.”

“Captain.”

“Here.”

“All safe?”

“Yes.”

“Good!”

“What have you learnt, Toro?”

“Not much.”

“And you, captain?”

“Nothing, or next to nothing,” was the reply.

“And you, Hunston?”

“I have gained knowledge,” answered the latter; “good, useful knowledge.”

The other two laughed heartily at this reply.

“You were always of a studious turn of mind, Hunston.”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

[Illustration: “'WHAT HAVE YOU DISCOVERED?' ASKED THE CAPTAIN”—ADV IN GREECE, VOL II, PAGE 21]

It may be as well to mention that they had sought a secluded part of the contessa's gardens, and met now by appointment.

They were all three arrayed in that peculiar style of costume which the prince of darkness is popularly supposed to don when he makes his appearance to German students, in certain weird and wild works of fiction, or in the supernatural drama.

It sounded really remarkable to hear these three men, disguised as devils, discussing matters generally in such an offhand manner.

The dresses of all three were alike nearly in every particular.

The only mark of distinction between them was a small straight feather they wore in their caps.

One wore a yellow feather.

Another had a feather of brilliant red.

The third one's feather was of a bright emerald green.

Now these feathers were small, but yet, by reason of the conspicuous colours, could be seen at a considerable distance.

“What is it you have discovered?” asked the captain.

“Out with it, Hunston,” said Toro, in his old impatient way.

“Well, in the first place,” was Hunston's reply, “our letters to old Mole and to the girl Marietta were perfectly successful.”

“Of course.”

“The vanity of the one, and the conceit of the other, made it an easy matter.”

“It did.”

“I saw the interview from a snug place of concealment, and took care to let her know it.”

“How?”

“By humming her song which you heard her sing up at the villa.”

The latter looked somewhat alarmed at this.

“Was that prudent?”

“Of course she did not see me, only we must get a thorough hold over this girl, so as to have her as an accomplice in the enemy's camp always.”

“Good.”

“Now let us get back to the ball−room, and see what is to be picked up there.”

Back they went, and arrived in the large ball−room just as a dance was being got up.

The three diabolical companions deemed it prudent now to separate, that no undue attention might be drawn upon their movements.

And they went sauntering about the rooms, each upon the look−out for any slice of luck which might turn up.

Hunston had added a long red cloak to his costume, so as to envelope his figure and cover his arm, for fear of accidentally running across Harkaway or Harvey, or in fact, any of the party.

In this cloak he was wrapped, and silently watching two young and lovely girls, whose grace and elegance were commanding universal admiration,

One was fair as a lily, with light, golden, wavy hair, and full blue eyes.

This beautiful girl it was who excited Hunston's curiosity

“Who can she be? Perhaps Harvey's daughter,” he thought

Now these two were equally lovely to gaze upon, the beauty of each being of a totally different character.

“If we can but spirit little Emily away to the mountains,” said Hunston to himself, “I shall be able to repay them for all I have suffered. Nay, more, I shall be able to satisfy the greed of Mathias and the band, by making the accursed Harkaway disgorge some of his enormous wealth.”

A hand was placed upon his shoulder.

“Hah!”

“It is I,” said a voice in his ear.

And looking up, he beheld the devil in the red feather.

“Mathias.”

“Hush! I have to rejoin a lady now, to whom I am engaged for the dance.”

“The dance!”

Mathias nodded.

“She accepted at once a dance with the devil; I'll lead her a devil of a dance.”

And the brigand captain laughed hugely at his own conceit.

But Hunston was not in laughing humour.

“I'm glad to find you so merry, captain.”

The Greek did not observe his gloomy manner; he only replied—“You will be merry, too, when I tell you the cause.”

“I have no thought for the pleasures of these fools,” said Hunston, gruffly; “I only think of business.”

“I too.”

“And yet you are going to dance, Captain Mathias.”

“For business reasons, solely,” said the Greek.

“Ho ho!”

“My partner is positively bristling with diamonds,” said the brigand, significantly.

Hunston was interested immediately.

“Diamonds?”

“Aye! diamonds; and such diamonds, too. There is one as big as a nut, I swear.”

“I must see this lady.”

“You shall.”

“Where is she to be seen?”

“Come with me,” said the captain.

Away they went, squeezing through the crowds of dancers and maskers, until they came to the smaller ball−room, where a lady stood in conversation with a big man, admirably got up as a knight of the olden time.

The lady Hunston recognised at a glance, from the description which Mathias had given of her jewels.

Her finely−rounded arms were encircled by bracelets, set with the richest diamonds, that matched a necklet of priceless worth apparently.

She wore a tiara, too, of the same costly making and setting.

The dance began.

It was a waltz.

Now the gallant Mathias acquitted himself to perfection in the dance, carrying his fair and richly−attired partner through the crowded room without getting at all jostled by the dancers.

Hunston followed their movements with the greatest possible interest, and as they shot past him for the third time round the room, he contrived to take from the Greek captain's hand one of the lady's bracelets which he had with some dexterity removed.

The next round he was less successful.

As they shot past, the brigand's hand was outstretched, but Hunston missed it, and a glittering object dropped to the floor. Hunston stooped to recover it, when—

“The lady has dropped something,” said a voice in his ear.

“What lady?” he demanded, recovering himself quickly,

“The contessa.”

“Ah! I see. But was it the contessa?” he asked.

“Yes.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes. It is the lady dancing with your half−brother.”

“Eh!”

Hunston started a little after these words.

They sounded very unpleasantly in his ear.

He had evidently been associated with Mathias by the speaker.

Now the latter was a strange−looking little being.

A stunted man, with broad, square shoulders, and got up to represent the description which Victor Hugo has given us of his creation of Quasimodo.

“That is the contessa?” said Hunston, recovering his presence of mind.

“Yes.”

“I am very glad of it, for I shall be able to restore this to its proper owner.”

“Of course.”

Hunston arose, and with a slight inclination of the head, crossed the room, as if in search of the contessa.

The dwarf regarded him eagerly as he went.

“That's a rum one,” he said to himself. “He means to pocket the contessa's bracelet. What a swindle! I thought there was something more devilish about him than his dress.”

* * * * *

Hunston fled precipitately to the gardens.

Close by the spot where he had previously met his companions in crime, there was a man awaiting him with a big bundle.

“Matteo, is it you?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Good; give me the other dress out. Quick! I must change, and be back before my absence can be noticed.”

As he spoke, he had already torn from the hands of the man Matteo a pair of trunks of blue cloth slashed with amber silk, and quick as an eye could wink, he was into them.

And then he fastened on a similarly coloured mantle.

“Tell me, Matteo, does that change me?”

“Yes, perfectly.”

“Good! take this.”

“What, jewels?”

“Hush! hear all, see all, and say nothing. Away with you, now.”

“Yes. Where to?”

“Back to the mountains, where we can always guard what we ourselves have made.”

“True.”

Just then there was a commotion in the ball−room, and a voice was heard to cry out—

“The contessa has lost her richest diamonds and other precious stones. There are robbers here. No one must leave the grounds.”

“By Heaven!” ejaculated Hunston; “we are lost.”

CHAPTER IV. HUNSTON'S ADVENTURE—MOLE IN A MAZE—HE MEETS AN EVIL SPIRIT— GROSS OUTRAGE ON HIS WOODEN LEGS—MATHIAS IN TROUBLE−THE ASSASSIN'S KNIFE.

Quasimodo, who had detected one of the devils, was Magog Brand.

The audacity of the fearless Greek had carried him through so far, but Quasimodo had spoilt him at last.

A number of gentlemen in the company began to inquire very minutely into the affair.

Prominent amongst them was Harkaway.

He and Jefferson, prompt to act as ever, inquired into the circumstances of this gross outrage, and then it was elicited that the depredator was seen last in diabolical costume.

“A devil!” ejaculated one of the company. “Of course, I saw the man myself.”

“I too,” said another.

“Yes, he wore a red feather in his high−crowned hat.”

“No,” said another; “a feather, it is true, but the feather was green, I am sure.”

Upon this, Magog Brand came forward.

“I saw it all done,” he said. “I saw the man who did it”

“What, rob the contessa?”

“Yes, and as soon as I saw what It meant, I gave the alarm; but the devil disappeared like greased lightning.”

“There!” exclaimed half a dozen at once, “I said it was the devil.”

“Yes,” added one of the guests, eagerly. “What coloured feather had he?”

“Red,” ejaculated another, immediately.

“Green,” retorted the opposite faction, loudly, but Magog Brand said—

“It was neither red nor green,” said he, “but a bright yellow.”

Now, while this inquiry was being proceeded with, nobody happened to observe one singular circumstance.

That was the presence, the whole of the time, in the motley−coloured crowd, of one of the diabolical trio in question.

This very devil no sooner heard the question raised about the coloured feathers in their head gear, than he doffed his hat unperceived and pulled out the feather.

And then, as the controversy grew warmer, he sneaked off.

He made all possible haste for the garden gate.

Once here he was about to rush through, when he was accosted by two men, whose uniform gave him an unpleasant twinge.

They were gendarmes.

“You cannot leave the ground yet, sir,” said one of them sharply.

“I don't wish to,” replied the devil, promptly. “I come to bring you orders.”

“I beg your pardon,” said the gendarme.

“A robbery has been committed.”

“Yes, sir.”

“That is the reason you have had your orders to guard the gate. Oh, you know it. Well, what you don't know is that the robbery is supposed to have been committed by a masker dressed as I am. Take particular note of my dress.”

“Yes, sir.”

The gendarme grinned as he said this.

“Keep your eyes open. These are the contessa's particular orders.”

“Trust me, sir.”

“There is a reward if you capture the thief.”

The gendarme laughed at this, and said, with an air of self−confidence —“I think I shall get him.”

The merry devil slapped the gendarme upon the back heartily.

“You are the sort of man for my money.”

Saying which, he turned and left the spot.

Making his way to a place in the grounds previously agreed upon, he ran across the brigand Matteo armed with a change of dress for him.

The spot selected was up one of the narrowest alleys in the grounds, at the end of which was a species of Hampton Court maze in miniature.

Just as the diabolical one was about to divest himself of half of his skin, Matteo gave the alarm.

“The devil!” ejaculated the masker, which was, perhaps, the most natural exclamation he could make, all things considered. “What can this be? Somebody watched me here.”

He waited a minute or so in anxiety.

An unsteady footfall was heard upon the gravel walk, and a man in a cloak came staggering along.

“They may call this a grand *fete* if they like,” he mumbled. “I call it a shabby affair. Why, there's not a respectable drink in the place. The lucky thing is that I have provided my own.”

He had a bottle with him, and he sucked at it from time to time as he staggered on, until all of a sudden he ran on to the alarmed masker, who was growing impatient to change his garments.

The staggering one looked up, and seeing such an alarming figure towering over him, he gave a wild howl and fled.

“The devil! the devil!” he shouted wildly. “Help! help!”

“Stop that fool, Matteo, or he will bring the whole house down about our ears.”

Matteo seized the merrymaker, and was about to make short work with him, when his superior held his hand.

“Put by your knife,” he said; “not that. Hold him tight and threaten him; but no knife.”

But for this timely interference, it would have gone hard with the unfortunate new−comer, who was our old friend Mole,

Mole, it should be noted, had been compelled to change his cork legs, on which he could scarcely stand, for his old, familiar stumps, which Harvey had brought with him in case any accident should occur.

“Forgive me, Mr. Devil,” he implored, in drunken tones, “oh, forgive me.”

“Mole!” exclaimed the devil, in a thrilling voice, “your evil deeds are known to me.”

“Oh, oh, oh!” groaned the wretched Isaac, piteously.

“Your time has come.”

“Mercy, mercy!” gasped Mole.

“Never.”

“Give me a little time, Mr. Devil.”

“No.”

“Oh, do, do, for the sake of my twins,” said Mole, in his most persuasive manner, “and I'll stand any thing you like to—hic—to name. Don't take me away, but come and liquor up with me.”

“Silence!” thundered the irritable devil

“I'm dumb.”

“Away with you, and repent.”

Mole staggered off.

As soon as he was gone, Matteo assisted his master to change his garments, and in the space of five minutes at the outside, the devil disappeared, and was replaced by a gay cavalier, habited in a rich costume of blue slashed with amber, and a broad−brimmed sombrero.

The excitement occasioned by the impudent robbery of the contessa Maraviglia's jewels had not by any means subsided, so the confusion prevailing in consequence was highly favourable to Hunston's new villany for trapping little Emily.

Nearing the entrance to the ball−room, he came to a conservatory, into which Mr. Mole had strolled, or let us say staggered, and then dropped into a seat.

Hunston glided in unperceived by Mole, and concealed himself behind some thick shrubs close to him.

Mole was bent upon making himself comfortable.

The irrepressible bottle was out again.

“I feel,” mumbled Mole, little thinking there was a listener near, “I feel that I am a devil of a fellow. All the ladies love me, and all the men fear me. I'm too much for anyone of them, ha, ha, ha! I've taken a rise out of the

devil himself.”

Here he had a suck at the bottle.

“I'm getting quite familiar with evil spirits to−night,” he said grinning; “I don't think he will see me again in a hurry—he, he!” He raised the bottle again to his lips, when a ghostly voice sounded in his ear—

“Beware!”

He turned pale, and then got very red in the face.

“Who's there?” said Mole, looking nervously round; “come in, don't knock; what a fool I am.”

“Remember!” said the same hollow voice as before.

“Oh, Lor', oh, Lor'!” cried Mole; “I'm gone; he's there again.”

“Beware!”

“I'm gone, I'm going,” cried Mole; “oh, Lor', oh, Lor'!”

And off he ran, Hunston following closely behind him.

Now Hunston got near enough to him to see that he was really trying to get little Emily and Paquita to take care of him for a time, and walk with him in the grounds.

“There will be two of them to take care of,” said Hunston, following them up as closely as was prudent; “that complicates matters. I hope Matteo has taken his measures carefully.”

Matteo had.

They drew near to the entrance of the maze, and then Hunston began to look anxiously about him for Matteo and the rest of their accomplices.

“I think we had better return,” he heard little Emily say.

Suddenly a whistle was blown, and five or six men sprang out from the maze.

In less time than it takes to record the outrage, the two girls were seized and borne off in stout, relentless arms, their cries being stifled by thick wraps thrown over their heads.

“To the small gate,” exclaimed Hunston.

Mole recognised the familiar voice of Hunston, and the whole danger flashed into his mind at once, sobering him most effectually.

“Hunston, you villain, I know you!” he cried. “And I will lose my life rather than harm should come to these dear girls.”

Hunston turned and faced him savagely.

“If you know me, Mole,” he said meaningly, “then beware of me.”

Mole's only reply was to grapple with him with all his strength.

But the foolish old man was hurled to the ground, and then one of the brigands fell upon him, brandishing a huge knife.

Hunston here interfered, and gave a command which made the men laugh very heartily.

A fresh outrage was perpetrated, and in the space of two minutes, Mr. Mole found himself alone, and on his back.

“Hunston, you black−hearted thief,” he cried, “I'll follow you if—”

He tried to rise, but down he went again.

He was lop−sided.

And why?

The brigands had amputated one of his wooden legs.

* * * * *

Leaving them for a moment, let us return to Mathias.

That daring scoundrel was not satisfied with having escaped a great danger scot free, and made a very rich prize, but he must needs return to the Palazzo Maraviglia in another dress, in quest of fresh plunder.

The fact was that he was flushed with wine.

Else he would have thought twice of returning.

Mingling with the crowd in the large ball−room, he came to a group discussing the late robbery in great excitement, and as he was pressing forward to learn what he could, he became entangled in a lady's lace flounces.

He turned sharply to apologise, and recognised the figure at once.

“The lovely Marietta,” Mathias exclaimed.

She heard him, and made off to the other end of the room, closely followed by Mathias, who had conceived a violent fancy for her.

“Stay, Senorita,” he exclaimed, seizing her hand.

“What do you want with me?” said Marietta.

“Only to plead—”

“Nonsense,” she exclaimed, interrupting him abruptly; “you don't know me.”

“Let me plead—”

“Bother!”

“Nay,” said the persistent robber, “if you will not hear me speak, hear me sing.”

And then, being an admirable mimic, he imitated her strut before the looking−glass, and general coquettish behaviour in the dressing−room at the villa, while he sang in a falsetto voice—

“Sweet Marietta,
Rarely has been
A sweeter or better
Face or form seen.
Dear Marietta!”

“Hah!” cried the girl, starting back as if she had been shot.

Her first impulse was to faint.

But as soon as she gained the cooler air without, she recovered, and collecting her senses a little, she gave a pretty shrewd guess at the truth.

She was silly, yet not a bad−natured girl.

She saw her duty plainly enough.

She must make herself known at once to her master.

Harkaway was close at hand, discussing the robbery still with Jefferson.

The whole of this party were of course known to Marietta; so she made straight up to Harkaway, and said hurriedly—

“Have that man seized, sir—see, that one who is following me. I am Marietta. He has just said something to me which convinces me that he was hiding in the villa to−night.”

“Hullo!” exclaimed Harkaway, not a little startled at this sudden address; “why, what in Heaven's name—”

“Lose no time,” interrupted Marietta eagerly, “or he will go—see, he has taken the alarm.”

“The girl's right,” said Jefferson, striding off after Mathias.

The latter now began to perceive that he had made a false step, and he hurried through the crowded room towards the door, and was just passing out, when a dwarfed and ugly figure leaped upon him.

So sudden was the attack that Mathias was capsized, and together they rolled upon the floor.

“Let go!” said the Greek fiercely, “or I'll—”

“Not me!” exclaimed Magog Brand—for he was the Greek's assailant. “I know you, my yellow−feathered devil, even though you have shed your skin!”

“Let go,” hissed the Greek brigand, with compressed lips, “or I'll have your life!”

“I'll not let go,” cried the brave little Brand. “I have got you, villain, and will hold you. Ah!”

Mathias scrambled up, and tried to fly, but he was met with a blow from Jefferson's fist which might have felled an ox in the shambles.

He dropped lifeless on the ground beside Magog,

And then a sudden outcry arose, for it was found that in that brief struggle poor Magog Brand had been cruelly used.

A long−bladed poignard was buried up to the hilt in his side.

Poor Brand.

Death must have been almost instantaneous.

They tore the mask from Mathias' face, and thereupon an agent of the secret police stepped forward and made known who it was.

“This is the notorious Mathias,” he said. “One of the most daring of the brigands hereabouts; we have been wanting him badly for some time past”

“You have got him,” said Harkaway, “but oh!” he added, glancing at the lifeless form of Magog Brand, “at what a price for us!”

At this juncture Harvey reached the spot, and taking in the whole scene at a glance, he dropped on his knees beside the body of Magog Brand, where Jefferson was already kneeling, seemingly half stupefied by the catastrophe.

“He has fainted,” said he to Harvey.

Harvey shook his head mournfully.

“He'll never faint again, Jefferson.”

“What?”

“Never.”

“You surely—no, no, Brand, dear old boy, look up.”

He faltered and broke down.

“Yes, Jefferson,” said Harvey in deep emotion. “Poor Magog Brand is at the end of his troubles and pleasures alike—he is dead!”

[Illustration: “'MURDER! ABDUCTION! SHOUTED MOLE HUNSTON IS HERE”—ADV IN GREECE VOL II PAGE 39.]

CHAPTER V. THE PURSUIT OF THE BRIGANDS—THE BATTLE—VARYING FORTUNES—HOW HUNSTON AND TORO WERE LAID BY THE HEELS.

Consternation was upon every face.

The catastrophe was so sudden and unlocked for, that the people about were half stupefied with fear.

On one side lay poor Magog Brand, lately so full of life and animation.

On the other was his assassin, felled by the dead man's best friend, the doughty Jefferson, and with scarcely more life in him than his victim.

And while the people were staring hopelessly at each other thus, a voice was heard giving the alarm hard by.

“Poor Brand, your murderer shall not escape,” said Jefferson bitterly.

The noise continued, and presently the voice was recognised.

“It is Mole,” cried Harkaway.

He was right.

Just then the poor old gentleman appeared upon the scene.

“Harkaway, Jefferson, Harvey!” he cried.

“What's the matter?”

“Murder!” returned Mole. “Hunston is here.”

“By Heaven! I thought it,” ejaculated Jefferson.

“He has carried off Emily and Paquita.”

“What?”

“I interfered, but they were too many for me. See how they have used me.”

“Was he with the brigands?” demanded Harkaway.

“I suppose so. A whole mob of ruffians.”

“Where are they gone?”

“By the small gate.”

A hurried explanation ensued with the agent of the secret police, who gave them a few words of comfort.

“He'll never be able to pass my men at the gate,” said the officer, with great confidence.

This was doubtful.

They knew too well Hunston's boldness and audacity.

But they lost no time in getting up a pursuit.

The contessa's stables were well furnished, and two horses were speedily saddled for Harkaway and Jefferson.

Harvey, too impatient to wait for a mount, had rushed wildly away in the direction of the small gate, followed by Mr. Mole.

Here he saw to his dismay that a scramble had taken place, in which the gendarmes had got decidedly the worst of it.

The two who had been on guard at the gate had got very roughly handled, one having a broken crown and the other showing an ugly wound in the side.

“They have gone this way, then?” exclaimed Harvey, eagerly.

“Yes.”

“Which way?”

“They made for the right,” faltered one of the wounded men.

“Is it long?”

“No; a few moments.”

“They can not get far,” said the gendarme with the broken pate; “the two girls were struggling hard with him.”

“Hurrah!” cried Harvey. “I'll save my child yet.”

“You are not the first in the hunt,” said the other gendarme, speaking with evident pain; “there are two black men after them.”

“That must be Sunday and Monday,” exclaimed Harvey.

And off he ran.

He bounded over the ground like a deer, and when he got about half a mile further on, he came suddenly upon two men struggling.

One of them was a negro.

Who, in fact, but our old friend the Prince of Limbi, the faithful Monday?

The other was one of the Greeks, a face unknown to Harvey, but one who has already figured in these pages.

Matteo!

And lying on the ground near him was a brigand struck down dead by brave Monday.

As Harvey came up, it was nearing the end of what had been a precious tough fight. Monday was uppermost, and Matteo, who had gradually succumbed to the wiry negro, was by this time in a very queer way indeed.

Monday held him by the throat, and in spite of his desperate efforts to set himself free, Matteo had lost his breath.

And there he lay completely at the negro's mercy.

“There, you dam tief!” exclaimed the Prince of Limbi, “take dat, an' dat, an' dat, an' now, be golly, have dis for a little bit in.”

At every word he pressed harder and harder and jerked his adversary back.

The “little bit in” settled Matteo completely.

Something seemed to crack in the wretched Greek's throat, and he dropped back.

“Monday, Monday!” said Harvey, eagerly, “where are they?”

“Hullo, Massa Dick!” said faithful Monday; “I'se gwine to give this fellar toko an' den I'll jine yar.”

“He's done for,” said Dick, hastily. “Come now.”

“He might come too,” said Monday, in some doubt.

“No fear.”

“Perhaps.”

“Why, he'll never trouble anyone more,” returned Harvey; “tell me, where have they gone?”

“They went straight on.”

“This road?”

“Yes.”

“Good. Come or stay. I'll go,” exclaimed Harvey.

And off he ran.

Monday gave his silent enemy a shake to see if it was all over.

“He's a gone coon,” he said to himself. “I'll bolt off after Massa Dick.”

Away he ran at a good swinging trot.

In about ten minutes more he came up with him.

And this was under the most alarming circumstances.

Not very long after this a horseman dashed up to the spot, and only drew rein to give a glance at the lifeless form of the wretched Matteo.

“He's dead,” said the horseman, who was none other than Jack Harkaway. “This looks like some of Dick's handiwork. Dick or some of our party. I hope Dick is safe.” Saying which, he whipped up his horse, and tore on at a mad gallop.

A very few moments after this he came up with the brigands with their captives.

Just in the nick of time.

Hunston and Toro were there both with their hands full, while the Greeks had all their work to do to take care of the two captive girls.

Little Emily and Paquita, having now recovered from their surprise, were lending assistance to the cause by keeping all the Greeks fully occupied in looking after them.

And while they were thus occupied, Sunday and Dick Harvey were engaged with Toro and Hunston.

Dick had rushed so violently upon Hunston that the latter was toppled over, and it looked as though Harvey was about to make short work with their old enemy.

But alas for Sunday!

The poor negro was overmatched.

His heart was good, but the weight and enormous strength of the Italian were too much for him to vanquish.

That he had not as yet succumbed to Toro, was due only to his vastly superior agility and activity.

It was all in vain for the Italian ruffian to try and close with him.

Sunday would not have this.

He knew that his chance lay in keeping Toro at a respectful distance.

And so he danced round him, dropping in an occasional smart rap which goaded the Italian to fury.

“Help!” cried Hunston. “Cut him down! cut him down!”

One of the brigands rushed at Harvey knife in hand, and thus created a momentary diversion in his favour.

Had not Harkaway just then appeared upon the scene it might have gone hard with his comrade Dick.

Prompt, however, to act at this critical juncture, Harkaway spurred his horse into the group and rode them down.

Then reining up, he flung himself from his horse, and went into the melee.

“I'm in it, Dick, old boy,” cried Jack; “here's one for Harkaway.”

“Hurrah!” shouted Dick, in great excitement. “A Harkaway! a Harkaway to the rescue!”

Toro turned to Harkaway with a cry of rage.

“Curse you!” he exclaimed; “I'll have your life now, or you shall have mine.”

“By all means,” said old Jack, cheerfully.

“Cur!”

“Come, now,” said Harkaway, with subdued rage, “I can't stand that; take this!”

And before Toro knew where he was, he got it.

It was not as pleasant as he could have wished when he did get it.

A devil of a thud it came upon his nose, a fair blow with Harkaway's fist, and being delivered straight from the shoulder, it seemed to the Italian like the kick of a donkey.

Toro shook all over.

His eyes flashed fireworks, and he was half stunned for the moment.

Harkaway's triumph was but temporary.

One of the Greeks, who was watching the conflict between these giants of the combat in great interest, had by now crept up behind Jack, and seizing him suddenly round the middle, hurled him to the ground.

“Ha, ha!” yelled Toro.

And bounding forward, he fell upon Harkaway, knife in hand.

“At last, at last, your life is in my hands,” he cried in fiend−like joy.

The knife gleamed in the air.

A piercing shriek from little Emily was heard.

A cry of fear from Paquita, and suddenly the latter, disengaging herself from her captors, bounded forward and seized Toro by the hair.

She dragged him back with all her strength, and little as it was, it saved the life of Jack Harkaway.

Jack put forth all his strength at this most critical juncture, and succeeded in grappling once more with his herculean opponent.

Toro lost his balance.

A moment more and he was rolling upon the ground in deadly battle with brave Jack Harkaway.

So fierce a strife could not last long.

In the heat of the combat cries were heard encouraging Harkaway and Harvey to fresh exertions, and up dashed the bold Monday, closely followed by Jefferson and several gentlemen from the contessa's fete.

The Greeks now began to lose heart.

The odds were veering round to the wrong side.

Greeks can fight moderately well when they are three or four to one Englishman, but when the numbers are equal, they do not care to provoke hostilities.

And so they blew upon their whistles for assistance, and soon the answering calls came in every direction, causing the gravest fears to the Harkaway faction.

“Hah!” ejaculated Jefferson; “they are coming to help you. But at least I'll make sure of you, Master Toro.”

The Italian did not shirk the encounter.

Toro, to do him justice, was, with all his faults, no coward.

He had felt the weight of Jefferson's arm, and he had reason to remember it.

Yet he met his old adversary boldly.

Jefferson fell upon the huge Italian with tiger−like fury, and in spite of his prodigious size and weight, he lifted him in his arms, swung him round, and hurled him to the ground.

The Greeks now, seeing their leaders in such dire peril, thought of avenging themselves by the most dastardly o| expedients.

“Kill the girls!” cried one of them.

The hint was caught up with avidity.

A savage yell responded to the bloodthirsty suggestion, and the lives of the two innocent girls were in real peril.

“Look to the girls!” shouted Dick Harvey, who was fully occupied with two of the Greek brigands who were pressing him closely.

There was a cheer in response to this appeal, and over went two of the Greeks.

Jefferson too lent a hand at this juncture.

Finding himself free from Toro's attentions, for the huge Italian had received such a desperate shaking with his fall that he was not fit for much now, he rushed into the *melee*, and dealt out such slogging blows that there were at least a dozen bleeding noses and black eyes distributed amongst the bandits in rather less time than it takes to note the fact.

The Greeks were thoroughly discouraged.

This unpleasant British mode of attack was not at all to their liking.

They could do pretty well with knives or swords, or even with firearms, but they could only regard men who used their fists in the lights of savages.

Gradually they retreated before the fierce onslaught of the Britishers and their gallant Yankee ally.

This was no small triumph.

The brigands mustered at least twenty men.

Their enemies were five.

The five were Harkaway, Harvey, Jefferson, and the two negroes Sunday and Monday.

The chicken−hearted Greeks, however, did not altogether turn tail, for ere they could get fairly off this hardly−contested field, they received considerable reinforcements.

About ten more Greeks put in an appearance.

A ragged, ruffianly crew, and ill armed.

The Harkaway party were not armed at all.

The Greeks fell back and made attempts to re−form in something like good order.

But Jefferson saw the danger, and he followed them up closely.

Jack and Dick Harvey were at his heels.

Neither of our old friends were inferior to the bold Jefferson in courage; but they did not possess his great advantages of size and strength.

Jefferson's right arm went out like a battering ram, and each time he struck out, down dropped his man.

At all events, the brigands did not give any particular signs of coming up for a repetition dose.

The huge American dashed into the thick of the enemy.

The assassination of poor little Magog Brand had fired his fury, and his charge was something terrific.

He dashed into the midst of the half cowed bandits, and swinging his arms around him like the sails of a windmill, he “grassed” a man at every stroke.

But this could not last for long.

As the Greeks grew stronger in numbers, they stood upon the defensive.

They were reassured.

They had seven−and−twenty men against the five.

The five, too, large−hearted though they were, had the two girls to look after.

Amongst the latest comers upon the bandits' side was one man who was a petty officer of the brigands, and he gave a few hurried commands, which had the effect of putting Harkaway and his friends into a very awkward predicament.

“Load and fire,” said the brigand, “Shoot them all down.”

If they could but succeed in getting a shot or two at the bold Jefferson, or at any of the party, it would speedily be all over with them.

But now, when individual bravery could no longer avail them, they had a rare slice of luck.

Suddenly a rattling volley of musketry was heard, and three of the Greeks bit the dust, while a number of cries told that several were hit.

And then a detachment of gendarmes dashed up into the open at a swinging trot.

And who headed this very welcome party?

Who but two youths that have been heard of before in these pages?

Who indeed but young Jack Harkaway and his friend Harry Girdwood?

CHAPTER VI. SUNDAY RUBS OFF AN OLD SCORE—THE BRIGANDS—WHAT HAPPENED AT THE PORTER'S LODGE—A STRANGE BLIND BEGGAR.

“Hurrah!”

“Give them another.”

“Load again.”

“Another volley.”

A rapid, irregular discharge followed, and the Greeks, with cries of fear and rage, dropped their arms and fled precipitately, panic−stricken.

The gendarmes followed them up, and several were knocked over and secured; and behind them the brigands had left no less than seven of their number who had not been able to get off.

Amongst those seven were two men that it was no small gratification to the Harkaway party to see once more in their power.

These two men were Hunston and Toro the Italian.

Sunday stood over the latter, leathering into his half insensible carcase in a way that threatened to cover it with bruises; and at every blow he had something fresh to say.

“Take dat!” he exclaimed, punching into Toro's ribs, “you dam nigger.”

Toro, dazed with what he had suffered in his shaking, could offer no resistance.

“And dere's another, you ugly tief!” said the virtuous Sunday. “I'll gib you what for; you shall hab what Paddy gib the drum, you 'fernal black skunk; I show yar what John up the orchard is, you—you Italian organ−grinding sweep—You chestnut−munching beast!”

Sunday had never forgotten his first acquaintance with Toro.

The reader will doubtless bear it in mind, since with it is connected one of the most startling episodes of Jack Harkaway's history, in his voyage round the world with young Jack.

It was at the hotel in New York that the Harkaways first met with Sunday, too, for here they were the means of rescuing him from the brutal violence of the ruffian Toro.

It was, in fact, this which led up to that scene of terror—the firing of the hotel by Hunston and Toro.

Sunday had suffered at Toro's hands, but had never had his whack back.

But now the darkey showed the half insensible Italian the full signification of “John up de orchard,” and likewise of “what for,” and “what Paddy gave the drum.”

* * * * *

Hunston and Toro were thrown into prison, with the few brigands captured and their discomfited chieftain Mathias.

Such was the end of their exploit.

When once they were in prison, however, it required some exertion on the part of the authorities to keep them there.

The gang were unceasing in their endeavours to release them.

Artifices of every kind were tried to accomplish it, but the Harkaways had foreseen that no stone would be left unturned by the murderous friends of the captured robbers; and they knew the good old−fashioned saying—“forewarned, forearmed.'“

The prison in which they we re confined was situated at the waterside, and it was approachable by boat, where the entrance was beneath a low, vaulted archway.

The day after the capture of the notorious robbers, a poor cripple hobbled up to the porter's lodge, dragging himself painfully along by the aid of a stick in one hand and a crutch under his other arm.

“Move off,” said the porter gruffly; “we have nothing to give away here.”

“I don't ask your charity,” replied the cripple humbly; “accept this, good sir, as a peace offering.”

And then, to the porter's surprise, he dropped a coin into his hand.

The porter looked hard at the coin in his hand, and then at the cripple.

He was a man of no sentiment, this porter, and so he asked the generous donor bluntly what he wanted for the money.

"I only want you to show some consideration and kindness, if possible, to some of the unfortunate inmates of this place," was the reply.

"Prisoners?"

"Yes."

"If you expect that," said the porter "you had better take back your money, for I have nothing to do with the prisoners."

The cripple looked grave, and he muttered to himself—

"This fool is beastly conscientious. If he had only proved a bit of a rogue, there was a chance—the ass!"

But he did not mean to yield the point yet.

"You are a very good man," he said to the porter, "a worthy honest fellow, and you will know that I don't mean to offer you any thing like a bribe."

The porter started.

"A bribe!" he said, with an expletive. "You had better not."

"Ahem!" coughed the cripple. "My friend, I have confined in this prison my son, a poor misguided boy—"

"They are mostly that," said the porter shortly.

"But he is innocent."

"They are all innocent," said the porter.

"All?"

"According to their own showing."

"But my boy is."

"No doubt"

"And I only want to beg you to do what you can to soften his lot—a hard lot it is, too."

"I can do nothing, I tell you," said the porter; "I never see the prisoners."

"I thought—"

"At least, when I say never, I mean only when they are allowed to walk in the prison yard."

"That is here?"

"Yes."

"When is that?"

"Once a day; sometimes more than that, if the doctor orders it."

"The doctor must order it, then?" said the cripple to himself.

"What is your son in for?" asked the porter.

"For an unfortunate resemblance he bears to a notorious brigand."

"Bah!" exclaimed the porter. "They don't imprison a man for being like another."

"Yes, they do; my unlucky son has been taken for Mathias the brigand."

"What," ejaculated the doorkeeper, "do you mean that Mathias is not Mathias?"

"I mean that my son has been taken for Mathias, to whom, indeed, he is so like that nothing but the capture of the real culprit can save my son."

The doorkeeper eyed the cripple sharply.

But the latter stood it coolly enough.

"Well," said the door porter, "if that is the case, it is certainly a very hard job for your son. What do you want me to do for him? I can't let him out."

"My friend," exclaimed the cripple, "think you I would suggest such a thing? No, all I would ask of you is to soothe him with a kind word."

"I'll tell him when next he comes out."

"At what time did you say?" asked the cripple, looking on the ground as though he only put the question casually.

"At twelve."

The cripple's eyes glistened as he heard this.

"Well, well," he said, pressing some more money into the door porter's hand, "I'll call again, and perhaps you

may have seen my boy, and comforted him with the assurance that I'll save him, in spite of all the ill these accursed English people can work by the aid of their money."

"Oh, that's it, is it?" said the porter. "The English are at work in it, eh?"

"Yes. They owe him some spite, and money, you know, can buy any thing— any thing." And blessing the gatekeeper, he hobbled off.

* * * * *

Near the prison he overtook a blind man begging by the roadside, and while stopping to drop a coin in his hat, the cripple contrived to whisper a few hurried words to this effect—

"I have made a step—almost made a breach in the fortress."

"You have!"

And the blind man turned his head to the right and to the left, almost as though looking out to see if they were unwatched.

"Yes; the prison yard is only the other side of the gate. Now that gate is kept by a porter who is already in our interest."

"Good, good, Tomaso!" quoth the blind man.

"Now, listen."

"Go on," returned the blind man, in an eager tone.

"At noon the prisoners are in the yard. If we could but get that gate open for an instant, and have our men ready hereabouts for a rush—"

"Yes, yes."

"Who can tell what may happen?"

"Good again—good again! ha, ha, ha! that's brave, that is. Why, the mob of idle sightseers who crowd about the prison gates at noon to watch the prisoners might all be poor blind wretches or helpless cripples like you and I."

"Of course."

"And if the gate is left open but one instant—a single inch, no more— why, worlds might be done."

"A horse ready saddled near at hand might be worth thinking of."

"True."

"And a small keg of gunpowder blown up under the archway by the waterside entrance would divert attention."

"Tomaso," ejaculated the blind man, "you're born to be a captain of brigands some day!"

CHAPTER VII. HOW TOMASO HELPED HIS FRIENDS IN TROUBLE—THE SKIRMISH IN THE PRISON—MATHIAS THE BRIGAND.

Tomaso, before the day was over, changed his garments and abandoned crutch and stick, and when he turned out with flaxen−dyed hair and spectacles, and presented himself at the other great entrance of the prison, as a German traveller who desired to go over the place, no one could possibly have imagined it to be the old cripple whose paternal lamentation had so touched the doorkeeper's heart.

“You have got here a notorious brigand, as I have heard tell,” said the visitor.

“We have, sir,” was the governor's reply; “a very remarkable man he is, too.”

“Ah, so I have heard,” said the visitor. “He is called Demetrius, I believe?”

“Nay; his name is Mathias.”

The visitor looked surprised at this information.

“Mathias—Mathias!” he repeated to himself. “I was misinformed, then. I certainly thought that his name was Demetrius.”

The governor smiled.

“You may be right, all the same,” said he.

“How so?”

“Why, Mathias is but his avowed name; he may be known by a dozen different *aliases*.”

“Is it possible?” ejaculated the sham German traveller.

“Indeed it is. These robbers are mostly adepts at disguise. Would you like to see this Mathias?” demanded the governor, courteously.

“Vastly.”

“Well, sir, I'll only warn you of one thing.”

“Indeed! What is it?”

“A disappointment awaits you in this.”

“How so?”

“Instead of seeing a ferocious fellow, such as you might expect, Mathias is really a very pleasant and innocent−looking man.”

The governor of the prison then led the visitors through the long stone corridors of the place where Mathias was confined.

They stopped before a door of great thickness, heavily barred, and studded with iron bolts and nails.

The governor tapped at a small grated trap in the door, and it was pulled aside.

At the grating a broad−shouldered fellow appeared, who touched his cap at the visitors.

“So that is Mathias,” said the German gentleman.

“No, no,” said the governor; “that is the gaoler who is shut up with him.”

“What for?”

“So that he might be watched night and day; the authorities have doomed him to—”

“To what?”

“To death,” replied the governor, in a low but impressive voice.

“He is young.”

“In years, yes,” answered the governor, “but old in crime. This man has been guilty of nearly every crime under the sun—brigandage is one of his least offences. His last exploit, however, is the worst.”

“What is that?”

“Murder.”

“Murder!”

And the German traveller looked inexpressibly shocked.

“Murder is a capital crime in every land.”

“And rightly too,” said the visitor, “rightly, too. But, sir, excuse my curiosity—”

“Ask all you will,” returned the governor.

“This man had, I was told, a bold, dashing fellow to second him in all his exploits.”

“An Italian?”

“No.”

“An Englishman?”

“No, no, sir, you mistake; I mean a Greek—a handsome, dashing fellow— a great favourite with the ladies—brave and daring.”

“And how is this Apollo called?”

“Tomaso.”

The governor burst into a loud fit of laughter at this,

“You are altogether mistaken about that brigand—that Tomaso. He is a scrubby and ill−favoured scamp—a sneaking, crawling rascal, capable of all the villany of his master, but not possessed of his courage.”

Had the governor been looking at the visitor's face just then, he might have had his suspicions aroused.

The sham German philanthropist glared ferociously as this description was given.

The prisoner, who was seated at a rough deal table at the further end of the cell, here arose at the gaoler's order, and came to the window.

A single glance sufficed to show that a very noticeable change had taken place in the appearance of Mathias.

His face was pale and haggard, and the whole of one side of it, the eye, cheek bone, and forehead were bruised.

This was the mark that Jefferson had set upon him.

This was the bold American's only vengeance for the deathblow which the brigand had dealt upon his faithful friend and companion Magog Brand.

Jefferson's right arm came down like a steam hammer, and any man who had felt its full force as the scoundrel Mathias had did not forget it very readily.

Such a desperate shaking had it given Mathias that he had not yet recovered.

The bold, defiant bearing of the man was gone, and he looked ten years older than when Tomaso and he had last met.

It struck the visitor at once.

“Dear, dear me,” exclaimed the latter, “is it possible that this can be the redoubtable Mathias?”

“It is he,” said the governor, “yet scarcely so gay as is his wont, eh, Mathias?”

The prisoner shrugged his shoulders and sighed.

“Laugh on, your excellency,” he said, rather bitterly, “it is your turn now.”

“Now!”

“Aye, now. It may not always be.”

“Why, surely you never think of getting out of this?”

“Indeed, I think of nothing else morning, noon, and night.”

The governor gave a sharp glance about.

He looked toward the gaoler.

Now the gaoler was a huge fellow, over six feet high and broad in proportion, one who could have tackled Toro himself, as far as weight and sheer brute strength went.

“Your excellency,” replied Mathias, “when I leave this place, my exit will be due to no violence. Bad as I am, I am not altogether what they would make out.”

“Poor Mathias!” said the governor ironically, “one would almost think that murder was not his line of business.”

“Your excellency,” said the prison, drawing near to the grated window, “I repent sincerely of that poor little gentleman's death; it was no assassin's stab in the dark, but a most unfortunate blow in a fight, remember,”

“Bravo! Mathias! bravo!” ejaculated the visitor.

The prisoner looked up.

A strange expression flitted across his face.

Mathias was an adept in the art of dissimulation, and his face was schooled to tell neither more nor less than he wished.

“Now, your excellency,” said the visitor, “this rascal appears strangely self−possessed.”

“He does.”

“What does it mean?”

“Brag.”

“Humph!”

“Ah, you do not know him, sir, as well as I do.”

“Perhaps not; but it might just be possible that he is in league with some of his comrades outside.”

The governor smiled incredulously.

“Impossible.”

“What if that scoundrel, Tomaso, of whom we were speaking, should be at work?”

The prisoner's eyes glistened at this word.

A slight flash of intelligence passed between the prisoner and the visitor.

It was but momentary, and so slight as to be utterly unobserved by either the gaoler or the governor.

“And if such could be the case, sir, what could he possibly do, eh? What on earth, that's what I ask.”

“There's no saying.”

“Indeed you're right.”

“Only he ought to be well guarded when you change him from one prison to another, or—”

“Stop, stop, my dear sir, why change him? He will never leave this place alive,” said the governor.

“Never?”

“Never!”

“But surely you don't keep your prisoners all confined in these stifling places?”

“We do, though.”

“And never let them breathe the air? Why, it is torture.”

“They do breathe the air. At noon every day they are allowed to walk for an hour in the prison yard.”

“At noon?”

“At noon.”

The visitor fixed his eyes strangely upon the prisoner.

“Very good; if I may be allowed to trespass again, I should like to see how this fellow bears himself in the yard amongst his fellow−criminals.”

“By all means.”

“I'll come, then, at noon.”

* * * * *

At noon next day the German traveller was as good as his word.

The governor, full of his wonted courtesy, accompanied him to the yard, where all the prisoners were walking round two and two.

Some of the more desperate men were fastened by a single handcuff to the wrist of another man—a warder.

Of this category was the brigand Mathias.

His companion was a huge fellow, who topped him by a head and shoulders, and their wrists were linked securely together by a strong— if slender—pair of handcuffs.

The visitor's countenance fell when he observed this.

It upset all his plans at one fell swoop.

However, he did not utterly despair, but made an effort to get over the difficulty.

“Your excellency,” said he, “this is indeed cruel.”

“What,” demanded the governor, “fastening them to the gaoler?”

“Yes.”

“I only order it in special cases, such as that of Mathias.”

“He is then very dangerous?”

“Well, I scarcely believe that, only such precautions are the established rules.”

“I regret that.”

“Why?”

“Partly on the score of humanity,” was the reply.

“Ah, you would be too tender−hearted,” said the governor.

“No. But I also regret it because I hoped to see the brigand more like he appears when not under restraint. I suppose you would not like to set him free?”

The governor shook his head.

“That is against custom, and I should really not like to do it.”

The visitor reflected a moment as they walked on.

He could not abandon his scheme now that he had gone so far.

The effort should be made all the same.

They walked up to the porter's lodge beside the gates, where an eager crowd had assembled for a glimpse of the prisoners.

“And do you open those gates to admit the prisoners?” asked the visitor innocently.

“No, sir,” replied the governor; “this little side door is all we open. Now watch how it is done. This bar, which is like a lever, stops the door, and renders it immovable, now—hah!”

The fallacy of his words was shown ere they were fairly uttered.

The visitor whistled in a very peculiar way.

And there was a sudden silent rush at the door in question.

The bar, immovable as it was, fell before that desperate onslaught, and the door was carried off its hinges.

The ragged and miserable−looking mob turned like magic into a crowd of armed desperadoes. And in they pressed.

On they came, tearing down the gates and dashing every thing before them.

The poor gatekeeper was trampled under foot, and the warders and governor got hustled and cruelly handled.

The mob of armed invaders made for Mathias and his companion, and bore them bodily outside the gates.

The brigands then wrenched off the handcuffs.

Once outside the gates, a horse was found waiting.

Suddenly there was a loud cry heard.

“The soldiers—the soldiers!”

The whole of the guard−room had turned out.

A charge was made, and it looked as though the rescue of Mathias were likely to cost them dear.

Cries of defiance and rage were heard.

Just when matters were at the worst for the robber band, a deafening explosion was heard, that shook the solid building to its base.

The soldiers turned back and re−formed at their officer's command.

Then it was that the brigands, headed by the sham visitor, Tomaso, found their chance.

Up till now, the retreat had been cut off by the unpleasant appearance of the military.

“There goes the powder keg under the water gate,” cried Tomaso. “Lose not a moment. Follow me.”

A desperate rush was made, and the brigands got clear of the prison.

The soldiers were divided into two lots, one party being sent in pursuit, the other remaining to guard the prison.

The roll−call of the prisoners made this discovery.

“How many prisoners have escaped?” inquired the governor.

“Three absentees, your excellency,” said the head man of the prison. “One is an Italian, calling himself Toro; another an Englishman, calling himself Hunston; and the third, the brigand chief Mathias.”

CHAPTER VIII. A DEEP−LAID PLOT.

The news of the escape, or rescue—call it what you will—of the three desperadoes soon became known.

Emily and Mrs. Harvey were much alarmed.

The dogged obstinacy with which attempt after attempt was made by the villains made them imagine they were unsafe in such a lonely place.

Accordingly, a grand consultation was held, the result of which was that the Prince of Limbi was sent into the town to take rooms for the whole party at one of the two hotels the place could boast of.

And the next day they all quitted the villa.

The hotel in which our friends had secured apartments was a large straggling building, right at the extremity of the ill−built street which formed the chief part of the town.

Mr. Mole had been very particular when they went there in his inquiries about the brigands.

Would the party be quite safe from molestation?

The urbane proprietor, with many low bows, assured his excellency the Englishman that there was not the slightest possibility of their being molested.

The other male members of the party really troubled themselves very little about the brigands.

By ten o'clock, the day after the masquerade, hardly a person was stirring in the town.

A casual observer would have said there was literally no one to be seen. But hush!

Soft, cautious footsteps may be heard, and anyone whose eyes are accustomed to the gloom might have seen three figures creeping quietly down the street on the side opposite the hotel. Right over against that building they paused.

“That is the place” said one of the three, a giant almost in size.

“Curse them! they always manage to get comfortable quarters, while I am an outcast,” said another, who spoke like an Englishman.

“Death, gentlemen! what better quarters can you desire than my cave, in which you have spent several pleasant evenings?”

“Bah! Captain Mathias, you have never tasted the sweets of civilisation.”

“And, Signor Hunstani, how much the better are you through having tasted those sweets?”

“Peace, peace!” growled the giant. “Let us unite in thought and action, and to−night obtain our long−sought revenge.”

“Well, Toro, I am sure I don't want to quarrel with anyone, except Harkaway.”

“Curse him! and especially that American.”

“Hush! let your curses be not loud but deep; you'll awake the town if you swear so.”

“Have I not good cause to? Has he not beaten and put me to shame?”

“And have I not suffered equal pain and shame? Yet I am content to bide my time; you should have patience, Toro.”

“Come, come to business, my friends,” said Captain Mathias; “there is the house where our foe resides. How are we to proceed?”

“Quietly; hush!” said Hunston. “Confound it, how still the air is; the whole street seems to echo back the lightest whisper.”

“Let me get once inside, and I care not if all the street hears,” muttered Toro.

“Which proves you care not if you are unsuccessful,” said the Greek.

“How so?”

“If we are heard, we shall have the whole street in arms against us, and I fancy these Inglesi, with their boys and the blacks, are quite sufficient for the three of us.”

“Bah!” exclaimed Toro.

“Seriously, though, let us consider how to get into this place,” said Hunston.

“There's the door facing us.”

“But have you the key?”

"No, but I could send my foot through that plank as easily as anything," growled Toro.

"Certainly, and you would undoubtedly alarm the whole household by doing so, whereas we wish to catch them sleeping."

"Well, then, how about the windows?"

"Too high to reach," said Hunston, "unless we had a ladder."

"And I doubt if such a thing can be found in the town," interposed Captain Mathias.

"Well, then, let us see what there is at the back of the house. Captain, you have eyes like a cat or an owl; just glance up and down the street to see if there is anyone about."

The Greek looked in all directions.

"Not even a mouse is stirring," said he.

So the three villains, drawing their cloaks closely round them, stole silently away from the shelter of the friendly doorway, where the foregoing conversation had taken place, and proceeded round to the back of the hotel.

To reach the point desired, they had, of course, to cross the road, which was tolerably wide, and then skirt a kind of paddock.

There were few stars to be seen, and the moon—a new one, and perhaps not yet fully acquainted with her business—was partly hidden behind some clouds, though not so entirely obscured but that the forms of the three brigands cast deep shadows on the ground.

But surely that is not a shadow, which as they move, moves also from an adjoining doorway, and follows them.

Like them, it is wrapped in a cloak; like them, it stalks along slowly and erect, but unlike them, it makes no noise.

Its footfall is silent as that of the panther lurking in the jungle.

Its very breath, if it has any, seems hushed.

The three villains go slowly, and the shadow, or substance, whatever it may be, keeps the same pace, till they reach the open field at the back of the hotel.

Hunston, Toro, and the Greek then stand side by side looking towards the hotel, but the shadow sinks down out of sight by the side of the fence.

Another hasty look round, and then the Greek brigand pronounced that they were safe.

"No fear of being interrupted here."

"Well now let us settle," said Toro; "I am anxious to be at them."

"But see," said Hunston, "there are lights moving; it is not safe yet."

"Not till half−an−hour after midnight."

"And now—−"

"It is half−past ten o'clock."

"Two hours," groaned Toro.

"Better wait four than fail," said Hunston.

"Cold−blooded Englishman, what know you of the furious rate at which my blood boils in my veins? In that house is the man who struck me to the earth."

"Wait two hours, then you may have a good chance of paying off the score."

"And I will, too, with greater interest than even usurer charged his hapless client. I wonder which room the cursed Americano sleeps in."

"The third room on the right−hand side of the first corridor, where you ascend the great staircase."

Captain Mathias said this as promptly and positively as though he himself had shown our friends to bed.

After a pause he continued—

"Mr. and Mrs. Harkaway have the first room; Mr. and Mrs. Harvey the second; the third is a double−bedded apartment, one couch being occupied by the American, the other by the two boys."

