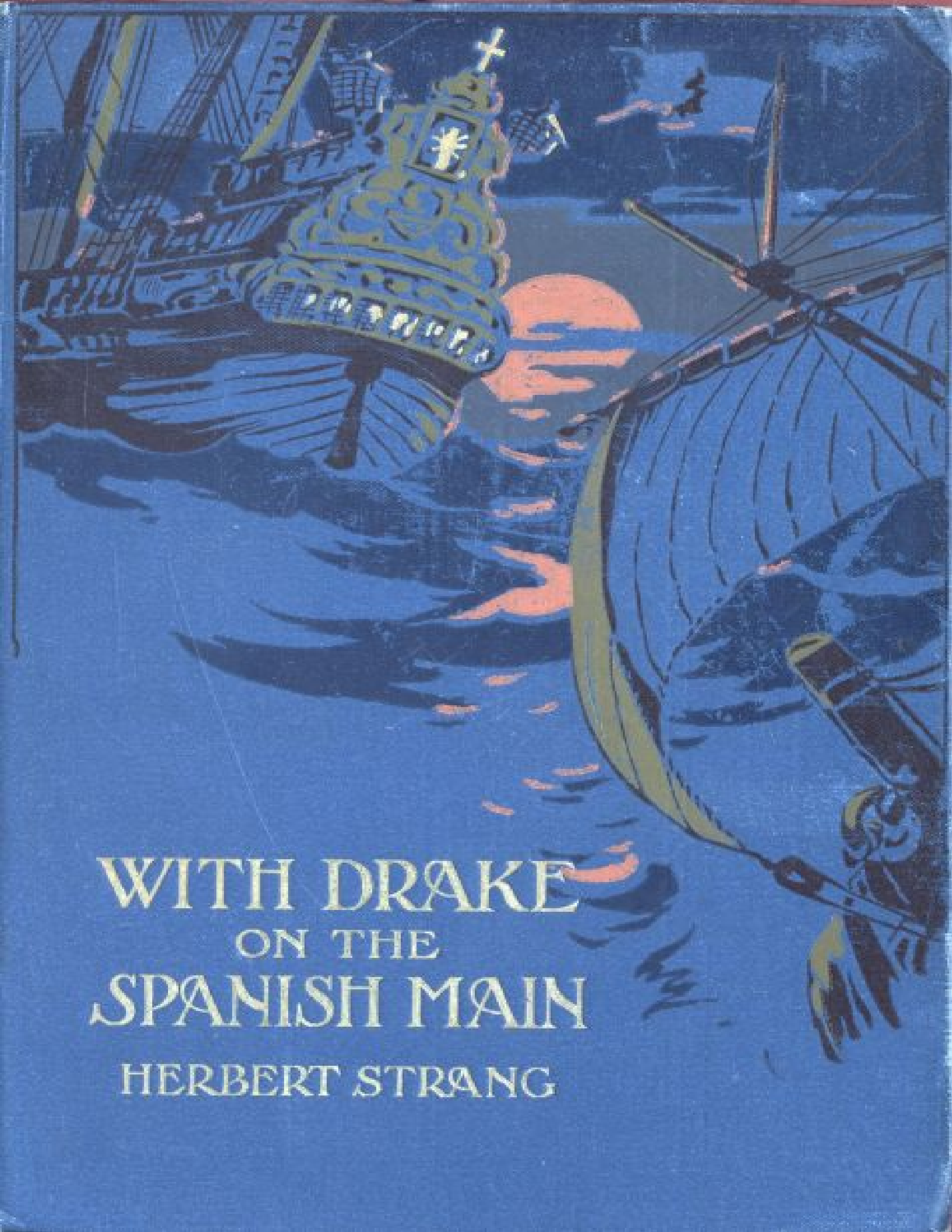

WITH DRAKE ON THE SPANISH MAIN

HERBERT STRANG

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"The Spaniard swung round."

"The Spaniard swung round."

WITH DRAKE ON THE SPANISH MAIN

BY

HERBERT STRANG

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PREFACE

The romancer, in choosing as the setting for a tale the period of a man who looms large in history, finds himself on the horns of a dilemma. He cannot place his fictional near his historical hero without either dwarfing the former until the young reader ceases to find him interesting, or robbing the latter of some of the glamour with which history invests him.

In the following pages I have tried to meet the difficulty by making Francis Drake the presiding genius of the story. The deeds of Dennis Hazelrig are akin to those of Drake; the same spirit of adventure dominates them: and when, in the course of the story, the real and the fictitious personages meet, it is, I trust, without loss of dignity to either.

HERBERT STRANG.

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Dennis saves Mirandola

"Captain singled out Captain"

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"A shot fell immediately in their wake"

Map to illustrate Drake's adventures

"The seaman flung him bodily at the fourth Spaniard."

CHAPTER I

Jetsam

Daybreak! But, eastward, no glory of dawn. Black thundrous clouds roll sullenly across a livid sky, riven at moments by pale zigzags of flame. Rain tumbles in cascades. League upon league of white-crested waves chase one another in fury, hissing, roaring as they hurl themselves upon a stubborn shore, only to be broken and thrown back

into the seething turmoil. The wind outstrips them, shrieking as it cleaves a way through the massed foliage, in mad haste to reach the mainland and smite the yielding tops of Darien's palms and pines.

The shelving sandy beach is strewed with the jetsam of the storm. Here, a tangled heap of seaweed, left by a breaker when, spent with its own rage, it falls back baffled. There, a log of wood, hard by nameless creatures of the sea, destroyed by the fury of their own element. And here, high up the strand, beneath a bank overgrown with large-leaved plants, lies a human form, huddled, motionless.

The waves do not touch it now; the storm has exhausted itself; the tide is ebbing. Minute by minute the sea becomes less boisterous; the strip of sand widens; the rain ceases. By and by the sun breaks through the eastern sky, and, gathering strength, disperses the lingering clouds and flings his radiance over the scene. His beams, falling aslant through a gap in the cliffs, strike upon the draggled form on the sand; it stirs slightly, stretching itself as a leaf uncurls. At last, when the air quivers with heat, and all things lie under a shimmering haze, Dennis Hazelrig heaves a sigh, opens his eyes, and looks amazedly about him.

His eyes close; for some minutes he remains still; then he lifts himself slightly, falls back with a gasp, and lies again as one dead. But Nature is recovering under the beneficent rays. Pigeons are cooing in the branches above; parrots are screaming; insects drone their burden; and when a mosquito, adventuring forth, alights on a human cheek, and tastes, Dennis is stung once more into consciousness. He starts up, brushes the marauder away, staggers to his feet, and, to prevent himself from falling, clutches at a tuft of grass in the overhanging bank. Its thin blade-like edge draws blood from his hand, and he looks at the red stain as at some strange phenomenon. Then he laughs huskily, checks the sound as though it too is unfamiliar, and laughs again—a short sobbing laugh.

"Certes, I am alive!" he mutters.

An hour or two passed before Dennis ventured once more to try his tottering legs. The sun's heat had dried his clothes, which, as he ruefully observed, had been so rent by the buffeting waves that they hung upon him precariously. But in the same genial warmth his strength was returning, and though all his body ached, he could now move without a stagger. Catching sight of some clams near him, he was conscious of a vast emptiness within, and felt for the clasp-knife which he was wont to wear slung about his waist. It still hung upon its chain. He had opened and eaten, ravenously, a dozen of the shellfish before he realized that after all his thirst exceeded his hunger, and he looked round for a spring of fresh water. He walked some paces along the shore, groaning with every movement, until his ear caught the musical ripple of a stream, and he saw a rivulet flowing across the sand from a narrow water-course in the cliff. In an instant he was down on his knees, drinking his fill.

Refreshed with the draught, he rose and began to consider. He was alive: that was the first thing. It seemed marvellous to him. The tornado had ceased. Looking round, he could hardly believe that the sea now so calm was the same sea which, but a few hours before, had been a raging monster. As far as the eye could scan it stretched away, shimmering in the sunlight, only a white crest here and there giving sign of its late disturbance. Not a sail broke the line of the horizon. What had become of the *Maid Marian* and her crew and his companion adventurers on board? Had they, had any of them, been cast ashore like himself, on some other part of this strange coast? If he had escaped, why not others? There was something cheering in the thought, and instinctively he braced himself for a search when, remembering that awful night—the amazing suddenness of the blast that struck the bark, rending the sails like ribands, snapping the mainmast like a reed, the tumultuous waves, the crashing thunder, the bursts of lightning, the deluge that poured down from the heavens—as he remembered these battling elements he shuddered involuntarily; could it be otherwise than by a miracle that he had survived?

He lived over again his last conscious moments. The mainmast had gone by the board. He heard the hoarse shout of Miles Barton the master, calling upon the men to cut away the wreckage. He was with them at the task, struggling to keep his feet, when the gallant vessel staggered under the onslaught of a tremendous sea, and he was swept off her deck. He heard cries all around him, but could see nothing for the darkness and the blinding rain. Striving to keep his head above water, he felt his strength failing, so puny was it against the might of the passionate waves, when he encountered a floating spar, and clung to it with the tenacity of despair. After that he knew nothing. His grip must have relaxed, for the spar was not near him when he awoke to consciousness on the beach. Yet it seemed that this had been his salvation. He must have held to it until near the shore; then some mountainous breaker

had torn him away and hurled him to the spot where he had lately opened his eyes again upon the world.

Hapless bark! It was scarcely possible that she had survived the hurricane. And what of the souls on board with him? What of Miles Barton, the bluff sea-dog her master, and his cheery crew, and the score of gallant gentlemen who had sailed out of Plymouth Sound but two months before, gay, high-hearted adventurers for the Spanish Main? Where was Sir Martin Blunt, the blithe captain of the band, and Philip Masterton, and Harry Greville, and Francis Tring, all young men of mettle, whom Dennis was proud to call his friends, and who, though but little his elders in years, had seen and done things in the great world that made him burn with envious admiration? Alas! he could not but fear that the sea had swallowed them.

But then again came the thought: might not Fortune have befriended them too? Why imagine the worst? And Dennis thrust sad thought from his mind; hope was not dead. His meal had given him strength to search, and search he would.

He looked about him. The sandy beach was narrow. It was overhung by cliffs of varying height, in parts merely a low bank, in parts reaching an altitude of perhaps forty or fifty feet. They were covered with the dense vegetation of the tropics. Some distance to the north of where he stood the receding tide had left bare a long ledge of massive rock, running up into the highest part of the cliff. To the south the shore was less rocky, and within half a mile curved round to the east. It was in this direction that he decided to go.

But he had not walked far along the glistening sand when he suddenly bethought himself. Signs of life there had yet been none, save the cries of birds from the trees above him. But what if he came upon a fishing village, and found himself among enemies—the wild red men of whom he had heard, the Spaniards of whose terrible deeds returning navigators made such grim tales for the winter nights at home? Where was he? On some shore of the Caribbean Sea, he made no doubt, for only the day before, when the *Maid Marian* was sailing merrily westward, Sir Martin had declared, and old Miles had borne him out, that but a few more days would bring them to the point where they expected to meet other adventurers who had preceded them on the same quest for excitement and gain.

And Dennis halted as one dazed when the full sense of his calamity was borne in upon him. He was alone!—alone! There might be, for all he knew, thousands of people almost within hail of him; but he was none the less alone, for they would be of another race, speaking another tongue, unfriendly, hostile. He sat down on a smooth rock and, resting his elbows on his knees and his chin on his hands, stared moodily out to sea. Between him and all that he held dear stretched this wide ocean for thousands of miles. In utter hopelessness he wondered why it had not swallowed him up with all his comrades, instead of casting him here, a battered miserable body.

The mood passed. He had escaped the perils of the sea, not by his own strength, but by the hand of Providence. If perchance he had more to fear from man than from nature—why, it behoved him, an English boy, and a Devon boy to boot, to face his destiny with a stout heart. After all, he was of the same stuff as Master Walter Raleigh and Master Francis Drake and many another bold man of Devon. He could not think that any one of them, in his situation, would give way to black despair; and, lifting his aching body from the shore, he walked on: he would at least learn somewhat of his surroundings.

The beach, he found, bore gradually to the left, so that he could see but a short distance ahead. Still he encountered no signs of life, save here and there a scuttling crab, and the rank plant growths above him, whence now and again a bird fluttered out and wheeled screaming about his head, and then soared clattering into the foliage. Soon he tired of this monotonous tramping over sand, which appeared to lead no whither; and observing at length a cleft in the rocks, whence a shallow stream swiftly poured itself upon the beach, he bethought himself he might more quickly make a discovery if he pushed his way up the water-course, which must by and by lead to higher ground. He turned in obedience to this impulse, waded through the stream, that wound this way and that between banks thickly covered with vegetation, and after what seemed an eternity to his aching limbs, found himself upon a cliff overlooking the sea. His wandering had brought him by a circuit to a point north of the spot where he had awoke to consciousness.

The cliff on which he stood was much higher than the surrounding country. To right and left the ground shelved downwards, and he now perceived that the coast on both sides had an inward trend; that, in fact, the cliff was also a promontory. Turning round, he found that his view was blocked by the trees except in one direction, where a sudden dip in the ground gave him an outlook over several miles. And there, surely, at the far end of the vista, was the sea

again. For the first time the suspicion occurred to him that he had been cast upon an island.

He went to the farthest point of the cliff to scan more carefully the horizon. Looking across the sea, which from the beach had seemed an unbroken plain, he now saw in the far distance several dark vague shapes rising a little above the surface. These must be islands. To the north, somewhat nearer to him, and somewhat more definite, were similar forms, which seemed to grow in size during the hour or more he watched them, no doubt owing to the fall of the tide. Far to the south he descried a long dark bar upon the horizon; this must be land, many miles away, probably the mainland. His view to the east being almost entirely shut out by the foliage, he could feel no certainty that his suspicion was justified; but he felt a stirring of interest and excitement now: supposing it were indeed an island, how did the discovery bear upon his lot?

Once more he turned and gazed along the valley at whose end he saw the sea. It could not be many miles away; perhaps in an hour or so he could reach it. The island, apparently, was not a large one, so that he could not go far without meeting its inhabitants. He looked around for any signs of habitation—a roof-top, a column of smoke; but there was none. Next moment he reflected that, if the island were small, it would not take him long to make its circuit and search every yard of the beach for tracks of his late comrades—of the *Maid Marian* too. Still cherishing a hope that some might have survived like himself, he set off to descend the cliff towards the beach, every downward step racking his bruised limbs and strained joints. When he gained the beach, he once more tramped southward, his eagerness lending him speed. He passed the water-course up which he had struck inland, and soon after came upon scattered articles of wreckage, among them the broken topmast of the *Maid Marian*. With a sigh for his lost comrades he passed on.

The sun had risen high in the heavens, and Dennis was fain to rest.

"I'm a poor battered hulk," he said aloud, finding some little solace in the sound of his voice, "and hungry—how hungry I am!"

He looked around for food, spied some shell-fish and ate them raw, quenching the ensuing thirst at another stream that rippled down from the interior. The feeling of nervousness lest he should encounter strangers again took hold upon him, and he felt a desire to hide. He found himself casting uneasy, almost terrified glances around him from the nook in which he was now resting, somewhat sheltered from the sun's fierce rays. Then, conquering the feeling, he rose again to continue his search of the beach. He must by and by, he thought, come upon some quay or harbour. When he should see it, he would halt and consider his course of action: whether to advance and risk the meeting with strangers, or to retreat until with recovered strength and a clearer mind he could prepare himself for what might be in store.

As he proceeded, he noticed that the jungle frequently approached to within a few feet of the mass of weed that marked high-water. At one spot he discovered, almost buried in the sand, the worm-eaten stern-post of a vessel. He could distinguish one or two letters of her name. Many a ship, he doubted not, had been wrecked on this coast, many a hapless wight had been cast up by the tide, alive or dead. By and by he came, on the southern side of the island, to high cliffs, and he set about scaling that which offered the easiest ascent, to obtain a view of sea and land from this point of vantage also. It was densely wooded, and as he mounted he heard, besides the cries of startled birds, other sounds that struck uncannily upon his ear. In his weakened state any new note in these sounds set his nerves tingling, and more than once he stopped, and could scarcely prevent himself from turning and speeding back to the beach, where at least there was nothing to cause him fresh tremors.

Near the top of the cliff the wood thinned away somewhat, and when he reached its highest point he found himself on a stretch of greensward. Northward the ground sloped gently down to a clump of trees, of a species unknown to him, tall, with slender trunks, which it seemed to him he could climb as easily as the masts on the *Maid Marian*. He made his way to them, half minded to swarm up the tallest of the group, so that from its summit he might gain a view, possibly, over the whole island, and solve the question that troubled him—whether somewhere upon it there was a settlement of men. Only when he reached the foot of the trunk did he remember his weakness. He stood leaning against it, and gazing up its length felt that at present his muscles were incapable of the feat.

All at once his eyes became fixed in his head. Travelling to the top, where a mass of foliage crowned the towering stem, they had lighted upon a face, that seemed to be peering at him from between the leaves. The feeling of fright that had before almost paralysed him seized him again. But next moment he laughed aloud.

"Ninny that I am!" he murmured. "Afraid of a monkey!"

He looked again. The monkey, a large long-tailed specimen of its kind, was gazing at him gravely, with a look so human that it reminded him of his old schoolmaster at Winchester. With the sportive instinct of a boy—Dennis was not yet seventeen—he stooped, picked up a stout piece of fallen branch, and flung it upward.

"Stir, Sir Monkey!" he cried. "I hail thee as the lord of this island!"

The wood struck the branch on which the monkey was perched. Chattering angrily, it flung its long arms around the branch above, and swung itself up, resting there, blinking and showing its teeth at this unmannerly intruder.

"A big fellow indeed!" said Dennis to himself. "I will not climb. If the beast is angered, as he seems, he would be no mean foe in his high perch. I'll not try a bout with you, Sir Monkey. For this time, farewell!"

And he went on, smiling a little as he became conscious that the meeting with the monkey had cheered him.

CHAPTER II

Sea-Girt

Besides the birds, and the ground animals which he heard at times scurrying through the undergrowth, the sole inhabitant of the island that Dennis had yet discovered was a monkey. Though he was beginning to suspect that his fears of encountering hostile human folk had been needless, he still felt a timid reluctance to leave the coast-line for the interior; and having given up for the present his idea of climbing a tree to obtain a wider view, he contented himself with walking to the top of the cliff, to continue his observations from that point. His native courage was returning; yet, as he mounted the cliff, he moved for the most part under cover of the trees; the dread of possible enemies still made him wary, though every now and then he forgot his precautions, only remembering them again when the sense of his loneliness forced itself upon him, or when he was momentarily startled by a sudden sound.

Panting a little from his exertions when he gained the summit, conscious of his bodily weakness, of bruised limbs and strained sinews, he looked eagerly around. Eastward stretched an illimitable expanse of sea; he scanned it longingly, yet doubtfully, for while it was from that quarter, or from the channel between the island and the mainland, that he might hope for rescue from a friendly ship, it was thence also that he might be descried perchance by an enemy. He sat down on the grass, once more yielding to the heavy sense of forlornness, and thinking sadly of his lost companions. How long he remained there he knew not; his mind wandered a little: he thought afterwards that he had probably slept, for he suddenly awoke to the consciousness of a gnawing hunger. He had walked far, and the few shell-fish he had picked up on the shore gave but meagre sustenance. Stiff and cramped, he rose to search again for food.

There was nothing edible in his immediate neighbourhood. The trees sprang to a lofty height, and bore no fruit. Plucking up his courage, he made his way slowly down the slope towards the middle of the island. The vegetation grew thicker as he proceeded; there was no path or road; all was a wild tangle. At first he saw nothing wherewith to ease his pangs; never in his life had he taken a thought for his next meal; it was a new experience. Often enough at home he had plucked fruits as they grew; he remembered with a strange homesick feeling many a boyish depredation upon neighbouring orchards, out of sheer mischief, not from a longing for food. But there were no apple-trees or plum-trees here. And when at last he came upon a broad-leaved tree upon which grew huge clusters of a yellowish fruit, in shape like monstrous pea-pods, he hesitated, wondering whether this might not be one of those evil trees of which he had heard, one taste of which would turn his skin black, and fire him with a raging thirst, and afflict him with a madness whose end was death. But his natural appetite would not be gainsaid. With hope and misgiving mingled he at last stretched up his hand and plucked one of the tempting pods, and stripped off the skin, and nibbled a morsel of the soft fruit within. It was delicious; but so was the devil's fruit of mariners' tales—the more delicious the more poisonous. Somewhat anxiously he waited; there was no change in the colour of his skin;

he watched it through the rents of his tattered garments; and indeed it seemed to him that any change would be for the better, for he perceived for the first time that he was already black and blue with bruises. He bit off another and a larger piece; then, with the ravenous haste of one long fasting, he let prudence fly, and ate the whole fruit, and another, and another, until he saw with surprise and qualms that his feet were encircled by a ring of empty skins. But he felt astonishingly refreshed and invigorated; he must eat one more; and thus, timorously and recklessly, he made acquaintance with the banana.

Of water for drink there was abundance. He drank gladly at a stream, and wandered on. It was strange that he no longer felt alone. He saw no man, nor any trace of one; he had become accustomed now to the rustle of birds and the swish of four-footed creatures moving amid the greenwood; what then caused him to look apprehensively around? What was this odd feeling of expectation that possessed him? There was nothing to account for it, and by and by the nervousness which had left him during his search for food returned in greater force. It was not lessened when he suddenly became aware that the sun was setting. Darkness, he knew, would soon envelop him, and there came with a rush upon his mind the memory of his early childhood, when night, with its silence, its blackness, had filled him with terror. He felt that a night in the solitude of these unfamiliar trees would be unbearable, and, guiding himself by the sunset glow, he hurriedly plunged through the jungle towards the shore. There, under the open sky, he could feel more at ease.

His course brought him to the beach on the southern side, where, in the morning, he remembered having seen, though in his despondency he had not heeded, a number of half-rotten staves of casks. These might, he thought, serve him for making a rude shelter. He soon found the spot, and then noticed, what had escaped his dazed observation before, that close by the staves there lay a medley of stripped branches. Had some one, at some time, built himself of these materials a shelter in that very place? He gathered the stuff together and rigged up a crazy hut, such as he had seen erected by shepherds on the moors of Devon. The day had been hot, but he knew from his experience on shipboard that the nights were cold; already he felt a sharpness in the air, and shivered in his tatters. The hut would defend him somewhat from the chill of night.

Another fear seized upon him with the approach of dark. His mind had been so occupied with thoughts of human enemies that the possibility of the island harbouring wild beasts had not, in the daylight, occurred to him. The darkness, he knew, brought forth small and great beasts; and he remembered with a shudder the tales told him by one of the hardy adventurers on board the *Maid Marian*—of packs of wild dogs that scoured these tropic woods, devouring sleeping men; of the hideous cayman, that lurked upon the shore, and, having swallowed hundredweights of stones to increase its heaviness, seized upon some unwary creature, and dragged it down into the watery depths, to feast upon it at leisure. All wild beasts, he had heard, were afraid of fire; he had his flint and steel, secure in a leather pouch upon his girdle; but he had no dry timber; the sodden wood of the staves and branches of which he had built his hut would be useless, and he shrank from issuing forth into the now darkening woods to find material that would serve. He comforted himself with the recollection that not once during his tramp around the island had he seen any animal larger than a hare, save the monkey; and he resigned himself to make the best of what he feared would be a cheerless night.

The dark fell rapidly, again he had that strange feeling that he was not alone. He went to the entrance of the hut, where he had drawn some of the worm-eaten branches, strung together with a few creepers, across as a door. Peering out, he saw nothing but the darkened cliffs and the sea, heard nothing but the wash of the surf, the rustle of the breeze, and the soft tones of wood-pigeons. He returned to the rear of the cabin, where he had strewed leaves for his couch. As he lay back upon it and looked up to the roof he started, and instinctively seized a branch for protection: above him shone two greenish eyes peeping through one of the many gaps. His hasty movement disturbed the watcher, and Dennis heaved a sigh of relief as he heard a shrill chattering above, and knew it for the gibber of a monkey. Springing up he dashed out of the cabin to drive the intruder away. He was just in time to see the monkey springing up the nearest tree.

It was long before he fell asleep. Then his rest was fitful and disturbed, not only through his over-wrought nerves, but by the nocturnal cries of creatures in the forest, and the attentions of insects, which nipped and stung with importunate malice. In spite even of them, however, he slept; and when with the rising of the sun they betook their satiated bodies elsewhere, he lay till the morning was drawing towards noon in the sound sleep of exhausted nature.

Opening his eyes upon bright day, he was tempted by the smoothness of the sea to bathe. When he flung off his

clothes he laughed to see the parti-coloured patches on his skin. Blue, and yellow, and black, the bruises reminded him of his battering in the storm, and his laughter turned to sighing as he thought once more of his comrades and their hapless fate. But in the physical joy of swimming he again plucked up heart, and he left the stinging water with a most healthy hunger. The recollection of his feast of fruit drew him into the woodland. He wandered long before he lighted upon the banana grove, and though, in the course of roaming, he saw other fruit-bearing trees, he resisted for the present the temptation to climb and taste; when once his hunger was appeased by the fruit he knew, he could more safely make an experiment on the unknown.

He saw, too, many animals which had escaped his notice previously. There were hedgehogs, and tortoises, and giant spiders, and scorpions to which he gave a wide berth; but he caught no glimpse of any four-footed beast to cause him dread, and having by this time made up his mind that there were no human beings on the island, he went more fearlessly, with a readier eye to note the features of his new abode.

Happening once to halt and glance back he saw, perched in the branches of a tree not many yards away, a monkey. Was it the same, he wondered, as that which had peered at him out of the tree he had thought of climbing, and pried upon him in his humble cabin? It seemed to be of the same size; it had spindly limbs and a long slender tail; but probably there was a colony of the strange creatures on the island.

"Good morrow, Sir Monkey," he said, again finding a pleasure in the sound of his voice. "Are you lonely too? You were not, surely, cast like me upon this island, far away from kith and kin. You have a wise and solemn look: what secrets do you harbour in that shallow skull of yours? And what do you think of me, I wonder, when you look at me with those cunning little eyes? I wish you could speak, for here am I prating to myself like an old gossip of eighty."

As he moved on it was very soon clear that the monkey was dogging him. He amused himself by putting the matter to the test. When he sat down, the monkey stopped, and remained almost perfectly still, partially concealing itself among the leaves. When Dennis rose and went on his way the monkey followed, springing from branch to branch with amazing dexterity, always keeping at a distance. Dennis became interested, fascinated, as he watched the movements of the agile creature.

"Truly, Sir Monkey," he said, "I begin to wish I had a tail."

And as the day wore on, and the monkey kept pace with him wherever he went, he began to find in its presence something of the comfort of human companionship. Once, as he sat resting under a tree, the broken skin of a fruit he had eyed longingly fell within a couple of yards of him, and looking up he saw the monkey sucking with relish at another of the same kind.

"Aha! my fine fellow," said Dennis, "you have something of a man about you, and mayhap what is good for you is good for me too."

And he climbed a tree on which the pale yellow fruit was hanging, and plucked one, and made a wry mouth at his first taste of the tartish lime.

Thus the day passed in aimless yet not unprofitable wandering. Warned by his experience of the previous night, he resolved to prepare his shelter somewhat earlier. Where should it be? He was determined not to go back to the cabin, for the insects had plagued him there unmercifully, and he could only ward them off by means of a fire. But flame by night and smoke by day rising from the shore would assuredly provoke curiosity among the crew of any passing ship; and since, of the vessels likely to pass in these latitudes, the most would undoubtedly be Spaniards, he was loath to attract visitors who might prove so eminently undesirable. Yet, as he knew from his experience in woods at home, the insects would be even more numerous inland than at the shore. A fire he must have, and it struck him that if he could find, somewhere in the middle of the island, a sheltered hollow, he might safely kindle there a few sticks, trusting that the over-arching foliage would prevent a glow in the sky, and that the smoke, in the night-time, would pass unobserved.

About a mile from the edge of the eastern cliff was a spring whence a little stream flowed westward. At its source but an inch or two wide, it gathered volume on its winding course, and Dennis, tracking it, wondering by what circuit it would finally reach the sea, discovered that it ran at length into a somewhat extensive marsh. He knew

nothing about rainfall and land drainage, but being a lad of some powers of observation and reasoning, he was not long in coming to the conclusion that the marsh collected as in a cup the water that fell on the surrounding high ground during such torrential rains as had fallen on the night of the storm. It was clear that there must be an outlet, or the marsh would be a lake, and this outlet he found amid thick undergrowth towards the western cliff near which he had been thrown by the sea.

Penetrating the dense jungle, he discovered that the outflow poured through a channel some three feet deep. Only a small stream now trickled down its centre; the banks were sandy and dry, and the interlaced foliage so arched it over, that Dennis decided he might rest in it secure from observation, and even run the risk of kindling a fire at night. It seemed scarcely necessary to bring the staves of his cabin over several miles of difficult country to this spot; the trees themselves formed a sufficient shelter; but with his clasp-knife he cleared away some of the undergrowth, and lopped off a few low-growing branches to make a little enclosure; and by the time the natural shade deepened at the approach of night, he had fenced in a few square yards and scooped out a hollow in the middle for his fire.

All the time he was working the monkey watched every movement from a branch overhead. Dennis was not at first aware of the animal's presence, so closely hidden was it by the foliage. Only when he struck a spark from his flint, and after some ineffectual attempts succeeded in blowing up a flame, did the monkey reveal its hiding-place by a little gibber of amazement.

"So ho! my friend," cried Dennis, looking up vainly. "You haunt me like a familiar. Have you never seen a fire? Do not let your curiosity tempt you too far, for, much as I value your company, I had rather you remained at your present comfortable distance until I know you a little better. Play the sentinel, Sir Monkey, if you will."

Dennis felt very well satisfied with his contrivance as he sat by the fire, eating a supper of bananas before laying himself down on a bed of leaves. The smoke defended him somewhat from the insect pests; the warmth was comforting; and the cheerful glow gave him a sense of homeness and well-being. He fed the fire more than once during the night, waking, it seemed, when the diminished heat warned him that the fuel needed replenishing, And when he awoke from his longest spell of sleep the dawn was stealing through the trees, birds were cooing, whistling, chattering overhead, and the monkey, on a low branch, was watching him with unalterable gravity.

CHAPTER III

A Wreck—and Mirandola

Dennis, as he made his breakfast, pondered deeply on the situation, taking the monkey in to his confidence. "Could we change parts, Sir Monkey—if I were you, and you were Dennis Hazelrig, what would you do? This is your island: we will call it yours; I am your guest. You seem to be a solitary creature like myself: are you miserable, I wonder? Does your loneliness trouble you? There is food for us both: it is so warm that for the present, at least, I need no more clothes than you; neither of us will starve. How old are you? You look wise enough to be very old. Am I to remain on this island until I have a beard as long and white as Sir Parson's at home? Oh, you cannot understand what I say, for all your wise look: you cannot know what a wretched mortal I am. What can I do?"

The monkey only blinked at him, and plucked a dark plum-like fruit from the bough and munched it.

For a time Dennis sat listless, feeling too wretched even to move from the spot. Then he got up and made his way back to the cliff. He stood on the summit, scanning the whole circumference of the shining sea. Not a sail was in sight. He scarcely knew whether he was disappointed or not. Supposing a vessel hove into view, he durst not try to attract the attention of some one on board. If it were English it would be welcome as a spar to a drowning man. If it were Spanish, he might as well jump into the maw of some sea monster. Yet how could he discover its nationality without at the same time betraying his presence? Several times during that third day he climbed to the same spot, and looked out with the same eagerness; not one glimpse did he catch of a white wing upon the water; and he always

turned away with the same uncertainty.

He spent hours in roaming, as aimlessly as before, along the beach and through the woodland. Coming in the course of the day to the cliff near which he had been cast ashore, he remembered that hitherto he had not made a complete circuit of the island; the beach northward appeared to be barred by huge masses of rock. In his present mood he had no curiosity to see what lay beyond; he supposed indeed that, if he did care to clamber toilsomely over the barrier, he would simply arrive at a point of the beach which he had already reached from the other side.

But later in the day, when the tedium of inaction had become unbearable, he started to explore the lower course of the streamlet on whose bank he had slept. He found that the channel gradually widened, the banks growing higher as he neared the sea. By and by he came upon a wide pool on whose rim a mass of seaweed lay rotting in the sun, and stooping out of sheer curiosity he dipped his finger and, tasting, discovered that the water was salt, as he had supposed. Clearly at high tide the sea came thus far up the gully. The entrance was as yet hidden from him by the jutting shoulder of the cliff, but he could hear now the light rumble of surf upon the beach, and he went on, feeling some curiosity to learn whereabouts on the shore he would arrive.

He had taken but a few more steps when, rounding the projecting cliff, he came upon a scene which petrified him with astonishment. Docked in the sand, lying over on her side, was the battered hulk of a two-masted vessel. Her stern was somewhat towards him, and he read, painted there, the word *Maid*; but so familiar was he with her lines that he needed not the rest of the name; this was in very truth the wreck of the *Maid Marian*. Of her two masts only the stumps remained: her deck, inclined towards him, was littered with a medley of rigging; her rudder was gone, part of her bulwarks torn away.

There was an uncanny look about the hapless vessel as she lay there on the sandy beach, at the head of a small bay bounded by the cliffs on either side. Dennis felt just such a thrill as he might have felt had he come suddenly upon the body of a friend. The solitude, the silence, intensified by the rustling wash of the surf, the background of boundless sky and ocean, combined to affect him with a sense of desolation. He felt a shrinking reluctance to approach, and when he had conquered this and stood beneath the vessel's quarter, it was some time before he summoned up the resolution to climb on board. Then he mounted slowly, hesitatingly, by the aid of a loose shroud, holding his breath as if fearful of disturbing a sleeper.

All was intensely still. Multitudinous insects were crawling this way and that among the litter of rigging: save for these there was no sign of life—where for two months as merry a company as ever trod deck had talked and laughed and jested. Dennis felt a lump in his throat as he recalled the little incidents of the voyage: quarter-staff bouts with old Miles Barton, wrestling matches with Harry Greville, sword-play sometimes with the captain himself.

The hatchways were battened down. He shrank from going below. Evening was drawing on; he would leave the wreck now, and return in the morning. And as he set his foot once more on the beach, and began to retrace his steps up the gully, he saw the monkey grinning at him from a tree on the cliff, and was surprised to find how pleasant and consoling was the creature's company.

Hard on his discovery of the wreck came another discovery. Retracing his way up the chine, he noticed a green ledge on the cliff, some few feet above his head, on the right-hand side. The thought occurred to him to rest there for a little; he could reach it by an easy climb. When he gained the ledge, he found that it ran back for a longer distance than he had supposed below. At its further end grew a wild mass of bushes and trees, some of which bore a plum-like fruit that he had seen the monkey eating with enjoyment.

He went to pluck some of the fruit, and penetrating a little way into the thicket, he suddenly perceived that the bushes appeared to grow across an opening in the rock. He pulled the strands aside, and looked into the dark entrance of a cave. The discovery interested him. Might he not find here a better lodging than the rude shelter he had made on the bank of the stream? It was far above high-water mark, and conveniently placed for refuge, being accessible landwards only by the rocky channel, and wholly hidden from observation at sea. Yet he paused before stepping into the cave. Might it not be a wild beast's lair? True, he had seen no animals which he could have any cause to fear, but at this moment of overstrung nerves he felt a child's dread of the dark.

"A proper adventurer, in good sooth!" he said to himself. "The skirts of a nurse would befit me better than an island in the Spanish Main."

And without more ado he took a step forward and entered.

The daylight was quenched within a few feet of the opening. Striking a spark from his flint, he kindled a mass of dried grass he had stowed in his pouch for this purpose, and started as the brief flame lit the interior, for there, almost at his feet, lay a human skeleton. Incontinently he dropped his torch and fled,—scoffing, when once more in the free air, at his lack of courage. But the wish to make this his abode was vanished. He had no fancy to consort with skeletons, and besides, the damp and musty atmosphere of the cave was unpleasant. Without delay he set off to regain his former resting-place.

These new discoveries had introduced a disturbing element into his life on the island. Uninhabited as it apparently was now, clearly it had not always been so. What was the history of that skeleton? Were there others further within the cave? It was not the remains of a castaway, for not even in the fiercest hurricane could the sea penetrate so far. Had some poor wretched fugitive fled there for refuge from a human enemy, and been slain or starved? These questions kept him wakeful long that night, and haunted him even while he slept.

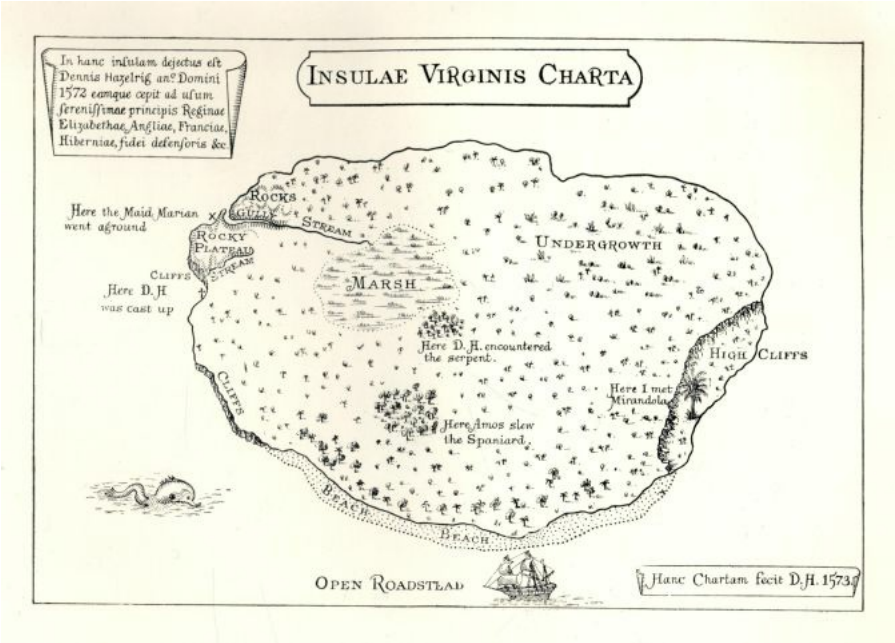
With morning light he thought less of the cave and more of the wreck. The *Maid Marian* had left Plymouth well equipped with stores; the hatchways had been battened down in the storm, and unless the sea had poured in through holes stove in her sides, there must be below decks a considerable quantity of materials that would prove serviceable if his stay on the island was to be lengthened. As soon as he had finished his breakfast he set off to return to the chine. It was no surprise to him now to observe the monkey following, like an attendant lackey.

"Come, Sir Monkey," he said, with an attempt at gaiety, "let us go together and inspect our treasure trove."

He felt again a strange sense of awe as he climbed into the vessel's waist, and trod her planks delicately. But remarking that her position had been shifted slightly by the incoming tide during the night, and that little streams of water were escaping from holes on to the sand, he reflected that it behoved him to lose no time if he wished to secure her contents, for any day a tempest might spring up and shatter the hulk irretrievably. Gulping down the timidity that still troubled him, he climbed to the quarter-deck, and went forward through the broken doorway into the main cabin.

The floor was littered with the possessions of his dear lost comrades. Here was Harry Greville's sword; near it a pistol-case that had belonged to Philip Masterton. He stepped over these and other relics and entered the captain's cabin beyond. Here, too, all was ruin and disorder. Garments, instruments of navigation, an ink-horn, trumpets, a drum, Sir Martin's arms and breastplate, the big leather-bound book in which he wrote his diary of the voyage, lay pell-mell on the floor. Dennis could hardly bear to look upon these mementoes of the lost, and he soon turned his back on them and returned to the open part of the vessel, where he sat for a time, given up to melancholy brooding.

At last he rose, threw off the oppression, and ventured to force up the main hatch forward of the mainmast and descend.



Insulae Virginis Charta

Even now he could not bear to remain long below. He explored the whole length of the vessel in sections, returning at short intervals to breathe the fresh air and enjoy the cheerful sunlight. On one of these occasions he was amused to see that his faithful attendant had now ventured to quit the security of its tree, and was sitting on a rock within a few yards of the vessel, an interested spectator.

His inspection of the contents of the vessel fully rewarded him. In the steward's store abaft the mainmast he found a large number of utensils—an iron pease-pot, a copper fish-kettle, a skimmer, several wooden ladles, a gridiron, a frying-pan, a couple of pipkins, a chafing-dish, a fire-shovel, a pair of bellows, trays, platters, porringers, trenchers, drinking-cans, two well-furnished tinder-boxes, candles, and candlesticks. There were casks of beer and wine, great boxes of biscuits, bags of oatmeal, pease, and salt, whole sides of home-cured bacon, several cheeses, a tierce of vinegar, jars of honey and sugar, flasks of oil, pots of balsam and other salves, a pledget for spreading plasters, a pair of scissors, and several rolls of linen, these last evidently provided for the exigencies of fighting. In the carpenter's store forward there were hammers, awls, chisels, files, a saw, hundreds of nails, both sixpenny and fourpenny. In the armoury were half-pikes, cutlasses, muskets, with bandoliers, rests, and moulds, calivers, barrels of gunpowder and tar, and leaden bullets, such as were to be bought at Plymouth six pounds for threepence. And as to the other appurtenances of a well-found ship, Dennis was almost bewildered by the quantity of them—bolts, and chains, and pulleys, buckets, mops, sand-glasses, horn lanterns, faggots for fuel, fishing-nets, articles of apparel, things for trade and barter: the list would fill a page or two. And he rejoiced exceedingly to find that all were in good condition, even the cheeses: there could not be even a rat on board to commit depredations.

Surveying this great and substantial store, Dennis rubbed his head in puzzlement.

"'Tis a month's work," he said ruefully, "and for one pair of hands. The grave and reverend signor yonder will scarce assist, I trow, indeed, 'tis to be feared he may be thievishly inclined, and needs must I bestow the goods skilfully. Well, to it; time and tide, they say, waits for no man."

He began by carrying the biscuits and other perishables from the hold to the bulwarks, where he rigged up a running tackle, and lowered the bags and boxes to the sand beneath. So intent was he upon his task that it was with a start of surprise and alarm he noticed that the tide was flowing in, and had almost reached the vessel. Threatened with the loss of the precious stores, he was hard put to it to drag and carry and roll them up the beach beyond the reach of the waves, and the sun was far down towards the western horizon before he had them high and dry. By this time the sea was several feet deep around the vessel, and the thought struck him: what if the wreck were to float away on the tide and all the remaining salvage be snatched from him? So grave a misfortune must be prevented. At

once he swam out to the ship, and securely fastening to the stump of the broken mast one of the stout cables he found below, he again plunged into the sea, and in a little had wound the other end about two sturdy trees growing out from the cliff.

While the wreck remained in its present position it was desirable that he should have his lodging close by. There was no shelter on the shore itself, nor did the cliff promise a comfortable abiding place; and his thoughts returned to the cave, which was a good deal nearer than the spot where he had rested the previous night.

Among the things he had brought ashore were a lantern, a tinder-box, and a candle. Fortified with a light, he entered the cave with less tremor than on the previous evening, and looked about him. The cave was deep: his light did not reach the further extremity. The roof was damp and green with moss. There was the skeleton, stretched on the rocky floor. By its side, as he now saw, lay a hatchet of curious shape: a little beyond were some coloured beads. But within the circle of light he discovered no other remnants of humanity; these were not very terrible after all, and he might have taken up his abode there but for the fusty, humid atmosphere. He gave up the idea of sleeping in the cave, but made for himself, just outside and across the entrance, a couch of cloaks taken from the wreck.

Before settling himself for the night, he returned to the base of the cliff, opened with the hatchet one of his precious boxes of biscuits, and taking a handful, sat on a flat rock to make an unaccustomed supper. He had barely eaten a mouthful when he saw a brown figure leap from somewhere above his head, swoop on the still open box, clutch one of the biscuits, and spring away with a long chatter of delight.

"Ah, knave!" he exclaimed, "my prophetic soul avouched that your gravity cloaked an evil bent. You are a thief, Sir Monkey. But I do not grudge you the biscuit; your constancy in attendance merits some reward. A toothsome morsel, is it not? It pleases me to see your pleasure, and—yes, I have it! You are my sole companion on this island; why should we not be friends? You must learn a rightful humility, to be sure. Regarding me as the dispenser of luxuries, will you not love me, with the respectful love of a dependent? Come, let us see."

Rising from his seat in time to forestall a second application to the biscuit box, he went to it, took half a dozen, shut down the lid, and returned to the rock.

"Now, Mirandola," he said—"I name you Mirandola for your wisdom, not your larceny—here in my hand I hold one of the twice-cooked, the fellow of the one you found so delectable. Come and take it, and give thanks."

But the animal sat motionless on its branch, grinning and gibbering.

"You do me wrong to suspect me," Dennis went on. "Well, this is to prove my good faith."

He flung the biscuit on to the sand a few yards away, and laughed quietly to see what ensued. The monkey chattered volubly with excitement, swung itself to a lower branch, then back to its former perch, where it sat for a moment blinking and grinning. Then it descended with extraordinary rapidity to the foot of the tree, crouched behind the trunk while a man might count ten, and with frantic haste, as though fearful its courage would not endure, it darted on all fours across to the biscuit, looking in its movements like a gigantic spider. Seizing the delicacy, it sped back to the tree, squatted on the lowest branch, and set its jaws right merrily to work.

"That is your first lesson, Mirandola," said Dennis, placing the remaining biscuits in his pouch, in full sight of the animal. "The second begins at once; it enjoineth patience."

And heedless of the loud outcry made by the monkey when it saw these choice comestibles disappear, Dennis returned to his couch, and laid himself down for the night.

CHAPTER IV

Salvage

Rising with the sun, Dennis set about making a more careful examination of the hull of the *Maid Marian*. The leaks in her timbers were rather more serious than he had supposed. Clearly they would prevent her from drifting out to sea on the tide, but they would also render her final break-up inevitable in the event of a violent storm from the north-west. There were signs on the face of the cliff that at times the waves dashed over the narrow beach of sand against the wall of rock beyond. In these latitudes, as the fate of the *Maid Marian* proved, storms arose without warning, and with incredible swiftness; and it behoved Dennis to make all speed in saving the ship's stores.

At low tide on this day, and on many that followed, he worked hard at his task. He rigged up a block and pulley in the waist, by means of which he was able to hoist casks and other heavy objects up the hatchways and lower them over the side of the vessel. It was more difficult to convey them from the vessel to a place of safety beyond the reach of the tide. At first he tried to haul them by a rope, but finding soon that he succeeded only in working up a ridge of sand which rendered haulage exhausting and in some cases impossible, he bethought himself of the device of employing rollers, such as he had seen used by fishermen on the beach at home. It was an easy matter, with the tools now at hand, to lop off and strip some straight boughs suited to his purpose, and upon these he brought, slowly and not without pains, the bulkier goods to safe harbourage. The tide always rose about the vessel too soon for his impatience; but the work was arduous, the intervals were really needed for rest, and they gave opportunities of furthering his acquaintance with the monkey.

His relations with Mirandola, indeed, were placed on a sound and satisfactory footing long before he had emptied the hull. The biscuits were invaluable. At intervals, now long, now short, he would throw one towards the monkey, which watched all his doings at the wreck day by day with unfailing regularity. Little by little he diminished the length of his throw, until, on the third day after his first lesson, Mirandola had gained sufficient confidence to approach him to within a few inches. On the fourth day, after keeping the monkey waiting longer than usual, Dennis took a biscuit from his pouch, held it for a moment between his fingers, then put it back again.