"You seem to have pretty exact information, captain," said Hunston.

"Yes, there is little going on there that does not come to my ears. One of the porters is a spy in my employ."

"Why did you not get a key from him?"

"I have one; it opens the back door."

Toro had, during the last bit of conversation, been growling to himself a choice vocabulary of Italian oaths, occasionally shaking his fist at the building which contained the objects of his hatred.

He now turned to his companions.

“And where do you propose to pass the two hours that must elapse?”

“At the bottom of yonder field is a thicket, where we shall be free from observation. We can smoke our pipes there. By−the−bye, the patrol goes round about midnight.”

“We must be cautious,” said Hunston.

“Come along, then.”

The three villains then walked off in the direction of the thicket where they were to hide.

A minute afterwards a shadow rose from the ditch where he had been crouching, and stood looking after them long after they had been lost in the gloom.

“Just in time,” muttered the so−called shadow, who was in good truth as substantial flesh and blood as any in Greece.

“If I had not wandered hither in search of my daughter, probably half− a−dozen murders would have been committed. However, I'll thwart the rascals, as sure as my name is Petrus.”

For Petrus it was, from Magic Island, who had been playing spy on the movements of the three conspirators.

He stood there in deep thought for a few minutes.

“I must warn some of the people in the hotel, but I should like to get this business over without alarming Mrs. Harkaway or the other lady. The question is, how?”

He reached the front door of the hotel, and pulled at the bell handle.

After an interval of two or three minutes, a light shone through the keyhole, and a voice asked—

“Who is there?”

“A traveller, in search of food and bed.”

“Are you alone?”

“Yes.”

Then the door was unbolted, and the traveller entered.

“Is the proprietor of the hotel in bed yet?” he asked.

“I don't know, sir.”

“He must be roused at once. I have important news for him from a distant land.”

The porter stared, but did not seem inclined to call the proprietor, noticing which, Petrus said—

“I shall be sorry to alarm all the house, when I only want one person; but if you don't quickly bring him, I'll ring half a dozen of these bells at such a rate that he'll think the house is on fire.”

Seeing the stranger was in earnest, the porter went to the proprietor's room, and soon returned with him to the hall where Petrus was waiting.

“I should like to have a few words with you *in private*, sir,” said the traveller, with a strong emphasis on the words we have italicised.

“Certainly. You may go to bed, Theodorus.”

The porter somewhat sulkily retired to a kind of pantry, where he slept, and the proprietor of the hotel, softly following, turned the key upon him.

“I have my doubts about that fellow,” he said as he returned. “But now, sir, what is your pleasure with me?”

Petrus at once told him what he had heard, and great was the alarm of the hotel−keeper.

“What shall we do? Send for the police?”

Petrus, after a short silence, said—

“No.”

“What then? I cannot allow my guests to be murdered. Why, these scoundrels have already made one attempt on Mr. Harkaway and his friends at a masquerade.”

Just at that moment a guttural voice was heard singing—

“Ole Ikey Mole
Was a lushy ole soul,
And a lushy ole soul was he.”

“Now den, you nigger, be quiet,” said another voice.

“Who are these people?” asked Petrus.

“Two black men in attendance on the Harkaway party,” said the proprietor of the hotel.

“Just the men. I know a little of them. I have fought side by side with them. Now I have a proposal to make, which is that we put these brigands to flight in a ludicrous manner, which will annoy them more than being beaten in fight. Myself and the black men will do it with your assistance and permission.”

“Anything, so that there is no bloodshed.”

“That I will guarantee. Please call the two worthy dark−skins.”

Sunday and Monday, who had been keeping it up in the kitchen, were called and acquainted with the state of affairs.

“What, Massa Petrus,” said Sunday in surprise, “what you do here? Am you got dat black rascal pirate with you?”

“No; the pirate chief is dead. You will find his bones on the island— Magic Island, as young Jack Harkaway named it. Yes, my revenge is complete. The pirate died as my slave; but now to explain to you my plan to punish the three brigands.”

Sunday rolled his eyes fearfully, as he listened to the details of the plot.

“Gorra, massa, I'd like to tar and feather dat big rascal.”

“Tar!” said Petrus. “Ha, ha, ha! that is a good idea. Listen—but first show me the place where the gentlemen sleep.”

The hotel−keeper led the way to the corridor, and pointed out the sleeping apartments of the Harkaway party.

Petrus then held another short consultation with the two black men and the hotel−keeper, the result of which was that the latter retired, leaving Sunday, Monday, and Petrus to work their will with the invaders when they appeared.

And then, as there was but little time to spare, they set to work with a will to make all the necessary preparations.

Over each door they screwed into the wall an iron hook, to which was attached a pulley and a cord.

Then they went into the lower regions and hunted through the store rooms.

The first place they lighted upon was a kind of paint shop, full of paints, oils and such−like things.

“Dis is jes de shop for to cook de goose ob dem willins,” said Sunday.

“And here's de pots to cook 'em in,” said Monday, pointing to some iron vessels resembling pails, but made so that the bottoms could be removed.

The pails, as we will call them, were something like sugar loaves, with the tops cut off and turned base upwards.

When full, the weight of the liquid kept the bottom in its place, but it was evident that if the bottom was removed, as it easily could be, the contents would escape.

Petrus, after an inspection, pronounced them “just the thing,” adding—

“Now we must fill them with tar.”

“No, no,” said Monday. “Put tar in one, wery hot; in nodder put dis here paint, also werry hot; and in de oder put water, bilin' hot.”

“Good.”

Then the three sat down by the large fireplace in the kitchen, and deliberately began their cooking.

Monday devoted his attention to the heating of several pounds of mixed paint.

Sunday boiled a barrel of tar, while Petrus attended to a large cauldron of water.

Ten minutes before the hands of the clock pointed to half−past twelve, all the cooks had completed their work.

The paint, tar, and water, all at boiling heat, had been placed in the iron pails with the movable bottoms, and one of these had been hung over each bedroom door.

The hot water over Harkaway's door, the paint over Harvey's, and the tar over that in which the two boys and Jefferson reposed.

A string was attached to each pail, and passed over a pulley, the end being conveyed to a recess where the three watchers were concealed. They were armed.

Sunday, Monday, and Petrus each had a six−chambered revolver, loaded.

Then came the clang of the old−fashioned clock as it proclaimed half− past twelve.

Breathless silence prevailed both inside the house and out.

“Lights out,” whispered Petrus, when, after a short pause, a slight grating noise was heard at the back door.

In an instant all was darkness, except that the moon shone through a narrow window at the extreme end of the corridor.

A few minutes afterwards Petrus, who was watching, saw three dark figures come gliding into the long passage.

The first was a tall, bulky figure—Toro.

The second the Greek, and the third was evidently Hunston.

A plan of operations had been agreed upon—that was quite certain; for Toro, without the least hesitation, proceeded to Jefferson's door, the Greek placing himself outside Harvey's apartment, while Hunston stationed himself at the room occupied by Harkaway.

Then they waited for a signal, evidently intending to rush in simultaneously.

“Now!” said Hunston, in a loud whisper.

“Now!” echoed Petrus.

Before the brigands could rush into the rooms occupied by those they sought to destroy, Petrus pulled the three strings he held in his hand, and, good Heaven! what a spluttering and swearing at once commenced.

Hunston was drenched and scalded.

“A million curses!” he roared.

“Help! Look here, Toro.”

But Toro could not look.

A deluge of hot tar had streamed over his head, filling eyes, ears, nose, and mouth, saturating his hair and running down inside his clothing.

“Furies!” he screamed, “I'll have the life of the villain who has done this! Mathias, out with your knife, man.”

But the poor Greek was utterly cowed; the paint had destroyed all his senses save that of feeling, which was fully exercised.

Hunston, although severely scalded, managed to keep a certain proportion of his wits about him.

“Come, lads—quick, as you value your lives!” he exclaimed. “Away! we must not risk capture.”

He endeavoured to drag them away.

At that moment, however, another actor appeared on the scene.

This was Nero.

That wide−awake member of the monkey tribe had been doomed to share Sunday's apartments, where a neat bed had been made for him in one corner.

Hearing a noise, and, perhaps missing his companion (brother, Jefferson said), he came down, carrying in his dexter paw a well−filled pillow.

He seemed to recognise Toro at once.

The valorous ape leaped forward, and gave his Italian foe such a bolstering as Toro had never before heard of, while the three spectators laughed and applauded loudly.

Crack!

The ticking of the pillow gave way, and a shower of feathers enveloped the unhappy son of Italy, whose oaths and execrations were literally smothered.

“Golly! an't he a downy cove?” said Monday.

At this juncture, Hunston managed to grasp his companions by the hand, and dragged them downstairs and out at the back door.

Only just in time, however, for Jefferson, hearing the noise, rushed out, in scanty costume, it is true, but fully armed with pistol and bowie knife, and eager for the fray.

“What is the matter?” he demanded.

Petrus explained briefly.

Jefferson rushed to the door and fired two shots after the fugitives, who, however, managed to get away.

Then the door was securely bolted, and after the affair had been explained to all the alarmed inmates of the house, they retired to bed, but not before Harkaway and his friends had shaken Petrus warmly by the hand, with a promise that he should see his beloved daughter in the morning.

CHAPTER IX. THE BRIGAND'S CONSPIRACY—THE ARAB ASTROLOGER—HARVEY'S FIRST APPEARANCE AS A MESMERIST.

“They are making fresh efforts to get Mathias out,” said Dick Harvey to his friend Harkaway.

This was the beginning of a conversation which took place at the residence of the Harkaway party just three days after the daring and audacious attack on the hotel.

Mathias had been captured by the patrol while endeavouring to escape, and thrown in gaol again.

“Hang their impudence!” said Jefferson. “Will nothing daunt them? I wish one of them had entered my room the other night; I would have held him faster than it seems the prisons here can.”

“These two restless vagabonds are up to their games again,” exclaimed Dick.

“You mean Toro?”

“Aye, and Hunston.”

“What have they done now?” demanded Jefferson.

“They have been trying to tamper with the gaolers.”

“How was it discovered?”

“The traitor, whoever he may be, let fall a letter that he was carrying to Mathias.”

“That's lucky. Well, did they discover any thing?”

“No; it was written in cypher.”

“The cunning rascals!”

“Now, I've got more news for you,” Dick went on to say.

“Out with it, then.”

“You have heard of the Arab who tells fortunes in the town?”

“Mehemed Sadan, the great necromancer?”

“Yes. Would you be surprised to learn that he is one of Mathias' band?”

“Why, those scoundrels have a finger in every pie.”

“True,” said Harvey. “Now, I have a notion to offer you. I propose that we go there and test the truth of what I say.”

“How?”

“I'll tell you that as we go. Are you agreed?”

“I'm willing,” said Harkaway; “any thing for a little excitement.”

Off they went.

Mehemed Sadan, the Arabian magician, carried on his occult practices in a house in the best part of the town, and all his surroundings tended to show that the “black art” had proved a most profitable commerce to him.

When Harkaway, Jefferson, and Harvey arrived there, they were ushered into the presence of the magician by a negro fancifully attired, wearing silver bands round his wrists and ankles, from which dangled chains with small bells attached.

Mehemed Sadan was seated on a high−backed chair, close by a long table, on which was a long cloth of black velvet, covered with mystic signs and letters, which were all so much Greek to the visitors.

The room was filled with all kinds of things calculated to impress the vulgar with superstitious awe.

The effect was altogether lost upon Dick Harvey, for he made a point of nodding at the Arab astrologer in the most familiar manner.

“Morning to you, old fellow,” he said, cheerfully.

“Salaam, sahib,” responded the necromancer, gravely.

“Hullo!” said Jefferson, opening his eyes, “why, this Arab talks Hindustani.”

“Leave it to me,” said Dick Harvey, in an undertone.

The Arab then said some few words to the company generally, which the company generally could make rather less of than if they had been addressed in Chinese.

“He's talking no known language under the sun,” said Harkaway. “It's my opinion he has got the cheek to talk regular right−down gibberish to us.”

It was true.

The words, or sounds, let us say, which the necromancer was uttering, only sounded but too much like “hokey−pokey kickeraboo abracadabra,” and the rest of the mysterious sounds with which the conjurer at juvenile parties seeks to invest his performance with additional wonder, for the benefit of his youthful audience.

Dick was in a rage.

“Confound his impudence,” he exclaimed; “I'll give him one.”

So he let out in this wise—

“Chi ki hi−u−thundrinold umbuggo—canardly keep my thievinirons off your wool—I should like to land you just one on the smeller and tap your claret.”

At which, to the surprise of the magician, the visitors burst out laughing.

The Arab necromancer now asked them, in very good Greek, the object of their visit.

“We shall not understand much if we are addressed in Greek,” said Harkaway; “try him in Italian.”

And then they found that the conjurer spoke Italian as well, or better, than any of the party.

“Can you tell me,” said Jack Harkaway, by way of beginning business, “if I shall succeed in the present object of my desires or not?”

The magician bowed his head gravely.

Then he opened a large volume covered with mystic characters.

For a minute or two he appeared to be lost in deep study, and then he gave his reply.

“Your desires tend to the downfall of some lawless men, I find,” he said, watching them keenly, as if he expected to see them jump up in surprise at his words.

“They do.”

“And you will not succeed.”

“Does your art tell you where I shall fail?” asked Jack.

“No; I only see disappointment and trouble for you and yours.”

“Dear, dear, how very shocking,” exclaimed Harkaway, winking at Harvey.

“Dreadful!” added Dick, with a terrified look, and putting his tongue out at the magician.

“What else does your art tell you?” demanded Jefferson, who was anxious to know how far the necromancer would venture to try and humbug them.

“I see here,” said the conjurer, drawing his finger along a line of something on an open “book of fate,” that looked like Arabic, “I see here that your lives are menaced, one and all, through the keeping of a wretched man under restraint.”

The visitors looked at each other and exchanged a smile.

“Your art is at fault,” said Jefferson; “we have no one under restraint.”

“You are in some way connected with it.”

“Wrong again.”

The wizard looked uncomfortable at this.

“Strange,” he said, “and yet I read it here as clearly as you might yourself if it were written in a book.”

“You are mistaken,” said Jefferson; “we are in no way concerned in any thing of the kind.”

The wizard pored over the mystic tome again.

“I can say no more then,” he said, “for here you are clearly indicated. You especially are mentioned as being the immediate cause of his downfall.”

“How am I indicated?” demanded Jefferson.

“By the letter J.”

“Which you take for?”

“Your initial.”

“Humph! not far out. What an audacious humbug the fellow is,” said Jefferson to Jack.

Now, during the foregoing scene, young Jack and Harry Girdwood had joined the party, and Dick Harvey was observed to be in close conversation with them.

At this point Harvey turned from the two lads towards Jefferson.

“The astrologer is right,” he said, gravely.

“What the devil do you mean?” exclaimed Jefferson.

“You are right, sir,” added Dick to the magician himself.

The latter bowed.

“I doubt it not,” he said; “the stars do not speak falsely.”

“No, no.”

“And so you may convince your friend that I say no more nor less than the truth.”

“I can,” said Dick, in a voice as solemn as that of the necromancer himself, “for I am a mesmerist, and I have here with me a clairvoyant of great power.”

The conjurer started.

“Where?”

“Here.”

He held out his hand to young Jack and led him forward.

Harkaway and Jefferson stared again.

“Hullo!” ejaculated old Jack; “what the deuce is madcap Dick up to now?”

“Can't hazard a guess,” said Jefferson.

“Mesmerism can not read the future as my art does,” said the necromancer.

“It can,” said Dick; “it corroborates all you have said. I'll give you a proof of it before our friends here.”

And then, before he could object, Dick made a mesmeric pass or two across young Jack's face, and immediately it appeared to take effect.

Young Jack's eyes were closed, and for a moment there played about his mouth a merry smile of mischief, and then he appeared to be in a state of coma.

Never was mesmerism effected with such little trouble.

“Now tell me,” said Dick, with all the tricks of manner of the professional mesmerist, “tell me to what this person alludes?”

“He speaks of Mathias, the brigand chief.”

“True,” said Dick; “and will Mathias escape?”

“No.”

“You hear,” said Dick, turning towards the necromancer.

“I do.”

“And therefore it is useless to try and effect the liberation of this Mathias?”

“Quite,” returned young Jack. “The wizard here is trying all he can himself, but he will be discovered by the police and thrown into prison.”

“Hah!” exclaimed Dick, “do you hear that?”

“I do,” returned the necromancer, “but it is false.”

“It is true,” said Dick. “So beware.”

[Illustration: 'SPEAK,' SAID DICK, MAKING MESMERIC PASSES ACROSS JACK'S FACE”—ADV. IN GREECE, VOL. II PAGE 64.]

“Ask him more,” said the wizard, eagerly. “Ask him more.”

“What shall I ask?” demanded Dick.

“Ask him—yet, mark me, I don't believe a word of it—ask him, for curiosity, what follows.”

“Follows what?”

“What he said last.”

“You mean what follows being thrown into prison?” he said, deliberately.

“Yes.”

“Do you hear?” said Dick.

“Yes, master,” responded young Jack.

“Speak, then.”

By this time Harkaway the elder and Jefferson began of course to see what they were driving at, and they became just as much interested as the wizard himself in what young Jack was going to say.

“What follows,” said young Jack, “is too dreadful to look at.”

“Speak,” said Dick, with a furious pass across the lad's face. “Speak, I command you. What follows?”

“I see the wizard hanging by the neck—there,” and young Jack pointed straight before him.

The necromancer looked as unhappy as possible when he heard young Jack's words.

“Do you know enough,” asked Dick Harvey, “or would you learn more yet?”

The wizard essayed to smile, but it was a sickly attempt, and it died away in a ghastly manner.

“I can not believe a word of what you say, but still let him speak on.”

Dick frowned.

“If you are a scoffer,” he said, sternly, “my clairvoyant will not speak.”

“I am no scoffer,” returned the necromancer; “speak on.”

“What would you know?”

“When is my danger to begin? Let him say that.”

“Speak,” said Dick, making mesmeric passes across Jack's face.

“He need fear nothing at present,” said young Jack.

The wizard drew a long breath of relief.

“The police are below,” continued young Jack, “but for ten minutes there is no danger.”

“Ten minutes!”

“Yes.”

“And after?” gasped the wizard, breathlessly.

“Then he is doomed,” said young Jack, in sepulchral tones. “The wizard will be numbered with the dead.”

Thereupon, the necromancer was taken suddenly queer, and he retreated with a few confused words of excuse.

“He's gone,” said Dick, laughing.

They pushed aside the curtains where the magician had disappeared, and found that there was a back staircase.

“There he goes, there he goes!” cried Harry Girdwood, excitedly.

“Yes, and he has left his skin,” said young Jack.

Upon the stairs was the long black velvet robe covered with tin−foil ornaments, with which the necromancer was wont to frighten the ignorant and superstitious peasants who came to consult him out of their wits.

“I'll frighten old Mole with this,” said young Jack.

“I don't suppose that they'll try to frighten us again into helping Mathias, the brigand chief, out of prison,” said Harkaway, laughing.

“He shall hang as high as Haman,” said Jefferson, sternly. “Of that I am so determined, that if there were no one else, I would willingly fix the noose myself. But hang he shall for murdering my poor and noble friend Brand.”

CHAPTER X. THE CONDEMNED CELL—MATHIAS ESCAPED—WHERE HAS HE GONE?—THE BLOOD ON THE HEARTH—A TALE OF TERROR.

The schemes set on foot by the friends of Mathias for his release were so many and so unceasing that the greatest precautions had to be taken to keep him in safety.

Rules were made, and for awhile most rigidly enforced, that not a soul was to be permitted to visit the prisoner; but the exception proves the rule, and there was an exception made in favour of a lady who came and pleaded so earnestly to the governor of the prison that he could not find the courage to refuse her.

The lady was shown into the cell which Mathias had lately occupied.

Lately? Yes.

The bird had flown.

But how had he got free?

Where had he gone?

Not a soul in the prison had the vaguest notion.

The gaoler stared and gaped like one in a dream.

“Where is Mathias?” demanded the woman.

“That's more than I can guess,” responded the gaoler, rubbing his eyes as though he could not believe their evidence.

“Have you mistaken the cell?”

“Not I.”

“Has he been removed?”

“No.”

She stared him straight in the face for a moment or two, and then she burst out into a fit of laughter.

“Ha, ha, ha! Why, he has escaped. He has escaped. He has beaten your vigilance—baffled you all in spite of locks, bolts and bars, and all your watching.”

The gaoler scratched his head.

“Let us look.”

“Look! why, you can see everything here at a glance—everything. There are four walls. There is the bedstead; you can see under it. There is not room for a man to creep under there. There is the fireplace, and there is the window.”

“Ha!” ejaculated the gaoler, “the window.”

“What then?”

“There is no other way; he must have escaped that way, undoubtedly.”

“Nonsense,” said the woman; “don't you see that is too high up from the ground.”

“He has found a way to climb up there, then.”

“But the iron bars are all in their places still.”

“True,” said the gaoler, thoroughly puzzled, “true. Where can he have got to?”

“It is simple enough.”

“How so?”

“He never attempted the window. He has walked out through the door being left open.”

“Never!”

“Money can do more than that, and I rejoice at his freedom.”

She moved to the door.

But the gaoler held her back rather roughly.

“Stop you here,” he said, rudely; “I shall have to report this to the governor, and you had better remain until the job has been investigated.”

And before the startled woman could divine his intention, he swung to the door and shot the bolt.

Then pushing back the trap in the door, he added a few words through the grating.

“You'll be safer there,” said he, “unless you can manage to get out as Mathias did. But the devil himself must

have a compact with Mathias!”

“At least leave me the light,” she said, imploringly.

“Against orders,” was all the answer vouchsafed.

The trap was shut.

The woman was left a prisoner, in total darkness.

* * * * *

There is always something unpleasant in darkness, and this woman was by no means iron−nerved.

No sooner was she alone, than a painful sensation of uneasiness stole over her.

“They can not keep me long here,” she kept murmuring to herself; “I have done nothing; I am accused of no offence. The governor will set me at liberty as soon as he knows. Could any thing be more unfortunate? Mathias was a prisoner, and I was at liberty. Now Mathias is free, and I am a prisoner. Cruel fate to separate us. We are destined to be parted.”

The gloom grew oppressive now.

She stood still, listening in painful silence for five minutes together—five minutes that appeared to be as many hours.

A silence so solemn, so death−like, that she could hear the very beating of her heart. This grew unbearable.

She groped her way around the cell to find the bed, and approaching the fireplace, she was suddenly startled by a sound.

A very faint noise, as of something dripping on the flagstones by her feet.

In the tomb−like silence then reigning, the faintest sound caused her to feel uncomfortable.

She listened awhile intently, asking herself what it could mean.

Drip, drip, drip.

It was strange.

When the light was there, she had not noticed it at all.

What could it be then, that was only to be heard in the dark?

Was it fancy?

No.

It was too real.

There was no mistaking it.

If the oppressive gloom of the cell started strange sounds or strange fancies in her head, why should it take such a shape as that?

Why, indeed?

“Would to Heaven they were back with the light,” she said. “Will they never come?”

Just then, as though her earnest wish were heard and answered, a faint thin streak of light was shot into the cell through the grated window above.

This was reflected from a chamber in the prison whose window was close by the window of this cell, and where a lamp had just been lighted.

The welcome ray shot straight across the cell where she stood by the fireplace, and she remarked that the dripping did not cease.

Drip, drip, drip!

She looked down.

“I see, I see,” she shudderingly exclaimed, “it is raining, and the rain is falling down the chimney. How foolish of me to get alarmed about nothing.”

Now the light, we have said, shot across the hearth, and here it was that the drip, drip, drip, fell.

“Same as I thought.”

As she muttered this to herself, she stretched forth her hand under the chimney, and the next drop fell upon it. It was not water.

No, imperfect as was the light then, it sufficed to show her that upon her hand was a curiously dark stain.

Raising it nearer to her eyes, she examined it eagerly.

Then she shuddered, and exclaimed in a voice of terror—“Blood!”

Yes, it was blood.

Pen can not describe the terror of that wretched woman upon making this alarming discovery.

"Blood! Whose? Hah! whose blood? Whose but his—whose but the blood of my darling—my own Mathias?"

For a moment the thought completely unnerved her, and it was little short of a miracle that she kept from fainting.

But she fought bravely with the deathly horror stealing over her.

And kneeling on the hearth, she called up, yet in gentle voice, lest she should give the alarm—

"Mathias! Mathias, my own! Do you not know me? Mathias, I say!"

She listened—listened eagerly for a reply.

And presently it came—a dull, hollow moan, a cry of anguish that chilled the blood in her heart, that froze the very marrow in her bones.

"Mathias, darling Mathias! answer me for the love of mercy; I shall die else."

Another moan was heard.

Fainter and fainter even than the first.

Yet full of pent−up suffering.

A sound that told a whole tale of anguish.

"Mathias, come to me," she called again.

"Oh−h−h!"

A fearfully prolonged groan came down to her, louder than before, as if the sufferer had put all his remaining strength into the effort.

Then all was silent.

Eagerly she listened, straining forward to catch the faintest breath.

But the voice above was stilled for ever.

And yet the drip, drip, drip continued, and as she stretched forward beneath the chimney, she caught the drops upon her face.

Then she could no longer thrust back conviction.

With a wild cry of terror she drew back, and groped her way round the room towards the door.

Her hand rested upon the grated trap, and she pushed it back with all her force, crying aloud for help as she did so.

"Help, help!" she shouted with the energy of despair; "Mathias is dying."

But that wretched man would not trouble the authorities more—His last breath had been drawn as she stood there listening to those awesome sounds.

What could be the solution of this mystery!

This would be known soon now, for the sounds of footsteps were distinctly heard now in the long stone corridors of the prison.

The gaolers had given the alarm at once of the prisoner's escape, and the outlets of the prison were guarded in all directions, while a party was sent to the cell to investigate the matter thoroughly.

At the head of this party was the governor himself.

The time had appeared ten times as long to the unhappy woman as it was in reality.

"Help, help! oh, help!" she cried.

At each effort she grew weaker and weaker. Her voice died away, and when they reached the door of the cell, they found her hanging by the bars of the grated window or trap more dead than alive.

"Show the light," ejaculated the governor.

And then, as the rays fell upon that face, pallid as the flesh of a corpse, save where the dark blood stains had settled, there was an involuntary exclamation of horror from all the beholders.

"Father of mercy," cried one of the men; "she has destroyed herself."

Such was the general idea.

She had committed suicide.

In this, however, they were speedily undeceived.

To burst open the door and rush into the cell was but the work of a moment.

At this the woman rallied a little and recovered herself.

"What is the matter?" asked the governor.

“The chimney!” gasped the woman faintly.

“The chimney! Speak—explain.”

“His blood—Mathias's,” she said; “see the chimney. I dare not look.”

Two of the men by now had approached the chimney, and lowering the light they carried, one of them discovered a dark ominous pool upon the hearth.

“Call the doctor; there is something more than meets the eye in this.”

This order was promptly obeyed, and a surgeon was speedily in attendance. A mere cursory glance convinced the man of skill that the blood upon the woman's face was not her own, and just as he arrived at the decision, drip, drip, drip it began again upon the hearth.

The men looked at each other half scared, and the governor himself was scarcely more self−possessed.

The surgeon alone retained his presence of mind.

Snatching a lamp from one of the men, he thrust it as far as his arm could reach up the chimney and looked earnestly up.

“As I thought!” he exclaimed.

“What?” demanded the governor, eagerly.

“He is there.”

“Who?”

“Who but the prisoner? Mathias is there—hopelessly stuck—wedged in. He has been trying to escape and has hurt himself.”

The woman looked up at these words.

“Is it no worse?” she asked. “Is he badly hurt?”

“I can not say yet,” said the surgeon; “we must get him down first.”

This proved a very difficult matter indeed.

The flue was so narrow that it was sheer madness to attempt climbing it.

Eagerly Mathias had pushed on, and finally got himself wedged inextricably.

He could neither move up nor down.

It was when he made this alarming discovery that his struggles became desperate, and in his wild efforts to free himself from his self−set trap, he tore and mutilated his flesh most cruelly.

The wounds and the want of air had done their work.

An hour's hard work succeeded in setting the prisoner free—or rather his body, for it was found that life had been extinct, according to the surgeon's report, before they had entered the cell.

And when they came to examine the clothes, they made a discovery which threw a light upon the whole affair.

A small scrap of paper, dirty and crumpled was found in his pocket, upon which was some writing that was with great difficulty construed in this wise—

“The only hope is from the waterside. If you can but reach the roof, and have the courage to make the plunge, freedom will be your reward.”

How this note came there was never discovered.

With this dire catastrophe ended the efforts of the brigands to free their unhappy leader.

CHAPTER XI. MR. MOLE VISITS THE WIZARD—THE MAGIC MIRROR AND THE LIFE−LIKE VISION—THE INCANTATION—THE CHARMED WIG.

“In point of fact, sir,” said young Jack to his tutor one morning, “it is about the only thing worth seeing here.”

“What is, Jack?”

“The wizard.”

Mr. Mole looked very straight at his pupil upon this.

“What wizard, sir?” he said, severely. “What do you mean?”

“I mean the conjuror that Mr. Jefferson, and dad, and Uncle Dick went to see.”

“When?”

“The other day. Didn't they tell you about it?”

“No, sir.”

When Mr. Mole addressed his pupil as “sir,” young Jack knew pretty well that he thought he was being humbugged.

There is an old saying—“Jack was as good as his master.”

Putting on a look of injured innocence, he called his comrade Harry to corroborate what he had said.

“That's quite true, Mr. Mole.”

“That Mr. Jefferson went with Mr. Harkaway and Harvey to see a necromancer?”

“Yes.”

“Preposterous!” quoth Mr. Mole. “Why, whatever is the world coming to next? We shall have them spirit−rapping and table−turning and such−like muck, I suppose.”

Jack looked serious.

“Then you don't believe in necromancy—that they can tell the past and the future by the aid of astrology?”

“Pickles!”

It would have astonished Messieurs Crosse and Blackwell themselves, could they have heard what a deal that one word could convey when uttered by an Isaac Mole.

“Well, sir,” said Harry Girdwood, seriously, “the wizard told us some very remarkable things indeed.”

“What did he tell you?”

“Many things, many very wonderful things; but one of the most wonderful was about you, sir.”

Mr. Mole started.

“Don't you try to come the old soldier over me,” said Mole.

Harry Girdwood protested that he held Mr. Mole in far too much respect to essay any thing like coming the ancient military, or indeed anything else which might be construed into want of proper feeling.

Mr. Mole looked hard at him.

“And what did he say about me?”

“He said that all the intelligence of our party was centred in one person.”

“Well?”

“And that the initials of the person in question were I. M.”

“Now, Jack.”

“Sir.”

“You two boys are conspiring against me.”

“You are rather hard upon us, sir,” said Harry Girdwood, with an injured look.

“Was I? Dear me, I didn't mean that,” said poor Mole. “But I'll go and see this wizard, as you call him.”

“It might startle you, sir.”

“Stuff and nonsense, Harry; my nerves are iron—iron, I tell you.”

“They had need be of steel, if you really mean to go.”

“I'll go, and you shall go with me, Harry,” said Mr. Mole; “and I'll unmask this wretched impostor before you.”

And down came his clenched fist upon the table, with a fierceness and energy which made all the things leap

up.

* * * * *

The chamber of mystery was arranged with a keen eye to effect.

The present possessors of the place had preserved all the adjuncts which had looked so effective during the career of the necromancer, who had fled ignominiously.

A huge stuffed alligator swung from the ceiling, and the lighting of the room was effected by means of two or three swinging lamps, that burnt dimly blue, and made the place look sepulchral enough to satisfy the most morbid cravings for the horrible.

At the further end of the room was a “charmed circle,” drawn with chalk, and set around it was a row of hideous grinning skulls, which suggested that a hint had been borrowed from Zamiel, in “Der Freyschutz.”

Besides these matters, there were several skeletons stuck up in the most alarming attitudes.

Beside the chair was a large oval frame.

Upon the other side of the necromancer's chair was a heavy curtain, or *portiere* of cloth, covered with fantastic figures, and this was drawn aside a minute or so after Mr. Mole and Harry Girdwood appeared.

Then, through the dark aperture thus disclosed, the wizard hobbled in.

Not the wizard that we have seen before, but a little old man bent half double with age, and of whom little was to be seen save a long white beard and an appropriate robe.

He leant heavily upon a staff, and sank into his chair with evident pain and difficulty.

“What would ye with me?” said the necromancer, in feeble, querulous tones. “If ye have come to scoff again, begone ere I summon an evil spirit to blight ye.”

Mr. Mole said nothing.

But when Harry Girdwood placed his hand nervously upon the old gentleman's arm, as if for protection, he felt that he was trembling slightly.

“He knows that we are English, you see,” whispered Harry.

“Ye−es—ahem!—ye−es.”

“Do you hear me?” said the wizard.

“Ye−es, oh, yes, sir,” said Mr. Mole, who could not, for the life of him, get his voice above a whisper.

“Then answer.”

“By all means! decidedly—quite so, I assure you.”

“What? Beware! Do you mean to doubt and mock?”

“Oh, dear; yes.”

“Hah!”

“That is, no. I really don't know what I am saying.”

“Silence, or the fiends will have your ber−lud ber−lud—Do you hear me?” shrieked the old wizard.

“Quite so. Dear, dear me, Harry,” said Mr. Mole in an undertone, “what a very remarkable person, and I don't want to lose my ber−lud.”

“What do you say now, sir? Do you feel sure that he is a humbug?”

“Of course not, but—”

At this juncture their conversation was cut short by a low, rumbling noise, that sounded like distant thunder.

As it continued, it increased in strength, until it became absolutely deafening.

Then suddenly upon a sign from the necromancer, it ceased, and the man of mystery arose and pointed menacingly with his wand at Mole.

“Ye have thought well to neglect my warning,” he said, in a voice which thrilled poor Mole strangely; “the secrets of your inmost heart are known to me as to my familiar, and the penalty must be enacted.”

Mole bounced up.

“Goodness me!”

Harry Girdwood laid a trembling hand upon the unhappy old gentleman, and played the part of Job's comforter once again with considerable effect.

“We are lost.”

“Don't, Harry, don't! Pray consider Mrs. Mole and the two babes.”

“Try and melt him with a very humble apology.”

“I will, I do!” exclaimed Mr. Mole in great excitement. “I really did not mean it, Mr. Conjuror; 'pon my soul, I did not; and pray do not let your vampires take my her−lud.”

“Enough,” said the wizard, sternly; “for once your ignorance shall excuse you. Now say what you would have with me and begone.”

“I think I should like to go,” Mole whispered to Harry,

“What for?”

“We have been a long while here,” said Mr. Mole in the same tone; “Mrs. M, will be looking for me.”

“Perhaps you don't feel quite comfortable here.”

“Comfortable,” said Mr. Mole with a sickly smile; “oh, dear me, yes, I never was jollier.”

“A little nervous perhaps, sir.”

“My dear boy,” said Mole, positively, “I have nerves of iron, literally iron. Ha! what noise is that?”

“Only the magician's evil spirit, or his familiar, as he calls it.”

“Strange,” said Mole; “but sheer humbug of course.”

“Humbug?”

“Hush!” exclaimed Mr. Mole, very anxiously.

Bang went that deafening thunder again, and Mr. Mole hopped towards the door.

Harry Girdwood followed him closely up.

“You are uncomfortable, Mr. Mole.”

“Not at all; nerves of adamant, Harry.”

The latter laughed.

Never was there such an audacious humbug as Isaac Mole.

“You see that frame, sir, beside the wizard's chair?” said Girdwood.

“Yes,” replied Mr. Mole; “what of it?”

“He showed us some marvels there last time.”

“What is it?”

“A magic mirror.”

“You must have been thoroughly well cheated; now, what could he have shown you there?”

“Wonders,” replied Harry impressively; “you, amongst other marvels.”

“Me?”

“Yes.”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean, sir, that you appeared before us as plainly as I see you now.”

Mr. Mole certainly looked serious at this.

“He can show you anyone you may want to see,” said Harry.

“Never!”

“Try him.”

“I will,” said Mr. Mole, with a show of determination, but shaking all over.

“Now, O sceptic, what proof of my lore would ye have? Would ye know something of yourself?”

“No.”

“Yes,” said Harry Girdwood for him promptly.

The wizard inclined his head gravely, and opened a large volume before him upon the table.

After poring over this for a time, he said the following doggrel in a deep bass voice—

“The doom of Mole is understood,
For ever more to walk on wood;
Though upon macadam or stone
Yet he shall walk on wood alone.
“Let him march out on asphalte—tile,
In orange groves his thoughts beguile;
Where'er he be, the fate of Mole's
To scud through life upon bare poles”

This peculiar incantation had its effect somewhat increased by soft music.

“Ahem!” said Mr, Mole, “it didn't want a wizard to tell me that.”

“What, sir?” demanded Harry, innocently.

“About my wooden legs; my infirmity is visible to every body.”

“But how could he know?”

“By looking.”

“Still sceptical,” said the wizard, who had very sharp ears; “shall I consult my book again?”

“No, no,” said Mr. Mole, uneasily.

But Harry Girdwood said “Yes.”

He did not want to end the scene yet.

“What would you?” demanded the magician sternly.

Harry commenced to whisper to Mr. Mole.

“Come, sir, pluck up your courage, and find out something about yourself. You know the past—why not ask him about the future?”

“He might be rude enough to say something unpleasant, Harry. However, I'll try him.”

Then, with a very polite bow, Mr. Mole asked—

“Can you tell me, Mr. Magician, what my ultimate fate is?”

The necromancer took two steps forward and seized Mr. Mole's hand.

“I find that the line of life is tinged with the hue of blood,” said he, in solemn tones, after a lengthened inspection of the palm.

“Dear me, how unpleasant—I washed my hands not long ago.”

“Man! do you think you can wash away the decrees of fate or sponge out the solemn words written by the stars? You are an Englishman?”

“Certainly.”

“Already six Englishman have sought me, and each of the six died a terrible death. What says the book?—

“A terrible death on this green earth,
With never the slightest chance of heaven;
Let him curse the day—the hour of his birth,
The English victim numbered seven.”

“And you are *Number Seven*, Mr. Mole. May all the powers of heaven and earth preserve me from such a terrible doom as yours.”

Mr. Mole almost fainted when the magician uttered such fearful words respecting his (Mole's) fate.

Harry Girdwood, however, handed him a rum flask, and a good pull at that restored his nerves.

“Pooh!” said he, “I don't believe a word he uttered.”

“Still sceptical?” said the magician. “But to convince you of my power, I will show you any thing you like in my magic mirror.”

“Very well, then, I should like to see Harkaway and Harvey at this present moment—just to ascertain what they are doing—that will be a test.”

He chuckled as he said this.

But as he spoke the magic mirror grew light, and two figures were seen, set, as it were, in a frame.

Jack Harkaway the elder, was seated in an arm−chair reading; beside him stood his constant companion, Dick Harvey.

The latter's figure was the more remarkable of the two, and the attitude was not merely characteristic, but it was startlingly like life.

One hand was in his pocket; the other was at his face, the thumb pointing at his nose, the fingers outstretched towards the audience.

“What do you think of that?” asked Harry Girdwood, in low tones.

“Marvellous!” cried Mole; “that is Harkaway and Harvey, sure enough. Harvey has got something the matter with his nose.”

“No,” whispered Harry, “he's taking a sight at you.”

“So he is. Just like Harvey. Harvey!” he called out.

The mirror darkened, and the figures faded away from the sight upon the instant.

“Do you desire still another proof of my skill?” asked the wizard.

“Well you can, if you like, tell me something more about myself; but don't put yourself to any trouble.”

The wizard leant over his book earnestly for a consider able time.

“I see here,” said he, “that you have contrived to keep one important matter secret from your friends.”

“What?”

“The hairs of your head are numbered,” continued the wizard.

Mr. Mole changed colour.

“How—what?”

“By the barber; you wear a wig.”

“Oh, no—no!” exclaimed Harry Girdwood, positively, “You are wrong there, sir, I assure you. Is he not, Mr. Mole?”

“Of course he is.”

“Will you see for yourself, unbelieving boy?”

“Yes,” said Harry.

“Where—say, where shall my familiar take it?”

“Up to the ceiling.”

Mr. Mole groaned.

At the self−same instant out went the lights; a heavy hand was placed upon Mr. Mole's head, and hey, presto! his wig was seen dancing about at the ceiling, glittering with a phosphorescent light upon it.

Mr. Mole looked up, gave one awful yell, then made for the door, and flew away as fast as his wooden legs would carry him.

And his yells continued, for all along his route young Jack had sprinkled a plentiful supply of crackers, which exploded as he ran.

An unearthly chorus, sounding like the discordant laughter of invisible fiends greeted his retreat, and he never stopped until he had got home, panting and gasping for breath.

As soon as he was out of the room Harry Girdwood locked the door.

“Come forth, my merry devils!” he shouted. “Old Mole's gone.”

The curtain was drawn back, and in came Dick Harvey and Jack Harkaway, carrying lights.

The wizard threw back his head dress and long horsehair wig, and showed the grinning face of young Jack himself.

“Bravo, Jack,” said his comrade, Harry; “you did it ever so much better than the other conjuror did.”

“Was he frightened?” inquired young Jack.

“Poor old Mole! I never saw him so alarmed before.”

Harvey and old Jack enjoyed the fun every bit as much as the boys.

“My opinion is,” said the elder Harkaway, laughing, “that the triumph of the whole job was in the dancing wig.”

“It was beautifully done,” said Harvey.

“I nearly missed it,” said Harry Girdwood laughing, “for you put out the lights so suddenly that I couldn't find the string, and then I nearly dug the hook into his head as well as his wig; and as for the phosphorus, I gave him a dab with it upon the nose.”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

Every thing had been carefully arranged beforehand, it need hardly be said, and a cord, with a fish−hook at the end of it, was run over a small wheel fixed in the ceiling,

Harry held the other end of the cord, and as soon as the darkness and confusion came, he drove the hook into poor old Mole's wig, while he rubbed it dexterously with phosphorus, and then with a jerk he hauled it up to the ceiling, where he set it dancing about, to the indescribable horror of Mole.

CHAPTER XII. WHEREIN MR. MOLE IS CRUELLY USED—THE GARDEN FETE—SUNDAY AND MONDAY GIVE AN ENTERTAINMENT—ANOTHER LOOK INTO THE MAGIC MIRROR— STUDIES OF NATURAL HISTORY—AN INVOLUNTARY PERFORMER.

When Isaac Mole had time to reflect coolly upon what had occurred, doubts arose in his mind.

In spite of the seemingly inexplicable nature of the phenomena which he had witnessed, he felt that Harkaway, father or son, must know something of it.

Dick Harvey, he was morally sure, was in it.

If any thing fell, Harkaway would start up, on which Harvey or young Jack would immediately inquire anxiously if he were startled, solely for the purpose of leading up to Mole's words at the wizard's house.

“Startled—nervous! Never; iron nerves, sir—adamant!”

Upon these occasions, Mr. Mole would glide away from Harkaway's room without a word, leaving his tormentors to have their grin out all to themselves.

All they could do they could not make him drop a word of allusion to the events just narrated.

On that topic he was utterly dumb. Day and night the worthy Isaac Mole brooded over one solitary topic.

Revenge.

“I'll teach 'em,” he said; “I'll let them know what it is to play practical jokes with a man like me.”

The last straw breaks the camel's back. The last indignity on his wig proved too much for Isaac Mole, for he had until that fatal day at the magician's, been fondly hugging himself in the delusion that the secret was all his own.

The talk was tortured and twisted about so as to make it bear upon the sorest subject for the poor old gentleman.

“Dash my wig, Mr. Mole!” Harvey would say; “let's take a short country excursion. You know the advantages of change of *hair.”*

If a suggestion were wanting for the dinner of the day, a voice was ready to advocate “jugged hare.”

“That's very well,” said Harkaway, “but where can you get one in these parts?”

“That's it,” chimed in Harvey; “as Mrs. Glasse says, first catch your *hair,* eh, Mr. Mole?”

Mole winced.

“It's not always easy to catch it, is it, Mr. Mole?” said Harry Girdwood, slyly.

“Not if it flies too high,” said young Jack.

This chaff goaded poor old Mole to fury, coming as it did from the boys.

“Really,” he said, with a lofty sneer, “I don't see what you have to laugh at in the idle nonsense of these children.”

This made them grin more than ever.

“The wit of the rising generation,” sneered Mole.

“Mr. Mole would like the young generation never to rise, I think,” said Harry Girdwood.

“That's it,” laughed Harkaway; “Mr. Mole was always so conservative in his ideas.”

“Let me see, dad,” said young Jack, looking puzzled; “Conservative, why, that means a Tory.”

“Yes.”

“But, Mr. Mole, I thought that you always were a Whig.”

Such a storm of laughter greeted this sally, that Mr. Mole could not stand up against it.

Looking daggers at every body, he trudged out of the room, digging his walking stick fiercely as he went.

Now at the door, who should he meet but Sunday, grinning from ear to ear?

“I'm not going to be fooled by you, you infernal black pudding,” cried Mole, exasperated beyond measure.

“Yah, yah,” grinned the mirthful Caesar Augustus, holding his sides.

“Take that,” cried Mole.

Sunday did take it.

It was not a pleasant dose, for “that,” in this instance, meant a severe crack across the head with old Mole's

walking stick.

Sunday rubbed his poll.

Happily the thick wool with which it was garnished saved the skull from much danger, and a nigger's head is proverbially tough.

But yet Sunday did not relish the indignity.

“You dam wooden−legged ole tief,” he shouted out; “I'll gib it to yar for dis hyar.”

And so, full of revengeful thoughts, the darkey sought his friend Monday.

And they set to work plotting, with what result the next day showed— much to the old gentleman's disgust.

* * * * *

They mustered a good round dinner−party upon the following day.

In front of the summer house was an object which excited Mr. Mole's curiosity considerably.

One of the ladies asked what it was there for.

“I don't know exactly what it is,” replied Harkaway; “something of Monday's, I think, Dick.”

“I believe so,” replied Harvey, carelessly.

“They are going to give us an entertainment of some kind,” said young Jack.

The cloth having been cleared, Monday came forward, and bowing gravely, addressed the company.

“Ladies and gentlemen—”

“Hear, hear!” from Mole, who, thinking himself free from attack, determined to try a bit of chaff upon his own account.

“Thank you, sar,” said Monday, bowing gracefully to Mole.

“Ladies and gentlemen—”

“Bravo, bravo!” shouted Mole; “exceedingly bravo.”

“Folks generally—sane and insane”—here he bowed in a very marked manner at Mr. Mole.

“Hear, hear!” cried Dick.

“My entertainment is just a−gwine to begin, and as it is of a scientific natur dat asks for all your attention, I must ax them to go at once who don't wish to stay and see it all through, so as not to interrupt me.”

“No one wishes to go.”

The most eager person to remain was Mr. Mole.

Poor old Mole.

Monday went on—

“The first that I'se gwine to show you, ladies and gentlemen, is some speciminks of what is known as the occult art, that is, the black art, or magic.”

Mole winced.

“Go on.”

“Hear, hear!” said Dick.

“Bravo, Monday,” from Jack Harkaway.

Mole was silent.

He had not another “bravo” in him, so to speak.

Monday bowed in acknowledgment of the plaudits.

“In the first place, den, ladies and gentlemen,” he went on to say, “I mean to show you my magic mirror.”

Mole glanced nervously at Dick, and from him to Jack Harkaway.

But both looked as stolid as Dutchmen.

Monday drew back the curtain from the easel, disclosing a frame, on which was fitted a plain black board.

“In this frame,” said the professor of the black art, “I can show you any persons you may ask for, dat is, persons who are known to you.”

Mr. Mole had heard enough to convince him that he was in danger of being once more sacrificed to the insatiable passion of his two old pupils for chaffing and practical joking.

“Well, sar,” said Monday, “just you try um.”

“We will,” said Dick.

“Well, then, sar, who shall be the first person I must bring before you?”

No reply.

“Well, Mr. Mole, name somebody,” said Monday, in his most insinuating manner.

Mole's only reply was a dissenting growl.

“No.”

“Will you, Mr. Harkaway, sar?” he said.

“Well, I will if you like—suppose that we call upon your friend, Sunday?”

“Very good, sar.”

And then he set to work.

A walking stick served him as a wand, and this he waved three times slowly and majestically, while he repeated in solemn tones this singular legend—

“Hokus−pokus, popalorum,
Stickstun, stickstun, cockalorum jig.”

Thereupon the curtain went back, and lo! Sunday appeared sitting upon a throne of state, robed in a long crimson mantle, which made him look like an emperor.

It was a most dignified tableau, or it would have been, but for the long clay pipe the darkey held in his mouth and the pewter pot he carried in his hand.

“Ladies and gemmen,” said Monday, “dat is our ole friend, dressed as de Empyroar Charleymane.”

“Bravo, bravo!”

Even Mr. Mole laughed.

The curtain closed over this dignified and historical representation.

“Now,” said Dick Harvey, “let us see some of our live Stock.”

“Yes, yes,” said young Jack; “show us Nero.”

“And Mike.”

Monday bowed.

Then back went the curtain, and there sat Nero, the monkey, on the throne just vacated by the emperor “Charleymane,” and at his feet stood the bold poodle Mike wagging his tail.

Nero appeared to understand what was required of him, and he sat motionless as a statue for a while, but before long the peculiar nervous irritation to which monkeys appear to be subject attacked him, and he began a series of spasmodic researches in natural history all over his ribs.

“Nero's making up for lost time,” said young Jack; “look how he is getting to work.”

Nero was indeed scratching away furiously.

“There's diligence,” laughed young Jack; “now he's busy.”

And then he broke off into the following appropriate snatch—

“He'll catch the flee—he'll catch the flee—
He'll catch the fleeting hour.”

Down went the curtain.

There was a general laugh at this.

“When we asked you to show us the live stock,” said Dick Harvey, “you took us too literally, Monday.”

“Yah, yah!”

“You must learn to draw the line somewhere.”

Monday here rapped the ground with his wand to secure attention.

Silence having been gained, he addressed them thus—

“Before we leave dis part of de entertainment,” he said, “I conclude de exhibition of one more animal. For reasons dat I need not mention, I shall leave you to guess at de name of dis animal. It is a small animal dat lives on wums.”

“Wums?”

“Yes.”

“What are they?”

“On wums, scriggley wums and insects, and burrows in the earth.”

“Why, dear me,” said young Jack, innocently, “that must be a mole.”

Before a word could be said, back went the curtain, and Nero was discovered walking upon a pair of wooden stilts.

He staggered about like a man in liquor, and made everyone yell again at the quaint manner in which he had hit off Mr. Mole's movements.

“Whatever has he got on his head?” said someone.

Mole shivered.

He guessed.

Guessed; alas, he was but too sure.

Nero put all his doubts at rest by making a graceful bow and removing his wig instead of a hat.

The wig!

Yea; the identical wig which Mr. Mole had left behind him in his precipitate flight from the conjuror's.

This was too much.

Losing his dignity completely, Mr. Mole jumped up and burst through the group of spectators, dashing out of the place in a perfect fury, young Jack's voice ringing in his ears as he shouted—

“A wig a wig! My kingdom for a wig!”

CHAPTER XIII. THE BRIGANDS' CAMP—A MOUNTAIN BIVOUAC—AN ALARM—THE SOLDIERS —A CHALLENGE—THE BRIGANDS' WIDOW—FATAL NEWS.

We change the scene.

And now we find ourselves in a mountain pass, where a number of rough− looking men are grouped about a camp fire.

A short distance from this group stands a tall man, leaning moodily upon the muzzle of his musket, while he watches the zig−zag paths up the mountain side.

Upon this man one can see the whole safety of the party depends.

He is on sentry.

A prolonged silence was suddenly broken by the sentinel looking up and grasping his musket nervously, while he turned a warning gesture to the camp.

“What is it?” exclaimed one of the party, jumping up.

“Hush!”

The sentry turned with his finger on his lips, and motioned him to silence.

At a sign from one of the men—evidently a superior—the whole party sprang to their feet.

A hurried examination of their musket−locks and arms generally showed that they expected danger, and only waited a word from the sentinel to be “up and doing.”

The leader stepped up to the sentry, drawn sword in hand.

“What is it?”

“The patrol.”

“Soldiers?”

The sentry nodded.

“The Carbonari?”

“Yes.”

The leader grasped his sword nervously, and made a step forward as though he would have dashed through the ravine and charge the military alone and unaided.

But if such were his intentions, he speedily altered his mind. “Perish them!” he muttered; “and curse their spying!”

“We could pick them all off from here,” said one of the men—a huge, burly fellow, who had climbed up to a projecting rock commanding an extensive view. “All down to the last man.”

And as he spoke, he brought his gun up to his shoulder with an ominous gesture.

“Hold, Toro!” ejaculated an English voice. “Your hasty imprudence will spoil us.”

“Bah!” said Toro, replying in the same tongue. “You are over prudent, Hunston. Why should we not destroy them while they are in our power?”

“What if one escapes?”

“One should not,” retorted the Italian savagely; “no, nor half a one.”

“And where is the good if we succeeded, as you say?”

“Good!” reiterated Toro, passionately. “Are they not our sworn foes? Are they not here in pursuit of us? Good!—why, will it not lessen the number of our enemies by their number at least?”

“Yes, perhaps,” replied Hunston. “And if successful, it would so thoroughly alarm the country, that it would cause a whole army to be sent after us, and make the end a mere question of time. Let one escape to tell the tale and it would bring them down to this spot, our safest place in the mountains, and hitherto undiscovered by our enemies.”

Toro grumbled.

Yet there was so much truth in what Hunston said that he could urge nothing further in favour of violent measures.

The sentry, who was still on the watch at the fissure in the rocks, here turned round and motioned them to

silence.

"Not so loud," he exclaimed, in a whisper; "they can hear something; they are looking our way."

"Hah!"

In fact, the military were so near, that they could be heard plainly enough giving their words of command.

"Halt! Ground arms!"

The rattle of their rifles was heard distinctly.

The officer then could be seen taking observations through a short telescope which he carried suspended by a strap to his side.

He glanced all about the place and fixed for some little time upon the fissures and rocky passes, resting longer below the very one at which the sentry was posted than elsewhere.

But although it would seem to have aroused his suspicions, it was evident that he could see nothing, for, after a few minutes, he lowered his glass and shut it up.

The reason of this was, that where the sentry stood was completely shadowed by the overhanging rocks, so that he was invisible to them, although they could be distinctly seen by the sentry.

The scrutiny appeared to satisfy the officer.

"Shoulder arms! Left wheel! March!"

The measured tramp of the soldiers was distinctly heard.

Fainter and fainter it grew until it died away.

The sentry watched them in silence for several minutes before he spoke.

Presently he turned round to his comrades and nodded.

"Safe," he said. "They have turned by the crossroads; the last man is out of sight."

"That's prime," said our old friend Tomaso. "Then now to dinner."

The sentry was not lost sight of—indeed, he was not the man to allow himself to be forgotten, for before the meal had been long in progress he reminded them that he had such a thing as an appetite about him by a very rough address.

"Gluttons," he said to the party generally, "do you think only of yourselves? Am I to mount guard for ever?"

They only laughed at this.

"Right, Ymeniz," said Toro; "turn and turn about is but fair. Matteo."

"Present," returned one of the men, jumping up and saluting with a stiff military action, which told that he had once served in the army.

"Relieve guard, and let Ymeniz take your place here."

Matteo picked up his musket and marched up to the rocky pass, while the late sentry joined the feast.

Now while the guard was changed, without any particular demonstration of reluctance upon the part of the new sentry himself, Tomaso made a very wry face.

"Our comrade Toro gives his commands as naturally as though he were our leader."

Toro flushed up at this.

"And why not?" he said, almost fiercely.

"Why not?" echoed Tomaso, with a sneer. "Oh, I could give several reasons."

"Give them."

"Nay, one will suffice."

"Well."

"Our only chieftain is the gallant Mathias."

"And he is in prison."

"True; but that doesn't prove you to be our leader while poor Mathias is in the hands of the Philistines."

"Bah!" replied Toro, impatiently. "Someone must command while Mathias is away."

"Then there are others who should command here in his absence in preference to those who are new comers."

"Who are they?"

"You haven't far to look," returned Tomaso, drawing himself up haughtily; "myself, for instance."

Toro burst into a loud and derisive laugh.

"You?" he said, contemptuously.

"Yes, I."

“Why, I have led a band of gallant fellows years ago—a band of thrice our strength; aye, and what is more, I have led them to victory again and again—to victory and fortune.”

“Your lucky star has not been in the ascendant since you have deigned to honour us with your company,” said Tomaso.

The covert sneer conveyed in this speech made the peppery Italian fire up.

“What do you mean by that?” he demanded, fiercely.

“I mean that your gallant followers must have missed so distinguished a leader; pity you could not return to lead them to fresh triumphs, greatly as we should deplore your loss.”

Toro boiled over at this.

“Do you want to fix a quarrel on me?” he asked, in a voice of suppressed passion.

“No,” replied Tomaso, insolently. “When I want to quarrel, I go straight to my point; I don't beat about the bush. I only want to remind you of your proper place here so fall back, Signor Italiano, and learn to be more respectful in your bearing.”

Stung to the quick by this, Toro plucked out his sword, and would have rushed upon the other, had not several of the men interposed.

“Come, come,” they said, “none of that. We have plenty of enemies; we can cut their throats, not our own, when we want to spill blood.”

“Besides,” said an old man, “it is profitless quarrelling about the leadership—we have a leader. Poor Mathias!”

“Right,” echoed several voices together, “right. Sit down; no quarrelling.”

“Here,” exclaimed an old brigand, “let us drink to Mathias.”

“And his speedy return,” added another.

“Aye, aye, his speedy release.”

Horn goblets were handed round and filled with ruddy wine from a skin, which the old brigand himself produced from his own mysterious larder.

“To Mathias!”

“To Mathias!”

A ringing cheer was heard, and the goblets were drained to the very dregs.

* * * * *

“Who goes there?”

“A friend.”

“The word.”

“Mathias.”

“Advance, friend, and give the countersign.”

This challenge was replied to, and a woman appeared at the narrow entrance to the mountain pass.

Slowly she walked through, her head drooping and her eyes fixed upon the ground.

They recognised her now.

It was the wife of their chieftain, the bold Mathias.

“I scarcely knew you,” said the sentry, apologetically.

She looked up and smiled in a strangely vacant manner.

The other said nothing.

Her manner impressed them with ugly feelings.

Instinctively they felt that some fresh calamity had happened to them.

In fear and trembling they anticipated the evil tidings which she brought, although, of course, they could not guess at its exact nature.

“Did you succeed!” demanded the old man.

She nodded gravely.

“You saw Mathias?”

“Yes.”

Her answer was given in the same vacant manner, and staring fixedly into the very midst of them, she appeared to see nothing.

“Did you tell our brave captain how eagerly we look forward to his release—how anxiously we long for the moment when he shall be again here amongst us—at our head?”

It was the old brigand who spoke.

She gave him a strange look, from which they could gather absolutely nothing, and her eyes dropped again to the ground.

The heavy, unpleasant feeling deepened.

Scarcely one of them had the courage to address her again.

An oppressive silence fell upon them all.

They looked at each other in silent, awkward expectation, all, bold desperadoes as they were, cowed into silence by her manner.

“You succeeded in seeing him?” said Hunston.

“Yes,” she said, quietly.

“And you bade him be of good heart?—you told him that we were making a plan in his behalf—a plan which could not fail of success? You said—”

The woman looked up.

“Nothing!”

“What!”

“Nothing,” she slowly repeated, “nothing. I saw him, but it was too late to speak those words of comfort.”

“Too late?” iterated Hunston, eagerly, “too late?”

“Ah, too late for words of comfort, for menaces, or for any thing.”

“Surely you do not mean—”

He could not complete the sentence, but she helped him out—

“I do,” she said, in a hollow voice, and nodding her head gravely, “I do mean that he, Mathias, the brigand chief is dead!”

The brigands, one and all, leaped to their feet, snatching up their carbines, while from their throats issued a deep cry of revenge.

Dead! The word thrilled them one and all with horror.

The bold Mathias dead!

Prepared as they had been by her manner for some dire Calamity, it came upon them like a thunderclap. The awful calm manner of the chieftain's widow impressed them more than if she had thrown up her hands in wild despair and given way to the noisiest demonstrations of woe.

After some few minutes, one ventured to break the awesome silence.

“How did he die?”

The brigand's wife turned from her questioner with a shudder.

“Ask me nothing yet. I am not able to speak of that at present; give me time to conquer this weakness.”

“If I ask, it is that I may seek vengeance upon his destroyer,” said Tomaso, the speaker.

Her eyes sparkled, and the colour rushed into her pale cheek at the word. “Vengeance—aye, vengeance. Well spoken, my bold Tomaso; vengeance is something to live for, after all; vengeance we'll have too. We'll glut ourselves with it; a feast of vengeance we'll have.” “We will, we will!” shouted the brigands, as though with one single voice.

“These English and these Americans shall die.”

“They shall!”

“We'll exterminate them, root and branch.”

“Aye, aye.”

“Firstly, these Harkaways shall fall, then—”

“They die.”

“Does Mathias owe his death to Harkaway's band?” demanded Hunston.

“Was not this Harkaway the prime mover in all our disasters?”

“Curse him!”

“Aye, curse him!”

Toro here stepped forward in the centre of the circle which the brigands had formed.

“If Harkaway is to be dealt with,” he said, “I will undertake to lead you to triumph within three days.”

Cheers greeted this speech until Tomaso stepped forward.

“If we want a leader,” said he, “we can elect one; we are not in need of any man to elect himself.”

“Stand back,” said Toro angrily.

“Fall back yourself,” retorted Tomaso, “and obey your superior.”

“My superior? Ha, ha! He does not live here,” ejaculated Toro fiercely.

The old brigand here once more stepped between the disputants and interfered.

“Why quarrel over a dead man's shoes while his widow is still in sight?”

Tomaso fell back at the rebuke, but Toro, less thin−skinned, stuck boldly to his text.

“If I offer to lead you against the enemy,” he said, “it is solely for our interest generally, not for mine alone.”

“Oho!”

“Aye, and I can prove it.”

“Do so.”

“I will.”

“Hear him,” said Tomaso derisively: “hear our general benefactor speak up for us all.”

Toro turned upon the speaker savagely. “I can speak to you presently,” he said significantly, tapping his sword hilt.

“You'll find me ready to answer you in any way,” retorted Tomaso boldly, also tapping his sword.

“I doubt not; meanwhile, I offer myself as the leader, for several reasons: firstly, I know these Harkaways well, and am more fit to cope with them than those who have never met them.”

Tomaso laughed.

“I doubt that,” he said; “why, by your own showing, you have never gained any signal successes with them.”

“No, but I start where you would have to begin; I am armed by experience, which you lack.”

“True, true,” exclaimed several of the brigands.

“That sounds fairly enough,” replied Tomaso, “but you have ever met with such signal discomfiture that I, for one, should have small confidence in your leadership. I don't speak to uphold myself; let any other leader be chosen—let one of ourselves to wit, not an Italian, or any other foreigner. Why should not a Greek lead Greeks?”

“Hurrah!”

A general cheer greeted this speech. “Tomaso! Tomaso!” they cried; “Tomaso for leader!”

Toro's face flushed blood red.

“Hearken to me,” he exclaimed, in a voice now hoarse with passion; “Mathias was a great leader, and I felt it no shame to serve under him, but I have been in command of as bold and brave a band as this, one far stronger in point of numbers, and if I am not elected for the command I shall withdraw altogether. Have me or not, you have the choice; only this is my determination; I will accept orders from no man here.”

“Go, then,” said Tomaso; “leave us. You came unbidden, and you may depart when you please.”

A general silence succeeded this speech.

Toro's aid was not to be despised.

His huge body and his muscular arm had gained him the consideration of most of those lawless men, who literally revered brute strength.

“Wait, wait,” said a brigand, stepping forward. “Let us not be too hasty. Some are for Toro, and some are for Tomaso.”

“Well?”

“Say on.”

“Let us put it to the vote, and let each of the disputants pledge himself to abide by the decision.”

“Good.”

“What says Toro?”

“Agreed.”

“And so am I,” returned Tomaso, promptly.

“Hands up, then, for Toro.”

Half the hands were uplifted and counted over.

“Now for Tomaso.”

Up went the hands of the other side, and when they came to tell them off, it was discovered that the brigands were equally divided in their choice.

“We cannot have two leaders,” said the brigand Ymeniz.

“No, no.”

“Then we must have neither, as the matter stands.”

“Unless one gives way.”

“No,” ejaculated the Italian, fiercely, “unless Tomaso likes to decide by the sword which of us shall have the lead.”

“I'm agreed to that,” retorted Tomaso, promptly. “Let us fight for it, and may the best man win.”

“Agreed.”

“Hurrah, hurrah!”

A ring was formed, and preparations made for the deadly encounter.

As they were not agreed about the choice of weapons, a coin was thrown up, and Toro won.

Tomaso would have chosen pistols, for he was an excellent shot, and it gave him the superiority; whereas, although not altogether unskilled in fence, Toro's superior weight and size gave him a great advantage with the sword.

However, there was nothing for it now but to fight.

The combatants stripped to the waist, and each received his weapon from his second.

They were long, heavy swords, cut and thrust, like the heavy cavalry carry, and with these there could be but one result.

Death!

There were no half measures with these weapons.

“Now, then,” exclaimed the Italian, impatiently, “why this dallying? On guard.”

“I am ready,” cried Tomaso, gripping his sword firmly.

The swords met with a clash which sent forth a shower of sparks, and both men recoiled with the force of the shock.

Recovering themselves quickly, however, they went to work in real savage style, and chopped away at each other with vicious earnestness.

Now Tomaso, it was clear, could not hold his own in a battle wherein mere brute force was to have the best of it, and feeling himself at a disadvantage in this respect, he dodged about his adversary as nimbly as Harlequin himself.

Being very quick−sighted, he saw what sort of a blow was coming ere it was fairly dealt, and so he shaped his defence.

If it was a desperate stroke, he jumped out of its reach.

If a light one, he turned it off upon the edge of his own weapon.

In this way he worked upon Toro to such an extent that the Italian's temper got the mastery of him.

Tomaso was attacking him so closely that the Italian looked like losing the battle.

Toro was bleeding from a dozen small flesh wounds.

Tomaso was, up to this moment, almost unscathed.

Presently he grew over bold, and incautiously trusting himself within reach, Toro lunged so sharply out that it was only by the merest shave he escaped being spitted on the Italian's long sword like a lark on a skewer.

As it was the sword pierced the waistband of his nether garments.

Tomaso stumbled, and so nearly lost his balance that it took him all his time to parry the next stroke, which was put in with equal smartness and vigour. One blow, that might have brought down an elephant, sent Tomaso on to his knees.

The same stroke made a notch in the Greek's weapon half an inch deep.

Had he caught the blow upon the flat of his sword, it would have been shivered to atoms beyond all doubt.

Toro saw his chance.

Nor was he at all slow to avail himself of it.

Quick as thought, another blow fell, and out of his grasp flew the Greek's blade.

He lay prostrate at the mercy of his adversary.

“Beg your life,” cried Toro, planting his heavy foot firmly upon his adversary's chest.

“Never,”

“Then die!”

He raised his sword.

But he paused.

Was it the action of a brave man to take the life of a defenceless foe?

Well, it was not the thought of such romantic notions which troubled Toro; it was simply because there were spectators.

These spectators, he knew, would judge it harshly.

He thirsted for Tomaso's blood.

Yet he dared not indulge in his brutal passion.

Therefore, making a virtue of the necessity, he lowered his sword, and spurning his beaten adversary with his foot, bade him rise.

“Then take your life unasked,” he said coarsely, “and in future learn to know and to respect your superiors.”

Toro's speech was received with cheers by the brigands.

CHAPTER XIV. THE NEW CAPTAIN−HUNSTON'S TROUBLE−THE ARM AND ITS LEGEND−HOW EMMERSON'S VENGEANCE WORKS STEALTHILY ON.

“What do you say, men, now?” demanded the huge Italian, as he wiped his sword.

“Huzza for Toro!”

“Have I fairly earned my right to take the lead here?”

“Yes, yes.”

“I want you to be unanimous,” he persisted.

“We are.”

Toro fixed his eyes upon one or two of the disappointed supporters of Tomaso, who had not uttered a word since the discomfiture of their champion, and said to them especially—

“If any of you object to me as a leader, let them come forward now and speak up.”

There were one or two murmuring voices.

“Look,” cried the giant Toro, “men all, if any here still denies my power, let them step forward, and this sword shall prove my right.”

This was final.

After the manner in which Toro had just dealt with their friend Tomaso, they were not encouraged to provoke a quarrel. And so, by his daring audacity and brute strength, Toro the Italian raised himself to the leadership of the Greek brigands.

None dared to dispute his sway from that moment.

Some had a difficulty to swallow the bitter pill, but the alternative was so very unpleasant that they got over it.

* * * * *

And Harkaway's enemy Hunston?

Why has he fallen so into the background of late?

His sole thoughts have been engrossed by the fearful sufferings to which he is subject.

That dreadful arm—the legacy of vengeance of the murdered Emmerson. Where the evil was it baffled all his skill to discover.

Slowly yet surely this horrible piece of mechanism was eating away its wearer's life.

“It seems almost as though some subtle poison were slowly injected into my body through this arm,” thought Hunston, “and yet I can not work without it.”

Never was vengeance more terrible than that of the dead Robert Emmerson.

The wonder was that Hunston lived through it.

His constitution must have been of iron.

The arm was removed, but only with infinite trouble and suffering; and then, after some considerable time, Hunston began to experience a faint sense of relief.

The sufferings slowly diminished.

This convinced Hunston that he had been correct in supposing that the poison was concealed in the mechanical arm.

He laid bare as much of it as he could without permanently damaging it, and pored over it for hours at a stretch.

To what good?

None.

Now this limb was the work of no common artificer.

It was the work of a hand of rare cunning.

A master spirit had invented it, and its mystery was far too deep to be penetrated by a common bungler.

Hunston was at last so tortured that, disguising himself, he one day left the mountains, and sought the advice of a surgeon.

“The man who planned this arm,” said the surgeon to whom Hunston submitted it for examination, “must have devoted a lifetime to the manufacture and perfecting of this mechanical limb.”

Hunston smiled.

He knew too well how little time the wretched man Emmerson gave to any thing like industrial pursuits.

“What is this?” asked this same surgeon, pointing to the flat of the arm, where the engraved legend was almost obscured with a dark stain.

Hunston changed colour and fidgeted about.

“I don't know.”

“There is something written.”

“Yes, yes, so I believe, but it is obscured by that stain—a stain—”

He peered closer into the arm yet, and looked serious, as turning to Hunston, he said—

“Why, it is a blood−stain.”

“No, no!” replied Hunston, hurriedly; “impossible. It can not be.”

“Impossible or not,” said the surgeon, “blood it is, and nothing but blood. Yet I see that, in spite of this stain, the reading is clear enough.”

“Scarcely,” said Hunston.

“It is, though, and it is in English, I should say, too.”

“Yes.”

“Can't you read it?”

“No.”

“Strange. Yet you are English.”

“Yes.”

“Well, I have some English friends here to whom I will show it, and—”

Hunston broke in impatiently at this.

“English here!” he exclaimed. “Where do they live?”

“At the villa—”

“What, the Harkaway family, do you mean?”

“Yes.”

“And you would take it there?”

“Why not? Mr. Harkaway is a clever man. He is surrounded also by clever people; there is a curious old gentleman there, too, an old gentleman of great learning, and he might be enabled to throw some light upon the secret, which even the closest scrutiny can not penetrate.”

Hunston listened to the end, but not without having to exercise a certain amount of self−control.

“How is this old gentleman called—this clever, learned old gentleman?”

“You seem to say that with a sneer, sir,” said the surgeon; “but you may rely upon it he is a very great *savant*—a man of great accomplishments—and a warrior who has—”

“Who has lost two legs!”

“Yes. You know him?”

“Slightly; his name is Mole.”

“It is.”

“And you would take my arm to these people for them to stare and gape at. No, sir; I am foolish enough to seek to conceal my affliction from the world, and by the aid of this wonderful arm I have been hitherto successful.”

The doctor bowed.

“So I beg you will keep my secret.”

“Rely upon it.”

Hunston showed all his old cunning in this speech. Yet all his inquiries, all his researches, availed him nothing.

The work of the dead Robert Emmerson remained as before, an inscrutable mystery. It remained the silent executor of its creator's vengeance.

Slowly, yet surely fulfilling the blood−stained legend on the steel arm.

CHAPTER XV. HUNSTON AGAIN AT WORK−THE DANCING GARDEN—MARIETTA AND HER GOSSIP−GREAT NEWS—THE ARREST—WHAT CHARGE?—MURDER.

Hunston's infirmity had told in many ways.

He had sunk to be a mere nonentity in the band.

Now he was but too pleased to be left at peace when in his great suffering; yet no sooner did he recover health and spirits a little than his old interest revived, and with his interest all the old jealousies.

He bitterly resented Toro's assumption of the command.

“Let the blustering bully fool impose upon them if he will,” he said to himself again and again; “he never could take me in. It shall be my task to show them who can render the most real service to the band.”

Their programme suited Hunston well.

What could better have accorded with his humour than the devotion of all their time, thought, and energies to the persecution—perhaps to the entire destruction, of the Harkaway family?

It was all gone on with avowedly to avenge the death of Mathias.

Little cared Hunston about the dead brigand chief.

Indeed, but for the presence of his widow in their midst, and the occasional mention of his name, Hunston would, in all probability, have forgotten that he had ever existed.

As it was, he made it his especial task to hang about the parts of the town where the Harkaways were most likely to be met. And never did he appear twice in the same dress.

One evening, strolling into a dancing garden, he chanced to come upon a smart young lady, whose appearance attracted his attention at once.

“I know her well,” he said to himself, “though where I have seen her is a puzzle to me for a moment.”

The merry antics of one of the dancers caused her to laugh, and then he recognised the sound of her voice immediately.

“Marietta!”

Surely he should not so soon have forgotten her.

Was it not upon the occasion of her memorable exploits at the gardens of the Contessa Maraviglia that he had last seen her—that night when poor Magog Brand met his fate?

As soon as he recognised her, he made up his mind to escort her.

So first (to assure himself of the excellence of his disguise) catching a cursory glance of his shadow in a mirror, he crossed the garden, and stepping up to her side, he addressed her.

“Do you not join the dance, signorina?” he said.

The waiting maid in reply only cocked her chin haughtily and moved away.

“You are proud, Marietta, to−night,” said Hunston.

She turned upon hearing her name mentioned.

“I do not know you, sir.”

“But you see I know you, Marietta, and what is more, if you were to ask your master Mr. Harkaway or Mrs. Harkaway about their friend Saville, I dare say they would not say any thing very bad about him.”

Marietta curtseyed in some confusion.

“I don't remember seeing you at the villa, signor,” she said, “so pray excuse me.”

“No excuses, pretty Marietta; I am not a very constant visitor, yet I have seen you, and yours is a face once seen not easily forgotten.”

Marietta, like a true daughter of Eve, did not object to this sort of thing.

And so she fell into the trap which he set for her with so little pains.

That is, she grew gossipy and communicative.

“And does Master Jack come here sometimes?” asked the sham Mr. Saville.

She shook her head.

“Never.”

“Mamma would object, of course,” he said lightly; “this is such a wicked place for her good, mild, innocent boy to come to.”

Marietta laughed a good deal at hearing young Jack spoken of thus.

“Neither of the young gentlemen are too innocent,” she said; “but yet they don't come here.”

“Possibly they have no taste for this sort of thing,” suggested Hunston.

Marietta shrugged her shoulders.

“They are forbidden to go about alone.”

“Why?”

“I don't know—some fancy of the ladies. They think that the brigands are always lurking about, ready to drop upon their boys.”

“Ha, ha, ha!” laughed Hunston; “a very good joke.”

“Is it not? Although I must tell you that there is some reason for fear, for I have twice come across the—”

“Across who?”

“The brigands.”

“Impossible.”

“It is true.”

“The miscreants. Did they steal any thing?”

“Well, only a few—a few kisses.”

“Hum!” said Hunston, “that was excusable. It is a sort of pilfering which I would willingly indulge in myself.”

“I dare say,” answered Marietta saucily, “but I have discovered how to use my weapons in self−defence.”

“What weapons?”

“These.”

She held up her ten pretty little claws. A tiny hand they were mounted on, too.

Hunston surveyed it with the eye of a connoisseur, and looked the admiration he wished to convey quite extravagantly enough for a vain woman to understand his meaning.

“Exquisite,” he said. “It would be flattery even to be scratched by such models.”

She laughed.

He resumed.

“And so they never go forth for fear of the brigands?”

“Never.”

“Their lives must be wretched, so confined to the house.”

“Aye, but they go out to sea.”

“To sea?”

“Yes, in their sailing boat; the two boys are always out fishing, sailing, and what not.”

Hunston pricked up his ears at these tidings.

“Yes, on the water they are allowed full liberty, for brigands and cats, according to Signor Harvey, are the two animals that fear the water most.”

“Ha, ha, ha!” laughed Hunston, “very good indeed, but I never knew that brigands so feared the water.”

“So Signor Harvey says,” replied Marietta. “Indeed he says that a bar of soap and a bowl of water would frighten a brigand more than a whole armoury of firearms.”

This was true.

Brigands may look picturesque when seen from a distance.

At close quarters they are, to put it mildly, objectionable.

If they do not hold soap and water in absolute fear, as Dick Harvey said, they at least look upon them as vanities and effeminacies unworthy of desperadoes.

* * * * *

“So, so,” muttered Hunston, as he walked away, “I shall secure them yet. For through the boys I can get at the father and at Harvey. Hah!”

At this precise moment a heavy hand was placed upon his shoulder.

There was a professional touch in it, which once felt could never be forgotten.

Hunston had felt such a clutch once in England, and the recollection was likely to last him as long as he lived.

He forgot where he was, every thing, and instinctively he faltered this inquiry—

"On what charge?"

"Murder!"

He knew the voice.

He had no need to look round; the voice was not one easily forgotten.

It was our old friend Pike, the English detective.

"Yes, Hunston," replied the officer coolly. "You have been giving me a lot of trouble, but it was only a question of time and patience, I knew. Come along; you are my prisoner."

CHAPTER XVI. A GREAT DANGER—OFF AND AWAY!—POOR PIKE.

Hunston quailed. He was lost.

So suddenly—so unexpectedly had this come, that he was utterly powerless to help himself.

Had he been wearing the mechanical arm, he might have able to tackle the wiry officer Pike.

Bitterly did he curse his unlucky fate.

Recovering himself, however, in some slight degree, he endeavoured to shake off the detective's hold.

“Quiet, now, quiet, Master Hunston,” said Pike, “or I shall have to try means for tranquilising you which you won't find agree with you.”

“Show me your warrant for this outrage,” said Hunston.

“Outrage! Hoity, toity! that's a good word.”

“I shall call the police to my assistance if you attempt to molest me,” said Hunston, putting on a lofty air.

This tickled Pike mightily.

“Call the police, will you?” he said. “Well, I shan't, for I flatter myself that I don't want much assistance to walk off with such a man as you—even if you were not lopsided.”

Hunston turned savagely upon the detective at this allusion to his crippled state and made an attempt at using his one arm upon him.

But Pike was—to put it vulgarly—all there.

He dexterously dodged the blow, and whirling round secured a hold upon Hunston's collar—that peculiar grip which is the specialty of men who have been in the force.

Hunston struggled desperately to get free. In vain.

Do what he would, he found himself being trotted along to save himself from strangulation.

Not only was it physically painful.

Hunston had an overweening sense of his own importance and dignity, and this being run in just like some paltry pickpocket in a crowd, was galling to his vanity beyond all description.

What could he do?

He was powerless.

The wondering people stared at this singular exhibition, but they parted their ranks as Pike and his prisoner came along, and never offered to interfere.

Now, during this brief but painful business, Hunston's thoughts ran right ahead of the present dilemma.

He endeavoured to realise some of the possible consequences of it.

The arrest was, he felt assured, illegal.

What then?

What could result from such a proceeding?

Would they detain him?

Could they?—that was the question.

The British ambassador might be influenced by people of the rank and position of the Harkaways.

This granted, it was easy enough for his excellency to waive legal forms and ceremonies there, and get Hunston transferred to the safe keeping of the English authorities.

At this point Hunston could not repress a shudder.

And why? He thought of what must necessarily follow.

His fevered fancy flew ahead, and he saw himself in the dock, faced by the stony−faced judge, and put through the torture of cross−examination which laid bare the innermost recesses of his black heart in spite of himself.

He saw further on yet.

He shut his eyes as he went on and heard the tramp of the twelve jurors re−entering the court in the midst of a profound and awesome silence.

He heard the solemn formula; he heard the hollow voice of the foreman give the verdict—

“Guilty!”

All that he heard and saw in his mind's eye, in that brief but unpleasant hustling he had to go through at the hands of the ungenerous and indefatigable officer Daniel Pike.

And Hunston now, being half cowed by his captor, was being driven through the streets like a lamb to the slaughter, when a sudden and startling incident changed the whole spirit of the scene, even in the twinkling of an eye.

A musket, grasped in a strong hand by the barrel, was swung over their heads, and down it came with an awful crack upon poor Pike's head.

Down he dropped like a bullock under the butcher's pole−axe.

And Hunston was free.

For a few seconds he could not realise his release, so sudden and unexpected it had been.

“Come along,” said a voice in his ear; “away with you, or we shall get into trouble here.”

This aroused him.

He recognised the voice of Tomaso the brigand, and it brought him to his presence of mind.

Off he started at a good brisk run in the direction that his preserver had taken.

And soon was out of danger.

But Tomaso was not so fortunate.

Following Hunston at a more leisurely pace, he had not gone many yards, when a firm grip was placed upon his shoulder.

“Halt!” said a voice.

The brigand turned hastily, and found himself in the firm clutch of the detective.

“I have caught you at last, villain!” exclaimed Pike the detective, as he twisted his hand into the collar of the garment Tomaso wore instead of a shirt.

Then, before the astonished brigand had time either to remonstrate or resist, the Englishman exhibited to him that particular form of wrestling known as the “cross buttock,” and stretched him at full length on the ground.

Another moment and a pair of real Bow Street handcuffs snapped on Tomaso's wrists.

“Neatly done; don't you think so?” said Pike.

Tomaso's answer was a tremendous Greek oath.

“You're swearing, I believe. Now that is a bad habit at all times, and very foolish just now, because you see it don't hurt me, inasmuch as I don't understand it,” said Pike, who, after a brief, stern survey of his captive, added—

“If you cursed me in English, though, I don't know but what I might be tempted to punch your ugly head.”

Tomaso remained silent, and Pike, after pausing some seconds, helped him to his feet.

“Now you are all right, and will come back quietly with me. But how do the bracelets fit? I've got another pair in my pocket.”

“You had better release me,” observed Tomaso.

“Now that is very ridiculous, my friend. Why should I take the trouble of capturing you, if I let you run again directly?”

“It will be much to your disadvantage to imprison me, Signor Englishman. An injured Greek is always avenged in some way.”

“Just so; however, I'll risk that”

Pike's coolness added to the rage of the brigand, whose passion fairly boiled over.

“May all the infernal gods my forefathers worshipped—may the fiend I—”

“Serve,” suggested Pike.

“The fiend I would willingly serve, or sell my soul to, for vengeance, visit you with his direst displeasure, and may all the plagues of Egypt blight you!”

“Thank ye, that's a very pleasant speech; something like what I used to hear at the theatre. But, old friend, you made one little blunder.”

“You will see if I have blundered.”

“One little blunder, when you spoke of selling your soul. Lor' bless you, Old Scratch isn't such a fool as to buy nowadays, whatever he may have done years ago.”

Another angry exclamation from Tomaso.

“You see, the old gentleman has gained some experience as a trader, and he knows well enough that if he

waits a little time, he'll get you all free−gratis for nothing at all."

"You are a devil, Englishman."

"And you are not exactly an angel. However, if I am a devil, you may consider you are regularly sold to me. So now come along; keep your hands under your cloak, and no one will notice the little decorations on your wrists."

"You are a devil, Signor Englishman; but you will die for this."

"Pshaw! I've collared scores of desperate villains, and they all said something of the same kind, yet here I am,"

"You will die," repeated Tomaso.

"Some clay, of course; but we have a proverb in England; would you like to hear it?"

Tomaso tossed his head with lofty indifference.

"The proverb," continued Pike, "is that 'Threatened men live long.'"

He then took Tomaso by the arm, and led him on.

"But stop," said he, "those pistols in your girdle are very heavy. I'll carry them for you, and the knife as well."

CHAPTER XVII. THE DECOY—A THROW OF THE DICE—THE EXECUTION.

Before Pike and his captive had gone far on their return journey, Harkaway and Harvey, with two or three of the gendarmes, and a minute after Jefferson, came up.

“You have caught him then. Hurrah!” said Dick Harvey.

“But this is not Hunston,” said Harkaway.

“No, sir; he managed to get clean away. But we'll have him yet.”

An old goatherd, who had scrambled down near to the place where the captor and prisoner stood, might have been seen to indulge in a contemptuous smile.

We say might, because the fact is that all were so much elated at the capture of Tomaso that the very presence of the old stranger had hitherto remained unnoticed.

Nor did he seem to court attention, but remained behind a bush, in a spot, however, where he could hear all that passed.

“Well, we must take this fellow back to the town, and hand him over to the authorities,” said Harvey.

“And then hunt down Master Hunston,” remarked old Jack. “I wish we knew where to look for him.”

“He took this direction,” remarked Pike.

“True.”

“And, therefore, it is in this direction that we must look for him.”

“Right again,” remarked Dick Harvey.

“But as he is associated with some desperate fellows, it would be as well to place this gentleman in the hands of the authorities before we seek him. It is not good to go into action with prisoners on our hands.”

As all agreed on this point, they walked back with the prisoner, and had the pleasure of seeing him put into a cell from which, apparently, there was no way of escape, even the fire−place having been bricked up since the attempt of Mathias to gain freedom that way. By the time that was done it was too late to think of starting that day, so our friends retired to hold a council of war.

Pike, however, took no part in the consultation.

That astute detective had formed in his own mind a resolution that, if it were possible, he would capture Hunston single−handed, thus covering himself with glory, and at the same time keeping the Harkaways and Harvey out of danger.

Pike knew that it was a difficult thing to keep them out of danger, and that if they heard any thing about the brigands, they would be the very ones to lead an attack.

Pike walked up and down, smoking and reflecting on the difficulties which surrounded his task.

He had not thoroughly matured his plans when the sun went down and the moon rose.

Few people were abroad.

The audacity the brigands had recently displayed had convinced most people that they were safer indoors than out.

As Pike walked up and down the quiet street, he noticed an old man crouched up in a corner, wrapped in a tattered cloak, and apparently intending to pass the night there.

“Hilloa, my friend, what are you? Are you one of the brigands?”

Pike uttered the words in a jocular manner, but the old man felt deeply offended.

“Sir Englishman, you insult me.”

“I apologise. I had no intention of doing so.”

“A brigand! Signor, I am here—houseless and penniless in my old age through those accursed villains! May Sathanas fly away with their souls.”

“Well, old man, perchance you will be avenged before long.”

“It is what I pray for. They burnt my hut, cut down my two fine olive trees, and drove off my little flock of goats.”

The old man covered his face, and appeared to sob violently.

“When was this?” asked Pike.

"Scarce three hours since."

"Was there with them a foreigner—one of my country?"

"I know not what country they were of, but besides the Greeks, there were two men who seemed leaders; one was called Signor Toro, the other was named Hunston."

"How many were there in all?"

"Three Greeks besides the two foreigners."

"Do you know any thing of the haunts of these brigands, friend goatherd?"

"Aye, well. But till now I have never dreamt of betraying them, for they never before molested me."

"Lead me to their den."

"You, signer? Why, they are at least five in number, and you are but—"

"But an Englishman! that makes all the difference, friend goatherd, so pray lead on. Here, take a drink from my flask first."

The old man accepted the proffered drink, and then said—

"Well, signor, it is a desperate and dangerous undertaking; but I know you English can do almost any thing, so I will show you the way. And if it comes to a fight, I shall be at your elbow, signor."

"True."

Without mentioning his intentions, or saying a word to any of his friends, the detective passed his arm through that of the goatherd and walked away.

Little conversation passed.

The detective was full of hopeful anxiety about the capture of Hunston; and as for the goatherd, it may be presumed that the loss of his goats afforded him plenty of food for silent reflection.

They passed the place where Tomaso was captured, and then turned aside out of the road into a dense wood which covered the side of a rocky hill.

It appeared as though the old goatherd was "out of condition," as the athletes say; at all events, the scramble up the rough path brought on a loud and distressing cough.

"Be quiet," said Pike; "you will alarm them."

"No fear of that, signor; we are more than a mile from the den of the villains."

So they scrambled and climbed away, till at length they reached a place where Pike found it necessary to use hands as well as feet to make progress.

He had just put up both hands to grasp a boulder over which it was necessary to climb, when, to his intense astonishment, each wrist was grasped by a couple of strong hands, and in another moment he was forcibly dragged up.

"The tables are turned now, Mr. Pike," said a voices "You will remain our prisoner till Tomaso is released."

It was so dark that Pike could not see the speaker, but he had no doubt that it was Hunston.

The impression was confirmed in an instant by the goatherd, who said in a jeering manner—

"Ha, ha, ha! Why don't you capture him? You were so very brave to talk, yet you do nothing."

Pike, by a sudden jerk, wrenched himself from his captors, and dealt the mocking brigand—for he was nothing more—a blow that doubled him up among the rocks.

But before the detective could escape, he was thrown down himself, and bound hand and foot.

Half−a−dozen Greek brigands then raised him and bore him away.

How far he could not tell, but it seemed, as far as he could guess, five or six miles.

At length they reached a little open glade in the forest where at least a score of brigands were assembled,

"You have him, then?" said a huge fellow, who spoke with an Italian accent.

"Yes."

"Tie him to that tree."

It was done.

"Now listen," said Toro—for he it was who had given the command. "If Tomaso is not at liberty and here among us at noon, you shall die."

"I can not set him at liberty."

"You can do a great deal towards it. Unfasten one of his arms—his right arm."

Pike's right arm was then released, and, in obedience to Toro's command, a small table was placed close to

him.

On this table were pens, ink and paper.

“Now write to your friend Harkaway, and tell him that unless Tomaso is released by noon, as I have told you, death is your doom.”

So Pike wrote—

“I am in the hands of the brigands, and unless Tomaso is released by noon, I shall be killed. But I am not afraid to die; hold your captive fast.”

Having signed it, he held it out to Toro, who read it, and then called a messenger, to whom he entrusted it for delivery.

Then the brigands sat down to breakfast, and Pike was left to his contemplations. These, as may be imagined, were not of the most pleasant kind.

Hour after hour passed.

The brigands were some sleeping, some playing cards, and all enjoying themselves in some way, but no one took any notice of the prisoner.

The sun rode high in the heavens, and it was evidently approaching noon, when the messenger returned from the town with a letter.

It was addressed to Pike, but Toro opened it.

It was not from Harkaway, but from the chief of the police, informing the unfortunate detective that the Greek government declined to make any terms or drive any bargain with brigands, but that any ill usage Mr. Pike might suffer would be most effectually avenged.

“You hear this?” said Toro.

“I do.”

“Then say what prayers you remember, and make your peace with Heaven, for at noon you die.”

“Let me be the executioner,” said a brigand who stood by.

“Not so,” exclaimed another; “the task is mine by right.”

“Peace!” said Toro. “The dice shall decide his fate. The highest thrower shall have the pleasure of shooting him.”

The brigands, in obedience to a signal from the chief, gathered round him, a short distance from the prisoner.

Dice were produced and the game began.

“Double four,” cried the first thrower.

“That man stands a good chance of being my executioner,” thought Pike. “To fancy that I, who have been the terror of evil−doers in England, should be the sport of these dirty brigands. Why, I could well thrash half−a−dozen of them in a fair stand−up fight.”

At this moment a loud peal of laughter greeted the second dicer.

“Ace—two.”

“My chance is worthless,” said the man.

“Worthless!” muttered Pike to himself. “Aye, you are indeed worthless, compared with some of the English villains I have hunted down and fought for life or death. I could die like a man if I only had to die in a fair hand−to−hand fight with such a man as Birmingham Bill, the very first murderer I ever coped with; but I'll show them how an Englishman can die.”

“Double six!” shouted one of the brigands, as he threw the dice.

The man was the smallest and ugliest of the lot, but it seemed very probable that he would be Pike's executioner. At all events, he carefully loaded his carbine.

“To be shot by such a villain as that!” thought Pike. “It would have been better if one of the shots fired by that burglar fellow they call the 'Whitechapel, Devil' had taken effect; six times he fired, and then we had a good ten minutes' tussle before I could secure him.”

At length all the brigands had thrown with the exception of Toro.

“Double six again!”

As it was a tie between the two, each had another throw. The little ugly brigand threw.

“Two—three.”

Toro then took up the dice, shook them well in the box and made his cast.

"Five—four!"

And Toro was hailed the winner.

"Prisoner, I give you two minutes to prepare."

"Brigand, I am prepared. Such sins as I have committed, I have repented of, so do your worst; but rest assured that vengeance will some day overtake you. To Heaven I commend my soul!"

With as much composure as if he had been practising at an inanimate target, Toro raised his gun, and counted—

"One!"

"Two!"

"Three!"

At the word three, he pulled the trigger. The report echoed from rock to rock, and the head and body of poor Pike fell forward, as far as the ropes that secured him to the tree would permit.

He was dead, the bullet having penetrated the brain.

* * * * *

That evening, as Harkaway, Harvey, and Jefferson returned from an unsuccessful attempt to rouse the authorities, they found that two men had left a heavy package at the house.

On opening it, they were horrified to find it a section of a hollow tree, nearly every portion of the wood having crumbled away, leaving the bark intact.

And in the hollow was the body of the poor detective and a brief note.

"The fate of all brigand hunters. Beware!—TORO."

"Vengeance for this, at all events," exclaimed Harkaway.

"Poor Pike! We should be unworthy of the name of Englishmen did we not punish thy murderers."

He wrote a note to the mayor.

"SIR,—In the huge package that accompanies this note, you will find the body of an Englishman, who has this day been murdered by brigands; I call upon you, in the name of Heaven, to rout these murderers out of their dens, and bring them to justice. Should you show any backwardness in so doing, I shall deem it necessary to appeal to the English ambassador.

"Your obedient servant,

"J. HARKAWAY."

Having despatched a couple of messengers with the body and letter, they sat down with sorrowful hearts and small appetites to their evening meal.

CHAPTER XVIII. HUNSTON IN THE CAMP AGAIN—RETROSPECTION—A DEVILISH PLOT—DARK CLOUDS GATHER OVER THE HARKAWAYS.

"Who goes there?"

"A friend."

"The word?"

"Mathias."

"Stand; advance a step, and I fire. Ha! I see you now. I did not recognise your voice, Hunston."

"I thought not; but why all this precaution?"

"Fear has induced us to change the countersign. We believe there is mischief abroad, and so extra precautions are needed."

"Right, Ymeniz," said Hunston, who had been out scouting for a few hours after the execution of Pike, "although it is to be feared that the blindness which prevents your recognition of a friend and comrade may mislead you as to the real character of an enemy, should one dare to penetrate thus far."

The sentry laughed.

"Fear nothing on that score, Hunston," he said.

"Indeed I do."

"My carefulness may turn even friends into enemies, but fear, or over carefulness—"

"It is much the same thing," suggested Hunston.

"Right; but it is not likely to make me take foes for friends."

"I doubt it."

"You have a cunning tongue, friend Hunston," said the sentry, who was just a little bit nettled, "but I don't believe that you could prove that to my satisfaction."

"I might do it to the one or the other," returned Hunston, caustically; "but certainly not to both, the two are so opposed."

This was just a dash too subtle for the sentry, and so Hunston passed on without further remark.

A few steps further on he came to a group formed of the brigands, gathered around Pedro, a brigand who had been of some little assistance in the rescue of Hunston, but who unlike Tomaso, had managed to escape.

He was recounting the late adventures—from his own episode in the tale—of Hunston.

Hunston walked up to the centre of the group.

"Pedro," he said, "you rescued me, and perhaps saved my life; accept my hand, and with it my eternal gratitude." Pedro stepped back. He winced instead of taking the proffered hand, and his countenance fell.

"Pardon me Hunston," he said; "I'm very glad to have been of service to you, to have been able to save a comrade, but—"

He paused.

Hunston frowned.

"But what?"

"Don't be too grateful."

The tone, no less than the nature of the request, sounded just a little bit comical, and it made the bystanders, Hunston included, smile.

"What do you mean by that, my preserver? Why should I not be grateful?"

"Because I have heard it said that your gratitude brought bad luck to anyone who had really befriended you."

Hunston started.

He thought of Robert Emmerson.

That arm did its inventor's work well, indeed.

Not a day passed but Hunston realised the truth of the legend inscribed on the mechanical arm.

Not a day passed, but that he saw how fearfully was the legacy of vengeance bequeathed by the murdered Protean Bob being carried out.

Dropping his glance in some confusion for a moment, he turned sharply upon the brigand after a little

reflection.

Pedro could know nothing of the death of Emmerson.

Nay, it was more than probable that the very name was utterly unknown to these men.

“You wish to insult me, Pedro,” he said, “and so cancel the obligation I am under to you. But beware of going too far, for you may leave a balance upon the wrong side, and I am as quick to avenge an insult as to—”

Pedro interrupted him with a laugh.

“What did I say? I have only just rendered you a great service—at least, so you say—”

“And mean.”

“And mean, perhaps; and yet you are already threatening me. When I said that your gratitude is said to bring bad luck to anyone, I was only repeating an idle saying—as I thought—but it seems like the truth, after all.”

Hunston was moving thoughtfully away, when the brigand's words stopped him.

“Forgive me, Pedro,” he said, turning round; “I am a bad, ungrateful man, but I'm not utterly wanting in decent feeling. You touch me on a very sore spot.”

So saying he walked on, leaving Pedro staring after him.

“That's a queer lot,” muttered the brigand to himself, “a very queer lot. I think I would sooner have the murder of a priest on my conscience than be weighted with the deeds that he'll have to answer for.”

Pedro was no fool.

His observations were pretty well to the point.

Hunston felt the pangs of remorse.

Daily, hourly, in fact, he looked back and thought of what he was, and what he might have been had not his vicious propensities got the upper hand of him at the critical turn in his career.

And so the demon remorse played havoc with him already.

The mechanical arm was responsible for all. Its mysterious disorganisation had been the direct cause of his forced inactivity.

What gives ugly thoughts such power over one as bodily inactivity?

Nothing.

Robert Emmerson, your vengeance is as terrible as it is unceasing in its action.

* * * * *

Hunston sought the widow of Mathias.

“I have made good progress, Diana,” he said, “for I have learnt enough about the enemy to make sure of getting some of them at least into our power.”

The listener's eyes glistened at the words.

“Are you sure?”

“Yes.”

“What do you propose to do, then? Tell me.”

“Harkaway has a son—a mere youth.”

“I know it.”

“Well, this boy is a dare−devil, bold and fearless lad; nothing can daunt him. He is, in fact, what his hated father was when first I knew him, years and years ago.”

A faint and half−suppressed sigh escaped him as he uttered this.

“What of this boy?”

“This boy has a companion called Harry Girdwood.”

“Well.”

“Well, these two boys are to be trapped, if it be gone about carefully —very carefully, mark you.”

“That can be done, of course.”

“It can—by you.”

Diana stared again at this.

“By me?”

“Yes.”

“How?”

“Listen. They pay a certain respect to us—hold us in some fear, in fact—and the boys, who are regular rovers,

like their parents and friends, have only permission to cruise about in their little yacht."

"How did you learn this?"

"From Marietta, the servant of the Harkaways."

"Hah!"

"Now, with care, the boys might be lured, perhaps, away from the part of the coast which they know, and let them once touch the shore out of sight and hearing of their friends—"

"I see, I see," ejaculated the widow of Mathias. "I can entrap them, I believe. But tell me first, what is the object of securing these two boys?"

"The object!" ejaculated Hunston. "Why, surely that is clear enough. Let us once get hold of them, and we can make any terms we like with the father and friends. We shall have to dictate the conditions, and Harkaway will have no choice but to accept them."

"I see, I see," cried Diana, excitedly. "Leave the rest to me; I'll undertake to get them into our power."

"How?"

"No matter how; you have done your share of the business. Be mine the task to secure the rest."

"When?"

"To−morrow."

"Good!" said Hunston, gleefully, "good! I feel a presentiment of luck. I'm not superstitious, but I feel as certain now that we shall succeed —as certain as if the boys were already in our power."

"They shall be," returned the woman, solemnly, "they shall be. I swear it!"

CHAPTER XIX. JACK AND HARRY GIRDWOOD AFLOAT—THE SQUALL—THE SHIPWRECKED BOY—DEEDS OF HEROISM—THEIR REWARD—A DEADLY PERIL.

"Down with sail, Jack; we shall be over if we are not sprightly," said Harry.

Young Jack laughed.

The thought of danger actually made him merry, and so proved that he was every inch a Harkaway—a thorough chip of the old block.

"There's no fear, old fellow," he said.

A sudden gust of wind caught the sail, and caused the boat to give such a lurch at this very moment that both the boys were sent flying.

They got some hard knocks.

But neither was afraid of a little rough usage, and so they only scrambled to their feet, laughing boisterously, as if there was great fun in barked shins and bruised arms.

"I told you so, Jack," said Harry Girdwood.

"No harm done," retorted Jack, rubbing a damaged part and grinning.

"No, but don't let us be too foolish; we might get into trouble."

Young Jack roared at this.

"Soho−ho!" he cried. "Shipped another passenger, Harry, have you?"

"What do you mean?"

"Why, you've got Captain Funk aboard."

"Not I," returned Harry, "only if we get into any foolish scrape, they won't let us come out for a sail again, and as this is the only jaunt left us, we may as well keep ourselves quiet."

"There's something in that," said young Jack,

So saying, he set about reefing the sail with all possible despatch.

Now it was barely accomplished when a violent gust of wind drove the little craft along at a furious rate.

It was only just in time.

A moment more and the sail would have been shredded, or, what was still worse, the boat would have been capsized for a certainty.

Harry Girdwood lowered the oars and pulled sharply along before the fury of the gale, while young Jack baled out a little water that had been shipped in the first heavy lurch, before the youthful mariners had been fully prepared for such violent treatment, and steered at the same time.

In this way they contrived to elude the violence of the gale for the present, at least.

But the danger was by no means overcome.

They had not got through the worst of their trouble as yet, little as they anticipated any serious danger.

The gale had come on with strange suddenness, and the truth was that they could hardly realize the extent of their danger.

It was great.

There was, perhaps, a special providence in their ignorance of their real peril, for their coolness alone gave them any chance in the present emergency.

They were brave boys both—never were there braver—yet it is no disparagement of them to say that there was very great probability of their losing their *sang froid* if they had known how very critical their position actually was.

As it happened, they did the very best thing to do under the circumstances.

They kept their boat before the wind, and by vigorous rowing, they contrived to drive along at a rate which was literally tremendous.

And so on they scudded for about ten miles, when the wind dropped a little, and the pace began to tell upon them both.

"Keep her off shore, Jack," cried Harry Girdwood.

“Right.”

The wind and rain had half blinded young Jack, and although he had said “Right,” he steered decidedly wrong.

He could not see where they were going.

“Look out!”

Harry Girdwood only just spoke in time for young Jack to take heed of the warning, for a minute later and they shot past some sharp, jagged rocks, into which they would inevitably have dashed but for a lucky tug at the rudder at the very last moment.

Now the roar of the wind and waters had just begun to lull a little, when a loud cry for help was heard.

And then, for the first time, they perceived that a boat had just been launched by a boy at not more than thirty yards along the beach, and being carried out to sea by a huge receding wave, had become unmanageable.

They could see with half an eye that the boy had no skill in handling a boat.

“Help, help!” cried the strange lad, waving his hand in distress towards their boat.

“All right,” shouted young Jack. “We're there.”

Harry Girdwood pulled vigorously towards the venturesome youth.

A few strokes brought them within twenty feet of the imperilled youth, and he would have been got away in safety but for his own folly and imprudence.

“Sit still,” shouted young Jack. “Sit still.”

“He'll be overboard,” ejaculated Harry, glancing over his shoulder.

The words of the latter proved but too prophetic

A cry from young Jack—a piercing shriek from the other boat.

When Harry Girdwood glanced over his shoulder again, he saw the other boat, keel upwards, floating away.

The unfortunate youth, its late occupant, was nowhere to be seen.

“He's gone!”

“He has,” cried young Jack, starting up, “and by all that's unlucky, he can't swim. Pull on, pull hard. Pull for mercy's sake.”