"It is time, Mirandola," he said, "that your education was completed. You are, I verily believe, as wise as a serpent; will you not believe that I am harmless as a dove? This is the same biscuit I stowed but now in my pouch; it is for you; it is yours if you will take it mannerly. No, I will not cast it on the sand; it is more seemly to take it from my hand, and, I do assure you, it will be no less relishable. Come, then, dear wiseacre; have I ever deceived you? Show a little confidence in your true friend and well-wisher."

He held forth the biscuit, with an alluring smile. Mirandola cocked his head on one side, gazed at this dispenser of delectable things with a searching solemnity, and then crawled forward with watchful eye, dubiously halting more than once. At length he came to Dennis's feet, and sat up, with so gravely sad an expression that Dennis found it hard not to laugh. Then, thrusting up his long arm, he made a grab at the biscuit.

"Not so, Mirandola," said Dennis, holding it beyond the monkey's reach. "Manners maketh man; assuredly they will not mar monkeys. Ape the gentle philosopher your namesake; be courteous and discreet. Now, once more."

He lowered the biscuit slowly, keeping his eyes on the creature's face. But with a suddenness that took him aback, Mirandola raised himself on his hind legs, flung out an arm, and, before Dennis could withdraw it, held the biscuit in his skinny paw.

"Wellaway!" laughed Dennis. "I may keep my breath to cool my porridge, for all the effect my words have upon your savage nature."

Then, to his surprise, the monkey came to him again, and held out his hand.

"You shall not be disappointed," he said. "Not for the world would I reject your advances. Here is a biscuit, and with this, shall we say, our friendship is sealed."

And it was not long before Mirandola would sit upon his knee, and take food from his hand with all mannerliness; and, its distrust gone, showed itself to be as affectionate and devoted as a dog.

Dennis availed himself in other ways of the hours when the tide interrupted his labour with the stores. There was no lack of planking and tarpaulin in the vessel; these he utilized in building on the ledge, and near a fresh spring that ran out of the cliff, a little hut about two trees that grew near enough together to form uprights for his roof. Then

he erected two small sheds close by, wherein to shelter his goods from the weather. At first he fumbled with the unfamiliar tools, not omitting to pinch his fingers as he hammered in the nails. But he soon acquired a certain dexterity, and was indeed mightily pleased with his handiwork.

Every now and again he made a trip across the island, to discover whether any vessels were in sight. Once or twice he descried a sail on the horizon; once, indeed, he felt some excitement and anxiety as he saw a bark under full sail bearing straight, as he thought, for the shore. But in this he was mistaken; the vessel altered her course, and Dennis, watching her diminishing form, hardly knew whether to be glad or sorry. He was in truth too busy for self-commiseration: work filled his days, unbroken sleep his nights. His feeling of loneliness had almost entirely passed away, for Mirandola was his inseparable companion, and it pleased his fancy to talk to the monkey as to a human being.

So engrossing had his labour been that he had taken no account of the passage of time. It came upon him with a shock, once, that the unnumbered days were flitting away. The idea that he was doomed to grow old upon this island, and linger out his years in endless solitude, struck his imagination with a chill, and set him climbing the cliff in a kind of frenzy, to scan once more the wide horizon for a sail. If at that moment a vessel had hove in sight, he would have flown a flag, fired a musket, to attract attention, reckless what crew it bore, so deep was his yearning to see a fellow man. When the fit passed, it left him with a new desire. Never yet had the possibility occurred to him of leaving the island. Could he construct a raft, or build a boat—nay, was there a chance of making the *Maid Marian* herself, battered as she was, seaworthy? The absurdity of attempting to navigate single-handed a bark of near a hundred tons set him laughing; but the idea suggested a new outlet for his energy, just at the time when the conclusion of his salvage work had bereft him of occupation.

He became fired with the purpose of saving the vessel. The weather hitherto had been perfect; but sooner or later a storm must come, and then the ship would be ground to splinters against the cliff. Was it possible to float her? He had unloaded what he imagined to be a good many tons of stores; thus lightened, could she be moved? If he could succeed in floating her, whither could she be taken? His tour of the island had failed to discover any harbour; there was little to gain and much to lose by allowing himself to drift about aimlessly in such a hulk. Suddenly an idea struck him. Would it not be possible to devise some means of floating her up the gully, round the shoulder of the cliff? Her draught was not great: at high tide the water was deep enough to carry her many yards beyond her present position, to a point where she would be at once invisible from the open sea and protected from the weather.

At the next fall of the tide he made a thorough inspection of the wreck. It was easy to find the leaks, for at every ebb the water that had entered the vessel at the flood gushed out in tiny cascades. Many a time he had seen ships careened and caulked in the dockyard at Plymouth. He had plenty of rope of which to make oakum, and of tar more than enough to meet his needs; in his search through the vessel he had lighted on no caulking iron, but a long nail would serve, and it should go hard with him, he thought, but he would make the old hulk sound and seaworthy ere many days were gone.

He found an unexpected assistant in Mirandola. He had teased out but an inch or two of rope when the monkey squatted down by his side and began with his strong nimble fingers to copy him, looking up in his face with an air of such busy importance that Dennis was fain to lie back and laugh.

"By my troth, Sir Mirandola," he said, "this is friendship indeed. And you outdo me, on my soul; you pick two inches to my one. 'Tis not the daintiest of work for fingers untrained to it, and if it pleases you, why, I will e'en leave it to you, and admire this unwonted usefulness in a philosopher."

But he found that when he ceased, the monkey ceased also.

"Poor knave!" he said. "You see not the end. 'Tis but an apish trick after all. Well, God forbid that I should judge your motive; I am thankful for your help, and we will work together."

Between them the two collaborators soon had a fine heap of oakum ready for use, and a couple of days' hard work at low tide sufficed to caulk all the seams. Mirandola's share in this second part of the job gave Dennis more amusement. The busy creature solemnly dabbed tar on sound parts of the timbers, and chattered with disgust when he discovered that the stuff clung to his hairy skin, defying all his efforts to get rid of it.

"I' faith, I named you more fittingly than I wot," quoth Dennis. "Pico, your illustrious namesake, was a gentleman of rare and delicate taste. Touch pitch and thou art defiled. But a little turpentine, mayhap, will cleanse the outward spots; and as for your inward hurt—what think you of a spread of honey on your biscuit?"

Mirandola thought nobly of the new delicacy, and came in time to look for honey whenever he had imitated Dennis with more than usual energy.

The leaks having been well caulked, Dennis proceeded to pump the water from the lower parts of the hold. He awaited the next high tide with great eagerness. To his joy the vessel floated, and rode fairly upright on her keel. The tide carried her several yards up the beach, leaving her again high and dry at the ebb.

But Dennis now found himself faced by a difficulty. He wished to get the vessel round the shoulder of the cliff, so that the tide might carry her up the chine to the pool below his hut and sheds. The distance was barely eighty yards, but he had noticed, from the movement of a log floating some little way out, that the set of the current was from north to west; so that if once she were allowed to float free, and felt the force of the current, she would probably drift away in the opposite direction from what he desired. On the other hand, if she were driven too high on the beach, she might stick so firmly in the sand that it would be impossible to move her, and then she would lie at the mercy of the first north-west gale.

His little nautical knowledge was at first at a loss.

"Mirandola, your speechless wisdom is of no avail," he said ruefully, as he sat at his fire one evening, feeding the monkey with pease porridge. "You and I are both landsmen; unlike you, I adventured forth, to gain gold, and fight the don Spaniards, if so the fates should ordain. Here is never a Spaniard to fight, and as for gold, the wealth of Croesus would not at this moment benefit me a jot. If I had been bred to the sea, now, I should not be at this pass."

But long cogitation, and another visit to the ship, determined a course of action. The windlass, he discovered, was uninjured, and though it was very stiff, he could still manage to turn it. A big jagged rock jutted out from the cliff near the shoulder round which the vessel must be warped. To this rock he carried a rope from the stump of the mainmast and securely fastened it. This would prevent the vessel from drifting out to sea. Then, with a hatchet from the ship's stores he cut a number of thick branches from the trees along the gully, and pitching them into the pool floated them one by one on to the beach alongside the wreck. There was plenty of rope on board to fashion these into a stout raft, on to which, with the aid of the windlass, he lowered a kedge anchor just sufficiently heavy to hold the vessel in a calm. It was a matter of some difficulty to get the anchor so evenly adjusted on the raft that the latter would not turn turtle; but after some patient manoeuvring Dennis arranged it squarely in the centre, and when the tide came in the whole floated with a fair appearance of stability. Then with a long pole Dennis cautiously punted the raft out beyond the gully, paying out as he went a stout cable, connecting the anchor with the windlass. Some thirty yards beyond the gully, at a point near enough in shore to be beyond the reach of the current, he prepared to drop the anchor. It was too heavy for him even to move; the only plan that suggested itself was to bring about what he had up to that moment been most anxious to prevent—the raft must now be intentionally upset. One by one he cut away the lashings of the outermost logs on the seaward side. At last he felt by the movement of the raft that only his own weight prevented the crazy structure from turning over. He slid from the raft into the sea; the far side sank and the anchor slipped over and went with a thud to the bottom. Then the raft righted itself, and Dennis scrambled aboard.

The rest was easy. When the tide ebbed it carried the wreck inch by inch towards the anchor, for with the aid of the windlass Dennis was able to keep the cable constantly taut, while at the same time he paid out the rope connecting the vessel with the shore. A couple of tides brought him in this way up to the anchor; then, transferring the shore cable to a stout tree some distance up the gully, he slacked off the kedge line when the tide was running up, and allowed the wreck to be carried shorewards. In this way the *Maid Marian* floated slowly up the gully on the flood, and another couple of tides brought her within a few yards of the pool, which he designed for her permanent harbourage.

Below this there was a narrow bar that threatened to baulk him. At low tide, indeed, he had to shovel away a large amount of sand in the middle of the channel, and once came near losing his temper with Mirandola, who, with well-meant industry, and a quite innocent pleasure, set about scooping back the sand as it was dug out. But the animal tired of this fatiguing amusement; the difficulty was overcome; and when at last the vessel rode gently into

the little natural harbour below the hut, Dennis hailed the success of his long toil with a cheerful "Huzza!" and broached a cask of sack. Of this indulgence he partly repented, for the monkey seized upon the empty can when he laid it down, and drained it greedily.

"No, no, my friend," said Dennis, gravely. "Wine maketh glad the heart of man; I do not read that it is anywise a drink for brutes. And all your philosophy would not reconcile me to a drunken Mirandola. 'Be not among wine-bibbers,' says the wisest of kings and men; I bethink me he says also, 'My son, eat thou honey, for it is good!' You shall have honey, my venerable son."

CHAPTER V

The Edge of the Marsh

During his operations about the wreck, Dennis had noticed that the monkey showed a strange aversion for the sea. At low tide, when the vessel was high and dry, he quite cheerfully accompanied his benefactor on board; but as a rule, when he saw the tide rolling in, he chattered angrily, swarmed down the side of the vessel, and posted himself at the nearest point above high-water mark. Only on the one occasion, when he mounted the windlass, did he remain on deck when the tide was at flood; there he seemed to regard himself as out of reach of the waves. Dennis wondered whether the dread of the sea was a characteristic of the monkey tribe, or whether Mirandola had at some time suffered a sea-change which it was determined not to repeat.

He took endless pleasure in studying the amiable creature; and when, his work with the ship being finished, he began once more to take lengthy strolls across the island, he drew a new delight from the companionship of the monkey. The friendship being so firmly established, Mirandola showed off his accomplishments with a freedom he had not displayed when he regarded this newcomer with distrust and suspicion. Dennis laughed to see his antics in the trees. He would curl his long tail about a branch, and swing to and fro with manifest enjoyment. Sometimes, clutching a banana with one hand, he would pick another with one foot, and hold a third to his mouth with the second hand. Sometimes when he saw Dennis holding his forehead in a brown study, he would rub his long gaunt arms over his own brow with a wistful look that brought a smile to the lad's face. He was amiability itself, and showed genuine distress when Dennis took occasion to scold him for some piece of inconvenient prankishness.

Now that his thoughts were no longer engrossed with his salvage work, Dennis more often speculated on his future. The prospect was not very encouraging. Supposing he could carry out his half-formed purpose of building a boat, what chance was there of surviving a voyage across the ocean in a vessel that, untrained as he was in handicraft, must necessarily be a clumsy thing? And unless he could risk an ocean voyage he felt that he had better remain where he was. No European nation but the Spaniards and the Portuguese had settlements on the American coast. What might be expected at the hands of the Spaniards he knew full well. Had he not heard from the lips of one Master John Merridew fearsome tales of their treachery and cruelty? John Merridew had sailed with Captain John Hawkins to the West Indies, with Master Francis Drake as one of the company. Forced by foul weather into the port of St. John de Ulua, the Captain made great account of a certain Spanish gentleman named Augustine de Villa Nueva, and used him like a nobleman. Yet this same Augustine, sitting at dinner one day with the Captain, would certainly have killed him with a poniard which he had secretly in his sleeve, had not one John Chamberlain espied the weapon and prevented the foul deed. And recalling Merridew's narrative, Dennis wondered what had become of those hundred poor wretches who, when victuals ran short, and the ship's company were driven to eat parrots and monkeys and the very rats that swarmed in the hold, preferred to shift for themselves on shore, rather than starve on ship-board. In imagination he saw that touching scene, when the General, as Merridew called Captain Hawkins, gave to each man five yards of cloth, embraced them in turn, counselled them to serve God and love one another; and thus courteously bade them a sorrowful farewell, promising, if God sent him safe to England, to do what he could to bring home such as remained alive. That Captain Hawkins would fulfil his promise Dennis believed; but how many of those Englishmen were still living? He reflected that he at least had food and present safety; compared with theirs his lot was a king's.

But he was not to escape misfortune altogether. One day the storm he had so long been expecting broke over the island, hurling great seas into the mouth of the chine, threatening to dash the *Maid Marian* against the rocks or sweep her out into the ocean. In the midst of pelting, blinding rain Dennis strove to ensure her safety. She wrenched at her anchor; every moment he feared lest her mooring ropes should be snapped; he could do little but keep a watch on the fastenings. And while he was thus watching, a roaring flood passed through the gully from the plateau above, swamping his hut, washing away some of his hardly-won stores; and the fierce blast tore off the roof of one of his sheds, exposing its contents to all the fury of the weather.

Next day he did what he could to repair the damage. Fortunately much of his perishable goods was contained in stout boxes which he always kept securely fastened, and the things he lost were those he could best spare.

In the afternoon of that day, he went across to the opposite side of the island, as he was wont to do at intervals, to take a look-out from the high cliff there. He wondered whether the storm had cast any other ill-fated vessel upon the shore. But, scanning the whole horizon, he saw nothing but league upon league of restless sea.

"Our solitude is not to be disturbed, Mirandola," he said to the monkey, "for which let us be thankful. Or ought we to deplore it? I wish you could speak, my friend, and tell me something of your history. Are you the last of your race, I wonder? Well, so am I. I have no kith nor kin; nor, as it appears, have you. I have a humble estate in an island —to be sure, somewhat larger than this. Now I come to think of it, this island is yours; it is a mark of nobility of soul —or is it poverty of spirit? I cannot say—that you do not regard me as a supplanter. Good Holles, my steward, would not brook the intrusion of any adventurer on my lands. Heigh ho! How fares the old fellow, I wonder? How he shook his old head when I acquainted him with my purpose to join Sir Martin Blunt in his voyage to the Spanish Main! 'God save you, sir!' said he, and asked whether he should sell my whippets! One thing I know, Mirandola: that if it please God to bring me safe home in season, Holles will give me a faithful account of his stewardship. Let me think I am your steward, good my friend. And now let us return to our honey-pot."

On the way back, Dennis struck somewhat to the left of his usual path, to skirt the marsh on its south-western instead of its north-eastern side. It was far larger in area than when he had first seen it; its outlet was too narrow to carry off the surplusage due to the tremendous rains. Dennis was picking his way around the oozy edge, letting his thoughts travel back to the pleasant land of Devon, when suddenly he was brought up short by the sight of a mark in the soft earth, the strangeness of which mightily surprised and perplexed him. Parallel with his own tracks there ran for a few yards a faint ribbon-like track—such a track as might be made by a large cart wheel that had rested very lightly on the surface. It was a single track: following its course, he found that it disappeared into the water, just as he had seen the mark of a cart wheel disappear into a roadside horse-pond at home.

He looked around. There was nothing to account for the mark. He scouted the idea that it had been actually made by a wheel; a vehicle must have been drawn by animals, and there were no hoof-marks to match. With all his puzzling he could find no explanation, and though he looked warily about him as he went on his way, with some return of his old feeling of nervousness, he saw no sign to suggest that the island had been visited.

It was a day or two before he again found himself near the marsh. He had been fishing from the base of the high cliff that formed his usual look-out. A kind of natural pier of broken rock jutted out from the cliff seawards, and the deep water on each side was the favourite resort at high tide of shoals of small fish, which chose it, he supposed, because the depth was not great enough for the ground sharks that sometimes made their appearance off the shore, and the little fish could disport themselves there in security.

Carrying his catch on a string—enough for his own dinner, for Mirandola would not touch it—he passed again by the brink of the marsh, and once more was puzzled by the wheel-like track which he had seen before and been unable to explain. The marsh had somewhat shrunk in the interval; the receding water had left more of the track visible: and the outer soil having been baked hard by the sun, the strange imprint was clearer and more definite.

It occurred to Dennis now to attempt to trace the mark in the opposite direction, away from the point where it disappeared in the water. It speedily grew fainter as he came to harder soil, and he lost it altogether where it entered undergrowth which had no doubt been partially submerged when the marsh was at its highest. But after some search he found it again where it emerged from the rank vegetation, and from that point he traced it with little difficulty, for it kept fairly close to the margin of the lake. Its resemblance to the track of a wheel had now ceased; not even the most rickety of carts, driven by a drunken tranter on a Devonshire lane, could have made such erratic movements as

must have caused this shallow winding mark on the soil. Dennis followed its curves with persistent curiosity, not unmixed with a vague uneasiness. Mirandola accompanied him, springing lightly from bough to bough of the trees nearest the edge of the marsh, descending with extraordinary quickness and loping along the ground where gaps intervened, or the fringe of the woodland belt took a trend inwards.

At length the tracking came perforce to an end. Again the trail disappeared into the water, and Dennis halted, feeling a little vexed that his patience was, after all, to bear no fruit. He looked round for Mirandola. The monkey had disappeared, exploring, no doubt, thought Dennis, a close-packed thicket that came within a few yards of the morass, having apparently crowded out all nobler trees save one slender cedar which, dominating the undergrowth, seemed taller than it really was.

Dennis was about to give up the problem as hopeless and go on his way, when suddenly he heard Mirandola chattering in a manner that was new to him. The moment after, the monkey sprang from the thicket into the tree, and climbed with frantic speed to the very top, where he sat gibbering and shaking with terror. Dennis, wondering what had perturbed him, took a step forward, then started back in a cold shiver. A huge serpent was rearing itself from the midst of the undergrowth and winding its coils about the trunk of the tree.

Mirandola on the topmost branch had now ceased his chattering, and clung, watching the monster with dilated eyes. The poor creature was helpless. To descend from his perch would have been fatal; there was no other tree at hand to which it might escape. Indeed, under the fascination of the serpent's baleful eyes, as it slowly drew its immense coils up the trunk, the monkey lost all power of motion; and Dennis himself, even with the thicket between him and the monster, felt a sort of chill paralysis as he watched its sinister movements. For half a minute he stood rooted to the spot; then, making an effort to throw off this dire oppression, he tried to think of some means of helping the monkey. At that moment of danger, he was conscious for the first time of the strength of his affection for the animal whose companionship had done so much to relieve the awful solitude of the island. Unless he intervened, Mirandola was doomed, and the thought of losing Mirandola filled him with a fierce longing to slay this monster that was crawling inch by inch towards its prey.

His first impulse was to run back to his hut for the gun he kept there ready loaded; but slow as the serpent's progress was, before he could return to the spot the tragedy would have ended. Then he remembered how the reptiles in the woods at home were killed. A blow on the vertebrae crippled them; could he cripple this huge creature, which even yet had not heaved all its length into the tree? His only weapon was the sailor's clasp-knife which he always carried at his girdle. He opened it impulsively, then hesitated. If he failed to hit the vertebrae, and dealt only a flesh wound, he might perchance save the monkey, but could he then save himself? He knew nothing of a boa constrictor's power of movement; yet his instinct told him that, if once enfolded in those monstrous coils, he must inevitably be crushed to death. But he could not stand and see his pet mangled and devoured: the serpent, moving deliberately, as though aware of its victim's paralysis, was not yet beyond his reach. Springing through the undergrowth, he marked a spot some distance from the reptile's tail. The serpent heard his approach, and turned its head slowly in his direction; but a second later Dennis drove his knife with all his force at the centre of the sleek round mass.

Next moment he was thrown sprawling on the ground, by a flick of the tail as the upper part of the serpent's body writhed convulsively under the blow. He jerked himself to his feet and leapt away through the undergrowth in panic fear. A few steps brought him to open ground, and then, crushing down his nervous terror, he looked back. The coils were slipping down the tree, and in a moment it was clear that the serpent's power was gone; its huge bulk moved uncontrollably: its motor force was destroyed. Dennis ventured to enter the thicket again. When the serpent reached the ground, it writhed as he had seen injured eels and earthworms writhe, but its movements were all involuntary; Mirandola was saved.

"Dennis saves Mirandola."

The monkey was now chattering volubly, but still clung to his perch. Clearly he would not venture to descend while his enemy moved. For some time Dennis watched it; then, feeling that he must put an end to its maimed life, he hurried away to fetch his gun. A bullet in the head: and the reptile lay motionless.

Even then some little time elapsed before Mirandola yielded to Dennis's persuasive calls and slid, still somewhat nervously, to the ground. He avoided the reptile's body, and scampered away with shrill cries to the open. When Dennis overtook him, the monkey sprang upon his shoulder, and so they returned to the hut.

After this thrilling experience Dennis felt somewhat less at ease in his peregrinations of the island. He had come to think that he had nothing to fear there so long as it was unvisited by men. But the thickets that gave hiding to one huge reptile might harbour many more. Henceforth he walked more warily, and never ventured far from his hut without a gun.

CHAPTER VI

The Spanish Whip

Dennis had given up the idea of building a boat as a means of escape from the island; but now that time again hung heavy on his hands, he reverted to it as a refuge from the tedium of idleness. It promised to give him much labour, for, unless he stripped the planking from the *Maid Marian*, he must needs fell trees for himself, and prepare his timbers as well as his unskill could devise. The trees of the island were for the most part unknown to him; and he was not aware of the Indian practice of hollowing out a cedar trunk with fire or hatchet. In his wanderings he now began to take note of the different species, with a view to selecting one that would best suit his tools.

One day, when he was strolling through the woodland on this errand, he was amazed, and not a little alarmed, to hear, from some spot far to his right, what seemed to him to be the ring of axes. He halted, incredulous. The island, he was assured, had no other inhabitant; yet he could not be mistaken; the sound of tree-felling reminded him of home, and he felt a sudden deep yearning for the combes and holts of far-off Devon. But this feeling was immediately quelled by a sense of danger. Who were these woodcutters? No friends, he was sure; he had given up hope of finding friends upon these remote coasts. And if not friends, discovery by these spelt death to him, or slavery to which death would be preferable.

He was minded to turn about and seek safety in his hut. Built upon the edge of the chine, it could only be discovered by careful exploration of the woodland, and the chine was all but invisible from the sea. There he might remain in hiding, with a fair chance that he would not be found. But this first impulse passed. He felt an overmastering curiosity to see who these visitors were. Whence had they come, he wondered? Why, if they came from the distant mainland, had they crossed the sea? He could not suppose that wood was lacking upon the shores of the great continent.

Slowly, with infinite caution, he began to thread his way towards the sound. There were open spaces amid the woodland; these he durst not cross, but kept always in the shelter of the trees. He dreaded lest Mirandola should betray him by a cry; but the monkey leapt from bough to bough almost noiselessly, as if he too had taken alarm from the unwonted sound. A few weeks before, Dennis himself would have found it difficult to make his way through the woods and the undergrowth without giving signs of his presence by the snapping of twigs or the rustle of parting foliage; but the abiding sense of danger which had oppressed him during his earlier passages across the island had bred in him a wariness of movement that was now almost as instinctive as in the wild creatures whose lives depended on their caution.

Guiding himself by the sounds, he was drawn towards a grove of trees that lay about two hundred yards from the southern beach. Only a day or two before he had struck his hatchet into one of them, and concluded from its soft white sappy rind that it would not provide fit timber for his boat. Yet it was clearly these trees upon which the unseen woodmen were at work. He stole forward, and coming to a dense fringe of undergrowth beyond which the grove lay, he edged his way into the thicket, and very stealthily pressed the foliage aside until he got a view of what was doing.

The trees grew somewhat far apart, and across a fairly open space he saw the strangers whose unexpected presence was causing him such concern. Five men, stripped to the waist, were hard at work with axes. Four of them had dusky skins of reddish hue; the fifth, a short, thickset, brawny man, the muscles of whose arms showed like great globes, was clearly a white man, though his hands and arms were stained a bright scarlet quite different from the red duskiness of southern natives, or the red-brown caused by exposure to sun and wind. As they moved, the five men clanked the chains that fettered their ankles to stout logs of wood. A little apart stood three men looking on, laughing and talking together in a tongue strange to Dennis. They were big swarthy fellows, with soft wide-brimmed hats, each decked with a feather, brown leather doublets and hose, and long boots. Each bore a caliver and a whip.

The sun was high in the heavens, its beams beating down through the trees upon the unprotected backs of the toilers. Sweat was pouring from them. The trees were thick, some at least two yards in circumference; to cut them through needed no slight exertion. The white labourer paused to draw his arm across his reeking brow. Then one of the watchers strolled across from the tree against which he had been lolling, and raising his whip, brought the thong with a stinging cut across the back of the slave who had dared to intermit his labours. A red streak showed livid on the white skin. For a moment it seemed to Dennis, watching the scene, that the victim was about to turn upon his assailant with the axe, his sole weapon. An expression of deadly rage writhed the features of his red, bearded face. His grip tightened upon the axe. But he controlled his impulse with an effort. The warder laughed brutally, flung a taunt, and cracked his whip in the air in challenge and menace. Sullenly the woodman resumed his task, and his persecutor, with another laugh, turned and rejoined his companions, applauded by their grins.

Dennis felt himself stung to anger. This swarthy ruffian, he doubted not, was a Spaniard, a subject of King Philip, once the consort of an English queen. It was not a pleasant introduction to the race dominating the Americas. Apparently Mirandola liked them no better than he, for at the first sight of the strangers the monkey had fled away. Dennis found him a good quarter-mile distant when, taking advantage of an interval during which the Spaniards ate and drank, and the flagging toilers rested, he strode away to a banana grove to refresh himself.

He watched the group till near sundown. Several trees having been felled, the men proceeded to hack off the branches and to chip away the white rind. Then the strange scarlet colour of their arms and hands was explained. The heart of the trees was a brilliant red. As the rind was stripped off, the Spaniards drew near and examined the core, and under their direction the labourers cut and trimmed certain selected logs. The work was still unfinished when the sun went down, and the leader of the Spaniards gave the word for returning to the shore. The logs were struck off the slaves' ankles and replaced by manacles; then they set off. Dennis followed them at a safe distance, and when he came within view of the sea, there was a small vessel riding at anchor some little distance off shore, and the slaves were in the act of dragging a row boat through the white surf. In this they all put off, and darkness covered them up as they regained the ship.

Dennis returned to his hut, joined by the monkey on the way.

"Here is food for thought, Mirandola, my friend," he said. "No fire for us to-night! Are you acquainted with don Spaniards and their ways? You kept a wide berth: have you too suffered at their hands? Who is the poor wretch the ruffian lashed? By his looks he would pass for an Englishman: I hope he is not of English breed. Yet I hope he is: what do you make of that, Mirandola? I protest I love your wise and friendly countenance; but there is something warming to the heart in the sight of one of my own kind, if such he be. We must be up betimes, my friend; maybe the morrow will give us assurance."

Thinking over the incident before he slept, Dennis wondered why the party had returned to the ship. If the purpose of their visit was to obtain any quantity of this strange red wood, doubtless they had several days' work before them; why had they not camped on shore? Perhaps they felt that the slaves were safer on board; perhaps, too, they did not care to weaken the ship's company during the hours of night. It was a small vessel; probably there was not a large number of Spaniards aboard; but doubtless they were all armed like the three who had come ashore, and their slaves, being fettered, would need but a few to control them. Dennis hoped that when they returned next day they would not make too thorough a search for similar groves elsewhere in the island, for if they should discover his hut, he had little doubt they would seek to impress him into the hapless gang.

His sleep was restless. Many times he woke with a start and sprang up trembling, feeling that the Spaniards were on his track. At daybreak he was on his way towards the western shore, and took up his position in the same thicket, the leafy screen being almost impenetrable. The monkey was with him now; but when his ears caught first the measured thud of oars, then the clank of chains drawing nearer, Mirandola chattered angrily, sprang into a tree, and disappeared.

The party came into view: five slaves, three Spaniards. The former were, to all appearance, the same as those Dennis had seen on the previous day; but it seemed to him that their armed guards were different; probably the men of the ship took it in turns to come ashore. But if the individuals were different, their methods were much the same. Indeed, before Dennis had been watching the work many minutes, he had reason to know that the warders of to-day were even more ingeniously brutal than those of yesterday. The first thing he noticed was a change in their manner of rendering their slaves harmless. One of them carried a large wooden mallet; the others had between them iron staples with sharp-pointed ends. These staples they drove one by one with the mallet into the boles of the five trees selected for the day's operations. Secured to each staple was one end of a long chain, the other end of which was fastened to the captive's ankle band. Thus the hapless woodmen were fettered not merely by the logs of wood, as on the previous day, but by chains that bound them to the very trees they were to cut down. The staples were driven into the trunks below the line of the cleft to be made; but the chains, though long, seemed to Dennis scarcely long enough to enable the men to escape crushing should the trees happen to fall the wrong way. That was a chance which evidently did not trouble the guards.

Dennis wondered why this additional precaution had been taken to ensure the safe custody of the wretched men. Had they shown signs of mutiny? It would not be surprising after the treatment of the previous day. Certainly the ingenious device lightened the task of surveillance, for the wood-cutters, however exasperated, could not turn upon

their guards until they had forced out the staples with their axes.

The three Spaniards threw themselves down at some distance from the slaves and lolled negligently against the trees. The wood-cutters plied their axes, sturdily, monotonously, never speaking, their faces expressing nothing but a sullen despair. Dennis fixed his eyes on the white man, and felt an eager longing to hear him speak. One word would be enough to show whether he was indeed an Englishman. But the man was as silent as the rest, and nothing was heard save the ring of the axes and the voices of the Spaniards conversing.

Five trees lay upon the ground; the warders rose to drive the staples into others. It appeared that time hung heavy on their hands. Some demon of mischief suggested to one of them a means of obtaining a little diversion. His proposal was received with shouts of laughter by his companions. Dennis did not understand what was said, but the meaning was soon made plain. The three men drew lots with three twigs of unequal length, and placed themselves by the side of three slaves—the white man and two Indians—as fate determined. Again they drew lots, and proceeded to fasten their men to three new trees. The other two Indians were set to strip the trunks already felled. It was soon evident that the Spaniards' amusement was to be had at the expense of the wood-cutters. They pooled a number of pieces of eight; the Spaniard whose man first felled his tree was to take the stakes.

The three men set to work, the warders standing over them with their whips. The faces of the Indians wore their wonted look of dull apathy; but Dennis saw the lips of the white man tighten, and a grim scowl darken his brow. The sport commenced. Excited by their gamble, the Spaniards urged on their men with loud cries. For some minutes the two Indians smote the trees with feverish energy; the white man plied his axe with measured strokes, neither slower nor faster than before. The warders became more and more excited, and from cries proceeded to blows. One of the Indians flagged, and to stimulate him the Spaniard behind dealt him a savage blow with his whip, and the poor cowed wretch laid on with greater vigour. Hidden in the bush Dennis nervously clutched his sword and felt the blood surge into his cheeks. Fine sport, indeed! The other Spaniards, not to be outdone, began to belabour the backs of their men also, and Dennis, seeing great weals rise on the bare flesh, could scarcely control the impulse to dash at all costs from his hiding-place to the aid of the suffering men. He saw the face of the white man pale beneath the sun-tan and the red stains; perchance the Spaniard would have had a qualm if he had seen the fury his features expressed. But he did not see it; with callous levity he shouted, and brought his whip down with a sickening crack upon the broad red-streaked back.

Then, with a suddenness that took Dennis's breath away, the white man's pent-up rage burst its bounds. At the end of his endurance, he swung round with a nimbleness surprising in a man of his bulk, and flung his axe with unerring aim at his tormentor. The man fell among the logs. In a second, before the other Spaniards had time to recover from the shock of this unheard-of audacity, one of the Indians at work on the fallen tree hurled his weapon at the warder nearest him, and struck him headlong to the ground. The third man had sufficient command of his wits to take to his heels and scamper away.

The wood-cutters were between him and the shore, and the direction of his flight was towards the thicket in which Dennis stood, all tingling with the excitement of this amazing change of scene. He gripped his sword; but the Spaniard stopped short within a few yards of the bushes, uttered a furious oath, and turning about, kindled his match, preparing to shoot at the slaves, who were hacking with frenzied haste at the staples that held them to the trees. The two Indians who were free were hobbling towards the woodland on the other side, appalled by their own temerity. Dennis heard the Spaniard chuckle as he raised his caliver. The man knew full well that, even if the woodmen succeeded in breaking loose, he would have time to shoot them down one by one, hobbled as they were.

Dennis could no longer remain inactive. An enemy of the Spaniards, whatever his colour, was a friend of his. He could not see the poor wretches slaughtered. For an instant he thought of kindling his own match and firing at the Spaniard, who was within easy range. Then, changing his mind, he pushed aside the bushes, sprang into the open, and leapt over the ground with the lightness of a panther. The Spaniard heard his movements and swung round; Dennis saw the startled look of terror in his eyes. Taken aback, he had no time to ward off the musket stock of this assailant who had sprung as it were out of the earth. His cry of alarm was stifled in his throat, and under the blow dealt him with all the force of honest rage he dropped senseless to the ground.

CHAPTER VII

Amos Turnpenny

Dennis felt his limbs tremble as he stepped round the fallen body and went forward. The white man and the biggest of the Indians had already released themselves, and stood as though rooted to the ground with amazement.

"I am a friend," cried Dennis, while still separated by some yards from them.

"My heart, that's a true word!" gasped the white man, and Dennis thrilled with joy as he heard the broad accent of a south-countryman. "A friend, true; and a blessed word to Haymoss Turnpenny's ears."

They gripped hands, and looked each other squarely in the face. There was a lump in Dennis's throat, and a mist of tears in the elder man's eyes. Then Turnpenny glanced over his shoulder with a sudden access of fear.

"We bean't safe," he muttered, and there was a world of terror in his gesture and tone. "They'll find us, and then 'twill be hell-fire. Can 'ee hide us?"

"Let us first release that black man."

"Ay, sure, fellow creature, although black. I'll do it, in a trice."

He walked towards the trees where the last man was still struggling to force out the staple. At this moment Dennis saw one of the others, who had released his feet from the hobbling logs, springing past him with uplifted axe, the fire of fury in his eyes. Turning, he noticed that the Spaniard he had felled was moving. He had but just time to dash after the man and prevent him from butchering his prostrate enemy. The Indian drew back in surprise, and Dennis stood on guard until the Englishman joined him.

"Bean't he killed dead? Why didn't 'ee kill him, lad? T'others be dead as door nails, and won't trouble you nor me no more."

"We'll let this fellow live; he may be useful to us."

"Why didn't 'ee kill him with your sword or caliver? He's vermin, as they be all."

"Well, his back was towards me," said Dennis. "Besides, a shot would have alarmed his comrades on the ship."

"The ship!" repeated the man, looking round again with fear in his eyes. "The ship! They'll find us! We are rats in a trap! Lord save us all!"

"Come, we must think of something. Can you speak to these men?"

"Ay, in some sort. Not in their own tongue, 'tis monkey-talk to me. Ah! look at 'em, poor knaves."

The Indians had fallen upon the provisions brought by the Spaniards for their own consumption, and were devouring them ravenously. Turnpenny called to them in a husky whisper, as though fearful of his own voice reaching the ears of an enemy. Then, taking the dazed Spaniard with them, the woodcutters, hobbled by the logs, made off across the island, led by Dennis to the watercourse at the further end of which his hut stood. Within half a mile of that spot he halted, and got the Englishman to tell the others to remain there until rejoined. With Turnpenny he hastened on.

"God be praised I was able to help you," he said.

"Ay, but I fear me 'tis to your own undoing. They will come ashore, and catch 'ee, and flay 'ee alive."

"Tell me, how many men are left on the bark?"

"Ten, lad, all armed to the teeth. Sure they will land when we don't go aboard at night. They will hunt us down.

This time to-morrow we'll be dead men, or worse than dead."

"Pluck up heart," said Dennis. "There are six of us; I have arms for all; we can post ourselves at a place of our own choice, and make a good defence, I warrant you."

"My heart! But what will be the use? Say we beat them off, 'twill be like as if we tried to stem the waves. With a fair breeze the mainland is but a day's sail, and there the Spaniards swarm like cockroaches in a hold. I tell 'ee, lad, whoever ye be, we be dead men!"

"I've been nearer death," said Dennis quietly. "Look! There is my hut. I was cast up on this shore from a wreck: I have been here several weeks, months—I know not: it has pleased God to keep me alive here, alone on this island, and I believe there is hope for us all."

"Amen! ... My heart! There's a sheer hulk in the pool yonder."

"Ay, all that's left of the *Maid Marian*. But I will tell you my story anon. Come away into the hut, and let us talk of what we can do to save ourselves from the Spaniards."

As they entered the hut, the Englishman drew back with a startled cry. Perched on a cask sat Mirandola. He chattered angrily at the sight of a stranger.

"My one friend on the island, and a faithful comrade," said Dennis. "A gentle soul; he will do you no harm."

"A friend, say you? 'Tis against nature to be friends with a spider-monkey. And I be fair mazed; it do seem all a dream, only in the offing yonder there be a real ship, and, say what 'ee will, I be afeard."

"We'll first file off these clogging hobbles. And what say you to a mug of beer? It has come far; I have not broached the cask, and maybe 'tis still drinkable."

"My heart! I never thought to taste beer or cider again. 'Twill comfort my nattlens, sure, and I was once a good man at a tankard."

The fetters were soon struck off; a mug of beer was drawn, and drained at a gulp; but Turnpenny was still ill at ease. He went to the entrance of the hut and looked nervously up and down the gully, listening with head cocked aside. Dennis could not guess at the terrible past which had made this stout English mariner as timid as a child.

"Let us get back to the black men," he said, knowing from his own experience the value of action in banishing sad thoughts. "Are they Indians of America?"

"Maroons, sir, half Injun, half negro; lusty fighters, and faithful souls when they do love 'ee."

"We'll knock off their chains and give them arms. What can they use?"

"Not muskets, nor harquebuses, but anything that will dint a blow."

"Half-pikes and swords, then. For yourself, take your pick."

"Ay, it do give me heart to handle a cutlass again. Here's a fine blade, now, and a musket—give me a harquebus; I could shoot once, but my arm is all of a wamble now. Lookeedesee!"

He raised the heavy weapon to his shoulder and tried to steady it.

"See! Shaking like a man with the palsy," he said, his nervousness returning. "I be no more good than a bulrush."

"Pish, man!" said Dennis cheerily. "You are overwrought; your arm is tired with wielding the axe. An hour's rest will set you up. Come, bring the file and the weapons; we must see that the others are not scared in our absence."

The four maroons had remained on the spot where they had been left, keeping guard over the Spaniard, who had now quite recovered from his blow. They eyed Dennis with a wide stare, and fell silent when he approached, seeming scarcely to comprehend the wonderful good fortune that had befallen them. The removal of their fetters and the gift of arms struck them as a crowning mercy; they grovelled upon the ground as in the act of worship.

"They take 'ee for a magician, sir," said Turnpenny. "'Tis marvellous to their simple poor minds. All the world be full of spirits to them; a storm at sea be the stirring of witches, and the Spaniards be devils. My heart!" he exclaimed suddenly, "the fear has took me again! When they do miss the sound of the axes they will jealous summat wrong, and then they'll come and we'll be all dead men."

"Cheer up!" said Dennis. "'Tis easy to cure that. Two of the men can set-to upon the trees again, and one can steal to the shore and keep an eye on the ship, and acquaint us if he sees any stirring there."

"But what of the Spaniard, lad? 'Tis then only one maroon to watch him, and 'tis not enough. If so be the knave be left to himself, he'll run to the beach and give the alarm."

"We'll stop that, too. When he has had a portion of food, we will gag and bind him, and all will be well."

When the Spaniard was secured, the whole party returned to the scene of the tree-felling, and while one of the men went stealthily forward to spy upon the ship, two others plied their axes upon the fallen trunks.

Dennis, more alert of mind than the sailor, foresaw that the trick could have only a temporary success. When the time came for the wood-cutting party to return to the vessel, their non-appearance would awaken suspicion among the Spaniards on board. Believing the island to be uninhabited, they would not guess what had happened; it would not even occur to them as possible that cowed and unarmed slaves would have courage enough to turn on their masters, much less overcome them. But if the party did not return at nightfall, the captain would certainly send some of his men to discover the cause. Of all men the Spaniards were the most superstitious; when they landed, their very superstitions would put them on their guard. Their approach would be cautious; they would probably discover the escaped slaves before these could strike at them effectively; and then, when the inevitable fight came, the party of six, of whom only two could use firearms, and one had partially lost his nerve, would stand a poor chance against men armed cap-à-pie and doubtless inured to the practice of warfare. Besides, even if the landing party could be taken by surprise and routed, the sound of the combat would alarm the Spaniards still remaining on the ship. They would sail away, and in a few days return in overwhelming strength.

Dennis was at first staggered by the difficulties and perils of the situation, and he dared not consult with Turnpenny until the sailor had regained his courage. For the present the important thing was to keep him employed, so as to turn his thoughts from anything that would feed his fears.

"We must bury these two knaves," said Dennis, glancing at the bodies of the Spaniards. "You and I can do that. Your name, I bethink me, is——"

"Turnpenny, by nature, Haymoss by the water o' baptism, sir."

"Haymoss?"

"Ay, sure, a religious good name, sir; a' comes betwixt Joel and Obydiah somewheres after the holy psa'ms. Born at Chard, sir, in Zummerzet, but voyaged to Plimworth when that I was a little tiny boy, and served 'prentice aboard the *Seamew*—master, John Penworthy."

Dennis had heard only the first sentence of this string of facts. He was in the very act of stooping to dig a grave with one of the maroons' big axes, when there flashed into his mind an idea which set him aglow with hope.

"Well, friend Amos," he said, so quietly that none could have suspected his inward eagerness, "think you not we may strip the outer garments from these knaves before we bury them? Your back would be the better for a covering, and this leathern doublet would well beseem you."

"True, sir, but I never donned a stranger's coat yet. I be English true blue, and though the Spaniard's doublet might span my back, 'twould irk my feeling mind, sir!"

"To please me, Amos. I would fain you covered your arms—the red is too like blood, and we may see enough of that ere we be many hours older."

To Dennis's gratification the sailor did not again blench at the suggestion of a fight with the Spaniards. He laughed.

"My heart! 'Tis easy to see you be a new man in this new world, sir. The stains of logwood don't worrit me; 'tis a noble dye, you must own, and many's the noble garment that has been dyed for a Spaniard's madam out o' the logwood I've cut. But since it offends your innocent eye, I'll e'en don the knave's coat afore I put him out o' sight in earth too good for him."

Overjoyed at the man's recovered spirits, Dennis hastened, as they went on with their task, to press his advantage.

"You are two enemies the less, Amos—nay, three, counting the knave we have in pound among the trees yonder. What say you to our making a shift to put a few more in the same case?"

"What mean you, sir?"

"Tell me, what people hath the ship yonder, besides the ten Spanish knaves of whom you spoke?"

"Why, sir, as a true man I answer, a black cook—no maroon, but a swart fat knave from the Guinea coast; and three maroons, who fell sick, or rather were well-nigh beat to death, in an island over against the continent yonder we visited on the same errand."

"And they are gyved, as you were?"

"All but the cook. He goes free, but, my heart! 'tis little he gains by it. He is every man's football and whipping-boy."

"Why then do the Spaniards remain aboard the ship when there are so few slaves to guard?"

"'Tis first because they be idle knaves, who would never do a hand's turn save by necessity. Item, because they be but poor seamen, and need a dozen to handle a craft, only forty ton burden, that three true-born Englishmen could sail into the devil's jaws. Item, because the spot where she lies at anchor is ill-protected; 'tis rather an open roadstead than a bay, and if a squall should come up sudden, as 'tis nature in this meridian, they'd need all the lubbers' work to get a fair offing."

"So three true-born Englishmen are a match for a dozen base cullies of Spain? Is that your thought, Amos?"

"Ay, at musket, pike, or quarter-staff; there's never a doubt on it."

"Think you two, then, are a match for ten? The balance turns a little in favour of the Spaniards; by right proportion it should be two to eight; but mayhap four maroons on t'other scale would even the odds."

Turnpenny desisted from his work, and a shadow of his former fear came upon his face. Dennis did not allow time for the fit to lay hold of him.

"There is advantage to him who strikes first," he went on, quietly. "If we wait, assuredly we shall have to fight against heavy odds. But if we assume a bold part, and jump the risks, we may gain all the vantage of surprise, and enforce it with that English blood you hold so high in estimation, to say naught of English thews and sinews. Why, man, that stout arm of yours would fell an ox."

"True, sir," said the simple mariner, bending his arm to raise the muscle, and looking at the knotty protuberance with great complacency; "I ha' done desperate deeds of strength in my time. But, heart alive! do 'ee think to capture the ship?"

"I think of venturing for it; and, unless I be mightily mistaken, Amos Turnpenny is not the man to turn his back

on a venture of that kind."

"Not by nature, sir," said the man, uneasiness struggling with simple vanity in his mind. "By nature I be as bold as a lion. But the lion in the story was meshed in with ropes, and could do no harm to a silly mouse; and for four year past, sir, the ropes of mischance have held my spirit in thrall, wherefore it is that——"

"That you are afraid? Nonsense! You are the lion; I am the mouse. Let us say that I, by good luck, have gnawed those confining ropes asunder, and now, on this island, you are free of mind as of limb, and a man of heart and vigour."

Turnpenny flung down his axe and fairly jumped.

"My heart!" he cried, gleefully; "'tis the very marrow of the tale! I be free, free! For four year I have forgot the word. Sound of limb, straight of eye, with all my five wits, praise God above! Speak your thought, sir; Haymoss Turnpenny is your man."

CHAPTER VIII

Half-Pikes and Machetes

The Spaniards had by this time been buried. The two maroons were still hacking at the trees. Nothing had been reported by the man on the look-out. Glancing at the sun, Dennis guessed that it was still two or three hours from setting. But for interruptions there would be ample time to develop his plan.

"Come beneath the shade," he said to Turnpenny. "There is much to be said and done. If perchance a man lands from the ship, we must take him prisoner. If several come, we must fight them at the gully. If they lie secure, and we are undisturbed, we shall capture their vessel this night."

"I believe it, sir, partly; I'd believe it more firm if I understood."

"Give me your judgement on my plan. At sunset we will haul some logs down to the shore and push off in the boat, as if we were the Spaniards with their slaves. You and I will rig ourselves in the doublets and hose of the two yonder; it will go hard with us if, in the dark, we do not mislead the Spaniards into security. We will mount into the vessel, and if luck favour us we shall be masters of the craft before the Spaniards have awakened to the danger."

"A noble plan, but fearsome," said Turnpenny, shaking his head. "We shall be two short, sir. We rig up as Spaniards, you and me; granted; but the knaves on deck will see two Spaniards instead of three, and they will want to know what has become of Haymoss Turnpenny."

"We will take our prisoner. Then they will see three Spaniards, and if they then miss Amos Turnpenny, let them suppose that the sailor man has turned troublesome, and been left on the island, to bring him to a reasonable humility."

"Ay, sure, that unties the knot. But I would not give a groat for my chance of seeing Plimworth Sound again if the knaves spy the head of Haymoss sticking out o' the Spanish doublet. The captain, he be a man of desperate fight; no miserable dumbledore is he; 'tis a word and a blow with him; I've seed him kill a man of his own breed for no more than a wry word."

"We must trust to our disguise, and the dark."

"But the maroons, sir; they'll be of no use 'ithout weapons, and if they climb aboard with naked steel in their hands, 'tis all over with us."

"You and I will mount first."

"That would put the knaves on guard at once. 'Tis always us poor slaves that come over side last into the boat and go first out of it, so as never to give us no chance of making off. They need not be afeard; whither could poor miserable wretches escape away? But there it is."

"Well, Amos, we must accept the wonted course, though I would fain go first, with you at my elbow."

"It is my very own thought, sir. No white man can trust a black un in the deadly breach. But be jowned if I see any ways o' they maroons getting aboard with arms in their hands."

"Nor I. Mayhap an idea will enter our conceits anon."

"My heart! There be another thing I had clean forgot. We have ta'en their irons off."

"We must put them on again. We will not fail for the sake of a clank."

"Ay, but there's the rub, sir. The maroons will show fight if we attempt that same. Poor souls! Having no language and no intellecks to speak of, they'll not understand the main of our intent. They will suppose 'tis but a change of masters, and I fear me my few words o' Spanish will not suffice to set their minds at ease."

"You made them understand you a while ago; you must try again. But a word more. I judge the sun is grown far on the west; 'twill soon be time to put our fortunes to the hazard. And, lest our dallying here waken the suspicions of the Spaniards, let us don these articles of apparel e'en now, and fix on the irons, and then go down to the shore, the maroons hauling the stripped logs thitherwards. The ropes are handy here."

"What, sir, haul logs in the very sight of the knaves?"

"Ay, do we not wish to deceive them? If they see two Spaniards marshalling the black men, cracking their whips, moreover, will they not believe 'tis their comrades, bent on finishing the work this night? 'Tis growing towards dusk; the vessel lies out too far for them to mark our lineaments; 'twill lull them into a fool's security."

"And so it will. I will presently go speak to the maroons with my tongue, and, seeing that the poor mortals lack understanding, with my fingers and my eyes and my ten toes if the case do require it."

Dennis watched the sailor somewhat anxiously. It would be a stroke of rank ill-fortune if they refused to have their manacles replaced. Everything depended on their docility. To his joy, after some minutes of gesticulation, Turnpenny came back, his broad face beaming with conscious self-esteem.

"Be jowned if I haven't done it easy!" he said. "I spoke 'em plain, and to make all clear, I put my two hands together, with one finger pointing aloft: that stood for yonder vessel. Then I pointed to this doublet, and to yours, and set my face to a most wondrous frown, by the which they understood that you and me pass for Spaniards. A firk with my cutlass did signify our warlike intent, a thrust of my arms forth and back pictured the sweep of oars; and, to make an end o't, they understand our fixed purpose and are keen set to lend us their aid."

"Admirably contrived!" said Dennis. "Now, while I bring the Spaniard to bear us company, do you replace the irons and fasten ropes about the logs. Darkness will steal upon us unawares and prevent the first part of our contriving."

As Dennis returned to the gully to fetch the Spaniard, he saw that Mirandola was keeping pace with him through the trees. Since the event of the morning the monkey had held himself aloof, as if scared by the presence of so many strange men. Dennis halted and called to him, but the animal blinked and made no movement to descend.

"Ah, Mirandola," said Dennis, as he walked on, "even the wisest of us have our failings. Jealousy, my friend, is a canker. I love thee none the less because I have a new friend. Will you not believe it? Is there not room for both—Turnpenny and Mirandola? If we succeed in this enterprise, you and Amos must be made at one."

Some little while later, in the growing dusk, the four maroons were hauling a heavy log out from the

undergrowth that fringed the sea. Dennis and Turnpenny urged them with rough cries and persistent cracking of their whips. As soon as they came within view of the vessel the ropes were cast off, and they all made their way back. When they returned with a second log, there came a faint hail from the vessel.

"Ay, ay, 'od rot you!" shouted Turnpenny indistinctly in response, knowing that at the distance his voice could not be recognized. "Belike 'tis a call to us to embark, sir," he said to Dennis. "Mark you, they called us; no man dare say they did not call us; and if they do not like us when we appear, 'tis not because we are not proper men."

The logs were laid alongside of those brought down the previous day; then the men released the boat's moorings, and hauled her off the shoal where she lay into water deep enough to float her. By this time it was almost dark, and the number of men who clambered into the boat could not easily be counted on board the vessel, nor would it be noticed that the maroons hoisted each a large bundle. At the last moment Dennis had decided not to encumber the boat with the captive Spaniard. He had thought of using the man to reply in Spanish to any hail from the vessel during the passage from the shore; but this might be attended with danger if the Spaniard should have courage enough to risk the inevitable penalty should he raise his voice to warn his comrades. Accordingly he was left on shore, gagged and bound, in a spot where he might easily be discovered by the Spaniards next day if the enterprise failed. There were no wild beasts to molest him, and the place chosen was remote from the haunts of the boa constrictor.

The maroons pulled steadily towards the silent vessel, lying low in the water some two hundred yards off shore. Already a lamp had been lit aboard. Every member of the little party in the boat was tense with anticipation. Not a word was spoken. The silence would cause no wonderment among the Spaniards on the vessel; a party of free negroes might have filled the air with their babblement; but the maroons partook of the reserve of the Indian race, and, living, as they did, in a state of deadly feud with the Spaniards, they nourished a deep silent longing for vengeance in their hearts. Besides, these men were cowed slaves, and, after the hard day's toil they were supposed to have undergone, no one would have expected them to be talkative or merry.

Stroke by stroke the boat drew nearer to the ship. At length a voice hailed it, and a flare was kindled in the waist of the vessel for its guidance.

"Why do you return so late?" came the question in Spanish.

Turnpenny answered in passable Spanish, but in a muffled tone—

"Wait till we come aboard."

A few seconds later the boat came beneath the vessel's side and was made fast. The biggest of the maroons—he who had flung his axe at the Spaniard—got up and clambered aboard. On his back he bore a huge load of bananas. Close to his clanking heels swarmed a second man; before the first was well over the bulwarks a third was beginning the ascent, each carrying a similar bundle. The fourth man had but just set his foot on the rope ladder that hung over the side when there came to the ears of Dennis and the sailor, nervously awaiting their turn, the sound of altercation above. One of the Spaniards had bestowed a kick upon the foremost of the slaves, and, laughing loud, grabbed at the load of fruit upon his back. The maroon, instead of dropping his burden and cowering away, as was the wont of slaves, held firmly to it, and stepped back to avoid the Spaniard's clutch.

"You hound!" cried the man, with an oath, and snatched a knife from his belt.

Then, to his utter amazement, the maroon let his load fall indeed, contriving as he did so to rip out of it a shortened half-pike which was cunningly concealed there. The light of the torch fell on the naked steel. With a loud cry of rage the Spaniards who had been lolling on the vessel's side sprang towards the slave, cursing his audacity, shouting to their supposed comrades in the boat below to ask the meaning of this unheard-of act of mutiny. But he stood his ground, glaring upon them, holding his weapon to ward them off. And now at his side his three fellow-slaves were ranged, their bundles lying at their feet, glistening half-pikes in their hands. Yelling with fury the Spaniards, armed at the moment only with their knives, pressed forward to teach these mutineers a lesson. What access of madness had seized them? Where was the abject look of terror with which they usually shrank from their masters? What could the men in charge have been about? The Spaniards rushed to the fray with the violence of wrath and outraged bewilderment.

At this first moment the fight was not unequal. The six Spaniards who had been on deck found that with their knives they could not come to close quarters with the four stalwart maroons wielding half-pikes. The latter, moreover, had kicked off the fetters loosely set about their ankles, and moved with freedom. And while the Spaniards were shouting for their comrades in the cabin and, as they supposed, in the boat below to come to their aid, the numbers of the mutineers were suddenly augmented. At the first sound of the scuffle, Dennis and Turnpenny, each armed with a cutlass, had sprung on to the ship, the former by the ladder behind the last maroon, the latter, with a sailor's agility, leaping up to the gunwale and hauling himself over. When they reached the deck they found the Spaniards dancing round the little group of slaves, who were keeping them at bay with valorous lunges of their weapons.

No sooner had the two Englishmen joined the combatants than they found that they had now the whole ship's company to reckon with. A huge Spaniard rushed from the main cabin behind the maroon, a machete in one hand, a pistol in the other. There was a flash, a sharp barking sound; one of the slaves staggered and fell. Other Spaniards came headlong out, in their haste not pausing to bring fire-arms. From the forecastle ran one of the sick maroons. The instant his eyes took in the scene, he snatched up a belaying pin from the deck and, weak as he was, threw himself into the mêlée. Now had come the chance for which he had so long hungered, and his black blood seethed as he rushed to pay off old scores.

There was hot work then amidships that narrow vessel. Cutlass and pike were matched, not for the first time, against the long Spanish knife. Under the disadvantage of surprise the Spaniards, though they outnumbered their assailants, were not so effectively armed for the fray. The maroons laid about them doughtily; they knew how terrible a weapon was the knife at close quarters, and their whole purpose was to hold their masters off and cripple them if they could.

The big Spaniard who had rushed first from the cabin and fired at the maroon found himself immediately afterwards engaged with a lithe young man who, though clad in a Spanish doublet, was certainly not a fellow-countryman of his. Instinctively, as it seemed, captain singled out captain. Dennis made a vigorous cut at him, but the blade was fouled by the shrouds above his head, and the blow, losing half its force, was easily warded off by the Spaniard's machete. He sprang back; if his opponent had been a little nimbler Dennis would have been at his mercy; but the Spaniard was gross with idleness and good living; heavy of movement he failed to seize his advantage, though in the lunge his knife cut the lad's doublet, and gashed his sword arm in the recovery.

"Captain singled out Captain."

"Captain singled out Captain."

Dennis was scarcely conscious of his wound. At this fierce moment his practice on the deck of the *Maid Marian* served him well. To attempt a second cut would have been to give another opening. He shortened his arm and gave point. The Spaniard was no tyro. With a turn of the wrist he parried the thrust, which was aimed low, but could not prevent the blade from entering his shoulder. He staggered and reeled back towards the doorway of the cabin, and the two men immediately behind him rushed into the fight. Turnpenny meanwhile had been engaged in a similar duel, and by the sheer force of his bulk had borne his opponent to the deck. Side by side Dennis and he faced their new assailants. One of these, a long sinewy fellow, had an amazing dexterity with his knife, and a most perplexing nimbleness of movement. Dennis kept him at bay only by the length of his cutlass. For a few moments there was brisk work around the mast. Making a sweeping cut, Dennis somewhat overreached himself, and it would have gone ill with him had not Turnpenny, who had run a second man through, perceived his danger in the nick of time. Springing forward, he pierced the fellow to the heart.

Three of the Spaniards had now fallen. The rest, who had barely held their own against the maroons, were stricken with fear when they saw their comrades' fate. Two of them sprang overboard; the remaining four, finding the three maroons now reinforced by the Englishmen, rushed back after their captain into the cabin, and, before they could be overtaken, slammed-to the door and shot the bolt. Dennis snatched up a belaying pin and brought it with all his force against the door, but made no impression on its stout timbers. There was a roar and a flash close to his ear; he felt his cheek singed; one of the Spaniards had fired through a loophole in the cabin wall. The moment after, there was another flash from a loophole on the other side, and one of the maroons uttered a cry of pain. In the open waist of the vessel the little party had no protection from musket fire; the loopholes had doubtless been pierced against the

contingency of such an assault as this, and nothing but the darkness could prevent the Spaniards in the cabin from bringing down a man at every discharge. They had the whole armoury of the ship to draw upon; there was no means of checking their fire; and realizing the situation Dennis called on Turnpenny and the rest to seek cover. Some found shelter just forward of the mainmast; two swarmed on to the poop, and, climbing to the edge of its break, held themselves ready with their half-pikes to attack any one attempting a sortie from the cabin. Dennis and the sailor, picking up the calivers they had laid down when they boarded the vessel, dropped down behind a coil of rope towards the forecastle.

"My heart!" exclaimed Turnpenny, as he primed his weapon. "'Twas brisk work, and not the end neither."

"They are run to earth, Amos, 'tis true, got away like foxes. Our case is not too good. We are baulked, my friend."

"Ay, sir. With all the victuals and munitions abaft, the knaves have the better of us. We cannot get at them; say we made endeavour to scuttle the ship, they could shoot us afore we got away."

"And there are sick maroons in the forecastle, I bethink me you said. I would fain save them alive. We must do something to bring the knaves to an engagement. There are five of them now. With time to recover themselves somewhat, and fortify themselves with food, they can if it so please them lie low till morning light, then sally out upon us with arms loaded, several pistols apiece, and we, fasting, would be of a surety overmatched."

"Ay, and we cannot feed ourselves even on that noble store of bananas, for they lie athwart the very course of bullets from the cabin."

"Could we smoke them out? Could we blow the door in?"

"With a sufficiency of powder, but the magazine is beneath the cabin."

"Is there none elsewhere?"

"Why, now I do mind me, the boatswain hath a vast relish for wild fowl, and is never loath to go a-shooting on shore. 'Tis like he hath a little secret store."

"Then I will go rummage the forecastle. Do you bide here, Amos, and keep ward over my caliver until I return."

When the party boarded the vessel, there had been a dim light in the forecastle. It was now extinguished. Dennis went in through the open entrance; then, feeling safe from the enemy's bullets, he took a candle from his pouch and having lit it, held it above his head. He shrank back, startled for the moment. The pale flame had fallen full on the face of a big negro, crouching in the corner of an upper bunk. A second glance assured him that he had nothing to fear; the black face was sickly with terror. In a flash Dennis remembered the negro cook of whom Amos had spoken. As cook, being allowed a certain freedom of movement about the vessel, the man would probably know where the boatswain kept his powder, and search might be unnecessary. Dennis called to him; the negro only showed more of the whites of his eyes. Dennis beckoned him with his finger; he only cowered and groaned.

"'Tis to be main force then, you white-livered rascal!" cried Dennis, and, setting down his candle, caught the man by his waist-band and began to haul his oily mass out of the bunk. "You gibber more brutishly than Mirandola; come, or I'll shake your fat bulk to a jelly."

Not without labour he lugged the negro forth, and dragged him aft to the place where Amos was crouching.

"Here's a fat knave that's like to dissolve with fright," he said. "I do not understand his monkey-talk; speak to him, Amos. Ask of him what we need to know, and tell him we intend him no harm, and will certainly not expect such a craven to fight."

"Ay, sir, 'tis Baltizar the cook, and a very whey-blooded knave. I'll ferret it out of him, trust me."

He took some minutes in his scraps of Spanish to make the man understand what was required of him. When he understood, the negro became very voluble. He said that the boatswain did indeed keep a small jar of powder in his

sea-chest, but there was a much larger quantity concealed among the ship's stores under hatches. It had been placed there by the mate—"the long knave I spitted," Amos explained—who was accustomed to do a little private trading with the natives of the mainland, and had destined the powder as a bribe for certain pearl-fishers of the coast.

"Is it in the fore-peak?" asked Dennis, remembering where he had found powder on the *Maid Marian*.

"No, worse luck!" replied Turnpenny, after questioning the man. "'Tis in the lazaretto, and the hatchway being but a few feet from the break of the poop, we cannot come at it 'ithout running the hazard of a shot from the cabin."

"'Tis darker now; could I not risk the deed?"

"The knaves med not see you, 'tis true; but you could not knock out the battens 'ithout raising a din, and they would know your whereabouts, and not all on 'em would miss your carcase. Be jowned if I'd like to see 'ee make the venture."

Releasing the negro, Dennis crouched again behind the coil of rope.

"We must find a way to get that powder," he said. "A mariner like you, Amos, ought to be fertile in devices. Come, set your brains on the rack."

"I be afeard they be soft wi' four years' misery, but I'll rouse 'em. If I had but the second sight, now, like the old witch as lived within a cable-length o' my grandad's hut on the moors!"

But Amos had done his brains an injustice. He had not pondered many minutes before he exclaimed—

"My heart! We have them on the hip! We'll e'en shin up the shrouds and lower the mainsail. She's furled on the yards, but we can unreeve her 'ithout noise, and when she's down, she'll be a barricade betwixt the mainmast and the break o' the poop, and not a knave of them can see what is toward in the waist."

Dennis applauded the notion, and the two instantly set about their task. Crawling to the starboard side, they crept along by the rope netting that replaced in the waist the wooden bulwarks which bounded the decks, and reached the shrouds of the mainmast unperceived by the enemy in the cabin. To swarm up was the work of a few moments to Turnpenny, and Dennis was little less expert, having practised himself on the *Maid Marian* in many details of the mariners' duties. Gaining the yards, they cast off the robands, made the buntlines fast, then, easing the earings, lowered away by the buntlines and the clew-garnets. Scarcely five minutes after they had left the shelter of the rope-coil, a wall of canvas shut the waist from the view of the Spaniards.

They had barely finished their task when two musket-shots rang out, and two holes were cut in the sail. Clearly the enemy was on the alert. There was no time to be lost. Turnpenny knocked out the battens as quickly as possible, and lifting the hatch, disclosed a small ladder leading down into the lazaretto.

"I will go down," said Dennis, "being of less bulk than you, Amos."

He climbed nimbly down, struck a light, and after a little search discovered a jar of powder among a miscellaneous collection of ship's stores. Hoisting the jar up, he gave it into the hands of Turnpenny, climbed up again, and returned with the sailor to the coil of rope, to be out of harm's way while they went on with their preparations.

"If we fire the whole jar we shall of a surety sink the ship," said Dennis; "and that I am loath to do. We must needs make a petard; but how?"

"That cook knave shall find us a tin vessel, or I'll firk him," said Turnpenny.

He went into the forecastle. Dennis heard a brisk exchange of bad Spanish; then the sailor returned, with a small canister out of which he poured a heap of peppercorns.

"Most admirable!" said Dennis, who had meanwhile forced off the top of the jar. Making a hole in the rim of the canister near the lid, he filled the vessel with powder and firmly closed it.

"There's our petard, Amos. Now to place it."

"That be my job, sir."

"No, no, we go shares in this work. 'Twas your idea to lower the sail. I carry less flesh than you, and therefore can go more lightly."

"But mayhap I be surer footed on the plank, being a mariner of forty year."

"I doubt it not, yet the deed shall be mine."

Carrying the canister, and in the pouch slung at his neck a handful of powder for the train, he crept to the side of the vessel, ran lightly along the gangway by the rope netting, and lifting a corner of the sail, stood between it and the wall of the cabin. Then he dropped on hands and knees, and wormed his way forward until he touched the wall, following it along until he reached the door. Being beneath the line of loopholes, he was in no danger so long as he moved quietly; but at the slightest sound the enemy would fling open the door and give him his quietus before help could reach him from beyond the barricade. He might have felt still more confident had he known that Turnpenny had crept along after him, and was waiting at the corner of the sail, ready to spring to his aid in case of need.

Feeling with his hand for the middle panel of the door, Dennis laid the canister down close against it. To ensure that the hole he had made in it, to connect with the train of powder, should rest upon the planks and not turn over, he pressed a slight dent in the rim. Then he crept backwards the way he had come, laying close to the cabin wall a train of powder from his pouch, not stinting the quantity, so that there might be no gaps in the line. He drew a breath of relief when he came once more to the further side of the canvas and stood erect. There was not a gust of air stirring; the confined space between the sail and the cabin was hot and stuffy; and what with holding his breath during the minutes his task had occupied, and the strain upon his nerves, he had felt almost suffocated.

He said not a word when he found Turnpenny awaiting him, but placed his finger on his lips and motioned the man to return. The charge having been laid in safety, it remained to arrange a course of action when the door should be blown in. While the sail was still lowered it would be impossible to dash forward into the cabin. The screen was no longer required now that there was no further need for the open hatchway; to remove it might indeed put the enemy on their guard, but they could not know what to expect, and there would be no time after the explosion to hoist the sail, even if it were possible to spare men for the task. So Turnpenny volunteered to replace the hatch and hoist and bend the sail, work which he would do more quickly and expertly than Dennis. It was then necessary to communicate with the maroons, for to attack the cabin in less than full strength, against superior weapons, would be to court disaster. A loud whisper reached the men who had taken shelter behind some tackle forward of the mainmast, and brought them crawling to their leaders. It was not so easy to attract the attention of the two men who had shinned up the poop, and to whom, though they had probably seen Dennis as he crawled beneath the sail, he had not dared to make a sign. The difficulty was removed by a word from Turnpenny to one of the maroons. The man made a strange clicking in his throat, and within a couple of minutes his comrades had crept noiselessly along the port side of the vessel, and the party was complete.

With great solemnity and many repetitions the sailor exhausted his small stock of Spanish in explaining what was required of them. They were all to charge together the instant after the petard had done its work. If the force of the explosion proved sufficient to blow in the door, they would dash through into the cabin and engage the enemy hand to hand. If, on the other hand, the door should be only partially shattered—as Turnpenny pointed out, there was no calculating on the precise effect of a charge of gunpowder—two men were to break it in with a short spar unrigged for a battering ram. Dennis counted on gaining a few moments while the Spaniards recovered from the surprise and shock of the explosion. In that brief interval it might be possible for him and Turnpenny to find the loopholes in the cabin wall and thrust the muzzles of their calivers through. By the time they had fired the door would be burst in, and then it would be a fight to the death.

If the occupants of the cabin had felt any wonder or misgiving at the manipulation of the sail, there was nothing during the pause to give them either explanation or reassurance. They might have suspected that the intention of lowering the sail was to screen an approach to the hatchway; but as, according to Baltizar the cook, the jar of powder had been appropriated by the mate secretly, and he was now dead, it would never have occurred to them that their enemy would seek there anything but food. Otherwise they would assuredly have made some effort, beyond the

firing of two random shots, to avert their fate.

There was absolute silence when Turnpenny had concluded his whispered instructions to the maroons. The vessel rocked gently, almost imperceptibly; the tide was on the turn. Dennis crept once more to the gangway by the rope netting, stole along on bare feet, and stooped with a beating heart to apply the match which Turnpenny had made for him. It had an inch or two to burn before it reached the train of powder; and he stood back against the side, out of danger from the explosion, ready to rush across to the nearest loophole when the moment came.

Suddenly a line of flame shot like a lightning flash across the planks. In an instant there was a deafening crash, and though each man of the attacking party knew what was coming, and was beyond reach of actual harm, they were all somewhat dazed by the explosion. But it was only for the fraction of a second. Then Dennis and Turnpenny sprang forward, one on each side of the cabin entrance, towards the loopholes whose position they had marked in the previous fight. For a few moments they were baffled by the blinding smoke, but finding the holes almost simultaneously, they thrust in the muzzles of their weapons, and fired at random into the cabin. A muffled cry from within announced that one or other of the shots had taken effect, but the next instant there was a roar as the Spaniards discharged their muskets together at the gaps rent in the door by the explosion. At the time the Englishmen knew not whether any man was hit, for, dropping their calivers, they seized their cutlasses, and, just as the spar carried by two lusty maroons levelled the shattered door, they dashed at the opening.

The light from a horn lantern hanging in its gimbals struggled with the smoke that filled the room. Dennis stumbled over a body that lay across the entrance. He had barely recovered his footing when he was amazed to hear a frenzied shriek from the further end of the cabin, and two men rushed forward with uplifted hands, shouting again and again a single word which, being Spanish, he did not understand.

"My heart! they cry for quarter!" cried Turnpenny, as much amazed as Dennis.

One of the maroons who had carried the spar, either not understanding or not heeding the wild despairing cry, thrust at the foremost Spaniard with a half-pike, and the wretch fell forward, hurling Dennis to the floor and doubly blocking the entrance. Dennis threw the man off and scrambled to his feet; but before he could take a step forward there was a second explosion, louder and more shattering than the first, and when he recovered his dazed senses he found himself lying at the fore end of the waist, twenty feet away from the cabin.

CHAPTER IX

Amos Tells his Story

"Body o' me! Will 'ee squall like babbies? Make for the boat, you howling knaves!"

And then Turnpenny launched into a tirade of Spanish abuse, which came somewhat more trippingly from his lips than sentences of sound instruction. Dennis rose, and staggered towards the sailor.

"God be praised! I feared you were dead, sir. The knave has blowed up the powder magazine, and in five minutes by the clock the ship will tottle down by the stern. These black rascals were howling like souls in bale, in the stead of swinging overboard into the boat while there is time. Come away, sir; the craft will sink to the bottom or ever we gain the island."

Bruised and sore, dropping blood from his untended wound, Dennis hastened with Amos to the side, and was in the act of following the maroons into the boat when he suddenly remembered the two sick men in the forecastle.

"I'll be with you anon," he cried, hurrying across the waist.

"What a murrain!" muttered Amos, scrambling back and running after him. "Shall we drown for a brace of savages! Wilful! Wilful!"

He reached the forecastle in time to see Dennis hauling from his bunk the fat negro, who lay there huddled and shivering with terror.

"Make the fat fool understand!" cried Dennis, shoving the cook into Amos's arms. Then he hurried to the further end, where the maroons lay in a stupor of fright. Having no words to acquaint them with their peril, he sought to move them by signs; but the men gazed at him in fear, regarding him doubtless as a new oppressor.

"Amos, leave that lump of jelly and come hither," he shouted. The sailor bawled a word or two in Spanish, and sped the negro towards the side with a kick. Then he made haste to join Dennis.

"The wretches are helpless," said the boy. "We must carry them—fair and softly, Amos."

"Ay, sir, an you will; but our case is parlous; I fear me our leisure will not serve."

"No delay, then. Hoist this fellow upon my back; do you bring the other. We cannot suffer the knaves to drown."

They staggered forth with their burdens, Dennis foremost. As he stumbled towards the side he caught sight of a man crawling slowly from the direction of the cabin. The man called to him feebly, but Dennis did not pause until he had reached the gangway by the netting, where he laid the maroon down.

"Call to his fellows below there to assist him into the boat," he cried to Amos. "There is a man yet alive; we must save him."

"Beseech you let the knave drown," returned the sailor. "'Tis a pestilent Spaniard—a meal for sharks. Be jowned if the lad be not a mere dunderpate," he grumbled, as he lowered his burden into the hands of the men below.

Meanwhile Dennis had hastened to meet the wounded man, who groaned miserably as he dragged his limbs along. Half supporting, half carrying him, Dennis brought him to the side just as the second maroon had been bestowed safely in the boat. Turnpenny, still growling under his breath, helped to lift the Spaniard down. Then the boat was cast off, and the men rowed for the shore.

"Canst see any sign of the knaves that leapt overboard?" said Dennis, looking around.

"Never a hair," replied Turnpenny, "Sure they be swallowed quick by the sharks, and there's an end."

Dennis shuddered. It was his first acquaintance with the tragedy of adventure on the Spanish Main, and his unschooled heart turned sick at the thought of the terrible fruit his scheme had borne. He gazed at the dark form of the vessel that was gradually fading into the night. The poop was already under water. He had not foreseen this end to his enterprise; the rapid sequence of events had bewildered him. What had caused the second explosion? Had the magazine been fired by accident? What a mercy it was that he and all his party had not been blown to atoms! He could not but feel a poignant pity for the poor wretches who had thus suddenly met their doom.

The boat grounded on the shoals. He sprang into the water and assisted Turnpenny and the maroons to carry the helpless men to the fringe of grass, and to haul the boat up the beach. Then he turned once more to look at the vessel. No longer was her dark form outlined against the starlit sky; she had gone down, leaving no trace.

Joining the men on the stretch of greensward where they were assembled, he suddenly heard the shrill voice of Mirandola close at hand, and next moment felt the touch of the animal's paw upon his arm. The monkey had followed the party at a distance when they came down to the shore in the dusk, and sat forlorn on the grass, watching the boat that carried his master away. Could the poor beast think human thoughts, Dennis wondered, as he felt its body trembling against his? Had it believed that it was deserted by the being who had treated it with kindness? Certainly it showed clear signs of gladness now, and its joy at recovering its one friend had vanquished its dislike and suspicion of the rest.

"Here we be, sir, ten martal souls," said Turnpenny, "reckoning Baltizar, who in sooth is more like a jellyfish than a man. What be us to do?"

"We cannot tramp across the island in the dark, Amos. What say you to camping in the logwood grove? 'Tis nigh at hand, and we can lie there with fair comfort until the dawn."

"With all my heart. 'Twill be a drier bed than those villanous knaves yonder can boast."

"Poor wretches! How came it that the magazine blew up, think you?"

"I know not, sir. I will ask the knave you brought last from the vessel—a deed of merciful madness."

He spoke a few words to the wounded prisoner, while the maroons who had formed the wood-cutting party conveyed their sick comrades to the grove. The man replied in feeble accents.

"This was the manner of it, sir," said Amos, after a minute or two. "The captain being sore wounded, and two killed outright, the other knaves, seeing how that they stood in danger of being sliced by our bilbos, did incontinently call upon him to render up the vessel, hoping thereby to come off with their lives. But the captain, a tall man and of a good spirit, did resolutely refuse to yield to their entreaties, swearing that he would with his own hand blow up the vessel rather than deliver it to heretics and dogs of English. Straightway he passed into his own cabin, and made fast the door; which seeing, and knowing that what he had said, that would he perform, the knaves began to whoop and hallo for quarter. Then did the captain, as 'tis to be supposed, make into the after cabin and fire his pistol into the magazine, and so dealt the ship that mighty blow."

"And this man—who is he?"

"A man of Portingale, sir, not of Spain, and so somewhat nearer grace. He thanks you and all the saints that he remains alive, though his limbs be maimed withal."

"Let us convey him softly to the grove; on the morrow we will look to his wounds and bind them up with balsam and other salves from the wreck."

"Marry, you use him too gently. 'Tis like warming a snake in your bosom; and, since charity begins at home, we will look to our own hurts first."

When the party was settled as comfortably as possible in the grove, Dennis and the sailor disposed themselves side by side to sleep. But both were wakeful, for all their fatigue. They lay for a time in silence, each fearful of disturbing the other; but Dennis, hearing at last a long pent-up groan from his companion, asked what ailed him.

"Thinking, sir—old thoughts of home."

"I have been minded to ask you of your history, Amos, but we have had other matters to speak of. How came you to be a prisoner of the Spaniards?"

"'Tis a tale long in the telling, sir, but I will give 'ee the drift of it. I were a young cockerel of twelve when I ran away to sea. It kept a-calling me; night and day I heard the sound; and when I could no longer endure it, I went and joined myself ship-boy to a worthy mariner o' Plimworth. Afterwards he made me his prentice, and so a mariner I have been from that day to this. Ay, 'twas a brave life for a man, in the days of King Hal, lad. I mind me I were but rising seventeen when the French king took a conceit to invade England. My heart! he had reason enough, for King Hal had before sent a power to capture Boolonny, on the French coast, which they did, and burnt it with fire. The French king would have his tit for tat, and he gathered a great power and a mighty fleet to strike at Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight.

"I was rising seventeen, as I said, and gunner's mate aboard the *Anne Gallant*, a noble galleass. The fleet made a brave show, lying off Spithead, and I was hot to show my mettle; 'twas my first fight, by the token, and sure 'twas a famous fight. The *Anne Gallant* and others of her sort, with the shallops and rowing-pieces, did so handle the French galleys that our great ships in a manner had little to do. The only hurt we suffered was the breaking of a few oars. We anchored for the night, as did the French fleet, we hoping to come at them in the morning; but when daylight broke, hang me if the French were anywhere to be seen, and though we gave chase they got away and ran into their ports. But a little after, the *Anne Gallant*, with three other galleasses and four pinnaces, was set upon off Ambletoosy by eight great galleys. There was great shooting betwixt us; we drew alongside of the *Blancherd* galley in the

smoke, and leaping aboard her, we took her captive, with two hundred and thirty pikemen and musketeers, and a hundred and forty rowers. Master King Francis got the wrong pig by the ear when he tackled King Harry.

"Ah me and well-away! That was over twenty-five year ago. I served many years on merchantmen, under many a master, good and bad. I made one voyage to the Guinea coast with Master Hawkins, and five year ago, being about to set sail to the Indies for to trade slaves with the Spaniards, he sent for me and made me boatswain aboard his own great ship, the *Jesus of Lubeck*, of 700 tons. Marry, 'twas a goodly squadron that sailed out of Plimworth Sound. Besides the *Jesus*, there was the *Minion* of Captain Hampton, the *William* and *John*, all great ships, and three smaller vessels, of the which Master Francis Drake commanded the *Judith*. Hast ever set eyes on Master Francis?"

"Ay, indeed, once only—this very year, in Plymouth, some months before I sailed."

"And I warrant he was stout and brave, and as 'twere a raging fire against the Spaniards, making ready to chastise the villanous traitors and promise-breakers: was it not so, good-now?"

"Well, to say sooth, when I saw him he seemed to have no thought of Spaniards: his whole mind was set on a game at the bowls, and he was some little put out when he failed of winning."

"Master Francis put out over such a trifle? Why, believe me, with these very eyes I saw him warp his bark clear when beset by Spanish fire-ships and battered by Spanish guns, with as serene a countenance as he were sailing a shallop for pleasure on the Plym. Master Francis put out for losing at the bowls! Tush, lad!"

"Nevertheless 'tis true, for I was there present, and saw and heard it."

"God-a-mercy!" ejaculated Turnpenny. "And what was the manner of it?"

"Why, Master Drake came to two gentlemen bowling on the Hoe, and one of them, being summoned away, left the other to play out the game with the Captain. He was beat, as I said, and being well conceited of his skill, he was for a moment vexed. Then he laughed, and clapped his hand on the shoulder of the other—a stripling he was—and said: 'A rub for me, my lad; 'twas a rare game, and I thank thee.'"

"Ay, that was true Master Francis: he is ever gall and honey mingled. Art then of Plimworth, sir? As you love me, your name?"

"Dennis Hazelrig, of Shaston."

"Of Shaston? I was never there. I will mind of your name. You be gentle, I know by your speech, and Dennis Hazelrig do sound richer to the ear than plain Haymoss Turnpenny, but——"

"Come, man, to your story," interrupted Dennis.

"Ay, sir, then I must make a tack. I was at Plimworth, a' b'lieve, when the name of Master Drake set me out o' my true course. Well, the ships I named, great and small, sailed right merrily out o' the Sound o' Plimworth; 'twas a day of October, I mind me, the very season o' gales. We had a deal of buffeting afore we made the coast of Guinea, and a deal of hard knocks afore we took on board our store o' negroes for to sell to the Spaniards of the Main."

"To sell?"

"Why yes, sir; that is Captain Hawkins his trade; and knowing now myself what it is to be a slave, I have a fellow feeling for the poor knaves, black as they be, and bought and sold like cattle. Well, 'twas near six month afore we came to the Indies and did some traffic among the islands. Then by ill hap, as we sailed for Cartagena, we were caught in a most violent and terrible storm, the which battered us mightily for the space of four days; in sooth, we feared we should go to the bottom. The *Jesus* was dealt with most sorely, her rudder shaken, and all her seams agape. Then, coasting along Florida, we ran into the jaws of another tempest, the which drave us into the bay of Mexico. There we sought a haven, and moored our ships in the port called St. John d'Ulua, where we landed, and our General made proposals of traffic.

"The next day did we discover a fleet of thirteen ships open of the haven, and soon we spied a pinnace making

towards us. There was in her a man bearing a flag of truce, and he came aboard the *Jesus*, demanding of what country we were. I mind we laughed at the knave; he swelled himself out like a turkey-cock. Our General made answer that we were the Queen of England her ships, come for victuals for our money, and that if the Spanish General would enter, he should give us victuals and other necessaries and we would go out on the one side of the port, the while the Spaniards should come in on the other. But it had so fell out that with their fleet there came a new viceroy of the Spanish king, and he was mightily put out by our General's reply, thinking it something saucy from an Englishman with so small a fleet. The proud knave returned for answer that he was a viceroy with a thousand men, and would ask no man's leave to enter. Our General laughed, and set us laughing too when he said: 'A viceroy he may be, but so am I. I represent my Queen, and am as good a viceroy as he; and as for his thousand men, I have good powder and shot, and they will take the better place, I warrant him.'"

"A right proper answer," said Dennis. "And what then?"

"Why, Master Viceroy gave in, and swore by king and crown he would faithfully perform what our General demanded, and thereupon hostages were given on both sides. The villanous knave! Our General chose out five proper gentlemen and sent them aboard the Spanish admiral; but the viceroy, stuffed with fraud and deceit, rigged up five base swabbers in costly apparel and sent them to our General, as if they were the finest gentlemen of Spain. Yet did we use them right royally, deeming it to be an act of courtesy and good troth.

"Then their ships came with great bravery into the port, and there was great waste of powder in firing salutes, as the manner is at sea. But 'twas not long afore our General became doubtful of their dealings. So did we all, for with my own eyes I saw them, when they moored their ships nigh ours, cut out new ports in the sides, and plant their ordnance towards us. 'So ho!' says I, 'there be trickery and hugger-mugger in brew.' Our master, one Bob Barrett, chanced to be well skilled in the Spanish tongue, and him our General sent aboard their admiral to know the meaning of these same doings. The base villains set poor Bob under guard in the bilbows, and we had scarce seen that mark of their knavery when they sounded a trumpet, and therewith three hundred of them sprang aboard the *Minion* from the hulk alongside. My heart! Many a time afore had I seen the blazing of our General's wrath, but never so fierce as it blazed then. His eyne were like two coals of fire as he called to us in a loud voice. I mind his very words. 'God and St. George!' cried he. 'Upon those traitorous villains, my hearts, and rescue the *Minion*; and I trust in God the day shall be ours.' And with that, with a great shout we leapt out of the *Jesus* into the *Minion*, and laid on those deceitful knaves, and beat them out; and a shot out of the *Jesus* fell plump into the poop of the Spanish vice-admiral, and the most part of three hundred of the villanous knaves were blown overboard with powder.

"It was a good sight to see Captain Hampton of the *Minion* cut his cables and haul clear by his stern-fasts, the while his gunners poured round shot into the vice-admiral that rode ablaze. But there was but four of us to their thirteen. The Spaniards came about us on every side, and began to fire on us with brass ordnance from the land. My heart! 'Twas hot work for us when we scrambled back on to the *Jesus* as the *Minion* sheered away. Being so tall a ship we could not haul her clear. She had five shot through her mainmast; her foremast was struck in sunder with a chain-shot, and her hull moreover was wonderfully pierced. Our General gave orders that we should lay her alongside of the *Minion* till dark, and then take out her victuals and treasure and leave that noble vessel. A right true man is Captain Hawkins. In the midst of that noise and smoke he called to Samuel his page for a cup of beer, and it was brought to him in a silver cup; and he drank to us all and called to the gunners to stand by their ordnance lustily like men. He had no sooner set the cup out of his hand but a demi-culverin shot struck away the cup, and a cooper's plane that stood by the mainmast, and ran out on the other side of the ship; the which nothing dismayed our General, for he ceased not to encourage and cheer us. I hear his voice in my ears now. 'Fear nothing!' he cries, 'for God, who hath preserved me from this shot, will also deliver us from these traitors and villains.'

"But on a sudden we perceived that the Spaniards had loosed two fireships against us. The men of the *Minion* were in such a taking with fear of those monsters that they bided not the outcome, nor did they heed their captain's commands, but in a mighty haste made sail. The *Jesus* being then alone,—for the *Angel* was sunk and the *Swallow* taken, and Master Drake had warped the little *Judith* clear—our General cried to us to spring upon the *Minion* ere her sails could draw, which he himself did. As I made to do his bidding, my heart! there came toppling on my head a portion of the main topsail cross-tree, and struck me senseless withal. When something of my wits returned to me, there was I, amid a score of wounded and captive fellows, on the deck of the noble *Jesus*, and a mob of Spaniards around; sure she must have been built under an evil star."

"And what befell you then?" asked Dennis, eagerly, for Turnpenny had fallen silent.

"God-a-mercy, sir, the fear takes me when I think on't! They hauled me ashore, with certain others of our men, and hanged us up by the arms upon high posts, until the blood gushed out at our finger-ends. 'Tis by the merciful providence of God alone I am yet alive, carrying about with me (and shall to my grave) the marks and tokens of their barbarous cruel dealings. 'Tis by the same wondrous grace I 'scaped handling by the Inquisition, that hath devoured many of my poor comrades. My heart and my reins cry and groan for the terror and pain of their sufferings. God have mercy on us all!"

Overcome by the recollection of what ensued upon his capture by the Spaniards, Turnpenny went by turns hot and cold and was unable to continue his story. Many times during the night Dennis was woke from his own troubled slumbers by a cry from his companion, upon whom, now that the time of action had ceased, his former sickly terror seemed to have returned with double force. Both were heartily glad when morning came, and with the new day the necessity of facing their new situation.

CHAPTER X

The Maroons Build a Canoe

The events of twenty-four hours had wrought a surprising change in Dennis's circumstances. The solitude of the island had suddenly become peopled. No longer would Mirandola be his sole comrade and confidant. He was inexpressibly glad of the company of a fellow-countryman; the presence of a group of men of strange races was somewhat embarrassing. Besides Turnpenny, there were now on the island the Spaniard who had been left pinioned on the shore, and the wounded Portuguese rescued from the sinking ship, three survivors of the wood-cutting party, three sick comrades, and the fat negro cook; in all a community of eleven. Small as it was, after his loneliness Dennis felt it to be a crowd.

His first care on waking in the morning was to liberate the bound Spaniard, and to bring salves from his store for dressing the wounds of the Portuguese, and of his party; his own wounds proved to be slight. While absent on this errand he left Turnpenny in charge of the rest, and found when he returned that the sailor had already spread a delectable breakfast, having set the maroons to gather from the trees not merely bananas, but several other fruits which Dennis himself, in his dread of eating something poisonous, had not yet ventured to taste. When the wounded man and the sick maroons, who were still bewildered by their good fortune, had been attended to, he held a consultation with Turnpenny. As a result of this he decided to keep the whereabouts of his hut and the existence of the stores a secret from the white men.

"They be all villains and traitors," said Turnpenny; "we must e'en keep them prisoners, and give them into the ward of the maroons. Wherefore I say, let the maroons build them a hut a mile or more away from your dwelling. They are idle knaves, and having been so long time slaves, they will be well content to do nothing but keep watch and ward over those that once were their masters. And as for their food, there is enough on the island for a whole city."

"And what of us, my friend?"

"Why, sir, here we be, two Englishmen, a thousand leagues or more away from home, but a few leagues from the mainland, where Spaniards rule the roast, and like to be discovered any day if another logwood party come ashore. 'Tis not in reason we could do with them what, by the mercy of God and your own ready wit, sir, we did with the knaves yesternight; and if we be found, there's naught afore us but death or chains; and for myself, I'd liever die than endure such things as I have suffered since the fight at St. John d'Ulua."

"Why then, good Amos," said Dennis with a smile, "it does seem we must cast lots who shall be king of this island, and the other shall be chancellor, and we will put in practice in our governance the ideas of the incomparable Sir Thomas More, who, though a Papist, did set forth in his *Utopia* most worthy and admirable schemes of ruling a society of men."

"I know naught of Sir Thomas More or what you call Utopia; and as for king and chancellor, I am but poor Haymoss Turnpenny, that cannot read nor write and have never had the ruling of more than a crew of mariners. Call yourself king an 'ee please, sir; but methinks 'twould be more fit and commendable if we seized upon this island in the name of our sovereign lady Queen Bess."

"A right loyal notion, and one that we will put in act. But then we must give it a name."

"Ay, sure, and what better name than Maiden Isle, after that same gracious lady?"

"So it shall be, and I here proclaim Elizabeth, by the grace of God queen of England, France, and Ireland, queen of Maiden Isle on the Spanish Main. But this is idle mockery, Amos. We are not builders of empires, but poor castaways, doomed to linger out our lives in what is after all a desert, or else in painful servitude. There is nothing for laughter here."

And then they fell to talking of their chances of one day escaping from the island and seeing the fair shores of England again. It could only be by being taken off by an English ship, or by setting off themselves and risking the perilous voyage across the Atlantic. The latter alternative seemed beyond the bounds of possibility. The *Maid Marian*, even if they could make her hull seaworthy and repair her shattered spars and rigging, would need a crew to navigate her, and the maroons were not sailor men. To build a smaller craft capable of the long voyage was an enterprise beyond their powers. Turnpenny could make a shift to navigate a vessel, but he had no practical skill in ship-building.

The other alternative seemed equally unlikely, Dennis learnt from the sailor that the island on which they had so strangely met was situated deep in the Sound of Darien. It was less than a hundred and fifty miles from Cartagena, the capital of the Spanish Main, to the east, and about the same distance from Nombre de Dios to the west; but the trend of the coast caused vessels to stand out some distance to sea in passing, and thus the island was little likely to be touched at by chance visitors.

One other course occurred to Dennis, only to be dismissed when he mentioned it to Turnpenny. It was to build a boat capable of conveying them to the mainland, and to take refuge among the Indians or the mixed race of Cimaroons or maroons who had settlements at various parts of the coast. But Turnpenny pointed out that this would expose them to the risk of being caught by the Spaniards, who were constantly at war with the natives, and would at the same time quite ruin the chances of getting into touch with an English vessel. While they remained on the island there was always the bare possibility of some English or Huguenot adventurer coming within reach.

Faced by the prospect of an indefinite sojourn on the island, they had only to make the best of it. Turnpenny explained to the maroons the plan arranged for them, and they accepted it without demur. The prisoners were sullen and resentful, perforce submissive, not a little distrustful of their guards, from whom they had deserved no kindness. Baltizar the fat negro was given the task of supplying the party with food, partly from the natural resources of the island, partly from the stores of the *Maid Marian*, which Dennis resolved to share, economically, with the rest.

A spot about a mile from the chine was chosen as the site of the shelters for the maroons and their prisoners. Having set the men at work, Dennis returned with Turnpenny to his own hut. Mirandola no longer showed any jealousy of the presence of a third party; apparently he had been cured of it by fright at the prospect of being deserted. Turnpenny, on his part, before the day was out was so much amused at the animal's antics that he lost his first disgust.

"My heart!" he exclaimed, when, work for the day being over, the monkey sat on a tub, happily feasting on biscuits and honey: "if 'tis wise looks do make a chancellor, sure the beast be the properest chancellor to your king, sir."

"You look pretty wise yourself, Amos," said Dennis, laughing. "We had resolved that the sovereignty of this island belongs to our lady Queen Bess; say then that I am her viceroy, and you my chamberlain; and for Mirandola, why, let us make him our jester."

Day followed day uneventfully. Dennis made a still more thorough exploration of the island in Turnpenny's company, and had his eyes opened to many things which had formerly escaped him. Passing the spot where he had

saved Mirandola from the boa constrictor, he mentioned the incident, and remarked that he had seen no other reptiles in the course of his wanderings.