And young Jack stood up in the boat, tearing off his jacket and waistcoat.

“What are you after?”

“I'm in after him.”

“Jack, Jack, you'll never live in this heavy sea.”

“Never fear, old boy, I'll try.”

“You shall not, I say. You—”

“Here goes,” cried young Jack.

And before Harry Girdwood could interfere, over he went, head first, into the boiling waves.

Harry Girdwood held his breath in sheer fright.

He shipped his oars and peered over the boat's side.

Where was he?

Would he never come up?

Oh, Heaven! what a fearful time it seemed that the intrepid boy was under water.

It seemed an age.

In reality it was but a minute, no more, before young Jack struck up to the surface.

He struck out with one hand—the other grasped something.

“Harry.”

“Yes, Jack.”

“I've got him.”

“Hold tight.”

“I mean to,” responded young Jack, with great coolness, all things considered.

And now Harry could see that Jack's left hand was twined in the black flowing hair of the half senseless boy.

The latter had no sooner reached the air and gulped down a breath or two greedily, than consciousness came partly back, and he threw his arms about his preserver and struggled desperately.

“Leave go,” cried young Jack. “Let go, or we shall both go down together.”

But it is not easy to reason with a drowning man.

Young Jack found himself now in a desperate strait indeed.

The frantic efforts of the rescued boy impeded his movements, entirely baffling the heroic Jack's best efforts.

Harry Girdwood saw it all, and his terror increased every moment.

Well it might.

The mad struggles of the stranger imperilled both.

“Dive, Jack, dive,” cried Harry Girdwood, frantically; “dive with him, or it is all up with both of you.”

Jack heard him.

Twisting like an eel in the embrace of the boy he would save, he dived down, dragging the stranger with him.

In the space of a few seconds he reappeared again upon the surface, observing his former tactics.

Striking out with his right arm, while with his left hand he grasped the stranger's long black hair.

“Catch hold of him,” gasped young Jack; “never mind me.”

Harry Girdwood leant over the boat's side and caught at the stranger by the collar.

“There; hold on like that,” said young Jack.

The weight coming all upon one side of the boat, however, threatened to capsize it, and so they had to act with the greatest precaution.

Young Jack, however, struck out and swam round the boat, so that his weight, clinging upon the further side of the boat, served to steady it while Harry Girdwood completed the rescue of the stranger.

“Bravo!” cried young Jack.

“It was a tough job,” said Harry.

“And a narrow squeak for all of us.”

“Right; but let's look after this poor fellow. He's alive.”

“Yes.”

“I'm glad of that; it would have been precious hard after all the work, not to mention the risk run, to have let him slip his cable in spite of us.”

“Well, it is not his fault that he's alive now.”

“Alive.” quoth young Jack, “by George! He looks more dead than alive as it is.”

“Don't fear for him, Jack; he's as good as twenty dead men so far, but how are you getting on?”

“Hearty. Rather damp outside, nothing more.”

“And inside?”

“Damp too. Why, I shipped a bellyful of salt water last drop down; enough to salt a barrel of junk.”

Harry turned his attention to the stranger.

“He keeps insensible a very long time,” he said to young Jack; “it begins to look serious.”

“Move the scat,” said young Jack, “and let us lay him flat down upon his back at the bottom of the boat. I have always heard that that is the proper thing to do.”

No sooner said than done.

Presently they were rewarded for their pains by detecting a faint breathing.

“How white his neck is,” said Harry Girdwood.

“And how small and delicate his hands,” said young Jack.

“One would almost take him for a woman.”

“He'd pass very well for one if he wore petticoats.”

“I'm almost inclined as it is to think that—”

“Ha! He's coming round.”

The youth opened his eyes and stared about him.

He looked half scared at first one and then the other.

“You are better now,” said young Jack, taking his hand.

He stared.

Jack had spoken in English in his anxiety.

He put the same sentiment into the best Greek he could muster.

“Yes, yes,” replied the stranger, “better, better,” and then he appeared to grow more and more confused; “but what is this? Have I been ill?”

“Yes.”

“Ah!”

“Not very; it is all well now. Don't you remember—”

The rocking of the boat furnished the missing link in the chain of memory, and the rescued boy showed, by a ray of intelligence in his bright face, that it had all come back to him.

A smile of grateful acknowledgment of their services shot over his countenance.

Then suddenly his expression changed.

“Where are we going?” he demanded, with the most extraordinary eagerness.

“Ashore.”

“Oh, no, no, no!” he exclaimed; “not ashore here.”

“Why not?”

“You must not go ashore here,” said the youth, eagerly, “not for worlds.”

“Why?”

Jack was questioning the stranger while Harry Girdwood shot the boat into a favourable creek.

Harry jumped out.

“Come along,” he said cheerfully.

“Safe on shore.”

“And precious glad of it,” added young Jack.

The stranger looked upon him in anxious expectation, and finding they were alone, he turned eagerly to his young preservers.

“Put off again,” he said; “put out to sea, I tell you.”

“Why?”

“You have disarmed me; you have saved my life and shown me tenderness and care—aye, brotherly love. Oh,” he added earnestly, “pray go now; at once, while you are free.”

“Well,” quoth young Jack, with a long whistle, “this is a rum go.”

Before another word could be spoken, there was heard a whistle, which sounded like the echo of young Jack's note; an answer came from another direction, and half−a−dozen men sprang forward from no one could see where, and pounced upon our two bold boys, Jack and Harry Girdwood.

“Bravo, Theodora!” cried a familiar voice in English, “you play the part of decoy to perfection. We have got them at last.”

Young Jack started.

He turned pale and haggard, looking in a moment to Harry.

“Do you know that voice?”

“I do,” replied Harry Girdwood.

“We are sold, undone. It is the villain Hunston.”

* * * * *

It was but a little while after young Jack and Harry Girdwood had been entrapped, when a strange scene took place.

Evening was coming on.

Brigand sentinels had been posted at each path by which their haunt could be approached, and one was perched high above on a flat rock, which overlooked everything, without having seen himself except by the very sharpest of eyes.

Hunston, after visiting the outposts and seeing that everything was safe for the night, climbed up to this spot, and seated himself on a large stone.

He felt feverish, and at that elevation he might feel something of the breeze, a thing unknown down below at the bivouac, which was closely surrounded by thick bushes.

Strange dreads and doubts filled Hunston's mind, dread of the future, dread of a lingering illness through his arm, which daily grew worse, dread of death, which he felt convinced must be the end, and doubts whether eventually his enemy Harkaway would not triumph.

For Hunston's hatred of Harkaway knew no abatement; living or dying, the same fierce, unquenchable thirst after vengeance would fill his soul.

But what troubled him most now was his health.

The shoulder to which the mechanical arm was attached was so painful, it could scarcely bear the pressure of the clothing he wore; the blood in his veins, after flowing through that part of the system, seemed to return to his heart heated almost to boiling point, but that heat did not stimulate him to exertion.

On the contrary, he felt languid and scarcely able to do the duties that devolved upon him as Toro's lieutenant.

Nor was his brain so clear as in former days.

Ideas he had in plenty, but they seemed to jostle and confuse each other in their endeavours to settle down into a connected train of thought.

Emmerson's vengeance was working.

As he sat there, the sentinel remained motionless, leaning on his carbine and peering over the edge of the precipice.

Presently Diana, the widow of Mathias, came up the rock, and Hunston rose to greet her.

"Your husband is to a certain extent avenged," said he.

"How?"

"Harkaway's boy is in our power,"

"That is something, at all events. That girl Theodora, the niece of Tomaso, has done her work well. Vengeance has commenced."

"Yes, but—"

"But what?"

"There is a hitch in the proceedings. The girl is softhearted, and begged hard for their lives."

"She is a fool! By Heaven, I am half inclined to do the deed myself with this dagger."

"In which case Toro would probably do for you."

"What, is he turned craven?"

"No; but he is sweet on Theodora, and for her sake is inclined to spare them."

Hunston knew well enough that all this was false, as, unless certain conditions were promptly complied with, Toro would certainly kill both of them without the slightest hesitation or compunction.

But he did not tell Diana.

"But," he continued, "what is your idea of vengeance?"

"I would wring other hearts as mine has been wrung. I would cause blinding tears to dim the brightness of other eyes besides mine. I would cause the stern judge Death to pass a decree of divorce upon others besides myself and Mathias. When Harkaway is a widower, or his wife a widow, then I shall consider my vengeance partly accomplished."

"Humph! for a woman you are tolerably moderate. I shall not be satisfied till the Harkaways and the Harveys are destroyed root and branch−till the other accursed detective, Nabley, his American friend Jefferson, the negroes, the wooden−legged ass Mole, till every one of the party is swept away out of my path. Harkaway taught me to hate, and I swear by all the eternal powers of earth, heaven, and hell, he shall see how I have profited by the lesson."

Diana was silent for a few moments; then, with something like a sneer, said—

"You are a brave man—in words, Signor Hunston."

"My acts speak for themselves."

"And little have they said for some time past. But listen; I have sworn a deep and deadly revenge."

"Well."

"This evening I depart."

"Good."

"When I return again, you may expect to hear that Harkaway is dead or his wife."

The excited woman glided away, and Hunston, after smoking a cigarette, followed her.

"Good?" chuckled Hunston to himself, "I could not have a better ally than that woman; for she can go where I dare not show myself, and will find opportunities for carrying out her plans unsuspected. Beware, Harkaway! for though I have waited years for revenge, it is now within my grasp."

CHAPTER XX. THE HARKAWAYS LEARN ALL—MR. MOLE EXPLAINS AND GETS INTO TROUBLE IN CONSEQUENCE.

Words cannot describe the trouble of the Harkaway family at the loss of young Jack and his stout−hearted comrade, Harry Girdwood.

At first their indignation had been so great, that their first impulse was to use violent means to effect the recovery of the boys.

But the first person to oppose this was Jack Harkaway himself.

“If we were to attack them in force,” he said, “it would be imprudent upon every hand. In the first place they would have the advantage of us, of course, in a mountain skirmish.”

“I don't know that they would get the best of it,” said Harvey.

“Nor I,” said Jefferson.

“We can do nothing at present as far as I can see,” said Harkaway. “Only wait.”

“To what end?”

“Their object must be plunder—money—ransom.”

“Supposing that they demand a sum?”

“I shall pay it as soon as ever I can rake it up. If it is more than I possess in the world,” said Jack Harkaway, seriously, “then I shall borrow of my friends to make it up.”

The poor fellow turned away to hide his emotion.

“What guarantee have you that they would give up the boys for the ransom?”

“None. But I should not send the money first. They would have to send the boys here first.”

“They might doubt you.”

“Why, yes. But Hunston and Toro are with them, and they know that Jack Harkaway's word is his bond, no matter with whom he is dealing, let them be the veriest scum on the face of the earth.”

“Which they are.”

“Which they are, as you say.”

“Very good,” said Jefferson. “Now I don't want to play the part of the wet blanket, and to dash your hopes to the ground before they are half formed, but I wish to guard against running away upon a false track.”

“In what way?”

“All your hopes of ransoming the boys rest now upon the fact of Hunston and Toro being with the brigands.”

“Yes.”

“Well,” added Jefferson, “how do you know that Hunston and Toro are really in the band? You only suppose that.”

“I can answer positively for that,” said a voice at the door.

They turned.

There stood Nabley, the detective.

“Nabley!”

“Nabley here!”

“Himself,” said the indefatigable officer, coming forward. “Hunston is with the brigands, very much with them, in fact.”

“That we know,” said Harkaway, who then related the death of Pike, and the supposed abduction of young Jack.

“I have been very ill,” said Nabley. “I fainted in the street, and, in falling, severely injured my head. But do you know how that Hunston finds out all about you and your doings?”

“No.”

“Well, it is through one of your own household.”

“Explain,” said Harkaway.

“What do you mean?” asked Harvey.

“I can't talk much; Mr. Mole will tell you perhaps better. Here, Mr. Mole.”

Mr. Mole stepped forward, looking just a little sheepish.

“Mr. Mole!”

“Mr. Mole!” exclaimed a dozen voices in chorus.

“Yes, my friends,” said the old gentleman, stepping forward with his well−known modesty, “it is even so; your much−wronged Mole.”

“Tell us how it occurred,” said Harkaway.

“I was down in the dancing garden, seated in a species of small summer house, taking a glass of—I mean a cup of tea—ahem!—when I fell asleep—I dozed, in fact.”

“You would,” said Harvey. “I've often noticed that you doze after a glass of—I mean a cup of tea.”

Mole glared at the speaker.

“The heat of the day quite overcame me.”

“It would,” said Dick, in the same compassionate manner.

“When I woke up, I heard two persons conversing close by the green arbour where I sat.”

“Yes.”

“Two familiar voices.”

“Ha!” exclaimed Harkaway, eagerly.

“Now guess,” said Mole, “who the two familiar voices belonged to?”

“Can't.”

“Out with it.”

“One of the voices,” said Mr. Mole, “was Hunston's, the other was—”

“Toro's?”

“No.”

“No! Whose then?”

“Marietta's.”

“Marietta—what, the maid here?”

“Yes.”

“Impossible.”

“Was it, egad? I thought so, but I am not easily mistaken.”

“Unless you dreamt.”

“Bah!” exclaimed Mr. Mole, with ineffable contempt; “fiddlesticks!”

“But did you suppose she was in league with Hunston?” demanded Emily with great eagerness.

“No.”

“What then?”

“He was bamboozling her, twisting her round his finger^ as one might say. He had got up a casual chat, persuading her that he was a private friend of yours, so he pumped and pumped her about the boys, where they went, and so forth.”

“And did she say any thing that could serve him in his vile purpose?” asked Mrs. Harkaway.

“Plenty to help them, the miscreants, I suppose.”

“The girl must be a downright idiot to get into conversation with a strange man after all that has taken place, and after all the danger which she knows they ran.”

“Not far short of it,” said Jefferson.

“He spoke particularly about the boys not venturing out to the mountains, that they were permitted only to sail about in their boat, and—”

Harkaway broke in here with an exclamation that startled them all.

“That explains all,” he said. “All, all, I see it now.”

“Do you? Explain.”

“They have put out to sea and taken the boys, perhaps by stealth, perhaps by violence.”

“Likely enough.”

“Poor boys, poor boys!”

“And where did all this take place?” demanded Jefferson; “in one of the public promenades, did you say?”

“Mr. Jefferson,” replied old Mole saucily, “you want your nose filed. I said in the dancing garden.”

“Oh, de dancing garden, was it, Massa Ikey?” said a voice in his ear, which caused him to palpitate nervously.

It was Mrs. Mole.

When he had spoken of the dancing garden, he had not noticed his better half's presence.

“Yes, my dear,” he said timidly, trying to look dignified the while before the company.

“And what was you—doing in such a place as a dancing garding, Mister Mole, sar?” demanded his dusky rib, in a voice which sounded dangerous.

“I went, my dear, to study character,” said Mr, Mole timidly....

“What?” thundered Mrs. Mole.

He trembled, and faltered something almost inaudibly.

“Studyin' character,” said the lady with great contempt; “losing your character, you silly old pump—”

“My dear,” remonstrated the old gentleman.

“Don't 'my dear' me,” said Mrs. Mole; “you're gwine off your silly old cokernut, you bald−headed old coon.”

“Mrs. Mole!”

“You go to dat dancin' garding for to see dem gals jump about and dance and make fools ob demselves, ignorant critters.”

“No such thing, I tell you,” said Mole, indignantly.

“Oh, yes, it is,” said his better half, “and you's a bushel more indelicate dan dey is, you silly old possum.”

This started the company off generally in a noisy fit of laughter, before which poor Mole was forced to beat a retreat, followed by his irate partner.

“Poor Mole,” said Jefferson, laughing heartily, “it is an unlucky admission for him. Chloe will give it to him sorely for this, I'm afraid.”

* * * * *

They went deeply into the question of ransoming the boys, for they were convinced that they had really fallen into the hands of the brigands.

But do what they would, say what they would, they could only come back to one result.

They must wait.

Patience was difficult under the circumstances, but there was no help for it.

“Wait till to−morrow,” said Jefferson; “it is a hard job, I know, but I feel certain that if the boys are with the brigands, to−morrow morning will bring a message from them.”

“But can nothing be done meanwhile?” said Emily.

“No.”

“Nothing.”

“Stay; you may get some papers printed and circulated everywhere, offering a heavy reward for the recovery of the boys.”

“To what end?”

“It can do no harm, and may do good. At any rate, it will show the brigands that we are ready to pay the piper for our boys' sake.”

“That's true,” said Jefferson.

“Let's do it,” said Harkaway, who was pacing up and down impatiently; “at any rate, any thing is better than remaining inactive.”

CHAPTER XXI. A HOUSE OF MOURNING—THE LETTER FROM THE ENEMY—A STRANGE CORRESPONDENCE—THE INCIDENT AT THE OPEN WINDOW—HUNSTON'S REVENGE— DESPAIR.

It was as Jefferson had predicted.

The notices were printed and circulated everywhere by well−chosen and energetic agents.

Early next morning, a letter was found fastened to the garden gate.

It was brought to Harkaway, who was already up and busy.

He tore it eagerly open, and found the following written in a disguised handwriting and in English—

"TO Mr. JOHN HARKAWAY:

"If you would save the lives of your son and your *protege*, his companion, the only way to do it is to bring the sum of five hundred pounds sterling to the stone cross by the old well at two o'clock this afternoon. Those who have the two boys in their keeping will be on the watch. Come along, as you value your happiness and their safety."

"Not very likely," said Jack Harkaway.

Instead of complying with this very shallow request, he wrote an answer in these terms:

"TO HUNSTON AND HIS FELLOW−VILLAINS:

"Send the lads back here. Within half−an−hour of their return, the money shall be sent to where you will and when you will. This I promise, and swear upon my honour. None knows better than yourself that this may be implicitly relied upon.

"HARKAWAY."

This letter he sent by a trusty messenger to the spot appointed for the meeting place, and they waited impatiently for the further result.

It was not long coming.

Before two o'clock, Marietta discovered another letter tied to the garden gate, but how it came there they were unable to decide.

Be that as it may, it was soon discovered to be of the highest importance to them in the present state of affairs.

It was brief and startling, and ran as follows—

"We do not bandy words with you. We offer our conditions. You refuse. Well and good. The consequences be upon your own head. If the money be not paid by four to−day, at six the boys will lose an ear each,"

"The villains!" cried poor Harkaway. "Oh, villains!"

But he was powerless to help them.

He knew well enough that, do what he would, he could not hope to get the boys back without paying, and paying through the nose too.

Nor indeed did he desire to try to achieve this.

The only question was, would they deliver up their prisoners, once they had received the five hundred pounds?

Perhaps.

Perhaps not.

If not, they would be in as much peril as they were already.

Nay, more.

He guessed shrewdly enough that once they had received such a handsome sum as five hundred pounds, they would think that they had drained him dry, or as nearly so as it was possible to arrive at, and so might make short work of young Jack and Harry Girdwood.

What was to be done?

He could not say.

He would gladly have risked all that he possessed in the world for the chance of having his boys back.

Aye, his boys, for Harry Girdwood was second only in Harkaway's affection to young Jack.

But he did not wish to reward the miscreants for ill−treating the unfortunate lads.

At length he came to the conclusion that he would persist in his resolve to have the boys back before he parted with any money at all.

Accordingly he wrote another note to the brigands.

This he dispatched by the same means as the former note.

“Release the two lads. Restore them to us, and the ransom of a king shall be yours. Fix upon any sum, however great, provided that it be within my means to pay it, and you shall not ask twice. Moreover, I shall do nothing more to molest you or interfere with you in any way. Play false, or harm a hair of my boys' heads, and beware. You may know that Jack Harkaway is not the man to make an enemy of.”

The answer to this was not long in coming.

An ugly scrawl upon a dirty piece of paper, and with it was a small parcel.

“We despise your threats, and laugh you to scorn. That you may know how little we are to be trifled with, we send you their ears in proof that we have kept our word. By this hour to−morrow the two boys die, unless you pay down the sum as fixed upon by us, both in manner and in amount.”

Jack Harkaway turned faint and sick.

He dared nor open the parcel which accompanied the letter.

He sent for Jefferson and Harvey, and unable to trust himself to speak, he placed the letter in the latter's hands.

“Read, read,” he said, with a horror−stricken look.

Harvey glanced down the letter, and his countenance fell as he passed it on to Jefferson.

“What is to be done?”

“I don't know,” replied Jefferson; “I am at a loss. This is too horrible.”

“What do you say, Dick?”

Harvey hung his head.

“Speak, Dick. Tell me, old, friend, what I ought to do,” said Harkaway, imploringly. “I am bewildered—dazed—at my wits' end. What ought I to do?”

“Pay the money.”

Accordingly the money, all in gold, was placed in a bag in the spot which they had indicated in the first note addressed by the brigands to Jack Harkaway.

This done, they awaited the result.

It soon came.

Too soon for the latter's peace of mind.

As the family and their friends were seated in moody silence and in sorrow around the dinner−table, so strong was the sense of oppression upon everyone that they only conversed in whispers.

“The heat is really overpowering,” said Mrs. Harkaway.

“Shall I open the window?”

“If you please.”

He hastened to comply with her request, when at that very instant something shot past him into the room.

It fell with a clatter upon the table, and cannoned off a dish on to Jack Harkaway, striking him a rather sharp blow in the chest.

“What's that?”

“Hullo!”

“A stone.”

“Yes, a stone with a paper wrapped round it.”

“So it is.”

“A letter, I should think,” suggested Dick.

“If so,” said Harkaway, smiling sadly, “it is evidently meant for me.”

“You have a striking proof of that,” said Dick.

Harkaway undid the paper and scanned it through.

His countenance fell as he read on.

His pale face grew pallid, and rising from his seat, he ran, or rather staggered, to the window.

“Gone!”

“What is the matter?” demanded Dick, jumping up.

“See after the man who threw this letter in,” exclaimed Harkaway. “Come with me—come, come immediately!”

And with this somewhat wild exhortation, he tottered out of the room, followed by Dick.

Everybody arose from the table in confusion.

Dismay, alarm, was depicted in every face.

“What can it be?” ejaculated Mrs. Harkaway. “Oh, Mr. Jefferson, go and see, and bring me the news.”

“I will. Calm yourself, my dear Mrs. Harkaway; it is very likely to be good news which thus agitates poor Jack.”

Away he went.

“I fear it is the reverse,” said Emily, shaking her head.

Jefferson overtook Harkaway and Dick Harvey in the gardens, where an active search was going forward after the man, or individual of either sex, who could have thrown the stone with its strange letter.

“Let me see the letter, Jack.”

The latter placed it in his hand, and then, to Jefferson's horror and dismay, he found it contained the following words—

“TO HATED HARKAWAY.

“I have had years and years of patience, and my turn has come at last. As your eyes glance at these lines, your boy is vainly supplicating for mercy. Before you reach the signature at foot, your accursed brat will be dead—mark that—dead! No power on earth can save him. Had you sent the money demanded as his ransom more promptly, you could have saved him. May the knowledge of this wring your heart as you have wrung mine in bygone years.

“HUNSTON.”

CHAPTER XXII. A HOUSE OF MOURNING—HARVEY'S RESOLVE—A TIME OF TROUBLE.

"Horrible!" cried Jefferson; "horrible!"

Dismay and terror were on every face.

The dreadful news paralysed their movements, and rendered them momentarily helpless.

Dick Harvey was the first to break the silence.

He sprang to his feet, and made for the grounds, motioning the others to follow him.

"Let us try and catch the postman," he exclaimed; "if we get hold of him, we may learn something worth knowing."

"Bravo!" responded Jefferson; "a capital idea."

They were flying all over the grounds immediately.

But the result may be guessed in advance.

Not a sign was there of the bearer of this alarming letter.

They gave up the search only when there was not the faintest vestige of a hope left, and crestfallen and disappointed, they returned to the house.

"Come," said Dick to the bold American; "we must move; we must be stirring."

"What for?"

"For several reasons," replied Dick, "but firstly for the purpose of giving Jack something to do. It will never do to let a man in his condition brood."

They sought poor Harkaway again, and led him off to hold a consultation.

"Jack," said Harvey, brusquely, "you must not give way to despondency. I say positively, must not. You will certainly undermine your health."

"Do not fear for me, Dick," returned Harkaway, "I shall be better for a little quiet."

"Indeed you'll not. Besides, it is not just to the boys."

Harkaway's lips quivered, and a big lump rose in his throat.

He swallowed it with considerable difficulty, and silently wrung Dick's hand.

"Don't, don't, old friend," he faltered, in a broken−hearted voice. "I can't bear the mention of their names. Poor boys! poor boys!"

"But you must," insisted Harvey. "I don't mean to leave them in the lurch."

"What do you mean?"

"What I say. We must not give up the search."

"Ah, Dick, you would persuade me, if you can't persuade yourself."

"You are wrong," replied Harvey. "I have the deepest conviction on the point."

"To what effect?"

"That they live—both live."

Jack Harkaway looked positively frightened at this reply.

"Dick, Dick," he exclaimed, mournfully, "what are you saying, old friend?"

"What I mean. They yet live," returned Harvey boldly.

"No, no."

"But I say, yes, yes."

"I should rather say that they were murdered long before we received their last message."

"Come, come, Jack," he said; "rouse yourself, man. Whatever can make you believe this to be true?"

"The letter."

Dick laughed at this.

"That is the very first thing to raise my doubts," replied Dick. "Why, we have known Hunston all his life, and never found him any thing but the most notorious liar."

"True; but—"

"He told lies as a boy—lies as a youth—lies as a man. His life has been one long lie, and yet you choose to

make yourself wretched and all of us too upon the strength of such a vagabond's word. Bah!”

Harkaway hung his head and sighed.

“That is not all, Dick,” he said; “I have the direst presentiment upon me—”

“Presentiment!” ejaculated Dick, interrupting him.

“Well, Jack, I will not quarrel with you about presentiments, since I am urged on to what I am about to say and do by presentiments—only my presentiments are of the most hopeful description.”

“Dick,” said Harkaway, looking him straight in the face, “you are trying to deceive me.”

“I swear I am not,” retorted Harvey, with warmth. “And you shall soon see whether or not I am in earnest.”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean that I am going to fetch the boys.”

“What wildness are you talking, Dick? What is this?”

“Simply that to−morrow at daybreak I shall start off on the search.”

“Whither?”

“To the mountains.”

Harkaway looked frightened at this.

“Not to trust yourself in the brigands' clutches?”

“I mean to beard the tigers in their lair,” echoed Dick firmly; “not a word, Jack,” he added, as he saw Harkaway about to interrupt him, “not a word; the worthy Richard Harvey will not go, but his spirit in another skin will go.”

“You are never going to trust yourself in a disguise.”

“I am.”

“Why, Dick, old friend, were you that unhappy man Protean Bob himself, Hunston would penetrate your disguise; the eye of hate—”

“Nonsense. If I were Protean Bob, Hunston would be too glad not to recognise me.”

“Perhaps.”

“Now, Jack, you must listen to me, and not give advice. My determination is taken; nothing can shake it. Hilda and the family generally must suppose that I have gone to the port to arrange about our departure, since they all appear to be so thoroughly bent upon leaving here.”

“But they will never believe a word about it.”

“That I can not help, but at all events I leave here to−morrow, at daybreak, and may the shade of one of their victims aid me to throw dust in the eyes of Hunston and the Italian villain Toro.”

“Amen,” said Harkaway, seriously.

* * * * *

Surely enough, at daybreak, someone set forth from the villa, but although we who are behind the scenes can give a shrewd guess at who it was, the early wanderer looked about as unlike Dick as you could well imagine.

Was it indeed Dick?

CHAPTER XXII. THE SILK DRESS−MURDER!

The morning after the interview between Hunston and the widow of Mathias, that woman was missing from the camp.

No one doubted that she had gone on her errand of vengeance, for Hunston had told Toro and one or two others of her threats against the Harkaways; but the question was how and when she did so?

No one knew.

The sentinels who all night long had guarded each known path leading to or from the bivouac were questioned, but neither of them had seen her depart.

Toro was rather annoyed at this; not that he had any great objection to her slaughtering the whole of the Harkaway family, although he certainly would prefer to perform that task himself. But he could not help thinking that a secret path might admit foes, as well as permit the exit of friends.

However, we must leave Toro to his reflections, and follow the brigand's widow.

It was between one and two in the morning when she quitted the bivouac without being observed, and walked slowly towards the town where the Harkaways were located.

There was no occasion for hurry.

At that hour of the morning she could not hope to gain admittance to the house where her foes were located.

A day must pass, and evening come again, before any thing could be done.

Diana's brain was in a whirl.

Deep−seated, poignant grief for the loss of one whom she had loved with all the passion her impetuous nature was capable of, made the thought and hope of revenge grow stronger and stronger.

Vengeance! aye, and a terrible one was what her soul craved.

Let once the deadly blow be stricken, and what matter then even if she fell into the hands of the authorities? What matter even if her life was pronounced a forfeit to the law? for life now had little charm for her.

As the sun rose, she sat down a little way out of the road and tried to form some connected plan for carrying out her purpose.

But no! her brain was too confused for deep thought, and after a brief interval she resolved to act upon no plan whatever, but simply do as the course of events might dictate.

At about the hour when she thought the inhabitants of the town would begin to stir, Diana walked into the place.

She knew the residence of the Harkaways well, but scarcely glanced at it as she passed and proceeded to a little house not far from it, where, according to an inscription over the door, one might obtain food, drink and lodging.

Entering this place, Diana made a slender meal, and then, telling the ancient dame who kept the house that she was fatigued, demanded to be shown where she could repose for an hour or two.

The old woman ushered her into a small, meanly−furnished apartment at the front of the house,

“Do not disturb me. I will rest till noon if not later,” said Diana.

“You shall not be interrupted,” was the response, and Diana was left alone.

She tried to sleep, so that she might be stronger and cooler for the business she had in hand; but the excitement under which she laboured effectually chased away drowsiness.

A little after noon the woman of the house looked in, and finding her lodger awake, entered into conversation, commencing by suggesting some refreshment.

Diana shook her head.

“Ah, my food is very plain and humble,” said the old woman. “I can't give you such dainties as the people over yonder eat.”

She jerked her thumb in the direction of the Harkaway residence.

“What people are they?” asked Diana, with an assumed indifference she was far from feeling.

“Some English.”

“Do they, then, eat and drink the best?”

“The very best; oh, they are rich.”

“What do they want here?”

“They have come to destroy the brigands; is it not droll?”

“Ha! have they succeeded?”

“No; but if they are not careful, the brigands will destroy them. They are so careless.”

Diana was afraid to exhibit too much interest in the doings of the Harkaways, lest she should arouse suspicion.

So she simply nodded, and listened most anxiously to what the garrulous old woman would say next.

“So very careless; anyone might get into their house by the side door,” said the ancient dame.

“Well, it is their own fault if they are robbed.”

“True. But it would be little credit to the robber; they think the brigands are afraid to enter the town, so they don't take many precautions.”

Diana treasured up every word of this.

Presently the old woman, finding her guest was not conversationally inclined, went out again, and Diana was left alone.

The sun set, and darkness began to gather rapidly when she went out, and after going a little way down the street, returned, and sought the side door of Harkaway's house.

She turned the handle softly and entered.

There was no one in the kitchen where she found herself, but the subdued noise of knives and forks in another apartment convinced her that they were at dinner or some other meal.

Diana, as soon as she had ascertained that fact, glided like a spectre up the stairs, and noiselessly examined various bedchambers.

At length she decided on hiding herself in one which seemed better furnished than the others.

“This must be it,” she thought.

And she was right.

It was the apartment of Mrs. Harkaway.

On the dressing−table was a folded paper.

Diana opened it, and found that it was a milliner's bill against Mrs. Harkaway.

“For making a pearl−grey silk dress, etc., etc.”

To hide herself was Diana's next move.

Clutching her sharp dagger firmly in her hand, the vengeful woman concealed herself behind some tapestry and waited.

Nor had she long to wait.

A light foot was heard without.

The door was opened, and a second afterwards, a graceful female form was seated before the mirror, with its back towards Diana.

And a female voice said—

“This pearl−grey silk suits my complexion far better than I thought it would. But it fits me badly. These Greek milliners are not to be compared with those of London or Paris.”

Then the wearer of the pearl−grey silk heaved a deep sigh, and Diana softly moved the curtain aside a little to get a view of the person who had spoken.

The face was not visible, but from the figure generally, Diana had not the slightest doubt it was Mrs. Harkaway.

“I want some new jewellery sadly,” continued “pearl−grey silk;” “but yet, after all, it would be scarcely safe to wear it here, while the brigands are in the neighbourhood. But they will soon be done for.”

The widow glided out from her hiding−place as the wearer of the silk dress continued—

“We have one villain safe enough, and another, Mathias, was smothered in a chimney—ha, ha, ha, ha—oh!”

The laugh ended in a deep groan, and never more came the slightest sound from those lips that a moment before had been so merry.

Diana had struck so hard and surely that no second blow was needed, for the first pierced a human heart.

“That laugh was an insult to the memory of my dead husband,” she said. “Let none dare scoff at Mathias.”

Like a shadow, she glided away, leaving the wearer of the pearl−grey silk sitting motionless before the mirror.

Dead!

The silk dress soaked with her heart's blood.

A few minutes later, some one entered Mrs. Harkaway's apartment, and then arose the fearful cry—

“Help! murder!”

CHAPTER XXIII. YOUNG JACK IN TROUBLE—THE COUNCIL—DOOM OF THE BOYS—A SOLDIER'S GRAVE AT DAYBREAK.

Young Jack and Harry Girdwood, who by their friends are supposed to have been grievously ill−treated, found themselves dragged by rough and brutal hands to a considerable distance from the shore where they had unfortunately landed.

The boy whom young Jack had rescued, and who decoyed them to their ruin, disappeared at once.

“Jack,” said Harry Girdwood, when recovered from the first shock, “we are done for.”

“No mistake about that,” returned young Jack, gloomily.

“Well, well, it is no fault of ours; that is some consolation.”

“A precious poor consolation, since here we are.”

“Yes.”

Here they were interrupted by their captors.

“Move on!”

The voice was Hunston's, and that sufficed for young Jack to show signs of opposition.

Vain obstacle.

The ruffians were only glad of the slightest pretext for further brutality.

“We are quite comfortable where we are,” said young Jack.

“Insolent brat!” said Hunston contemptuously. “You shall be birched well for that.”

The colour mounted to the boy's face in spite of himself.

“You can threaten in safety, fellow,” said young Harkaway, turning and facing their old enemy, “since you have so many backers to protect you.”

Hunston grew livid.

“You wretched spawn of a hated race,” he ejaculated between his teeth, “do you dare speak to me?”

“There is not much daring required,” retorted Jack, boldly.

The words were barely uttered when Hunston dealt the boy a buffet which nearly sent him to the earth; but young Jack was pretty prompt in returning it.

This was a kind of debt which the Harkaways were not long in acquitting.

Quick as lightning recovering himself, he turned and leapt upon Hunston, and taking him unexpectedly, he toppled him over and fell upon him, clutching him by the throat.

“Now I'll show you what it is to lay your dirty ringers on a Harkaway,” exclaimed the boy, glaring into the other's face.

“Let go, or—”

“My father trounced you before he was my age” cried the boy excitedly, “and now I'll finish you that you—”

But he was not allowed to complete his threat.

Rough and muscular hands dragged him off.

Else had Hunston fared badly.

It was all momentary, but no sooner had the brigands perceived their comrade to be in danger than they seized hold of the young prisoner and dragged him off.

Hunston sprang to his feet, and knife in hand rushed upon the boy, but the others interfered and placed themselves between the boy and the man.

“Come, Hunston,” said one of the men, “let him alone.”

“But he has struck me.”

“You provoked it.”

“What then? Shall I take a blow from such as he?”

“You were wrong to strike a child—a child too that is unarmed.”

Hunston hung his head at this way of putting it.

“No matter; he shall die for this.”

“Perhaps so; but meanwhile, there is possibility of ransom. The interests of the band can not be allowed to

suffer for you."

Hunston was silent.

He sheathed his knife, but his silent resolves were not less murderous for being unuttered.

"Lead the way, Simon," said the brigand who appeared to be chief spokesman.

Simon stepped onward, and behind him young Jack and Harry were forced to march.

They were walking into captivity, but they could not help themselves; and so they wisely obeyed, so as not to give their captors fresh excuse for further barbarity.

The road which Simon led them was a gloomy and narrow defile that wound precipitously up among the hills.

Sometimes the rocks overhung the road, so that the sky was barely visible, and here and there heaven was altogether obscured, for they had to walk through tunnels in the solid rock—too solid apparently to have been worked by the hand of man.

On they walked upon the gloomy track, the silence only broken by the echo of their own footfalls.

Any thing so desolate our boys had never beheld.

A dull settled feeling of loneliness and despair fell upon the two boy prisoners.

After journeying in this way for about two miles they came unexpectedly (to them—for of course Simon the guide knew where he was leading the party) upon a circular opening among the hills, beneath which was what appeared to be a table land of dark earth or peat.

"A swamp," said Harry Girdwood.

"It looks like a bog," said young Jack, "but yet I can see something moving."

"It is water."

"A lake."

"Yes."

"How black—how dismal it looks."

It did, indeed.

Silent and gloomy, like a table of metal, spread the darkling waters of this strange lake.

Wild and desolate was it in the extreme.

On every side it was enclosed by towering heights, bare, treeless and solemn.

Both boys were plainly impressed with the dull solemnity of the scene.

"What does that look like?" said young Jack, in a low voice to his companion.

"I don't know—Lerna, the famous marsh, near Argos."

"No; it was there that Hercules killed the Hydra, wasn't it?"

"Yes."

"I should like to think that it was like that," he said, glancing around at the brigands about them.

"And that you or we might emulate the example of Hercules."

"Ah, yes."

"But our enemies are more than hydra−headed."

The other glanced eagerly about him before he spoke.

"It is a question; I should almost sooner run a good deal of risk than be marched quietly off."

Now at this present juncture there was a signal from the topmost hills, and upon a trumpet note being blown in answer by one of the brigands, dark, dusky forms appeared upon every side.

Men sprang up in the rocky hills all round the dark waters of the lake, as promptly as the kilted savages responded to the summons of their chieftain, Rob Roy Macgregor Campbell.

Whatever wild fancies the two boy prisoners might have had in their minds, this startling phenomenon effectually drove them away.

And fortunate it was, too, for them.

Hunston called a halt.

The men were nothing loth.

The road they had traversed was steep and rugged, and it had perhaps told less upon the two boy prisoners than upon any of the party.

The brigands sat and refreshed.

They made a hearty meal of cold meat and coarse bread and herbs, and they drank of their wine from the skins

until their swarthy faces flushed purple; and whilst they feasted and made merry, the captives were constrained to look on—in envy perhaps—but not to share the banquet.

Hunger fell upon them.

But the boys guessed that their sufferings would only give pleasure to their captors, and so they kept their troubles in this particular to themselves.

“Tighten your belt,” said Harry Girdwood; “squeeze your stomach, Jack, and don't let these wolves see that we are peckish.”

“Not me.”

Taking the hint, Jack drew in a reef.

The two young comrades were, in reality, not much improved by this movement; but they thought they were, and imagination goes a great way.

But hunger is an intruder whose importunities there is no denying for any length of time, and so it fell out that, in spite of their brave and manful efforts at keeping up each other's pluck and spirit, he gnawed at their vitals in a way which reduced not only their stamina, but their spirits.

“This is to be our prison,” said Harry Girdwood gloomily; “I feared it would be.”

“It is rather like the Lethe than anything else,” said young Jack, pointing to the silent water below. “If we remain here long, we shall forget all that has gone before, you may be sure. This is the place to drive us out of our wits more than any spot we could imagine.”

“Rather the Styx than the Lethe,” said Harry; “banish all hope who enter here.”

It was indeed a spot to evoke gloomy reflections, and the boys were in a frame of mind to indulge in such.

This place, they found, was fixed upon as the camp of the brigands, who had felt it imperative to change their headquarters, since they had positive proof that their old stronghold was known to their enemies.

Here they were not in danger of surprise, for their men commanded every outlet, and it must be a rare chance to take them by surprise.

Within a couple of hours of the arrival there of the two boy prisoners and their captors, the whole of the band sauntered down in twos and threes, until the vast host that they formed fairly amazed young Jack and his companion.

“Let us fix a sum on them,” said Toro, “so that their parents and friends may release them if they wish.”

This was approved of by one and all of his hearers.

There was only a single dissentient voice.

This was Hunston's.

“If you attempt to temporise,” he said, “you will be beaten, for sure.”

“Why?”

“Beaten by whom?”

“Harkaway.”

“Bah!”

“Such is my experience of him,” returned Hunston.

“Nonsense; why shouldn't we make sure of the money if we can?”

“Why not?” said Hunston; “if we can, which I doubt.”

“Harkaway is a most affectionate parent, I know well,” said Ymeniz; “I have heard it from a dozen different sources. Once let him know that his son and the other boy are in danger, and he will pay any money for their release.”

“Well.” said Toro, “let us say five hundred pounds.”

“Five hundred?”

“Yes.”

“Not enough.”

“How much is five hundred pounds?” demanded Ymeniz.

“Twelve thousand, five hundred francs,” replied Toro.

“Very good, very good; a fair sum.”

“Is it not?”

“How shall we claim it?”

This question was put to the assembled council generally, and answered eagerly by Hunston.

“Let me do that?”

“Very good, Hunston; be yours that task.”

“But remember our old friend Tomaso is still in the power of these cursed English.”

Toro paused, and from all the band arose the unanimous cry—

“Tomaso must be rescued or be avenged!”

Hunston addressed himself to the business with considerable interest.

It is not necessary for me to go through the correspondence which took place, nor to dilate upon the ingenious manner in which the letters were delivered by Hunston or his emissaries.

With his wonted shrewdness, he watched for the result of his last threatening letter himself, and after making the most careful observations, he descended to the appointed spot and fetched the letter containing the money.

The five hundred pounds were there, in five Bank of England notes of one hundred each.

“Five hundred pounds,” he said, his vicious eyes glistening as he touched the crisp new notes, “five hundred pounds! Heaven, what a sum!”

He looked about him.

He was alone.

Not a soul in sight.

“Why should I share it?” he said; “why should it not all be mine?”

Why indeed?

Because he feared his lawless companions.

Nothing more.

“I'll take up a hundred, one hundred,” he muttered, half aloud, “and this shall serve a double purpose. The four hundred shall remain mine, and the one hundred theirs, But seeing that they can get nothing out of Harkaway, they will be the more easily worked upon, and I shall achieve all I want at one stroke; a noble notion.”

Back he went, and then began a comedy which Hunston went through like a veteran actor, a comedy that was destined to have a tragic finale.

“Toro,” said Hunston to the Italian, “to you I may speak as the leader of these brave fellows; also to you, comrades in general, I may talk without fear of my motives being in any way misconstrued.”

“Speak on.”

“Here is the reply of the cold−blooded Englishman Harkaway to my demand for ransom, and you are all my witness that I did not exact a very unreasonable sum.”

“No, no.”

“What says he?”

“He sends this,” returned Hunston, holding up a single hundred pound note: “one hundred pounds—two thousand, five hundred francs—in a word, one−fifth of the sum we demanded, and with it a letter.”

A murmur of indignation followed.

“What does the letter say?” they demanded.

“He defies us; he offers this sum, but says that if the boys are not released before sunrise, he will come and fetch them.”

“Let him come.”

“So say I; but what shall be done with the boys meanwhile ?”

A momentary silence followed; then came the deep stern words—

“Let them die.”

This speaker was Toro.

The Italian's words were eagerly caught up.

“Aye, let them die; but when?”

“When you will,” said Hunston; “I care not, so that we are lid of them. We see clearly that there is no counting upon these Harkaway people for the ransom set down by us, however reasonable our demands may be.”

“True.”

“Then, I say, let them die to−day.”

“Impossible,” said one of the brigands, stepping forth.

“Why?”

“Because the traitor, Lirico, is to die at daybreak; we can't have two executions so near to each other. Let them all die together.”

“Lirico,” said Hunston, “and why has he to die? I haven't heard in what he has offended.”

“A hateful thing,” was the reply of his informant; “Lirico has offended against the foundation rule of the band.”

“How?”

“He has kept to himself the booty he has gained, and our law is that any member of the band who shall conceal his booty, or any part or fragment of the same, to the prejudice of his comrades and fellows shall die the death of a traitor.”

Hunston was silent.

But had anybody been watching him closely then, they would have noticed that he changed colour.

It was an unpleasant topic to tackle the English ruffian upon, after all that had just taken place.

“Why so silent, comrade?” said an old brigand named Boulgaris, staring Hunston full in the face; “do you not approve?”

“Of what?”

“Of the law.”

“I—of course.”

“Of course you do,” said Boulgaris boldly; “why, you would be the first to approve. Who could approve more of such a law than you, honest Hunston?”

“Who, indeed?”

Hunston winced under the cool scrutiny of the Greek.

Did he know aught about what had taken place?

The idea was utterly absurd.

He (Hunston) had taken too much care that he was not observed for any vulgar pryer like Boulgaris to find a corner from which to spy upon his movements.

Still it gave him a qualm.

“Quite right,” said Hunston, boldly; “quite right and just; any man who can play false to his fellows deserves to die the death.”

“Hear, hear! Let him die.”

“And the two boys shall die with him?” asked Boulgaris.

“They shall, at daybreak.”

This was put to the assembled throng, and agreed to by all, when suddenly a single dissentient voice was heard.

“They shall not die.”

The brigands looked up, and a boy appeared upon the scene, the boy who had lured the luckless lads to their present unlucky pitch.

“Theodora.”

“Aye, Theodora,” responded the boy—or rather girl—for a girl it was, as you have long since discovered, although in male attire.

“And why shall they not die, Theodora?” asked Hunston.

“Ask rather why they should die?” she said sadly. “What have they done to merit death?”

“Hullo, hullo!” ejaculated Toro.

“Why, whatever is the meaning of this change of tone? I thought that you, like all others, were most eager for revenge.”

“Why?”

“Why? Need I already remind you of the ample cause for vengeance which we all have?”

“No,” returned Theodora, calmly. “But those boys are innocent of harm.”

“Then why did you lure them to their destruction?”

The woman sighed.

“Ah, why indeed?”

“Yes, why?”

“I was wicked, cruel, base, deceptive,” she replied; “words cannot paint my wickedness. But I was punished for my badness by peril such as I have never yet known; and when really running a danger which I thought but to affect the better to lure our destined victims to their doom, I was rescued from the grave by them, by the very boys—brave, brave boys—whom I sought to destroy. Now,” she added, turning bodily to the assembled brigands, “can you ask me why I have changed my tone?”

A dozen voices were heard at once, and all uttered different sentiments.

“These prisoners are mine by right,” said Theodora, “for I have taken them, I have brought them here; it is for me to dispose of them.”

Some few of the brigands agreed to this; but the majority, overruled by Toro and Hunston, denied her jurisdiction altogether in the matter.

The girl made a passionate appeal to the assembled brigands. But all in vain.

They were resolved.

It was put to the vote, and the result was easily foreseen.

Death.

Death by a majority of voices as of ten to one.

“Death at the gibbet,” exclaimed Hunston, triumphantly.

“Aye, aye.”

“Nay,” cried the girl, with superhuman energy, “these two poor boys have shown themselves better men than most here present. See how they bear their fate. Be men, then, and if they must die, let them die like soldiers.”

An animated discussion ensued on this, and finally it was agreed that the hapless boys should die next morning with the traitor Lirico.

CHAPTER XXIV. QUALMS—THE EVE OF THE END—A SAD VIGIL

Hunston did not close his eyes throughout the night.

The words of Boulgaris rang in his ear like a knell.

Lirico was to die for concealing a part of the spoil which he had made.

What of the four hundred pounds which he, Hunston, had kept back out of the sum fixed upon for the ransom of the two boys, and which Harkaway had deposited in the spot agreed upon?

He knew the desperate men he had cast his lot with far too well to suppose for a moment that there could be any hope for him did they chance to discover his secret. Would they?

The bare possibility of it made him shudder.

His hand nervously sought the hidden notes, which were concealed in his chest, and the faintest rustle of the crisp new paper caused his cheek to pale.

Once he dozed off, but barely were his eyes closed ere he was troubled by dreams that caused him to toss about and moan as if in great bodily pain, and when he awoke, he, dared not try to sleep again, so he arose and went to look at prisoners.

The two unfortunate boys were awake, and talking to the now disconsolate author of all their troubles, the disguised girl whom they had lost themselves in saving.

“Hullo, madam,” exclaimed Hunston, brutally, “what do you do here, talking with the condemned brats.”

“I am seeking to comfort them,” replied the girl; “to prepare them for the butchers.”

“Butchers? Humph!”

“I mean you and those who are persuaded by you.”

“No matter; you had better leave them now to themselves.”

“At whose command?” demanded the woman, drawing herself up proudly.

“At mine,” returned Hunston, who was fast losing his temper.

“What, you dare!” ejaculated the girl, with flashing eyes.

“Dare!” laughed Hunston. “Will you go away and leave the boys alone, or must I carry you away?”

The girl's colour forsook her cheek, and she drew nearer to Hunston, and the latter, startled at her expression, drew back.

“These unhappy boys are doomed to die at daybreak,” she said, “but if you stay a moment longer to molest me or annoy them, I will summon the men and tell them that you would insult me and murder them.”

“It is false.”

“I know it,” replied the woman, fiercely, “but do you suppose I would hesitate at that? And what would your life be worth?—what, I ask? Why, they would wait for no explanation; your presence here would be sufficient; they would tear you asunder. Begone, craven blackheart. Go.”

Hunston muttered something indistinctly, but he bent his head before the storm of this fierce woman's wrath and slunk away.

She turned to the boys.

“My poor fellows,” she said, tenderly, her manner changing as if by magic, “my unfortunate, brave lads, what can I do for you?”

“You have earned our gratitude,” returned Harry Girdwood, “by the whipping you gave that cur.”

“Indeed you have,” chimed in young Jack, with warmth.

“How like a beaten hound he looked,” said the woman. “But how can I ever hope to be forgiven by you?”

“We have nothing to forgive.”

“Aye, but you have; you have saved my life and I take yours.”

“Not you.”

“I am the cause of it indirectly.”

“Perhaps; but at any rate the innocent cause.”

The girl's distress at this was painful to witness.

She had conceived a great affection for the two boys, her youthful preservers, and she could not tell them how

far she was guilty.

She dare not avow that she had started out upon that risky trip to sea with the intention of simulating the peril which afterwards became too real, and so decoying the two boys as she had done.

No; she dare not avow this.

She had soon repented of her share in that black business.

Soon—aye, but that soon was all too late.

Too late!

The thought wrung her heart, and she bent her head and wept.

“This is very painful,” said young Jack.

“It is, Jack,” said his comrade, in a broken voice. “I don't like to see a boy crying.”

They were still ignorant of their friend's real sex.

* * * * *

“What is that?”

“What?”

“Don't you hear?”

“I do; it sounds like some heavy instrument beating the earth close at hand.”

“Yes, like digging.”

The three started at the word.

No sooner was it uttered than the meaning of it struck them all three, and sent a chill to their very hearts.

Digging at that fatal hour, so short a time before daybreak, could have but one significance.

Grave−making; and if the two hapless boys quailed at that awful sound, can we accuse them of cowardice?

No.

Assuredly not.

Who amongst the bravest could listen to such a sound unmoved?

To have been callous to such a thing would have shown them mere senseless logs, nothing more.

“You know what that is?” she said, in a faint voice.

“We do,” responded Harry Girdwood.

“And you?”

This was to young Jack.

“Yes.”

The reply of both was given in a grave voice, befitting such a solemn occasion.

Yet their voices never trembled, never faltered.

She understood them well, and her expression showed clearly as words the admiration she felt for their courage.

“I am glad that you know the worst,” she said, in a low but impressive tone, “for the unpleasant task of telling you is not left for me. Have you any thing to say before—”

“No.”

“All that I would say,” remarked young Jack, “that since they mean assassinating us, I hope that they will do their work cleanly, and not put us to the torture.”

“At the worst,” added his companion, “we shall not give them the satisfaction of seeing us beg and pray for mercy.”

“It would be useless.”

“We know it.”

“And so shall not give them the chance of saying that two Englishmen showed the white feather.”

“Bravely spoken,” said the girl, “but the night is growing old, and so listen to what I have to say.”

And then she made a communication which considerably startled them.

At first they listened as though in a dream, for they could not believe in the reality of what she said, but they were not sorry to believe in its truth.