"'Tis because you knew not where to look," said Turnpenny. "The snakes in this new world be cunning; 'wise as serpents,' says the Scripture, and a true word. They dress their skins so as to look like the trees they live in; 'twould puzzle Solomon himself in all his wisdom and glory to say which is tree and which is the coil of a snake."

And as they passed through the thickest woods, which Dennis had prudently refrained from entering, the sailor drew his attention more than once to snakes of various kinds whose coils were almost indistinguishable from the trunks of trees.

Once he plucked some fruit from a kind of palm, and, pressing it, squeezed out a juice as black as ink.

"That is a good sight," cried Dennis gladly. "I found in the cabin of the *Maid Marian* a store of paper and quills, but the ink was all spilled, and I had nothing wherewithal to write. So I have lost count of the days, and know not whether I have been on this isle weeks or months. Now I can make a journal."

"Not so neither! This juice is good to write withal, but the marks disappear within the ninth day, and the paper is as white as if it had never been written on. 'Tis no matter, indeed; we should be none the happier for seeing the tale of our days."

One day Dennis showed Turnpenny the cave in the cliff, which hitherto he had refrained from revealing. The sailor attentively examined the trinkets which Dennis had found on the floor beside the skeleton and carefully collected. He pronounced them to be such ornaments as were worn by the natives of the mainland, and made no doubt that the skeleton was that of some Indian or maroon done to death by brutal persecutors.

Dennis got him to continue the story of his life, never yet resumed since his first night on the island. He had been sent, he said, among a gang of prisoners from St. John d'Ulua to Cartagena and thence to a place on the coast somewhat south of Cartagena, where the governor had a pearl fishery. It was defended by a fort, garrisoned by some fifty Spaniards. Expecting reprisals from Hawkins for the treacherous treatment he had received, the governor had ordered the fort to be strengthened, and dispatched several of his able-bodied prisoners to assist in the work.

"And I think of my dear comrades rotting in the dungeons of Porto Aguila—for so 'tis named. There was Ned Whiddon, and Hugh Curder, and Tom Copstone, and a dozen more, and for all I know they are there even now, toiling all day, with many stripes from the villanous whips, and groaning all night in most foul and noisome dungeons. Ah! the tales I could tell would make your skin creep and your hair to stand on end. Why, what think 'ee they do if the tale of work seem to them not sufficient? They tie the poor wretch to a tree, and take thorns of the prickle palm, and put them into little pellets of cotton dipped in oil, and stick them in the side of the miserable captive, as thick as the bristles of a hedgehog. This alone causes a most fierce torment, but they are not content therewith. They set the oiled cotton afire, and call on the poor wretch, with loud despitous laughs, to sing in the midst of his torment, and if he cries out in the agony of pain they out upon him for a base miserable coward and villain. With my own eyes I have seen the foul deed, and many more which it is shame to tell of."

"How came it that you got aloose?" asked Dennis.

"Why, it happened in this wise. The treasure of pearls fished up from the sea-bottom at that place was wont to be conveyed to Cartagena every month by ship. One day the vessel sent with this intent came into the port wonderfully battered by a storm, the which had nigh stripped her of all rigging and had moreover washed half her crew overboard. The garrison at the fort being soldiers, and there being no other mariners at hand, the Spanish captain moreover being fearful of the governor's wrath if the treasure should be delayed, he sent half a dozen or more of his slaves, French and English, aboard that vessel to work her back to the capital city. My heart! I well nigh wept for joy when I heard what was in store, for I bethought myself that of a surety we mariners, French and English, might seize upon that vessel on the voyage and sail her at our pleasure. But it was as if the knave had seen to the very heart of my intent, for when we mounted on ship-board, there were Spanish soldiers set over us, two for one, and with the Spanish crew they were as three to one, and they armed. My device was come to naught. We did each man his best to lengthen out that voyage, if perchance we might fall in with an English vessel and acquaint them with our case; but never a sail did we see till we made the harbour of Cartagena, and all our hopes were

dashed.

"Then it came to pass that, being a handy man and a stout, I was sold for money to the master and owner of a ship employed in the traffic of timber—that same vessel that lies a fathom deep yonder. At sea I was a mariner; ashore, being stout of the arms, I was made to ply an axe on the trees, as you yourself saw. 'Tis three year or more since I fell prisoner at St. John d'Ulua, and six months since I last set eyes on my comrades at Porto Aguila, and I fear me I shall never see them more."

"Why think you they be even now there?"

"Why, sir, because the Spaniards be all knaves, and there is no truth nor faithfulness in them, not one. The Captain of that place was the Governor of Cartagena his own son. A son, one med think, would be loving and obedient unto his father, but 'tis not so among these dogs of Spain. Why, body o' me! in the stead of doing diligently the thing his father commanded, this young roisterer must needs build him a house, and thereto he used the labourers sent him with intent to strengthen the fort, and when I came from that place the house was got but a little above the ground, and was not like to be finished for a full year."

"Might not other labourers be hired from Cartagena?"

"I trow not. The Spaniards are so scared and daunted by the descents of venturers' ships upon their coasts that they are looking to their fortresses throughout the Spanish Main. By long and large 'tis more like the prisoners will be conveyed back to Cartagena for to build new forts there. But this will not be yet, for the Governor of Cartagena holds the pearl-fishery in dear affection, and he will not bring the men thence until he has assurance that all is done as he commanded. No, truly, I believe they be still at Porto Aguila, my dear mate-fellows, and though I praise God for His infinite goodness and mercy in bringing me safe into this haven and out of the hands of those wicked men, I mourn in my heart for Hugh Curder, and Tom Copstone, and Ned Whiddon, and other my comrades; God save them!"

Many a time in the succeeding days did Amos relate incidents in the life of the prisoners at Porto Aguila that made Dennis's blood run cold. He now began to understand the deep and fierce hatred of the Spaniards that filled the hearts of adventurers who had returned from expeditions to the American coast. The same consuming desire for humbling and punishing the proud Spaniards burnt in his veins, and he chafed at the idleness to which he was enforced on this remote island.

Meanwhile the other inhabitants of Maiden Isle were living what appeared to be a contented life. With abundance of food, and nothing to do, the maroons enjoyed, as Dennis thought, conditions that answered to their idea of bliss. He was therefore a little surprised one day to hear the unwonted sound of wood-felling, and to find, when he came to the spot, four of the men plying their axes lustily upon a huge cedar. They desisted when he approached, with something of a guilty air that puzzled him. They had shown themselves very amiable companions, grateful for their rescue from their taskmasters. He could only suppose that even they had begun to weary of idleness, and had resorted to their former occupation of log-cutting from no other motive than the desire to kill time.

But Turnpenny shook his head when Dennis suggested this explanation.

"It do seem to me there be another meaning in it, sir. 'Tis their intent, a' b'lieve, to make unto themselves a canow."

"But they have no skill to do it, nor fit implements, Amos."

"Bless your eyes, sir, you do not know them. Wait a while, and if that be not their purpose, never trust Haymoss Turnpenny."

Letting a few days pass, Dennis went again one morning with the sailor to the scene of the tree-felling. The huge trunk had already begun to take shape as a canoe at least twenty-five feet long. The men were diligently working at it, some with axes, others with fire. Its interior had been partly hollowed out, the wood and pith burnt away, and the charred sides scraped with the hatchets. It was clear that within a few days the tree would become a vessel which, whether navigable or not, would certainly float.

"'Tis a pretty piece of work," said Dennis to Turnpenny. "Ask them whereto they design it."

Turnpenny spoke a few words in Spanish. The answer was surprising. One of the maroons, a man whom the others seemed to have elected as their leader, threw down his hatchet and fell on his knees. Then, in a strange jargon which the sailor had much ado to understand, he gave voice to the sentiments and aspirations of himself and his comrades. They were sick of solitude. They had homes upon the mainland; and yearned to see again their relatives and comrades, to return to their settlement, to share in its life, to seek opportunities of revenging themselves on their oppressors. And so they were making this canoe, in which they would sail over the sea. They were not ungrateful for the kindnesses showered upon them by the white men; indeed, to show their gratitude, they would take them with them, having first killed the two prisoners. Their spokesman on his knees besought the white men to yield to their desire, and come with them. They would supply all their needs, and follow them with all obedience, if they would lead them against the Spaniards.

"Tell him to get up," said Dennis. "This is a matter we must think upon."

Dennis and Turnpenny held by and by a serious consultation. They felt that they were in a somewhat awkward predicament. The maroons' desire to regain their friends was natural and reasonable, but their departure would deprive the white men of valuable allies. And what of the two prisoners? Turnpenny would not have hesitated to kill them, but Dennis shrank from that course. They might allow the maroons to carry them off; but then the Spaniards would either be butchered as soon as the canoe was out of reach, or they would probably be held as hostages and exchanged for natives held captive by the Spaniards on the mainland. In that case they would certainly report the presence of two white men on the island and the assault upon the lumber boat; a search party would be the result, and Dennis and his companion would be slaughtered or carried away into slavery. On the other hand, if the maroons were allowed to depart, leaving the prisoners on the island, the burden of keeping watch over them would prove a constant source of anxiety.

"The canoe is all but finished," said Dennis. "We must let them finish it. To forbid them, poor knaves, would be cruel."

"And vain, to boot," said Turnpenny, "for if we took their axes from them, they would use bits of sharp rock. The Indians have hollowed out such canows with instruments of flint from the beginning of the world."

"We must let them go, then. For ourselves, I see not at present our course; but we can provide against the worst hap by conveying our stores, secretly and by night, to Skeleton Cave; 'tis a good hiding-place, not like to be easily discovered, and we know not what necessity may drive us to make it our habitation."

The transfer of the stores occupied two nights. Mirandola accompanied the two men as they went to and fro between the sheds and the cave, clinging so closely to them that it seemed as if he had some intuition of changes to come.

"By my soul," said Turnpenny with a laugh, "he be as faithful as a dog."

"And whatever may chance, we will not leave you, Mirandola," said Dennis. "Shall I forget the days when you were the only friend of my solitude? Would you could speak, for assuredly I would ask your counsel on this pass to which we are come."

They went daily to the clearing to watch the progress of the canoe. As yet they had given no answer to the maroons; but these were working very diligently at the task, having apparently inferred from the silence of the white men that at least nothing would be done to prevent their making use of the vessel. Dennis and Turnpenny talked over the situation again and again; but their thoughts followed the same weary round. At one moment they were almost resolved to throw in their lot with the maroons and voyage with them to the mainland; the next they shrank from this course as throwing away what seemed their only chance of ultimate rescue—the chance of being found some day by an English vessel.

The problem weighed more heavily on Dennis than on Turnpenny. Compared with his former sufferings, it was to the sailor a slight matter. Dennis, lying sleepless at night, envied his friend the soundness of his slumbers. The mariner snored as peacefully on his canvas couch in the corner of the hut as though he were on a feather bed at

home. To Dennis the hours of darkness passed wearisomely. He thought of all that had happened since he sailed with light heart from Plymouth Sound, and wondered sometimes whether his comrades had not perchance been happier in meeting swift death in the storm. Then he upbraided himself for his ingratitude to the Providence which had preserved his life and health, and given him the companionship of a fellow countryman. He contrasted, too, his lot with that of Turnpenny's mates on the mainland, dragging out a miserable existence of slavish toil. He recalled the sailor's stories of the tortures they endured—and then suddenly, one night, there flashed upon his mind a possibility which, in his preoccupation with his own plight, had never yet occurred to him. The maroons would shortly leave the island; had Providence arranged this as an opportunity for helping the hapless Englishmen in the Spaniards' power? If Turnpenny and he should accompany the black men, might they not find, at some time or other, a means of rescuing the prisoners—Ned Whiddon, Hugh Curder, Tom Copstone, and the rest?

The idea set Dennis throbbing with a new hope, a new aim. Slaves sometimes escaped; the maroons themselves were the offspring of negroes who had made off from the Spanish settlements and formed alliances with the native Indians of the woods. Their communities were constantly being recruited: what if the sailor and he should cast in their lot temporarily with the men about to embark, and watch for opportunities of communicating with the distressed Englishmen! Even if they never found a means of reaching home, it would still be something to the good if their comrades were got out of the hands of their oppressors. At the worst they might form a settlement of their own, and live free, though in exile.

The idea took complete possession of Dennis. He felt no desire to sleep. For a moment he was tempted to wake Turnpenny and put the question to him; instead, he got up, and stole quietly from the hut, to think it over more fully under the open sky. He walked down to the shore, and, sitting on a rock, looked over the sea and pondered the matter to the soft accompaniment of the washing tide.

It was clear that the Spaniards of the mainland had no suspicion that the island was inhabited, or they would long since have visited it. They might be off their guard. From what Turnpenny had told him he knew the indolence of their temperament—the unlikelihood of their taking precautions against problematical dangers. Unless directly threatened by the vessels of adventurers like Hawkins and Drake, they might be expected to ply their trade—manage their pearl fisheries, work their mines—without great vigilance. True, they had recently set about strengthening their defences; but probably the season of panic had passed; it was years since Hawkins had troubled them. It had already been proved what a determined few could do; if he, with Turnpenny and the six maroons, could safely reach the mainland, might they not bide their time until, Fortune assisting them, they found some means of bringing off the prisoners, or at least of striking a blow in their cause? Surely it was better to make the attempt than to rust in idleness on the island, waiting on a chance that might perhaps never come, and always exposed to the risk of discovery by the Spaniards. The more Dennis thought, the more his imagination was captivated by the idea, and when he at last returned to the hut he was resolved to broach the subject to Turnpenny as soon as he should wake.

As he came to the entrance the sailor's voice hailed him.

"Be that you, sir?"

"Yes. I could not sleep, and went for a walk on the shore."

"I had but just waked, all of a sweat, and shaking like a leaf."

"Why, what ailed you?"

"A dream, sir. Do 'ee believe as dreams come true? My old grandam was wont to say they go by contraries; dream of a weddin', she would say, sure there would be a funeral. And she was a wise woman; ay, sure."

"I know not, Amos. We read in Scripture of dreams that most wondrously came true. 'Twas in a dream that Solomon asked of God an understanding heart, the which was promised to him with riches, and honour, and length of days; and Solomon lived long in the land, and became the richest and wisest of kings. Scripture was written for our instruction, Amos, and I would liever believe in Holy Writ than in the old wives' tales of a score of grandams. But what then was your dream?"

"Why, sir, if it be not sin to speak it, I was standing alone in a waste place, and on a sudden the voice of Tom

Copstone spoke out of the air, and said, 'You and me, Haymoss; you and me, my heart!' And while I was wondering in my simple mind what those words might mean, there was a thick smoke, and a roar as of thunder, and I stood dazed, and the fear came upon me. And then the smoke lifted, and I saw old Tom with 's head all bloody, and Hugh Curder behind him, and behind him again I saw you, sir, and Ned Whiddon, and, God a-mercy! my very own self, as I ha' seen myself time and again in the glass, but sore battered and misused. And I thought sure 'twas my ghost, and the fear of it woke me up, and I rose all panting and trembling, and cried to 'ee, and when there was no answer I broke into a sweat, remembering my grandam's words."

"Well, 'tis all safe. I also have had a dream, Amos, and yet I did not sleep. And 'tis to tell you my dream I am here now. Mayhap it will fit yours; God in His mercy send that both yours and mine come true!"

CHAPTER XI

The Main

The dawn of day found Dennis and Turnpenny discussing the scheme which was born of the night's meditation. Remembering his bitter experience of bondage among the Spaniards, and oppressed by his superstitious fear that his dream portended some calamity, the sailor at first refused point-blank to consider Dennis's suggestion. But by and by, when Dennis had shown him how light had been his sufferings, after all, by comparison with those of his comrades, and had declared his belief that the strange coincidence of the dream with his own imaginings was an augury of good, Turnpenny's better feelings got the upper hand of his timorousness, and he threw himself with ardour into a consideration of the project.

As soon as it was light, he asked Dennis to lead him to the very spot where the idea had occurred to him. And there, in the little bay beneath the chine, he became the bold-hearted English sailor again.

"My heart! we're a-going to do it," he said. "See here, sir." He began with the end of a half-pike to mark out a rough plan on the dry sand. "Here be the fort. Here be the don Captain's new house; the foundations were no more than laid when I was hauled away on ship board. Here, at this angle, be the rooms of the guard; in the cellars beneath my poor comrades lie and groan o' nights. In this quarter be the pearl-fishers, penned up like cattle when their work is done. And here, under the guns of the fort, be the little harbour, with a quay of planking. Nor'ard, a mile or more, is the fishery, where the black knaves have to dive for the baubles, and woe betide 'em if they do not bring up enough to please their masters."

"And think you you could pilot us to the place, Amos?"

"I've never a doubt of it. Twice have I sailed to it in direct course from Cartagena, and many's the time I have passed it in the lumber ship. 'Tis true I am not so skilled in the landmarks from this side as from the side of Cartagena; nathless I be a ninny, not worth the name of mariner, an I be not able to lay a course thitherwards without losing my bearings."

"What is the country thereabout?"

"Why, sir, for the most flat and forest clad. Behind the fort there is a hill, fairish high. Once on a time 'twas covered with trees, but a great stretch of the forest was of late burned black by a fire; I mind it well, for the shape of the black patch is like to a monstrous cayman, upwards of a mile long. 'Tis a famous landmark, and clear to the eyes a great way off at sea. Let me but spy that, and I warrant I will steer any bark to it on a straight furrow."

"Well, then, Amos, it does seem that with good luck we can make a landing somewhere on the coast, and then it shall go hard with us but we can, by taking thought, devise some plan whereby we may release your comrades from their chains. But we cannot do it without help from the maroons; think you they would be willing to lend us aid?"

"My heart! Do but promise them a share of the Spaniards' treasure, and they will be hot to have at them."

"But the fishery belongs to the Governor of Cartagena, you said. Imprimis, we are not pirates; nor indeed is there like to be a great hoard of pearls at Porto Aguila, for they will be sent, no doubt, for safety to Cartagena."

"Bless your bones, sir, I warrant there be more kept at Porto Aguila than be sent to Cartagena. The Captain, truly, is the Governor's son; but every Spaniard is a shark, and would rob his grandam's grave were he not afeard of ghosts. And as for being pirates, when 'tis Spaniards in question I would be a pirate without the tenth part of a scruple, for 'tis certain the fishery was filched from the Indians; they be the Spaniards' jackals."

"Well, let us go to the maroons and put the case to them."

Dennis need have had no doubt as to the men's reception of his proposal. To begin with, they were frankly delighted that the white men would accompany them. They had often talked among themselves about the young lord, as they called him, who had led the attack on the Spaniards' vessel, and they were agreed that his presence in the canoe would serve them as a talisman. Then, even without the prospect of plunder from the Spaniards' treasure-house, they nourished a bitter resentment against their old oppressors, and were ready to embrace any opportunity of striking a blow at them.

"We are the servants of the young lord," said their spokesman to Turnpenny, "we will do whatever he bids."

"Ask them if they know the region."

The reply was in the negative. None of them had ever been engaged in the pearl fishery; most of them hailed from the neighbourhood of Nombre de Dios.

"Then our whole dependence is on you, Amos," said Dennis.

"Ay, sir, and it do daunt me somewhat. In a bark, or a shallop, or e'en a longboat, I could have great comfort; but a canow, sir—a mere tree-trunk hollowed out, wi' no ribs nor planks, no spars nor other gear; 'tis a fearsome and wonderful craft, with a crazy look."

"But the maroons are wont to handle such craft, you told me. They will navigate her; you will but have to cry the course."

"True, sir, but no master mariner that hath any manhood in him will be content to govern a craft being ignorant of its true nature. Yonder monkey would be as fit."

"Ah! We must take Mirandola. The poor beast would, I verily believe, break his poor heart did we leave him here in loneliness again."

"Leave the knave prisoners to bear him company, sir."

"No, no. Besides that it would be a poor compliment to Mirandola himself, it would have some spice of danger for us. Left to themselves in freedom, the men would of a surety signal to any passing ship, the which being in all likelihood Spanish, the report of our doings would soon be spread abroad through all the coast, and a hue and cry would be raised after us. We must bring them along with us. Trust me, they shall have no chance then of giving the alarm to the enemy, and 'tis not unlike, indeed, they may serve us as hostages."

"I fear me they'll be the Jonahs in our marvellous craft."

"An ill comparison, Amos. Jonah fled from his duty, and by reason of his wrongdoing peril came upon the mariners. The similitude does not hold."

"That be a great comfort, sir, in especial for that there be no whales as I know on in these waters, but only sharks."

In answer to a question from Turnpenny, the head man of the maroons said that the canoe would be ready to take the water within a week. But he added that since the young lord had agreed to make the voyage with them, they were willing to remain a little longer on the island, in order to give careful finishing touches to the craft and ensure

its thorough seaworthiness. Dennis thanked them, through the sailor, for this mark of consideration, and resolved to use the interval in teaching them the use of the caliver. He could not foresee what might ensue upon their landing; they would be at a disadvantage if they had no other arms with which to meet the Spaniards than axes and pikes.

Accordingly, he presented each of them with a caliver from the stores he had placed in Skeleton Cave, and for a certain portion of each day Turnpenny and he instructed them in marksmanship, choosing for their practice ground the deepest part of the chine, whence the noise of firing was least likely to be heard out at sea. The first experiments were disheartening, and at the same time amusing. At the kick of the cumbrous weapons the men flung them down in alarm, crying out that they were possessed with evil spirits. But their timidity was by degrees overcome; and when Dennis, in addition to practising them at fixed targets, rigged up a canvas figure which he suspended on two parallel ropes across the chine and ran from side to side by means of pulleys, they entered with some zest into the sport. At first the figure made many journeys to and fro without receiving a single hit; but within a week the marksmanship had improved astonishingly, and there was not a man of them but might be trusted to hit a moving object at fairly short range.

Meanwhile Amos, not content to trust the navigation of the canoe entirely to the maroons and their paddles, had busied himself in rigging up a mast with small sails taken out of the *Maid Marian*. When he at last pronounced the vessel ready, several kegs of water and boxes of biscuits were rolled down to the beach near at hand, and the party awaited only a favourable wind to launch their craft.

For some days there had been a dead calm, and when at length a light breeze sprang up it blew in shore. The natives grew impatient, and begged to be allowed to proceed with their paddles alone. But this Turnpenny stoutly refused. With a voyage of thirty or forty miles before them it was needful to spare the men as much as possible, lest when they reached the mainland they should be worn out, and unfit to cope with the labours and perhaps the struggles that awaited them. Turnpenny scanned the sky with a seaman's eye, in some fear lest the wind when it came should prove too boisterous for this strange craft, which he still looked on with distrust. One morning, however, he announced that a fresh breeze had sprung up from the north-west, promising to increase in force as the day wore on. No time was lost. The canoe was carried down to the beach and moored in shallow water; the stores were lifted aboard; then the two prisoners, pale with apprehension, and Baltizar the cook, were conveyed to the vessel on the backs of three stalwart maroons, and last of all Dennis and Turnpenny prepared to wade out.

During the proceedings at the beach the monkey had remained perched in a tree, watching everything with many signs of excitement. At the last moment Dennis turned and called to the animal; but it merely gibbered and blinked.

"Come, Mirandola," said Dennis, coaxingly, "we cannot go without you. I fear me you feel a declension from your high estate, when you were the sole partner of my solitude; but believe me, I still hold you in dear affection. Come then, and let your grave and reverend presence dignify this our enterprise."

But the monkey refused to budge, and Dennis remembered the aversion he had always shown to the sea. He walked towards the tree in which the animal sat, holding forth his hand, using every blandishment; then, when all was of no avail, and Turnpenny called to him from the canoe to leave the unnatural creature, he turned and stepped into the water. He had just laid his hand on the side of the canoe, preparing to leap in, when he heard a shrill cry, and saw the monkey spring down with amazing celerity and run on all fours towards him across the sand, uttering sounds of entreaty. It was as if Mirandola had to the last refused to believe that his master was leaving him, and now that he could doubt no longer, had overcome his horror of the sea and resolved to brave the discomforts of the voyage. He reached the brink of the water and scampered up and down, as though seeking a dry path to the boat. It was impossible to resist his pleading cries. Dennis returned; the monkey with a squeal of delight sprang upon his shoulder; and so entered the canoe, a trembling passenger.

The maroons shoved off; Turnpenny ran up his sail; and the craft moved into deep water. For some minutes the natives kept their paddles busily employed, until, drawing out of the lee of the island, the vessel felt the full force of the breeze and began to scud merrily over the rippling sea.

"My heart!" cried Turnpenny, "'tis a wondrous neat little craft. I was wrong; I own it free; and if the wind holds she will make good sailing and bring us ere many hours are gone to the coast where we desire to be."

"Too soon, if I mistake not," said Dennis. "It will not be well for us to make the shore before dark; we may be spied from the land. In truth, we run a great risk, Amos. Our sail will not escape the eyes of the look-out of any vessel whose track we may chance to cross."

"True, sir, there be risks great and manifold. But we must e'en hope for the best. The maroons have rare good eyes; and if perchance they catch sight of a vessel, I will run down the sail afore they can spy us, and we will lie snug until the coast be clear."

After two hours' sailing the coast hove into sight as a long blue bar upon the horizon. At midday Turnpenny lowered the sail, for it was clear that at the rate the vessel was going she would run into view from the shore long before it would be safe to attempt a landing. While the crew were eating their dinner of fruit and biscuits one of the men cried out that he saw a sail. Turnpenny took a long look in the direction the man pointed out, Dennis watching his face in keen anxiety.

"All's well, sir," said the sailor at length. "She be coasting along towards Cartagena; in an hour she will be clean out of sight, and we're so low in the water that no natural eye will see us, the sail being down."

They lay gently rocked by the waves until, after a good look round, he judged it safe once more to hoist the sail. An hour afterwards he declared that he recognized a headland which was no more than three leagues from Porto Aguila. The vessel's head was pointed direct for the land, but the wind dropping somewhat, they were still a long way from shore when the sun went down and the swift darkness of the tropics descended upon them.

"We dursn't try to land in the dark," growled Turnpenny. "This craft of ours is only fit for fair weather and easy harbourage, and not knowing the little crinkles o' the coast, t'ud be nowt but a miracle if we 'scaped being stove in."

"But there will be a moon to-night, I think?" replied Dennis.

"True, a little tiny one, like the horn of a cow. Maybe she will give light enough to guide us to a creek. We must e'en wait for her rising."

They had no means of telling the time, and the maroons grew so restless that, while it was still dark, Turnpenny ordered them to paddle cautiously along the shore.

"'Tis a creek I be looking for," he said to Dennis, "where we can run the canow with a fair chance of hiding it when day breaks."

"How far are we from the fort?"

"I cannot tell. I fear me I have overshot the mark with being over cautious."

"That is impossible, Amos. At least it is an error on safety's side.—Hist! what was that?"

His ears had caught a slight splash at no great distance shorewards.

"Nowt to make 'ee uneasy, sir," replied Turnpenny. "'Twas without doubt a cayman slipping off into deep water; and by the token, 'tis a guide for us, for the reptile haunts the banks of rivers, and sure the very creek we be looking for will be somewheres anigh here."

The men drove the canoe a little nearer in shore, and in a few minutes Turnpenny, who was in the bows peering intently ahead, whispered that he did indeed see the opening of a creek. Soon the canoe entered a fairly wide water-way, much obstructed with reeds, and darkened by the dense and high vegetation on either bank. Now and again, through a gap in the foliage, the late rising moon shed a wan mysterious light upon their course. As the canoe moved slowly and stealthily up the creek, Dennis was conscious of a strange home-sickness. How many times had he rowed by night on little tree-shaded creeks and river-mouths in far-off Devon! The deep shadows, the narrow paths of ghostly light, the silence, rendered only the more intense by the incessant croaking of frogs, lent a charm to the adventure that almost eclipsed its peril.

The creek made several curves within a short distance, and Turnpenny, speaking in a whisper, said that they had

now come far enough to escape notice from the sea.

"'Tis well, my friend; and now, say: shall we land, or shall we rather remain in the canoe for the rest of the night? I give my voice for landing. We are packed here as close as biscuits, and I would fain stretch my limbs, and moreover get a little to windward of some of these our companions."

"I warrant the maroons would liever stay in the canow, sir; and I own I myself am somewhat chary of landing in the dark. I know summat o' these forest lands, and there be fearsome wild creatures in 'em, the like of which you never saw in Maiden Isle yonder. There be wild hogs, of a surety, and monstrous wild cats that climb like monkeys, and see in the dark, and will pounce on a man and carry him off afore he can twink an eyelid. And as for these our bedfellows, my heart! there be worse ashore—muskeeties, and sandflies, and ants in armies, that crawl aneath your clothes, and nip your arms and neck, and make themselves most pestilent ill neighbours. And we cannot light a fire to scare them away, for savage as they be, whether four foot or six foot, they be gentle and mild by comparison with the two-footed enemies the fire would bring on our tracks."

"We will lie by till morning, then, and pray the night be not disturbed."

The maroons were unmistakably glad when this decision was communicated to them. To their minds the mere darkness was awful, and when to this were added the manifold dangers of the forest, they would rather have faced an army of Spaniards than camp unprotected among the trees.

The party spent a restless, uncomfortable night in their cramped quarters. Yet in his wakeful moments Dennis found some pleasure in watching the fire-flies darting hither and thither on the shore, and in listening to the continuous drone of insects, that seemed to his ears a pleasant lullaby. Once a goat-sucker clattered heavily past, uttering its weird cry; now and again he was amused by the question, "Who are you?" shouted from the trees, and recognized it as the cry of some nameless bird. As morning drew on, these sounds were replaced by others. Macaws screeched from the tree-tops, toucans barked like puppies, tree-frogs whistled and boomed, and at intervals the whole neighbourhood reverberated with long howls which Turnpenny said were the morning song of red howler monkeys. As morning began to dawn, and these signs of forest life multiplied, Dennis noticed that Mirandola was becoming much excited; and when the canoe was run ashore under a towering mora tree, the monkey sprang nimbly to land, chattering with delight, and in an instant was springing up into the foliage.

"Poor knave!" said Dennis. "It seems we have brought him home, Amos. Would that we too were restored, whole and happy, to our friends!"

"God-a-mercy, do 'ee forget Hugh Curder, and Tom Copstone, and Ned Whiddon, poor souls? Do 'ee have more respect for the feelings of a heathen monkey?"

"Nay, nay, you mistake me," said Dennis, smiling at the sailor's honest indignation. "I do not forget them. By God's mercy we are here in safety, and ere long I hope to have all your friends to join our little company. Now, master mariner, what is to be our course?"

"Why, sir, we must first go and spy out the land."

"Through the forest? How shall we find our way?"

"Imprimis, this creek runs eastward of the bluff I steered by. Wherefore 'tis our first business to lay our course westward and cut off that headland, as you might say."

"But can you be sure of setting your course aright?"

"There's the sun above us, and we may catch a glimpse of him here and there among the trees. And 'tis certain we shall encounter brooks wandering like lost children in the forest; only though they do seem lost, we know, being men, and in our right minds, that they be running all the while to the sea. By this and by that we'll come at the place we steer for."

"And who shall go on this inland voyage of discovery?"

"Why, you and me, sir. God-a-mercy, the very words of my dream! 'You and me, Haymoss, you and me!' 'Tis a good sign, for sure. The maroons shall lie hid in the creek, and keep ward over the prisoners."

"But can we trust them? Will they not, having arrived on the mainland, act after their own devices and depart?"

"'Tis a risk, in truth; but I will speak to them with all gravity, and bring to their mind the Spaniards' treasure, and the stripes they suffered in bondage. We will see if there be faith in their black blood."

After a conversation with the maroons, Turnpenny announced that they had agreed to remain in the creek until nightfall. If the white men had not returned then, they would hold themselves free to act as they pleased. Then Dennis and the sailor set off on their scouting expedition.

At the edge of the forest the trees grew fairly wide apart, and the canopy above admitted a few rays which lay as bright spots on the floor of dead leaves. But as the two adventurers proceeded the forest became thicker and thicker, until they walked in a dim twilight. Well covered with vegetation as Maiden Isle had been, Dennis had never imagined anything like the dense woodland through which he was now slowly making his way. It steamed with moisture; the din of early morning had given place to a mysterious stillness; birds and animals were quiet or asleep; and if the silence was broken at rare moments by the long howl of a monkey, the melancholy sound did but enhance the impression of utter solitude. Turnpenny led the way with great wariness; his former experiences of forest life warned him of dangers that might lie in wait—a slumbering jaguar which their footfall might disturb, a snake so cunningly marked that it was indistinguishable from the tree about which it was coiled. Several times he halted, in doubt of his bearings. Once, when he confessed himself beaten, he climbed with a mariner's agility a towering trunk, and declared when he descended that from its top he had caught a glimpse of the open sea and so learnt the general direction in which to go.

They came at length to a narrow open space, where apparently trees had been felled at no very distant date. Turnpenny was pointing out a hairy sloth hanging under a branch like a nest of termites, when Dennis touched him on the arm and bade him look across the glade.

"What is it?" he whispered.

"Methinks the figure of a man, moving among the trees."

Though he had spoken under his breath, it almost seemed that his words had been overheard, for the figure halted, then instantly turned sideways and vanished from their sight.

"We must after him," said Turnpenny.

"Ay, and catch him, or there is an end to our venture and us. He is alone, for he made no sound, and if he had companions near by he would surely have summoned them."

Without further pause Dennis ran across the glade, and plunged into the forest on the other side, taking the southerly direction in which he had seen the figure disappear. He had not gone far before he heard the rustle and crash of some one forcing his way through the undergrowth; clearly the fugitive was not a good runner, or he would have been out of earshot before this. Dennis quickened his step, guided always by the sound, ever increasing in loudness. At length he again caught a glimpse of the man, labouring ahead; he gained on him, and was within a few yards when the runaway suddenly turned, and Dennis halted and swerved aside just in time to evade a spear hurled straight at him. It whizzed through the air, flew harmlessly by, and struck with a twang a tree trunk, where it hung quivering.

Next moment Dennis sprang forward and closed with the man. He had no time to take note of him, save that he was more than common tall. But it struck him with surprise that he met with no real resistance. The man staggered under the impact; the two rolled on the leaf-strewn ground; and in an instant Dennis was uppermost. He scarcely needed the Devonian trick of wrestling to maintain his advantage; his opponent was already spent. Holding him down, Dennis raised himself at arm's length to recover breath and take stock of the fugitive. He was struck by the glare of inextinguishable hate in the man's haggard eyes. Helpless as he was, there was no yielding in his mien; it was weakness, not fear or cowardice, that had made him such an easy captive.

In a few moments Turnpenny came up breathless. Seeing that Dennis held the man firmly down, he did not offer to assist, but halted and threw a keen glance at the prisoner.

"God-a-mercy!" he exclaimed, suddenly. "'You and me, Haymoss!' 'Tis the dream come true. 'Tis Tom Copstone, 'tis very Tom! Sir, let him up; 'tis my dear comrade, my messmate in the *Jesus*. Oh, Tom, what a piece of work is this!"

Dennis was amazed at the alteration in the man's expression. The fierce blaze of his blood-shot eyes was quenched in a mist of tears.

"Haymoss! dear Haymoss!" he murmured, and seemed like to swoon away.

Turnpenny was by this on his knees beside his old comrade.

"Oh, Tom, to see thee in this sorry plight!" he exclaimed, pitifully.

He raised the prostrate figure. Copstone did indeed present a sorry spectacle. His clothes were completely in tatters, he was emaciated almost to a skeleton; his hair and beard hung long, straggling and matted.

"Tell me, Tom, me and this true friend, what has brought 'ee to this fearsome pass."

"I ran away; 'tis three months since. Three, I say, but I cannot tell; maybe 'tis four or five. I ran away from those devils; 'twas more than flesh and blood could endure."

"But whither, whither, Tom?"

"I had hope to fall in with a friendly folk—maroons or Indians; for such hate the Spaniards, and whoso hates the Spaniards must be a friend to me. But I found none, and I had perforce to take to the forest, and here I made shift to keep body and soul together with the fruits of the earth. Then I was stricken with the forest fever, and lay for nights and days shivering and burning by turns."

"Take time, dear Tom," said Turnpenny, noticing the other's gasps. "We be true friends."

"And here is wine from my store," said Dennis, producing a flask. "It will refresh you."

The man drank gratefully.

"And I marvel," added Turnpenny, "that 'ee be still alive in this fearsome place of wild beasts. Verily the Almighty has kept a guard over you, even as He defended Daniel in the den of lions."

"'Tis true; yet I did what I could for myself. Come and see."

He led them through the forest, winding in and out among the trees in a manner that seemed to the others nothing short of marvellous, until he came to a great trunk in which there were notches cut, from a point near the base to the lowest branch. By these notches he climbed up, Dennis and Turnpenny following in turn. The steps ceased when the bough was reached; then he ascended some twenty feet through foliage until he arrived at a little hut, formed of branches cunningly intertwined, with a roofing of thatch.

"My heart, 'tis a pleasant and delectable mansion!" said Turnpenny, looking admiringly at the leafy structure. "And did 'ee fashion it with your own hands, Tom?"

"No," replied the man, with a smile. "Here I found it, as it is. It was made, I doubt not, by Indians, in the time before the Spaniards set foot on these shores. 'Twas here I lay when the fever was heavy upon me, and I thought to die. Oh! how good it is to see your face, Haymoss; but what brings 'ee, old friend, to this dreadful place, and how got you free from the hands of the oppressor?"

"'Twas the deed of this gentleman, a man of Devon, Tom, that was cast on an island yonder in the Main, and by wit and courage loosed me from bondage."

He told the whole story, to the great wonderment of his friend.

"And now we be here to help Ned Whiddon and Hugh Curder and others of our messmates in the fort," he said, in conclusion. "By God's mercy we will snatch them, too, from the house of bondage, and make them free men once more."

"Ay, and I will help. The sight of 'ee has done me a world of good; the Lord has put a new song in my mouth. I will lead you. I know this forest in and out, Haymoss, for though I be by rights but a simple mariner, I am made now into a woodsman. For why? 'Cos otherwise I should have been a dead man. The spear I threw but now,—God be praised it failed of its mark, sir! and I bethink me 'tis still sticking in the tree—has served me in good stead many a time and oft. 'Twas the only thing I brought away with me, and without it long ere this the birds would ha' picked my bones."

"Think 'ee thou'rt strong enough to lead us to the fort, Tom?" asked Turnpenny.

"Ay, sure, and 'tis a good time, i' the heat o' the day, when the Spaniards be mostly asleep. We'll e'en go at once. What be the name of this true friend?"

"'Tis Master Dennis Hazelrig, Tom, and a' come from Shaston, and has changed a word with Master Drake."

"Ah, Master Drake be a rare fine man and mariner. I warrant he hath not forgot the base dealings o' the knaves at St. John d'Ulua, and in my bondage I looked for the day when he should come with a mighty power and do unto them what they had done to us, and more also. But I could not wait, Haymoss, I could not wait; and now we be met, and Master Hazelrig, and you and me, Haymoss——"

"My heart, the very words of my dream! Ay, Tom, you and me and Master Hazelrig, we three, will do what men may do to succour Hugh Curder and Ned Whiddon, and other our dear comrades in distress."

CHAPTER XII

Beneath the Walls

Tom Copstone leading, the party of three swiftly made their way through the woodland. Their mark was the south-western angle of the fort; that was the quarter, said Copstone, whence it might be most safely reconnoitred. The ground rose gradually as they proceeded, and after walking for what must have been several miles they came upon a large open space which had evidently been cleared by fire.

"'Tis the black cayman on the hill above the fort," whispered Turnpenny to Dennis. "You mind, sir?"

"Ay, the landmark of which you made mention."

Skirting the upper side of the clearing for a few hundred yards, being careful to remain slightly within the edge of the forest, they arrived at a spot where, while themselves concealed, they had an uninterrupted view of the country before them. There was a thin belt of woodland beyond the clearing, but the hill then dipped somewhat steeply, and through this dip they saw the fort which held so many bitter memories for the sailors, and the sea stretching out beneath it, a vast shimmering plain.

"'Tis bigger than I deemed likely," said Dennis, "the garrison being but fifty, if I remember right."

"True, sir," said Copstone, "there be but fifty Spaniards, but there be Indians and maroons within the walls as well, the slaves and pearl-fishers to wit. Aforetime, as I have heard tell, the fishers lived in huts around; but about six year ago a French vessel bore suddenly down upon the place. The Spaniards, some twenty or thirty then, had no warning, and the Frenchmen had an easy job to carry off all the treasure that the captain had stored up, and in the

tumult a great part of the fishers made off and were never seen more. Thereafter the Governor of Cartagena gave command that the fort should be strengthened and the workers lodged within: you can see the huts ranged along inside by the wall."

"'Twas shutting the door after the steed was stolen," said Dennis, with a smile. "Now let me print the lines of the settlement upon my memory."

The fort was a rough square in shape, with a round tower at each corner. In the centre of the enclosure was a long low house, with a veranda, which Copstone explained was the Commandant's new house, but lately finished. Close by was a smaller house, occupied by the captain of the garrison, and beyond this a row of still smaller buildings, devoted to the Spanish troops. From their elevated position they could see that on the eastern side the fort was bounded by a stream which appeared to wash the wall; but Copstone said that between the wall and the stream was a level walk, about twelve feet wide, where the officers were accustomed to promenade in the cool of the evening. The one gate of the fort was cut in the eastern wall, and it led immediately to a narrow pier running into the river, where the vessels were loaded and unloaded. Between the pier and the mouth of the stream a small two-masted bark now lay at anchor; there was safe harbourage, and this vessel probably awaited its cargo of pearls to be conveyed to Cartagena, having brought provisions thence.

The northern wall, Copstone said, was built on a rocky cliff about thirty feet high, washed at high tide by the sea, which swept round the north-eastern angle, and formed, with a series of broken rocks and boulders, an effective defence to a great part of the western wall. The southern face of the fort was hidden from the spectators by the intervening trees, but between it and this belt of woodland was an open space some two hundred and fifty yards wide, cleared with the object of depriving possible assailants of cover. About a mile to the right was the scene of the pearl-fishing, and the fishers were at that moment to be seen at work, diving from canoes, in each of which, said Copstone, were two Spaniards fully armed.

"And where be our dear comrades, Torn?" asked Turnpenny. "In my time they were lodged in underground dungeons hewn out of the rock beneath the south-east tower yonder."

"And there they be still, poor souls," said Copstone. "Ah! many's the hour I've spent in the selfsame dungeons, groaning with the pain of the stripes made by their whips on my bare back."

"And 'twas thence 'ee fled, Tom? I marvel how 'ee broke out o' that strong-fast place."

"Nay, never a soul has broken out of they dungeons. It was in this wise with me. One day a fearsome storm blew up without a minute's warning. The harbour yonder, that is wont to be safe, was a seething whirlpool then, and a bark that lay beside the pier, laden with a treasure of pearls in readiness for the voyage, was dashed hither and thither by the fury of the waves until she was like to be battered into splinters. There was a cry for all hands to save her, and we were driven out of the gate to do what we could. The sky was black as pitch, though 'twas an hour or two from sunset; and in the midst of that coil, covered by the darkness, I dropped down over the embankment wall, clinging on with my hands, and so worked myself along till I came to the extremity of the walk, fearing every moment lest a wave should come and sweep me away. But by the mercy of God I came safe to the end of the walk, where the round tower juts out—you mind, Haymoss?—its foundations being struck into jagged rocks, with many a cleft in between. There I refuged myself till the night came, beat upon by the waves till the breath was well-nigh battered out of my body. But there, a drenched mortal, I clung until the tempest fell to a calm, and in the darkness I got me away to the woods."

"My heart! 'twas a deed of daring and peril," said Turnpenny. "But list! What be adoing down yonder?"

The silence below was suddenly broken by the ringing sound of picks. Men were apparently at work on the face of the fort nearest the observers. The labourers were out of sight, and Copstone confessed himself unable to guess what their task might be. The fort seemed complete; for a month before Copstone's escape the work had indeed been hurried on in response to urgent orders from Cartagena, where the Governor desired more men to assist in his own defences. His commands resulted in the prisoners being treated with increased brutality, and Copstone said that it was a stock joke with the Spanish garrison that by the time they had done with the captives at Porto Aguila there would be little work left in them.

For an hour or more the three men stood scanning the fort and its surroundings, until Dennis felt that every detail was firmly graven upon his mind. Then, as they had a long journey back to the boat, and it was desirable that they should reach their companions before the fall of night, they set off to return to the creek. Copstone knew it well; under his guidance the others took a short cut through the forest, that saved them, he said, more than a mile, and the short tropical twilight had only just begun when they arrived at the canoe. The maroons had not been disturbed during their absence. One of the Spaniards, who recognized the creek, had tried to persuade the natives to set them at liberty, promising them a rich reward. But they had no faith in him or any of his race, and their answer was to make his bonds more secure.

Knowing that they were several leagues from the fort, with a long wooded hill between them, the sailors agreed that it would be safe to kindle a fire on shore, beside which they might camp for the night without molestation by insects. But they had little sleep. The three sat long over the fire, Copstone relating incidents in his prison life that made the blood of his hearers boil with rage and indignation. With the good food given him from the stock they had brought, and the companionship of his countrymen, he had already become a very different being from the famished solitary creature they had met in the forest; and when, fired with passionate hatred of the Spanish oppressors and with pity for their hapless prisoners, Dennis and Turnpenny vowed that they would go through with their enterprise, no matter at what cost, Copstone declared himself heart and soul with them, and only longed for the moment of action to come.

But it was not enough to be full of zeal. The greatest courage and determination would not suffice alone to achieve their object.

"We are but ten against fifty," said Dennis, "and one of the ten a fat negro whom the sight of a bare blade would cause to shake like a jelly."

"Leave him out, sir," said Turnpenny. "He would squeal like a stuck pig if his finger were pinched."

"There are but nine of us, then, and what can nine do against fifty?"

"If all the nine were men of Devon like Tom Copstone and me," said Turnpenny, "we would face fifty don Spaniards and beat 'em too. But you can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, as the saying is, and you can't turn a negro or maroon into a true fighting man that will never say die. Men of their sort cannot play a losing game, though they be full of courage if things go well with them."

"I fear me even nine men of Devon could not fight a pitched battle against five times their number, whether Spaniards or other. But 'tis not my purpose to approach the walls with a trumpet and deliver a defiance. Our only chance is by surprising the fort in the darkness, and so taking them at a disadvantage. How stands it then, Amos?"

"Why, sir, it stands clean topsy-versy, which is to say it is by no means possible. The walls, as you did yourself see, be too high to leap over, and the gate be shut and bolted and barricadoed by night."

"But is it watched?"

"That I know not. Do 'ee know, Tom?"

"Nay; afore dark all the prisoners be thrust into the dungeons, and kept fast in ward until morning light."

"And do they set a guard over the dungeons?"

"Not as I know, sir. What would be the good? The doors be strong and clamped with iron; the guard house be just above; and we was all so worn with toil and so sick at heart that nary one of us ever had the spirit to attempt a sally. When they had us fast in the dungeons, there they might leave us, with never a fear but we would be safe bound."

"Methinks that same security would forbid them to keep a watch seawards. The sea washes the north side of the fort, you said?"

"Ay, sir, and even at high tide there is no draught for a vessel of more than twenty tons burden, so they need

fear no attack thence. True, they might keep a watch on the harbour when a vessel lies there; but 'tis years since any enemy has appeared, and with the dons 'tis out of sight, out of mind, I trow."

"Well, does not that favour us? Grant we cannot scale the walls, nor force the gate, we may still approach the fort from the sea by night, without risk of being discovered, and that is the very thing that we must do. This night is too far spent for us to make any attempt in that quarter. We must possess our souls in patience for yet another day, and truly that is not amiss, for it will give us leisure to spy once more upon the fort. Think you 'tis possible to come where we may view the north side?"

"There is but one way; to make a circuit as we lately did, and go further through the woods, and creep down at dusk to the rocks, when the work for the day is over and we are not like to be seen by the Spaniards who keep ward over the fishers."

"That is what we will do, then. And now, since we know not what the day may bring forth to try our strength, let us get what sleep we can, and so fortify ourselves."

But for many hours Dennis lay awake, thinking over the next day's doings. Up with the dawn, he set the maroons to cut from the trees a number of light tough poles, and these Copstone and Turnpenny, with seamen's skill, quickly fashioned into a rough but serviceable ladder. It was made to taper from bottom to top in three sections, the first seven feet long, the second five feet, and the last, four. The first and second were lashed together with some spare rope brought in the canoe, but the supply gave out when this was done, and Dennis was at a loss for material to fasten the second and third sections together. The headman of the maroons speedily made good the deficiency. Going into the forest, he soon returned with long pliable tendrils of a creeper called bejuca that grew plentifully among the undergrowth, and these, when cut into short lengths, formed lashings as strong as could be desired.

The greater part of the morning was spent in constructing and testing the ladder. After the midday meal Dennis and the sailors again made their way through the forest to their former place of espial, waited until they saw the canoes return with the pearl fishers, and then, in the late afternoon, crept down the hillside westward of the fort until they came to the rocks on the shore. From their new position they were able to glance along the northern wall of the fort. The tide was on the turn, and it was clear from the masses of seaweed and the waterworn appearance of the rocks on which the wall was built that at high water the base of the escarpment would be washed by the waves, as Copstone had said. Having formed a careful mental picture of the place, Dennis gave the word for return, and they reached their camping ground just before dark, as on the previous evening.

Arrangements were at once made for their expedition. Turnpenny estimated that the distance by water from the mouth of the creek to the fort was about ten miles. It was desirable to start early if the paddlers were not to be overtired when the serious work of the night began. Dennis was in some doubt what to do with the prisoners, but after consultation with the sailors he decided to leave them behind in the charge of the cook and one of the maroons. He deplored the necessity of thus diminishing his little party, but it was clearly impossible to trust the guardianship of the prisoners to Baltizar alone. That flabby and chicken-hearted negro was desperately afraid of being left. He feared the prisoners, although they were securely pinioned; still more he feared the wild beasts of the forest. Turnpenny "gave him a piece of his mind," as he said, and his language was none the less forcible because he eked out his scanty vocabulary of Spanish with racy expressions in his own vernacular. He called Baltizar a slack-twisted nollypate, a wambling dumbledore, an ell-and-a-half of moidered dough, mingling with his expletives an instruction to keep up the fire if he wished to scare the beasts away, and a warning that the Spaniards, if they were allowed to escape, would certainly kill him first. And to guard against the danger that the prisoners might work upon his fears and persuade him to loose their bonds, the maroon chosen to remain with him was told, in his hearing, that if he had any conversation with the two men he was instantly to be knocked on the head. Watching the negro's expression, Dennis felt pretty sure that he would prove a most zealous jailor.

The night was still young, the moon had not yet risen, when the canoe floated silently seawards down the creek. The little party of three white men and five maroons was not hilarious; every man knew that he had taken his life in his hands. But neither were they down-hearted, for seven of them had the recollection of a night adventure which had wonderfully succeeded against great odds; and though the odds this time were immeasurably in favour of the enemy, and the task was infinitely more difficult, the very magnitude of what they had set themselves to do fired them with eagerness and hope.

The sections of the ladder had been unlashed, and were safely bestowed, with the rope and the tendrils, in the sides of the canoe. In his ignorance of the coast, Dennis ordered the paddlers to put some distance out to sea before heading the canoe westward, so as to avoid any rocks or shoals that might lie in wait for the frail craft. The wind was north-east, and as there was only the faint illumination of the stars, the sail was run up during the first part of the voyage. But when they rounded the headland that lay between the creek and the fort, Turnpenny took in the sail, lest by some unlucky chance it should be observed from the shore, and bade the maroons paddle slowly, for they wished to arrive at the fort when the tide was high, a little before dawn.

Slowly as they paddled, however, the fort loomed up on the shore a good hour before they had intended to draw in. None of the party had any means of telling the time; but Turnpenny, experienced in reading the heavens on many a silent night on the deep, guessed it pretty accurately by the horn of the moon just peering above the horizon. To delay their arrival a little, Dennis ordered the men to rest on their oars, and for an hour the canoe rocked gently on the swelling tide. The pause would have been even longer had not Dennis perceived that the inaction bred a certain nervous restlessness in the maroons—an ill mood in which to face the coming ordeal.

At last, shortly after four in the morning, the nose of the canoe was turned towards the fort, and the vessel crept in dead silence towards the line of white foam that showed where the tide was lapping the wall. It was still half a musket-shot distant when its progress was arrested with a suddenness that threw the paddlers heavily forward. Recovering themselves, they backed water lustily, but without avail; the canoe was fast on a rock. Instantly three of the men slipped gently overboard to lighten the vessel, kicking their legs busily to ward off any ground sharks that might be adventuring in the neighbourhood. In a few moments the canoe slid off the rock, the men clambered back to their places, and the paddling was resumed. But it was soon discovered that the shock had torn a hole in the vessel's side; she was filling fast; and by the time she came beneath the wall of the fort she was wellnigh waterlogged. Not a man of the party ventured to speak a word; but from the glances they gave one another it was clear that they realized what the accident meant for them. Nothing but complete success could now save them, for if the attempt on the fort failed, it would certainly be impossible to escape on this leaking vessel, and they must fall an easy prey to their enemies.

One after another they quietly left the canoe, carrying the climbing apparatus, and their calivers and ammunition, which had fortunately lain on the raised stern of the vessel and had escaped a wetting. They found themselves on the rocks, in two or three feet of water. Turnpenny and Copstone gave their weapons into the charge of two of the maroons while they carefully lashed the two longer sections of the ladder together. Meanwhile Dennis was scanning the wall above him with the object of finding a suitable spot against which to plant the ladder. In spite of Copstone's belief that the fort was not sentinelled, Dennis had taken the precaution to land a little to the west of the tower at the angle, thinking that the sentry, if one were posted there, would probably be taking shelter under the eastern parapet. But so far as he could see in the dim light the line of the wall was unbroken.

At the top, however, a battlement slightly overhung it. To Dennis, gazing up, this battlement seemed terribly far off, and his heart sank as he felt that the ladder would certainly not be long enough. But it was possible that the apparent height was deceptive; at any rate the attempt must be made. Accordingly, Turnpenny and Copstone, as he had previously arranged with them, planted the ladder beneath the wall while he mounted. The first steps were easy, but when he came near the top he was seized with a momentary dizziness and had to pause before he ventured to take another upward step. He climbed very slowly: he was now close against the wall, with nothing to cling to, and he maintained his balance only by pressing forward until he was almost flat against the smooth surface. He reached the last rung; it was impossible to ascend another inch; and the top of the wall was still, it appeared, at least twelve feet above him. Even if the third section of the ladder was added, the coping would be still utterly beyond his reach.

It was a position in which many a bold fellow might have despaired, and, for a little, Dennis did feel dismay and a touch of compunction for having brought the men below into what appeared to be a hopeless case. But it is such moments as these that prove the grit of a man's character. Dennis was no weakling; and as he stood and leant against that wall, shrouded by the night, he set his teeth and vowed that by hook or crook he would ere long be upon the other side.

He looked up and around, to see if there were any notches or seams by means of which he could scale the wall. The moon was creeping round the sky, and now threw a little more light on the scene. Letting his eye travel slowly over every foot of the surface from left to right, he suddenly caught sight of what seemed to be a hole in the wall, some distance to his right, several feet above him, and a yard or so below the parapet. It flashed upon him that this

must be a gun embrasure; was it possible, he wondered, to make his way in by that? Carefully descending the ladder, he told the sailors in a whisper what he proposed; they quickly lashed on the last section, and shifted the ladder until it stood immediately below the dark patch which at this distance the embrasure appeared to be. Then Dennis mounted again.

Once more he was disappointed. At the imminent risk of falling backwards he crept up to the highest point, but even then he found he could but just touch the lower edge of the hole. He had not sufficient grip on the smooth sill of it to pull himself up: he could not raise himself high enough to peep through. He wondered whether Copstone, who stood nearly a head taller, would have better success; but remembering the man's privations he thought it scarcely possible that he would have nerve enough to mount on this frail ladder, which bent dangerously beneath his weight now that the last section was added, without becoming dizzy and toppling down. Was there any conceivable manner in which the ladder could be still further lengthened?

Down he crept again and held another whispered consultation with the two men. At first neither was able to make a suggestion. They stood looking at one another in perplexity. Then suddenly Turnpenny, forgetting himself in his excitement, uttered an exclamation in a tone which sent a shiver down Dennis's back.

"Hush, man!" said Dennis in a warning whisper. "What is it?"

"Ah, I must talk gentle," said Turnpenny. "Of a sudden I thought of muscles and sinews, and the power of a strong back. Me and the headman of the maroons—not so strong as me, to be sure, but yet with mighty shoulders of his own—me and him betwixt us can raise the ladder aloft, and hold it firm while you mount, and then without doubt you'll be high enough to peep through the port-hole and see all that may be seen."

"Art sure you can do it, Amos?" asked Dennis, eagerly.

"Why, sir, look at this!" he returned, bending his arm until the muscle showed like a globe of iron.

Without more ado, Turnpenny and the maroon hoisted the ladder, and, one on either side of it, supported it with their shoulders. Then Dennis climbed on to Copstone's back, thence to the ladder, and began the ascent. The ladder was more tremulous than ever, and Dennis felt a flutter at the heart as he came nearer and nearer to the top. But the stalwarts below did not yield an inch, and Dennis crawled up and up until at length his head came to the level of the embrasure, and with one more step he found himself able to rest his arms in it. To his joy the embrasure was empty: the gun had evidently been withdrawn; and taking this as a good omen—surely it indicated great security on the part of the garrison!—he hoisted himself up and wriggled into the aperture. Then, breathless, with a hurrying pulse, he crouched to consider his next move.

CHAPTER XIII

The Taking of Fort Aguila

During the morning, while the ladder was being made, Dennis had talked over with the sailors the plan of action he proposed to adopt should they succeed in entering the fort undetected. The first thing was to silence the sentry, if sentry there was. It was quite clear, from the fact of having been undisturbed hitherto, that no careful look-out was kept; but Dennis did not forget Copstone's suggestion that a sentry might be napping behind the parapet, and it must be his first business to assure himself on this point before giving the signal for his companions to make the ascent.

He crouched motionless in the embrasure, listening. It had been pierced for only a short gun—a minion or falconet perhaps; and doubtless within three feet of him was a stone walk extending for the whole length of the wall. All was still; there was not a sound to show that, within the enclosure, a hundred human beings were crowded, masters and slaves. But looking through the embrasure Dennis saw a few lights twinkling in the centre of the fort, and he guessed that some at least of the enemy were awake. However great their security, it had seemed incredible to him that the place should be left wholly unguarded, even if only to provide against turbulence on the part of the

slaves.

After a few moments Dennis ventured to crawl towards the inner end of the embrasure, where he might get a view of the whole enclosure. The thin light of the moon fell on the brightly painted walls of the commandant's house in the centre; there was no light in the windows; no doubt the señor capitan was fast asleep. But a beam of light came from a building somewhat to the right; this was presumably the officers' quarters. The huts along the western wall, in which the slaves slept, were all in darkness. On the farther side of the enclosure, in the round tower beneath which the prisoners were confined, another light shone forth; somebody was awake there. But not a sound stirred the heavy moist air of the tropical night. If there were sentries upon the walls, they were certainly not pacing up and down.

Waiting another minute or two, Dennis ventured to peep round the corner of the embrasure. He could scan the whole length of the walk from tower to tower; no sentry was in sight, but he saw the gun below him a little to his right. Taking courage from the silence, he slipped out of the hole, and groped his way on bare feet toward the tower at the north-east angle. Every now and again he paused to listen, and at last, when he came within a few yards of the tower, he heard a sound of deep regular breathing hard by. Evidently some one was asleep. He stole along by the parapet in the deep shadow cast by the moon, until he saw, huddled in the corner between the tower and the wall, the form of a man. He halted to consider. Should he go forward and pounce on the sentry, risking the sound of a struggle if he attempted to gag him, or a cry if he struck at him with his sword and failed to kill him outright? It went against the grain to slay a sleeping man, and the sentry was apparently so fast asleep that it seemed possible for the rest of the party to climb up without disturbing him.

But there might be a sentry at the other end. Leaving the man in peace, Dennis stole back again, went on hands and knees where the gun necessitated his coming for a moment into the moonlight, then rose and groped his way along beneath the parapet as before. There was no sentinel, asleep or awake, in this direction. With more confidence now in the chances of a safe ascent he returned once more to the embrasure, and, taking from his pocket a thin piece of creeper, he paid this out through the aperture. He soon felt a slight tug from below. He waited until he felt a second tug, then gently pulled the creeper towards him. To the end of it a stout line was attached—a part of his salvage from the wreck of the *Maid Marian*. This he quickly secured to the heavy gun, and having strained on the rope to convince himself that the fastening would hold, he gave the signal by another tug to his comrades below.

Then he crawled into the embrasure, and, leaning out, saw Amos swarming with a seaman's nimbleness up the rope. Giving him a hand when he came within reach, Dennis helped to haul him into the embrasure.

"What about the calivers?" he whispered, for the sailor had come up unarmed, lest a clank of steel against the wall should attract attention.

"We've tied 'em up in our shirts, sir. Haul on the rope and we'll have 'em up in a trice."

The bundle was quickly raised and brought into the embrasure without a sound.

"There's a sentry asleep by the tower yonder," whispered Dennis.

"Did 'ee not kill him?"

"No, you could not kill a sleeping man, Amos?"

"I warrant I could, though I'd liever not. But we must do summat with the knave."

"He sleeps sound."

"Maybe, but any moment he might waken, and then t'ud be all over with us. A sailor's knot and a mouthful of shirt will make all snug."

"Very well. We must go quietly."

Soft-footed as cats they stole to the careless sentinel, still drawing the long regular breath of placid slumber. Suddenly the sound changed to a low choking gurgle: Turnpenny had nimbly slipped a strip of his shirt into the

man's open mouth. In two minutes he lay straight on his back, his arms and legs firmly bound with lengths of the flexible tendril. Then the two intruders moved swiftly back to the embrasure, and signalled to the waiting men that it was safe for them to ascend.

Tom Copstone and two of the maroons came up in turn. Then there was a hitch. The remaining three men stood helpless on the rocks, afraid to attempt a feat which had never come within their experience. There was a moment's delay: then Turnpenny slipped down the rope, hitched a loop around one of the men, abusing him under his breath as a good-for-nothing land-lubber, and signalled to the others to haul him up. The two others were brought up in the same way, not without some bumps against the wall; then Turnpenny again came up hand over hand, and the little party of eight stood complete beside the gun.

"My heart! 'tis a famous doing!" said Turnpenny mopping his sweating brow. "'You and me, Haymoss,' as I heard in my dream."

The next step also had been pre-arranged. Copstone, as the man most familiar with the fort enclosure, was to lead four of the maroons to the quarters of the garrison, dash into the outer room where the fire-arms would probably be kept, and hold the Spaniards in play while Dennis and his companions made a rush for the round tower beneath which were the dungeons. The Spaniards would no doubt be asleep in the inner room, and, suddenly disturbed from their slumbers, they might be expected to hesitate before attacking five well-armed men who stood guard over their muskets. It was scarcely likely that more than one or two would at this dead hour of night be in the outer room where the light was, and Copstone and his men might be safely trusted to account for them.

"You must give us a minute, Tom," said Amos, "seeing that we have the greater way to go."

"Ay, indeed," said Dennis, "our entrances should fall together. You know the way, Amos?"

"Ay, sure, and have good reason to."

"Well, then, Copstone will wait until we have had time to reach the tower, then he will perform his part."

This conversation had passed in whispers. All having been arranged, they crept down the steps from the battlement to the courtyard, and while Copstone and his four dusky companions stood in the shadow of the stairway, the other three, with rapid, noiseless steps, ran towards the light in the farther corner. The courtyard was covered with grass, except for a small stone-paved space around the buildings in the centre; and Turnpenny, who was leading, kept to the grass, even though their bare feet might make no sound on the stones.

But they had covered little more than a third of the distance, and had, indeed, not yet come level with the buildings, when all three were suddenly startled by a low deep growl on the right, from the neighbourhood of the commandant's house.

"Crymaces! I had forgot the Captain's dog!" whispered Turnpenny.

They had instinctively halted and turned in the direction of the sound. A dark form, still growling, was rushing over the stone court towards them. It made direct for Turnpenny. The sailor threw up his left hand to ward off the attack, but the beast was so large, and came against him with such momentum, that he reeled under the impact, and the sword he held raised in his right hand was almost wrenched from his grasp. Dennis was swinging forward to his comrade's assistance when he saw that no help was needed. The hound had impaled itself on Turnpenny's sword. Amos gasped with relief as he shook himself free; then, whispering "They'll have heard the beast's growls," he set off at full speed for the round house, the two others following close at his heels.

"The sailor threw up his left hand to ward off the attack."

"The sailor threw up his left hand to ward off the attack."

They dashed straight for the doorway, which was faintly lit by a light in the guard-room to the right of the passage. In a quarter-minute they were inside; five seconds more brought them to the door of the room, which they reached just as three Spaniards were leaving the table at which they had been dicing, curious, no doubt, to discover the cause of the dog's uneasiness. They were unarmed; their weapons indeed lay on a bench at the further end of the room; clearly the dog's growls had caused them no real alarm, and no other sounds could have reached them. Consequently they stood stock-still, petrified with amazement, when they saw two white men and a maroon with naked swords rush almost noiselessly into the room.

"Surrender, villains!" cried Amos, pointing his sword full at the first man's throat.

His tone, backed by the sight of the three blades, helped to clear their scattered wits. With fine presence of mind, the man farthest from the door snatched a goblet from the table and hurled it straight at Turnpenny, stooping then to seize his sword that lay on the bench behind. But he had taken only a single step when the maroon, with a cry of fury, flung himself clean across the table, and drove his weapon through the man's body. The other two, less quick-witted and less courageous than their hapless comrade, shrank back and held up their hands, crying aloud for mercy.

"Down on your knees, dogs!" shouted Turnpenny. "To the passage, Juan!" he said to the maroon. "Stand by the door opposite."

While Amos unstrung his caliver and lit his match, Dennis swept the Spaniards' weapons from the bench out of their reach. Scarcely had this been done when the door on the opposite side of the passage opened, showing a room dimly lighted by a candle-lamp, and eight or ten Spaniards who had been roused from sleep by the noise.

"What is this?" cried one of them, fumbling with his sword as he came to the door.

Juan, the maroon, stood on no ceremony, but promptly transfixed him, and he fell like a log across the doorway. His comrades immediately behind recoiled in panic; but were pushed forward by the men in the rear, who had not seen what had happened.

"Stand, you villains!" called Turnpenny, from the opposite doorway. "I will shoot any man of you that lifts a finger."

"Shut the door!" cried one of the men behind.

But this was impossible; the door opened outwards, and none could reach it without stepping over the body of the man whom the maroon had killed. They well knew that the first who ventured across the threshold would meet with the same fate, and every man of them shrank from the risk. Dim as the light was, Turnpenny recognized the features of men under whose whips he had many times writhed.

"Fling down your sword, Hernando," he cried to the foremost of them. The man hesitated. "Down with it, or you are a dead man," roared the seaman, and there was an accent in his voice that boded ill for the Spaniard if he should delay. His sword fell with a clatter on the stone floor.

"Now yours, Fernan, and yours, Manuel," and as these obeyed the curt command the rest waited no bidding, but cast their weapons from them and cried for quarter.

"Out with you, into the guard-room," shouted Turnpenny. "Have a care, Juan; let none escape."

The big maroon stood in the passage with his back towards the outer gate, and the sight of his ferocious look and his formidable sword was enough. The Spaniards tumbled over each other like a flock of sheep as they surged into the room, where Dennis stood ready to cut down any who attempted resistance.

"Ah, 'tis you, José," cried Turnpenny, following the last into the room. "Where are your keys?"

The warder edged away, seeking to hide behind his comrades. At a sign from Turnpenny the maroon sprang after him and hauled him back.

"Your keys, rascal!" cried Turnpenny, and the cold barrel of the caliver within an inch of his ear jogged his memory.

"Mercy! I will fetch them," he said, hastily. The maroon followed him as he ran back into the room opposite, and in a few seconds he returned with his heavy bunch.

"Lock 'em in, sir," said Turnpenny, handing his weapon to Juan. "I be going with this villain to loose the prisoners."

He caught the terrified warder by the shoulder and pushed him into the passage, where he turned to the right towards the stairway leading to the dungeons. Down he bundled him, neck and crop, and forced him to find the key among his bunch and throw open the door.

"'Tis me, comrades," he cried jubilantly into the dark space, "'tis me, your old comrade, Haymoss Turnpenny, come to free 'ee from this cursed hole. Be you there, Ned Whiddon?"

"Ay, ay," came the amazed answer.

"And you, Hugh Curder?"

"Ay, Haymoss, here I be."

"Come out, my hearts. Ah, I hear the chains clanking on your poor legs. 'Tis not for long, dear comrades. Come out; this villain warder will ungyve ye; then do the same with the rest of the comrades and follow up aloft. We have arms for 'ee there, dear hearts. God be praised you be alive! José, you villain, loose their fetters. Ned, I will leave him with 'ee; keep an eye on him."

Leaving the cowed Spaniard in the safe hands of Whiddon and Curder, Turnpenny hastened back to rejoin Dennis, who had locked the door upon the others, and piled their arms against the wall of the passage. Then the three rushed out into the open, and raced at breakneck pace across the courtyard to the main buildings, whence came the sounds of desperate conflict—shots, cries, and the clash of steel.

Copstone, waiting impatiently with the four maroons at the foot of the wall until the others should have reached the far corner of the enclosure, heard the growl of the commandant's dog, and guessed, from the sudden silence that followed, what had happened. Instantly he led his men with a rush towards the main building, where the light indicated that some at least of the garrison were awake. They reached the spot just as the door was thrown open and a man stepped across the threshold, whistling for the dog. Copstone sprang upon him, and toppled him over, and was then dashing past him into the house when he perceived that a group of at least half a dozen Spaniards were coming towards the door, alarmed by the sound of the scuffle. Copstone darted back; the maroons fired their calivers into the doorway; groans proclaimed that some of the shots had told. But there were resolute spirits among the garrison; in a few seconds they came pouring out, and, catching sight of the maroons, evidently believed that they had nothing worse than an outbreak of the native labourers to contend with. Shouting with fury, they pressed forward, slashing with their swords, and forced the assailants into the narrow space between the wall of heir quarters and the commandant's house.

When Dennis and his comrades came breathless upon the scene, Copstone and his party were hemmed in by a crowd of infuriated Spaniards outnumbering them by seven to one. The Spaniards had had no time to light the matches for their muskets; the maroons had had no time to reload; and both attacked and attackers were laying about them doughtily with their swords. Whatever the timidity of the maroons in captivity, there was no doubt about their courage when fighting for their lives against odds. Aided somewhat by the darkness, which made it difficult to distinguish foe from friend, they were cutting and thrusting vigorously with their backs against the wall, encouraged by the voice of Copstone, who mingled with English words of cheer a few Spanish exclamations he had picked up during his imprisonment.

But steadily as they fought, it would have gone ill with them had not the arrival of Dennis and the others caused a momentary relaxation of the pressure upon them. The three dashed with a resounding cheer upon the rear of the Spaniards.

"Stand to it, my hearts!" bellowed Turnpenny. "You and me, Tom Copstone, you and me!"

Three Spaniards fell at the first onset. Before the rest had recovered from their surprise, before they had any idea of how small the reinforcement was, three more suffered the same fate. In the confusion, Dennis and his men dashed right through the cordon and ranged themselves alongside the doughty five. Then the Spaniards, finding that their rear was no longer attacked, realized that their enemy had received but a slight accession of strength, and returned to the fight with redoubled energy. For some time it was cut and thrust almost at random, and many shrewd blows were dealt on both sides. So sudden and surprising had the attack been that the Spaniards had had no time to collect their wits and resort to strategy. It had not occurred to them to get at the rear of their enemy over the wall. Again and again they rushed headlong upon the little party; but the maroons and Copstone had taken new courage from the presence of Dennis and the others. Turnpenny was in the centre of the line, Dennis at the extreme right, Juan the maroon at the left next to Copstone. Again and again they flung back the furious assault, and ever and anon above the din of the combat rose the inspiriting battle-cry of Turnpenny, "You and me, Tom Copstone, you and me!" and the answering shout, "You and me, Haymoss; good cheer, my heart!"

But eight men, however bold and stout-hearted, could not long contend with an enemy at least four times their number. Scarce a man of them but was bleeding from several wounds. The exertions and excitements of the night

had made inroads upon their strength even before the fight began, while the Spaniards were at no such disadvantage; some of them, indeed, had risen fresh from sleep. Gradually the blows of the lesser force weakened. The Spaniards could not all attack them at the same time, so confined was the area of conflict; but when any of their number fell out, from wounds or fatigue, there were new men to take their places. For the others there was no such relief. Each one of them had to meet a succession of Spaniards. Dennis felt his strength giving way. He was not conscious of having been wounded, but he could now scarcely hold his sword from sheer weariness. And he felt that things were going badly with his comrades. Two of the maroons at his left had fallen, whether killed or merely wounded he could not tell. He still heard the ringing voice of Turnpenny, but his heart sank as he realized that in a few more minutes he, at any rate, would no longer have the force to respond.

At last, when he felt with a kind of frenzied despair that it was impossible he should strike another blow, there fell upon his ears a new sound from the front—from some point beyond the crowd of Spaniards. Surely there was an English ring in those cheers; it was no mere Spanish yell. It was coming nearer, swelling into a roar. A few seconds later, the ring of steel by which the little party was encircled seemed to be burst asunder; then the Spaniards broke and scattered in all directions, fleeing helter-skelter before knives and swords wielded with the terrible might of vengeance by the hands of a score of men who had but lately lain cowed and crushed in their dungeons. Little mercy they deserved; little they found. Ned Whiddon, Hugh Curder, and many another hunted them into the four corners of the courtyard; the tables were turned, and the freed prisoners smote and spared not.

CHAPTER XIV

Vae Victis

The intention of Dennis had been to release the prisoners and then make for the bark that lay alongside the quay. She was only of some fifty tons burden; her crew would not be a large one; and it ought to be a comparatively easy matter to overpower the men on board and warp the vessel clear before the discomfited Spaniards could recover from their confusion and make an organized attack.

But he had not reckoned on the rapidity with which events had moved, and the impossibility of communicating his design to the men who had been released. They had scattered in all directions in pursuit of the Spaniards; Copstone and the maroons were carried away by the lust of vengeance, and, wounded as they were, had rushed away with the rest; and Dennis found that only Turnpenny was left at his side.

There were elements of peril in the situation. Some of the Spaniards had swarmed over the wall of the officers' quarters. If they found efficient leadership they might yet rally and prove a very formidable enemy. Dennis and the seaman held a hurried consultation. They were unarmed save for their swords; they had left their calivers in the passage of the round tower, and the weapons were no doubt now in the hands of two of the released prisoners. Adventurous as they both were, it seemed the height of folly and rashness to attempt, they two alone, to cope with unknown numbers beyond the wall. While they were still perplexed as to the best course to follow, they heard a roar and a crash from the direction of the commandant's house, followed by a babel of cries. Running round, they found that the maroons, headed by Copstone, had blown open the door of the house, and were hunting through it in the darkness for the man under whose authority they had suffered so many grievous wrongs. There were only four rooms; it was the work of a few minutes to ransack them thoroughly; not a trace of the commandant or his household could be discovered.

"Be jowned if they bean't stolen a march on us," cried Turnpenny, "and made for the harbour first!"

"Let us after them at once, then. If they get away ours will be a bad case indeed."

Calling to the half-dozen men who were at hand, Turnpenny led the way at a great pace to the gate in the eastern wall of the fort. It was locked. Almost beside himself with baffled rage, the seaman threw his great bulk against the timbers; but they were stout, and even his weight failed to force the lock.

"Is there no other way out?" asked Dennis.

"Not as I knows on. Where be Tom Copstone? Hey, my heart, be there any other way out o' this yard?"

"Ay, there be a postern in the nor'-east tower."

The words were scarcely out of his mouth before Dennis dashed towards the tower, the others following him with a rush. The door at the foot of the tower was open; he sprang up the spiral stairway three steps at a time, and almost broke his head against the postern door, that opened inwards and blocked the way. The dawn was bursting in the eastern sky, and Dennis looked eagerly out. The postern faced the sea, and the harbour and quay were hidden from him by the circumference of the tower; but he spied a rope ladder dangling from the opening to the narrow footway below. It was clear that the commandant and his party, while the combat was at its height, had slipped out of the house and made their escape by this exit.

By this time Turnpenny and half a dozen others were crowding the narrow staircase.

"They have made for the bark," cried the seaman, "and if there be true mariners aboard she'll be warped clear and out to sea."

"She is not there yet. We have one chance. Copstone, run back to the gate; blow up the lock and lead as many of your comrades as you can find hot foot along the quay, in case it be still possible to seize the vessel. Amos, can we train the fort guns on the mouth of the harbour?"

"Ay, sure, and I'll do it, being once gunner's mate aboard the *Anne Gallant*."

"And I can aid you; God be praised that Sir Martin practised us venturers in the usage of ordnance in the *Maid Marian*."

He slammed-to the postern door, freeing the stairway, and rushed up to the narrow open archway leading on to the battlements, stumbling in the dim light over the prostrate body of the gagged sentry as he leapt through. Vaulting on to the parapet, he looked down at the quay to see how the men were faring. A cry of bitter mortification burst from his lips as he saw the bark slowly moving towards the sea. Her sails were hoisted on the mainmast, and filling with the light westerly breeze; a group of officers, among whom the commandant was easily distinguished, crowded her deck, in addition to the crew; and there was not one of Dennis's party or the prisoners in sight.

But at that moment there was a loud explosion; the gate fell with a crash; and a crowd of men, white and black, headed by Copstone, rushed out on to the quay. They roared with fury when they saw that they were too late. Those of them who had loaded calivers ran along the quay, firing ineffectually at the moving vessel. They were answered with a volley from her decks, and two maroons fell, shouts from the Spaniards acclaiming the lucky shots.

But Turnpenny had now taken his post at the nearest gun.

"Body o' me, sure 'tis a saker taken from the Jesus herself!" he cried joyfully. "And here be powder and round shot and stone shot, and a half circle for the sighting. Haymoss Turnpenny be no true man an he do not send a good un plump into the midst of the knaves."

But none knew better than Turnpenny that, at any considerable distance, it was easier to miss than to hit. Seeing that it was impossible to depress the gun so as to get a shot at the vessel until she had drawn clear of the harbour, he ran to the ordnance on the northern wall, and loaded them in readiness in case his first shot missed. Meanwhile Dennis had spied the muzzle of a demi-culverin projecting from the roof of the round tower, and summoning to his assistance a white man who was among his party, he ran up and began with all haste to load the gun.

Before he had finished, there was a flash and a roar from Turnpenny's saker just below. The Spaniards on deck, who the moment before had been laughing at the futile shots from the men on the quay, skipped down the companion way with exceeding nimbleness. Dennis looked eagerly for the result of the shot. That something had been carried away was clear from the clattering noise on board and the rush of the crew towards the stern-works; but neither the fore nor the mainmast had been hit, and the vessel still glided seawards. Turnpenny growled with rage, and ran to the next gun, from which, however, it would be useless to fire until the bark had come quite out from the

harbour mouth.

Dennis's heart leapt within him as he saw that the course of the vessel would bring her in a few seconds within range of his gun. Now was his chance of showing how he had profited by Sir Martin's lessons in gunnery. How ardently he hoped that the bore was true and the windage not too great to spoil his aim! He waited with lighted match until, sighting with the gunner's half-circle—the quadrant with which every piece of ordnance was equipped—he knew that the Spaniard was well within range. He applied the match and sprang forward to the very edge of the parapet to watch the effect of his shot. There was a sound of rending and splitting from the deck; and through the smoke he saw the mainmast collapse with all its rigging. A great shout from the battlements and from the crowd below acclaimed the famous shot. There had been no time to run up a sail on the foremast; the vessel lost way; and the crew, having been deserted by the officers, huddled into the forecastle, leaving several of their number prone upon the deck.

When the motion of the vessel ceased, two of the Spaniards rushed up the companion-way and called on the crew frantically to hoist the foresail. But in vain. The men were helpless with terror. And while the Spaniards were storming and gesticulating, Turnpenny, exerting his immense strength, hauled round the eight-foot minion which had been removed from the embrasure by which the intruders had entered the fort, and next moment a carcass crammed with case-shot plumped amidships of the hapless bark, and the Spaniards, cowering from the flying splinters, scuttled down the companion-way—all but one fellow, bolder than the rest. The vessel had swung round a little, so that her stern-chaser, a culverin twelve feet long, pointed full at the fort. It was already loaded. The Spaniard, with a shout of defiance, altered the elevation of the gun, lit a match, and applied it to the touch-hole. A round shot crashed through the embrasure from which Turnpenny had fired, scattering a shower of stone-chips around, and dealing wounds among the group who were watching and assisting the seaman to reload. The crashing sound brought the Spaniards again from below, and they began feverishly to clean out and reload the piece. But another shot from Dennis's gun fell plump into the round-house on the half-deck; and now the Spanish commandant, perceiving that the men on the quay had sprung into the fishers' canoes that lay alongside, and were making direct to board his vessel, saw that the game was up, and, raising his arms aloft, shouted that he surrendered.

"Go and board her," cried Dennis to Turnpenny. "I'll stay by the guns in case he meditates treachery."

The seaman hurried away with a mixed crowd of maroons and white men. In a few minutes he was pulling lustily for the vessel. Dennis, with gun loaded, watched him climb the side and receive the Spaniard's sword. Then a hawser was fixed to the headboards, and the vessel was towed back to the quay side.

Dennis hastened down. The crestfallen commandant with all his men was brought ashore and escorted to his house, where they were left under guard. Hugh Curder, with three other seamen, was placed in charge of the vessel, and then Dennis re-entered the fort-enclosure with Turnpenny and the rest, eager to see, now that day had fully dawned, what had happened during his absence.

He could not repress a shudder as he saw the ground strewn with dead and wounded men; and he was horrified to observe that some of the slave-fishers had broken out of their huts, and were moving about the court-yard, giving the finishing stroke to the wounded of their late masters who were yet alive. Dennis sent Ned Whiddon among them to put a stop to this ruthless butchery; then his intervention was called for at the round tower from which the prisoners had been released. A group of them, headed by a big ruffianly seaman, had burst open the door of the room in which the unarmed Spanish guards had been locked, and were beginning a work of butchery there when Dennis, with Turnpenny and a few others, rushed to the scene. Dashing into the room, Dennis sprang at the ringleader just as he was thrusting at a Spaniard who had thrown himself down on his knees and was pleading for mercy.

"Hold, knave!" he cried, hauling the man away.

"Zounds! and who be you?" shouted the fellow, recovering himself and lunging furiously at Dennis.

"I'll teach 'ee, Jan Biddle!" roared Turnpenny. Seizing the man, he lifted him as though he were a child and hurled him over his head in true Devonian style. Biddle's head struck the floor with a loud thud, and he lay as one killed.

"Souse him, my hearts!" cried Turnpenny. "The saucy knave!"

And in a few minutes a plentiful drenching from a water-butt at the door brought some glimmering of sense into the man's bruised noddle.

Meanwhile the Spaniards who had survived the fight and escaped from their pursuers, had barricaded themselves in the officers' quarters, where they were unmolested while the majority of their late prisoners were on the quay. The victory could not be considered complete while they remained shut up, for they no doubt had arms and ammunition at their disposal. Some of the victors were for blowing up the house and all in it; but Dennis and Turnpenny dissuaded them from this, and declared for insisting on unconditional surrender. To obtain this they made use of the captive commandant. At Dennis's suggestion, Turnpenny put the case to him, pointing out how hopeless was the position of his men, and promising to spare their lives if they surrendered at once. The commandant was then led to the officers' house between two men with drawn swords, and after a few minutes' colloquy the men agreed to hand over their weapons.

Dennis meanwhile collected his whole party. They were a very ragged regiment. None was quite so tattered as Tom Copstone, but all were dirty, unkempt, unshorn, bearing many marks of toil and suffering, as well as the more recent marks of fight. Of the five maroons who had scaled the fort wall two were dead; the rest were all wounded. Not one of the little band had escaped unhurt. Dennis had several gashes in his arms. Turnpenny's big face was disfigured with cuts and bruises, while Copstone, who had fought with utter recklessness, seemed to have borne a charmed life, so many were his wounds. The released prisoners had come off best. With the exception of the two men shot down from the vessel, one being killed and the other badly wounded, they had escaped with a few scratches. They were a wild, rough lot, and Dennis wondered, as he looked them over, whether they would show themselves amenable to discipline.

The Spaniards having been disarmed and locked in the house, Turnpenny constituted himself master of the ceremonies. After a brief talk with Ned Whiddon and Hugh Curder, his special friends, he said to Dennis—

"Here we be, sir, masters of the fort, twenty-two all told, five being French. We must needs have a captain, and that be you, for 'tis all owed to your wit, and we pay you our humble duty."

"Thank 'ee, Amos, but I will not be captain save by the wish of all. Methinks 'tis an office for one older in years."

"Be jowned if it be, sir. Comrades, list while I tell the tale of these rare doings."

He related to the crowd the story of his rescue from the Spaniards on the island, the capture of the lumber-ship, the voyage in the maroons' canoe, and all that had happened since.

"And now, comrades," he concluded, "I ax 'ee, who so fit to be our captain as Master Dennis Hazelrig, of Shaston in Devon? We owe our lives to him, and there be many a thing to face afore we get across the thousand leagues to home. Who but him shall be our captain?"

The election was ratified with a great shout.

"Thank 'ee, comrades," said Dennis. "'Tis not a post I covet; willingly would I serve under an older man, my good friend Amos, to wit. But I accept your choice. One thing I say. There may be more fighting before us; if we fight, let us fight like Englishmen, not like savages, and treat our enemies according to the manner of civilized nations. Do you agree to that?"

"Ay, ay!" shouted the men,—all but Jan Biddle, whose growling protests were howled down by the rest.

"Then it is mine to choose my lieutenant. You are all good men and true, but 'tis my misfortune I am not so well acquainted with you as I hope to be. But I know Amos Turnpenny, and you know him also; and——"

"I crave your pardon, sir," said Amos, interrupting; "I was gunner's mate twenty-five year ago on the noble *Anne Gallant*, and four year ago boatswain on Captain Hawkins his *Jesus*, and methinks the rank of boatswain befits my stature and my fancy both; and if I may be so bold, I say let these our comrades, good men and true, as you

yourself did say, choose among themselves two to serve as mates aboard the vessel."

"A wise speech," said Jan Biddle. "There be good mariners among us; ay, and some of us are skilled in the manage of greater vessels than the poor bark yonder. Let us then do as Amos says, and choose who shall come next to our noble captain."

"So be it," said Dennis, with a glance at Amos. "Choose then, and we will abide the choice."

It was clear that Jan Biddle expected the election to one of the posts to fall upon himself. He could not hide his chagrin when by general consent Ned Whiddon and a man of quiet appearance named Gabriel Batten were selected. Dennis on his part was glad that Biddle was to remain a simple member of the crew; he disliked the man's overbearing manner and the shifty look in his eyes.

These matters having been settled, he explained that his purpose was to sail away as soon as the vessel could be got ready, and steer a course for England. It was needful to make haste, for the sound of the firing might have been heard on Spanish ships at sea, and even now an enemy might be making for the spot. The first thing was to inspect the vessel at the quay and see what damage had been done. He asked the two mates and Turnpenny to accompany him to the ship for this purpose. Meanwhile he suggested that the others, with the assistance of the natives, should give those who had been killed burial in the sea, and he dispatched two of the maroons to the creek where they had left Baltizar and one of their comrades in charge of the two prisoners, to acquaint them with what had happened and bring them to the fort.

Boarding the Spanish vessel, he found that the mainmast was a complete ruin; it would be necessary to replace it. This Ned Whiddon said would be no difficult matter. A couple of men could soon fell a tall and slender cedar in the woods, and though it was not advisable to spend much time in trimming it, a few hours' work would suffice to fit it for its use. Luckily the step was uninjured, and there was plenty of sound rope on board from which to form new stays.

The deck had been a good deal knocked about by the shots from the fort, but the damage done was not such as to render the vessel unnavigable as soon as the mast should be stepped and the rigging repaired. Ned Whiddon undertook to carry out the necessary work with the assistance of men of his choice, and went back to the fort with Batten to make a beginning.

Dennis and Turnpenny examined the vessel from stem to stern above and below decks. In the captain's cabin they found a number of small bags which on being opened they discovered to be full of pearls. The commandant had evidently not come empty-handed from the fort. There were also several chests containing pieces of eight, and in the hold were twenty odd jars filled with gunpowder, and more than a hundred jars of wine.

"'Tis my counsel to fling 'em overboard as soon as it be dark," said Amos. "'Tis a goodish time since my comrades have tasted strong liquor, and I fear me with such plenty they might drink until they were drunken and fit for nought. And Jan Biddle with wine in him would be no less than a madman."

"Ay. Tell me, Amos, what know you of that same loud-tongued mariner?"

"Why, sir, I know little. He do say he be an Englishman, and one time second mate on a Dutch privateer; but what be the truth of it none can say. He speaks the French and Dutch tongues as readily as English, and has suffered at the hands of the Spaniards even more than most, by reason of his unruly tongue. He is loved by none, but hath a certain power over men; and I rejoice that he is not chosen for mate aboard this vessel."

"I like not his looks. Your comrades have done wisely, I trow, in rejecting him. And now, what think you of the chances of our purposed voyage, Amos?"

"My heart! I warrant we can sail her merrily across the great ocean, and with favouring winds may hope to see the blessed shores of England in a matter of two months. And my soul hungers for the sight of the old cliffs. By the mercy of God, who hath marvellously prospered our doings, we will yet again come to haven in our dear native land."

"We will new christen her for luck, Amos. Her present name—I cannot say the words—"

"*Nuestra Señora del Baria*—a papist name, sir, 'Our Lady of'—I know not what. What name shall we give her?"

"What say you to *Mirandola*? Our comrade the monkey has without doubt gotten him away to the woods, and there, mayhap, found old friends of his kind. I hold the beast in affection, Amos, and would fain keep him in remembrance."

"The *Mirandola* it shall be, sir; 'tis a fair sounding name, and, if I may speak my mind, befits a tight little craft somewhat better than a heathen monkey. Though i' fecks, I'd liever call her by a plainer name; yet it shall be as you say."

"And now, a matter that troubles me, Amos: what shall we do with the Spaniards our captives?"

"Be jowned if I would let the knaves trouble me. Let 'em loose afore we sail. There is much food, I doubt not, in the fort, and abundance in the woods around. The knaves will not starve; t'ud be no great loss if they did; and belike a vessel will come to this place ere many days be past, and then they can tell the tale, with raging and cursing that will harm us not a jot."

"It shall be done. And it will be well, I trow, to raze the fort to the ground. It has been built with the blood and sweat of our comrades; to destroy it will be a just reprisal."

"Ay, and make the knaves to dismantle it with their own hands. I would fain scourge their naked backs as they have scourged mine, many's the time."

"And the ordnance?"

"Burst it asunder. Why should we leave it sound to belch its shot, mayhap, on English craft some day? God-a-mercy, 'twas a famous shot of yours, sir, that sent the mainmast by the board, and I don't grudge it 'ee that your aim was truer than mine. 'Tis twenty-five year since I served the ordnance on the *Anne Gallant*."

"And I had good practice on the *Maid Marian*. But you have not forgot your cunning, Amos, and I warrant if we have occasion to use the piece here in the stern you will make good firing. Now 'tis time to return to the fort; I would not that Jan Biddle should stir up the rage of our people against those unhappy Spaniards, and 'tis not unlike, we being absent, he may do so."

"Ay, 'tis meet we trust not Jan Biddle overmuch. Let us go, sir."

They found on returning that Ned Whiddon had already gone into the forest with two or three men to fell a tree for the mast. While he was absent on this errand Dennis set part of his company to collect all the Spaniards' small arms and pile them in readiness for conveyance to the vessel, others to ram excessive charges of powder into the guns, and a third gang to superintend the Spaniards in their enforced task of dismantling the fort. Great charges of powder, of which there was an ample store, were placed in barrels in each of the round towers, to be fired at the last moment, for Dennis did not wish to risk an explosion, which must be heard many miles away, until he was on the point of sailing out on the *Mirandola*.

The work of preparation was continued throughout the day, with brief pauses for meals. Ned Whiddon and his party toiled with such right good will that he was able to announce, at nightfall, that after a little more work in the morning the new mast would be ready for stepping. This was especially good news, for in view of the possible arrival of a Spanish vessel Dennis could not feel secure until the *Mirandola* was fairly out at sea. As soon as it was dark, Turnpenny and Copstone went down to the vessel, and flung overboard the whole store of wine save a few jars which they kept for emergencies. The Spaniards, of whom about thirty had survived the fight, were again shut up in the houses of the commandant and the officers, and Dennis arranged that a careful watch should be kept through the night. Then, tired out with his long labours, he gladly threw himself upon a couch in one of the towers, and slept soundly until the dawn.

In the morning, as he went round the battlements with Turnpenny to see that the guns had all been crammed with bursting charges, he was seized with a whim to preserve two of them and carry them home to England.

"Me thinks they would make rare trophies for our folks to marvel at," he said to Amos with a smile. "What say you, Amos? Would not one look exceeding well on the Hoe at Plymouth? And I think not Holles, my steward, who is keeping my little place at Shaston warm for me till I attain to man's estate,—I think not even he, puritan as he is, would find cause why one should not stand at my gates."

"A rare conceit, sir. Pray you one be the saker stolen by the knaves from the *Jesus*; t'other might be the demi-culverin you fired so famously. They'd be good ballast aboard, moreover; pearls are of greater price than weight; and there be room enough and to spare in the hold."

With some trouble the two pieces were lowered over the battlements to the quay and hoisted aboard the vessel, where Ned Whiddon and his crew were already at work stepping the mast and overhauling the rigging. By midday Whiddon declared with pride that the *Mirandola* was ready for sea. A great cheer greeted the announcement. No time was lost in carrying stores, water, arms, and ammunition on board. When all was safely stowed, Dennis, with Turnpenny as interpreter, had a final interview with the commandant, to whom he made known his intention of blowing up the towers of the fort, but leaving the buildings in the centre of the enclosure intact. He said also that the native pearl-fishers, with the maroons, had elected to coast along the shore in their canoes until they reached a settlement of their own people. Being well provided with arms, they could defend themselves against pursuit even if there should be any disposition on the part of the Spaniards to attempt to capture them.

Then, one after another, the guns were fired and burst to atoms by means of long trains of powder. Last of all the charges in the towers were exploded, and as the masonry toppled and fell after each thunderous roar, the little company greeted the destruction with a storm of cheers. When Dennis and his comrades turned their backs on the place and went aboard the *Mirandola*, they left the once stronghold a heap of ruins, amid which the Spaniards were already moving about in desolation and despair.