The nature of this communication will appear later on.

“And now,” she said solemnly, “the time is short. I must insist upon your sleeping. Rest, and I will watch by your side. A friendly voice at least shall call you for the last dreadful trial of all.”

CHAPTER XXV. THE TRIPLE EXECUTION—A SOLDIER'S GRAVE—TORO'S LUCK.

Morning dawned.

The eastern sky was only just tinged with the light of the rising sun when the bugle call summoned the firing party.

The party in question was composed of six men commanded by Hunston.

He had insisted upon having this post, one that none of the brigands envied him—so that he might gloat over his victims at the last hour.

The two boys were aroused with some difficulty, for strange though it may appear, they were sleeping soundly when the fatal moment approached.

“Come,” said the girl, in a hollow voice. “Lirico is already on the ground.”

“We mustn't be behindhand then.”

“No,” added Harry Girdwood; “they must see how Englishmen can face death.”

And then, led by the girl who had, to her sorrow, brought them to this dire pass, they came to the spot where the tragedy was to take place.

Lirico, the traitor, was already pinioned, and he stood with his eyes bandaged upon the edge of the grave which was shortly to receive his lifeless body.

Upon either side of this was a newly−dug trench or grave.

One of these was for young Jack.

The other was for his stout−hearted comrade.

They needed no telling what to do now; but each went through his part in the horrible ceremony as though it had been previously rehearsed.

Not a word was spoken.

The only signs of emotion which the boys exhibited were when they silently wrung each other's hands before taking their places before their graves.

The girl passed before each of the unhappy victims and shook them by the hand one after the other. “Courage,” she said, in a low but firm voice, “courage, brave hearts.”

“Bandage their eyes,” said Hunston.

“No; let us look upon our fate,” said young Jack.

“The old Harkaway brag to the very last,” said Hunston, with a sneer.

“You don't like to look a Harkaway in the face, assassin!” retorted the boy.

“Fool!” exclaimed Hunston, “since you want it, you shall have it. Fire at the middle first. They can have an opportunity of seeing a real man die before their eyes. It may give them a relish for their own share to follow.”

The word was given.

“Ready! Present! Fire!”

The six rifles flashed simultaneously.

Then, as the wounded Lirico was struck, he bounded into the air and fell back into the grave—stone dead!

Hunston stood smiling grimly, even while the very men turned sick at the butchery they were forced to enact.

He, with fiend−like satisfaction, noticed the sickly pallor of the two boys' faces, and it gladdened his black heart.

“They aren't quite so happy now,” he muttered. “Now it is they suffer. Oh, if Harkaway were here too. It would make me drunk with joy.”

The girl turned to young Jack.

“Courage,” she whispered, “courage; be bold.”

And then turning to the firing party, she said—

“Come, do not delay. It is needless to prolong the sufferings which these poor boys feel already.”

“Silence, and begone!” exclaimed Hunston fiercely. “You have no right to speak to the men.”

“I have every right,” returned the woman, boldly. “Silence yourself, I say, and know your place!”

Her voice and manner half−awed Hunston, who fell back a pace or two.

"My poor comrades," she went on, addressing the firing party, "this work is not to your taste. I'll load for you."

So saying, she set to work to reload the rifles, which were piled now.

And she observed the very greatest care in this task.

"Not a shot must miss," she said to the men of the firing party, earnestly. "Every bullet must have its billet. We have to murder, but even then not to torture, these unhappy boys."

Hunston smiled sardonically.

"How very tender−hearted you have become," he said, with a sneer of contempt.

"Silence!" said the girl, turning fiercely upon him, so that he actually quailed before her indignant gaze. "Silence, I tell you, bully—butcher—villain—silence!"

Hunston would have retorted at this, but prudence bade him be silent.

For the girl was a great favourite with all the men, and he feared that they might take up the cudgels for her in a way which might be unpleasant for him.

"So, young Harkaway," he said, jeeringly, "you wish to see it all go before you. It prolongs your pleasure, and so I can't complain. This one next."

He pointed with his sword to Harry Girdwood.

The latter looked deadly pale but resolute.

"Ready! Present! Fire!"

Young Jack turned half round, and saw his brave comrade clap his hand to his breast, totter and fall.

A cry rose to his lips.

But he stifled it ere Hunston should have this small gratification.

Hunston looked round at young Jack, and he positively bit his lips with sheer vexation to find that he was unable to make the boy betray the least sign of fear.

"You keep it up well, boy," said Hunston, "but I know well that you are ready to sink through the ground with fear, nevertheless."

"Liar!"

Hunston flushed purple.

But he kept down his rage.

"As you are going to die, boy, I may let you off the birching which your impertinence merits. You have all the old brag of your father."

Jack was silent.

"All his deceit; all his sham and falseness—"

The boy said nothing.

"All his craven−hearted, black−hearted villany."

But young Jack saw through the other's game clearly enough.

He held his peace.

He knew well enough that the real way to enrage the ruffian was to appear unmoved at his taunts.

So when Hunston had exhausted his expletives and was about to give the word to the firing party, young Jack spoke.

"One moment."

Hunston made the men a sign to ground arms.

The boy was about to beg for mercy.

Here, then, there was one chance of wreaking his spite upon the lad.

Now he should be able to feast his ears with the unhappy boy's piteous appeals, for he well judged that, once he began to plead for pity, all his fortitude would go.

"Before they fire," said young Jack, pale but resolute, as his comrade Harry had just shown himself, "one word."

"Go on."

"I can speak as one on the brink of the grave," said the boy, "and so my words may be prophetic. Before many weeks are over, you shall kneel and sue for mercy to my father, and it will be denied you. You will grovel in the

dirt, and crawl and cringe in abject misery; but it will be hopeless, and in the bitterness of your despair you will think of this moment, and curse the hour you ever molested one of my race, or anyone in whom we are interested."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Hunston, in a boisterous and forced manner; "quite a sermon. Preaching is a new quality in the Harkaways. It is unfortunate that you are to be cut off in your early youth. You would soon bloom into an odd mixture of Puritan and bully."

But he could not provoke his victim.

Having said all he had to say, young Jack coolly folded his arms and waited the end of the tragedy, apparently not hearing what Hunston was saying.

* * * * *

"Make ready! Present! Fire!"

As the word was spoken, the volley was fired.

The unhappy boy—the last of the three victims—threw up his arms, and fell back into the new−made grave yawning to receive him.

Poor young Jack!

The body did not even quiver after it had fallen into the grave.

Apparently death had been instantaneous.

"Fill in the graves and cover up the carrion," said Hunston; "and then let us get away and make merry."

The girl stepped up and interposed herself.

"Begone and leave the rest to me,"

"To you?"

"Aye."

"What for?"

"It was so agreed," said one of the men.

"Let us pray for them now," said the girl. "Surely, having destroyed their bodies, you do not wish them any further harm."

She waited for no reply, but falling upon her knees, was soon lost in holy meditation, her hands clasped fervently, her head bent upon her breast.

The men doffed their hats reverently and glided noiselessly away.

Hunston feared to shock their superstitious susceptibilities, and so he followed them in silence.

* * * * *

For several hours she was left to her meditations.

And when, some hours later in the day, Hunston returned to the spot, the three graves were filled in.

Over those of the two unhappy lads some pious hands had raised a rough wooden cross.

"The first to taste our vengeance," muttered Hunston.

"May the others soon follow," said a voice at his elbow.

He started.

It was Toro.

"This is the turn of our luck," said the Italian, exultingly.

"I hope so."

"I feel it so. The rest of the hated race will soon follow, if we have the least good fortune."

CHAPTER XXVI. THE BRIGAND'S RECRUIT—HUNSTON'S PERIL—DELICATE GROUND.

"Who is it?"

"Where?"

"Below; down that crevasse. Look again."

"I see; it is Ymeniz."

"It is, it is."

The speakers were two of the brigands who were plying their lawless trade; and passing along a mountain ridge, a short time after the execution, they suddenly espied the body of a man lying flat upon his back.

Upon his breast was something white, which they could not quite distinguish.

The form and features, however, they had no particular difficulty in recognising.

It was their comrade Ymeniz, they could see well.

"He has fallen down there," said one to the other.

"It looks so."

Now, strange to relate, that although they said this to each other, they both had misgivings.

The body lay in such a strange attitude.

However, they soon proceeded to solve the problem, and set all doubts at rest.

Passing down to a lower ridge by a circuitous path well known to them both, they reached the bottom of the crevasse.

"He is dead—murdered!"

"Hah!"

"And here, by all the powers of evil!" exclaimed the brigand, "here is the confession of the murderer."

"A confession!" exclaimed the brigand.

"Yes. Take it," said the other, lifting the paper from the blood−stained breast of the slain Ymeniz, "take it and read for yourself."

"Nay, you know I am no scholar; do you read it out to me."

In a sonorous voice the brigand read the following document—

"I, Jack Harkaway, proclaim war to the knife against the murderers of my boys. The villains Hunston and Toro will tell you all that I never threatened in vain. One of your number shall die daily until I have exterminated you root and branch. No amount of precaution upon your part can avert your doom. You claimed a ransom of five hundred pounds for my son. I have paid the sum demanded, and you have played me false; therefore, you die. To the last man you shall perish. You shall learn to look forward to your fate in fear and trembling; and day by day the survivors, anticipating their turn, shall learn to curse the hour that they were led to murder my two innocent boys. Beware!"

The two brigands looked at each other half scared.

"What of that, do you think?"

The other looked nervously around him before replying.

"It is grave."

"Very."

"Poor Ymeniz! he has been stabbed in the back."

"No; here is the death wound below the heart."

"Then he has not been taken by surprise."

"Evidently."

The two men made their way with all despatch to their camp, carrying the paper with them.

The sensation it caused is indescribable when Boulgaris read it aloud to the assembled brigands.

"Death to the Englishman Harkaway!" exclaimed one of the brigands, impetuously.

The cry was caught eagerly up by all—save one.

This one was Hunston.

It was not that he hated Harkaway less intensely than his comrades that he remained silent.

It was simply that in his fierce denunciation of the brigands, Harkaway had told about the money.

Lirico was barely cold in his grave for an offence which, beside that of Hunston's, was a mere paltry pilfering.

The secret was in great danger now.

If they should believe Harkaway, then his (Hunston's) position was indeed critical. What should he do? What would be better than to cast doubt and derision upon Harkaway's dark menaces.

“The man is a charlatan, a humbug,” he said, curling his lip; “and his purpose is more than accomplished could he but know it, which he does not, I am glad to say. He would laugh rarely could he but know what an alarm you have taken at this message.”

But they would not let this pass unchallenged.

“It is no joke, Hunston,” said Boulgaris, seriously.

“How do you know?” demanded Hunston, quickly.

“The death of Ymeniz is proof enough. That is no joke.”

“True!”

“Moreover, I for one feel sure that this Englishman Harkaway speaks truly.”

“How?”

“In saying that he gave the ransom.”

“In full?”

“In full.”

“Why, where, then, do you think it is?” demanded Hunston, with an assumption of boldness, yet trembling as he waited the reply.

Boulgaris answered with a single word—

“Stolen.”

A murmur ran round the assembled throng.

“What!” cried one of the brigands, stepping forward; “is it possible that we have more thieves and traitors amongst us?”

“Never!”

“Death to all traitors, say I!”

“And I.”

“And I.”

And so the cry went round from mouth to mouth.

Hunston trembled for his very life.

“Who can have stolen the money?” demanded one of the men, fiercely.

“Who but he who was charged to fetch the money from the old well, the spot appointed—who but the comrade that fetched the money?”

“Why,” exclaimed Toro, turning to Hunston, “then it was—”

He paused.

Hunston turned heartsick as every eye was directed towards him.

“Never!” exclaimed Hunston, fiercely.

This was a critical moment for the latter.

For awhile his life hung upon a very slender thread.

Hunston, to begin with, was no favourite.

But he was a lucky villain.

At the very moment that matters were looking so very unpleasant, their attention was called off in another direction.

“Do you hear that? The sentry is giving the alarm.”

They were all accustomed to danger, and were on the qui vive ere the alarm was fairly sounded.

Pistols, knives, and blunderbusses were called into requisition.

And all was ready to give an intruder a warm reception.

Toro climbed up a crag and peered over.

Then turning to the men, he motioned them to silence.

“Hush! He comes this way. Back!”

And then, at a sign from him, every man glided quickly, silently off, and concealed himself behind a rock, or bush, or wherever a favourable place was to be discovered.

Then a stumbling noise was heard, and a man crept through a gap and hobbled on to the scene.

He was a strange, wild−looking fellow, with long fair hair and eyebrows almost as light as an albino's.

His cheeks were fair, but much sunburnt, and almost destitute of beard.

He progressed with difficulty, and leant heavily upon a staff cut roughly from a tree, and from its green bark and slovenly−stripped branches only recently cut, too.

He was apparently a young man, and if he progressed with so much difficulty, the natural inference was that fatigue and perhaps illness was the cause of it.

He was dressed in a very tattered outlandish costume.

He carried a long knife stuck in his waistband, but he had no arms beyond this.

His arms were bare to the elbow, and the left one was bleeding from a flesh wound that did not look many hours' old.

Evidently he was no milksop, for although the wound was pretty severe, the only care he had taken was to tie it loosely up with a strip of white rag.

Perhaps he had lost blood and began to feel it, for, as he drew into the open, he dropped heavily down upon a rocky seat and gave a sigh or grunt of relief.

“I'm not sorry to come to an anchor.”

He spoke in English.

But if he thought to rest here in peace, he was destined to be disappointed.

Barely had he stretched out his legs, when he was startled by a sound at his side, and glancing up, he found a huge, black−muzzled fellow towering above him and covering him with a long−barrelled horse pistol.

“Hullo!”

Out came his long knife instanter.

“Move or speak, and I pull the trigger,” said the brigand.

“Thank you for nothing,” said the stranger.

“Who are you?” demanded the brigand.

“Just what I was about to ask you,” returned the stranger, lightly.

“Whence come you?”

“Precisely the question I was going to put.”

The brigand's colour came and he grew vicious.

“If you are wise, you'll not try to fool me,” he said.

“If you have any wit,” retorted the new−comer, “you'll not come pestering me with questions; I'm not in the humour, and when I am put out, I'm dangerous. Good−morning.”

The brigand, finding he could get nothing out of the eccentric stranger, fell back a pace or two, and the latter thought that he was to be molested no further.

He was mistaken.

Nor was he long in making this discovery.

The withdrawal of the brigand was a signal for a regular mob of the lawless men to make their appearance.

Every nook and cranny about the opening was guarded by armed men; and now, when the cool stranger glanced up−wards, he found a dozen rifles, pistols or blunderbusses pointed at him.

Still he did not appear disconcerted.

He only glanced about him with a coolness that was remarkable, and muttered—

“Dear, dear, how very attentive these dear boys are.”

Before he could speak to them, however, they stepped out from their hiding places, and with their firearms still making him their target, they advanced to close in upon him.

When he saw the object of this manoeuvre, he jumped up and plucked out his knife.

“So, so,” he cried, “sold, eh? Come on, all of you.”

“What does he say?” demanded one of the Greeks, turning to Toro.

“He challenges us all at once to fight him.”

“Why, the fellow's mad or an Englishman.”

“Yes,” said Hunston, “an Englishman. That makes him feel he is a match for a mob of Greeks, and I don't know that it is all madness.”

Suddenly the stranger appeared to liven up.

“What, you are not the police, then?” he ejaculated.

“Police!” said Hunston, contemptuously turning round to the speaker.

“What do you mean by that?”

“Why, I took you for the police in pursuit of me.”

“What have you been doing?”

“Am I among friends?”

“We are brigands, but you can speak freely.”

“Well, then, I am an unlucky wretch who has been forced to bolt away from his master and his living—and all for nothing.”

“What do you call nothing?” said Toro.

“A trifling peccadillo, sir; nothing more, I assure you—merely a few pounds and a paltry bit of jewellery belonging to an Englishwoman of the name of Harkaway.”

They all pricked up their ears at this name.

“Hullo, hullo!” exclaimed Toro; “what is this? Stand forward, man. Do you know Harkaway?”

“I do—to my sorrow,” replied the man; “he was my master.”

The brigands all pricked up their ears at this.

“Harkaway's servant, were you?” said Hunston, eagerly.

“I was, sir.”

“And what may be your object in coming here?”

“To join you.”

“Do you know—”

“Who you are? Yes, of course; at least I can guess it—I'm uncommon good at guessing.”

And he chuckled again.

“The fellow's an idiot,” said Hunston.

“Do you bring any information to us?”

This question was put by the Italian bully and brigand, and to him the stranger turned with an elaborate bow.

“What do you want?”

“To get hold of Harkaway himself,” cried Toro.

“Then I can help you to do this.”

“You can—then money shall be yours,” said Toro.

“I hope so; why, I've got that already from them.”

“You have!—much?”

“A pretty lump. Look.”

It was a bag of money composed of pieces of copper, silver and gold.

It was a good round sum, and it looked considerably more than it was.

“Is that all?”

“I have these few nicknacks,” added the stranger, producing a bundle tied in his pocket−handkerchief.

They tore open the bundle eagerly and it was found to contain various articles of plate, a silver candlestick, and some jewels.

“Those,” he said, pointing to the latter, “belonged to Mrs. Harkaway, and I believe she set some store by them—they were wedding presents.”

“So much the better,” exclaimed Toro, exultingly.

“So say I,” added Hunston.

“Is all this a fair amount for a fellow to bring as his entrance fee?” demanded the stranger.

“What say you, comrades?” demanded Toro of the bystanders. “You are the best judges. Shall we admit this man in as a brother and a comrade?”

“We will,” shouted the brigands.

"Agreed on all hands?" said the Italian chief.

"Agreed."

It was answered as if with a single voice.

"Good," said Toro; "do you, Boulgaris, prescribe the oath."

The oath, which was administered in Greek, was not at all understood by the novice, but he subscribed to it cheerfully.

"You swear to devote your life to the destruction of your enemies," said Hunston.

"I do," responded the new brigand, with fervour.

"Enough. What is your name?"

"Geoffrey Martin."

"Geoffrey Martin," repeated Toro; "the name has a ring about it that I like. Now understand, the end of the Harkaways draws near; one has already paid the forfeit."

"Who?" cried the stranger.

"Two!" said a voice.

The brigands turned and beheld Diana, the widow of Mathias.

"Two have already fallen, for I myself struck the wife of this hated Harkaway to the heart with my dagger," cried the fierce woman.

And she then recounted (as we have done in a previous chapter) how she gained admittance to the Harkaway mansion, concealed herself in Mrs. Harkaway's chamber, and dealt her the fatal blow.

To all this the brigands' new recruit listened calmly enough.

When, with an air of triumph, Diana concluded her narration, the brigands cheered loudly.

"Another of our hated foes dead. Three cheers for the brave Diana!"

"Certainly," said Geoffrey Martin politely.

And his voice was heard in the general shout.

"Now, gentlemen," said he, when silence was once more restored, "allow me to correct one very slight error in the statement of this good and valorous lady."

"What is that?" demanded Toro.

"Her narrative is quite correct, with this little exception—it was not Mrs. Harkaway who was killed."

Diana turned pale, and uttering a wail of disappointment, sat down.

Hunston, after venting a few fearful imprecations, said—

"Then I hope and trust it may have been the wife of that confounded Harvey."

"It was not, and to tell you the truth, I am rather glad of it, for, do you know I have almost fallen in love with her?"

"Cheek!" muttered Hunston. "Well, who was it, then?"

"You must know I was waiting on them at the dinner table, when Mrs. Harkaway expressed a wish that her fan, which she had forgotten, might be brought.

"I was going to call some of the female servants, but Harkaway himself went and before he had been gone a minute, we heard him scream out—

"Help! Murder!"

Away rushed Harvey and that long American fellow, Jefferson, while Mrs. Harkaway fainted.

But in a few minutes the three came back with the news that Mrs. Harkaway's maid—Marietta by name—had been killed.

"No fault of yours, madam, for the girl had been dressing herself in some of Mrs. Harkaway's clothes, and no doubt she looked as much a lady as her mistress."

"What then?" demanded Diana.

"The police took the matter in hand, and are now searching everywhere for the murderer."

"Let them search," said Diana, with a scornful laugh.

There was silence for a time; then Diana asked—

"Did you hear anything of Tomaso?"

"Yes. He is condemned to die."

"When?" demanded Toro.

“The date is kept secret, so that you may have less chance of rescuing him.”
Toro growled an oath and departed.

CHAPTER XXVII. THE RECRUIT WORKS BRAVELY—HARKAWAY's VENGEANCE—“HE NEVER FORGETS A DEBT.”

The brigands soon found that they had made an invaluable acquisition in their new recruit.

The day following his admission into their honorable fraternity, he brought in an addition to his already handsome booty.

This was in the shape of a lady's reticule, containing a rich prize in money, and more jewels.

“I came across my late mistress,” said Geoffery Martin in explanation; “she had ventured out of the town with her new maid, and so I fleeced them royally. I did not leave them a stiver; moreover I secured this.”

So saying, he spread out before them a newly−printed placard, which, translated, ran as nearly as possible in this wise—

“FIVE THOUSAND FRANCS REWARD

“Will be paid to the police or to any private person, who will secure, or give such information as may lead to the capture of, one Geoffrey Martin, lately a valet in the service of Mr. John Harkaway.”

Then followed a description of his person, walk, and mode of speech.

“The said Geoffrey Martin having absconded with a large sum of money, besides property of great value, it is the duty of every man to aid in bringing him to justice.”

He chose a good moment for bringing this paper in. There was a large muster of the brigands in camp.

“Five thousand francs reward,” he said to his newly−made comrades generally; “you have only to turn me over to the Harkaways, and you can make a small fortune.”

“You'll only find good men and true here,” said Hunston.

Geoffrey Martin turned upon the latter.

“All?”

There was a hidden significance in his tone which thrilled Hunston.

“I am glad that they are all safe, friend; by the way, what is your name? I haven't heard it yet.”

“My name is Hunston, and I'm not ashamed of it.”

“No, of course you wouldn't be; so you are Hunston?” he added reflectively.

“Did you know my name?”

“Yes.”

“Indeed. Heard your master speak of me, I suppose?”

“Yes; Harkaway and his friend Harvey.”

“Harvey,” cried Hunston contemptuously; “a paltry, frivolous fool.”

“Yes; wasn't he? You should hear him speak of you.”

“There was never any love lost between us,” said Hunston moodily; “we hated each other most cordially from boyhood.”

“Known him so long?” said Martin.

“We were at school together, and at college together,” said Hunston.

“College—phew! then you must have been a swell.”

“Well,” he said haughtily, “and what of that?”

“Oh, nothing; I was only thinking.”

“What were you thinking?”

“Why, if I had half your chance of getting on in life, you would never have found me here.”

“What do you mean? Are you ashamed of your comrades?”

“No, no, not me,” said Martin; “but I should be if I was you. You're a swell, and it's an awful drop for you. I'm only a poor devil—a nobody, and it's a rise in life for me to join your honorable company; give us your hand.”

And then, before he could say yea or nay, the new recruit seized Hunston by the hand and wrung it with real or affected warmth.

Hunston strode moodily away, hanging his head.

This singular individual, Geoffrey Martin, appeared greatly interested in the fate of the unfortunate boys, young Jack and Harry Girdwood, and he got Boulgaris to take him to the spot where the crosses had been erected over the graves by the pious hand of Theodora, the girl who had unwittingly lured them to the fatal trap.

“So here you have buried them?” said Geoffrey Martin.

“Yes, poor boys,” said Boulgaris.

“Poor boys,” echoed Martin in surprise, “poor boys.”

“Yes, I see no reason for butchering two children, for they were little more.”

The new brigand eyed the speaker rather curiously.

“Have you any pity to spare for Harkaway's boy?”

“And why not?” said Boulgaris. “True, Harkaway's our enemy, and I hate him; I'd like to get the upper hand of him; but we don't want to fight boys. Besides, Harkaway is a good sort of enemy; a bold, daring fellow, not a sneak.”

“No, that he isn't,” said Geoffrey Martin, with warmth.

“I am sure he'd never murder a boy because the boy's father had wronged him.”

“True.”

“Besides, there is something in this Hunston I don't like. We are bad enough in all conscience, but this brutal butchery will, perhaps be the ruin of our band.”

“Why?”

“Well, we were not loved before; but this brutal deed will make us execrated by the whole country. The government scarcely dare to molest us; they are satisfied at keeping up a show of doing something. But Harkaway is rich and powerful, I am told; English money and English influence will force the government to pursue us, and all for what? Why, for murdering two helpless children, who had done us no wrong; who fell into a trap while saving the life of one of us.”

Geoffrey Martin opened his eyes in astonishment.

“Is that true?”

“Yes. Didn't you know the story?”

“No.”

“It was the daughter of one of our old comrades, that the boys saved while sailing. Poor girl! If prayers and tears could move men's hearts, hers should have saved the boys.”

Geoffrey Martin coughed and blew his nose loudly.

“Ahem!” he said, staring at Boulgaris. “You are a soft−hearted fellow for a brigand.”

“Not exactly that either,” replied Boulgaris, grinning. “I feel incensed at this deed for its brutality, and for exposing all the band to risks and dangers for the sole purpose of gratifying their revenge.”

“Theirs; you mean Hunston's?”

“No; for Toro was interested also in it.”

“Toro, Toro,” muttered Martin; “why, the name sounds, familiar to me. Of course. They knew this Toro in Italy, I remember. He was one of a band that Harkaway and his friend Harvey exterminated.”

“It is true, then, about that band?” said Boulgaris, his eyes flashing eagerly.

“Of course.”

“You see, then, from that, what cause we have to dread arousing the enmity of such a man as this Harkaway.”

“He is an awkward customer, and that's the fact of it; and I have heard, my brave Boulgaris, that if Harkaway once says he will have revenge, he never fails. Now, let's return.”

Back they went together, and as they neared the brigands' camp, they perceived signs of some great commotion,

“What is the matter now?” asked Boulgaris.

“Come with us,” replied the first man, “and I will show you.”

They silently followed.

Down one of the slopes and then through a narrow pass, and within five minutes' run of the brigands' stronghold, they came upon a number of their men gathered around a long figure stretched upon the ground and covered with a cloak.

The brigand who had brought them there silently drew back the cloak, and showed that the figure was the

corpse of one of their comrades who had been on guard there.

“Look, another of our men killed. His death, like the first, has been sudden.”

A sure, swift hand had pinned him through the body with a long dagger.

It had pierced his heart, and the point of the blade actually protruded near his shoulder−blade.

“Look there,” cried one of the brigands,

“Where?”

“At the handle.”

Fastened to the haft of the dagger was a slip of paper, upon which were these words—

“*Remember Harkaway never forgets an injury.*“

CHAPTER XXVIII. THE VILLA AGAIN—A MESSAGE FROM THE ENEMY'S CAMP—HOW A SNARE WAS LAID.

Harvey carried his project into execution, and went off, leaving Mrs. Harvey and Mrs. Harkaway under the impression that he was going about the vessel, and making preparations generally for their departure.

They were one and all anxious to be gone from the place, which was for evermore associated in their minds with the mishaps of the last few days.

When Harvey had been absent forty−eight hours, they grew anxious.

But on the morning of the third day, Nabley the detective came with a message from Dick.

He had met him by appointment and brought news.

There was something in Nabley's face which made Harkaway anxious to see him alone.

“Now tell me, Nabley,” he said, eagerly, “tell me all. How is Harvey? What does he say of the boys? What is he doing? Has he any plan of action decided?”

“Gently, Mr. Harkaway, gently,” said the detective; “you overpower me.”

“Oh, Nabley, I say—”

“There, there! don't be impatient. I'll give it all out as fast as ever I can.”

“I don't want all,” interrupted Jack Harkaway, passionately. “How are my boys? Answer that. Are they safe? No, no! I read it in your face.”

And then he dropped heavily into a chair, looking the picture of misery and despair.

Nabley had scarcely a word to say for himself.

The sight of the brave Harkaway so utterly collapsed was more than he could endure.

Jack rallied a little and turned again to Nabley.

“Well, quick, tell me the news.”

And then, as Nabley still stammered, he went on—

“I know; save your breath. I knew it; poor boys! poor Harry and my poor brave boy Jack.”

“Dirk Harvey bids you keep your courage up,” said Nabley; “not to be downcast. It is quite time enough to be down upon our luck when we find out that the worst is true. The boys may yet live.”

“No, no,” cried Jack; “I fear my poor boys are no more.”

“Let us hope they still live, but meanwhile, Mr. Harvey has treated the brigands as though the worst was true.”

“How?”

Nabley made a significant gesture with his right arm as though stabbing violently at some unseen enemy.

“What, the brave Dick seeking and taking revenge?” exclaimed Jack.

“Yes. Two of the Greek brigands have fallen by his hand. The rest will follow, be sure of that; and, moreover, they never suspect whose hand has dealt the blow.”

“Not suspect!”

“No, his game has been and will continue to be picking them off in single file. He meets one of them alone, and Harvey makes sure of him by his own strong right arm.”

“Oh, brave Harvey,” said Jack.

“Yes,” said Nabley, “it is revenge. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth; and I for one should like to see the whole gang food for kites and wolves.”

“You have suffered in losing your old comrade,” said Harkaway; “judge, then, if you so keenly feel the loss of a friend, what must I feel for my boy—my own flesh and blood.”

“Yes,” said Nabley; “I have suffered, but I will yet have a bitter revenge on my poor pal's murderers. He was to me a brave and true friend. Poor Pike! he was foully assassinated.”

“Yes, Nabley; he was cowardly shot by the villain Toro. But do the brigands know who is now taking revenge on them?”

“Yes; it is told them in black and white. A paper fixed to each carrion carcase tells that this is another proof of Harkaway's vengeance.”

Jack's face flushed crimson at these words.

“Well done, Dick; well done, brave old boy,” he muttered; “well done!”.

“And he tells me that they are in a rare state about it in the camp. It has thrown all the lot of them into the greatest consternation. Hunston has grown very unpopular. It needs very little upon Harvey's part to make sure of him.”

“That's brave.”

“Now he's growing ambitious. One at a time no longer satisfies him, so he has a scheme for bagging half−a−dozen of the brigands at once.”

“How?”

“You know the spot that the boys christened the fig−tree grove.”

“I do.”

“He pretends to have intercepted a letter (when he “stole” the money and jewels I took him by way of keeping up appearances), which informs him that one of your party—a Mr. Hardy, or Harpy, he pretended—would be passing through the fig−tree grove this evening, with money, on a journey of some importance. As this Hardy or Harpy is a dangerous person, the brigands, on Harvey's advice, are to send six of their best men on the business.”

Harkaway's eyes twinkled again at this.

“Now,” said Nabley, “we must bait the trap well. I'll be the bait.”

“You?”

“Yes.”

“But why should you have so dangerous a post?”

“I prefer it,” said Nabley, quietly; “besides, although alone, I shall have some staunch and valuable friends with me.”

“You speak in paradoxes, Mr. Nabley.”

The detective's reply to this was to draw his two hands from his coat− pockets, and in each hand there was a six−shooter.

“Here are twelve lives,” said the detective, “and I've six more in here,” tapping his breast.

“You're a regular arsenal,” said Harkaway, smiling. “But supposing, when you raise your hands, they close upon you and ransack your pockets.”

“I have no need to withdraw my hands to use them. I fire through the pockets.”

They must have been made with something of this intention, for they were cut in the side seams of the coat which were exceedingly roomy.

“Well, well,” said Harkaway, jumping up, “when do we get to work?”

“Now.”

“Now?”

“There are no preparations to make, Let Mr. Jefferson be sent for. Both of you get your arms ready, and follow me.”

“Good. What arms?”

“Short axe, in case of close work, and rifle each. You'll be more than a match for six Greeks. Besides,” he added, with a significant smile, “I shall not be idle.”

“Well, well; away with you,” cried Jack; “I am all eagerness to be at work. I shall be quite another man when I have had a brush with these beasts.”

“Right, sir,” cried the detective; “they will find a powerful foe in you.”

“Yes, Nabley,” cried Jack, “my arm is nerved for this fight, and it shall go hard with me, but I will have my revenge on those Greek devils for the murder of my poor boys.”

The door opened and Jefferson entered.

“The very man!” exclaimed Harkaway.

“What, Nabley!” said Jefferson. “What news of Harvey?”

“Mr. Harkaway will tell you all,” answered the detective; “my time's up. Follow me as quickly as you can.”

“Off with you,” said Harkaway, growing quite excited at the prospect of a brush with the enemy.

“The fig−tree grove,” said Nabley.

“Understood.”

And off went the detective.

“Jefferson,” said Jack, “I am now about seeking my foes, and fear not but I will render a good account of my actions, for against the brigands I feel the strength of a giant.”

CHAPTER XXIX. WHEREIN MR. MOLE PHILOSOPHISES AND HAS AN ADVENTURE—THE SCENT OF BATTLE—MOLE THE TERROR OF THE BRIGANDS—ISAAC THE ANNIHILATOR— MOLE'S PRISONER.

It must not be supposed that Isaac Mole was idle all this time.

He heard of the bold doings of his friends Harkaway, Harvey and Jefferson, not to speak of the valuable aid of Nabley the detective, and, figuratively speaking, his very soul panted for glory.

“I feel I could conquer by my single hand half−a−dozen brigands,” said Mole to himself; “but still I should prefer to come across a sleeping brigand. But ah, me!” there he sighed deeply, “brigands are as rarely caught asleep as weasels.”

Poor old Mole's desire to distinguish himself in this matter was very great.

The plain truth was that poor Isaac was at times badly henpecked.

On these occasions he would assume his most dignified deportment and point to his wooden legs.

“There are proofs, Mrs. Mole,” he would say, “that Isaac Mole never shunned the foe in his life.”

“Yah, yah!” his spouse would gracefully smile in reply, “dat no fault ob yours, Ikey Mole; de ignorant critters took off your legs because you so often lost your legs before.”

“Lost them before?”

“Yes.”

“Before they were amputated, do you mean?”

“Yes.”

“Why, Mrs. Mole,” and he would draw himself up to his full height, “you have been surely indulging in strong waters.”

“No, sar; no, Ikey Mole, not dis gal, sar. You lose your legs continual and your head too, sar, with strong waters—sperrits, sar, sperrits.”

Poor Mole, he was no match for her, and could only turn for consolation to where he had ever thought to drown dull care.

The bottle.

Mrs. Mole one day surprised him at a sly tipple in the grounds of the villa, and he knew it to his sorrow.

Suddenly popping round the corner, Chloe emptied the contents of a pail over his luckless head.

“Thar, you teetottler! you banderhoper, you good templar! Take a leetle tiddy drop of water with your rum; makes lubly grog well mixed, yah, yah!”

And then the amiable partner of his joys and sorrows bore off her empty pail, leaving her husband to dry and shiver.

“Philosophy, my dear Mole,” said the worthy Isaac to himself, “philosophy is your physic; think of Socrates and be at ease—ugh! It's precious damp—too much water. I must have an extra drop to keep the cold out.”

And up went that inexhaustible bottle again.

“Ha! Massa Ikey!” said a terrible voice close at hand, “you want some more water to mix with it, do you?”

Mole clutched his bottle, jumped up, and rushed wildly to the house, with his loving spouse after him with another pail of water.

* * * * *

From that time Mole scarcely dared have a suck at his bottle within half a mile of the house.

One afternoon, having dined early, Mole went for a walk in the suburbs of the town, and selecting a favourable spot, he reclined gracefully and dropped off into a gentle slumber.

How long he slept he never knew until this hour.

All he knew was that he dreamt that he was the hero of some gallant adventures, wherein the Greek brigands fell before his sword like corn before the reaper's sickle; yea, as the phantom miscreants succumbed to the onslaught of Don Quixote.

Now, while he slept, a man crawled out of the thicket upon all fours and looked eagerly about him.

The singular part of this incident was that, although the sleeping Mole was within six feet of the spot, he did

not perceive him.

Mole was partly hidden by the thickly−grown bushes.

The man dragged himself painfully on; he was badly hurt.

One of his legs was broken, and he carried no less than three pistol bullets in his body; in short, it was little less than marvellous that he was able to crawl at all.

The history of this miserable wretch is soon told.

He had been shot down by the unerring aim of Nabley the detective, and feeling himself badly hurt, he had sought safety in flight while there was yet time.

Dragging his wounded body into the thickly−grown copse, he had lain hidden from sight, baffling the keenest search; and here he had presently lost consciousness.

Loss of blood and anguish had rendered the hapless wretch powerless to help himself, and knowing well what little mercy he had to expect from the Englishmen did they come upon him, had lain there in fear and trembling at every sound until hunger was added to his other torments.

He was nearly blinded with a blow he had received on the face, and now his only hope was to be able to crawl along until he came up with some of his comrades, who would help him to regain their stronghold in the mountains.

“Oh!” he groaned, “a blight upon the hand that struck me down. Oh!”

And the violence of his pains made him give a deep groan.

Mole moved.

Then opened his eyes; and waking, his glance fell upon a ghastly looking object, pale and bloody, dragging itself along.

Coming towards him.

Mole gasped.

This was real, he knew at once; there was no doubt about that.

It was one of the Greek brigands, who had seen him asleep, no doubt, and was about to do for him.

Poor Mole.

Cold beads of perspiration stood upon his brow.

A channel of sweat trickled down the small of his back.

His very wig stood up on his scalp with terror.

What should he do?

Alas! it would soon be all over with him.

The ghastly object crawled on.

A minute more and the wretched man would be up with him.

Now, poor old Mole had on occasions been what is called pot−valiant.

He sought his black bottle for Dutch courage; but before he could raise it to his bloodless lips, the wounded man perceived him, and he gave a cry of terror.

“Keep off!” cried Mole, his teeth rattling like a box of dominoes.

The wounded man, half blind as he was and frightened out of what little sense remained to him, took the black bottle for another revolver such as Nabley had carried; and having a wholesome dread of that terrible weapon, he cowered down, hiding his face on the ground.

“Don't be violent,” exclaimed the wretched Mole.

“Mercy, mercy!” implored the brigand.

“Have pity on me,” said Mole, in abject terror.

“Do as you please with me,” whined the brigand, “only for mercy's sake don't fire again at such a poor wretch as I am.”

“Think of my helpless condition,” said Mole.

“I am done to death,” said the brigand.

“I have two wooden legs,” gasped Mole.

“Do what you will with me,” cried the brigand, in despair, “only give me water—a drop for mercy's sake.”

And he prostrated himself in abject submission before the half dead Mole.

Now the latter could not well misunderstand this attitude; but yet he could scarcely believe the evidence of his

senses.

"What's his game?" thought Mole; "he is trying the artful dodge on; and he's going to jump up and give me one for myself—not for Isaac. By jingo! What a topper I could give him as he lays there, what a—"

He stopped short.

"My eye! what a hole he has got in his head already."

And then by degrees, in spite of his fears, he was forced to see that this piteous object was not dangerous.

As Mole rose up to look at the brigand, the latter made still more signs of submission, and now he could no longer misunderstand.

It is difficult to say which feeling filled Mole most completely, surprise or satisfaction.

"Oh, oh," cried Mole; "I feel that my heart tells me I have great courage. Yes, I will capture this desperate brigand with my own brave hands."

Here was a slice of luck.

"I'll just drive him home," said the crafty Isaac to himself, "and then see if Chloe will dare to cheek me as she has done of late. I rather flatter myself I shall take it out of Harkaway and Jefferson themselves."

First, though, he meant to have one more suck at the black bottle.

But now again, to his intense surprise, at the sight of the bottle, the wounded man cowered and shrank back in terror.

"Mercy, mercy, great captain," he implored; "as you are strong, be merciful."

"What does he mean?" muttered the astonished Mole.

"Don't fire again," cried the wounded man feebly; "I never hurt one of your friends. I am not responsible for the two boys' death. It was done without my will, for I don't war with boys or women; ah, how I suffer."

"Don't fire! Why, what—ah, I see it; he takes the bottle for a pistol.

"March on then," he said in a terrible voice; "on with you, or I'll fire."

"Don't, don't! mercy!"

"March on then, or I'll blow you to atoms," and he presented the black bottle again.

The Greek held up his hands in supplication and moved on.

"Go on!" thundered Mole.

"I'll be your slave, your abject slave," groaned the brigand; "but oh, great warrior, captain, spare my life."

"I'll eat you alive," hissed the cannibal Mole in his ear, "if you don't walk faster."

"I will, I will."

"Faster still, or you die."

"Pity, pity."

"Bah!" said the fierce Isaac, contemptuously, "why should I have pity on you after killing a score of your fellows with my own hand? Answer me that."

The other was silent.

In this way, the valiant Mole drove the miserable wretch to the villa.

When, after a long and wearisome journey, they got within a stone's throw of the grounds of the house, Mr. Mole was suddenly startled to hear a loud, shrill cry of alarm, and who should appear before them but Mrs. Mole herself?

"Whateber hab you there, Ikey?" she demanded.

"A prisoner, my dear," responded Mole.

"A what?" she exclaimed; "whose prisoner?"

"Mine."

"Yourn?"

"Pardon me, my dear—yours, not yourn. Yes, my prisoner," he added modestly; "I have captured him."

"Where?"

"In the wood."

"What you doing there, Ikey?"

"I was on the hunt. I came across them—five, and a little warm work went forward. The other four," he added significantly, "I have left on their backs, with a pretty decent sign of my handiwork upon all of them."

Chloe gasped.

“You're a dreffful man,” said Chloe; “and I'll run for Massa Harkaway.”

And she dashed down the garden, crying out for Harkaway and Jefferson, and goodness knows who besides.

They were ever upon the *qui vive* for danger, so down they came with a rush.

“Why, Mr. Mole,” exclaimed Jefferson, “you have indeed got a prize.”

“However did you manage it?” asked Harkaway, not a whit less startled.

Mole coughed.

“I felt that something was required of me,” he answered, with touching dignity and modesty combined, “and so I went on the hunt myself, and I fell foul of a few of the Greek vampires.”

“A few,” echoed Jefferson, elevating his eyebrows; “a few, you said.”

“Yes,” replied Mr. Mole, “only five.”

“Not more?” said Jefferson, laughing; “then you must have felt rather bad in the inside.”

“Never, sir,” said Mole, getting more and more dignified; “but I left the enemy rather unhappy, in the inside and the outside.”

“Indeed!”

“This is the only survivor out of five; question him closely.”

Mole had carefully ascertained that the wounded Greek didn't speak a solitary word of English.

“Ask him, I say, what I did for his comrades; how I larded them—how I peppered them, and made them cry peccavi. Damme, Jefferson, old boy, you should have seen me in action; gad, sir, I'm like an old war−horse at the first sniff of powder. Down they went, first one, then the other. Hang me! if I didn't play at skittles with' em, and I was in that humour, Harkaway, when you can't miss. I'd just cheek the corner pin and make a royal every go. What do you think of that, Harkaway?”

Old Jack smiled.

“I'm not proficient enough in skittles to appreciate the feat,” he answered.

“And so you tackled all this lot single−handed?”

“Yes.”

“How many?”

“Ten.”

“I thought you said five.”

“Ten, sir, ten in all; five came up at first, but in as many moments they were all on their backs; and then up came another five of them, each heavily armed. I never forget; hang it! I couldn't forget such a job as that very easily. Five of the second lot fell at my first fire; I toppled over three more, and the other one—”

What Mr. Mole might in his ardour have been tempted to draw for upon his glowing fancy, it is impossible to say, for just as he reached this point in his fanciful narration, up came Nabley.

“Hullo!” he said, as he caught sight of the wounded brigand; “here's the missing man.”

“This,” cried the rest of the people present as if with one voice.

“Yes, this is the man I shot down at my first fire; he must have crawled away to hide; why, where is Mr. Mole running to?”

The imaginative old gentleman suddenly vanished from the scene.

He did not relish the presence of such a witness as this.

“This is Mr. Mole's prisoner,” said Jefferson, laughing; “you see he has brought in one, after all.”

“I bring you something better even then prisoners,” said the detective.

“What is that?”

“Good news.”

“Speak; what is it?”

“The brigands have given up Hunston.”

Harkaway started at the words.

“That is news, indeed,” he said; “and now justice demands that the villain shall speedily hang.”

CHAPTER XXX. THE FIG−TREE GROVE—A DOUBLE AMBUSCADE—THE LEECH−FISHER—HOW THE TRAP WAS BAITED, AND HOW IT TOOK—SOMETHING LIKE THE OLD FORM— TRIUMPHANT MARCH OF HARKAWAY AND CO.

Within an hour—nay, less—of the foregoing conversation you might have seen an aged man wending his weary way along the high road from Athens towards the mountains.

Thickly−grown fig trees leant over the road, and their well−garnished branches formed a roof of foliage through which no ray of sunlight could penetrate.

He seemed an aged man.

His steps tottered.

It was strange that he did not seek the aid of a stout staff, or walking stick at least.

But no, he preferred to keep his hands in his coat pockets.

Now the coat he wore was a full−skirted frock, much resembling in shape the garment which was worn by our grandfathers, or their fathers, when George the Third was king, with huge pockets in the skirts and lappets.

And into these big pockets the old wanderer's arms were buried up to the elbows.

Perhaps it was because he felt somewhat chilly.

There was a gentle breeze blowing through the trees.

As he went along, he shot sly glances from time to time about him, almost as if he were expecting someone; but he had got nearly over a third of the distance down the fig−tree grove before there were the faintest signs of life about him, and there, apparently overcome by the fatigue of his walk, he dropped down upon a moss−grown bank to rest.

He looked up at the leafy canopy overhead, and sniffed down the sweet odours that floated along on the gentlest of zephyrs.

“Not such bad quarters,” he muttered to himself (it was in English that he spoke); “not at all bad. There is only one thing required to make this the happiest day of my life; only one thing, and that is, success in my present undertaking—”

He paused.

“Hark!”

What was it?

He heard a faint rustling in the foliage hard by.

This part of the country was reported to be infested with thieves, the regular hunting grounds of the brigands.

A faint smile lurked round the corners of the old man's mouth, and there was a twinkle in his eye.

“At last,” he muttered to himself, “at last!”

Just then there was a noise as of branches being pushed aside and dry twigs being crushed; and forth stepped a stalwart peasant, all in rags and tatters, and placed himself, hat in hand, before the old man.

“Hullo!” exclaimed the latter, “why, where did you come from?”

And yet his surprise looked more assumed than real.

“Charity!” replied the beggar.

“Charity!” echoed the old man, fumbling in his pockets, “by all means; take this, my honest fellow.”

So saying, he dropped a piece of money into his open palm.

“Gold! Yes, a golden piece, by all the saints in the calendar.”

The beggar's eyes glistened greedily at the piece.

“Heaven bless you!” he exclaimed; “may you live for ever.”

“Don't wish me that,” responded the old man; “that is no blessing.”

“Not with your riches?” said the mendicant

“No.”

“You are not easily satisfied then.”

And then came forth from the beggar a strange sound.

Was it a signal?

It almost appeared to be the result of a preconcerted arrangement, for while the sound of his laughter echoed down the leafy grove, there was a crashing of branches and general breaking of the dried twigs and undergrowth, and out swarmed a group of men numbering perhaps ten or a dozen.

A villanous−looking mob they were too.

They surrounded the old man and were about to attack him, when the first man who had already profited by the old man's charity warned them off.

“There is no need for violence here,” said he, hurriedly, and speaking in their native language; “he will give us up all he has got without so much as dirtying a knife over him.”

The old man laughed.

A dry, cynical laugh it was too, and almost calculated to make one believe that he had understood what they said.

“Who are these people?” he asked of the first beggar.

“Poor men worthy of your pious charity, like myself,” was the reply.

“Then they shall have it,” replied the old man; “more than they expect.”

He looked around him rather anxiously, as if expecting some more people to arrive.

Now that glance was observed by more than one of the men, and it was no very difficult matter to excite suspicion in their minds.

“He expects someone,” said the foremost man of the party; “he is a spy.”

“See how he's looking about him,” observed another. “What shall we do?”

“Kill him at once.”

“Yes, kill him.”

“On to him.”

And the speaker himself was the first to act upon his own counsel.

He stepped forward to catch the old man by the coat, but the latter, retreating a couple of paces, appeared startled.

“Keep your distance, my masters,” he said; “keep your distance, because I am a very dangerous fellow.”

They laughed at this.

“Dangerous, you are?” cried one of them, “oh, oh! what is your name?”

“Why, they call me the leech−fisher.”

“The leech−fisher!”

“Yes.”

“What for?”

“Because I am my own trap and bait and all,”

They looked puzzled.

“He's mad.”

“Daft as he can be.”

“Poor old fool. But let us get his money if he has any, without killing him.”

“Money!” echoed the self−styled leech−fisher. “Here's plenty.”

And with these words he threw a pile of gold pieces upon the ground, making all the lawless ruffians' eyes glisten greedily.

“You don't seem yet to understand the parable of the leech−fisher,” said the singular old man. “You are dense blockheads.”

“Ha, ha, ha! hear him,” cried the first beggar. “He is quite a treat.”

“What I meant was that I am a trap for you. I have set myself to catch you; I am the bait; the leech fishers are their own bait, I am my own. So now come on, my merry men, my unbelieving pagans.”

One of the men here laid a rough hand upon his shoulder, when there was a loud explosion.

A flash and smoke issued from the old man's square coat pocket, and the brigand staggered back.

The rest of the party looked utterly amazed.

What was it?

“An ambuscade,” ejaculated one of them.

“No, no; it came from the old man's coat skirt. See, it is smoking.”

There was a small round hole in the cloth, and it was singed and smelt of gunpowder.

“Death to the spy!” cried the Greeks.

Two of the brigands fell upon him, one on each side, when lo! there was a double explosion, and with loud cries of pain, each fell back dead.

The rest of the brigands now began to recover from the state of stupefaction into which this sudden and unexpected attack had thrown them, and accustomed to rapid action upon emergencies such as the present, they prepared to fall simultaneously upon this ancient Tartar.

“Oh, oh! What, you think to capture me, do you?” he cried.

In an instant all his feebleness had dropped, and lo! he appeared a very nimble man.

Springing back about six feet, he drew both hands from those capacious pockets to which we recently drew the reader's attention, and then the mystery was revealed.

Each had held a six−barrelled revolver.

“How like you my music, you ruffians?” cried the strange man. “Oh, what would I give if my poor friend Pike was with me now!”

Bang!

Another shot, and another *hors de combat.*

The foremost of the brigands rolled over, stone dead.

This was warm work.

But as if it had not grown hot enough, there suddenly appeared upon the scene two men armed with rifles and revolvers.

These two men were crack shots, unluckily for the brigands, and they speedily gave proof of their skill.

Two of the mountaineers bit the dust before they could dream of helping themselves.

Not three minutes had elapsed since the firing of the first shot, and already six men were down.

“Surrender!” said one of the new−comers, in a loud, authoritative voice.

But instead of responding, one of the Greeks drew a pistol and levelled it at the towering figure of Harkaway, for of course he was one of the marksmen, but before he could pull the trigger, bang went another chamber of the old man's revolver, and the pistol fell to the ground.

The hand which had held it was helpless, the arm shattered at the elbow.

There was in truth something dreadful in this carnage.

But neither Harkaway nor Jefferson thought any thing of this.

Indeed, horrible as it may sound, they killed a brigand with as little compunction as they would have slaughtered a wolf.

“Surrender!” cried Harkaway, for the second time. “Yield now, or by Heaven, you shall all die on the field.”

The Greeks looked around for assistance.

They were five.

The enemy only three.

As a rule, these ruffians were not deficient in bulldog courage and ferocity, but this desperate fighting had surprised and frightened them.

“Yield, ruffians, to better men than yourselves.”

They paused.

“To pause is death,” cried Jack Harkaway, in a loud voice.

As the last word was spoken, up went the two rifles.

“Nabley,” cried the American.

“All right,” answered the disguised old man.

“Look after that outside brigand on your left.”

“I will, and his neighbour, too?”

“If you can.”

“I am thinking of my murdered friend, Pike, and I feel I can take twenty such vagabonds!” echoed the detective, fiercely.

“I'll take that big fellow, Jeff,” said Harkaway. “You pot the other.”

“Good.”

“Now, then, you villains, when I count three, look out,” said the detective, with a mild expletive.

Not mild enough for repetition here, by the way.

“One, two—”

The brigands, having held a hurried consultation, here threw down their arms.

Just in the very nick of time.

Two seconds more and they would have had no chance.

“Now,” cried Harkaway, still with the gun ready for use, “forward! march!”

The brigands looked mischievous for a moment.

So did the rifles.

So did the revolver.

These two weapons were great persuaders.