CHAPTER XV

A Long Chase

The *Mirandola* was towed out of the little harbour by maroons and Indians in their canoes, and beat out to sea against a nor'-nor'-easterly wind. Thanks to Ned Whiddon and his comrades the bark was in capital trim, and the crew, now after many days free men afloat, were at the top of cheerfulness and jollity. The long voyage home had no terrors for them. They were all sturdy mariners, accustomed to adventure their lives on the deep. They had hardly weathered the headland to the east and stood away for the mouth of the gulf before Hugh Curder began to troll a ditty:

"Lustily, lustily, let us sail forth;
The wind trim doth serve us, it blows from the north,
All things we have ready, and nothing we want,
  To furnish our ship that rideth hereby;
Victuals and weapons they be nothing scant,
  Like worthy mariners ourselves we will try.
    Lustily, oh lustily!"

"Oh, 'tis good to hear to 'ee, Hugh!" cried Turnpenny. "And I do wish we had a crowdy-kit aboard, for I mind me Tom Copstone can ply the bow, and a merry tune would set our feet a-jog. To it again, Hugh; open your thropple, man, and we'll bear our burden, every man of us."

And Hugh Curder, after "hawking and spitting," as he said, because his "wynd-pipe" was "summat scrannied for want o' use," struck up again:

"Her flags be new trimmed, set flaunting aloft——"

"Not so," interrupted Ned Whiddon. "We bean't got no flags."

"Pegs! 'tis in the ditty, Ned," cried Turnpenny. "None but a ninny-hammer would look for sober truth in a ditty. Heed him not, Hugh; to it again."

"Her flags be new trimmed, set flaunting aloft,
Our ship for swift swimming, oh she doth excel;
We fear no enemies, we've escaped them oft;
Of all ships that swimmeth she beareth the bell.
Lustily, oh lustily.

"And here is a master excelleth in skill,
And our master's mate he is not to seek;
And here is a boatswain will do his good will,
And here is a ship-boy, we never had leak."
Lustily, oh lustily."

"You be the ship-boy, Hugh, seeing you be the youngest of us," said Whiddon. "And you've a proper breast for a singing-boy."

"Now the last stanzo, Hugh," cried Turnpenny. "'If fortune then fail not,'—but my scrimpy voice murders it. Sing up, man."

"If fortune then fail not, and our next voyage prove,
We will return merrily and make good cheer,
And hold all together as friends linked in love,
The cans shall be filled with wine, ale, and beer,
Lustily, oh lustily."

"'Tis not worth a crim," growled Jan Biddle, when the song was ended. "'Wine, ale, and beer'—where is it? I'd give a week o' life for a gallon o' home-brewed."

"Ay, and what then!" said Gabriel Batten. "Sing the song of ale, Hugh."

"Back and side go bare, go bare,
Both foot and hand go cold——"

"Nay, not that one; 'tis over long, and 'll make us too drouthy. Seeing we have no ale, 't'ud be cruel to sing the praises of it so feelingly. Nay, sing the ditty that serves for warning; 'twill better fit our case."

Hugh Curder began:

"Ale makes many a man to make his head have knocks;
And ale makes many a man to sit in the stocks;
And ale makes many a man to hang upon the gallows—"

"Oh, shut his mouth!" cried Biddle testily. "We'll all be glumping if we list to such trash. Hallo for the wind to change, for with this nor'-easter blowing we'll never get clear of the coast."

The vessel was indeed making slow progress, beating out against the strong wind. Dennis, though elected Captain, had little to do with the actual handling of the ship: in those days the captain was not always a navigator. But the *Mirandola* was in good hands. Both Whiddon and Batten were practised seamen, and in seamanship, as distinguished from navigation, Turnpenny was incomparable. They had found in the cabin a chart of the coast and the neighbouring sea, by means of which they avoided the shoals and made without mishap towards the mouth of the gulf. Dennis and Turnpenny examined the chart carefully to see if they could distinguish the island they had named Maiden Isle. Several small islands were marked on it as mere dots without names, and they could not for a long time decide which of them was Maiden Isle; but Turnpenny at last fixed on one of them, and his conjecture was proved to be correct in the evening. Whiddon had set the course by Turnpenny's suggestion, and just before dark the vessel skirted the south-eastern corner of the island where he and Dennis had met so strangely.

Looking at the chart, Dennis wondered how the *Maid Marian* had escaped wrecking a dozen times during the hurricane that finally cast her up on the western shore. There was marked a good open channel for vessels of any draught south and south-east of the island, but, as he had guessed, the sea to the north and west was practically unnavigable except by small craft. The *Mirandola* gave the island a wide berth in passing; the wind was freshening, and there were signs of heavy weather. Dennis felt a little regret at leaving the island unvisited, and abandoning the relics of his friends which he had saved from the wreck; but, like every member of his party, he was eager to lose sight of this hostile coast, and to gain the wide ocean where, given good luck, they would be secure from Spanish molestation and have nothing to fear but the ordinary chances of a long voyage.

They made little headway that night. Anxious as they were to run out of the main track of Spanish commerce, they felt the necessity of choosing a safe rather than a short course, and especially of avoiding the network of reefs and islands to leeward. In the blackest hours of the night, indeed, they lay to, Turnpenny remarking that it was better to lose a little time than to run the risk of losing the vessel by a too bold navigation of unfamiliar seas.

This caution proved to be justified, for the wind shifted in the night; and when at break of day the *Mirandola* again got under way they found that she had drifted dangerously near an island which, being very small, was not marked on the chart. A light haze lay over the sea, but it lifted soon, and then vast excitement was aroused on board when the look-out shouted that he descried, under the lee of the island, a vessel under full sail. Turnpenny took a long look at her, and declared that she was a bark somewhat larger than the Mirandola, though at the distance—near four miles, he thought—it was impossible to be sure.

"Of what nation is she?" asked Dennis.

"No mortal man could say," returned Amos; "but 'tis a hundred to one she be a Spaniard, and we must either fight or run."

"Think you she will see us, being so small a vessel?"

"None can tell that either. We must look to the worst. True, we have the weather-gage of her; but soon or late she will overhaul us if she gives chase. She has a look of speed, or I be no mariner. 'Tis certain we cannot fight her; our armament will not suffice; furthermore, from her size I reckon her crew be three or four times ours, and our men have no mind to be captured and cast again into a Spanish dungeon."

"We must e'en run then," said Dennis with a sigh. "That means we must put about?"

"True, and 'tis somewhat in our favour, for you perceive the wind has shifted in the night to west-sou'-west, and belike we can sail close-hauled better than she can."

Whiddon accordingly put the vessel about, and set the course so that she could keep the island between herself and the stranger. But in the course of the next hour it was clear that the *Mirandola* had not escaped notice. The stranger had weathered the island and was manifestly standing in pursuit. The crew of the *Mirandola* watched her anxiously. They were but twenty-two all told, five of them being French: and although they were all stout mariners with no lack of native courage, the remembrance of their past sufferings did not incline them to run risks. For some

time it was doubtful whether the pursuing vessel was or was not gaining; but as the day wore on it became clear that the *Mirandola* was being outsailed.

"'Tis a piece of rare good luck we had the wind against us last night," said Turnpenny, "for in a straight chase in the open we should have no chance against the critter, whereas if we get back among these islands we may give her the slip."

"If we do not strike a reef and founder," replied Dennis.

Here Turnpenny tried a device that he had often seen practised on the *Anne Gallant*. He ordered two men to go up to the cross-trees with a pulley-block; they rove a line through, and, hoisting up buckets of water, saturated all the canvas. Then he put all the men on to the lee braces, and so got the vessel to lie a point nearer the wind.

The two manoeuvres considerably increased her speed, but in spite of all that seamanship could do or devise the gap between the vessels sensibly diminished; the pursuer loomed ever larger down to leeward. Then Jan Biddle began to show himself in his true colours. Dennis had noticed that the man had attached to himself a group of the wilder spirits among the crew, who with an ill grace went about the duties assigned to them by Whiddon, and upon whom, indeed, the mate called as seldom as possible. When it became clear that the *Mirandola* was being surely overhauled, these men were observed in close talk beneath the break of the poop. By and by Biddle swaggered forward, followed by seven or eight of his comrades, to where Whiddon and Turnpenny stood, forward of the mainmast. Batten was at the helm.

"Art mad, Ned Whiddon?" cried Biddle in a hectoring tone. "Dost think thou'rt a mariner? Crymaces! if we trust to thee we'll be laid by the heels in the hold of yonder craft ere night."

"Couldst do better, think 'ee?" asked Whiddon quietly.

"Better? Who but a slin-pole would have done as 'ee have done? There's but one way to scape out of the clutches of the Spaniards, and that is to put the helm down, come about, and run for it. This craft is better running free than close-hauled."

"Know a fool by his folly," said Turnpenny. "Rule your saucy tongue, Jan Biddle, and offer not to teach your betters."

"Who be you to talk of betters, Amos Turnpenny—a sluddering rampallian like you? An you will take no counsel we'll e'en see to the manage of the vessel ourselves. Here, comrades, this be enough of these joulter heads; let go the sheets; I will put the helm down and we'll go round on the other tack: we'll have no fools over us, to bring us to harm."

But before one of the malcontents could step forward to do his bidding, Turnpenny threw his arms around Biddle, lifted him clean off his feet, and flung him against the bulwarks, where he lay stunned.

"And I'll serve any man likewise that dares to raise his voice in mutiny. Get about, you villains, and 'ware lest you be clapped in irons and set awash in the bilge."

Dennis had hastened to Turnpenny's side at the first sign of altercation.

"When the chase is over we will deal with these fellows," he said quietly. "Meanwhile, Amos, is not that our Maiden Isle on the lewside ahead?"

"Surely it is, sir."

"Think you not 'twould serve us best to run in among the reefs thereabouts? The bark could not follow us."

"True, but we might strike and run aground any moment, and lose our vessel and our lives withal."

"Ay, but we are being surely overhauled, and meseems 'twere better to take the risk of running aground than to fall into the hands of the Spaniards. There is a chance of our threading a way through, whereas the stranger, being of

greater draught, would not venture her bottom among these uncharted shoals."

"Verily 'tis a wise thought—if there be time. What think 'ee, Ned? Yonder, mark 'ee, is the isle whereon Master Hazelrig and I lived secure for a matter of weeks, with food in plenty. Think 'ee there be time to make the shallows afore the Spaniard comes within shot of us?"

"Ay, there be time enough, but I fear me we should wreck our craft."

"There be no other way, Ned. And I warrant me I could make a shift to steer a safe course inshore, because 'twas on the south side of the isle we landed from the timber ship, and there, i' fecks, be her masts—see, Ned, standing out a little above the sea."

"Then do 'ee take the helm, Haymoss, and God save us all."

Clearly the course of the *Mirandola* was being closely watched on the pursuing vessel, for when, tacking in obedience to the helm, she made direct for the south of the island, there came a puff of smoke from the side of the bark, and a shot plumped into the sea about two cable-lengths astern.

"'Twas over hurrisome, master don," said Turnpenny with a chuckle; "and call me a Dutchman if 'ee ever get to closer range."

He ran the little vessel cleverly inshore and steered past the wreck of the timber ship. Then it occurred to Dennis that there must be a practicable channel not far to the west, or the *Maid Marian* would have gone aground in the hurricane long before she did. At his suggestion the *Mirandola* was kept on her course for half a mile beyond the southernmost point of the island. Then, as there was no time to take soundings, she was put before the wind, with the object of gaining the north of the island, where Dennis knew that if the pursuer drew as much water as from her size seemed likely, there was little chance of her being able to follow.

The confident bearing of Dennis and Turnpenny had a cheering influence on the crew. Even Jan Biddle, who had now recovered from his blow, and his cronies seemed no longer inclined to quarrel with the handling of the vessel. The pursuer was now out of sight, hidden by the bend of the shore. The *Mirandola* was making excellent sailing before the wind, and Dennis hoped that if she could elude the Spaniard until dark, there might be a good chance of her escaping any further attentions.

The pursuer came in sight again just as the *Mirandola* was approaching the rocky ridge which had been a barrier to Dennis's exploration of the shore on his first day on the island. He was rejoiced to see that in wearing she had lost a little. Then a sudden idea struck him. Beyond the ridge was the entrance to the gully, and up the gully the broad pool in which the *Maid Marian* lay. Would not the best course after all be to play a trick on the pursuer? Why not try to run into the pool? When the *Mirandola* had once rounded the shoulder of the cliff she would again be almost out of sight; if she could run into the gully the pursuers would almost certainly suppose that she had fled round the northern side of the island; and safe in the pool, she might lie there until the chase had been given up. He mentioned his idea to Amos.

"Be jowned if it bean't a right merry notion," cried the mariner.

But none knew better the difficulty of steering the vessel safely into the gully. There was no time for consideration. If once she passed the entrance the vessel could not beat back again before the pursuer came within range. The slightest failure in Turnpenny's seamanship would run the bark on the rocks. But the old mariner knew the gully. With set lips and a deep indentation between his brows he stood at the helm and gave his orders to the men.

"Stand by the halliards," he cried, "and let go the moment I say the word."

It was important to have plenty of way on the vessel, for the instant she came to the headland the wind would be taken out of her canvas. Easing the helm gently over, Turnpenny called to the men to let go as the ship rounded the point; in a few moments the canvas was all taken in, and with the way on her she glided up the gully.

Within ten minutes from the time when the notion first occurred to Dennis the *Mirandola* lay side by side with

the wreck of the *Maid Marian* in the pool, invisible from the open sea.

"Mum's the word," said Turnpenny when the anchor had been dropped. "Muzzle your jaws for a while. Master Hazelrig and me we knows this island, and we'll mount the cliff yonder and see what the don Spaniard makes of us now."

Leaving the men to swim ashore if they chose, Dennis and Turnpenny sprang overboard, soon found their footing, and scrambled up the rocks and the cliff, keeping well under cover. When they reached the top they saw the pursuer about three miles distant. She had shortened sail, and was evidently inclined to give the coast a wider berth than the *Mirandola* had done. It was growing dusk when she came level with the gully, standing about a mile from the shore. Her movements for a time were erratic; clearly the people on board distrusted the waters round the island, and were somewhat perplexed as to the course taken by the fugitive. At length they decided apparently to abandon the pursuit, for she stood to windward, and the two watchers breathed again.

CHAPTER XVI

Jan Biddle, Master

"God be praised!" said Turnpenny, fervently; "we have escaped out of the hands of the enemy."

"And we find ourselves once more on Maiden Isle, the which I never thought to set foot on more. I am glad of it, Amos, for now that we have a bark fit to carry us over the sea, I would fain take with us certain things that belonged to my dear comrades. They will be cherished by their sorrowing folks at home."

"True, the sight of such belongings of the dead and gone do have a morsel of comfort in it. And moreover we can take some of your stores, for though our own monkey ship be not ill provided, yet the victuals be Spanish, and 'twill make new men of our comrades to give 'em a rasher of bacon now and again."

"Ay, but why monkey ship, Amos?"

"Why, sir, I cannot put my tongue to the name your fancy gave the vessel, and to my thinking it is not to compare with *Anne Gallant*, and *Jesus*, and *Minion*, and other craft I have served aboard, to say nothing of the *Susans* and *Bettys* that are well beknown in Plimworth Sound."

"Well, have your way. To my ears *Mirandola* hath a pleasant sound, and it will always keep me in mind of my good friend. But 'tis time we returned to our comrades."

When they reached the entrance of the chine they found that the crew had all come ashore, save one or two who were curiously examining the wreck of the *Maid Marian*. They could not refrain from shouting a glad "Huzza!" when they learnt that the pursuing vessel was standing away. Jan Biddle and one of his cronies had been rummaging in Dennis's hut and sheds, finding little to reward them, however, almost everything having been transferred to Skeleton Cave. Night was drawing on apace, and though some of the crew were for setting sail in the darkness, the majority agreed with Dennis that it would be better to defer their departure until the following night. This plan would give them a whole day's rest; it would render it less likely that the pursuer would be still in the neighbourhood; and it would enable them to carry more water on board, which was desirable in view of the possibility of a protracted voyage. Dennis and Amos decided to occupy their old hut; the men were given their choice of the sheds, now all but empty, and the huts erected by the maroons near the logwood grove. They all declared for sleeping ashore rather than on board ship, Hugh Curder and Gabriel Batten, however, volunteering to remain on deck as a night watch.

Next day, after the stores and things which Dennis wished to take home had been transferred from the cave to the vessel, and several barrels of fresh water from the spring in the cliff had been placed in her hold, the men broke up into little groups and wandered about the island, revelling in their liberty and in the abundance of fruit which they

could have for the picking. Several times Dennis went to the cliff top on one side and Amos on the other side of the island to scan the horizon for a sail, but neither saw any sign of one. In the afternoon Dennis ventured to sound Sir Martin's trumpet as a signal of recall, and the men came dropping back in ones and twos and threes in anticipation of departure.

The tide was at flood, and Dennis had just given the order to go aboard, when Tom Copstone suddenly exclaimed—

"Zuggers! Where be Gabriel Batten?"

"Is he not here?" asked Dennis.

"Not the ghost of him," said Amos, looking round on the company.

"He were always a ninny-hammer," cried Jan Biddle angrily. "Never did I know such a man for simples and other trash. Sure he be roaming somewheres with his nose to the ground, trying to smell out some herb that will heal a scratch or cure a distemper."

"Blow up the trumpet for en," suggested Copstone; "Gabr'el be a vitty lad—none the worse for not being made so rampageous as 'ee, Jan Biddle, for all he do go wool-gathering at whiles."

Biddle glared at the speaker, but said no more. Hugh Curder, being the man with the brazen lungs, blew a loud blast on the trumpet which set the cliffs and the chine reverberating. They waited; the wanderer must have gone far indeed if he was out of earshot of that strident blare. But as time went on, and he did not appear, Dennis began to be somewhat vexed.

"'Twas thoughtless of the man," he said; "already is the tide beginning to ebb, in two hours it will be impossible to embark this night, and that entails upon us the loss of another day."

"Embark without him," growled Biddle. "What is he that he should keep a score of good men waiting his pleasure?"

"Nay, nay," said Dennis. "We cannot leave him here. You have had your sufferings and sorrows, from the like of which God save us all; but is there a man of you that hath dwelt alone upon an island, spending nights and days without the sight of a face, or the sound of a voice? That have I done, and not willingly shall I subject a man to a like solitude. There is still a little space during which the tide will serve. Let us scatter in parties, some going this way, some that, and halloo; perchance some of us may light on our comrade."

The suggestion was adopted; only Jan Biddle and his few particular friends went about the search grudgingly. But though the men scoured the island from shore to shore, and kept up the quest to the very verge of nightfall, long after the tide had run so low that the idea of setting sail till next day had to be abandoned, they discovered no trace of the straggler, and returned weary and irritable when the trumpet recalled them.

"He may come in by and by," said Dennis cheerfully. "If not we must e'en take up the search in the morning. We shall have a whole day wherein to pursue it. Let us now get our supper and commend ourselves and our comrades to God."

"Odspitikins!" cried Jan Biddle. "What did I say! What a captain is this! Here be we, twenty-one souls, raped up here for one slummaking micher not worth a varden."

"My heart!" shouted Amos, "you were best keep a still tongue in your noddle, Jan Biddle, or with the captain's leave I'll clap 'ee in irons the instant we go aboard, and keep 'ee under hatches for a sluddering mutineer—ay, and larrap 'ee first, I warrant 'ee."

Biddle's experience of the strength of Turnpenny's arm did not encourage him to repeat his protest; but when the supper was spread on the rocks above the pool, he carried off his portion to a place apart, and nursed his wrath among a small group of his comrades who followed him. The malcontents numbered eight in all, and four of these were Frenchmen, with whom Biddle could converse freely in their own tongue.

Again they slept ashore, except the two who had been selected to keep watch on the vessel. The precaution seemed hardly necessary, for it was unlikely that a hostile ship would appear in the night; but Turnpenny had suggested that it was well to keep up the customs observed at sea. The men chosen for this night's watch were two steady fellows named William Hawk and Luke Fenton.

Dennis lay awake for some time, talking with Amos about the missing man. Though he had maintained a cheerful composure before the crew, he was in reality not a little vexed at the delay caused by the thoughtlessness of Gabriel Batten.

"Is it true, what Biddle said," he asked, "about Batten's madness for gathering simples?"

"Ay, 'tis true. He be a vitty lad, as Tom Copstone said, and a good seaman, quiet withal; but he has a maggot, and 'tis that, without a doubt, that has led him aroaming. There be a time for everything, and though I do not deny that Gabriel's skill in simples has ofttimes served us well, 'tis not to be wondered at that the men make a pucker about it."

"Well, we must find him to-morrow. We cannot sail away without him; why, there is not even a Mirandola here now to bear him company."

"Be jowned if I don't ballirag en to-morrow for his hanticks, od-rat-en!"

Dennis passed a restless night, waking often, to wonder what had become of the wanderer. He resolved to set out himself as soon as dawn broke, and take advantage of his knowledge of the island to search thoroughly. Finding himself unable to sleep again, he got up while the chine was still in darkness, and walked to the edge of the cliff overlooking the pool. In the gloom he could just see the dark form of the *Maid Marian*; but then he started, rubbed his eyes, looked again, and felt a shock of amazement when he realized that the other vessel was no longer there. Next moment it flashed upon him that she must have dragged her moorings and floated away on the very last of the ebb-tide, and the fact that no alarm had been given seemed to show that the watchers had fallen asleep, overcome by the sweltering heat of the tropical night.

Calling to Amos, he set off at full speed down the cliff towards the opening of the gully, narrowly escaping a serious fall in the darkness. He was much relieved to see, on rounding the shoulder of the cliff, the dark hull of the vessel in front of him. The tide was so low that it was marvellous she had floated so far without grounding, and the thought that she might strike a reef and cause further delay while repairs were made prompted a vigorous shout, to waken the neglectful watch ere it was too late. But there came no answering hail from the vessel; and fearing that, even if she did not run aground, the men on board might not have sufficient seamanship to bring her back in safety, he dived into the water and struck out in her wake.

As he did so, he heard footsteps behind him, two or three voices, and the sound of another splash. Evidently some one had followed him. The *Mirandola* was moving very slowly; the motion of the tide was indeed almost imperceptible, and Dennis, being a good swimmer, soon came under her counter. Catching hold, by a happy chance as he thought, of a rope that had formed her mooring cable, he swarmed hand over hand up the side and on to the deck. But no sooner had his feet touched the planks than two figures sprang towards him, a blanket was thrown over his head, and before he could utter a sound he was flung down, gagged, and pinioned.

Even through the thick folds of the blanket Dennis was able to hear a great scuffling on board within a few seconds of his own discomfiture. Then all was still, except for the muffled tones of his captors' voices. He could not hear what they said, but it was not long before he knew from the greater motion of the vessel that they must have hoisted sail. Not for a moment did he doubt the meaning of it all. Who but Jan Biddle and his fellow malcontents would have had the daring to run off with the vessel? The man was a ruffian in looks, and Dennis had already had several evidences of his turbulent spirit. And, lying helpless and half smothered on the deck, he did not have to seek far for the motive of the act. It was not merely chagrin at being denied a rank; the man knew that there were pearls in the hold, a valuable treasure, and his treachery was prompted by cupidity. He had supposed, Dennis suspected, that as a simple mariner among the crew he would get but a small portion of the treasure when it should be divided, and persuaded some of the men to make this attempt to secure the whole. Angry as he was, Dennis could not withhold a certain admiration for the man's daring; and then he fell a-wondering why he had not been struck on the head and killed outright; a ruffian like Biddle would hardly have spared him from any feeling of compunction.

How long Dennis lay half stifled under the blanket he could not tell. Hours seemed to have passed when it was at last removed, and he could breathe freely. And there, beside him, lay Amos Turnpenny, gagged like himself. Jan Biddle and several of his comrades stood over them, grinning with malicious triumph.

"Pegs, Captain," said the man, "you do seem betoatled. Thought the vessel had broke a-loose, I reckon. And so she had—eh, comrades?"

"Ho! ho!" laughed the men, vastly appreciating their leader's joke.

"Now, we be eight, young master captain,—stout fellows, but a small crew for this vessel. You be in our power, you and Haymoss too, for all he be a rare fustilugs; and down a-hold lie Bill Hawk and Luke Fenton, that kept but a ninny-watch, to be sure. Wherefore we be twelve all told, enough for the manage of this craft. Haymoss will not be boatswain, to be sure, nor you captain; I be captain; boatswain is French Michel yonder; but 'ee can take your choice,—help to work this vessel, or walk the plank. Now I will loose your gags, and you and Haymoss can talk the matter out, and when ye've made up your minds we'll unbind 'ee, or tumble 'ee overboard, according."

Left to themselves, Dennis and Turnpenny were not long in deciding on their course of action. They were at present outnumbered; they had to accept the inevitable. Their assistance would be very valuable in the working of the vessel, and Biddle, in spite of his assured bearing, was by no means so confident in his seamanship and skill as he tried to make himself appear. After his treacherous conduct he had no reason to suppose that Turnpenny would lift a finger to make good his deficiencies; on the other hand it was not to the interest of the prisoners that the ship should come to grief through mishandling, and Biddle knew that in extremity Turnpenny's instinct of seamanship would forbid him to hold aloof.

But while Dennis and the mariner agreed that they had no choice but to accept the position with what grace they might, they resolved to bide their time for getting the vessel again under their control and returning to the island.

"My poor comrades and me be parted again," said Amos, with a sigh. "'Tis true it will not be so bad for them upon the island as 'twas for us. But there they be, and there they must bide until we can fetch 'em off."

"And mayhap the Spaniards will land before we can get back to them, and then God help the poor fellows. There is little chance we two can overpower these eight villains; we can but hope on."

Having acquainted Biddle with their decision, they were cast loose, and sat beneath the break of the poop watching their captors' attempts at navigation. The vessel had rounded the easternmost point of the island and was running before a south-south-westerly wind. But it made little progress; as the day wore on the breeze died away, and the island was still in sight as the sun gradually sank in the western sky. The mutineers cast somewhat anxious glances around, as if fearing that the comrades they had betrayed might even now find some means of following them. But as the island gradually faded into the dusk their spirits rose, and having broached one of the few jars of wine which had been left in the cabin, they began to boast of the success of their trick. Biddle even acquainted the prisoners with the manner in which it had been carried out. In the darkness they had surprised the watch on board, and cut the cable mooring the vessel to a tree at the side of the gully; then seven of them had lowered the jolly-boat and in it towed the ship past the shoulder of the cliff until the sails caught the wind and it was carried free of the shore. He told Dennis exultantly that if he had swum out three or four minutes earlier the plot would have been defeated, for only he was then on board, at the helm. But just before Dennis scrambled on board the others had clambered up by the fore chains, and his cry and plunge having been heard, there had been time to arrange for his reception.

The crescent moon, which had somewhat favoured the attack on the fort, had now increased in size, and threw a thin silvery light upon the sea. Biddle, among a little group of his comrades, was still recounting his achievement for the benefit of Dennis and Turnpenny when the look-out shouted that he spied a vessel to windward.

"What care I for a vessel to windward!" cried the man. "We'll give her the slip in the dark. I, Jan Biddle, be captain now; ay, what did Hugh Curder sing t'other day?

> Here is a master excelleth in skill,
> And our master's mate he is not to seek.

That be Dick Rackstraw, Haymoss, a merry soul, not a glumping galliment like 'ee.

And here is a boatswain will do his good will——

not you, Haymoss; you be boatswain no longer; 'tis French Michel, a deal better man.

And here is a ship-boy——

why, hang me if we won't make a ship-boy of our noble captain, comrades. 'Tis a stripling, to be sure, and I warrant will be none the worse for a smitch o' tar on his fingers. Ees, we'll make him ship-boy, we will so. Ho! ho!

And here is a ship-boy——"

But his mirth and the gleeful shouts of the others were suddenly checked when the look-out cried that he saw a second, and then a third vessel. Biddle sprang up with an oath and ran to the taffrail. What he saw did not lessen his alarm. The three strangers were coming up on a broad front, half a mile between them. They were evidently bringing a freshening breeze with them, for they had not been visible when darkness first fell. It was clear to a mariner's eye that the bark would have to show her best sailing powers if she was to escape. She had been sailing under foresail and mainsail only, but now in frantic haste the crew, in obedience to Biddle's orders, set the topsails and the topgallants. But before the effect of this was apparent the approaching ships had crept up within gun range. It was not long in doubt whether they had seen the *Mirandola*, and were making straight for her. A flash was seen from the bows of one of the vessels; a few seconds afterwards a muffled roar was heard.

"Blank charge!" said Turnpenny to Dennis. "'Tis a word of warning."

Biddle only shouted a defiant curse. The bark was now feeling the full force of the wind, and was making good headway. It appeared likely that, running before the wind, she could hold her own with the strangers. A minute later another gun was fired, and this time with no harmless intent, for there was a great splash in the water a little ahead of the *Mirandola* on the starboard side. After a short interval, a third discharge shook the air, and the mutineers raised an exultant shout when they saw the splash some distance astern. It was clear that, if the guns had been fired with the same elevation, the chase was drawing away. The dropping of a fourth and fifth shot still farther astern left no room for doubt.

"What say you now, master boatswain as was!" cried Biddle, triumphantly. "Bean't Jan Biddle as good a mariner as Haymoss Turnpenny?

Here be a master excelleth in skill."

"My heart! it be a true saying, don't halloo till 'ee be out o' the wood," said Amos, grimly.

"Zuggers! but you be a molkit, Haymoss, a molly-caudle to be sure. Go aft, Haymoss, and cuddle the ship-boy and say your prayers."

Turnpenny raised his arm to strike the insolent fellow, but Dennis whispered him to let it pass; there was nothing to be gained by a fight at the present moment, even supposing they prevailed against the odds.

Hour after hour the chase continued. The moon went down, but still the three vessels could be seen in the dim starlight. Clearly the *Mirandola*, good sailor as she was, could not shake them off. Biddle ceased to boast; his blustering confidence was changing to dismay, for he now perceived that though he had drawn further and further away from the vessel that had fired, her consort to windward was becoming more clearly visible. He had not reckoned on so obstinate a chase; moreover, being unable to read a chart, he had no idea whither the vessel was heading. There was no chance of doubling. To alter the course would be to lose time, and allow the persistent pursuer to make up on her. She seemed indeed to be gradually decreasing the distance between them, though the other two were out of sight.

So the chase went on through the hours of darkness, and daybreak showed two vessels far astern, but the third

without doubt creeping up slowly but surely. Biddle, weary with the long night's work, was in a sullen rage; the other men watched the pursuer with undisguised terror; Dennis and Turnpenny, holding themselves aloof, looked on with curiosity and something of amusement.

"Jan Biddle be no fool," said Turnpenny once. "I could not have handled the craft better myself. But 'tis not an end."

Then, when the spirits of the crew were depressed to the lowest, an early morning mist settled down upon the sea, blotting the pursuer from sight.

"Jaykle! 'tis a mercy!" cried Biddle, rousing himself.

He instantly changed the course of the vessel.

"We'll fool them this mizzly morn," he said. "Mum's the word now, comrades."

Dead silence was maintained on board, and for some hours the bark made steady headway through the mist. Dennis could not but admire the mutineer's fine recklessness. Without any sure knowledge of his bearings he held the vessel steadily to the wind, though she might at any moment strike a coral reef or even run aground on one of the innumerable islets that studded the gulf. He was bent only on escaping the dreaded grip of the Spaniards.

At length the fog began to clear, dissipated by the increasing heat of the mounting sun. The crew strained their eyes through the eddying mist, to assure themselves that the pursuer, as they hoped, had been deluded by the change of course. But they were appalled, and looked from one to another with a gasp of dismay, when they saw, less than half a league distant, a large Spanish galleon holding exactly the same course as themselves. Far down on the southern horizon another sail could be seen.

"What I'd have done myself," said Turnpenny to Dennis. "The Spanish skipper be no fool neither. When the mist came down he guessed the manoeuvres of Master Jan, and afore he was closed in by it he had time to signal the others to make off, one east, t'other sou'east, while he held on the same course, thereby making sure that we'd still be in sight of one or other of 'em when the mist lifted. Ah! lookeedesee, sir; there's a flag a-running up the galleon's forepeak. 'Tis a signal to the others to come and join the chase. Be jowned if Jan Biddle han't got to run the race all over again!"

CHAPTER XVII

The Demi-Culverin

Jan Biddle's face was the image of despairing rage when he saw how he had been outwitted. But he stuck gamely to the helm. The *Mirandola* was now carrying every stitch of canvas possible; her only chance, and that but a slight one, was to fly on before the wind. Dennis was tingling with excitement. Here was the bark, cutting through the water at a spanking rate; there the larger galleon, speeding after her under press of sail, and two other vessels equally large coming up from the south. He had forgotten that he was a prisoner—forgotten everything but the fact that the implacable enemy was at his heels.

Suddenly he saw the galleon luff up in the wind, and noticed a lift of the foresail.

"Now she's at us!" cried Amos at his elbow, scarcely less excited.

From the bows of the galleon came a spout of white smoke, blown back amid the sails and rigging, and disappearing in a long wispy trail to leeward. The report of the gun followed close, and the shot plumped into the sea less than twenty yards astern.

"Be jowned if it do not put me in mind of brave doings on the *Anne Gallant*" said Turnpenny. "'Twas well aimed; an they get our range, 'tis heigh for our pearls and pieces of eight!"

A second shot came, falling about the same distance short of the mark. A third and fourth followed at intervals, neither hitting the vessel, each failure greeted with a yell from the crew, who seemed now to have lost their terror in the sheer excitement of the chase. On swept the gallant *Mirandola*, showers of spray flashing over her bows, her slender masts swaying and creaking under the stress of her bellying canvas. Then a shot whistled over the masthead.

"Too high, too high!" shouted Amos. "She's got our range now, to a surety; would they but depress the gun and our cockle-shell would be shivered to splinters. Jan Biddle be a better man than I took him for; see the sinews of his arms as he grips the helm. My heart! but he be a mazy Jack to think he can 'scape that tantarabobs. Ah!"

His final exclamation was occasioned by the effect of another shot from the enemy's bow-chaser. It struck the taffrail, and cast up a huge splinter which flew straight across the poop. Next moment Jan Biddle was stretched senseless beside the helm, and the helm taking charge, the ship ran off before the wind. The crew were aghast. Biddle was their captain, but he was more; he was the soul of their enterprise. Without him they were as a flock of sheep. Not a man of them was fit to direct. Some cried out for surrendering; the bolder spirits howled them down, swearing it were better to sink with the ship than to return to the servitude from which they had but lately escaped. When Biddle fell, Amos, with the instinct of the mariner, had rushed towards the unmanned helm.

"Sir, 'tis our turn," he called to Dennis. "Let us do what we can to save this vessel, and od-rabbit the mutineers!"

He leapt to the helm, seized it in his iron grip, and brought the ship once more to the wind.

"See!" said Dennis at his side. "Yonder streak on the horizon is surely the mainland. Is not our only chance to win the coast? We cannot escape by mere sailing, but there will be shallows amid which perchance we may slip away as at Maiden Isle. Shall we not attempt it, Amos?"

"Ay, ay, sir. We'll run inshore, and methinks I know a trick will help us."

At this moment another shot fell and ploughed up the deck, striking up a shower of splinters in all directions. Again arose cries for surrender; but Dennis shouted to the frantic men:

"Amos is at the helm. Trust to him. Remember what he did at the fort. Never surrender to the dogs of Spain. We will 'scape them even yet."

At his words they plucked up heart; all they wanted was a leader; and when Turnpenny declared that land was in sight, and that he'd be jowned if he didn't cheat the don Spaniards, they answered with a cheer.

Outclassed as the *Mirandola* was in sailing before the wind, it occurred to Amos that she might show to better advantage in working to windward. Accordingly he altered her course a few points. The immediate effect was that the enemy gained a little, and with a broader target succeeded twice in hulling the vessel. Apparently the shots did little damage, for she still rode the waters buoyantly, and after some time, to the joy of the crew, it was seen that the gap between the two ships was sensibly widening. But now a more serious danger threatened the gallant bark. The second of the enemy's vessels, which was some distance to windward when the mist lifted, was rapidly making towards a point where she might intercept the *Mirandola* and drive her back towards the galleon which she had just escaped. Turnpenny's seamanship was capable of no more. To tack would have been to run into the lion's jaws; to bear up would have been equally hopeless; all he could do was to stand on, and possibly weather the vessel ahead.

He explained the difficulty to Dennis, who was still at his side. Dennis knew no trick of navigation that would meet the case; but racking his wits to find some means of helping the hardy mariner, he suddenly asked himself whether it were not possible to use one of the guns he had brought as trophies from the fort. They were big guns, quite disproportionate to so small a vessel as the *Mirandola*. To fire them might do more damage to her than to the enemy. But it was a moment when something might well be risked, and he mentioned his idea to Turnpenny.

"Good-now, 'tis a brave notion!" cried the mariner. "Do 'ee grab the helm, sir; head her straight for the coast; Ise warrant 'ee I'll soon give the villain a mouthful of iron."

Amos rushed amidships, called all the crew about him, set some of them to rig up the tackle blocks by which the weapons had been lowered into the hold, and himself knocked off the hatch and descended. His first proceeding was to unloose William Hawk and Luke Fenton, the two men who had been surprised by the mutineers, and had since lain side by side in no enviable state of mind or body.

"Od rabbit 'ee for a brace of numskulls!" he exclaimed. "Get 'ee up and come show a leg, now."

With their assistance he slung the demi-culverin by its pomelion, and the men above hoisted it to the deck; the carriage followed, then its ammunition, and Amos set about mounting it. There was no time to lug it to the quarter-deck. Amos ordered the men to place the carriage, consisting of two "cheeks" or side-pieces held together by thick cross-pieces of wood, on the waist; then the cannon was slung on to it, the clamps were fixed over the trunnions, and a quoin was driven under the gun to prevent it from sagging towards the breech. When mounted on the fort it had not been secured by breechings, but Amos quickly made ready a length of stout rope, fastened one end to the gun, and clinched the other to ring-bolts in the vessel's side. This would check the recoil when the gun was fired.

Amos was now in his element. He had not been for nothing gunner's mate aboard the *Anne Gallant* twenty-five years before. He lost no time in loading the piece with round shot; then, all being ready, he ran back to instruct Dennis how to bring the vessel round when he gave the word. He found that Biddle, who had merely been stunned by the flying splinter, was now sitting with his back against the taffrail, watching these proceedings in a sullen envy.

"The Spaniard will draw closer when we yaw, sir," said Amos, "but that we cannot help; and 'tis a mercy we are out of range of her bow-chaser."

"Is she not beyond range of our gun, Amos?"

"Nare a bit, sir. Our demi-culverin is bigger, I'se warrant, than any gun she has aboard. Point-blank her range be a hundred fathoms; but I reckon I can hit the knave at six hundred at the least. Put the helm down when I call, and then I'll send an apple aboard will be ill to digest."

He returned to the gun, and sang out to Dennis; he put the helm down, the vessel yawed, and when she lay broadside to the pursuer, Amos carefully laid the piece, aiming directly at the fore-mast. He waited till the vessel rose on the next wave, then gave the word to William Hawk, who stood by the breech with lighted match. The match was applied; there was a deafening roar, followed by a sound of rending; the *Mirandola* quivered from stem to stern; and through the smoke it was seen that the gun had jumped clean out of the carriage and was lying against the step of the mainmast. Amos ran to it in haste, fearing that it might have burst in the discharge. But it was uninjured. Several planks amidships had been started; the mainmast was heavily scored; and a number of round shot were rolling about the waist. Amos shouted to the men to remount the gun and sponge it out, while he ran to the side to see what the effect of the shot had been, calling to Dennis to put the helm up again and head the vessel on her former course.

The smoke had cleared away, and Amos saw that the pursuer had gained considerably, and was still coming on apparently undamaged. But a few minutes later he uttered a shout of glee. There was a bustle in the forepart of the Spanish ship; men were crowding to the gunwale; and Amos perceived that they were letting a sail down over the side.

"I hit her betwixt wind and water," he cried to Dennis. "They are letting down a sail to stop the leak. True, I aimed at the foremast, but she rose somewhat quicker than I did guess and so 'scaped with a hulling."

"But she has gained on us, Amos. The hurt she has suffered does not abate her speed."

"Truly, so it is, but I will give her another so soon as the gun is righted, and call me a joulter-head an I do not deal her such a blow that she'll tottle like a man fair buddled."

Dennis called to Luke Fenton to take the helm, while he went forward to scan the horizon for the hazy streak which he had taken, half an hour before, for the shore-line. He had barely reached the cut-water when he heard the roar of a gun and the sound of a crashing blow. For an instant the vessel's head fell off, and turning hastily he saw Jan Biddle rushing to the helm. A round shot from the enemy's bow-chaser had fallen smack upon the poop,

smashing the binnacle, and killing poor Fenton instantly. Only Biddle's prompt action had saved the ship from yawing and presenting her broadside to the pursuer.

Seeing that the helm was in safe hands, Dennis turned once more and glanced anxiously towards the shore, which was now beginning to loom large to windward. Was it possible, he wondered, to reach it before he could be cut off by the second Spanish vessel? He measured the distance with his eye, and his heart sank as he perceived that, if she held her present course, the Spaniard could not fail to run across the bows of the *Mirandola* long before she could gain the coast. It seemed that he must choose between surrendering and fighting against heavy odds. But certainly one ship would be easier to deal with than two; might not another fortunate shot from the demi-culverin cripple the vessel in chase, and so enable the *Mirandola* to get away from one of her pursuers? Dennis did not forget that there was still a third vessel somewhere to leeward, but she was at present out of sight.

By this time the gun had been righted and reloaded. Dennis hastened to rejoin Amos.

"Shall I take the helm again, or leave it to Biddle?" he asked.

"Fegs, I say leave it to him, and do 'ee take the match, sir. I'se warrant 'ee'd be quicker than Billy Hawk. Biddle will port the helm when I give the word; he hates you and me, but he hates the Spaniards worse."

This time the gun had been loaded with chain shot. At a hail from Amos, Biddle put the helm down, the vessel swung round, and as soon as she was broadside to the enemy Amos carefully laid the gun, loosening the quoin, and thereby elevating the muzzle, which he pointed straight for the pursuer's foremast. But the enemy was now more alert. At the first sign of the *Mirandola* yawing the galleon began to swing round by the stern, so that the two vessels came broadside on within a few moments of each other. Those few moments gave time for Amos to resight his gun. Dennis stood ready, match in hand.

"Now!" said the mariner, as the *Mirandola* sank on the roll while the galleon rose.

The gun spoke. Only a second or two later it seemed to the crew of the *Mirandola* that the end of all things must have come. With a thunderous roar the whole broadside of the enemy burst upon them. Some of the enemy's shots passed clean over the smaller vessel; her masts almost miraculously escaped harm, but her hull was struck in half a dozen places, and her long-boat splintered to atoms. And the big gun, breaking loose from its extemporized breechings, recoiled obliquely across the waist, smashed through the forecastle, and plunged with a resounding splash into the sea. Some of the men were groaning in pain; the Frenchmen were flat on their faces beseeching their saints; Dennis found himself in a heap by the break of the poop; for the moment Amos was not to be seen.

Dennis picked himself up and peered through the smoke to see whether the enemy had suffered any hurt. To his joy he saw that both the foremast and the mainmast of the galleon had been shattered. Turnpenny's shot had cut away the shrouds of the foremast, causing this to snap off, and struck the mainmast fair and square. The enemy's decks were smothered under a medley of spars and rigging; it was clear that the galleon was out of action, and already the *Mirandola* was rapidly drawing away. This her crew perceived, and the air was rent with a tremendous shout of triumph.

But their exultation was short-lived. Half a minute later Amos came up the hatchway and hurried aft.

"Sir, there be three terrible rents in the hull below water. I feared as much when I felt the shots strike the vessel. The galleon's masts must have fallen just as the knaves were a-firing, and so the most of her shots struck us low."

"Can we stop the leaks?"

"I fear, I fear! But we'll try."

In a few minutes a sail was lowered over the side, and at the same time two of the men ran below and tried to stop the leaks from within. But in spite of all efforts the water gained, and in the course of half an hour it was plain to all on board that the vessel must founder unless she could be run ashore in time.

While the men were still doing their best to check the inrush of the water, Dennis and Turnpenny went forward to calculate their chances.

"'Tis a good ten mile away," said Turnpenny, "and we be going slower every minute."

"True. But see, the other vessel yonder, that might have cut us off, has altered her course. She is standing to her consort's aid."

"God be praised for that, but I fear we shall be water-logged in no long time, and then she can overhaul us at her ease. In an hour we must take to the jollyboat. 'Tis a God's mercy that was not smashed up like the long-boat."

"Then we'll put our stores aboard her at once, so that we lose no time when the moment comes. And I do not give up hope, even now, of running the bark ashore."

But in half an hour it was clear that the case was hopeless. The men came running from below with the news that the water was gaining more and more rapidly; the vessel was settling down; her motion had almost ceased. And the situation was rendered the more alarming by the fact that during this half-hour the uninjured galleon, having found apparently that her consort was in no immediate danger of sinking, had again altered her course and was now in hot pursuit. It was to be a race to the shore.

The jolly-boat had already been stored with provisions, water, and a number of calivers with their ammunition. At the last moment Dennis and Turnpenny brought from below the bags of pearls from the cabin in which they had been locked. Then Dennis ordered the boat to be lowered, the crew quickly went down the side and entered her. Two of the men had been so badly hurt by the enemy's shot that they had to be lowered into the boat. Fenton was dead, so that the whole effective company now numbered only nine men. The wounded men were laid in the bows, Dennis took the tiller, and the remaining eight gave way with a will, knowing that hanging would be their mildest fate if they fell again into the enemy's hands.

CHAPTER XVIII

Juan the Maroon

It was now past midday, and the sun's rays beat down upon them with cruel power. Yet none of them was glad when the wind freshened, bringing a touch of coolth; for it filled the sails of the vessel in chase, which loomed ever larger and larger in their wake. The land appeared to be very close, but to Dennis's anxious eyes it scarcely seemed to grow closer. For mile after mile the rowers toiled on in the sweltering heat. Dennis ventured to leave the tiller for a few moments to give them water when they flagged. One of the men collapsed, and Dennis crawled to his thwart and took his oar, bidding him go to the tiller. So the chase went on, until, when the boat was still more than a mile from land, the enemy began to fire. The mere sight of the shots splashing in the sea astern stirred the wearied rowers to renewed efforts. When, after a few minutes, a shot fell immediately in their wake, sending up a terrific burst of spray, their energy seemed to be doubled again.

"A shot fell immediately in their wake."

"A shot fell immediately in their wake."

Dennis now had his back to the shore. It could not, he thought, be more than half a mile away: how far would the enemy venture to follow them? Surely she would not come much farther, at the imminent risk of running aground on a shoal. He saw a man at the chains taking soundings. Then suddenly the vessel was thrown into the wind, and she fired the whole of her broadside, in the hope, no doubt, that at least one shot would strike the target. The men were so played out that they were not able even to raise a feeble cheer when they found that they had escaped scot-free. Any gladness they may have felt was extinguished as soon as the smoke cleared away and the enemy perceived that they had failed to hit the boat. The galleon had hove to: the Spaniard was lowering her boats; and in a few minutes all three, long-boat, cock-boat, and jolly-boat, crowded with men, came sweeping across the water.

But they were as yet half a mile away; looking over his shoulder Dennis judged that his boat was now within less than a quarter-mile of the shore. Calling cheerfully to the men for a final spurt, he bade the steersman run them aground on the first shoal or spit of land that presented itself. A minute later the boat was brought up with a jerk. The men flung down their oars and began with desperate haste to gather up some of the stores and the weapons.