With slow, unwilling steps the five men marched onward into captivity.

“I'll see to the wounded,” said the detective.

Four of the brigands had been killed outright.

Others were writhing on the ground and using bad language.

“Two and four make six,” muttered Mr. Nabley; “six and four are ten. Why, I could have sworn that there were eleven. Yes, certainly there was another. Where the deuce could he have got to?”

The most diligent search, that is, the most diligent search possible under the circumstances, failed to find the faintest trace of the missing man.

“That's the one I gave that smack in the face,” said Nabley to himself. “Well, I know I gave it to him pretty warm besides that. He hasn't got far. He has crawled somewhere to die, I suppose. Well, well, I can't deny him that little luxury.”

And then, by dint of threatening the wounded with instant death, he persuaded them to crawl after the rest.

* * * * * And when our three adventurers marched into the town with their prisoners between them, there was a loud outcry.

Cheers, bravos, huzzahs, at every step of the way.

“That's the Englishman Harkaway,” said one of the bystanders, as they marched onward towards the prison, “and that is the American Jefferson.”

“Dreadful men those to make enemies of. I have heard that Harkaway has destroyed hundreds of brigands and pirates.”

“Yes, I have heard so,” answered the other. “It was an evil moment for those villains of brigands when they shot the poor young Harkaways. They will lose many a life for those two.”

“Ah, that they will.”

“Who is that driving the two wounded men before him?”

“That is an English secret police officer. He is even more dangerous than the others. He has killed four men with his own hands in this skirmish. I believe an old friend of his has been murdered by the brigands, and he has sworn to have revenge.”

“It is taking the law into their own hands with a vengeance.”

“All honour to them for their bravery.”

“Three cheers for Harkaway!”

CHAPTER XXXI. THE SECRET WORK GOES ON—WHO IS THE TRAITOR?—THE FALL OF A FAVOURITE—THE RECRUIT'S MUSINGS—A STRANGE REVELATION.

It was true.

Hunston had been given up by the brigands.

They knew but little of Harkaway, but that little told them that he was not the man to make a false assertion.

They felt sure that Hunston had received more money for the ransom of the boys than he had acknowledged, and so they voted his doom.

Under ordinary circumstances he would have been shot.

As it was, they had learnt so terribly to respect Harkaway that they gave up his enemy in preference to taking the law in their own hands.

Not a day passed but one or more of the brigands suffered at the hands of the enemy whose revenge they had so unwisely provoked.

Let them go armed, with a support of armed men within easy call and on the watch, it could not avail them.

They were picked off, slowly, surely, quietly, mysteriously.

And this was the chief reason that they sought to negotiate with the Harkaway party by giving up their enemy Hunston.

But still the work went on.

There was only one man in the whole band who had the courage to lay the facts before them.

“We must move away from this part of the country,” he said. “Once let us see how matters turn out with our comrades who have fallen into the hands of these English people, and then we must be gone.”

But while they waited more fell.

Several got taken prisoners, and the band presented a very thin appearance.

The day of trial approached for the brigands, of whom Hunston was one.

And the verdict was universally foreseen.

They were condemned to death for the murder of the two boys, Harry Girdwood and young Jack.

In five days they were to be executed.

In the court there was one person who heard the sentence with the greatest possible terror.

This was Theodora.

Why should it so affect her?

It was surely not that she could have any sympathy with such rogues and murdering villains.

Justice was swift in the execution of its decrees here, and the condemned brigands were doomed to death within five days.

“Five days!” Theodora repeated to herself again and again, as she left the court. “Five days! So short. Well, then I must my do duty come what may. To−morrow may yet be in time—or the next day.”

Still she was sorely perplexed.

“If I avow all, I shall incur the undying enmity of the band,” she reasoned; “and if I keep silent, I shall be the murderess of those men —men with whom I have grown up and been taught to look upon as brothers.”

She had some strange secret upon her mind which troubled her sorely.

In her dire perplexity she went to the camp, and did her best to excite the men to an effort on behalf of their imperilled comrades.

Pedro listened to all she had to say.

Then he gave his opinion.

“We are clearly bound to make an effort to save our friends,” he said; “we can not let our comrades perish without attempting to save them.”

“No, no!” answered the brigands, with one voice.

But perhaps the most demonstrative of all was the last recruit who had joined the brigands—the Englishman, known amongst his new comrades as Geoffrey, the discharged servant of Harkaway.

“When shall the attempt be made?” said Pedro; “that is the next question.”

“At once,” said Toro.

He looked around for some supporters; but he looked in vain.

Toro was no longer in good odour.

His connection with Hunston had rendered him exceedingly unpopular.

He was too daring a spirit for them to break out into open murmurs, but quietly he was deposed; and then Pedro was admitted as leader.

When the question of giving up Hunston to the enemy was first mooted, Toro had violently opposed it; but his was the one solitary voice that was lifted for his old comrade.

“The only chance of success,” suggested Pedro, “is to wait and attack the procession on the way to execution. The prison itself is too well defended for us to hope for success.”

“That's true,” said Geoffrey; “and failure would ruin them.”

“Surely.”

It was arranged consequently that the attempt should be made upon the day appointed for the execution.

The utmost secrecy should be kept as to their plans.

“Let not a word be breathed of our resolves anywhere,” said Pedro, “unless we are all together in council assembled, for I fear that we have had a traitor in our camp.”

“A traitor!”

“Aye.”

“One or more?”

“One, at least, would not surprise me after all that has occurred.”

“Nor me either,” said Geoffrey.

Saying which, he glanced significantly over his shoulder in the direction of Toro.

The latter, on the rejection of his plan, had stalked moodily away, and was walking up and down buried in bitter reflections.

“Hah!”

“If I could believe that possible,” exclaimed one of the brigands, “it would be a speedy end of his rule here.”

Saying which he drew his long dagger significantly.

“Well, well,” said Geoffrey, who acted cautiously, and was satisfied at having unsettled their minds with regard to the Italian bravo, “let us seek the traitor, and when found—.” He left the rest unsaid; but they knew well what was meant.

The only person quitting the camp was Lerna.

So that no traitor could well carry the news to the enemy this time.

“Let no precaution be neglected,” said Pedro; “we must choose trusty sentinels. I'll take the watch at the gap myself.”

“Good.”

“Geoffrey.”

“Present, captain.”

Toro gave a start at that reply, which clearly gave the death−knell to his own command.

“Do you mount guard at the cross roads below.”

“Leading to the fountain avenue, do you mean, captain?”

“Yes.”

“Good.”

And shouldering his musket, he gave a stiff salute and marched off.

“Perhaps you would not have far to look for traitors,” said Toro, as Geoffrey disappeared, “did not your prejudices blind you.”

“Do you allude to Geoffrey?” asked Pedro, coldly.

“Judge for yourself.”

“Speak out boldly.”

“I have been bold enough for you,” said Toro, passionately,

“Speak in the presence of him you would accuse.”

“I fear no man here” cried Toro.

“Nor does any man fear you.”

“Then by thunder, he shall!” and out came his sword.

At this unmistakable demonstration several of the brigands made signs of cutting in, and the Italian saw that it was a desperate game he was venturing on.

He saw it just in time, for the brigands were ready, one and all, to fall upon him with dagger and sword.

Gradually he fell back and left them, but the seed was sown.

The few words which Geoffrey had spoken had done their duty well.

“So, so” muttered Geoffrey, as he went; “Hunston is done for, and Toro shall soon follow. Thirty−two men have been 'dropped' for our dear boys—thirty−two. Gad! but it is a goodly number. They will learn to respect the name of Jack Harkaway in this miserable land—and to rue the day that they molested anyone of us. Thirty−two—aye, and the rest shall follow, as sure as my name is—Who goes there! Speak! By Heaven, stop! Nabley—just in time, but silence.”

CHAPTER XXXII. THEODORA'S ERRAND—FATAL NEWS—THE MYSTERY DEEPENS—HER RESOLVE—TO THE VILLA—INTERVIEW WITH HARKAWAY—THE VOICE FROM THE GRAVE—A HEART OF GOLD.

Theodora now made her way with all speed to the waterside prison, to which allusion has been previously made.

The head gaoler of this prison had a daughter of the same age as Theodora.

His wife had nursed them both as babes, and Theodora looked upon them as her parents, and on the girl as her sister.

To them she was wont to appeal at any time of trouble, and now she came to tell them her cares.

She asked for her foster sister, and called her aside.

“What is it now, Theodora dear?” asked the gaoler's daughter, anxiously. “You look quite pale and haggard.”

Theodora shook her head sadly.

“I have got involved in a matter in which I am responsible.”

“But the evil is over?”

“No.”

“As far as you are concerned, is it, dear?”

“No; I say no. Are not our men to be executed for the murder of the two boys?”

“And richly they deserve it,” exclaimed Mariana.

“No, no. They can not deserve it for what they are innocent of.”

“It is no fault of theirs,” retorted the gaoler's daughter; “They are guilty in intention, at least.”

“Well, well, Mariana. I am not so base that I could see them suffer death, knowing what I know—what we know, in fact.”

“But you would not betray me?” exclaimed the gaoler's daughter, anxiously.

“No, darling. The necessity for danger to you—to us, I may say—is entirely done away with.”

“What do you mean?”

“The gallant men will rescue their comrades on Thursday on the way to the execution.”

“What!” said Mariana; “Thursday!”

“Yes.”

“Then you don't know,” she exclaimed, with a wild scared look.

“Know what?”

“That it has been changed. They are to be executed in the morning.”

Theodora gave a cry of terror and staggered back.

“No, no, Mariana,” she said, wildly; “it is impossible.”

“It is true”

“When was this made known?”

“Just now.”

“Why was it altered?”

“Because they have discovered that an attack was meditated by the brigands upon the way to execution on Thursday.”

“Impossible!” cried Theodora, starting up. “Why, it was only just agreed upon. I have left them not two hours ago, and it was then that they came to this resolution.”

“It is already known here. A messenger from the great Mr. Harkaway sought the governor with the news, and as Mr. Harkaway is all−powerful here, the execution takes place to−morrow morning at daybreak. It is said that he has his own spies in the camp of the brigands.”

Theodora clapped her hands to her head, and paced wildly up and down.

“There is no way out of it, dear Mariana,” she cried. “No way, no way, but one.”

“What is that?”

“I will see this Mr. Harkaway, and tell him all.”

“But you will ruin us all.”

“No. He will be overjoyed with the news I bring, and will do as I wish —all I ask to repay me for the words of comfort which I have for him.”

“I doubt it.”

“I know him well,” retorted Theodora. “I know his boys too well to believe the father so bad and merciless as you suppose him. All his enmity would be forgotten could he but believe the glad tidings which I have for him.”

“Then the knowledge of this will risk all our lives.”

“No; I am convinced that all will be well.”

“Theodora!”

“Delay me not. My duty points clearly to that.”

And before she could offer to interfere further with her resolve, Theodora was gone.

She fled like a deer.

Nor did she pause for breath until she was at the villa.

* * * * *

“Mr. Harkaway will not see anyone,” said the servant.

She eyed the panting girl with suspicion, as Theodora leant for support by the door, while her left hand clasped her beating heart.

The tragic events of the past few weeks, and the murder of Marietta in Mrs. Harkaway's bedchamber, had led them to distrust every body and every thing.

“I must see him,” gasped Theodora.

“Impossible,” returned the girl curtly; “call to−morrow in the afternoon.”

“Afternoon,” returned Theodora. “After six in the morning will be too late. It is life and death, I tell you. Go and tell him.”

“Obstinate girl, I tell you Mr. Harkaway has serious business on at daybreak, and has gone to rest, giving the strictest orders that he is not to be disturbed.”

“Call him,” returned Theodora, with forced calmness, “and he will have no need to go on this business at daybreak.”

“Hah!”

“Do you hear?”

The girl retreated backwards, never moving her eyes from Theodora.

“This is some hired assassin.” she thought. “They can't tackle my master, and knowing how wary he is, they have hired a girl to do the deed.”

She was about to thrust to the door, when Theodora, in sheer despair, burst in, and cried at the top of her voice to Harkaway—

“Mr. Harkaway! Mr. Harkaway; come, come and hear news of your poor boys, I say.”

At this wild outcry in the middle of his house, Jack stepped out of his room.

“Keep back, sir; keep back,” screamed the servant “She's an assassin.”

At these words Harkaway slipped back into his room, and reappeared armed with a pair of pistols.

“Now, what is it you require, my girl?” he demanded of Theodora.

“A few words with you.”

“Don't trust her,” shrieked the servant; “I saw a knife in her girdle. Don't trust her.”

Theodora smiled faintly.

“I am alone, unarmed,” she said; “the great Mr. Harkaway, the hero of the day here, is surely not afraid of me.”

“I am afraid of no one,” returned Jack; “but I warn you, my girl, that if any treachery be meditated, each of these pistols carries a man's life.”

“It can not affect me,” returned Theodora, calmly. “I come to bring you news which will gladden your heart, and have no fear of your enmity.”

Her words and her manner thrilled Harkaway strangely. He lowered the pistols.

He had her shown into a room, and followed her in.

“Sit down there, my girl, and tell me all,” he said, trying to appear composed, while he was in reality

singularly moved.

"I come, Mr. Harkaway," said Theodora, who had now regained all her calmness, "to bring you the most welcome news that ever gladdened your ear—that ever sent balm and comfort to your bruised heart."

Jack turned pale; he thought he had heard her speak of his boys before leaving his room.

"Speak on," he said, his voice faltering.

"Tell me, sir, what could I say that would restore happiness to you—to your wife—to your friends and home? What could I say to lift the veil of mourning from your house and hearts?—to restore the former gaiety to this tomb−like place."

Jack Harkaway listened as one in a dream.

"Girl," he said, in a voice that was almost inaudible, "you know not what you say."

"I am perfectly cognisant of all," she replied.

"Then your errand here is to torture me?"

"You wrong me."

Harkaway looked her sternly in the face.

And Theodora bore his glance without flinching.

"Your manner tells me," he said, "that you know better than any one what alone could restore happiness here."

"You are right."

And she gravely inclined her head as she answered.

"And you know it is impossible," he said.

"It is not."

"Not impossible!" ejaculated Harkaway. "Know you what you say?"

"Perfectly."

"Girl, girl," cried Harkaway, passionately, "the grave can not give back its dead."

"It does—it has."

Harkaway gasped for breath.

She was about to speak on, when the ghastly pallor of his countenance and its wild, haggard expression frightened her.

"Girl, go on, tell me," he cried excitedly; "do not play with me."

"Calm yourself, Mr. Harkaway, pray—"

"Go on, go on."

"You alarm me."

"Speak, in mercy's sake," implored Harkaway; "this suspense is ten thousand times worse than all the good or bad news which you could bring me—are you fooling me?" he added springing up and seizing his pistols.

"No."

"Speak on then."

"Your son Jack—"

"Yes, yes; my boy—my own darling brave lad—what of him?"

The girl suddenly turned pale. "Hark," she said, "I think I hear footsteps outside; quick! to the window; I think we are watched," and the girl sank in terror at Jack's feet.

Harkaway, with one bound, sprang to the window, pistol in hand, ready for use.

But it was a false alarm; and, having satisfied himself that there were no eavesdroppers, Harkaway returned to his seat, and the girl resumed—

"Are you able to bear good news?"

"Yes," he said, with a sickly smile; "the novelty would perhaps affect me—speak then—you said my boy—"

"Lives," answered the girl.

"Impossible," he faltered; "why, Harvey saw their grave."

"And I too saw them in their grave."

"In their grave!" echoed Harkaway; "and yet you say they live."

"Yes."

"Where are they?"

“Close at hand; but I wish to ask you in return—”

“All you will—anything, everything—only bring me back my boys.”

“I only ask to save the lives of the men unjustly accused of the murder, and who have been doomed to die to−morrow.”

“Granted—why, it was granted unasked,” said Harkaway.

“Enough,” said the girl; “I see that I may count upon you. Will you come with me to your son and his friend?”

“Yes.”

He sprang up with the greatest alacrity, but a sudden fancy crossed him, and he seized the girl by the shoulder.

“You are not playing me false?” said Jack.

“Look in my face and be assured.”

He gazed long and earnestly at her, and she bore his fixed look unflinchingly.

“Yes, yes,” he said, more to himself than to her; “you are truthful—I am sure of that—but I'll not neglect any precaution; for my head is so sorely perplexed by all you have told me that I scarcely know if I am asleep or waking.”

He pressed his brow with his open hands, and then looking carefully to the priming of his revolvers, he started out with the girl; and as they issued from the grounds of the villa, he spoke his last words of mistrust before giving her his whole confidence.

“You see, Theodora,” he said, for she had told him her name, “I don't hang back. I freely confide in you.”

“You do well.”

“I believe so—see that my confidence is not misplaced, and you shall have no cause to repent it.”

“Your words would imply a promise of reward for me; but I seek none.”

“I am willing to believe it, but still my fixed resolve—”

“Your fixed resolve could not make me take it,” said the girl, proudly. “I have told you my object in my present mission; I have no other.”

Harkaway was greatly surprised at this, but as he stole a sidelong glance at her, surprise was not the only expression in his face.

Admiration was strongly mixed with it.

“Tell me where we are going?” he asked presently, as they got clear of the town.

“To the prison by the water.”

“What for?”

“They are there.”

“But in prison—how came they there? In prison! Why, then, without knowing it, I have been probably twenty times within earshot of both.”

“Yes.”

“How came they there?—no half measures now. Surely this is the time for revealing all?”

“And now, Mr. Harkaway, I will tell you all as we walk on. The seeming mystery shall remain so no longer.”

So saying, Theodora began the brief but startling narrative which follows—and which may fairly be entitled—

THE DEAD ALIVE.

“Your dear son Jack and his friend Harry Girdwood saved my life when I was in danger of drowning at sea. They brought me safely ashore, only to fall into the hands of my remorseless companions, the mountaineers. Ah, I see you would call them by something less gentle in sound. Well, it was a planned thing. I was the decoy, but alas! I thought but little then how soon I was to repent of my share in that evil work.”

“Go on.”

“I will, to the end, even though you should learn to loathe me. Well, a price was put on their heads.”

“Which I paid.”

“You paid one−fifth.”

“No, no; I paid all, as demanded.”

“Hunston returned to the camp with only one hundred pounds, and they voted the death of the two boys. Poor boys! both brave boys. The bravest veteran on the battlefield never faced death with the heroic calmness of those two young heroes, sir.”

“Bless you for those words, my girl,” exclaimed the gratified Harkaway. “I am proud of my dear boy.”

“I demanded their release—I implored—I begged—I prayed in the most abject terms. But they had felt the weight of your hand too often. They and theirs had suffered so much that I was powerless. I could only obtain one small concession.”

“Say on, say on!” exclaimed Harkaway. “What was that? I burn with eagerness to know more of my dear boys.”

“I was to do the last sad honours to the noble dead. Three were to be executed; one of themselves, a traitor called Lirico. By dissimulating to Hunston—the viper! how I tremble with horror at the very name—I obtained one concession—Lirico was the first to suffer, the boys were to follow.”

“Oh, Hunston! villain!” groaned Harkaway, “villain!”

“The execution took place at daybreak. I waited on the firing party. When the wretched Lirico was dealt upon, I passed round and gave the men to drink from a spirit keg which I had specially provided. Then, while they feasted upon the drugged spirit, I passed round and reloaded the muskets for what they thought the final butchery.”

“Well, well, do not torture me, girl. Quick, tell me the end.”

“Can you not guess?”

“No, no. Quick, tell me all.”

“In loading the muskets I forgot the bullets.”

“Ha, ha, ha!” laughed old Jack, half−hysterically. “I see it all now, brave girl.”

“The rest was no easy task. As the men fired, they fell back in the grave and simulated death, as I had instructed them overnight; and now you can understand how I saw them in the grave and yet can prove that they live.”

“I do. Girl, you are brave and good; I know not how to thank you for the lives of my poor boys.”

“The night before their great trial, I exacted a solemn promise from them that they would follow me to a hiding place without the least offer of resistance.”

“I begin to see. But how did you contrive—”

“To get them secreted in the great prison?”

“Yes.”

“You shall hear. My foster−sister is the daughter of the head gaoler. Her lover is completely at her mercy, and he holds a superior post in the prison. It was the only condition upon which I could spare the brave boys' lives, and so they were forced to yield.”

“And all this time we might have been spared the bitterest agony.”

She hung her head.

“I know it, but I dared not speak sooner, for I feared to betray my friends.”

“You may trust me,” said Jack.

“I know it, for I have saved your boys.”

* * * * *

They reached the prison.

“Sebastian,” said Theodora, presenting Harkaway to her foster−sister and the latter's lover, “this is Mr. Harkaway.”

The Greek official bowed with an air of constraint.

“Theodora has told you all, sir?”

“Yes, you have risked much to save my boys' lives.”

“Since I can count upon your forbearance,” said Sebastian, “I will say no more. Follow me to the presence of the boys.”

So saying, Sebastian led the way through the stone−paved passages to the tower overhanging the sea, in which the cell of the two boys was situated.

At the base of the tower were jagged, sea−beaten rocks.

Beside the tower, at about half the height of the tower, reckoning from the level of the sea, was a gravel terrace, covered with a waterproof canopy, so as to form a sort of shed.

And looking out of the tower windows as they passed up its steep inner staircase, Harkaway inquired what this place was.

“That is used as the prison mortuary.”

“Those black, ugly outlines there are—”

“Bodies.”

“Ugh!”

“They are put into those black bags in lieu of winding sheets, then placed into those rough wooden shells, which are lowered to the prison cemetery below by that crane you see to the right”

“A very poor look−out.”

But away with such dull thoughts.

Here he was on the threshold of new joy—new life.

“Your boys are here,” said Sebastian, pausing before a huge barred door.

He undid the fastenings, and pushing open the door, made way for Harkaway to pass in.

“Enter, sir,” he said.

Harkaway's heart beat high.

He pushed open the door—entered.

“Where are they?”

“There.”

A momentary pause.

“There's no one there,” said Harkaway, in a tone indicative of powerfully−suppressed emotion.

Dire apprehensions of evil stole over both Sebastian and Theodora as they followed Harkaway into the cell.

“Theodora,” gasped Sebastian, staggering back, “they are gone.”

“Where? How?”

“They must have escaped.”

“Liar!” yelled Harkaway, suddenly springing back and drawing his six− shooter; “this is some plot. Thieves! murderers! You think to fool me; but you shall pay the penalty for your villainy. You are in an injured father's grasp. Die, brigands!”

CHAPTER XXXIII. YOUNG JACK AND HIS COMRADE HARRY GIRDWOOD—DEAD OR ALIVE—THE RIDDLE UNRAVELLED—THE PLAN IN CYPHER—A RELIC OF THE PAST—EUREKA!— THE CYPHER UNRAVELLED.

Now for young Jack.

Once more let us see the bold young Harkaway and Harry, his brave comrade.

Too long have we been absent from them.

Too long have we been forced by the exigencies of our history to leave, not only the Harkaway family and party generally, under the cruel impression that the two boys had been foully murdered, but the reader likewise.

They lived.

Aye, it was every word true that Theodora had said.

Sebastian was not a wit less truthful.

When he opened the door of the cell in the tower, he fully expected to find the two boys there.

Where were they?

By what jugglery had they contrived to get out of such a formidable fortress as that place?

This the present chapter is to relate.

To give it clearly, however briefly, we must go back to the day of their entrance into their gloomy prison home.

Jack and Harry were alone.

“This is a rum go, Jack,” said Harry Girdwood. “What do you think of it?”

“Precious dull, old boy,” grumbled young Harkaway.

“Better than a grave on the mountain side.”

“It is just that,” said young Jack. “But it wouldn't be quite so good if this sort of thing was meant to be permanent.”

“Growler, growler,” said Harry Girdwood. “Why, I call these famous diggings, after that hole they meant us to rest in while the worms made meat of us. Besides, we must get away.”

“How?”

“Escape.”

Young Jack looked up at the word, and his heart beat a little quicker.

But he said nothing.

Frowning walls on every side.

The cell was fully eighteen feet high, and the window was close up by the ceiling.

“If we want to get out of this,” said young Jack, “we must begin operations from this moment.”

“Good.”

“Do you know, Harry, what is to be the first step?”

“No.”

“To get at that window.”

“But it is about eighteen feet high.”

“Well, we must reach it,” said young Jack.

Both boys were expert gymnasts.

The greasiest of greasy poles were vanquished by either with the greatest of ease.

In the stormiest weather they could mount into the topmost parts of the rigging on board ship.

And the consequence was that the morning after their entrance into their prison found young Jack perched up at the window, looking down at his comrade and fellow−prisoner, and giving graphic descriptions of all he saw there.

“What's on the other side, Jack?”

“The sea, the open sea, old fellow,” cried Jack.

“And below?”

“The sea, again, old fellow.”

“To the right?”

“The sea, the sea—the open sea, old fellow. Water, water, everywhere, and not a drop to drink. At least it would be an awful *drop* to get at it.”

“Can you see any thing to the right?”

“Water only.”

“Is that all?”

“Yes—hallo!”

Some thing fell.

A roll of some thing white and soft dropped at Harry Girdwood's feet, and he hastened to pick it up.

Some thing white, we said.

Well, it had once been white, but now it had got very considerably discoloured with age and dust, which seemed to indicate that it had been a long while up on the shelf in its hiding place.

Yes, its hiding place.

They opened the bundle, and found it to be composed of three slips of cotton, upon which were written, in red ink, curious things which they could not make much of.

Upon one of these pieces of cotton were certain cabalistic signs, such as figures, algebraical marks, and geometrical figures.

Upon another was traced a plan of some building.

A third was a sectional view, drawn roughly, but upon architectural principles, and marked with initial letters of reference.

“This is a rum go,” said Harry Girdwood, laughing.

Young Jack had dropped from his perch and joined his fellow−prisoner on *terra firma*, and together they poured over these singular rags.

Now young Harkaway soon lost patience, and speaking contemptuously of their find, he proposed pitching it through the grated window into the sea.

“Not I,” said Harry; “there's some thing here which it will amuse me to puzzle out.”

“If you like to kill time that way, Harry,” answered young Jack, laughing, “no harm; there's plenty of time to kill in this dreadful dungeon.”

And puzzle over this precious treasure Harry did.

The cloth upon which were the cabalistic signs was headed with certain words, which were all but illegible, and this he managed to construe.

“Simple cypher, left in hopes that it may yet serve some unfortunate Englishman to escape from the tender mercies of this hole.”

Below this were the following figures and signs—

3. 15. 21. 14. 20.—6. 15. 21. 18.—19. 20. 15. 14. 5. 19. —21. 16.—6. 18. 15. 13.—7. 18. 15. 21. 14. 4.—20. 23. 15.—6. 15. 21. 18.—19. 9. 4. 5.—15. 6.—3. 8. 9.

Neath) 13. 14. 5. 25.— > C.—23.

Press)

it.

8. 1. 20.—9. 19—

revealed.

Now when Harry Girdwood had got through the above puzzle once or twice, he was in a regular fog. The only result was to get himself heartily laughed at by his fellow−prisoner.

So Harry Girdwood kept what he knew of the matter to himself.

Upon that same day towards sundown, when Sebastian came round to bring their food, Harry Girdwood said—

“We are not the first Englishmen who have been here, my friend.”

Sebastian gave him a sharp glance, as he answered—

“How do you know that?”

“There is no mystery in it,” replied Harry Girdwood; “I saw some words written in pencil upon the wall,”

“Where?”

The eagerness of his manner aroused the curiosity of both the boys.

“Somewhere here,” replied Harry, pretending to seek for the marks upon the wall.

But of course he found nothing.

“It is strange,” he said, still looking about; “for I made sure it was hereabouts somewhere. I saw some words which made me sure that it was occupied by an Englishman once.”

“You are right,” replied Sebastian; “quite right. An Englishman named Terence Dougherty—”

“That Englishman was Irish,” said young Jack.

“Possibly; but he was a priest. He was confined here for a long while. So long that he went mad.”

“Mad, did you say?”

“Yes, and raving at last; his madness appeared to have so much method in it that it quite deceived our head doctor.”

“How did he deceive the head doctor?”

“By his apparent sanity. He was mad as a March hare, and he used to rave about having discovered the way out of the prison.”

The two boys pricked up their ears at this speech.

“What was more natural?” said Sebastian. “A prisoner is always thinking how he can get away.”

“Of course.”

“And yet,” said Sebastian, “the old priest was sure he had discovered the way to elude our vigilance when he chose to put his plan into execution; and his dying words startled us.”

“How?”

“He said to the doctor within twenty minutes of drawing his last breath—'Doctor, you think I am mad. Not a bit of it, and I tell you that I have given my life to the study of prison breaking—getting out of this particular cell—and, doctor, I should have got out if the great commander death had not ordered me off by another route. As it is, I leave my work for the benefit of the first Briton who shall fall into your claws and drop into my cell, and then—mark me well—he'll profit by my work, unless he be a greater fool than you have taken me to be, and get away.”

“He was very mad,” said young Harkaway.

“Very.”

Harry Girdwood said nothing.

* * * * *

They were alone.

Young Jack was full of deep and serious thought.

Harry Girdwood arose suddenly from his puzzle.

“Eureka!” he cried; “I have discovered it.”

“What?” demanded the startled Jack.

“The cypher. It is alphabetical. Listen here.”

Young Jack approached.

“It is clear as daylight,” said Harry; “these figures correspond with the letters of the alphabet.

“'Count four stones up from ground. Two from side of chimney. Press underneath. See what is revealed under it.'”

“Hurrah!” cried young Jack.

“Hurrah!” yelled Harry Girdwood; “but stop. Let us see if there is any thing in it, for we may yet escape.”

CHAPTER XXXIV. WHAT THE CYPHER DID FOR THEM—THE END OF THE PASSAGE—NEARLY SAVED—BACK AGAIN—LOST—THE DEAD−HOUSE ON THE TERRACE.

Four Stones up.

Two across.

“Do you understand it now, Harry?”

The latter scratched his head and looked about.

“I understand it well enough,” he replied; “but there is one difficulty.”

“What?”

“A tool.”

“Let us try with our hands first,” said Jack.

And so saying, he set to work himself to try as he suggested.

“One, two, three, four, and two up. Good! Now, Harry, lend a hand here. Come.”

Harry Girdwood dropped on one knee beside his companion and together they pressed the stone indicated in the singular cypher.

For a moment they felt no effect, but after a minute's effort they found that they had made an impression.

The discovery set them all aglow.

“Once more.”

“Harder yet.”

“Of course; only mind, Jack, no jerking.”

“All right”

“We must work without making any noise; a jerk might bring down one of the stones with a clatter, which would alarm the guards.

“Caution is our watchword.”

Soon they had the satisfaction of seeing the stone revolve and drop out into their arms.

Then they saw that beyond the hole thus left there was an open space.

It was pitch dark.

Now, the hole in the wall was only just big enough for one of them to squeeze through, and Harry Girdwood pushed in eagerly, and then he perceived that beyond was a sort of tunnel on a small scale, with a roughly−hewn flight of steps at the end of it.

“I can see some steps,” said he.

“Go on,” said Jack, with feverish eagerness.

“I will; but you go to the door, Jack, and listen.”

Jack stood eagerly watching at the dungeon door.

Young Jack was full of eagerness.

Harry had disappeared, and he could not see or hear him.

“All right.”

The answer came in a hollow, echoing sound, which indicated that Harry Girdwood had made some considerable progress.

This increased his eagerness greatly.

* * * * *

“Harry.”

No answer.

He was too far for young Jack's voice to reach him.

Quitting his post at the door, young Jack ran back to the hole in the wall, and called out eagerly to his exploring comrade—

“Harry, Harry!”

“Hullo!”

"Come back, quick! I can hear someone coming."
"The deuce you can."
Back he scrambled as fast as the narrow space would allow of, and he was soon in the cell again.
"What is it?"
"I heard the bell go and the iron door along the passage outside. Sebastian is coming."
"Confound it! Look what a precious mess."
The displacing of the stone had left traces of the work.
But having seen their danger, they were prepared to provide against it.
Quick as thought they swept up the dirt, mortar, and rubbish, and threw it into the hole.
Then, joining hands, they raised the stone and lifted it into its place.
At that moment the key turned in the massive and half rusty lock.
Sebastian entered the cell, tray in hand.
He had not the faintest suspicion that any thing was wrong.
"Will you leave the tray, Sebastian?"
"Why?"
"For us to work up our appetites; we have none to speak of now."
"Very good," returned the man; "there can be no harm in that."
"Of course not."
Sebastian then left the room.
"Thank goodness he's gone!" said young Jack, who was all impatience to see what Harry was to do next.
Harry Girdwood watched until the door was fairly closed, and then turned again to the hole in the wall.
"Come along. Follow me, Jack."
"Trot on," said young Harkaway. "I'm after you."
They both scrambled through the hole, and when they were upon the other side, they replaced the stone.
And this done, the cell wore its original aspect.
Their way now lay down a rugged flight of steps, roughly cut in the solid earth.
The greatest care was necessary to avoid stumbling.
At length Harry Girdwood came to a standstill.
"Jack," he said, in a whisper,
"Here."
"Keep close now."
"Right."
"Nearer. Lend me a hand here. That's it. Now help me to raise the stone here."
"Are you sure you are right?"
"Certain."
"Why?"
"This is exactly the position of the stone we have to lift away that old Dougherty describes in his plan."
Young Jack said no more, but lent his aid, and together they shifted the stone from its place.
Then daylight peeped into their dark hiding−place.
There was something leaning against the opening.
They pushed it aside, and stepping over a pile of sacks, found themselves in a covered shed overlooking the sea.
A place of curious aspect, with no sign of life in it
All was as still and gloomy−looking as if it were a huge mausoleum.
"I know what this place is," said Harry Girdwood.
"What?"
"It must be the dead−house on the terrace that I see noted down in old Dougherty's plans."

* * * * *

While they were in the dead−house upon the terrace, a stirring scene was being enacted in the cell in the tower above, which they had only lately vacated.
In fact, Jack Harkaway the elder had only just entered the cell with Sebastian as they found themselves upon

the terrace.

"Where are we now?"

There were several ugly−looking long boxes, whose shape was uniform and suggestive, standing upon tressels.

Besides these, there were no objects in the room or shed beyond a few badly−filled sacks which rested against the wall.

They looked anxiously about them.

Nearly facing the place where they had made their entrance was a door, and this they tried without a moment's loss of time.

Fast.

Immovable.

"The window, then," said Harry Girdwood.

Back they ran on tip−toe to the window, and pushing open the casement, they looked out.

The sea.

Between thirty and forty feet below, and lashing the very base of the prison.

They turned to each other simultaneously.

"Ugh!"

"No chance here."

"This is a funny go."

"Well, Jack," said Harry, ruefully, "I'm glad you find it funny; for my part, I don't see the joke."

"Your friend, old Dougherty, did, no doubt."

"Don't be hard on poor old Dougherty," said Harry, laughingly. "It is very likely that his plan is complete, if we could only find it out."

"Where is it?"

"In our cell," said Harry; "I'll go back and get it."

And putting aside the sack, he pressed his way into the opening.

Young Jack glanced around him at the boxes on the tressels.

An unpleasant feeling stole over him.

He did not relish being left alone with the dead.

He felt convinced that those ugly boxes did contain the bodies of dead prisoners.

"I'm with you, Harry," he said.

After him he pressed, and up the long, narrow tunnel made by old Dougherty they passed.

Sometimes on all fours; sometimes standing nearly upright.

"A few steps more, and we are there," said Harry.

"Hah!"

"What now?"

"Listen!"

"I can hear voices," said Harry, in a whisper. "This is the stone which is all we have to displace to get back to the cell."

"Then the voices are there?"

"Yes."

"By jingo!" exclaimed young Jack, "then they must have discovered our absence already."

"Of course."

"How I should like to yell out something! Wouldn't it startle them just a little?"

"Don't be foolish, Jack," said his companion, uneasily. "You would ruin us."

"They'd never discover where we were. Shall I startle them?"

"No. Our only chance of safety depends upon keeping snug."

"All right."

They could hear noisy tones of anger, which denoted that something unusual had occurred.

"There are several people there," said Harry, listening intently at the stone.

"By Jove! how I should like to give them a cheer."

“Keep quiet,” exclaimed Harry. “You will ruin us.”

But, by a mere chance, he was wrong there.

Had young Jack really indulged in his propensity of devilment on this occasion, it would have saved them many hours of mental anguish and of bodily suffering, for the angry words uttered in the cell but lately tenanted by the two boys were spoken by Jack Harkaway the elder?

Yes.

Cruel fate was playing them a sad trick.

They were now actually fleeing from their father and protector.

The voice raised in anger, and whose echo came but feebly to them in their hiding−place, was his.

Harkaway's.

And thus were these loving hearts parted by a few inches of stone wall.

The boys, on the one hand, taking the confused sounds for the murmur of their enemy's voice.

And at that very moment Harkaway was nearly distracted to have all his hopes dashed rudely to the ground.

And in his anger, two lives were sorely endangered.

Sebastian and Theodora were both menaced—aye, both.

Harkaway could only believe that they had been fooling him, and that he had been trapped there with a view to further treachery.

His rage, in consequence, knew no bounds.

But we must now follow the two brave boys.

“Back we go, or we shall be captured,” said Harry Girdwood.

Young Jack led the way back as fast as the narrow space would permit.

And soon they were in the dead−house again, and groping about here, they presently came upon a cupboard in which they discovered a number of tools.

“Luck at last,” ejaculated Harry.

“Here, let's make sure of these two knives,” said young Jack.

They were long−bladed weapons, something similar in shape to the American bowie.

They took one each and placed them in their waist belts.

They little thought then of the singular yet immense service these were to be to them.

Now barely were these knives secreted when they were startled by the sound of heavy foot−falls upon the stone−paved passage beyond the dead−house door.

“What shall we do now?”

Young Jack stepped up to the door, and listened intently for awhile.

“There are only two people,” he said to his comrade, Harry, in a whisper.

“Only two. Well, that's quite enough, I should say.”

“Let us hide behind the door,” said young Jack, eagerly, “and then fall upon them, and make a dash for liberty.”

The steps drew nearer and nearer.

“Let us hide here,” said Harry, pushing the lid off one of the long coffins or shells.

But even as he did so, both boys started back with looks of horror.

And why?

The removal of the coffin lid revealed a ghastly corpse, the face showing the last agonies which the dead man had suffered, and they, to judge by the distorted face and twisted mouth, must have been horrible indeed.

They pushed back the lid.

“Ugh!”

“Horrible, horrible!” gasped young Jack. The footsteps sounded nearer.

They were coming to this place, whoever it was.

The boys looked about them in despair.

At the last moment young Jack's eye lighted upon an empty sack upon the ground, lying beside the full ones to which we have previously alluded.

“Let's get in that.”

“Good.”

Harry Girdwood jumped at the proposition.

Now the sacks were very large, and made of coarse canvas, thick enough to avoid falling into folds, which would reveal the contents to any one at a glance.

So, quick as thought, young Jack held it open while Harry got in, and then Harry, holding up the sides of it with both hands, stood erect while young Jack joined him.

“This is a novel way of jumping in sack,” said the irrepressible Jack.

“Hush!”

“They come.”

A key was heard grating in the rusty lock, and as the boys inclined against the other sacks so as to look as much like one of the pile as possible, the heavy door ground suddenly ajar, and two ugly−looking, black−visaged men entered the shed.

CHAPTER XXXV. THE BLACK TRADE—A TRAFFIC IN DEATH—A PLACE OF HORROR—CAN IT BE TRUE?—TWO BOYS IN ONE SHROUD—A FIGHT WITH A SHARK—GIVING HIM THE SACK—DEEP−SEA FISHING ON A NOVEL PLAN.

The two black−looking ruffians looked about them stealthily as though they were on no good errand there.

Then one of them listened at the door awhile.

“You had better lock the door, Fleon,” said one of the men. “What we have to do mustn't be overlooked.”

“True.”

The boys heard the door closed and locked, and the sound seemed to lock out another hope for them.

“Now, Fleon, come here.”

“Well, what now?”

“We must come to terms.”

“Of course, Barthes, but there is no need to go far into that matter; the terms are simple enough.”

“You are allowed forty−five francs for each burial, that is, for cost of the shell and sheet,”

“No, forty only.”

“Well, forty; and if I sign the register in my quality of head gravedigger, you can go and get your money at once. Besides, you will have my sacks.”

“You drive a bargain like a Jew. Keep your sacks.”

“And drop the bodies out into the water?”

“Of course.”

“Impossible.”

“Why?”

“They would float.”

“No matter, the sharks below would soon take care of the few that floated.”

“Are we agreed,” cried Fleon, “for halves?”

The other made some grumbling rejoinder, but grumbling he closed with the proposition.

“Very good, very good,” said Fleon, rubbing his hands. “Now let us cast them up.”

“One, two, four, six, eight, eleven, thirteen,” said Barthes.

Now they were standing so close to the pile of sacks that the boys in their novel place of concealment could not only hear every word, but they actually felt the speakers brushing against them.

But they dared not speak.

They even held their breath.

They heard, and partly understood, yet could not believe that they guessed aright.

What could it mean?

Surely not—

No, no, no!

The thought maddened the boys.

It was too horrible.

Yet what did the rest of the sacks contain?

Besides, there were no other sacks in the shed but these.

Both the boys heard the conversation.

Yet so fearful a notion was it that each felt that he had not heard aright.

They dared not speak.

And their worst fears were indeed correct.

* * * * *

“Hullo!”

“What now?”

“Thirteen.”

“Yes.”

“You are wrong,” said Fleon; “count them again.”

The man obeyed.

“Thirteen; I was sure of it.”

“Well, that's a rum go,” said Fleon. “I am positive that there were only twelve.”

“There's a baker's dozen now,” said Barthes, with his brutal laugh; “the more the merrier.”

“Right.”

“What are you staring at?”

“I can't make out that thirteenth one.”

“Well, I don't see that that's any thing to weep over. Thirteen at dinner is an awkward number, they say; but I dare say that the sharks won't object to it; they're nor so weak−minded as to be superstitious. Ha, ha, ha!”

But still Fleon could not get over this last sack.

“I've got it.”

“What, where the last sack came from?”

“Yes.”

“Well, then, out with it, and ease your mind—not that I care much, so long as we land the money.”

“Why, they have brought the last one in from the hospital fever−ward; I heard the bell tolling at midnight, and I remember now that they said another was all but gone.”

“Why, of course,” said Barthes; “and see how the lazy beggars haven't even taken the trouble to tie the neck of the sack round.”

“That's easily done.”

Before the boys could guess what was next to take place, the sack was jerked over, and a rope was twisted around the neck of the sack, thus excluding nearly all the air.

But young Jack had already grown desperate, and he held his knife in his hand ready for an emergency.

The jerk had sent the knife through the sack about two inches, and it prodded Barthes in the hand.

“Hullo!”

He yelled and drew back his hand

“What now?”

“I've cut myself.”

“Why, how on earth did you manage that?”

“There's a knife sticking out of the sack. Let's open it and get it out.”

“What for?”

“It's a pity to throw such a thing into the sea.”

The boys shivered.

This time there could be no mistaking the words.

“Jack,” whispered Harry Girdwood, “do you hear?”

“Yes; let us show ourselves, and go back to prison, or—”

But before he could complete his proposition, they were jerked in the sack up on to their feet.

“Come, let's do it quick”

“Good!”

“Phew!” grunted Barthes; “it's precious heavy.”

“Heavy enough for two,” said Fleon.

“Over with it. Now, then, both together at the word three.”

“One.”

“Two.”

“Three.”

They raised the sack on to the window ledge and—

“Oh, murder!” cried Barthes, his cheek blanching with terror. “I felt something move in the sack.”

“So did I,” faltered Fleon.

“It's alive,” cried the man Barthes, turning pale.

“Over with it, then; sharp.”

It was poised for an instant, no more, over the dizzy height.
Then down it went.
As it fell, a wild, despairing shriek went up to Heaven.
A piteous cry.
It was cut short by the sharp flight through the air.
A splash.
Then all was still.

* * * * *

The two ruffians stood staring at each other, their eyes half starting from their sockets.
The perspiration stood out in big beads upon their foreheads, and they shook like ague−stricken wretches.
“Look over,” said Fleon in a hoarse whisper. “What do you see?”
“I see,” responded the other, in the same constrained tone, “there's a shark! I see his fin.”
“There's plenty more in the neighbourhood.”
“No; he's all alone, and, my eye! what a feast he'll have!”
“I see him! He strikes for the bottom. He's got him, whether he's dead or alive.”

CHAPTER XXXVI. A WATERY GRAVE—THE BED OF THE OCEAN—A BOLD STROKE FOR LIFE— THE RACE WITH A SHARK—A NARROW SQUEAK—HOW TO GIVE A SHARK THE SACK— THE BOAT—“FREE, FREE AS AIR!”—A STRANGE ENCOUNTER WITH A GENTLEMAN ON TWO WOODEN LEGS.

Poor boys!

Unhappy Jack.

Luckless Harry Girdwood.

The fall from such a height to the water would render death almost a certainty.

Hand and foot bound, they could not move.

Yet stay.

Could it be possible that these noble boys were to fall victims to the villainy of such ruffians?

No.

As they reached the bottom, the two boys, momentarily deprived of their senses by the fall, were partially restored by the shock.

Instinctively the knives go to work.

Young Jack here rendered the most signal service.

He held his knife in a tight grip even as they fell.

And barely did they come in contact with the bed of the ocean, when young Jack stabbed upwards, and, at a single stroke, cut his way out of the sack.

At the self−same instant his left hand grappled his friend and trusty comrade Harry.

To kick the earth fiercely with his feet was to Jack a natural impulse, and striking upwards, he made for the surface.

Will he reach it?

Doubtful.

It seemed a weary, weary way to get.

But now the water grows lighter and less dense.

Jack and Harry can see about them.

Both are experienced swimmers and divers, and they always keep their eyes open under water. And now this habit serves them in good stead, for looking up, Jack perceives a huge floating mass bearing down upon him through the water.

Jack and Harry have Fleon's words, and the cruel jokes of Barthes, still ringing in their ears, and they know, alas too well what it means.

A shark.

With the energy of despair, both boys strike out, diving lower.

And now for a moment their fate seems sealed.

They discover that their rapid movements are stopped by the sack, which they have not got quite clear of, and which, puffed, follows them up through the water in their progress to the air and light.

And this, by a miracle, saves them.

The voracious monster of the deep strikes for the two boys, but its unwieldy body not answering its helm with the swiftness of an ordinary fish, it shoots fairly into the ripped−up sack, in which it gets its huge maws entangled.

A strange trap for a shark.

A shark trapped by no more cunning contrivance than a canvas sack, ripped up on one side.

And while the fierce beast wallows about in this novel trap, lashing the water furiously with its fins, the two boys gain the surface of the water, marvelling at their escape.

Together they turn over on their backs, and gulp down big draughts of the welcome air.

Presently they get their breath again.

“Jack, old boy, are you safe?” was Harry's question.

“For the present, Harry, old chum. How do you feel?”

“Saved, thank Heaven!”

“God bless you, old man.”

Thus the two boys, rescued from such a complication of perils, pass their first moments in getting a gasp of Heaven's fresh air.

Each is full of thankfulness for the other's escape, and for the moment thinks but little of himself.

Suddenly young Jack reverts to their last danger.

“Where is he, the monster?” he asks, with great eagerness.

“The shark?”

“Yes.”

“Don't know.”

“Doesn't relish us.”

“Fancies we shan't be tender after getting out of prison so recently.”

Young Jack and Harry were only just out of the jaws of death, and already they were joking.

“Have you got your wind yet, Harry?”

“Then follow me. I can see a sort of archway in the prison wall, and a boat, I think.”

“Hah!” cried Harry, “I remember.”

And turning easily over, he shot out for the prison wall.

A few strokes brought them in sight of a flight of stone steps under the archway.

And as they catch sight of the steps on ahead, they become conscious that they are being pursued by another of those ravenous beasts of which Barthes and Fleon were talking in such cruel levity.

“Quicker, Harry, quicker, old lad!” gasps young Jack.

“Right; I see.”

Three vigorous strokes, and Harry grasps a chain fastened to a staple in the wall to which a boat is moored.

He is on the steps.

Then grappling with young Jack, he helps him up with a desperate jerk.

Just in time.

Hardly are they landed when the hideous monster shoots past him.

“Ugh! you beast!” growled young Jack.

And he shook his fist at the shark, while the latter, after shooting past, turned round and paddled leisurely back, making sure of them yet.

But they were not left long at liberty to enjoy the shark's disappointment, for they were startled by a great noise and commotion going forward in the prison.

Young Jack looked inquiringly at his companion.

“Our absence discovered?”

“I suppose so. Let us make tracks as soon as we can.”

With this they set to work to loosen the boat.

It took them some little time to force the padlock which held the chain to the staple, but together they accomplished it.

Then, lowering their sculls, they pushed out to sea.

“Free,” murmured young Jack, exultantly; “free at last.”

“Don't be too fast”

Now each took a scull, and with long, deep strokes they pulled for their own safe part of the coast.

Wind and tide were in their favour, and they shot through the water at racing pace.

“Pull round; here's our place. Now for it.”

“Both together,” said Harry Girdwood, excitedly.

Three long, vigorous strokes, and the boat ground far up high and dry upon the shingle.

They ran on wildly.

And now the villa was in sight, which fact made them increase their speed.

Ah, how their young hearts beat at the sight of it.

“Won't they be surprised?”
“And pleased.”
“And shan't we? Ah, me! Hello! who's this coming here? Why, blow me, Harry, do you see who it is?”
“Of course; it's old King Mole.”
“Mr. Mole, Mr. Mole, Mr. Mole!” they both yelled out. “Here we are safe back!”
The old gentleman staggered back in sheer amazement.
“Is it possible?” he exclaimed. “Surely—yet, no; it can't be.”
“Can't it though?”
And to put all doubt at rest, they each seized hold of a hand and nearly dragged him off his frail supports.

CHAPTER XXXVII. RESTORED—GENERAL REJOICINGS—HOW MR. MOLE WAS CRUELLY MALIGNED—FATHER AND SON—THE DEATH KNELL AND THE REPRIEVE—“SOON WE WEIGH ANCHOR”—GOODBYE TO GREECE.

“Mrs. Harkaway?”

“Who's there?”

“Me; your obsequious humble to command.”

“Good gracious!”

And then upon the other side of the door Mrs. Harkaway was heard to whisper—

“It's Mr. Mole. I declare he is quite tipsy.”

“You are right there, my dear Mrs. Harkaway,” responded the gallant Isaac; “more than tipsy—obfuscated, groggy—excuse the slangy phrase— tight—not with liquor, but yet full of spirits—figuratively speaking.”

“Whatever is he talking about?” muttered Mrs. Harkaway.

“About introducing a young gentleman to you,” replied Mole, who overheard every word, but who was too overjoyed with recent events to take umbrage at any thing now.

“Excuse me just now, Mr. Mole,” replied the lady, “I—I am dressing.”

“Humph!”

Young Jack was bursting with impatience to push him aside and rush into his mother's arms.

But Mr. Mole restrained him.

“The young gentleman I would introduce, my dear Mrs, Harkaway, brings us news of our young Jack.”

“Hah!”

A cry of joy, delight, anxiety, fear, hope, all commingled, burst from the mother of our young hero.

The door was opened, and Mrs. Harkaway stood upon the threshold.

She stared confusedly at the two boys.

“Mother!”

“Jack!”

No more.

In a moment they were locked in each other's arms.

“Oh, Jack, Jack!” exclaimed the astonished mother. “Where have you been? Now that you are come back, I may tell you I feared I should never see you again.”

Jack's eyes filled with tears.

He kissed her tenderly and held out his hand to Harry.

“Here, mother dear,” he said; “there is a sweet little cherub that sits up aloft to keep watch over the life of poor Jack—and Harry is the cherub,”

“Hush! Jack.”

“I shan't hush, Harry; you know that it's true. You are the cherub, and you know it. Why, mother, now that it's all over, and I am here, I must tell you that I never should have been here if it hadn't been for Harry.”

“Bless you, Harry,” said Mrs. Harkaway, squeezing his hand.

Just then, Mr. Mole, who had felt a tingling sensation at the nose, and fearing that he was about to disgrace his manly reputation by a tear, had retired, came stumping back with some news.

“Here comes Jack—old Jack, I mean. Here's luck for us.”

A well−known footstep was heard, and Jack Harkaway entered the room.

As his eye fell upon Harry Girdwood, he started back, and the colour forsook his cheek.

Then he caught sight of his boy, and he gave a cry of delight as he held open his arms.

Young Jack flew to him

“Come here, Harry,” cried Harkaway; “here, my boy—for you are a second son to me.”

And the two boys were soon locked in his arms.

For some minutes not a word was spoken.

His heart was too full for speech, but whilst they were thus engaged— engrossed by their own happiness—a

deep sound was heard.

A dismal, moaning sound.

A bell that sounded like a distant funeral knell.

What was it?

Harkaway started up at the mournful sound.

“Hark!” he exclaimed. “Do you hear that?”

“Yes.”

“What is it?”

“An execution.”

“Where?”

“At the prison.”

“Of whom?”

“The brigands.”

“The villains have earned their fates right well.”

“Yes, yes,” exclaimed Jack Harkaway, hurriedly; “but this execution must not take place, though Tomaso was shot yesterday.”

“Tomaso, the brigand,” cried young Jack, “then why not the rest of the brigands.”

“Why? Because it is unjust, for the men condemned to suffer death have been sentenced for murdering you, my own boys.”

As the word was uttered, there was a loud commotion, and Theodora burst into the room.

She gave a cry on seeing the two boys, and rushed up joyfully to Harry Girdwood.

“Thank Heaven you are safe,” she said hysterically; “but my own brave boy, do you hear? Do you know that that bell sounds the death−knell of men who, bad and wicked as they are, have been wrongfully condemned?”

“I know.”

“Yes, my girl,” said Harkaway; “we know—but there is yet time to save them. Come on, to the prison.”

They all left precipitately, and in a very brief space of time they were at the prison and the brigands respited.

As young Jack said, they had earned the full penalty of the law.

But they would not have it upon their consciences that these lawless ruffians should suffer for a crime which they had not committed.

“There is one strange fact about this,” said the governor of the prison to Harkaway, “and that is, that one of the prisoners has taken the liberty of respiting himself.”

“Which one?”

“The Englishman Hunston.”

“What, Hunston escaped!”

“Impossible.”

“Indeed it is not.”

“But how?—when? Why Hunston any more than the others?”

“We can only give a guess,” said the governor, “but it is a good one. His gaoler has disappeared with him; the rest is not a difficult matter to guess.”

It was quite true.

Hunston, Harkaway's old schoolfellow and bitter foe, had once more contrived to elude justice.

Both had disappeared—prisoner and gaoler with him.

“I'm sorry for that,” said Harkaway, “for it would have been a good thing to take care of that double−dyed traitor, but no matter, we shall have nothing to fear from him now; we have had enough of this place.”

“Are we, then, to leave Greece, dad?”

“Yes, all our preparations are made, and in a few days, we will weigh anchor and get away from romantic Greece, and its precious scoundrels and brigands.”

CHAPTER XXXVIII. THE LAST OF THE BRIGAND BAND—HUNSTON'S PERIL—HIS WANDERINGS— STARVATION IN THE MIDST OF PLENTY—ON THE LANDING STAGE AT NIGHT—AN ADVENTURE.

And what of the band?

Where was it?

The fear−stricken few remaining of this once formidable host hid themselves in the recesses of the mountains, lurking, like thieves and miscreants as they were, in retired nooks and crannies.

And so their lives grew wretched.

Their famous recruit, Geoffrey, who was such a famous hand at bringing in plunder every day, disappeared.

And with him disappeared all the booty he had brought them.

Altogether, therefore, this Geoffrey was not so much of an advantage to them as they had at first supposed.

And with the disappearance of Geoffrey, the sham brigand, we have to chronicle the sudden return of our old friend, Dick Harvey, to his beloved Harkaways.

And what of Toro, the giant brigand?

He was completely lost sight of for awhile.

No one knew what had become of him.

Hunston's first care on getting free from the prison was to get into the mountain fastnesses, in search of his old comrade, Toro.

But he could not discover the least trace of his old comrade.

He skulked about at night and fled to sleep in the mountains by day, shrinking at the echo of his own footfalls—starting at his own shadow.

“My curses light upon the Harkaways one and all,” was the speech ever upon his tongue; “they have been my bane—my curse through life.”

He resolved to get away from this place.

Yes; he would fly.

But how?

Here was he well−nigh starving in the midst of plenty, possessed of a sum of money which was a small fortune in that land, and yet he dare not change or part with it.

This life grew unendurable, and he resolved at all hazards to change it.

Yes; he would get away from this place at once.

Soon after dusk, he ventured, well disguised, into the town and down to the water side, and lolling about, he soon chanced to hear something which greatly interested him.

A group of French sailors were smoking, and gossiping upon a subject which caught his attention as soon as he heard a name mentioned.

Harkaway.

“Yes; Mr. Harkaway and friends are going away tomorrow,” said one of the sailors, who appeared to be a petty officer.

“I shall come down and see the ladies go on board,” said one of the sailors.

“No, you won't,” laughed the former speaker.

“Why not?”

“You're too late.”

“They're not on board already, surely?”

“Indeed, they are.”

“They start early.”

“They weigh anchor at daybreak, I hear.”

“Ah, well,” said the other sailor, joining in; “they'll miss Monsieur Harkaway here, for he's as rich as Croesus.”

“Or Monte Christo,” said another, laughingly.

“Aye, that he is,” said another sailor. “I was here when the ladies went on board, and I was lucky enough to be able to render some little service to Madam Harkaway.”

“What was it?”

“It is not worth repeating,” replied this modest Gallic tar. “All I know is, that Monsieur Harkaway made such a fuss about it that he would insist upon my going on board with him to drink their health.”

“And you went?”

“Yes; and we swam in good wine. And when I came away, it was with pockets full of cigars and money to stand treat to you all round.”

“What a splendid fellow this Monsieur Harkaway is.”

“Aye, that he is.”

And amidst these words of praise Hunston slunk away, gnashing his teeth in rage and bitterness.

“Hang him!” he muttered; “his old brag and ostentation have caught these fools! I wonder where his vessel is? If I could fire a torpedo under it and send them all where young Jack and the other boy have gone to, I shouldn't have a dull moment for the rest of my life.”

And the ruffian chuckled to himself maliciously.

“Ah, but I was one with them,” he muttered, “when I had their precious boy and that Harry Girdwood shot like dogs that they were. Ah! that was grand. Those were crumbs of comfort.”

And rubbing his hands and chuckling, he rambled on.

He paused presently upon coming to a long, wooden landing stage, jutting out a long way to sea.

Arrived at the head of the jetty, he looked out earnestly seaward, in the endeavour to trace out which of the many ships in the offing could be the Harkaways' vessel.

“Well, well,” he murmured to himself, “I don't care much, for I don't see what I could do if I knew it. I could only send my blessing straight after it—hah, hah! But with Harkaway's departure, I can breathe more freely. I have only to get over a few weeks quietly, and then all the dust which he has kicked up will blow over, and I can live quietly upon his money like a gentleman, until I decide upon the next step.”

While he sat thus looking out to sea, his attention was suddenly attracted shorewards.

“Confusion!” he ejaculated, starting up; “there's someone coming along the jetty.”

It was true.

Two sailors and a woman came sauntering along the landing stage, chatting as they came.

There was barely room for four abreast upon the narrow wooden pier, and consequently they might recognize him, providing they had heard the description of him.

“What an ass I was to come here,” muttered Hunston; “to drive myself into a corner.”

He looked round.

They did not appear to notice him.

Not yet at least.

So he crouched down, and lowered himself into a boat, which was moored to one of the end piles.

Beneath the end of the jetty was a series of crossbars and beams, resting upon the low range of piles, which indeed served as the main foundation for the whole structure.

So Hunston clambered nimbly out of the boat into this species of scaffolding.

Here he lay at full length, listening for the approach of these three people.

* * * * *

“You had better come ashore now, miss,” said one of the sailors.

“No, no,” replied Mrs. Harkaway's new maid.

“But you'll never be up in time if you go to bed at all.”

“Oh, yes, Mistaire Saileur, I get up at the hour which I like; I shall go on board at three o'clock,” said the wilful girl. “I shall get the seasickness quite early enough, I know. Besides, I don't like the water when it so dark.”

“The moon will be up directly.”

Jack Tiller was right.

The moon just then burst through a thick cloud, and shot a ray of silvery light just upon the spot where the girl was kneeling.

It fell across a living face just below the flooring of the jetty.

A face rendered ghastly white by the action of the moonlight, with eyes upturned in eagerness and expectation.

A startling sight.

A weird and ghastly object to come suddenly before the strongest nerve.

She started back, and sprang to her feet.

Then, with a piercing shriek, she fled.

The sailors looked aghast, staring at each other for explanations.

“Let's after her, Jack!” cried one; “she'll be overboard double quick if she fouls agin them blessed bulwarks. It's as rotten as tinder.”

Off they ran, and they tried all they could to bring the girl back.

But she had had such a scare that she would not hear of it.

She had seen a man hiding there.

“Bah!” cried Jack Tiller, “why should a man hide away from us?”

“Yes, that's it, miss, why?”

“I don't care, I know it was a man. I knew the face. I have seen it in madame's book of photographs.”

“The dooce you did.”

“Who was it?”

“One of the brigands. The likeness was taken in prison.”

This made the gallant tars laugh again.

“That's the natural bogey hereabouts,” said Joe Basalt; “damme if I believe half their yarns about the brigands.”

“Nor I neither.”

And so, failing to persuade the girl to go on board then, they went back up the jetty, dropped into their boat, and, unlocking it, rowed out to sea.

CHAPTER XXXIX. A TRIP BY WATER—BOAT, AHOY!—A COMPACT FOR MONEY—THE STOWAWAY ON BOARD THE “WESTWARD HO!”—HIS VISION—IN THE HANDS OF THE PHILISTINES.

Hunston had overheard every word uttered.

The full sense of his danger flashed across him.

He was watched, he felt sure.

“Not yet,” said Hunston to himself, “not yet. Sooner than let them get hold of me, I'd lay my bones at the bottom of the sea.”

With which intention he dropped into the water.

But he did not even touch the bottom, for before he had got far under, he struck out, and after taking a dozen strokes; under water, he came to the surface.

“That's another narrow squeak,” he said to himself, as he took in a deep draught of air. “The last time I had to swim for it was in Cuba, and a narrow squeak it was too.”

He had been rescued on that memorable occasion by his enemy, Jack Harkaway himself.

“Well, this squares that old account,” he said, turning over on his back to float. “He saved me last time. He's the cause this time of my having to take this risk.”

He began to look anxiously about him.

There was a boat at no great distance being rowed by two men, so Hunston thought of signalling them.

“Suppose they are some of those wretched Greeks, and recognise me?”

He gave it up.

But he could hardly keep himself afloat now.

What if they did recognise him?

Would they give him up?

Perhaps.

Well, at the worst they could only take his life for his misdeeds, and his life was in sore jeopardy now.

So he resolved to hail the men in the boat.

* * * * *

“Boat ahoy!”

“Hullo!”

“Man overboard!”

The signal of the sinking man caught the quick ears of the two men in the boat, and they pulled towards him double quick.

Hunston caught hold of the side of the boat.

“This arm. Catch under my armpit. There; thanks. I've hurt the other.”

Barely rescued from the jaws of death, and yet all his coolness and presence of mind had come back to him.

In a trice he was lying at the bottom of the boat, panting and waiting to recover his breath to renew his thanks for their service.

“Why, mounseer, you speak English,” said one of the sailors. Hunston nodded.

“I am English.”

“So are we.”

“I guessed as much,” retorted Hunston, “by the way you pulled to help a poor devil. It was nearly all over with me.”

“Just in time. Well, that's one to us, messmate.”

“Yes, and you'll find that I'm able to reward you with something more solid than thanks.”

“Get along; me and my mate here don't save lives at so much an 'ed.”

“I believe you,” said Hunston, “but I should be a villain if I did not do something handsome for you if I could.”

“I tell you what, mate, you shall lug me and my mate out of the water.”

“When you get the chance,” laughed the other.

“Jes' so.”

“How came you there, though?” demanded the former sailor, suddenly.

“It's a long story,” said Hunston, taking breath, and thinking up a good plausible “whacker”; “so I'll tell you without all the details.”

“Do.”

“There's a very rich and powerful man in this place, who has a very lovely wife. Well, this lady—”

“Casts sheep's eyes at you.”

“Ha, ha!”

“Well, that is about it,” returned Hunston, laughingly. “It's no fault of mine. I'm sure I never encouraged her. But her husband is precious jealous, and the consequence is that he had got me out to sea in a boat with a gang of murderers—”

“The swabs!”

“Marlinspikes and grampuses!” cried the other.

“They were going to practise a curious trick upon me. It is an institution of their neighbours and masters, the Turks, and they call it the bowstring.”

“D—n their fiddling,” ejaculated one of the sailors; “I'd like to have 'em here just awhile. I'd bowstring 'em and show 'em what black eyes, and good old English fisticuffs mean.”

“I don't think that they would care to be instructed in that,” said Hunston.

“I'd, I'd—”

“Let the gentleman go on,” said the other.

“Well, the fact is, I got out, jumped overboard and capsized the boat in my struggling, and some of them, I dare say, have gone to the bottom.”

“Hurrah!” shouted one of the sailors.

“Hurrah!”

“I hope you finished off the lot of the swabs.”

“I don't think that. But anyhow, I'd give a trifle if I could get clear out of this place.”

“I can tell you how to do it”

“You can?”

“Yes.”

“That's jolly.”

“Easily done.”

And then the sailor suggested bringing him aboard their ship and introducing him to the skipper.

Hunston listened and then shook his head.

“What,” exclaimed the sailor, “won't do?”

“No.”

“Why?”

“I'll tell you; a blessed outcry would be raised, and the skipper would be forced to give me up to be tried.”

“Well, they would not dare to play false.”

“Not while there was a British man−o'−war in the harbour; but nothing short of that would prevent the villains doing any thing they liked with me. They would go through the mockery of a trial with me, and I should be condemned to death beforehand.”

“The wampires.”

“Wuss wuss, nor wampires, Joe,” said the other sailor, wagging his head gravely.

“There is only one way to get out of this scrape,” said Hunston.

“Out with it then.”

“Why, earn forty pounds apiece and stow me away on board in the hold, anywhere, until you are out at sea,” said the fugitive.

The two sailors looked hard at each other.

“Can't do it.”

“No.”

“Why not?”

“Unpossible.”

“I'll tell you why not. Our skipper is the best commander afloat, on'y he won't have no nonsense. We daresn't do it, we daresn't.”

“Right, Joe.”

“Now, harkye, messmates,” said Hunston. “I'm not the man to get any man to fail in his duty; I wouldn't insult you by mentioning it. But mark my words, your skipper would be the first man to approve of such an act.”

They shook their heads.

“Not he.”

“I know he would, if what you say of him is right; only, d'ye see, he'd think it his duty to give me up for a fair trial. Well, and what would be the result of that? Why, as soon as you had set sail, they'd just do what they liked with me, and you'd never hear of me again in this world, whereas if I was concealed unknown to the skipper, he'd only be too glad afterwards to have such a good action done on board his ship without his having failed in his duty.”

They listened to this, and listening they were lost.

That night Hunston slept in the hold of a ship, the two sailors having contrived to smuggle him on board with the greatest secrecy.

It had been a difficult task for them, and indeed the sailors well earned the money which he gave them.

Not a soul on board the ship, with the exception of the two sailors, had the least idea of his presence there.

They contrived to make him up a very snug hiding−place behind some barrels of sugar and salt pork.

And here they brought him food turn and turn about.

And so he chuckled to himself by day and night at the way in which he had defeated his enemies, and escaped from Greek justice.

* * * * *

For three days and three nights he lay snug and quiet.

This was the most prudent course.

But long before the third night was over, Hunston had grown weary and heartsick of this close confinement.

He had a sharp attack of the blues.

He got drink from the sailors and drank heavily to kill dull care, and this defeated its own end.

He fell off into a heavy sleep and dreamt all sorts of terrible things.

He thought that without knowing it he had fallen into the power of the Harkaways again; that in flying from them he had suddenly, when he thought himself miles away from them and from imminent danger, fallen into their arms.

And so went his alarming dream, when his worst enemies were assembled in judgment over him. Jack Harkaway, Harvey, and Jefferson, together, being his judges, the latter places were suddenly taken by three visitors from the other world.

These were Harry Girdwood, young Jack, and oh, horror! Robert Emmerson, his murdered friend.

His three visitors.

And these three threatened and put him to tortures unimaginable, until he raved, stormed, and wept by turns; and then, broken in body and in spirit, he prostrated himself before them and begged them to kill him, and in this horrible phase of his vision he groaned so loudly that he awoke, to find the perspiration pouring off him in a regular bath.

He was quivering like one suddenly stricken with ague.

Not an inch of his body was free from this fearful palsy.

“Oh, what would I give for the light now!” he thought; “will they never come?”

Yes.

What was that?

Merciful powers! his prayer seemed to be answered.

He saw the faint glimmering of a light

Yes, it was coming this way.

What a relief!

He drew a long, long sigh.

The light stopped suddenly.

Then it was shaded from the part of the hold in which he was hiding.

What could it mean?

Silence was around him.

He stretched forward to ascertain the cause of the light, and there he saw that which froze the very marrow in his bones with fright.

The light was all reflected upon a young, handsome face which he knew but too well—so real, so vivid, so lifelike.

The face, too, with the deathly hue of the grave upon it.

It was young Jack's face, but looking to Hunston's frightened eyes pale as death.

Hunston stared; his optics dilated and appeared ready to start from their sockets.

He gasped, made an effort to articulate, and then his senses forsook him, and he became unconscious.

CHAPTER XL. HUNSTON'S PERIL—BLACK VISIONS—A DREAM OF VENGEANCE—AN UNKNOWN DANGER TO THE “WESTWARD HO!”

An explanation of the foregoing is scarcely necessary, we believe.

You bear in mind, of course, that Hunston was utterly ignorant of the miraculous escape of his destined victims—young Jack and Harry Girdwood.

You must bear in mind, too, that although you, friend reader, may give a shrewd guess at the truth, Hunston had not the remotest notion of where he was.

This said, you may perhaps understand the fearful effect of this waking vision upon the guilty wretch.

Bear in mind that he had been lurking in a close and stifling hold, into which no single ray of sunlight penetrated, for three whole days— three long nights.

Unwelcome conscience tapped and would not be deceived.

A man with the guilt of Hunston upon his mind could not afford to be alone—nay, nor in the dark either.

* * * * *

When he recovered consciousness, his first sensations were of burning in the throat, and opening his eyes, he found himself being cared tenderly for by one of the sailors who had brought him there.

“Come, come, I say, mister,” said the honest tar, who had had a bit of a fright on finding Hunston's condition, “this won't do, you know.”

“I am better now,” murmured Hunston, faintly.

“You are a little, precious little. You will have to come on deck now, and chance what the skipper says about the job.”

“Yes, yes; I will,” said Hunston, waking up.

“He can't kill us.”

“Nor eat me,” said the stowaway, with a sickly smile.

“Not he.”

“Any thing is better than remaining longer here. I believe I should die if I did.”

“Then up you come at once, as sure as my name's Jack Tiller.”

“Tell me, my friend,” Hunston said; “whither are we bound?”

“For the Red Sea.”

“Pheugh! A long cruise?”

“Well, yes.”

“And then we are going further yet, and to travel on until we touch the coast of Australy.”

“The deuce!”

“That's it, sir.”

“What's the name of the vessel?”

The sailor laughed.

“What makes you grin?”

“Why, I was wondering, messmate, why you never asked that before.”

“My thoughts were too full of getting away.”

“Ah, of course.”

“What is her name?”

“The 'Westward Ho!' She was formerly the 'Seamew,' and the owner rechristened her.”

“What's his name?”

“The skipper's? Why, captain John Willoughby.”

“The owner's?”

“Mr. Jack Harkaway.”

Had a thunderbolt dropped down in the hold between them, Hunston could not have been more astonished.

“What?”

His tone startled the sailor.

He saw it, and he did his utmost to calm himself.

“Who did you say?”

“Who?” echoed the sailor. “Why, who but Mr. Jack Harkaway? He's well known enough. Surely you don't mean for to go for to say as you never heard of him?”

“I—I think I have heard the name,” muttered Hunston.

“Think! Well, so do I, unless you've been shut up in solitary confinement for the last fifteen years. Blow me tight, but the man that hadn't heard of Mr. Jack Harkaway, would be a living curiosity.”

“Jack Harkaway the owner of this ship!” Hunston murmured, like one in a dream, and relapsed into silence once more.

No wonder that he had seen that vision.

No wonder that the spirit of the murdered boy, young Jack, should hover about the vessel where his destroyer was hiding—in which his father, mother, and all that he held dear in life were journeying.

The situation grew graver than ever.

It was truly an alarming plight, and the more he thought it over, the more desperate did he become.

“Jack Tiller,” said he.

“Your honour.”

“I'll stay where I am.”

“Oh, very good,” replied the tar; “mum's the word. I thought your berth wasn't over cheerful.”

Jack Tiller gave a hoist at his slacks, and with something between a sigh and a grunt, he wheeled round and went on deck.

* * * * *

“If I could only see my way out of this, I should like better than any thing to fire the ship,” said Hunston, to himself; “fire it and watch it close by, chuckling at them while they roasted. What a glorious return it would be for them. By the powers, it is about the only thing I could do to wipe them all off at once, all, all! Jack, Harvey, Emily, that Yankee braggart—curse him!”

And Hunston sat brooding in the black and evil−smelling hold day after day.

The only companion of his solitude being his own dark thoughts, his vicious resolves for vengeance.

“It is my own cursed ill−luck,” he would say to himself again and again, “to be beholden to this Harkaway for my life. Why, even now, he has saved me again, saved me in spite of himself. That's the merry side of the question.”

Merry as it was, it never made him smile.

One dreadful thought filled his poor mind.

One fearful fancy took such complete possession of him, that day and night he was brooding on it.

“Once let me see a clear landing,” he would mutter to himself, “once let me see my way straight to get ashore in a safe place, and then I'll make the 'Westward Ho!' too hot to hold them. Too hot—ah, yes, a precious deal too hot to hold them, that I would; for I would make up such a blaze as they would never be able to extinguish.”

And so he began devoting himself to the arrangements for this villainous purpose.

What is more, he got all his plans mapped out, all ready for the execution of this most diabolical deed.

Little did the happy passengers in the “Westward Ho!” dream of the fatal danger threatening them.

They would not have enjoyed so many sweet slumbers, could they have had the faintest inkling of the truth—if they had suspected that near them was the villain Hunston, following them with a deadly purpose of revenge, which seemed to have increased year by year ever since the schooldays of Jack Harkaway.

CHAPTER XLI. YOUNG JACK'S CONFIDENCES—HOW TWO INNOCENT CONSPIRATORS REPENTED—A CHANCE SHOT STRIKES HOME.

“Harry,” said young Jack, as they walked up and down the deck arm in arm, “I must tell you something that has been upon my mind for days past.”

Harry Girdwood turned round. Young Jack's serious manner impressed him.

“What is it, Jack?”

“I know you'll laugh,” began Jack.

“Do you, Jack?” returned Harry Girdwood, promptly; “that being the case, tell me at once. I like to laugh, as you know.”

“Well, Harry, it hasn't made me laugh. I was lolling half drowsily over the hatchway there, the other evening, when I suppose I dropped off asleep, and I dreamt of Hunston. I dreamt that I was going through all that ugly scene again, and while in the thick of the dream, something woke me.”

“Yes.”

“What do you think it was?”

“Can't say.”

“Hunston's voice, moaning, groaning with pain apparently.”

Harry Girdwood opened his eyes in wonder at this singular speech.

“What are you talking about?”

“Nonsense, rubbish; is it not? So I thought since. But you know that sort of dream when you wake up with the vivid effect of your vision so strongly upon you, that the dream−drama appears to continue after you're awake?”

“Yes.”

“Well, that is exactly what happened to me. I heard Hunston when I was awake.”

There was something strangely impressive in his manner as he said this, which caught Harry Girdwood's attention in spite of himself.

“Fancy,” he said, with an assumption of indifference which he was far from feeling; “fancy, my dear Jack.”

“Of course,” answered young Jack; “but very strange.”

“Not exactly strange, either, every thing considered, after all we have gone through. Why, Jack, you will hardly believe me when I tell you that I scarcely sleep without dreaming of Hunston. And what is there wonderful in that, after all that has taken place? It was enough to shake the strongest nerves, to startle the bravest man that ever lived.”

“You allude to the attempted execution of ourselves?” said young Jack.

“Yes; and in spite of that brave brigand girl's assurances, there was great danger when we stood upon the brink of our grave with a firing party aiming at us.”

“I felt a good deal of confidence in her,” said Jack, “but I couldn't help thinking that an accident in her calculations might happen very easily.”

“That's true. Supposing one of the bullets had been left in?”

“Why, then one of us would have been food for worms by now, unless the wolves or bears had rooted us up out of our graves and made dinner off us; but I haven't told you all about my vision yet, Harry.”

“Did you dream again?”

“No.”

“What more have you, then, to tell? Out with it. What else was it?”

“The moans I heard grew more distinct while I listened, and I followed the sounds—”

“In your sleep?”

“No, awake. I followed the sounds to the hold.”

“Well?”

“They were plainer heard there. I pushed my way over the barrels and boxes, and nosed down in all the corners with my bull's eye lantern, when suddenly I heard a half−suppressed cry, a violent gasp rather, as if someone had too suddenly found himself on the edge of a precipice, or had seen a ghost.”

“Well, well.”

“Well, at that very moment a hand was placed upon my arm.”

“Yes.”

“I started back and drew my dirk, and then I found my self attacking—”

“Mole?”

“No. Joe Basalt.”

Harry Girdwood burst out laughing at this.

“So it was Joe Basalt that was hiding and having a lark with you all the while?”

“I didn't say so,” replied young Jack, thoughtfully.

“Why, then, what, in the name of all that's wonderful, do you think it could have been?”

“I don't know, but Joe Basalt chaffed me. He swore I was walking in my sleep; but I have come back upon my old opinion since I have thought the job over.”

“You mean that you actually believe there is someone concealed in the hold?”

“Is—or was. Now, you watch Joe Basalt, Harry, and see if there is not some thing very strange in his manner.”

“I will, if you like, but—good−morning, Tiller.”

This was to Jack Tiller, who came up to them touching his forelock.

“Good−morning, Master Jack—morning, Master Harry. We've got a fishing party on, gentlemen, and thought as you might like to jine us.”

“Who's going?”

“Me and Sam Mason, Tommy Shipwright and Bill Adams, Joe Basalt and old Higgy—only that lot among the common folk,” added he, with a grin.

“And who among the superior class?” asked young Jack, laughingly.

“Mr. Mole.”

“What, Mr. Mole! Why, what on earth is he going for?”

“That's exactly the p'int of it, young gentlemen,”

“How so?”

“We're going a−fishing with something new−fangled which Mr. Mole has inwented.”

The two boys looked at each other and grinned.

“Larks are on, Jack,” said Harry Girdwood. “I'm in it, for one.”

“And I too.”

“That's your sort,” cried Joe Basalt. “Mr. Harvey's going, too, and Mr. Jefferson; now I go to Mr. Harkaway and ask his consent.”

And Joe left them singing—

“Avast!” cries Jack, “do you suppose
I ain't a man my dooty knows?
For liberty afore we goes
To ax the skipper I propose.”

And the well−disciplined sailor went to Harkaway's cabin and broached the question.

“All right, Basalt,” said Harkaway; “only look sharp after the young gentlemen; you know what boys they are to get into mischief.”

“All right, your honour; trust me.”

“I do, Joe Basalt,” responded Harkaway; “I do, for I know that there was never a straighter or truer man ever trod a deck than you are.”

“Come, I say, your honour,” remonstrated Joe Basalt, modestly, “draw it mild.”

“No deceit about you, I know it; nothing underhand about Joe Basalt.”

A sudden thought flashed through the sailor's head, and it brought up a very unpleasant reminder.

With it came a flush to his bronzed face.

He touched his forelock respectfully to Harkaway and ran up stairs.

As he went he muttered to himself—

“I felt like a miserable swab!” he muttered; “a d—d, deceitful son of a sea−cook—that's what you are, Joe Basalt, I wish I'd never had nothing to do with that precious stowaway.”

CHAPTER XLII. SHARK−FISHING—BILLY LONGBOW'S YARNS—TELL THAT TO THE MARINES —A NOVEL BAIT—HOW MR. MOLE HAD THE LAUGH HIS OWN WAY.

The fishing expedition consisted of two boat−loads.

To wit, the pinnace and the cutter.

In the former were Jefferson, Dick Harvey and four sailors.

In the cutter were young Jack, Harry Girdwood, Mr. Mole, Joe Basalt, Sam Mason, and Jack Tiller.

“Now Jack,” said Mr. Mole, settling himself comfortably at the rudder lines; “and you too, my dear Harry, you know, of course, we are going shark−fishing. You understand what that is?”

“I know what a shark is, if you mean that,” answered young Jack.

“Rather,” said Harry, with a shudder at old recollections “we had a white one after us once.”

“A white shark!” said Mr. Mole, beaming upon the boat's crew generally. “*Squalus Carcharias*, the worst of the family.”

“They aren't got no families, axing your pardon, Mr. Mole, sir,” said Joe Basalt, “for they eats their own mothers and fathers and children likewise.”

“Why, Bill Longbow told me a yarn once, your honour,” said Sam Mason, “about a white shark. I mean,” he added, nodding at Mr. Mole respectfully, “a squally cockylorium—a blessed rum name for a shark— as devoured all his family for dinner, supped off a Sunday school out for a pleasure−trip in a steamboat, and was a−goin' to wind up with a meal off his own blessed self, when his dexter fin stuck in his swaller, and he brought hisself up ag'in.”

A general laugh greeted this sally.

So boisterous was their mirth, that it caught the occupants of the other boat.

“That's Sam Mason at one of his Billy Longbow's yarns,” cried a sailor in the pinnace.

“So you had a white shark after you in the water,” said Mr. Mole. “Rather unpleasant that.”

“It was indeed unpleasant at such close quarters,” said Harry Girdwood.

“Very close?” demanded Mr. Mole.

“Not further off than—”

“Than that squally cockylorium is from you now, your honour,” cried Sam Mason, pointing behind Mole.

The old gentleman looked quickly behind them, and there, paddling about the stern, was a monstrous white shark.

Mr. Mole slid off his seat to the bottom of the boat with wonderful celerity.

“Don't like the look of him?” said young Jack.

“Ho! I'll tackle him presently, but I—I slipped down,” said Mr. Mole.

“So I see, sir.”

“And I mean to show you some novel sport in the way of shark−fishing,” said the old gentleman.

“You?”

“Yes.”

He had brought a large hamper with him, which he now proceeded to unpack, the occupants of the boat looking on with great interest in the business.

“Billy Longbow told me a yarn once,” said the irrepressible Sam Mason, “about a wooden−legged nigger.”

Mr. Mole looked up.

“What?”

“A wooden−legged nigger,” said Sam Mason, touching his forelock respectfully at Mole. “No offence, your honour, to your legs.”

“Oh, no.”

“Go on, Sam,” said young Jack, laughing; “out with Billy Longbow's yarn.”

“This nigger was stumping along the banks of the Nile one day, when who should he meet but a blessed big crockydile about a hundred feet long,”

“Oh!”

“Draw it mild, Sam.”

“Well, that's what Billy Longbow said—a hundred feet long.”

“Oh, damme!” cried Joe Basalt, “make it ninety−nine, Sam, for decency sake.”

“I won't give in half a foot,” persisted Sam. “Well, when Snowball sees Muster Crockydile so near as there was no getting out of the way, he says—'You jist wait a bit, Massa Crock, I'll gib yar suffin to sniff at.' An' so, without more ado, he unscrews one of his wooden legs, and walks into the animal's jaws.”

“Oh, oh, oh!”

A general groan of incredulity.

“Absurd,” said Mr. Mole, without looking up from his task of watching, in case the shark should again show itself.

“A fact, sir,” said Sam Mason. “Well, he holds up his wooden leg perpendicular and the greedy crock comes on with a snap, but the wooden leg was a trifle more than he could get over; there it stuck and propped his great ugly maws wide open; out crawls Snowball, a kind of sorter modern Jonah, none the worse for it.”

“Bravo, Sam!”

“Ho! it is quite true, for it's Billy Longbow's version of it,” said the modest Sam.

“And is that all?”

“Not quite. He squatted down upon his stump, and prodded the crock in the eye with the other wooden leg until he caved in.”

“Oh, oh, oh! Sam, Sam!” they cried in a chorus.

By the time the laugh had subsided, Mr, Mole was ready with his novel fishing−apparatus. Novel, indeed.

He took a soda water bottle, filled with gunpowder and tightly corked, and through the cork was a twisted wire that was attached to the line.

The other end of the line was a small square box, which was furnished with four handles, similar to that of a barrel organ.

One of these handles was to pay out line, another was for winding in.

“And the other two?” demanded Harry Girdwood.

“Simple enough,” said Mr. Mole; “this box is a battery, and in my line is a conductor that goes through the cork into the powder. When I feel a tug, a turn or two of my handle here sends a spark into the powder, and our friend the *Squalus Carcharias* gets a good deal more than he has time to digest.”

“I begin to see.”

“Really, it is a very great plan, Mr. Mole.”

“Now for the pork.”

“Pork!”

“Yes.”

He had provided himself with a large morsel of fat in a flat strip, and this he proceeded to tie round the soda water bottle with twine.

When this was done, he put out about thirty feet of his telegraphic line, and then hurled his novel bait out to sea.

They looked eagerly out in the direction, and saw the great sea−monster dive swiftly after it.

Then its huge carcase was clearly perceived in the limpid water turning over.

Mole waited a moment.

The line tightened.

“Now for it.”

He gave two of his handles several vicious twists.

There was a shock, and a kind of water spout not far off.

Mole chuckled quietly, and wound in his line.

“Do you think it has succeeded?” demanded young Jack, anxiously.

“Do I think, do I know? Of course it has.”

They watched the place eagerly, and in the space of a few minutes the carcase of the huge white shark, completely rent asunder, rose to the surface of the water, and floated about.

“Damme!” ejaculated Joe Basalt, “if that ain't the queerest fishing I ever come nigh.”

“And ain't Mr. Mole the best fisherman you ever see?”

“That he is.”

“Let's give him a cheer; hip, hip, hip!”

“Hurrah!”

And they towed the vanquished shark alongside the “Westward Ho!” while Isaac Mole became the hero of the day.

CHAPTER XLIII. MORE DEEDS OF DARING—HOW JEFFERSON SHOWED UP IN AN EMERGENCY— SINGLE COMBAT AND ITS RESULT—MR. MOLE TO THE FORE WITH A FRESH FEAT ON THE LONGBOW.

“They've got a bite in the cutter,” said Parry.

They had, and it seemed to be a strong one. They had got a Tartar.

A big fish was hooked, and dragging their boat through the water at a furious rate.

“We must go and lend them a hand,” said young Jack.

They laid down to their work, and were soon upon the scene of the strife.

Aye, strife is the correct expression.

Strife it was.

A steam tug could not have dragged them along at a better pace, or have made resistance more hopeless.

“Pull hard.”

“Aye, aye, sir!”

“Lay down to it, my lads,” cried old Mole, excitedly; “look how they are flying through the water.”

“Aye, aye, sir!”

“I remember Billy Longbow once,” began Mason.

“Hang Billy Longbow now!” said Joe Basalt.

“Yes, let's bag this fish first and then—”

“Ain't Mr. Mole got another of his soda water bottles?”

“Lots of bait,” replied Mr. Mole; “but the tackle isn't up to the mark.”

“Now he's slackening.”

“Yes—he's getting blown.”

“Now he rises.”

So he did.

As they spoke, the flight of the cutter was checked, and a huge shark rose to the surface of the water for air,

A couple of fowling pieces gave him a warm greeting, but without appearing to damage him much.

The pinnace now pulled sharply round, and young Jack, standing up on the head of the boat, held the harpoon ready for use when they should be within reach.

The moment was soon found.

The harpoon flew from his grasp whizzing through the air, and struck the quarry.

Tough as his hide was, the harpoon would not be denied admission.

The shark snorted as it was struck, and dived down, down, until the line grew taut.

Had there been but a single line to hold the voracious monster in check, it would have been but little use, so violent was the struggle, and so desperately sudden was the strain.

But the two lines worked well together now.

Much as the shark objected to their company, he had no choice but to cruise about within the comparatively narrow limits of his tether.

“Beast!” said Dick Harvey, snapping a pistol as it rose once more to the surface. “You take a thundering lot of killing.”

“This must be settled,” said Jefferson.

“How?”

“I'll show you,” returned the Yankee, promptly.

He drew his bowie, and watching the shark intently for a moment, he sprang over the boat's side into the sea.

A cry of horror arose from one and all.

What could this mean?

Suicide—the maddest suicide that ever man had contemplated.

Nothing could save him now.

Nothing.

“Jefferson!” ejaculated Harvey.

“Hush!” cried one of the sailors, with suppressed excitement; “don't worrit. Let him have the same chance as the shark at any rate.”

It wanted a bold fellow to do such a deed as this, but Jefferson was a bold fellow, few bolder.

He was no braggart; but his self−confidence was amazing, and it brought him through many and many a desperate strait.

Would it bring him through this present affair?

Doubtful—sadly doubtful, indeed.

The wounded shark caught sight of the intrepid American, and all heedless of its hurts, dived after him.

The spectators held their breaths.

Jefferson rose to the surface in an instant, drew a long breath, and then down he plunged again.

Barely was he under when up came the shark snorting, puffing, and blowing.

There was a momentary pause just then.

Then its huge tail lashed the water into foam and it rolled over, the water surrounding it being crimsoned with its life blood.

“That's another gone coon,” said Sam Mason exultingly.

As he spoke, Jefferson shot up to the boat's side, where half a dozen eager hands dragged him in.

“Phew!” he said, shaking the water from his face and head, “that beast has cost me my knife and my cutlass.”

He had sheathed them both in the shark before the ugly beast was done with.

The spectators gave him a cheer.

“That's sharp work, Jack,” said Harry Girdwood.

“Sharp, indeed.”

“It wants a quick hand and a sharp eye.”

“And it has got it, too, there,” said Isaac Mole, enthusiastically; “the smartest performance I've seen for many a long day.”

Jefferson nodded and smiled at the speaker.

“Thank'ee, Mr. Mole,” said he; “such praise is indeed gratifying coming from you, the real hero of the day.”

Mr. Mole was radiant with smiles at this.

“Jefferson,” said the old gentleman, in his most condescending and patronising manner, “you remind me of myself in my best days.”

The boat's crew generally laughed at this.

But Mr. Mole was not at all abashed.

“Really, Mr. Mole,” said Jefferson, “you flatter.”

“Not I,” protested Mr. Mole; “I rarely remember doing a neater thing myself.”

“Indeed!”

“Truly.”

“Is it possible?”

“What magnanimity!”

“Humility itself,” ejaculated another.

The exaggeration of their expressions of wonderment as well as admiration did not at all upset Mr. Mole's moral equilibrium.

He had a very large swallow for admiration, and he pleased to take it all as his legitimate due.

“The only thing which can at all compare to Mr. Jefferson's gallant deed was an adventure that I will tell you of,” said he, modestly. “I was on a whaling expedition up north—−”

“Whaling?”

“You!”

“Yes, yes, I, Jack. What is there surprising in that?”

“Nothing, sir,” responded young Jack; “only I was not aware you had ever done any thing in that line.”

“Now, how can you expect to know all my past career, my dear boy?”

“Of course, sir.”

“Whaling, I repeat. We were chasing an enormous spermaceti whale. I was carrying the harpoon and tackle,

and as we got within range I let fly at him with all my force. Now, perhaps I ought not to say it, but there were not many men who could approach me in handling the harpoon. I spitted the animal clean through the middle,"

"Dear me!"

"No sooner did he feel himself struck than he sounded. Out went the line, but hang me if I could pay out fast enough, for he jerked me clean off my perch into the water."

"Dreadful!"

"Shocking!"

Mr. Mole smiled grimly.

"Not so bad as it sounds, after all," he said. "It startled me a bit, as you may suppose."

"It would, of course," said Dick, tipping the wink to Jefferson.

"But I had got back my presence of mind in half a crack, so I hauled in my line until I found myself on the whale's back. There I stuck on like grim death, jobbing and stabbing away with one hand, while I held on to the hilt of the harpoon with the other. I had only a dirk or short sword with me, but it was quite long enough for the whale."

"No doubt, no doubt," exclaimed Dick.

"In a few minutes I had jobbed all the go out of him, and he floated on the top of the water dead as a bloater, with me on the top, rather blown with being so long under water, but with that excepted, not much the worse for it."

"Wonderful!"

"Marvellous!"

"A miracle!"

Such were the mildest tributes of admiration which Mr. Mole's fanciful reminiscence drew forth.

"You must have shipped a good lot of water, your honour," said Jack Tiller.

"That I did."

"More water than your honour has ever took since."

Mr. Mole half smelt a lurking sarcasm in this, but the honest tar's face showed no signs of slyness.

The only evidence of it being a dig at Mr. Mole's well−known weakness for strong waters was to be found in the merry twinkling of the listeners' eyes.

"I remember something that happened to Billy Longbow—" began Sam Mason.

"Avast, Sam!" interrupted Jack Tiller; "Billy Longbow ain't in it with Mr. Mole at a yarn."

CHAPTER XLIV. HUNSTON'S TRIALS IN THE HOLD OF THE “WESTWARD HO!”—THE SHINE WITH HIS PROTECTORS—A STRANGE REVELATION—TROUBLES.

Hunston was, meanwhile, getting into a very bad state of mind.

The mechanical arm was resuming its invidious advance—its mysterious yet none the less terrible attack.

“I feel that I am going off the hooks,” he would mutter to himself, grimly, from time to time. “I shall put my old enemy Jack Harkaway to the trouble of burying me after all.

“Well, one good turn deserves another. I buried his brat, he shall bury me. Only he won't get as much for doing for me as I did for his son.”

He little dreamt that both young Jack and Harry Girdwood were upon that ship.

He had seen young Jack once, and then his fears were so excited that they obtained a complete mastery over his cooler judgment.

He took him for his own apparition.

* * * * *

Joe Basalt and Jack Tiller felt unhappy.

They had long learnt to repent of their slyness in concealing the stowaway on board the “Westward Ho!”

Honest Joe Basalt and rough−and−ready Jack Tiller consulted daily over the dilemma into which they had fallen.

“Hark ye, Jack,” said his pal Basalt, “we've bin an' made hasses of ourselves in getting that chap aboard, but our dooty is clear now.”

“What's that?”

“To go and make a clean breast of it to the skipper.”

“But the cove himself seemed so particular avarse to that.”

“Cos why? Ain't he bin telling lies by the pint measure? He's been humbugging of us,” persisted Basalt.

“Let's go and talk reasonable to him, then,” said Tiller, “for this must come to an end. Damme, if I don't feel as if I'd been an' done a hanging job at the very least.”

They went to the hold and found Hunston.

The appearance of the wretched stowaway was by this time something dreadful.

“We have come to the conclusion, mister,” said Joe Basalt, “that there is nothing for it but to let the skipper know all.”

Hunston pricked up his ears at this.

“Do what?” he exclaimed, violently. “Split upon me, would ye?”

“That's a rum word to use,” said Joe Basalt. “You are precious feverish, and if you only was to see our skipper and let him know what you told us when we picked you out of the water, he would help you—”

“To a halter,” muttered the castaway.

“Did you speak?”

“No, Tiller, not I: I was only saying that he wouldn't care to see me, so drop it.”

“We can't”

“Can't,” repeated Joe Basalt.

“Then listen to me,” exclaimed Hunston, starting up with new energy; “if you tell a word about me to anyone it will be a breach of faith and I shall resent it.”

“Resent! How?”

“Easily.”

“Well, if you means threatening me. I may as well tell you I ain't afeared of no man, and when you gets round and pulls up your strength again, I shall be happy to have half an hour with you quiet and comfortable, and my pal, Jack Tiller, shall stand by and see fair play.”

And honest Joe rolled up his shirt sleeves showing to the villain Hunston a pair of powerful and brawny arms.

“I don't mean that,” said Hunston.

“But I do.”

“And so do I,” added Jack Tiller.

“I mean to say that if you betray me to Harkaway or to any of the party, I shall make a point of letting them know that you kept me snug here so long because you were well paid for it, and it may not please your master, perhaps, to learn that you are doing a little passenger traffic upon your own account; and what's better, sticking to the money you make over it.”

This staggered the two sailors not a little.

“You lying, black−hearted swab,” ejaculated Tiller, when he had got his breath. “Would you dare?”

Hunston curled his lip contemptuously.

“Dare!”

“Why, you sneaking, lying Judas,” cried Basalt.

“Lying!” echoed Hunston; “is it not true?”

“No.”

“Not true that I paid you for saving me and bringing me here?”

“Yes; but—”

“But—but—but pickles. The tale I shall tell will speak for itself.”

“Then, damme, you shall try it on now,” ejaculated the exasperated Joe Basalt, moving towards the companion ladder.

But before he could get any further, Hunston sprang before him, knife in hand.

“Hold!”

“Stand aside,” cried Joe.

“When you have sworn not to utter a word; but not till then—not till then.”

The two sailors stared at each other in surprise at this outburst.

“Well, Joe,” exclaimed his comrade, “did you ever see such a black−hearted villain?”

“Not I. But put of the way with you, swab, or, damme, I'll make small biscuit of you.”

So saying, he ran at Hunston, and knocked the knife out of his hand.

Hunston endeavoured to close with him.

But the temporary strength with which his fury had invested him vanished suddenly, and he fell to the ground, a dull, heavy load.

They ran to raise him.

To their dismay they discovered that he was breathless—lifeless.

“He's dead!”

“Is he? Then, by the Lord Harry, we must go and fetch the doctor, or we shall get into an awful mess. Stay here, Joe, awhile. I'll go up and see for the doctor.”

“Stop a bit,” said Joe Basalt, feeling the stowaway's chest. “He's not dead yet. I can feel something moving here. Yes, it's beating.”

“He's only fainting, then.”

“Yes.”

“Quite enough, top. I'll go up and let them know, before he can go on again about it.”

Up he ran.

Joe Basalt used his best exertions to bring the swooning man round.

* * * * *

Tiller found Harkaway on deck.

“Might I have half a word with your honour?”

“A dozen, if you like, Tiller,” said old Jack, turning from the party of daring fishermen, who had been relating their deeds of daring with the sharks, and was quite elated with the narrations which they had been giving.

Jack Tiller hummed and ha'd, and looked uneasy, and so he pulled his forelock and spluttered out—

“Please, sir, I've been and gone on like a darned bad lot, your honour.”

“Tiller!”

“Yes, your honour, I have. I've been and let a berth here on board, and stuck to the money—leastways, that's what the passenger himself says, though, the Lord help me, I hadn't the least idea of doing such a thing; not I. I

took a poor drowning wretch in, and I put him below in the hold to keep him snug, and—”

Here Harkaway interrupted him with a cry of wonder and astonishment.

“What, Tiller, you mean to say you have a stowaway on board the 'Westward Ho?'“

“Yes, your honour,” responded the frightened mariner.

“You have done very wrong, Jack Tiller,” said Harkaway, “very wrong indeed.”

“I know I have, though Lord help me if I thought of wronging any man. The poor devil in gratitude, offered me money, and I took it; and now I feel as if I had been robbing your honour, that's all. But I'll be glad to hand over the money, and so will my pal, Joe Basalt.”

“Joe!”

“Yes.”

“Is he in it?”

“Yes, sir.”

“You surprise me.”

“Devil a bit do I wonder at that, sir. We're a thieving, dishonest lot, sir, little as I thought it, sir.”

Old Jack smiled at this.

“Well, well,” he said, after a moment's reflection, “we'll go deeper into that question when we have seen your stowaway.”

“This way, sir,” said the worthy Tiller.

Old Jack followed him down below.

On reaching the hold, he found Joe Basalt kneeling up in a corner over the wretched stowaway, who was still in a deep swoon.

“How is he?” asked Tiller. “Any better yet?”

“No.”

“Fainted again?”

“Yes—hush! don't make a row.”

“Here's the governor, Joe,” said Jack Tiller.

Joe Basalt turned round with a start, and hung his head abashed.

“It's all right, Joe,” said Harkaway, “Don't worry any more about it; only you were wrong to conceal it from me, that's all. And now let us look at the patient. He is ill, Jack Tiller tells me.”

“Yes, your honour.”

“Turn your lantern upon his face.”

The sailor opened his bull's−eye.

As its glare flashed upon the half swooning man, he opened his eyes.

The recognition was mutual—yes, and instantaneous.

The stowaway glared fiercely upwards, and uttered but one word—

“Harkaway!”

“Hunston!”

CHAPTER XLV. GOOD FOR EVIL—AN UNEXPECTED STROKE OF LUCK FOR HUNSTON.

Harkaway, the noble and generous, and Hunston, the villain from boyhood to manhood, together—face to face!

After all these changes and trials and vicissitudes.

After all these acts of villainy, treachery, and cruelty upon the part of the miserable wretch Hunston. After so many acts of daring upon the part of our dashing hero, Jack Harkaway.

Not a word was spoken for some moments.

This strange encounter literally deprived them of the power of utterance.

It was unexpected to both of them.

Startling—appalling was it to Hunston upon regaining consciousness, to find himself face to face with the man of all others he dreaded and hated most.

Need we say why?

No.

The reader has not, of course, forgotten that Hunston was ignorant of the two boys' preservation. Little did he dream that those two destined victims had, by little less than a miracle, escaped his vengeance.

Bitter, indeed, therefore, were his feelings now, for he fully believed that young Jack was in his grave in the Greek mountains.

Under any ordinary circumstances he would have felt tolerably easy, for well as he knew what an ugly customer was Jack Harkaway in a tussle, he was also aware that Jack would not take advantage of an enemy's powerless condition, no matter how deep were the wrongs inflicted.

The murder of Harkaway's boy, Hunston knew well, was a crime which Harkaway would never look over.

His fate was sealed.

So deeply was he convinced of this that he would have laid violent hands upon himself if he had had the power.

But the crowning crime of self−murder he was powerless to commit.

“So, Hunston,” said Harkaway, sternly, “we meet face to face once more.”

Hunston was silent.

What could he say?

“What new villainy brought you here?” said Harkaway. “What fresh act of devilry had you in contemplation when you got on board my vessel?”

Hunston gave him a sickly and scornful smile.

“Do you suppose that I knew where I was?”

“Yes.”

Hunston stared.

“Then all I have to say is, that you haven't improved in wit or wisdom with increasing years. Why, the merest chance brought me here. I am not guilty of gratitude as a rule, you will say.”

“True.”

“You haven't the satisfaction of saying it,” retorted Hunston, quickly; “I have said it for you. But the two men who hid me here had no idea who I was. Being hard pressed on shore—where you made it too hot to hold me—I took to the water, and when I was nearly sinking, I hailed their boat. They took me in and—”

“And you returned the compliment.”

“How?”

“By taking them in,” said Harkaway.

“They hid me away here to do me a service. I made my tale good to them. As my time, I feel, is nearly up in this world, I don't want to do them any wrong.”

Harkaway listened in some astonishment.

The wretch's allusion to his approaching end thrilled Harkaway strangely.

“Do you feel so ill?” he asked.

Hunston smiled sardonically at this.

“Nearly all over,” was his reply. “Laugh away—laugh away!”

“Hush, miserable man, hush!” exclaimed Harkaway. “You have known me nearly all my life; you knew me as a schoolboy and as a man.”

“Yes.”

“And no one has better reason than you to know that Jack Harkaway does not fight with helpless enemies, still less does he rejoice over the sufferings of the worst foe he ever had.”

Hunston looked up.

A faint gleam of hope appeared in this.

But no; it was impossible.

Too well he knew that his life was forfeited.

But while he was ruminating thus, Harkaway had sent one of the men up on deck to fetch the doctor.

In the course of two or three minutes the man returned, accompanied by the ship's surgeon.

“A stowaway on board the 'Westward Ho!'“ said the doctor, as he entered the hold; “I should sooner have expected to find one on board a man−of− war.”

“Examine him, please, doctor,” said Harkaway anxiously, “and let us know how he is.”

The doctor made no reply, but proceeded without any fuss or demonstration to feel the sick man's pulse.

“Very low,” he said; “in a bad way. We must get him up out of this place, for it is enough to choke a black.”

He was tended as carefully as if he had been one of their best friends, instead of the bitterest, the most treacherous of their enemies; and, strange to relate, Jack Harkaway appeared not a little concerned about the villain's welfare.

“Do you think that there is any danger?” he asked.