"Billy Hawk, take the treasure," said Turnpenny.

But Biddle was too quick for him. Hawk managed to secure one of the goatskin bags; Biddle seized the two others. There was no time to make any alteration. Trembling with their exertions, the men were staggering up the beach, some loaded with articles from the boat, some carrying the two wounded men. Amos, remaining till the last, drove a boat anchor through the bottom and hastened after the others. But the Spaniards' boats, fully manned with

crews fresh and vigorous, had sped over the water at a tremendous rate, and it seemed to Dennis, looking back and marking how near they were to land, that after all he and his party stood but a poor chance of getting away. In the three boats there were at least sixty well-armed men. It was clearly their intention to run ashore and continue the pursuit on land. Within half an hour they must be upon them.

There was only a few yards of beach. The thick vegetation came down almost to the water's edge. It was a wild part of the shore; not a path was to be seen through the undergrowth, and beyond rose the forest. But the foremost of the fugitives had struck out a way for themselves through the plants, and Dennis and Turnpenny hurried along, bringing up the rear.

The fugitives were greatly impeded by the necessity of carrying the wounded men and the stores. Even when they reached the forest, where there was less undergrowth, their pace must be slower than that of the Spaniards, who had only their arms to carry. And to avoid them was quite impossible, for the Spaniards were not unused to tracking runaway slaves, and would not fail to follow up the broad trail left by the party.

"'Tis vain to go farther," said Dennis to Amos, as they hastened on. "We must be caught. And we shall need all the poor remnant of our strength. Yonder is a thick clump of bush where with our calivers we may perchance give pause to the enemy. I will run on and tell our comrades ahead to betake themselves thither."

"Ay, do so, though meseems 'tis but to stay for our death. You be lighter of foot than me. I will go into the thicket and there hide."

Dennis ran forward, but had not gone far when he found the two wounded men lying on the ground, deserted by their bearers. The rest of the party had disappeared. Part of the stores also had been abandoned. Clearly the men had bolted, perhaps in panic fright at some noise in the forest, perhaps—Dennis saw in a flash the explanation. Among the things abandoned there was no sign of the bags of treasure. Even at this critical moment Jan Biddle's cupidity had got the better of all other feelings, and he had made off with the booty and his fellow mutineers.

Dennis bent over the wounded men. One was past help; the shock of being left to his fate had hastened the end that was probably in any case inevitable. The other man Dennis helped to bring back to where Amos had taken up his position.

"Where be Billy Hawk, then?" said Turnpenny, when Dennis had acquainted him with what had happened. "He had one of the bags of pearls. Od-rat-en for a traitorous faggett!"

But his attention was immediately diverted from Billy Hawk's shortcomings by the sight of the enemy making their way through the trees. Dennis and the mariner had no hope of saving themselves. They two could not contend long with numbers so overwhelming. But they were resolved not to surrender. They knew well—Amos by experience, Dennis by the tales he had heard—what their fate would be as captives. Their whole aim was to sell their lives as dearly as might be. Amos had already kindled matches for their calivers. These as they burnt gave out an acrid smoke, which was bound to attract the attention of the Spaniards if they came near. Confident of their immense superiority in point of numbers, even if the whole band of fugitives stood up against them, the enemy were pressing forward without caution. Dennis for a moment debated with himself whether to fire on them or let them pass. He owed nothing to Jan Biddle and the mutineers. Twice had they behaved treacherously towards him; they would receive no more than their deserts if he allowed the Spaniards to go by unmolested. But then he reflected that after all some of the fugitives were his fellow-countrymen; all had been miserable slaves; and what he had learned of the Spaniards' dealings with those in their power made him regard them as enemies of mankind.

Turnpenny for his part had no scruples. To him, as to the majority of the Englishmen of his time, the Spaniard was a hateful oppressor, who appropriated the riches of the New World in order to set the nations of the Old by the ears. Even if he had not suffered personally at their hands, the whole race of Spaniards was in his eyes no better than vermin. So when Dennis gave the word, he levelled his caliver with right good will at the body of men that presented so easy a target, as they came hurrying through the forest. The two fired together; one man fell; the rest halted, looking about them with an air of fright that set Dennis mightily wondering. While they hesitated, Amos and he reloaded with what haste they might, and had not completed that troublesome process when the enemy, plucking up courage, advanced again in somewhat more extended order, firing as they marched. Bullets pattered on the tree trunks all around. Dennis had come scatheless through the action at sea, but now he felt a burning pang in his

forearm, and saw that the sleeve of his doublet was singed. But at the same moment he heard a deep sigh from the wounded man who lay at his feet. The poor wretch had again been hit. There was no time to attend either to him or to his own wound, for the Spaniards, taking heart at the cessation of the fire from the copse, were preparing to make a rush.

By this time both Dennis and Turnpenny had reloaded, and stood waiting to make a last stand against what they felt must be an irresistible attack. To their amazement, however, just when they were expecting to hear the order to charge, they saw that a number of the enemy had swung round, and were facing towards the coast, the direction in which they had come. Next moment there was a yell from among the trees: "Yo peho! yo peho!" The strange cry was taken up at point after point, until the whole surrounding forest seemed to ring with fierce whoops and battle-cries. Then they caught sight of dark figures flitting among the trees beyond the Spaniards, who had now clearly given up the idea of advancing, and were crowded in a serried mass to meet another foe. There was the sharp crackle of fire-arms, followed by the twang of bow-strings. A long arrow whizzed past Dennis's ear, perilously close. The newcomers had formed, as it appeared, an immense semicircle about the Spaniards; several of these had fallen, and the semicircle seemed to be drawing ever closer.

"The maroons! O Jaykle!" whispered Turnpenny.

Driven together now into a compact body, the Spaniards fired a volley. Before the smoke had cleared away, from all around the maroons, dusky forms clad in smocks that reached their knees, were among them. Then began a desperate hand-to-hand fight. The Spaniards, in their turn outnumbered by three to one, were wielding their swords with the courage of despair against the javelins of their furious yelling enemy, striving to break through the ring.

"Yo peho! yo peho!" The maroon war-cry rose ever fiercer and fiercer. It was an affair of a few minutes. Half of the Spaniards were on the ground; the survivors broke and scattered, some speeding towards the copse, forgetful that their first check had come from thence. Turnpenny levelled his caliver and fired at the foremost of them.

"Shoot 'em, sir!" he cried to Dennis, who had hesitated, feeling some compunction. "Shoot 'em, or we shall have the maroons in upon us, and they will not stop to ask our names."

Dennis fired. The Spaniards broke away to the left, and dashed into the forest, pursued hotly by the exultant maroons. Seeing that the tide had passed them by, Turnpenny stepped out into the open and, raising his arms, shouted "Amigos!" at the top of his voice to the maroons within hail. One or two let fly their arrows at him; some were about to fire; but a big fellow among them called loudly to them in a tongue that the Englishman did not understand.

"My heart, 'tis Juan!" cried Turnpenny, and as the man advanced towards them Dennis recognised the leader of the maroons he had rescued on the island—the man who had with Amos supported the ladder for his climb into Fort Aguila.

Juan shook hands with them with every sign of delight. While the others continued the pursuit, he explained to Amos that his attention had been attracted by the sound of firing at sea, and from a point some distance along the coast he had watched, from among the trees, the race in the boats. Never loath to seize a chance of striking a blow at the hated Spaniards, he had hurried with his comrades along the fringe of forest. He was overjoyed to think that the men whom his sudden onslaught had saved were his old friends and the leaders of the attack on Fort Aguila. He invited them to accompany him to his village deep in the forest, and wound a horn to recall his comrades. Within a few minutes they were all assembled. The Englishmen recognized among them some who had been with them at the attack on the fort. Soon they were on the march. They took no prisoners; it was not the maroons' way to spare any Spaniard who fell into their hands. Four of them carried the twice-wounded sailor, but ere they had gone far he succumbed to his hurts, and they buried him under leaves in the forest.

An hour's march brought them to the maroons' village, built on a hillside circled by a narrow river. It was surrounded by a broad dyke, and a mud wall ten feet high. It had one long street and two cross streets, very clean and tidy; and the huts of mud and wattle, thatched with palm-leaves, and with doors of bamboo, were kept with a neatness that surprised the Englishmen, who mentally contrasted them with the dirty cottages of labourers at home. Juan made them very welcome, supplying them with a feast of wild hog, turkeys, oranges and other pleasant fruits.

"I'feck, it be a dinner fit for a lord," said Turnpenny, appreciatively.

He related the events that had brought them to the straits in which Juan had found them. When the maroon learnt that some of their party had deserted with the treasure, he despatched a band of his men to follow them up. And then he told his visitors a piece of news that mightily cheered them. El Draque, he said, the Dragon, the great English sea-captain, had lately raided Nombre de Dios, the port whence the great treasure fleets were wont to sail for Spain. Then he had disappeared. The Spaniards were in a state of nervous dread. So bold, so sudden were his movements, that not a settlement on the coast but lived in constant terror of his appearance. The very mystery that surrounded him, their ignorance of his whereabouts, added to the fear his name inspired.

"They do not know where he is," said Juan, with a chuckle; "but I know. He is a long day's march from this place, in a little harbour that no passing ship can spy. And there he waits till he can swoop like a jaguar on the dogs of Spain."

"My heart, it be joyful tidings!" said Turnpenny. "I knew Master Francis would come again to these shores, to have a proper tit-for-tat for the base dealings of the Spaniards at St. John d'Ulua. Good-now, sir, shall we take a journey and see the worthy captain, and peradventure join with him in spoiling the knaves?"

"With all my heart, Amos," replied Dennis. "Without doubt Juan will furnish us with a guide."

Turnpenny spoke to the maroon.

"Better than that!" he said, after a brief colloquy. "He says he will e'en come himself with a party. Master Francis, he says, does hurt to no woman nor unarmed man; he is kind to the maroons; and not a man of them but loves him and would serve him to the death. Ay sure, a noble man is Master Francis, that loves God and hates the Spaniards; and Ise warrant we could do naught better than join ourselves to him. Crymaces! he will list with a ready ear to the tale of our adventures."

"'Twill be overlong for the captain," said Dennis, with a smile. "But I would fain see him and speak with him, for he may perchance spare a vessel to go and seek for our poor comrades penned up in Maiden Isle."

"God-a-mercy, I had a'most forgotten, sir. True, there be Tom Copstone, and Hugh Curder, and Ned Whiddon all lone and lorn. Master Francis will help us to save them, or he be no true man."

CHAPTER XIX

Drake's Camp

Early in the afternoon of the second day thereafter, Dennis and Turnpenny, with Juan and a company of maroons, came to the outskirts of a large clearing at a little recess of the shore. A bark and three trim little pinnaces lay rocking in a secluded roadstead. Neatly thatched huts of the maroons' pattern bordered the clearing. At one end of it stood two archery butts at which men were shooting; a smith was lustily plying his sledge at an anvil; and in the middle, on a stretch of sward, two stalwart bearded figures were disporting themselves at a game of bowls.

"I'fegs, 'tis very like home," said Turnpenny. "'Tis Master Francis himself, as I live, and Master John Oxnam, a gallant soul; and there be Master Ellis Hixom, the captain his man, and a very worthy gentleman. And Bob Pike, busy with the rum bowl—a good man, when not betoatled with the drink. And O cryal! lookeedesee, sir; Bob hath a monkey at his elbow, and hang me if he be not teaching the poor beast the taste of rum. Oh Bobby, Bobby, the drink will be your undoing, an ye have not a care. They spy us, sir; 'tis a right merry sight, good-now, and warming to the heart."

A maroon came from among the company to meet them. He greeted Juan warmly, looking with surprise and curiosity at his white companions. Then they advanced into the clearing. Bob Pike, a red-faced mariner, sitting on a

tub, looked up as they approached, and raised his bowl unsteadily, singing—

"Let us laugh, and let us quaff,
Good drinkers think none ill a.

Welcome, Haymoss; I know not where be coom from but here be a sup for 'ee, comrade.

Let us trip, and let us skip,
And let us drink our fill a.

Why, what ha' taken the wink-a-puss?"

His exclamation was occasioned by a surprising action on the part of the monkey that had been crouching at his feet. With a chatter of delight the animal had sprung up and was bounding on all fours towards Dennis. Next moment it was on his shoulder, stroking his cap with its paw.

"Fi, Mirandola," said Dennis, with a laugh, "hast forgot my admonitions to soberness? Has all thy philosophy and my instruction not steeled thee against temptation?"

"My thirst to staunch, I fill my paunch
With jolly good ale and old,"

sang Bob Pike; "though in truth it be new rum, for ale, under this sky, would turn as sour as whey. Good-now, Haymoss, come and take a sup with me, soul.

I drink to you with all my heart
If you will pledge me the same."

"Stint it, stint it, Robert Pike," said the elder of the two players, looking up. "You'll be but a buddled oaf an you go this gait. But odds-an-end, who be this?"

"An Englishman of Devon, so please you, captain," said Dennis, doffing his cap.

"Out of sky, or earth, or sea, for I swear you are not of my company?"

"Out of earth and sea, sir, newly come to bid you my duty."

"And that is Amos Turnpenny, an I be not in a maze. We will finish our game anon, Jack," he added, turning to Oxnam, "for there is a tale hangs by this. Come, young sir, methinks I know your face, though rabbit me if I can mind the when or the where of seeing it."

"It was on an occasion like to this, sir," said Dennis. "You were at play with Sir Martin Blunt on Plymouth Hoe when——"

"Stay, I mind it well, and you were the youth that beat me! I was in somewhat of a dander, to be sure. Are you of Sir Martin's party? Sure I looked for him months agone to join me, and wanting him has not been to my comfort. Is he at hand?"

"Alas, sir, Sir Martin has been at the bottom of the sea the washing of many a tide. I alone am left of all his company."

"God rest his soul! He was a right good man. But tell me, then, how it chanced that you alone escaped. And what brings you here in company with this ancient mariner? Furthermore, what strange affinity hast thou with this monkey, who is friends with that besotted knave alone, and that only for the love of liquor?"

"Mirandola and I are old friends, sir. How he comes to this place it passes my wit to guess; but he was my sole companion and friend on the island whereon by God's mercy I was cast alive, in the same storm that wrecked the *Maid Marian* and swallowed all my dear comrades. There I spent many a day and night without sight of human face or sound of human voice, until Spaniards came purposing to cut logwood, with slaves of whom Amos was one, the only white man. He had the good hap to escape their hands——"

"Nay, captain," Amos broke in; "it was not good hap, but the wit and spunk of Master Hazelrig. He saved us from the knaves, and led us to the taking of their vessel, in the which we purposed to sail away; but the knave captain blew it up with powder; wherefore it was we came to the main in a canow of the maroons' devising, and did take that strong fort and fastness of Aguila, where——"

"Stay, stay!" cried Drake. "Ods my life, this your tale makes my noddle buzz with amaze. What is this about Fort Aguila?"

"Why, sir, 'tis as I say," replied Turnpenny. "We did sail to it in the canow, which ran aground and was stove in. But we mounted those walls by a ladder, and crept upon the fort by night, and drew out of their dungeon all my comrades—Ned Whiddon and Hugh Curder and Tom Copstone, and nigh a score more. And we dealt the knave Spaniards many a dint, and took the fort, and blew up the towers, and sailed right merrily away in their own vessel with great store of pearls and pieces of eight. And the vessel was named in the Spanish tongue *Our Lady of Baria*, but Master Hazelrig he could not abide the Papist name, and called her by the very name he had afore bestowed on this heathen beast, Mirandola to wit, whereas I would liever have called her Susan or Betty——"

"Jack, is 't not a midsummer night's dream? A very mingle-mangle of madness! Tell on; I have a soft ear for mariners' tales."

"I' fegs, 'tis no mariner's tale, sir, but very truth. We sailed away, but the morn after, when it was mizzly, we spied a vessel that straight gave chase, and but for the little small harbour of Maiden Isle, whereinto we ran and lay hid and so diddled that knavish vessel, we had e'en fallen again into those cruel hands."

"When shall we laugh, Jack?" cried Drake, smiting his thigh and loosing a mighty roar that caused the archers to pause, and drew the smith from his anvil, and at last brought the whole company crowding round. "Why, friend Amos, that knavish vessel was my own tight bark the *Pascha* yonder, and 'twas I myself that chased thee, ay, and would have caught thee, too, but for the huffling of the wind. If 'twas thou handling the vessel 'twas a mighty good piece of seamanship. And mine was a knavish vessel, good-now! Ho! ho! 'tis a merry world."

"Be jowned if Ned Whiddon thinks so, or Hugh Curder, or Tom Copstone! There they be, poor souls, marooned on that same island, which indeed we took and named Maiden Isle for behoof of her gracious Majesty. We fled from that craft which in our thought was a knavish vessel of Spain, and remained a night and a day to refresh ourselves, intending to sail thence on the morrow. But one of our company, Gabriel Batten, a quiet good soul, but somewhat of a drumble-drone, did go astraying after simples, and when the time came for us to embark, ods-fish, he was not with us. In that night, Jan Biddle, a man of Belial, made off with our vessel; but Master Hazelrig spied her ere she ran clear, and we swam to her and clomb aboard, and were vumped topsy-versy by those knavish mutineers. But they loosed us when she had made an offing, and right well it was for them, for we were chased by three galleons of Spain, and hardly escaped ashore in our jolly-boat. And then be jowned if Jan Biddle and his villainous crew did not skip off hippety-hoppety with the treasure we got with our pains at Fort Aguila——"

"Aha! I owe you a grudge for that, Master Hazelrig," cried Drake. "I had heard of the pearl-fishery, and was e'en chasing you, supposing your craft was a merchant vessel out of Venta Cruz or Cartagena, to inquire somewhat of the defences of that same fort. I came by chance to the place, and lo! it was a ruin. You beat me at bowls, young sir; art minded, meseems, to beat me at other games."

"Truly, sir, had I but known you were in these seas, I would surely have joined myself to your company, with your good leave, and served you with all diligence."

"Wilt serve me now, lad?" Drake shot a keen glance at him. "I am preparing a sore dint for the Spaniards, and have but few men for the job. Wilt join me?"

"I could desire nothing better," said Dennis, with a flush of pleasure; "but——"

"Say on; let me hear your but."

"Some half a score of Englishmen, the comrades of Amos, lie marooned on yonder island, sir; and we came hither, when we heard of your presence, to beg a vessel to go and fetch them off. Methinks one of the pinnaces yonder——"

"Knavish vessels, good-now!"

"Crymaces, sir, will 'ee remember that against me?" Amos broke in. "A man must say what a' thinks, but thinkin' don't alter what is. 'Twas your vessel; then 'twas no knave."

"Save as the Spaniards think it so. Well, I would fain help Englishmen in so hard a case, but at this present I cannot spare a pinnace; nay, I cannot even spare a man. Yet when the matter I spoke of is brought to an end, and falls out to our liking, I will go myself to that island and bring off your comrades; for in truth I have a mind to see the haven into which you fled and so 'scaped my knavish tricks. Methinks it should prove a secret and comfortable place for myself. In brief, I give you my word. Now, what say you to my proposal."

"Sir, I am yours," said Dennis, "and I thank you for your good will."

"Ay, and me likewise," said Turnpenny, "and Ise warrant a man of my muscle can do summat against those villain dons—lookeedesee!"

He exhibited the knotty muscles of his arms with a simple vanity that set Drake and Oxnam a-laughing.

"But not the monkey," added Drake, as the animal chattered in concert. "He is prone to utter his voice out of season, and an indiscreet cry might be the undoing of my purpose, and me."

"How comes the monkey here, sir?" asked Dennis. "We brought him with us from the island; indeed, he would not be left; but he deserted us some ten miles beyond Fort Aguila, and I supposed he had gone among his kind and thought never to see him again."

"Why, we found him among the ruins of that fort, and meseems he saw some likeness between Bob Pike and Turnpenny——"

"God forbid!" cried Amos earnestly.

"In muscle, not in manners," said Drake laughing. "Howbeit, he hitched himself on to Pike, and hath accompanied us ever since, and I trow not what Pike will say if the beast transfers his allegiance. But good-now, the sun goes down; 'tis time to make our evening devotions and then to supper. Methinks you, Master Hazelrig, have good cause to render thanks to the Almighty Father for the wondrous things He hath wrought in your behoof; and we have great plenty of fish, fowls, rabbits and the like, which, I doubt not, will be comfortable fare to you after your late privations. Come with me to my hut: I would hear of your adventures more at leisure."

And thus Dennis became one of the company of Francis Drake.

CHAPTER XX

A Raid through the Forest

Though Dennis had accepted Drake's offer on the spur of the moment, he saw no reason to repent when he talked the matter over with Amos next day. The rescue of their comrades on the island was indeed deferred; but it

was impossible to attempt that rescue without a suitable vessel and a due equipment of men and stores; and since the men had plenty of food on Maiden Isle, the delay of a few weeks would make no serious difference to them, unless —and this possibility gave Dennis some concern—they were molested by Spaniards. He hoped, however, that if an enemy did appear on the island the men would have sufficient warning to give them time to take refuge in the cave, where with good luck they might remain concealed until the danger had passed.

Before the day was out Dennis had made acquaintance with the members of the little company at Port Diego, as it had been called. From Ellis Hixom, Drake's right-hand man, he learnt something of their adventures since they left Plymouth in May, only a month after the *Maid Marian* set sail. Early in July they had arrived at Port Pheasant, a secret anchorage discovered by Drake on a former voyage, and so named by him "by reason of the great store of those goodly fowls which he and his company did daily kill and feed on in that place." On the 20th they sailed for Nombre de Dios, and a week later made a night attack on that unhealthy town, which once or twice in the year emerged into importance when the galleons came there from Cartagena to take in their cargoes of gold and silver sent for shipment by the governor of Panama.

The moon was rising as they stood in for the shore; but Drake, finding that his men were full of superstitious terror of the night, persuaded them that it was the dawn of day. They landed on the sands, beneath a battery, and only a few yards from the houses which were built on the shore, with the forest behind. The single sentry was slumbering, but he was roused by the sound of their climbing up the redoubt, and fled to give the alarm in the town. They spiked the six big guns in the fort, but ere they had finished they heard the great bell of the town church booming out; drums beat in the narrow street; it seemed that there was warm work before the little band of fifty.

Drake divided his men into three parties; one of twelve to guard the boats, the second of sixteen, with his brother John and John Oxnam, to enter by the east gate of the market-place; while himself, with about a score, would march in at the other end to the sound of drum and trumpet, with torches glaring at the end of their pikes. He gave the men orders to make all possible noise, so as to delude the garrison into the belief that his force was stronger than it really was.

The market-place was crowded with a mob of mingled soldiers and citizens when Drake and his men entered with great clatter from the side nearest the sea. The intrepid band was met by a hot volley, to which they replied with their calivers and a flight of arrows; then, not waiting to reload, they charged with a fierce shout, to do the rest of the business with pike and sword. As the same moment Oxnam and his company dashed in at the other side with a great blast of trumpets. The Spaniards, scared by the noise and the torches, still more by the knowledge that El Draque was among them, did not stay to fight the matter out, but flung down their weapons and rushed away in disorderly flight along the road leading through the forest to Venta Cruz.

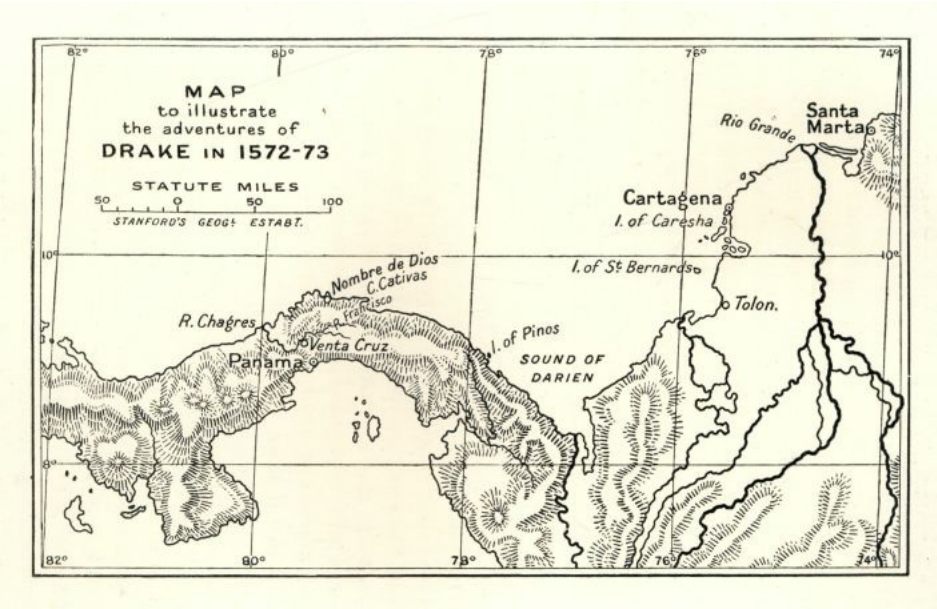
Drake re-formed his men, and, under the guidance of Spaniards he had captured, made for the governor's house, where the mule trains from Panama were unloaded. The door was wide open, and by the light of a torch the Englishmen saw a vast pile of silver bars standing in the passage. But Drake had learnt that in the King's treasure-house on the eastern side lay a goodly store of gold and jewels, far more than they could carry. Accordingly he would not allow the men to break their ranks and despoil the governor, but led them back to the market-place to prepare for the more serious work.

Meanwhile the men on guard at the beach, hearing the din, and seeing by the light of the torches men running this way and that in the streets, began to be alarmed, especially when they learnt from the negroes who had joined them that the garrison had been newly strengthened. In their panic they sent word to Drake that the pinnaces were in danger of being taken. Drake had no sooner sent his brother and John Oxnam to allay their fears and assure them that all was well when a terrific thunder-storm burst upon them, wetting their bowstrings and the charges of their guns. They ran for shelter to a shed at the western end of the King's treasure-house, and there, while they repaired the damage, the men began to mutter among themselves of the peril they were in, and some talked of flight. As soon as the storm had ceased, Drake, seeing that the adventure was in jeopardy unless he led the men to action, ordered Oxnam to take a party to break open the treasure-house while he held his ground in the market-place.

But, unknown to the men, he had been severely wounded in the leg at the first onset, and fell faint from loss of blood. He perceived that some of his men had already laden themselves with plunder from the houses and booths in the market-place, and knew that they would be glad of any excuse to get away to the boats. It was no longer possible to hide his wound, and the men, seeing it, begged him to return to the boats, and paid no heed to his entreaty that

they would leave him to fend for himself and possess themselves of the treasure so nearly within their grasp. The possibility of losing their captain took all the heart out of them. They carried him hastily down to the beach, got aboard the boats, and shoved off just as dawn was breaking. It was a disappointing end to the expedition; but only one man of them, a trumpeter, had been killed, and they were all glad enough to get off so lightly.

Since then they had cruised up and down the coast, capturing Spanish vessels here and there, and making themselves a terror to the whole Main. They had suffered many losses, by sickness and in fight; John Drake had been killed in leading a mad attack on a frigate; but small as the company was, every man was now cheerful in the expectation of gaining great plunder in the approaching expedition to Panama. Dennis and Turnpenny were welcome recruits, and none were more eager than they to set off with the great captain, and go whithersoever he might lead.



Map to illustrate the adventures of Drake in 1572-73

One day, about a week after their arrival at the camp, Drake called his men together in council, and unfolded to them his daring plan. The Spanish treasure fleet, he had learnt, had arrived at Nombre de Dios, and was awaiting there the consignments of gold and jewels which were brought by long mule trains across the isthmus from Panama. He purposed to ambush one of these trains in a lonely spot on the north road. Solemnly he placed before the men the dangers of the expedition. They had a march of sixty miles before them, through poisonous jungles and fever-haunted swamps. It was an enterprise for none but hardy and courageous men, ready to endure labour and fatigue without murmuring.

Of his original company he had only forty-two left. Some of these were sick, others were required to guard the ships; and when Drake had weeded out the least fit of the rest, he had only eighteen Englishmen for the adventure. To those he added thirty maroons, making a little company of forty-eight all told. Dennis observed with admiration how carefully all things were prepared. The men were provided with spare boots, so that they might not go footsore and be troubled by the jiggers of the jungles and the leeches of the swamps. The bows were all re-fitted, the arrows and fire-arms cleaned and scoured; large stores of dried meat and biscuit were packed in bundles; and bottles were filled with wine and rum, for it was unsafe to drink the water of the rivers.

It was a bright February day, Shrove Tuesday, when the adventurous band set out, the ships in the harbour dipping their colours and the trumpeters sounding "a loath to depart." The Englishmen carried nothing but their weapons, the baggage being strapped to the shoulders of the stalwart maroons. They marched in the coolest part of the morning, from sun-rise to ten, when they paused for dinner. Soon after noon they were afoot again, and at four halted for the night, the maroons building for them with extraordinary rapidity little huts of grass and palm-leaves, where they ate their supper over cheerful wood-fires, beguiling the evening hours with song and talk. It was a new

life for Dennis, and full of strange charm. He spent many an hour in the company of Drake and Oxnam, listening with a boyish admiration to their talk, revelling in their tales of fight and adventure.

The great captain exercised a wonderful fascination upon him. Drake was at this time little more than thirty years old, below the medium height, but with brawny limbs and a broad chest. Brown hair clustered close on a bullet-shaped head; his beard grew thick and strong; his face was ruddy and pleasant to look upon; and the honesty of his soul spoke out of his large, round blue eyes. His voice was clear and musical, and he had a natural eloquence, set off by the burr of his native speech. Nothing impressed Dennis more than to hear the Captain, every night at sunset, recite the evening prayers and collects bare-headed among his men assembled. "By Thy great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night"—there was something very real and earnest in the petition, uttered in the shade of the forest where wild animals dwelt, and in a country where every man was a foe. There was no doubt about the reality of Drake's religion; and it was part of his simple belief that he was chosen of God to scourge a pestilent enemy of mankind.

The order of the march was the same every day. Four maroons led the way, marking a trail by flinging broken branches or bundles of leaves upon the ground. Then came twelve more maroons, followed at an interval by Drake and his eighteen Englishmen, and two maroon chiefs. The rear was brought up by the rest of the maroons.

After four days' tramping through swampy woods, much entangled with undergrowth, steaming with heat and infected with noisome odours, they entered a pleasanter country, where the trees grew larger, and with branches so thickly interlaced that they were defended from the sun's rays and found their path less obstructed by creeping plants. The ground rose gradually, and Pedro, the maroon chief, told Drake that on the summit of the ridge they were ascending, half way across the isthmus, there grew an immense tree from which he could descry the North Sea whence he had come and the South Sea whither he was going. At ten o'clock on the eighth day of their march they came to the place, and while the dinner was being got ready, Drake went with Pedro to the tree of which he had spoken. Ascending big steps cut on the bole, they reached, near the top, a pleasant thatched arbour, large enough to seat a dozen men. The sky was clear; no haze blanketed the view; and looking forth, Drake caught, thirty miles away, the sparkle of the southern ocean on which no English boat had sailed. The soul of the great mariner was strangely moved: he fell on his knees, and "besought Almighty God of His goodness to give him life and leave to sail once in an English ship on that sea." Then he called up Oxnam and others of his company, and told them of his desire and prayer. Dennis never forgot the scene in that shady bower at the tree-top: the kindling face of the sturdy captain, his shining eyes, the fervency of his speech.

They went on again, and in two days more reached the wide savannah, with grass as high as corn, and great herds of black cattle. Now and then they got a glimpse of Panama, the city of their dream, and by and by, when they were near enough to see the ships riding at anchor in the roadstead, Drake called a halt: they had come within touch of danger and must walk warily. Resting in a grove some three miles from the city, Drake sent one of the maroons, dressed like a negro of Panama, into it as a spy an hour before dark. He was to find out on what night, and at what hour, the mule train set out with its precious burden for Nombre de Dios. He had learnt from Pedro that the first stage of the journey, from Panama to Venta Cruz, was always performed by night, because by day the open plain was scorched by the sun. But the second stage, from Venta Cruz to Nombre de Dios, was accomplished by day, the road lying among cool shaded woods. It was clear that the first stage offered the best chances of a successful ambush, and Drake had resolved to intercept the treasure-train between Panama and Venta Cruz.

The spy returned sooner than he was expected. From old acquaintances in the city he had learnt that a train was to start that very night, its departure being expedited because a Spanish hidalgo, the treasurer of Lima, was in haste to reach a ship waiting at Nombre de Dios to convey him to Spain. His train consisted of fourteen mules, of which eight were laden with gold and one with jewels. Two other trains, of fifty mules each, would follow, with provisions for the fleet and a quantity of silver.

Within an hour of the receipt of this news, Drake and his men were afoot on the road for Venta Cruz, some twelve miles away. Before starting, the English men all put their shirts on outside their other garments, so that they might have some means of telling friend from foe in the darkness. When they had marched about half the distance, two of the maroons, going ahead as scouts on the narrow track between long grass, detected the smell of a burning match, and creeping stealthily on, guided by the scent, and the now audible sound of snoring, came upon a Spanish sentry fast asleep by the roadside. In a trice they pounced on him; they stuffed a gag into his gaping mouth, put out his match, tied his arms to his sides, and haled him back to the main body. This danger removed, Drake divided his

band into two companies. One of these, under John Oxnam and Pedro the maroon, he stationed in long grass fifty paces from the road; with the other he went to the same distance on the other side, posting them so that, if it came to a fight, their fire would not harm their comrades. He gave strict orders that no man should stir from his post, but that all should maintain perfect quiet, and, if any travellers should come from the direction of Venta Cruz, that these were to be allowed to pass without molestation.

Dennis and Turnpenny were placed among Oxnam's party, and lay side by side in the grass. The night was so dark, and the stalks so long, that they could scarcely see each other, much less any other of their company. For a time all was quiet; nothing was heard but the faint critch of insects among the herbage. But by and by Dennis caught a slight murmur from some point near at hand. He lifted his head to listen. Yes, it was certainly a man mumbling. Then he heard a glug-glug, as of liquid poured from a narrow-necked vessel, and immediately afterwards a deep sigh of contentment. Again there was silence; but after a while another glugging and another sigh.

"Begorz!" whispered Turnpenny, "'tis some bosky lubber a-puddling of aqua vitae. St! Here be bells a-coming, on the neck of moyles, Ise warrant. St!"

The sound came from the direction of Venta Cruz: evidently a train was returning to Panama. Almost immediately afterwards there came a fainter tinkle on the other side; the treasurer of Lima was on the road, but he would not reach the ambush until the train from Venta Cruz had passed.

Nearer came the sound, growing now into a loud clanging. Dennis held his breath. The Venta Cruz party was to be allowed to pass; it would meet the other travellers, and give them the word that all was well. But what was this? Some one was rustling in the grass near him; some one was moving forward; and, peeping up, Dennis saw an Englishman, as he knew by his shirt, creeping towards the road through the long stalks, and a maroon following.

At this moment his ears caught the sound of a horse trotting. He could not see the road; the men who had gone through the grass were also out of sight; but suddenly the trot changed into a gallop, and he heard the horse clattering at a furious rate down the road. His heart gave a jump; he felt a hot flush surge through him: the rider, whoever he was, had been startled, and was now doubtless dashing on to warn the coming train. Who could the fool be who had so flagrantly disobeyed the captain's orders? Had he been so mad as to expose himself, in his shirt over-all, to the view of the horseman? Turnpenny was as wrathful as Dennis.

"Be jowned if I don't deal en a whap in the niddick," he whispered, "as'll make en twine like an angle-twitch."

The sound of the hoofs died away, and Dennis expected that the clanging of the bells would cease also, and all be brought to nought. To his surprise there was no change: the bells drew nearer and nearer; now he heard men's voices; and then, with a suddenness that made him jump, a shrill whistle-blast rose high above all other sounds. It was the signal for the attack. Dennis and the sailor rushed through the grass; on all sides white-clad forms rose from their lurking-places and made towards the road with a cheer. They sprang at the muleteers, toppled them over, and without a shot fired the long line of mules was in the raiders' hands.

With many a laugh and jest the sailors hauled the packs from the backs of the mules and slit them with their hangers. But soon the mirth was turned to melancholy.

"Od-rat-en, what have we here?" cried Turnpenny, lifting a soft mass on the end of his weapon. "Bless my bones if it bean't a bunch of yokey sheep's wool!"

"And here 'tis nought but dried meat as tough as leather."

"Ay, where be the goold, where be the goold?" cried Robert Pike, breaking from the grasp of a maroon. "Cap'n said there was nugs o' goold as big as goose-eggs, and be jowned if I can see a farden's worth!"

"And the gewgaws for the rory-tory madams o' Spain—where be the gewgaws?" cried another of the seamen. "Here, you codger"—seizing one of the muleteers—"where be the gewgaws adiddled to?"

He shook the man till he gasped for breath, then hauled him before Drake, who had come into the midst of the enraged sailors. He bade the muleteer speak. The man told how the horseman, trotting by with a page at his stirrup, had been startled to see a ghost-like figure rise out of the grass at the side of the track, and galloped on to warn the

treasurer. Superstitious as the Spaniards were, they knew so much of the daring of El Draque that the treasurer did not for a moment doubt he had to deal, not with a ghost, but with a very real and substantial enemy. The warning had reached him just in time. He drew his mules, bearing the treasure, to the side of the road to allow the train of merchandise to pass; the loss of food and wool could be endured patiently if the gold and jewels were saved. Then, when the din ahead confirmed his suspicions of an ambush, he turned the mules' heads back towards Panama and slipped away.

Here was a pretty end to the adventure from which all had hoped so much! Loud was the outcry against the wretched man whose rashness had had so untoward an effect. While Drake took hurried counsel with Oxnam and Pedro the maroon, the men went about growling, accusing each other, threatening terrible punishment for the offender. Of them all none was louder or more vehement than Robert Pike.

"An I catch the knave," he shouted, "Ise fulsh en, Ise thump en, Ise larn en a thing or two as the wink-a-puss won't forget."

But as he spoke he lurched towards Amos, who caught him by the collar as a sudden suspicion dawned.

"Be jowned if I don't b'lieve 'twas 'ee, Bob Pike! You hawk-a-mouth knave, I smell 'ee, I do. You been puddling aqua vitae, dang my buttons an you bean't. You bandy-legged piggish lubby, you, 'ee'll fulsh en, will 'ee? and thump en, will 'ee? and larn the wink-a-puss a thing or two, will 'ee? The Old Smoker take 'ee for a lubberly knave and a jackass."

"And 'ee for a gabbing rant-a-come-scour!" retorted Pike, when he got his breath. "What be 'ee jowering at me for? I only supped a little small drop to keep me awake, and when I heard the moyles a-coming, od-rabbit-en, thinks I, Ise nab the first; and when I got to the road, 'twas no moyle, but a fine horse and rider, and I rose up to see what he was, and a knave maroon pulled me down and sat upon me like to squeeze out my vitals, and so the villain Spaniard got away."

"You bosky knave, I'll——"

But what Turnpenny would have done remained untold, for at this moment Drake called all the men together.

"'Tis no good crying over spilt milk, my lads," he said. "An we do not shift for ourselves betimes, we shall have all the Spaniards of Panama upon us pell mell. To go back the way we came is a four leagues march; we all be wearied and for-done, and meseems 'twere better to go forward two leagues into the forest. True, the town of Venta Cruz stands in the way, but 'tis better, methinks, to encounter our enemies while we have strength remaining than to be encountered and chased when we be worn out with weariness. We will e'en eat our suppers while we may; there be great store of meat and drink in the mule-packs; then will we mount upon these beasts, so that we do not weary ourselves with overmuch marching. And then, if God will, we will ding a blow at the enemy for our honour; and mark 'ee, my lads, we are disappointed of a most rich booty; but surely God would not that it should be taken, for that, by all likelihood, it was well gotten by that treasurer, and not by evil courses."

And, taking what comfort they could from their captain's explanation, they set off on mule back as soon as supper was over, and came in an hour to the woods a mile out of Venta Cruz. There they dismounted. Drake bade the muleteers remain out of harm's way, and led the men over a cobbled road ten feet broad, running between great walls of vegetation.

Following his custom, Drake sent forward two of the faithful maroons to reconnoitre. They came back with news that, half a mile farther on, the enemy were hidden in the thickets; they had heard the rustle of their movements and smelled the pungent smoke of their matches.

"Let no man fire till after the enemy hath dealt us a volley," said Drake; "methinks they will first parley with us."

He led them quietly forward. A few minutes later a dark form appeared on the darker road.

"Hoo!" came a voice.

"Halloo!" replied Drake.

"What nation are you?" called the man in Spanish.

"Englishmen."

"In the name of the King of Spain my master," cried the captain, "I charge you to yield, avouching on the word of a gentleman soldier that I will deal with you most courteously."

"Come on, my lads," quietly said Drake, taking a few quick steps forward. Aloud he cried: "For the honour of the Queen of England, my mistress, I must have passage this way."

At the same moment he fired his pistol. The Spaniards in ambush, mistaking the shot for a signal from their own officer, poured in a volley. Drake blew his whistle, and instantly his men sent a spattering shower of bullets and arrows into the brushwood, following it up with a charge. The Spaniards bolted like hares, and at Drake's command the maroons of his party swarmed forward to cut the enemy off from a stronger position in the rear, shouting their terrifying war-cry, "Yo peho! Yo peho!" Back went the Spaniards, scurrying along to the shelter of the town, the maroons leaping and dancing after them as their manner was in war, the seamen not far behind, adding to the uproar with English yells. Within a few yards of the town wall the enemy attempted to rally, posting themselves across the road and in the woods on both sides. But the maroons swept upon their flanks, Drake and his men charged full at the centre. For a few moments the place rang with the clash of sword and pike and the cries of the combatants. Then as one man the Spaniards wheeled about and scampered through the open gates of the town, with Drake's whole party at their heels. On they went into the streets, seamen and maroons, thrusting and slashing without pause or respite, yet strictly observing their captain's injunction to spare women and unarmed men. In five minutes they were masters of the town.

For little over an hour the men ran hither and thither, gathering what spoils they could in the shape of articles easily carried. Then, just as dawn was breaking, and they were snatching a hasty breakfast before departing, a dozen horsemen dashed in at the Panama gate. Not until they were within point-blank range of the musketeers whom Drake had posted there did they perceive that the town was in the enemy's hands. The sentries fired; half of the horsemen fell; the rest fled back hastily into the forest. But Drake feared they were the advance guard of a larger force. It was dangerous to delay. He whistled his men together; and in a few minutes they marched out of the town with their spoils, some little compensation for the lost treasure of the mule train.

The toils and sufferings of that homeward march lived long in the memories of Dennis and Turnpenny. Drake forced the pace unmercifully, anxious to get back to his ship. Food ran short; he would not stay to hunt wild hog or deer. Several of the men had been wounded; there was no time to tend their wounds. Their clothes were torn to tatters; their boots, even the extra pairs, had given way, and they were driven to bind their feet with rags. The faithful maroons served them nobly, carrying all the burdens, building huts for their rest at night, bearing upon their shoulders some of the seamen who were too exhausted and footsore to tramp any longer. A maroon went forward to warn the waiting company of their approach. On the afternoon of the 23rd of February, three weeks after they had started on the expedition, they tottered out of the forest towards the beach, just as the pinnace, sent by Ellis Hixom to take them off, scudded inshore. There on the glistening sand the little company of men, haggard, worn-out, half-famished, raised their husky voices in a psalm of thanksgiving, praising God because they saw their pinnace and their fellows again.

CHAPTER XXI

Maiden Isle Again

As they sailed back in the pinnace to the secret haven, the weary adventurers were surrounded by their comrades, and feasted their ears with wondrous tales of what had befallen them. Ellis Hixom also had a story to tell.

A few days after the departure of the company, there had staggered into the clearing three men in the last stage of exhaustion. Two were English, one French. They were pitiable objects, their eyes bright with fever, their cheeks haggard with famine, their feet blistered and bleeding from long wandering in the woods. Each man carried a bag of pearls.

And they told a pitiful story. They had escaped, they said, from captivity in Nombre de Dios, and set out with three comrades, bearing plunder from the houses of their captors. It was well known along the coast that Drake was somewhere in hiding, and they marched eastward, hoping by good hap to light upon his encampment. But as they rested one night, the leader had overheard a plot on the part of three of the men to slay the rest and make off with the booty. Fearing that if it came to a fight he and his two comrades would stand but little chance against the others, who were men of exceeding great strength and ferocity, the three had slipped away in the darkness and had since been tramping for days through the forest, unable to find sufficient food, and subsisting on berries and mushrooms. Once they had almost stumbled into a village of maroons, and fled for their lives, dreading lest they should be taken for Spaniards and slain before the error was discovered.

"And where are they now?" asked Drake.

"On the *Pascha*, sir," replied Hixom, "where they are slowly recovering of their calentures."

"And the name of the leader?"

"Jan Biddle, by his own account a skilful mariner and——"

"Ay, I have heard tell of him," interrupted Drake with a grim smile. "Master Hazelrig," he added, calling Dennis up, "I learn that the captain of your mutineers waits your judgement on my vessel."

He repeated what Hixom had told him.

"What is the name of the other Englishman, Master Hixom?" asked Dennis.

"Dick Rackstraw, methinks. The Frenchman's name is Michel Barren."

"Then what has become of our comrade Billy Hawk, I wonder? Biddle and his crew deserted from us with the treasure, when we came ashore in our boat. Billy Hawk went after them; I fear me there has been foul play."

"We will enquire into that matter when we gain our haven," said Drake, "and see what Master Biddle has to say for himself."

As soon as he reached the haven, Drake boarded the *Pascha* and called Biddle and his companions before him. He listened patiently to the man's wild tale, then sent a boat ashore to bring off Dennis and Turnpenny. Biddle's jaw dropped when he saw them come over the side. He attempted to bluster it out, but Drake cut him short.

"You are a foul liar and a mutineer," he said sternly. "Art a murderer also? What didst thou to Billy Hawk thy comrade? Answer to the point, villain."

"Afore God, sir, I know nought of him. With me came but four men, and two of those lie dead in the forest, of a strange sickness that got hold of them after that they had drunken of the water of a certain river. Of Billy Hawk I saw nor heard nought."

"My poor comrade!" said Turnpenny. "I fear me he be gone or alost."

"These are your men," said Drake, turning to Dennis. "The punishment of mutiny is death. Do with them as you list."

"I would fain leave them in your hands, sir," replied Dennis. "For me, I would not that any man should die."

"I will consider of it. Have them put in irons and carried below."

Next day he decided, on Dennis's intercession, to content himself with holding the men closely confined in the vessel. The bags of pearls were taken from them and handed to Dennis and Turnpenny. And ere the day was out Robert Pike was sent to join them. Drake had learnt of the mischievous part the man had played, which had resulted in the failure of his attack on the mule trains.

"A little darkness and solitude may teach him to refrain from the bottle," he said.

The enterprise had so nearly succeeded that when Drake declared he would make the attempt again, as soon as the time came for another convoy of treasure to cross the isthmus, every man of his company eagerly besought him for a place in the expedition. But Dennis reminded him of his promise to lend him a pinnace in which to sail to Maiden Isle and bring off his comrades.

"I will hold to my word," said Drake. "You and your brawny henchman have suffered less than the most of my men, by reason, I wot, of your being inured to hardships on your island. Some days must needs pass before we are ready to attempt other enterprises. The island is but a day's sail, you said?"

"Ay, sir, and with good hap we should return on the second day, or the third at most."