“Immediate, do you mean, sir?” said the doctor.

“Yes.”

“Humph! I can scarcely say. Not exactly immediate, perhaps, if care be taken.”

“You think he will live?”

“Unless the fever which has set in should take an unfavourable turn. He is constitutionally strong.”

“I know that.”

The doctor looked at Harkaway in some surprise.

“You are a bit of a doctor, Mr. Harkaway?”

Jack smiled.

“A very small bit,” he answered; “only I have known this man nearly all my life.”

“Indeed!”

The doctor's manner invited confidence, and it was quite clear that his curiosity had been awakened.

Harkaway thought it over quickly and quietly, and he came to the conclusion that he could not do better than let the doctor participate in the secret.

“You are surprised that an old acquaintance of mine should be here on board my ship, lurking and skulking as a stowaway?”

“Well,” answered Doctor Anderson, in a constrained manner, “if I confess the honest plain truth, I am.”

“It is simple enough; the man did not know that he was on my vessel, or it would be about the last vessel in the world he would have chosen for refuge.”

“Refuge?”

“Yes; refuge is the word. Now I am the worst man in the world at half confidences. Tell me, are you a good man to keep a secret, doctor?”

“I am.”

“Then I may tell you something that will rather startle you.”

“You will?”

“Yes. That poor wretch you have the charge of is the worst enemy that I have. It is my old schoolfellow, Hunston.”

“Hunston!”

“Yes. You remember the name, I perceive.”

“I do. But is it possible that the villain has the audacity to venture here?”

“No; that is just what he would not do. He took to the water, being hardly pressed by his enemies.”

“Why, if your men knew who it was, they would tear him piecemeal.”

“Exactly; and that's what I wanted to speak of to you, doctor. We must take every care not to let them know.”

“Really, you are as careful of him as though he were a cherished friend.”

“Not quite,” answered Harkaway; “only I don't care to drop on a helpless enemy, even such a viper as this Hunston.”

“But he is such an utterly bad lot.”

“True; and I should not feel the slightest compunction at taking his life in a tussle, in a fair stand−up fight; but what I can't do, is taking a man's life when he is helpless at my mercy.”

The doctor saw that Harkaway did not wish to discuss it further, and so he contented himself with obeying orders; and so Hunston got restored to health in the ship of his old schoolfellow, the man whom he had injured most deeply.

Care and skill of the first description were lavished upon him.

But for this, Hunston would probably have languished and died wretchedly upon the coast of Greece, unless an accident had thrown him into the power of the authorities.

In that case, his destiny would have been speedily accomplished.

His end—the scaffold.

CHAPTER XLVI. HUNSTON'S PROGRESS—MISGIVINGS—THE WARNINGS FROM THE GRAVE.

"Mr. Harkaway."

"Doctor."

"A word with you, if convenient, sir."

"Certainly, doctor," returned old Jack.

And they walked on deck together.

"It is only concerning the patient."

"What of him?"

"There is something concerning that mechanical arm which completely baffles me. It is poisoned, I fear."

"You astonish me," said Harkaway.

While they were talking this over, young Jack dropped into the cabin. Now, the boy knew better than anybody the history of the mechanical arm.

It will not be forgotten by the reader that the death of Robert Emmerson occurred on board the pirate vessel during the captivity of young Jack Harkaway and Harry Girdwood.

Although so many adventures have been gone through since then, you can not have forgotten that during their captivity Hunston and Toro had striven might and main to compass the poor boy's destruction.

It is needless to recall to the reader's recollection that it was during that time that this wondrous work was perfected by Robert Emmerson, and that during that time his work was the indirect cause of his death.

The legend of the steel arm was not forgotten by the boys.

* * * * *

"This arm was made by the notorious Protean Bob," said young Jack to his father. "You remember Protean Bob?"

"Yes."

"He was a highly−skilled mechanician, it appears, and that he gave himself thoroughly up to the manufacture of this arm."

"It is certainly a marvellous piece of work," said Doctor Anderson.

"The strangest part of the story is," said young Jack, "that only the inventor knows the exact working of it, and that there is concealed in the springs something deadly to avenge the inventor should the wearer of the arm ever prove wanting in gratitude. And Hunston, as you know—"

"Never troubled anyone with gratitude."

"No, indeed," said Doctor Anderson, reflectively; "the strangest part of that is, he never misses an opportunity of railing against you."

"Against me!" said Harkaway.

"Ungrateful ruffian!" exclaimed Harvey, who entered just as this was spoken.

"He thinks when he gets well, you will take his life, for he is still ignorant of the boys being here, or of their lives being saved," said the doctor.

"I see, I see," said young Jack; "he doesn't know that we escaped the death which he fancied so sure. He ought to suffer for that."

"Hush!" said old Jack: "he is punished enough already."

"Not quite. I don't think he could be punished enough," said Harry Girdwood.

"Nor I."

"Stop, stop," said Harkaway, seriously; "I have suffered more than all of you, at the hands of this man, and if I can forgive him, surely you can,"

* * * * *

Now, as Hunston gained strength, his old evil passions returned in their full force.

The nurses appointed to attend his bedside, were the two sailors who had rescued him from a watery grave, honest Joe Basalt and his friend Jack Tiller.

These two bluff tars had been appointed to the post for reasons which the reader will readily comprehend.

They had received a long lesson from old Jack and from the doctor too.

They were forbidden to mention certain matters, and although Hunston would wheedle and cross−examine with the skill of an Old Bailey lawyer, he quite failed to get any information from them.

“At any rate,” exclaimed the patient, in utter despair, “you don't mind telling me whither we are bound.”

“Oh, yes, I do,” returned Joe Basalt, who was on duty for the time being.

“Why?”

“Can't tell.”

“You don't think that Harkaway means to—”

“Mister Harkaway, if you please,” interrupted Joe Basalt, surlily.

“Well then, Mr. Harkaway,” said Hunston, impatiently.

“That's better.”

“You don't think that he means to hand me over to the authorities at the nearest port, do you?”

Joe was mum.

“Eh?”

Not a word.

Hunston still remained in ignorance of the presence of the boys—aye, even of their very existence.

* * * * *

“Massa Jack,” said Sunday to our youthful hero, one morning, “we often gib poor old Daddy Mole a teasing, sir, a frightening.”

Young Jack grinned.

“We have.”

“Ought he not to get off easier dan dat dam skunk, dat Hunston fellar?”

“Yes, but you wouldn't recommend joking with him as we do with Mr. Mole?”

“No. I'd let it be no joke, Massa Jack; I'd just frighten him out of his darned skin, dat's all.”

Harry Girdwood was taken into their confidence, and a fine plot was agreed upon.

The only difficulty was the sailor nurse.

Joe Basalt was on guard again.

They gave Joe Basalt a good stiff tumbler of grog—and where is the sailor who could resist that?—and oh, wickedness! the grog was hocussed.

In plainer language, that means drugged.

Not very long after drinking their healths in a bumper, old Joe felt drowsy, and he fell asleep.

The patient slept, and would not have awakened probably for two hours had not the two negroes Sunday and Monday set up a most unearthly, moaning noise.

The pitch was low but thrilling, and not the pleasantest thing for a man to hear with a conscience laden with guilt as was the wretched man Hunston's.

The sick man was for some time oblivious of the sounds which were going on for his special ear.

But after a certain delay it began to tell.

He moaned.

Then moved.

Then turned upon his back.

“Hunston! Hunston! oh, Hunston!” Sunday groaned. “Awake.”

And then the two darkeys would groan together.

A responsive moan from Hunston was heard.

He opened his eyes, moaned and groaned, and awoke wakeful at once.

And when he awoke!

His startled eyes fell upon two awful and awesome figures.

The two boys, young Jack and Harry Girdwood, standing hand in hand, their faces bearing the ghastly pallor of the grave and their brows smeared with blood.

In the darkened cabin a flickering, phosphorescent light played upon them, a hint which had perhaps been borrowed from the practical joking in the chamber of the sham necromancer in Greece.

The two victims glared upon the sick man, while he could only stare in fearful silence.

He stared.

Then he closed his eyes and rubbed them, and opened them again, as if to assure himself that it was real.

But they never moved.

Never spoke.

He essayed to speak.

But his tongue refused to wag.

It stuck to the roof of his mouth.

The perspiration stood out upon his brow in thick beads.

Presently, when a sound came from him, it was a dull, hollow moan of anguish, that sounded like the echo of some “yawning grave.”

A sound which seemed to contain the pent−up agony of a whole lifetime of suffering.

But his tormentors were merciless.

They did not budge.

“Away, horrible creatures!” gasped the miserable wretch, in tones scarcely louder than a whisper. “Away, and hide yourselves!”

And he strove to drag the coverlet over his head.

But there was a fearful fascination in it which forced him in spite of himself to look again.

“I know you are unreal,” he faltered. “I know my mind is wandering— that I fancy it all—all. Begone! away!”

As well might he have invited them to shake him by the hand or to embrace him affectionately.

No.

There they stuck glaring upon him with eyes full of hideous menace.

“What brings you here?” he said again. “Why do you come to torment me now? Rest in your graves. Away, I say, away!”

His manner grew more violent as he went on speaking.

“You had no mercy upon us,” said young Jack; “and now remember when last we were upon earth.”

A groan from Hunston was the only response.

“Beware!” said Harry Girdwood, in sepulchral tones. “Beware, I say!”

“Beware!” chimed in the others, as in one voice.

“I warned you that the time would come when you would beg for mercy of my father,” pursued young Jack. “I told you that you should grovel in abject terror, and plead in vain—aye, in vain.”

“Never!” retorted Hunston.

“To−morrow will show you.”

“What?” cried Hunston, in feverish eagerness, while he dreaded to hear.

“Your fate.”

“It is false.”

“The rope is ready—the noose is run. You shall die a dog's death.”

“And you shall die hard,” added Harry Girdwood.

A groan, more fearful than any which had preceded, burst from the guilty wretch.

“But Harkaway will be merciful.”

“As you were.”

“No, no, no; he is full of forgiveness, I know.”

“But not for crimes like yours.”

“He could not pardon you, even if he would.”

“Why not?” demanded Hunston, quickly.

“Because the crew would drag you piecemeal. No, no, no, Hunston; your fate is sealed. The rope is ready—the noose is waiting for you. In torment and in suffering you shall die the death of a rabid cur, the death of a loathsome reptile, of a poisonous thing of which it is true humanity to rid the earth.”

He could hear no more.

With a moan of incalculable terror he dived under the bedclothes to shut out the fearful vision.

When he ventured forth again, they were gone.

Vanished!

They had returned as noiselessly as they had come.

* * * * *

“Basalt.”

“Hullo!”

The drugged sailor fought with the opiate which had been administered to him and opened his eyes.

“There's no one here, is there, Basalt? Tell me.”

“What are you muttering about now?” demanded Joe Basalt, in his surliest tones,

“Are we alone?”

“Of course.”

“I have had such an awful dream, my good friend,” said Hunston, still on the shiver.

“Then keep it to yourself,” retorted Joe. “I don't care the value of a ship's biscuit for your dream—yours nor anybody else's—so stow your gaff. Close your peepers, and let me get a few winks, if I can, always providing as I'm not troubling your honourable self.”

Not even honest old Joe's withering irony could affect the patient, so profoundly pleased was he to find the supernatural visitors gone— melted, as it were, into thin air.

Hunston turned on his side, muttering—

“If I had but the giant strength of Toro, I would soon take my revenge upon all this ship contains—yes, a deep and deadly revenge.”

After a moment, he again muttered—

“I wonder if the brigand Toro is alive or dead, or if I shall ever have his help to destroy my old and hated enemy Harkaway.”

CHAPTER XLVII. WHEREIN HUNSTON'S EVIL PROPENSITIES CATCH HIM IN A TRAP— DANGER—ANOTHER SHARK—MR. MOLE SUFFERS.

"I have had such horrible dreams, doctor," said Hunston the next morning.

"I don't much wonder at your dreams being ugly ones," replied the doctor, significantly.

Hunston coughed.

There was no mistaking the doctor's meaning.

The conversation hung fire for a moment.

"I can quite understand that you may dream of many things which would scarcely bear repetition."

"That's not the case," angrily retorted the patient.

"Indeed."

The end of it was the doctor treated the patient for the feverish symptoms which the tricks of the night had created, and as the day wore on, he got calmer and better.

Time wore on.

Days grew into weeks.

The mysterious ravages of the secret poisoning still baffled Doctor Anderson and prevented the complete restoration of the patient.

"There's something very extraordinary in this," the doctor would say to Hunston, "something which is quite beyond me. If we were not in the nineteenth century, I should almost be inclined to believe in a spell having been cast upon you."

Hunston winced.

"Upon me?"

"Yes; or rather upon that wonderful mechanical arm. I should almost think that the wearer was under a ban."

The doctor's words thrilled the listener strangely.

Little did he know that Doctor Anderson was well acquainted with the history of the mechanical arm, and of its ill−fated inventor, Robert Emmerson.

Little did he think that the doctor's words were meant to produce the exact effect which they had.

The doctor's speech sank deeply into Hunston's mind, and he brooded day and night.

But although it did not affect his health, it certainly had a most unwholesome effect upon his mind, and the result of this soon made itself manifest.

* * * * *

That same afternoon the two boys and their tutor were on deck.

There was scarcely a breath of wind on the ocean, the sails were hanging loosely from the spars as the vessel rose and fell upon the swelling waves.

"What a country this is for sharks!" exclaimed Mr. Mole, who was seated on the low bulwarks of the weather quarter, enjoying what little air there was, and carefully unloading his pocket pistol.

"Beg pardon, Mr. Mole," said Harry, "but what is the name of *this particular country?"*

Mole frowned horribly.

"You are a very impudent boy."

"No, sir, only a youth of an inquiring turn of mind. What is the chief city of this country?"

"I never answer absurd questions."

Mr. Mole took another suck at the pistol (*i.e.* flask), and then his countenance relaxed.

"It is a place for sharks, though," he said; "only look at that great fellow down here."

Harry looked, and so did young Jack.

There was a monster of the deep moving slowly to and fro, occasionally coming up nearly to the surface and then sinking apparently without an effort almost out of sight.

The fish was of greater size than those they had already killed.

He came up and looked at old Mole and then turned away, evidently thinking the worthy tutor much too old, lean and tough for his dainty stomach; but when he caught sight of Jack and Harry, he showed more animation.

Evidently they were more to his taste.

“I mean to have a try for him,” said Jack.

“Do so, my boy. I shall make a sportsman of you yet, I see,” observed Mole.

“You have certainly put us up to a wrinkle or two lately, sir.”

“Bah! your father is considered a clever man in all that pertains to sporting, but what is he in comparison with me?”

Young Jack did not hear the conclusion of this speech, for he had gone away to get his fishing tackle, a large hook attached to a chain.

He quickly returned, and baited the hook with about ten pounds of beef, that had gone a little queer in the bottom of the tub.

“Now, Mr. Sharkey, let us see if you can digest that,” exclaimed Jack, as he dropped the hook overboard.

The shark looked at it closely, and then looked up at Jack, as though he would much prefer the fisher to the bait.

“It is no use, Jack,” said Harry; “he is not hungry.”

“Strikes me it is unskilfulness in angling, rather than want of appetite on the shark's part,” remarked Mr. Mole.

“Would you like to have a try, sir?”

“Hem! well, I don't mind showing you how to do it,” responded the professor.

Jack began to haul in the line, coiling it down just at Mole's feet, or rather where his feet should have been.

But sharkey, finding himself in danger of losing his dinner, made a dart at the meat before it left the water, then discovering that the barb of the hook had stuck in his mouth, she darted off at a great rate, but sad to relate, the rope as it flew out over the bulwark, got twisted round one of Mr. Mole's stumps, and the worthy professor flew into the ocean For a wooden−legged man to swim well, or even to keep himself afloat by treading water, is a somewhat difficult task and so Mr. Mole would have found it, had not Harry Girdwood promptly followed the advice given by a celebrated American—

“When you see a drowning man, throw a rail at him.”

Harry threw a plank, and Mr. Mole being fortunate enough to clutch it, was thereby enabled to keep himself afloat.

But he was exposed to another danger.

The shark being irritated by the rusty iron in his throat, was rushing hither and thither in a most furious manner, snapping his jaws in a way that made the spectators thankful they were on deck.

And then, turning on its back, it bit at Mole.

“Help, help!” shouted Mole.

“Oh! the brute has taken my leg off.”

The shark resumed its natural position, and held Mole's stump above water, puzzled to know what to do with it.

“This is my fault,” said young Jack, and seizing a cutlass, he leaped overboard.

“Lower away the boat,” shouted Dick Harvey, who had just come on deck.

He and Jefferson had also armed themselves, and were about to leap in to young Jack's assistance, when Harkaway senior appeared.

“Hold, let no man here risk his life,” he said.

“But—”

“But the excitement will do me good, I want a good fight to keep my spirits up.”

While speaking he had thrown off his coat and shoes, and cutlass in hand, leaped to the rescue of his son and old Mole.

By this time, however, the boat had been lowered and was pulling rapidly towards Mr. Mole, who still clung to his plank about thirty yards from the stern of the vessel.

Old Jack with a few powerful strokes reached him.

“Hold on, Mr. Mole; the boat is coming. You youngster, swim out of the way at once.”

“I'm going to fight the fish, dad.”

“You are not. Away with you at once.”

During this brief conversation the shark had been down out of sight. He now rose to the surface, and

perceiving three enemies, seemed undecided which to attack first.

And while the fish was hesitating, Harkaway resolved to open the campaign. Accordingly he dived, with the intention of coming up beneath the fish and administering a stab.

Old Jack Tiller and Joe Basalt were just at that moment engaged in hauling Mr. Mole into the boat; they had him half way over the gunwale, when the shark made a snap and away went the professor's other leg.

“Mercy, help! The beast is devouring me by inches,” screamed Mole, as he rolled headlong into the boat.

Joe Basalt seeing that young Jack was still itching to have a go at the shark, seized him by the collar and dragged him in. They then rested on their oars and prepared to give the elder Harkaway any assistance they could.

“I lay five to three against the monster of the deep,” said Harvey.

“I accept the wager on those terms,” said Mole, who having discovered that he was unhurt, was reviving.

He took another swig at the pistol and then sat up to watch the conflict.

The shark, finding he had now only one opponent to deal with, turned towards Harkaway, who dived again, and getting this time fairly beneath the fish, thrust his cutlass up to the hilt in its stomach.

Startled by this sudden attack, and smarting from the pain caused by the wound, the shark leaped up half out of the water, and then fell with a loud splash close by Jack.

Everyone on board was by this time on deck, watching the unequal struggle.

While the shark was twisting and turning to get at its adversary, Jack managed to give a second stab; but it was rather hot work, though, for Jack was obliged to dive so frequently that he had little time to recover his breath.

He was just endeavouring to do so, when the shark made another rush at him.

Old Jack dived again, and young Jack would have been over to his father's assistance had not Joe Basalt forcibly restrained him.

A third stab made the shark feel very queer indeed.

In fact, Harkaway thought the fish was done for, and had struck out for the ship, but just as he grasped a rope and permitted himself to be drawn up, the shark recovered and made another most vicious dart at him.

Our hero, who had, in his time, vanquished so many foes, felt hardly inclined to let a shark get the best of him. He dropped from the rope and sank beneath the waves just as the head of the brute emerged therefrom.

Then up again like a shot; and the keen cutlass tore its way through the vitals of the fish.

Then a fin was lopped off, and a few seconds afterwards the huge carcase was seen floating on the waves.

Harkaway seized the rope and fastened it round the head and tail of his vanquished foe, which was then hauled on deck.

“Bravo, old man,” exclaimed Harvey, shaking his schoolfellow by the hand.

“You did that well.”

“Though you were certainly a long time about it,” observed Mole. “I could have—”

“You could have paid me three sovs. by this time,” replied Harvey, “so just out with the dust.”

Mole made no reply.

Jefferson then added his congratulations.

“Pshaw!” said Jack. “Mr. Mole did it all.”

“How?”

“Why, he poisoned the poor shark with his wooden legs. It's enough to make a fish disgusted with life.”

A loud laugh followed.

“Meanwhile,” said Mole, “will some−one be good enough to give me a lift?”

The professor was hoisted up on deck, and when they had all changed their clothes, and the great shark−killer had shipped two new wooden pins, he grew quite as bounceable as ever.

Especially as the death of the last shark was still jocularly attributed to him.

CHAPTER XLVIII. OLD JOE PLOTS WITH HUNSTON—WHAT CAME OF THE PLOT.

The Harkaway family and their guests were all assembled at dinner, after the shark−fishing, when the conversation turned upon their old enemy.

“I wish we were fairly rid of him,” said Mrs. Harkaway, “for all the while he is on board, I feel as if some misfortune were hanging over us.”

Jack smiled.

“Have you had any dreams, Emily?” he asked, slily,

“Don't learn to mock, sir,” retorted the lady, with mock asperity, “You have been influenced by dreams yourself before now.”

Jack looked serious.

“That's true.”

“And we owe this wretched man nothing—”

“But hate.”

“We do that,” said Jefferson; “but he is a miserable wretch, and we can afford to let him off cheaply, without paying old scores.”

“What do you wish to do, then?” demanded Harkaway. “I am willing to abide by the decision you may come to.”

“Well,” said Mr. Mole, “I propose that he shall be put ashore.”

“When?”

There was the rub.

They were many weary miles away from the sight of land.

“Put him ashore the first time that we come within reach of land,” suggested Harvey.

“We will,” said Harkaway, “if that is the general wish.”

“It is.”

It was put to the vote and found that everybody, without a single exception, was desirous of seeing the back of Hunston.

Who can wonder?

None.

“Well, well,” said old Jack, “that is agreed upon. And now, Emily, my dear, I hope that your mind is at rest.”

“Almost.”

“What! doesn't that satisfy you yet?”

“For the present; but I shall be all the more satisfied when he is really out of the place altogether, for he is a regular nightmare to me.”

“You are fanciful, my dear,” said old Jack.

“Perhaps; but there have been times when you have not made so light of my presentiments,” said Emily.

As these words were spoken, the saloon door was opened and who should enter but Joe Basalt.

Now old Joe wore a face as long as a fiddle, and addressing Harkaway he requested a few words in private.

“Presently, Joe,” said Harkaway.

The old tar twisted his hat round and waited.

“What, won't presently do for you?”

“I'd sooner out with it at once,” said Joe.

“Well, out with it,” said Harkaway.

“Before everyone, your honour?” Joe demanded.

“Yes.”

He looked shyly about him, and cast a furtive glance at the ladies before he ventured to speak out.

“I want to break it to your honour as gently as possible, and I want to know what your honour thinks of me?”

Old Jack stared.

“Why, really, Joe—”

“I think Joe wants to know if you think he's handsome,” suggested Dick Harvey.

“Do you admire the cut of his figurehead?” chimed in young Jack.

But Joe Basalt was evidently too much upset and preoccupied by something on his mind to heed this chaff.

“No, your honour,” he said, fiercely, “what I want to know is—do you consider me a d—d mutineering swab?”

“Joe, Joe,” exclaimed Harkaway, laughing in spite of himself, “moderate your language; remember that there are ladies present.”

Joe reddened to the roots of his hair.

“I ax their pardon, every mother's son of them,” he said, tugging at his forelock; “but my feelin's carries me away.”

“Tell us what it is, then,” said Jefferson, “and perhaps we can offer advice.”

“Well, then, sir, I've been insulted.”

“I see, I see,” said Jefferson; “you have been having a row with one of your messmates.”

“And you have punched his head?” suggested young Jack.

“Serve him right, too, Joe,” said Harry Girdwood.

“No, no, young gentlemen,” said Joe, “I ain't done that, or else I should be quite happy—that's just it—because I wanted his honour's permission.”

“What?”

“To give him a good licking,” urged Joe Basalt; “you see, I couldn't well do it without, as it's the stowaway.”

The interest of the whole of the company redoubled at this.

“He's been at his tricks again,” said Joe.

“I thought so.”

“And d—d dirty tricks they are, too. The swab can't do nothing fair and square and above board. He allers cruises about in a nasty, sly, piratical way.”

“What is it? Tell us at once.”

“Yes, sir, I will. Why, you see, the fact is, he has been a−sounding me about trying if the crew is satisfied with your honour.”

A low murmur went from mouth to mouth around the table.

“He's never trying to undermine you, old fidelity!” ejaculated Harkaway.

Joe nodded.

“That's it, your honour.”

“Villain!”

“And what's more, he's been trying it on with Jack Tiller.”

“He has?”

Harkaway's brow darkened, and the expression of his face grew ominous.

“How did Jack Tiller meet his advances?” asked Harvey.

“Why, Jack ain't got no command over himself, and so he—”

Joe paused.

“So what?”

“Why, Jack gave him one for himself; but he ain't damaged him much,” Joe hastened to add apologetically, “for Jack Tiller knows his dooty better than that, your honour. No, he's only put one of his toplights into mourning.”

This sent the two boys into ecstasies.

“And so you see, your honour, when he opened fire on to me, I could hardly believe it possible, until he put it plainer, and then I was so staggered that I did not know what to do, so I thought I would come and let you know.”

Harkaway, looking up, caught his wife's glance fixed upon him.

“You see, it doesn't do to scoff at secret apprehensions,” she said, quietly.

“No, no. This shall be seen to at once,” he answered, rising from his seat. “Come with me, Dick, and you, Jefferson.”

They left the cabin, followed by old Joe Basalt.

Now, when they got on deck, Jack Harkaway led the way to a part where they were alone, and not likely to be disturbed.

"Now, Joe," said he, "I have been thinking this matter over. I know you have only spoken the truth, without a word of exaggeration. But we must catch the villain in his own snare."

"How, your honour?"

"I'll tell you. You must go back to this traitor, and you must play the part of a willing listener."

"A what?"

"A willing listener. You must let him think you are ready to join in his villainy, do you see?"

"I do, your honour, but damme if I like it."

"You will have to like it in this instance, Joe, for the good of us all. This man is the worst villain alive. I have forgiven him more wrongs than you would think it possible to forgive; but now the safety of all is concerned, and it must be done."

Joe scratched his head, and looked troubled.

"If that's orders, your honour, I've nothing but to obey."

"Right, Joe."

* * * * *

Having primed Joe Basalt up in his lesson, they marched off to Hunston's cabin, and Joe entered, while Harkaway, Dick Harvey, and Jefferson took up a position near where they could overhear what was going on within.

"Well, shipmate," said Basalt, "how goes it?"

Hunston was lying on his side, holding a damp towel to his damaged eye.

He only turned round, and grunted some few ungracious words.

"I've brought you some news," said Joe, repeating his lesson; "there is a regular shine on deck."

Hunston turned quickly round at this.

"What's wrong?" he asked, anxiously. "You haven't been saying any thing, because I'm sure you were mistaken, as—"

"As Jack Tiller was."

"Yes."

And Hunston fondled the blackened eye, mentally cursing Tiller and his hard, horny fist.

"Not I," said Joe Basalt, "not I. There's a row aloft, I told you. Three men have been put into irons, and I have got into trouble as well."

"What for?"

"Nothing," answered Joe Basalt, with a surly imitation of anger. "That's just it, for nothing, and aren't they up in the stirrups neither?"

"They are!" exclaimed Hunston.

"Rather."

"And what do they say?"

"Say!" exclaimed Basalt. "Why, they'd as lief draw a cutlass over his weasand, as they'd smash a ship's biscuit."

Hunston's pale face grew crimson at these words.

"That's good," he said; "they're men of spirit."

"That they are."

"And the rest of the crew; what do they say of it?"

"Why, they are all up about it; all to a man. So if you have a good thing to offer, I'll undertake to say as they'll volunteer to a man."

"Good."

"And leave them Harkaway folks in the lurch here, as they deserve, the mean beasts."

"Mean, indeed," echoed Hunston, secretly chuckling. "Why, they're worse than mean."

"So you'd say if you only knew what a palaver they've made about having you here, pretending as it's all charity and the like, when, of course, we know—"

"That it's all your goodness, and that of your hot−headed comrade."

“Don't speak of Jack Tiller, my friend,” said Joe, who was working into his part capitally by this time; “he sees now what a fool he has made of himself.”

“Did he say so?”

“Yes.”

“Why did he go on so?”

“He quite misunderstood your meaning.”

“The deuce he did. Why, however could that be? I was pretty explicit.”

“He thought that it was to sell him. In fact, he made sure as you had overheard us grumbling together about the skipper, and that you was a−trying it on only to tell Mr. Harkaway all about it.”

“Did he say so?”

“Yes.”

“Then undeceive him immediately.”

“I have done so.”

“As for this,” added Hunston, pointing to his discoloured eye and cheek, “I think nothing of it. All I'll ask of him is that he shall do as much for Harkaway.”

“That he will,” said Joe, with sham heartiness. “And now how soon shall the ship be ours?”

Hunston glanced anxiously towards the door.

“There's no fear.” said Joe. answering his look; “they are all too busy for'ard, talking about them poor devils in irons.”

“Brutes!”

“Aye, that they are. But when shall we get them free from their floating prison, cos that's what it seems a−coming to?”

“I'll tell you,” answered Hunston, sinking his voice, “we'll serve the Harkaway party as he served your messmates.”

“How?”

“Put them in irons.”

Joe Basalt gave a start at this.

“And if they would not go?”

“Chuck them overboard, all, everyone of them, except the women.”

“I should hardly like doing that,” said Joe.

“Then that shall be *my task*,” exclaimed Hunston, warming up as he unfolded his diabolical scheme. “I should like to do that part of it myself. I swore to finish them all off,” he added, more to himself than to Joe, “and I shall keep my oath after all, I begin to think. I'll throw them all overboard—Harkaway, Jefferson, Harvey, all.”

He looked up suddenly at the door.

Three big forms stood upon the threshold of the cabin.

The three whose names Hunston had just uttered.

Harkaway, Jefferson, and Dick Harvey.

“I thought I heard you call us,” said the latter.

Hunston's colour fled from his cheek.

He looked from one to the other.

Then he glanced at Joe Basalt.

Harkaway was the first to break the silence.

“Hunston.”

The sound echoed dismally, as though uttered in some bare−walled cavern.

“Yes,” he faltered, struggling to appear at his ease.

“Come.”

“Where to?”

Harkaway pointed silently to the door.

“What do you want with me?”

“Can't you guess?”

The words were simple ones, yet they sounded like a death−knell to him.

“We have heard all; every word. This crowning act of villany and ingratitude, baser than ever entered the mind of man, has doomed you. Follow me.”

Appalled, half stunned with fear, the miserable wretch tottered after Harkaway.

Close upon his heels came Jefferson and Dick, while Joe Basalt brought up the rear.

CHAPTER XLIX. THE TRIAL—HUNSTON'S PUNISHMENT.

“Pipe all hands on deck!”

“Aye, aye, sir.”

The crew came tumbling up.

And when they were all assembled, Jefferson and Dick Harvey ranged them round in position, while Harkaway, with Hunston close by his side, stood forward to address them.

“My men,” said he, “I have had you called together upon no pleasant errand. But it is a question of duty, and, therefore, pleasant or unpleasant, must be done. What we have to do is an act of justice, and I don't wish that anyone should be able to impugn my motives. I would not leave it in the power of any man to say that I ever behaved unjustly to my worst enemy.”

“Hurrah!”

A ringing cheer greeted Harkaway.

“Now, my men, what I have to say to you concerns my own and my family history, perhaps, more than it does you. You have all heard my poor boy's adventures when he fell into the hands of the Greek brigands?”

“Aye, aye, sir.”

“You know who it was that was instrumental in getting him condemned to death.”

“It was that sneaking lubber, Hunston,” cried several voices at once.

“It was. I need not enlarge upon all he has done to merit the worst punishment it is in our power to bestow, if ever he should fall into our hands—the worst I say, eh?”

“Yes,—him!” said a voice, with a very strong expletive.

The approval of the crew was perfectly unanimous.

In vain did Hunston look about him for one of those disaffected men of whom Joe Basalt had spoken.

Not a vestige of any thing like opposition to the general sentiments did he trace in any of those weather−beaten, honest countenances.

“Well,” resumed Harkaway, “and what would you say if, after that I have forgiven him, taken him in hand and had him carefully tended and nursed, what would you say if even then he tried to wrong me—to ensnare innocent, well−meaning men, into a murderous plot against my life?”

“Why, I should say as he's the blackest−hearted lubber ashore or afloat,” said one.

“One word more,” said Harkaway. “What should we do to this wretch if we had him here in our power?”

“Give him a round dozen, to begin with,” suggested Sam Mason.

“And then string him up.”

A cheer came from a score of throats.

“Men,” said Harkaway, “this is the villain, Hunston.”

A pause.

The men were so thoroughly taken by surprise at this that they had not a word to say for themselves.

“I was anxious to spare him,” said Harkaway, in conclusion, “for although he has always been false, treacherous, and cruel, I could not forget that he was a fellow−countryman, and that we were boys together. I would have returned good for evil, he refused it; I now mean to try evil for evil.”

The men applauded this to the echo.

Joe Basalt and his comrade Jack Tiller passed the word forward from mouth to mouth.

They told their shipmates what had taken place, and so thoroughly incensed them against him that his life would not have been worth five minutes' purchase had Harkaway, Jefferson, and Dick Harvey absented themselves.

“Come,” said Jefferson, “it is growing late; let us settle it off−hand.”

“What is the verdict?” said Harvey, “Let the men decide.”

Their decision did not take long at arriving at. As if with a single voice, the men responded—

“Death!”

A sickening sensation stole over Hunston.

There was enough in that to appal the stoutest heart, it is true, and he now felt that it was all over.

"Very good," said Harkaway, "His fate is with you."

"String him up to the yardarm at once, then," suggested Sam Mason.

"Tie him up by the heels and let's shoot at him."

"Let him walk the plank."

"No; hanging is better fun. It's a dog's death that he has earned, so let him have his deserts."

A rope was got and the end of it was flung over the yardarm, and a running noose made in it.

Then rough hands were laid upon the doomed man.

This aroused him into lifting his voice in his own behalf.

"Harkaway," he said, "do you know that this is murder—cold−blooded murder?"

"So is every execution, even if sanctioned by law."

"But it is done upon ample proof."

"We have proof enough."

"You haven't a single witness against me," said Hunston, eagerly.

"Plenty."

"Where's one? Let go, I tell you," he cried frantically, at the men who were dragging him towards the rope. "This is murder; you'll hang for it, Harkaway; you'll—cowards! all of you upon one."

But they did not pay much heed to his ravings.

"Do you hear, Harkaway?" he cried, "This is murder, whatever you call it. It will hang you yet; at the least, it will transport you for life."

Harkaway smiled.

"I shall not soil my fingers in the matter."

"It is your work!" now yelled Hunston, struggling with mad desperation.

"Then we'll all have a hand in it," said Harkaway; "we'll all pull together, so that no one can fix it upon his fellow—"

"You'll not escape," yelled the miserable wretch. "You'll swing for it yourself; you will, I swear. You have no witnesses; these two sailors are notorious liars."

"Take that, you swab," cried Joe Basalt, dashing his fist in his face.

"They are greater curs than yourself," yelled Hunston; "such witnesses would swear away your own life for a glass of grog—witnesses indeed—"

He stopped short.

His glance fell upon two forms standing close by—young Jack and Harry Girdwood.

Both were dressed as he had last seen them in the mountain haunt of the brigands.

Hunston was still in ignorance of the rescue of the boys.

For all he knew, their bodies were rotting in their mountain grave in Greece.

They bent upon him the same sad and stern look which had been so efficacious before, and he cowered before them.

Appalled at the horrible phantoms come to mock him at his last moments, he clapped his hand to his eyes in the vain endeavour to shut out the sight.

Vain, indeed, for the sight possessed a horrible fascination for him, which no pen can describe.

"Down, and beg for mercy," said young Jack, solemnly.

"On your knees, wretch!" added Harry Girdwood.

"Hah!"

The two boys pointed together to the feet of Harkaway senior.

The condemned man caught at their meaning at once.

A wild cry of hope came from his lips, and he burst from the sailors who held him and threw himself at Harkaway's feet.

"Mercy, mercy, Harkaway!" he cried, piteously. "Have mercy, for the love of Heaven, as you hope for mercy yourself hereafter."

Harkaway gazed on him in silence.

"Look there," cried Hunston, wildly, pointing to where the two boys stood still in contemplation of the scene,

“Look there; see, they are begging for mercy for me.”

“Who? Where?” demanded Harkaway, in considerable astonishment

“Your own son, your own boy; don't you see him?” pursued Hunston, wildly,

“Look. No—It is my own fancy, my fear−stricken mind, which conjures up these horrible visions. Ugh!”

And he cowered down at Harkaway's feet with averted glance, endeavouring to shut out the fearsome sight.

“Take him away,” said Harkaway to the men.

They advanced and laid hands upon him, but Hunston fought madly with them and clung to Harkaway's knees in desperation.

It was his last chance, he felt positive.

“Think, Harkaway, think,” he cried again and again. “Remember our boyhood's days; remember our youth, passed at school together. We were college chums, and—”

“No; not quite,” interrupted Dick Harvey in disgust. “We were at Oxford together, but never chums.”

“You were never the sort of man that one would care to chum with,” added Harkaway.

“Never!”

“Take him away.”

Hunston gave a loud yell of despair, and gazed around him.

Again his glance was riveted by the sight of the two boys standing in the same attitude, and then horror−stricken, appalled, he sank upon the ground all of a heap and half fainting.

A miserable, a piteous object indeed.

* * * * *

“Hunston,” said Harkaway, after a few minutes' pause, “you bade me think. It is my turn to bid you think. If your white−livered fears had not blinded your judgment, you would have known that your life is safe here.”

Hunston raised his head slowly.

He gazed about him with the same vacant look, utterly Unable to realise the meaning of Harkaway's words.

“You jest,” he faltered.

“We are not butchers,” said Jefferson, sternly.

Humbled, degraded, though he was, these words of hope sent the blood coursing through his veins wildly.

Saved!

Was it possible?

Young Jack stepped out of the circle and approached the miserable wretch.

“When we last stood face to face, and when you ordered the Greek brigands to fire on us, Hunston, I told you that this would come about.”

Hunston shrank affrightedly before the lad.

“I told you, Hunston,” continued young Jack, “that the time would come when you would grovel in the dirt and beg your life from my father. That time has come, you see. Like the miserable cur that you are, you grovel and beg and pray in a way that I would never condescend to do to you. You have tasted all the horrors of anticipation, and that is worse than death itself. Now, perhaps, you know what I and my comrade Harry felt when you condemned us to death.”

“We told you,” added Harry Girdwood quietly, “that it would come home to you; it has.”

During the foregoing, Hunston began to realise the truth.

They lived.

“Get up,” said Jefferson; “it is time to end this sickening scene.”

Hunston slowly rose to his feet

“Excuse me,” said the captain, stepping forward, “but as captain of this ship—under your orders, Mr, Harkaway, of course—I can't see how it is possible to allow his offence to go unpunished. You are of course at liberty to forgive him for any wrong he may have done you all, but with all due deference I must set my face against winking at such offences as he has committed on board this ship.”

“Listen to the skipper,” added another of the crew.

“To let him off scot free would be to encourage insubordination and mutiny, in fact.”

“Then I leave it to you, captain,” said Harkaway; “I shall not interfere in your management of the ship.”

Hunston's heart sank.

“Get rid of him at once,” suggested Harvey.

“How?”

“Lower him in a boat; provision it for a month and set him adrift.”

“Good.”

“Do that,” said Hunston, “and you consign me to a living death, worse than any tortures that savages could inflict.” He remembered too well how he and Toro the Italian had been cast adrift from the “Flowery Land.”

He had not forgotten the horrors of that cruise.

It was, in truth, as he said, ten times more horrible than death at their hands could be.

“My own opinion is,” said the captain, “that his crime should be punished at once; such a crime should not be allowed to pass on board ship.”

“What would you do?”

“Tie him up to a grating and give him four dozen lashes.”

A wild storm of cheering greeted this proposal.

There was some feeble attempt at opposition upon the part of the Harkaway party, but this was overruled by the captain and crew.

“I'm not a cruel man, gentlemen,” said the captain, “but I must side with the crew in this. Now, we'll give him every chance. I propose to let him off if there is a single voice raised in his favour.”

Not a word was spoken.

“If any of you think, my men, that he should not be punished, he shall escape. Let any man stand forth and it shall settle it. I will allow him to escape and not question the motives of whosoever speaks for him.”

Hunston looked anxiously around him.

Not a voice.

Not so much as a glance of pity did he encounter there.

His only hope was in the man that he had most wronged of all there present, and so in despair he turned to Harkaway.

But the latter moved away from the spot in silence.

Despair.

Rough, horny hands were laid upon him, and his coat and shirt were torn in shreds from his back until he stood stripped to the waist.

The grating was rigged for punishment, and the culprit was lashed securely to it.

“Barclay.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Stand forward.”

“Here, sir.”

“Take the cat.”

“Yes, sir.”

This was the youngest boy in the ship. The lad took the whip and poised it in his hand eager to begin operations.

“Joe Basalt.”

“Yes, your honour.”

“Time the strokes.”

“Aye, aye, sir.”

The boy Barclay now received his instructions, and noted the same most diligently.

“Strike well up, not too low. You understand, well across the shoulders.”

“Yes, cap'n,”

“And don't be too eager or too quick. Let each stroke tell its own tale.”

What were the miserable man's feelings when he heard his torture prepared thus, with such coolness and deliberation, we leave you to imagine.

A momentary pause then occurred, during which every one present looked on with mixed sensations of eagerness and dread.

“One!”

A whizzing noise.

Then a dull, heavy thud, as the thongs came in contact with the culprit's back and shoulders.

A gasp came from the spectators, a convulsive shudder from the suffering wretch himself.

And then his shoulders showed a series of livid ridges of bruised flesh.

“Two.”

Down came the lash.

The blood shot forth from the right shoulder, where there was more flesh to encounter the cruel whip.

“Three.”

A moan of utter anguish burst from the victim, whose blood streamed down his back.

A sickening, horrible sight to contemplate.

“Four.”

“Hah!”

“Come away,” exclaimed Harkaway; “come away from this. It makes me sick and faint.”

“Yes,” said Jefferson; “it is not to my taste.”

“Nor mine.”

“Nor mine,” said Dick.

“This may be Justice, my friend,” said Jack Harkaway “but it isn't English—it is not humanity.”

“Five.”

A cry came from the prisoner.

“Cast him loose!” cried Harkaway, “No more—no more!”

But the sailors did not appear to hear.

“Six.”

“Have done, I say!” thundered Jefferson. “Enough of this!”

“Excuse me, sir,” said the captain, “we have a duty to perform. I can understand that it is not pleasant to you, but—”

“Seven,” sang out Joe Basalt, drowning every voice.

Down came the whip again.

And as the thongs struck the lacerated flesh of the wretched man he gave a piercing shriek.

It sounded more like the cry of some wild animal than the utterance of a human being.

“Eight.”

“Fetch the doctor,” exclaimed Harkaway.

Young Jack, who was secretly glad of an excuse to begone, ran off and brought the doctor up from below.

“Doctor Anderson,” said Harkaway hurriedly, “I believe sincerely that this man has earned all he has had and a great deal more.”

“Indeed he has,” said Doctor Anderson.

“But I can't endure the lash. It is savage, it is unworthy of a civilised people—it must not go on. Stop it.”

“How many has he had?”

The answer to this came at that identical moment from Joe Basalt's lips.

“Twelve.”

As the lash came down, the body shook slightly, and then was quite still.

“Say that he can bear no more,” said Harkaway. “They'll heed your report as the doctor.”

“I shall only say the truth,” said the doctor.

“You think so?”

“Of course. He has fainted. You'll kill him if you go on. Cast him loose, carry him to his berth.”

CHAPTER L. MR. MOLE'S TROUBLES AGAIN—AN ADVENTURE WITH NERO—LAND HO!— THE FIRST VIEW OF AUSTRALIA.

Let us draw the curtain.

The particulars given in the preceding chapter must be as unpleasant to the readers as they were to Harkaway, to Jefferson, to Dick Harvey, and beyond all to Harry Girdwood and young Jack.

They are not agreeable matters to relate, and we gladly draw the veil upon such a scene.

Once in the care of Doctor Anderson, the prisoner was tended carefully, and the doctor's best skill was employed in bringing him back to health.

But his convalescence was a long time in being brought about, for not only was he cruelly maimed, but, to use the doctor's own expression—

“The scourge had knocked him to bits in health generally.”

* * * * *

“What a capital sailor old Nero makes, Harry.”

“Splendid.”

“He only wants to know how to chew.”

“And take grog like old Mole.”

“True, and then he'd be an out−and−out sailor.”

These words were part of a conversation which our two young comrades were indulging in one afternoon towards sun−down as they walked to and fro on deck.

They had rigged Nero out in full nautical costume, and taught him several sailor tricks of manner.

He hitched up his inexpressibles with a jerk that the late T. P. Cooke might have made studies from.

And his bow and scrape, although more like a stage sailor than the real thing itself, were ticked off so admirably, that you expected him to start off into a rattling hornpipe.

But perhaps the greatest treat of all was to see him pretending to take observations through a telescope.

“Nero,” cried young Jack.

The monkey ran up at the word.

“Give us your arm, Nero.”

And so drawing a paw under each of their arms, they promenaded the deck, these three young monkeys together, to the great amusement and delight of the sailors generally.

“Why, Joe!” said Sam Mason, “he looks as great a swell as the port admiral.”

“Port admiral! As the first lord himself.”

“Do you know, Joe, that Billy Longbow had a monkey once as would—”

“Now for a yarn.”

“No, this is a born fact,” persisted Sam Mason, stoutly. “Billy Longbow had a monkey on board ship as used to mock the bos'en, and one day when he see the bos'en take out his rattan to larrup one of the powder monkeys, Jocko went for to give the bos'en one for hisself.”

“By way of protecting one of his own species, I s'pose,” suggested Joe.

“Perhaps. Well, he felt in all his pockets for a rattan, and he happened to get hold of the tip of his tail. Now he seed the bos'en lugging hard to get the rattan out of his pocket, for it had got entangled with the lanyard of his jack−knife, and so Jocko tugs precious hard at his tail, presuming it to be a rattan likewise, I s'pose, and, by Jove, if he doesn't pull it right out.”

“Come, now,” cried Joe Basalt, with a grunt, “I ain't agoing to swaller that tale.”

“It's a fact. Billy Longbow was the most truthful pal I ever had—out came his nether rattan.”

“Well, what next?”

“Nothing next,” answered Sam Mason, with a sly look. “That was the end of Jocko's tail, and it's the end of mine too.”

Now while they were engaged in listening to Sam Mason's Billy Longbow anecdote, they saw Mr. Mole come out of the deck saloon, where he had been dozing.

He walked up the deck with a certain apparent unsteadiness of gait.

“Old Mole is half seas over,” said Harry Girdwood.

“I'll tell you what. Wouldn't it be a lark if we could get him to strut up and down with Nero, without knowing it?”

“That's more easily said than done, I imagine.”

“Wait and see.”

They crept back out of sight as Mr. Mole passed along. Then, having made a hurried whispered consultation, young Jack stepped forth alone and tackled Mr. Mole.

“Taking the air, sir?”

“Yes, Jack—hiccup—yes, my dear boy, and I have come to look out for land.”

“Land?”

“Yes.”

“Are we near?”

“Sho—sho—I mean so—I shpose—s'pose—”

Mr. Mole was conscious of his speech being a little bit thick, and he hastened to add that he was suffering from toothache.

“My mouth ish sho shwollen—swollen, I mean—that I can hardly sp— speak plainly,” he said.

“Dear me! how shocking!” exclaimed young Jack.

Slipping his arm under Mr. Mole's they walked up and down talking.

Meanwhile, young Jack tipped the wink to Harry Girdwood, who slipped out of his hiding−place with Nero, and followed Mole and Jack along the deck.

Young Jack chose his opportunity well, and drawing his arm out of Mr. Mole's he pushed Nero's in its place.

Mr. Mole, all unconscious of the change in his companion, strutted along, chattering away, secretly pleased at having such an excellent listener by his side.

“It'sh really pleasure to talk to you, my dear boy,” he said.

“You un—stand with half a word—and I enjoy—a conservation—conserva —singular thing—I can't say conservashun. I enjoy—a talk—an intellectshul chat more with you than sitting down to wine with Jeffershon and Harvey, and your dear father. Good fellarsh—jolly good fellarsh—only too fond of sitting over wine. Shocking habit—shpending hours in getting tipshy—hiccup!”

* * * * *

Now, while Mr. Mole poured out his philosophical reflections into Nero's ear, Harry Gridwood went and fetched Harvey; old Jack and Jefferson.

Young Jack stepped back to the door of the deck saloon, and sat down while Mole turned round and hobbled up the deck again, with Nero still leaning upon his arm.

As the old gentleman came up to where they all stood, they could hear him still laying down the law to Nero.

“Yesh, Jack, my dear boy,” he was saying, “wine'sh a jolly good thing— to be ushed and not abushed. Blow my toothache—toothache—so very dericulous—don't know what I'm shaying.”

Mr. Mole winked and blinked like an owl in daylight.

“Jack.”

“Sir.”

“Whash the devil—Jack!”

He started in utter amazement.

“Yes, sir.”

“Why, Mr. Mole,” said Harvey, suddenly popping out of the cabin, followed by Jefferson and old Jack, “what on earth are you walking up and down with him for?”

“Who?”

Before another word could be spoken, Nero, on a secret sign from his young master, took off his tarpaulin hat, and dabbed it on Mr. Mole's head.

Mole turned suddenly round upon his companion.

“Nero—the devil fly away with you, you beast!”

He made a dash at the monkey; but the latter was up in the shrouds and out of danger in the twingling of an

eye.

* * * * *

"Land ho!"

"Which way?"

"Due south."

Harkaway had a glass up in a crack.

"That's right," he said. "Gentlemen all, allow me to introduce you to Australia."

CHAPTER LI. HUNSTON IS DISPOSED OF.

Yes, there was the continent of Australia.

The ladies came running up on deck at the news, for the first sight of land after a long voyage is a thing to make your heart beat, however much you like the sea.

“I can't see anything yet,” said little Emily, after peering vainly through a telescope for five minutes.

“Because you don't get the proper focus,” explained young Jack.

“Then you fix it for me, since you are so clever,” retorted the young lady.

“That's an Irish remedy,” laughed young Jack.

However, he helped her to fix upon the focus, and then she had the gratification of seeing the land.

It was a beautiful verdure−clad range of hills that they had first perceived from the distance, which were half a mile or more inland.

So that they found themselves presently much nearer land than they had supposed.

It was covered with wild luxuriant vegetation, but it was altogether uncultivated.

“Harkaway,” said Jefferson, as they stood together contemplating the scene, “this is where Hunston must be dropped ashore.”

Harkaway thought it over for a few moments.

“Yes, Jefferson,” he said, presently, “I think you are right, this will do. He can't well starve here, and it will be better than dropping him amongst the civilised people.”

A boat was manned, and provisioned, and lowered.

Then Hunston was brought up from below.

His face had never changed since the first moment that he had recovered from the great shock of the flogging he had received.

Apparently there was some fixed purpose in his mind now that it would take much to uproot.

He never said a word when they came to fetch him.

He was not a little anxious to know all about it, but such was his pride that he would have perished sooner than breathe a word.

As he was lowered into the boat, Harkaway just gave him to understand what he was going to do in a few hurriedly−chosen words.

“We are going to put you ashore here, Hunston; not that you have any right to expect the least consideration at our hands, but we do not wish to have it on our consciences that you have been badly treated by us. You will be left here, far away from any human habitation, where you can do no harm, at least, for some time to come. We shall leave you these provisions, but we have no arms or ammunition to give you.”

Hunston listened silently—impassively to these words.

Not the slightest change in the expression of his countenance indicated that he heard the words which been addressed to him.

“You are going, and our ways through the rest of our lives may be widely separated. We may never meet again. It will be some gratification to you to know that you have once more most keenly disappointed me—that I would have given much to see the least signs of repentance in you—that the greatest delight would have been for me to say to myself 'At least I have conquered the evil in that man's nature by showing him a good return for his vicious acts, and turned a bitter enemy into a friend,' but that was a forlorn hope. May you live to repent your evil courses.”

Hunston turned.

Not a word escaped him.

The boat pulled off from the vessel, and in the same sullen silence he was landed with his rations.

There were forty pounds of hard biscuits, a good twenty pounds of salt beef, besides rice, flour, a jar of water, and other matters which might be necessary, should he fail to fall in with the means of getting food and drink for some considerable time.

But when that was gone he might starve.

THE END.