"Then take the *Minion* pinnace, and good hap go with you. You will need men. Choose out eight according to your mind, and a few maroons also. Juan was with you, I bethink me; he will doubtless serve you right faithfully. In sooth, I shall be mighty rejoiced to have with me the dozen men you go to find, for if they be in spirit and body like to you and your henchman, they will be most serviceable when I make my next journey to Panama. I would go fetch them myself, as I had purposed, but that our preparations demand my presence here."

Next day, then, the *Minion* pinnace sailed out of the little haven with a crew of eight Englishmen and five maroons, three of whom were the men who had accompanied Dennis from the island. Mirandola also was on board. He had disappeared when Dennis set off with Drake to cross the isthmus, but had evidently kept a watch on the settlement, for the day after they returned he came out of the forest and attached himself to his old master with demonstrations of delight. A brisk breeze was blowing off shore; the pinnace was a first-rate sailer; by midday they were in sight of the island, and in the afternoon they rounded the shoulder of the cliff, Turnpenny steering the vessel into the gully.

Dennis, standing in the bows, caught sight of a group of men beyond the pool, near his sheds. They were partly hidden by the foliage, and when they saw the strange vessel making straight towards them, with the evident intention of coming to an anchorage, they took to their heels and disappeared.

"Poor souls! they take us for Spaniards," said Turnpenny. "I warrant they be most desperately in the dumps. 'Tis nigh a month since we departed hence."

The pinnace dropped anchor beside the *Maid Marian*, and the men went ashore.

"Blow a blast," said Dennis to one of the men, who carried a trumpet, "with notes that will be familiar to their ears."

As the shrill notes rang out, he stepped ahead of the men, with Mirandola on his shoulder. Before long a man appeared among the trees far up the chine.

"Hallo hoy!" shouted Turnpenny. "Be that you, Tom Copstone? Come, comrade, never be afeard. We've come to take 'ee off, poor soul, and bring 'ee to Master Drake, who will make us all rich with much gold and treasure. Come, my hearts, Ned Whiddon, and Hugh Curder, and all."

Turnpenny's well-known voice was more successful than the trumpet's notes in banishing the men's mistrust. Soon they came hasting down the gully, Copstone leading.

"I said it! I knew it," he cried, as he approached. "'You and me, Haymoss'—the blessed words stayed in my noddle, and I knew 'ee would come back somewhen, dear soul. But we be in piteous case. 'Tis a long ninny-watch we ha' kept, and hope was wellnigh drownded, sir. We could not make it out; we was mazed, every man of us; but you be come back, praise be to God."

He told how the disappearance of the *Mirandola* had filled them first with consternation, then with bitter rage. Some of the men declared that they had been decoyed to the island; that they had been betrayed and deserted for the sake of the treasure. From the first Copstone and Whiddon had absolutely refused to believe that Dennis and Turnpenny had wilfully left them; Hugh Curder, indeed, had made a shrewd guess at what had actually happened; but the rest clung to their first notion, gave way to bursts of rage and reviling, and as the days passed, settled down into a state of moody despair.

Copstone had tried to induce them to fit out the *Maid Marian* for sea, but he had found it impossible to whip up enough energy among them. They had some reason for their reluctance, inasmuch as, the stores of the *Maid Marian* having been put aboard the *Mirandola*, there was no provision for a long voyage. The fruits of the island would spoil in a week or so, whereas if they clung to the island they were at least sure of finding a sufficient subsistence. But they had been troubled even on this point, for some of the men fell ill through recklessly eating fruits and berries without first ascertaining whether they were fit for food, and with broken health their spirits had been still further depressed.

"Poor souls!" said Turnpenny. "'Ee do look a wangery and witherly crew. But 'ee be all here, all twelve, not a man lacking? My heart! where be Gabriel Batten?"

"He never come back!"

"Never come back! What do 'ee mean?"

"We looked for en, up along and down along, but nary a crim of him did we see."

"Ay, and another be gone, too," said Hugh Curder. "But a sennight agone, poor Joe Toogood vanished out of our sight, and we never seed him again."

"Be there devils upon the island, Haymoss?" asked Ned Whiddon, anxiously. "Be there pixies that lead poor souls into some ditch or quagmire, where they be swallowed quick in the pluffy ground? Once we was bold mariners all, but now we be poor timorsome creatures, afeard when the wind soughs in the trees."

Dennis remembered the boa-constrictor from whose clammy coils he had saved the monkey that now sat upon his shoulder.

"'Twas no sprites nor pixies, comrades," he said. "Without doubt they came unawares upon a big serpent that charmed them first with his fiery eyes, and then swathed them in his fearsome coils till he had crushed the life out of them. Poor souls! poor souls!"

"But now 'tis time to be merry, lads," said Amos quickly, "for here we be, and our pinnace yonder is named the *Minion*, the same as the bark that Captain Hampton handled so cunningly at St. John d'Ulua; and we be goin' to take 'ee all back to Master Drake, who lies by a secret haven, in little small huts built by the maroons; and there be archery butts, and a smith's anvil, and other such homely things. And we have seen wondrous things, my lads—the blue south sea beyond, and the treasure town, and Master Drake be set on leading us forth to adventure for gold and jewels beyond price. 'Tis time to be merry, souls!"

And catching the infection of his cheery good-will, Hugh Curder flung his hat in the air and began—

Ill is the weather that bringeth no gain,
Nor helps good hearts in need.

Dennis had transferred to the *Mirandola*—now, alas! at the bottom of the sea—the greater part of the *Maid Marian's* stores that he kept in his sheds; but there was a goodly remnant still in the cave, and this he determined to put on board the *Minion* and carry to Port Diego. The afternoon was too far advanced for the work to be completed that night; so he determined to sleep on the island and make an early start next morning. As soon as it was light he sent a number of Turnpenny's old comrades in different directions across the island to get a supply of fresh fruit, while the men he had brought from the mainland set about carrying the stores from the cave to the pinnace.

They had not been long at the work, however, when Ned Whiddon came hurrying back.

"God-a-mercy, sir," he cried, "we have spied a crew of strangers on the south shore, and in the offing two vessels at anchor. They be all clad and armed in the Spanish fashion, and when they set eyes on us they gave chase, and but that we know the island now as well as we know the lanes to home, none of us would have 'scaped."

Other men came in while he was speaking. Dennis trembled for the fate of those who had gone towards the northern shore and had not yet returned.

"'Tis ill news indeed," he said. "Run, Curder, after the men that have gone northward, and warn them that Spaniards are here to trouble us, lest they have not already discovered it. Comrades," he added, addressing the men about him, whose countenances bespoke their alarm—"comrades, we must take counsel together. What think you, Amos, we should do?"

"Why, sir, we should steal out in the pinnace as soon as our men be back along, leaving these stores, and thread a way betwixt the reefs to nor'ward; for the knaves could not follow us save in their boats."

"Ay, sir," said Copstone, "that be the true way of it. God send the tide be high enough to serve."

"Then get aboard and make all ready to depart. Amos, look to all things, and make the rest of our comrades to embark as they arrive. I will run to the top of the cliff to spy if the coast be clear."

But on reaching the spot whence he had often before looked so longingly and vainly for a sail, he made a most unwelcome discovery. About a mile to the south-west of the island lay a large vessel, which, since she was busily engaged in signalling, was clearly a consort of the two ships that Whiddon had seen. Keeping well under cover, Dennis raced along to a point half a mile south, whence the whole southern offing was visible. There were the two vessels; and, even as he looked, a boat was lowered from the nearest of them, rapidly filled with men, and was rowed towards the beach.

The sight was enough to cause the boldest heart to quake. If the pinnace ran out of the gully, she would have to pass within half a mile of the ship, for the tide was low, and even the little *Minion* drew too much water to make her way northward until she had run at least half a mile out to sea. This would bring her under the guns of the third vessel, and the Spaniards must be poor marksmen indeed if they failed to hit her at this range.

He was beginning to retrace his steps when Turnpenny came up hurriedly.

"We be all aboard, sir, save yourself and Nick Joland. Have 'ee seen him?"

"No."

"He be but late better of a fever, as Tom telled me; pray he be not swooned."

At this moment they heard loud shouts to their right. Running down through the trees, careful not to expose themselves, they saw four Spaniards chasing this very Nick Joland, a thin cadaverous-looking man whose stumbling gait betrayed his weakness. He was making almost in a straight line for a large bignonia bush that stood alone at the end of the narrow clearing just below where the two men were watching.

With one accord Dennis and Turnpenny stole to the bush and dropped down behind it.

"Let Joland pass," whispered Dennis; "then we can tackle the knaves as they come up."

"Without arms?" replied Turnpenny.

Dennis nodded. In a few moments the fugitive, panting hard, ran past the bush. The four Spaniards, running in a body, were close at his heels.

"Now!" Dennis whispered.

They sprang out with a yell, and though they were unarmed, the odds were not utterly against them, for the Spaniards were startled by this unexpected onset. A single blow from Turnpenny's sledge-hammer fist stretched one

of them senseless on the ground. Dennis felled his man, but his arm was less powerful, and the Spaniard began dizzily to regain his feet while Dennis grappled with another. As he rose he reeled just within reach of Turnpenny's arm. Catching him round the middle, the seaman flung him bodily at the fourth Spaniard, who was making furiously at him with drawn sword, Their heads collided with a terrific thud, and down they fell on the grass together.

"The seaman flung him bodily at the fourth Spaniard.

"The seaman flung him bodily at the fourth Spaniard."

Meanwhile Dennis had come to grips with the third man, a heavy and muscular fellow, who had only been prevented by the suddenness of the onslaught from using his sword, which he was unable in the surprise of the moment to shorten before Dennis was within his guard. Dropping the weapon, he strove to crush his antagonist by sheer strength. But Dennis was a wrestler. He neatly tripped the Spaniard, who fell, dragging his opponent with him. With a tremendous effort, he heaved himself uppermost and pinned Dennis to the ground. His hand was already on Dennis's throat when suddenly a bright object hurtled through the air, striking him with terrific force on the side of the head. His grip relaxed, he fell with a groan upon Dennis, the object that had struck him clattering to the ground.

Dennis was up in a moment. The strange missile was the headpiece of one of the Spaniards. It had fallen from his head in the tussle, and been picked up by Nick Joland, who, seeing the diversion in his favour, had hurried up at the critical moment in time to save Dennis from strangulation.

"Dead as door-nails!" said Turnpenny succinctly, seeing Dennis glance at the Spaniards on the ground. "'Tis a terrible heave-up, sir; we were best to run back along to our comrades in the pinnace, for there be gashly work afore us. And we will take these knaves' swords and calivers. Crymaces! there be more running towards us, and a round

dozen; we durst not bide their coming. We have but bare time to get back to the chine. Stir your stumps, Nick Joland; we can't save 'ee twice, man."

CHAPTER XXII

A Fight on the Cliffs

The three doubled back towards the chine, which was little more than half a mile away. The Spaniards saw them ere they disappeared among the trees, and followed with loud shouts, quickening their pace when they reached the spot where their comrades lay. But the Englishmen, knowing the ground, came in good time to the edge of the gully, where a steep and winding path led down to the ledge on which the huts were built. From the summit the ledge was not visible.

"Shall we run down at once, or give them a taste of their own lead first?" asked Dennis, halting for a moment.

"Give the knaves a taste, to be sure," replied Amos. "They know not how many we be, nor can they see through the trees; and we must needs check them, to give us time to acquaint our comrades with what is toward, and set our defences in order."

While speaking he had kindled the matches taken from the Spaniards. The calivers were already loaded. Crouching behind the thick bushes that lined the edge of the gully, they fired when they caught sight of the Spaniards advancing among the trees. Two of the enemy fell; the rest halted; and while they stood considering whether to advance, the three Englishmen hurried down the path, guessing that the Spaniards would hardly venture to follow while they were ignorant of the size of the force with which they had to deal.

Arriving at the ledge, Turnpenny gave a hail to the men on the deck of the pinnace, bidding them leave the vessel and bring their arms and ammunition with them. They had been much alarmed by the continued absence of their leaders, and by the sound of the shots, and asked anxiously, when they reached the ledge, what was to be done. Dennis rapidly told them what he had seen from the summit of the cliff, and how for the present the Spaniards had been checked, and then, taking Turnpenny and two or three of the others aside, began to concert a plan of defence.

The position was naturally a strong one. The ledge was accessible only by the narrow path from the cliff-top, and by a few yards of steep ascent from the base of the gully. It was protected from attack from above by the overhanging cliff; it could only be assaulted from below if the enemy got into the bed of the gully, either by coming in boats round the shoulder of the cliff, or by clambering down the sides inland. The gully was forty yards across; the opposite bank was steep and much overgrown with vegetation, trees and bushes growing thick to the very edge. Down the middle ran the stream from the marsh, very shallow after a season of dry weather. On their own side the defenders could pick off the enemy if they came to attack them along the narrow path; they were only in danger if the Spaniards took post on the summit of the cliff opposite, and they could not reach that spot except by making a long circuit about the marsh in which the stream took its rise, or by clambering down the southern bank some distance up-stream, wading through the water and climbing the other side. This would be a matter of an hour or two at least—an invaluable respite which Dennis resolved to make the most of.

He sent one of the maroons up the path to keep watch on the enemy, and another to cross the gully, clamber up the opposite face, and hide among the trees there to give notice of an approach from the north-east. The other maroons, with several of the Englishmen, he set to fortify the extremity of the ledge with a wall of branches, so that the party might be screened from gunshot on the far side. Turnpenny, with the strongest of the mariners, went down to the pinnace, and at the cost of great exertion brought up the falcon and rabinets which formed, with the addition of a saker, her armament. The saker was a muzzle-loader weighing more than half a ton, and too cumbrous to be hauled up the steep cliff; but the falcon was less than half that weight, and the two rabinets weighed only three hundred pounds apiece. The falcon was seven feet long, had a bore of two and a half inches, and threw a shot of three pounds weight, with a similar weight of powder. The rabinet was only two and a half feet in length, its bore

was one inch, and its shot weighed only half a pound. Both guns had a point-blank range of from a hundred and twenty to a hundred and fifty yards, and, mounted on the ledge, in embrasures of the extemporized wall, they would prove very effective weapons of defence.

While the guns were being hauled into position, others of the men brought buckets of water, filled at the cliff stream, and emptied them into the casks which during the months spent on the island by Dennis and the sailors had been depleted of the stores they had held when brought from the hold of the *Maid Marian*. Two casks still remained full of cider, but this having gone sour in the heat, it was poured away, the casks were swilled out, and re-filled with water. It was fortunate that a pure spring welled in the cliff, for the water of the rivulet draining the marsh was unfit for drinking.

All the men worked with a will. They knew not as yet how many the enemy numbered, but since there were three vessels, of which each, if fully manned, might contain from forty to seventy men, they had to reckon with a force that might be from a hundred and twenty to more than two hundred strong. The odds were tremendously against them. All told, they numbered only twenty-six, of whom six were maroons. But they had only two courses open to them: to fight, and at least sell their lives dearly, or to yield, and be shot or hanged or haled away to a slavery worse than death. Not one of them hesitated in his choice.

As a last resort, Dennis had the cave to fall back upon; but he was loath to retire to it until he had made a good fight at the gully, for while, from the ledge on which his hut stood, he could command the entrance of the gully, and to some extent protect the pinnace, the cave was deeper in the cliff and out of sight, and however strenuously the party might defend itself there, the pinnace would then be at the mercy of the enemy. It was true that, even if the pinnace were carried away or destroyed, a canoe could be dug out by the maroons, so that they would still have a means of leaving the island; but Dennis was determined to sail the *Minion* back to Port Diego and to Francis Drake.

Midday came, and passed. The maroons had finished their wall; the guns were mounted and charged; the water-casks were filled: and still there was no sign of the enemy. But the scouts had not returned, and Dennis began to feel somewhat uneasy. What were the Spaniards doing?

"Have we left aught undone, think you?" he said to Turnpenny, as they sat on upturned tubs eating their dinner.

"Nowt, sir, as I can see. But methinks 't'ud be well to withdraw the muzzles of our guns somewhat. If the knaves come on t'other side and spy them, they may sheer off and seek some other way of troubling us; and I would that they came to close quarters here, where we can strike them down."

"'Tis good counsel. Not perceiving the guns they will be the more emboldened to attack us, and 'twere well we have occasion to teach them a sound lesson."

Accordingly the guns were withdrawn so that their muzzles did not project from the other side of the wall. Hardly had this been done when the nose of a boat was seen shooting round the shoulder of the cliff.

"Lookeedesee!" cried Turnpenny. "The knaves that followed us did assuredly go back to their comrades and tell them of the gully and the path downwards, and they have sent their cock-boat to spy the place from the sea."

"Let us keep out of sight and watch what they do," said Dennis.

The boat, filled with armed men, came under full sweep of oars up the entrance to the gully. When it was still some distance from the pinnace the men rested on their oars, and one rose in the bows to look about him. For some time he saw nothing to indicate that the place was defended, and his fellows in the boat began to talk over the situation, the sound of their voices coming clearly to the men behind the wall. Then, as the boat again moved towards the pool, some one in it suddenly caught sight of the barricaded ledge, and the voices broke out once more in eager discussion. The upshot of this was that they came to the conclusion that the pinnace had been abandoned to her fate, and with a shout of triumph they bent lustily to their oars and came on with the evident intention of securing the vessel.

But they were now within range of the calivers of the defenders. At a sign from Dennis eight of the men stepped forward to the wall, lit their matches, and, resting the weapons on the top, fired when he gave the word. Several of

the oarsmen were seen to fall back; the boat came to a stop; and while the Spaniards were hesitating whether to advance or retreat, eight more men sent a hot volley among them, working havoc in the crowded boat. Cries of pain were now mingled with their shouts; the defenders heard a loud word of command; and the rowers began to back water so as not to present the side of the boat to the hidden marksmen. When the boat was out of danger it swung round on the current, and in a few minutes disappeared past the shoulder of the cliff.

Scarcely was it out of sight when the maroon who had been sent up the cliff to the south came running down the path. He reported that he had stealthily spied upon the Spaniards who had been baffled when Dennis and Turnpenny vanished over the edge; they had returned to the southern shore, where they rejoined a larger party which had assembled there. A council had been held on the beach; horns were sounded, no doubt to recall scattered bands who had been ranging the island in other directions; more men had been sent off from the ships; and the whole force, numbering, as near as he could guess, nearly two hundred men, had set off with matches already lighted, marching northward. Moreover, the third vessel, which had been lying off the south-western shore, was working slowly up the coast.

"'Twas from her, without doubt, the boat put off that we have lately routed," said Dennis. "The men aboard will tell what they have seen. What will be the upshot, think you, Amos?"

"Be jowned if I can tell, sir. My counsel is, let the maroon go back and spy upon them. An the knaves march directly northward they will come upon the gully just above us, and methinks, however stout they be, they will not dare to come down the path, where we can shoot them man by man."

It was done as he suggested. Within half an hour the maroon came back with the news that the boat had been run ashore on low ground to the west: many wounded men had been lifted out of it; and the majority of the Spaniards had hastened across country to rejoin the marching force. It halted while a consultation was held; then the march was resumed, but this time in a more easterly direction, which would bring them to the gully at a point about midway between the ledge and the morass, where the banks were sufficiently low and the stream sufficiently shallow to permit them to cross without difficulty.

"They be coming about to fire down at us from t'other side," said Turnpenny.

"Over the wall," added Copstone.

"We can fire back," said Whiddon.

"Zuggers! but twenty of us cannot keep two hundred in check," said Hugh Curder, anxiously.

"Say you so?" said Dennis. "Master Drake with but few more did assault and take a whole town. The Spaniards have learnt the worth of an English mariner; they will not approach us rashly. And they know not the ground as we know it. 'Twill be a matter of time to cross the gully and climb the bank and creep along through the trees on the further side until they face us here. There is—you know it well—a space on the opposite cliff where the trees grow somewhat thin: a space which the knaves must cross an they wish to gain the edge. Might we not ensconce ourselves on the hither border of that space, and fire upon them as they come? We are not able, 'tis true, a poor twenty, to withstand the fervent assault of two hundred; but we can assuredly delay them, and teach them somewhat to respect us, and give time withal for our wall to be increased in height; meseems it is lower than is proper. What say you, lads; shall we do this?"

"But how get back to this our fort, sir?" asked one of Drake's men. "We must fall back before them if they push on, and then methinks they might drive us over the brink, so that we fall headlong to the bottom, and break in pieces."

"Nay, Wetherall," replied Dennis. "We would take two, or even three, calivers apiece, whereby we twenty become sixty, and I warrant me we could do so much damage among them that they would pause ere they resolved to bring it to a push. And while they paused, we should have time to scramble down through the trees and shrubs, and up this side again, and come to our wall, mayhap, before they won to the edge. Assuredly we can do them more hurt yonder than if we wait until they stand in serried mass face to face with us above. Shall we do it, lads, for the honour of England?"

"Ay, ay, sir," shouted the men, fired by his enthusiasm and confidence; and Hugh Curder began to troll—

> "And hey for the honour of old England,
> Old England, Old England!"

The move was instantly begun. Dennis bade four of the maroons weave more branches into the wall. The rest of the men, with two loaded calivers apiece—three were found to be too cumbrous a load—followed Dennis down the cliff, forded the stream on rocks just above the pool where the pinnace and the *Maid Marian* lay, and clambered up the opposite cliff by a zigzag path, assisting themselves by the branches and projecting roots of trees. Arriving at the summit, they waited only to light their matches, then hurried forward through the undergrowth to the edge of the somewhat open space which the enemy must cross. Each man posted himself behind a convenient tree. For two hundred yards in their front there were only a few scattered trees and bushes. Dennis wished there were time to fell these and so deprive the enemy wholly of cover; but even if they could have been cut down, there was no means at hand of dragging them away, and they would give less protection if left erect than if they lay lengthwise across the space.

About half an hour after they had thus taken up their positions, the maroon who had previously been sent across the gully as a scout came running back to announce that the enemy were approaching. They were marching with great caution, the soldiers blowing on their smouldering matches to keep them alight. Dennis ordered the maroon to post himself behind a tree, and the little party waited in breathless silence for the enemy to appear.

At last one or two men could be seen among the trees on the other side of the clearing. They halted, evidently waiting for the main body to appear before they moved across. Dennis took advantage of the interval to whisper his orders to the men. If the enemy did not come on in a mass, and at the charge, only alternate men were to fire the first volley, then, if they had time, to reload their pieces, still having the second loaded caliver in reserve.

In a few minutes the gleam of the Spaniards' headpieces and shoulder-plates was seen as they joined the advance scouts among the trees. Then, as it were out of the leafy wall, some twenty men marched resolutely forward in closed ranks, clearly without any suspicion that the woods beyond were occupied. Dennis waited until they were half-way across the open space, then he sounded the "Hoo! hoo!" which was the maroons' signal in wood fighting. The calivers flashed from the belt of trees; several of the enemy fell; the rest, startled and confused by this sudden and unexpected attack, rushed back instantly upon the main body, while the men who had fired began in all haste to reload.

But they had no time to complete the priming of their weapons. A shout was heard from beyond the clearing. Immediately afterwards a tall Spaniard, whom his dress marked out as an officer, dashed forward at the top of his speed, carrying a short heavy pistol of the kind known to Englishmen as "daggs." With a yell the whole body followed at his heels. For a moment it seemed to Dennis that nothing could stay the rush; he and his little party must be overwhelmed. But he called aloud to his men to hold their fire until the Spaniards should come within point-blank range. One man, Nick Joland, in sheer nervousness, fired wildly before the proper time; but the rest, being old mariners who had borne a part in many a scrimmage before, had sufficient self-command to obey his orders.

On came the Spaniards, and some of the waiting Englishmen knew them to be trained soldiers, infantrymen reputed the finest in the world. But none of the seamen quailed. They knew what was at stake. When the enemy were within forty paces Dennis gave the word. Twenty calivers sped forth their deadly missiles, and every shot took effect. Even the splendid courage and discipline of the Spanish soldiery was unequal to the strain put upon it. Twenty of them lay writhing or motionless upon the ground; the mass behind recoiled, and fled to cover, some to the few trees and shrubs that dotted the open space, others to the thick wood beyond.

Among those who had been struck down was the gallant captain. He had just risen on one knee when one of his men sprang from the shattered ranks to his assistance. Reckless of consequences, the brave fellow rushed to the middle of the clearing, fully exposed to the marksmen, and, lifting the wounded officer, carried him bodily among the trees. His courage drew a great cheer from the Englishmen, not one of whom raised his weapon to shoot.

"My heart, 'tis a brave lad," roared Turnpenny; "and withal a mighty."

The advance had been checked; the enemy had disappeared; but the voice of another officer was heard haranguing the men. Soon bullets began to spatter among the trees behind which the Englishmen lurked, and there were signs that the Spaniards were spreading out with the object of taking them in flank. It was time to retreat if they were not to be cut off. The enemy's movement would take some time,—after their check they would hesitate to make another direct attack across the clearing; and Dennis hoped to be able to clamber down the cliff and regain the ledge before the Spaniards discovered that their opponents had disappeared. The word was passed quietly along the line; the men snatched up their weapons; and running fleetly to the edge, leapt, rolled, swung themselves down with all possible haste.

They had crossed the stream and were half-way up the opposite side when the movement was seen by one of a flanking party of the Spaniards. A loud cry proclaimed his discovery of their flight; he fired his caliver, and Hugh Curder gave a yell; the bullet had struck his foot. But by the time other Spaniards had come to the brink of the cliff, and, kneeling down, fired across the gully, the whole party had reached the ledge, and dropped down panting behind the wall, where for the moment they were safe.

CHAPTER XXIII

Bombarded

Bullets pattered upon the wall and the cliff behind; but Dennis and his men, lying low, took no hurt, and made no reply to the Spaniards' fire. This presently ceased, and Dennis, peering with caution through one of the embrasures in the wall, saw the summit of the opposite cliff lined with the enemy, who were clearly examining the position with careful interest, and discussing it with animation. At length, firing one or two shots as by way of farewell, they withdrew from the edge and disappeared among the trees.

"God be praised for all his mercies," said Amos, rising to his feet. "But I know not what is to be the end of this."

"Nor I," said Dennis. "'Tis not to be believed they have left us altogether, but rather that they have retired to consider of the next move. They can do us no hurt from the cliff yonder except they bring great guns from their ships to bombard us. Nor can they assault us from below, for the ascent is steep, and however bold they may be, they will not come up merely to be shot at. We must e'en wait and be ready."

"Ay, and think on Jan Biddle and what his villainous knavery has brought us to. But for him we should by this be snug in Plimworth, a-kissing of our wives and little ones—those that have them. Ah! sweet Margery Tutt! What a power of mischief one base villain can do!"

The day passed in quietude, the men cleaning their weapons and still further strengthening the wall. The tide rose in the gully, gently dandling the pinnace as she lay at anchor in the pool. Many a longing glance was cast at the little craft, many a sigh broke from the breasts of the mariners as they saw in imagination the dear cliffs of England, which even the most confident among them scarcely hoped ever to behold again.

Darkness fell. Nothing was heard save the rumble of the surf beyond the entrance of the gully, and the lapping of the waves against the base of the cliffs. Looking seawards, in the starlight Dennis saw the mouth of the little harbour like a deep blue cleft in the blackness. He had just divided the company into watches, to keep guard over the ledge while the others slept, when Juan the maroon caught his arm and pointed to a small dark patch at the bottom of the cleft. It seemed to be moving towards them. At the same time there was a series of flashes from the cliff opposite; bullets flew among them, one hitting Ned Whiddon in the arm. Instantly all the men sank below the level of the wall, and Dennis, crouching close against it, looked through one of the embrasures at that dark object slowly approaching up the gully, looming larger every moment.

The meaning of it had already flashed upon him. A boat, perhaps the same as had appeared earlier in the day, was coming in to cut out the pinnace. The outbreak of firing from the cliff was intended to mask the movement and

deter the defenders from interfering.

"You see their cunning," said Dennis to Turnpenny, who had crept to his side. "By day they would not dare come within the range of our calivers; they know that by night we can but fire at random, and endamage them little."

"My heart, but we must save the pinnace!" said Turnpenny. "She is all our hope and salvation."

"Not all, Amos," replied Dennis. "You forget the canoe which the maroons built for us; they will build another. But I am not content to lose the *Minion*; how could we face Master Drake and confess we had lost her? I would fain save her, but how?"

"Ah, if we had but torches to light the scene!" said Tom Copstone—"like to those we had at Fort Aguila yonder."

"Thanks for that word!" cried Dennis. "Quick, Amos, into the shed! I bethink me there are barrels of oil that we did not place aboard the *Mirandola*. Broach one, man; tear some of your garments into rags and plentifully soak them in the oil. These we will light and fling down into the pool."

Skipping back from the wall, Turnpenny and Copstone went into the shed and crept back in less than two minutes with armfuls of drenched rags. These they kindled and threw hastily over into the pool below. The enemy opposite poured in a hotter fire, but the little company kept close and none was hit. The device was not a moment too soon. By the light of the blazing rags it could be seen that the Spaniards had swarmed on board the pinnace, hauled up her anchor, and fastened her head rope to their boat. She was indeed already moving slowly towards the sea.

"Fire, my lads!" cried Dennis. "Let them not all escape."

Half a dozen of the men leapt forward, and, heedless of the enemy's bullets, discharged their calivers at the men on the deck of the pinnace. Cries proclaimed that some at any rate had hit the mark; but in an instant afterwards the *Minion's* deck was clear, the Spaniards having sprung overboard or gone below. Still the vessel slowly receded. As she was between the towing-boat and the ledge, the rowers were protected from the Englishmen's bullets, and they uttered a derisive yell as foot by foot they drew the vessel nearer the sea.

"The falconet, Amos!" cried Dennis. "'Tis time to use our ordnance."

"But we be too high, sir. I cannot lower the muzzle so as to bear on the pinnace."

"You will be able to do that as she draws nearer the shoulder of the cliff. Lay the gun in readiness."

"Zuggers, sir, but if I hit the poor little craft 'twill smash her."

"I care not. If we cannot keep her whole, neither shall the Spaniards have her whole. Lay the gun, man."

"My heart, and so I will, and the knaves shall have a plumper, od-rat-en!"

The entrance to the gully was dimly lit by the burning rags floating in the wake of the pinnace. Amos had shoved the gun through the embrasure, and, with his eye along its upper surface, watched the little vessel as she floated on towards the open sea. The firing opposite had now ceased; it was as though the Spaniards, sure of success, disdained to waste more powder and shot. Apparently they were watching the departing pinnace with so much interest that they had not observed the muzzle of the falconet projecting from the wall.

The vessel was now at the very entrance of the gully. In another half minute she would round the shoulder of the cliff and disappear. But before that half minute was past there was a flash from the ledge; a round shot flew seawards; and next moment there were shrieks from the Spaniards who, now that they were out of range of the defenders' small arms, had again come on deck. The shot had struck the vessel square astern. Her rudder was shattered; she swung round on the tide, and in another instant ran aground on a shoal and stuck fast.

A mighty cheer rose from the ledge when the men saw the effect of Turnpenny's shot.

"'Twas famous, Haymoss," cried Copstone. "Man, 'twas a thumping twack!"

And Hugh Curder in his glee lifted up his voice:

"Then next the blacksmith he came in,
And said 'Twas mighty hot!'"

"Smother you!" cried Turnpenny. "Think of the little poor craft yonder; 'tis like striking a 'ooman, and goes to my heart."

"But 'ee'd do that in kindness, Haymoss," said Copstone. "See, the knaves cannot pull her off; she be firm on the rocks, and with the tide falling they'll never move her. They'll think twice before they try that same device again."

An angry volley from the cliff opposite set them all scurrying again to cover behind the wall. It proved as Copstone had said. After vainly endeavouring for some time to haul the pinnace from the shoal, the occupants of the boat cast off the rope and disappeared. The flames of the burning rags went out one by one; black darkness settled over the gully; quietness reigned all around; and leaving three men to keep the first watch, the rest drew their garments around them and sought sleep, wondering what the coming day might have in store.

Dennis passed a miserable night. He could not share the childlike elation which Turnpenny's successful shot had produced in the minds of the mariners. He felt that this enemy was not to be baulked; every little set-back would only strengthen the Spaniards' resolve to crush their opponents; and by this time they could be in no doubt how small was the company resisting them. His head ached with thinking before he fell asleep, and when he woke, before dawn, it was with throbbing temples and anxious heart.

And when he got up and looked towards the sea, he felt his spirit die within him; for there, just past the shoulder of the cliff and some distance out to sea, lay one of the enemy's vessels, moored at a point which he had fondly believed to be unapproachable by any craft of her size. She had been descried by the men of the last watch, but the meaning of the move was not clear to them as it was instantly to him. The ledge was just within range of her guns, for although the shoulder of the cleft hid the pool from any vessel in the main channel, it was just within sight from the spot to which the enemy's vessel had worked.

"Jaykle! the skipper must be rare and bold," cried Turnpenny.

"And a mariner of right good skill," said Dennis.

But their admiration was turned to grave alarm when, with a roar, the whole of the vessel's broadside was suddenly fired, and the round shot came hurtling up the gully. To reply was impossible. The small guns on the ledge were too light to carry the distance. And there was nothing to be hoped for from bad marksmanship on the enemy's part. The first discharge had no effect except to displace masses of rock and earth from the cliff below the ledge.

"They cannot raise their muzzles high enough to hit the ledge," cried Turnpenny in delight.

But this fond hope was shattered at the next broadside. One shot struck the hut; another tore a great gap in the wall; a third chipped off large pieces of rock; several men were wounded.

"Our wall is vain now," said Dennis. "Another shot will tear it away, and we shall have no defence against the calivers of the enemy when they again appear on the cliff. Ah! and there they come. We must run for the cave, Amos; 'tis our last refuge. Lead the men thither; let them carry our arms and munitions, and what water and stores they can. I and Copstone and one or two more will strive to make reply to the enemy while aught of our wall remains."

Bullets were already falling on the ledge. Led by Turnpenny, most of the men, loaded with things, scuttled along the face of the cliff into the thicket that half concealed the mouth of the cave. Dennis with three companions fired back at the opposite cliff; but in a few minutes another volley of round shot came crashing up the gully, and scarcely a man on the ledge but was wounded by splinters of rock, though none was directly hit by the shot. It was hopeless to cling to the position longer.

"Follow me, lads," cried Dennis; and, rushing down the ledge to where it widened and was overgrown with bushes, he and his comrades joined the others safely in the cave.

CHAPTER XXIV

The Leaguer of Skeleton Cave

"Save us all!" cried Turnpenny, "we be like rats in a trap."

"The knaves cannot get at us, for this present at least," said Copstone.

"True, not without being well whopped; but they can block up the entrance, and keep us mewed up until we must either yield or starve, or perish of thirst."

"Keep a good heart," said Dennis, cheerfully. "We will not yield or starve yet. Since I set sail from England in the *Maid Marian* yonder many a marvellous thing has befallen me. I met a countryman when I had given up hope! Why may not things we do not foresee happen again?"

"Ay, true," said one of Drake's men; "and perchance Master Francis himself may come to our aid."

"That is but a poor chance," said Dennis. "It were better we trust in God and our own wit. We are safe at present; let us see what shelter our cave affords; I confess I have not hitherto fully explored it."

Lighting a torch, he walked inwards, with two or three of the men, and found after a few yards that the floor sloped slightly downwards, and that the cave widened out on both sides, so that, if the enemy discovered it, and fired into the opening, the inmates could find shelter out of the line of fire. The air was close, but as it did not become oppressive so soon as Dennis expected, he was tempted to believe that there was a hole somewhere in the roof which served to ventilate the cave. But though he looked carefully along the whole vault, which extended for some thirty yards into the cliff, he found no such opening, and concluded that the comparative freshness of the air was due merely to the spaciousness of the cave and the width of its mouth.

The day wore away in quiet. Careful watch was kept at the opening, and occasionally Spaniards were seen moving up and down the gully and on the opposite cliff; but no assault was made, and it seemed as though the enemy was content to wait until hunger and thirst had done their work. An inspection of the stores showed that there was only two days' food; all the water they had was contained in three buckets; and this, in that climate, and the state of excitement to which the men were wound up, was but a pitiful supply if the investment was to be protracted. Especially was it unfortunate seeing that several men were wounded, some seriously. Their injuries were dressed as carefully as possible with the limited appliances at hand; but in the course of the day one poor fellow died, and was solemnly buried in a grave dug with their weapons in the floor.

Among the occupants of the cave was Mirandola. The monkey had taken refuge in a tree while the fighting was in progress, and Dennis thought that the poor animal would certainly flee to the woody interior of the island, far away from the din and turmoil. But at nightfall the monkey stole into the cave, and attached himself to Dennis, whom he followed about like a shadow.

The hours of darkness dragged slowly along. Almost as soon as it was light, a round shot came crashing into the opening, scattering stones and earth in all directions. The Spaniards' inaction during the previous day was explained: they had evidently brought from the vessel in the offing a gun, perhaps more than one, and mounted it on the opposite cliff. The effect of the shot, which luckily harmed no one, was to send the men in all haste to the sides of the cave. But the crash and the smoke made Mirandola shriek with fright. He ran deeper into the cave, and when Dennis, with a torch, followed to soothe his terror, he discovered that the poor beast had taken refuge on the top of an irregular pillar of rock that stood out from the wall about three quarters of the way from the entrance. He tried to coax the monkey to descend, but without avail. The top of the pillar being beyond his reach, he called Turnpenny,

and, climbing on to the mariner's broad shoulders, reached up to seize the monkey. But Mirandola retreated and disappeared.

"The beast is deaved, to be sure," said Turnpenny, "and lacks his little wit. Let him bide, sir."

"Nay, he has been our partner so long that I am not willing to lose him, and he will surely be stifled if we do not bring him nearer the opening. Hoist me, Amos."

He swarmed to the top of the rock, the sailor handing up the torch after him. It took a few moments to become accustomed to the blackness, and in the red flickering light he failed to see any sign of the monkey. But he perceived with surprise that the pillar did not abut immediately on the wall, as he had supposed. Behind it he saw what appeared to be a deep black hole, which seemed deeper when he inserted his torch. Into this Mirandola, his nerves completely unstrung by the shattering explosion, must have run for refuge.

Dennis crawled in, and holding the torch over his head, was still more amazed to find that he had come to the entrance of a second cave, apparently larger than the first. The floor of it was many feet below him: he hesitated to risk a dislocation of his ankle if he sprang down; so he retreated, and called to Turnpenny, informing him of his discovery.

"Sling up a rope," he said; "you and Copstone keep a firm hold upon it on your side, while I let myself down on the other side and see what is beyond."

Lowering himself through the aperture, he found the monkey sitting on the floor.

"Come, Mirandola," he said, "you taught me the merits of some of the fruits of this island; hast more to teach me, old friend? Let us go on together."

He found that the floor of this cave also inclined downwards, and he went very cautiously, lest he should come unawares upon a chasm and fall headlong to his doom. The atmosphere was damp and close, but not foul, and as he proceeded he saw by the flickering of the torch that there was a slight current of air. No wall blocked his way, but by and by the cave narrowed and the roof came lower, and he had to stoop, and at last to crawl, to avoid knocking his head. He had still not reached the end of what was now a tunnel, when the torch went out. For a moment he hesitated whether to go on in the darkness; then, deciding that it was not worth while to run any risks when he could procure another light within a few minutes, he hurried back, got another and a larger torch, and asked Turnpenny to accompany him.

The two together came to the spot where the first torch had been left, and went on. The rough irregular fissure grew no narrower, but its slope became steeper at every yard.

"God-a-mercy, it likes me not!" murmured Turnpenny, who was filled with superstitious fears in face of the unknown. "Meseems we be going down into the very bowels of the earth, or mayhap lower. Dost fear no goblins? Dost not think we may come upon the Old Smoker?"

"Never a whit, Amos. Why, man, the floor here is wet. Touch it with your hand. And as I live, here are seaweeds and shells! And look; surely that is a glint of light yonder that comes not from our torch. Here is a very pool; duck your head, man; I gave mine a rare crack just then, the roof comes so low. Crawl after me. I smell the sea, Amos; and ah! look! here we are on the shore. Have a care; we must not be spied."

Crawling actually through the water, they found themselves on the shore at a point not far north of the spot where Dennis had first opened his eyes on the island. The hole in the cliff was almost hidden by the overhanging plants. Mirandola had halted; to go through water was not to his taste. Cautiously raising themselves, Dennis and Turnpenny parted the screening leaves and looked out to sea. There, a little distance out, was the vessel that had fired on them. The tide was low; she had had to shift her position further into the main channel. In the little bay which here indented the shore a boat lay on the sand, two Spaniards leaning against its side, keeping guard over it, no doubt, while their comrades were engaged in investing the cave.

"One thing is plain," whispered Dennis; "here at least is a way of retreat should we no longer be able to remain in our cave. And when water fails, we can creep out by the hole in the night time, and fill our buckets at one of the

rills that trickle from the cliff."

"Ah! that is something, sir," said Turnpenny, "but I would fain knock those knaves yonder on the head and take their boat. We might then make a shift to row away from this isle."

"A good wish, Amos, but hard to come by. We could not do it in daylight, and methinks the Spaniards would not do us the grace to leave their boat here on the shore for us to make free with at night. But assuredly we can keep a better watch on them here than from the cave above, where we cannot show a head but with great peril; let us therefore return and send one of the maroons hither as a sentinel."

There was great excitement among the men when they were told of this discovery. Though it seemed impossible that the passage to the sea could avail them much, the knowledge that it was open to them gave just that dash of comfort which is all the world to men in extremity. And when, as the day wore on, the enemy's guns began to play regularly on the mouth of the cave, and brought down in front of it great masses of the cliff above, they did not get into a state of panic, but almost gaily made air-holes through the loosely piled earth with their weapons, chuckling at the thought that the besiegers were no doubt flattering themselves with the supposition that the hapless garrison was being gradually entombed.

But it seemed to Dennis that an attempt should be made to turn this strange discovery to account. Clearly it was possible to leave the cave, but supposing they all made their way to the shore, what then? They might take to the woods in the centre of the island, and for a time, perhaps, elude the enemy; but it would only be a matter of days before they must be hunted down. They could not, a mere handful, risk a stand-up fight against a force six or seven times their number. And it was in the highest degree unlikely that the enemy would leave any of their boats on shore during the night. Still, there was just a chance that a boat might be so left, and Dennis arranged that Juan the maroon should go before dark to the exit on the shore, to see what he could discover of the Spaniards' arrangements, and then to steal up the cliff and learn how they encamped during the night.

The night was still young when the maroon returned. He had seen the boat put off, conveying officers to the vessel. Then, waiting until it was dark, he had climbed the cliff, and found that the enemy had formed a camp on the summit immediately above the ledge, at some little distance from the brink. No pickets were posted; the Spaniards had evidently recognized the hopelessness of any attempt to escape either up or down the gully.

Juan had then crept round to the northern cliff, and discovered that the two guns which had played on the cave during the day were left in charge of two men. Dennis was somewhat surprised that the main camp of the enemy had not been made there instead of on the southern cliff, until he remembered that only on the latter were there springs of fresh water.

"'Tis as I feared, you see," he said to Turnpenny. "The boat returns to the ship at night—just as the boat was wont to return to your lumber-ship. It was but a poor hope, and that is dashed."

"And so 'tis. The only thing that we poor souls could do would be to crawl out by the hole, and fetch a long compass to the cliff yonder where the guns be, and blow them up for the knaves. If there be but two men guarding them, 't'ud be no hard feat."

Dennis did not reply. He seemed to have fallen into a brown study.

"I'se warrant I could do it, with Tom Copstone and Juan, and maybe another of the maroons. 'T'ud not save us, to be sure, but 't'ud at least give the knaves a turn, od rabbit en!"

"Amos," said Dennis with apparent inconsequence, "if you were a Spanish officer——"

"God forbid, sir!" interrupted the seaman, fervently.

"It is impossible, I own. Still, if you were a Spanish officer aboard that vessel yonder, and in the blackest hour of night you heard a great uproar on this island, and saw the flashing of guns, what would you do?"

"I'fecks, I would think there was a rare randy afoot, and straightway lower a boat and come with all speed ashore to lend a hand."

"And you, Copstone,—what would you do?"

"Come with Haymoss, to be sure, sir. You and me, Haymoss——"

"The words of my dream again, sir!" cried Amos in excitement. "There be summat in your mind, sir; tell it out, and, souls all, lend an ear."

And then Dennis unfolded a scheme which Juan's report and Turnpenny's suggestion had set working in his mind. For some minutes the little group around him hung breathlessly upon his quiet words; then Turnpenny exclaimed—

"We'll do it, we will so, and be jowned if the knaves will not wish themselves anywhere but on Maiden Isle. Come, my hearts, the sky is black and lowering: 'tis the very time o' night for our intent, and with God's help we will prosper in our doings."

And then the rough seaman fell on his knees, and with clasped hands recited the prayer for help in time of need, and every man of the little company responded with a low fervent "Amen!"

Half an hour later, Turnpenny, with Copstone, Juan, and a second maroon, bade farewell to his comrades and clambered down into the second cave. When they were on the farther side of the dividing rock, their weapons, with four belts packed full of grape shot from the stores of the *Maid Marian*, were handed down to them, and after a final "God speed!" from Dennis they started on the way to the sea.

An hour passed—an hour during which the rest of the company sat in hushed expectancy, scarcely speaking a word. One of the maroons had pushed his way through the heap of loose earth piled at the mouth of the cave, and crawled stealthily to the ledge, where he crouched amid the ruins of the sheds. Presently, from the opposite cliff, came a slight booming sound like the cry of a night beetle. The maroon, invisible in the black shade of the cliff, crept back to the cave. Immediately afterwards the whole company, man by man, crossed into the inner cave, the two men most seriously wounded being lifted up one side of the pillar, and lowered gently down the other. Dennis leading, with Mirandola close behind, they made their way by torch-light down the sloping floor, then, extinguishing the torch, crawled out at the narrow aperture, and, after Dennis had taken a careful look round, stood up, a silent band of twenty-one, on the sea-shore. The two men whose wounds forbade exertion were left in a sheltered spot below the bank; then the rest followed Dennis up through the vegetation, in single file. It was so dark that no man could see the man before him, but each one grasped the caliver of the man ahead, thus guiding themselves through the jungle.

Up they went, quietly, almost as surely as if it were broad daylight, for Dennis knew every foot of the way, which he had trodden many times since that day long before when he had begun his exploration of the island. Winding in and out, he came at length by a long circuit to the high ground approaching the southern bank of the gully. And there he halted. Through the trees before him he saw the watch-fires, dying low, of the enemy encamped on the clearing beyond. All was silent. If any sentinels were awake, they were not conversing. The camp was as quiet as though it were an abode of the dead.

Suddenly the deep silence was broken by the boom of a beetle. It died away. So natural a sound was it that the Spanish sentinels, if any were on guard, would never have suspected that it came from the throat of a maroon. Even Dennis's company might have been deceived had they not known that the sound had been made by one of themselves, the maroon at their leader's side.

Scarcely had it died away when two sharp cracks rent the air from some point beyond the camp. Then came an instant change over the scene—a change which Amos and Tom Copstone had fired to bring about. A loud cry rang out in the camp, followed by a din of many voices and the clash of arms. Some one cast fuel on one of the fires, and the flame, leaping up, shone on a camp in commotion; men were hurrying this way and that, calling to their fellows excitedly. What was this that had disturbed their slumbers? Was some one signalling to them from the vessel out at sea? Could it be that El Draque had sailed up out of the night?

Into the midst of this noise and confusion broke a shattering sound, the roar of a piece of ordnance. Then the din was redoubled, and with the astonished cries of some were mingled the shrieks and groans of wounded men. Still

Dennis and his little band stood motionless amid the trees, but every man now held a lighted match. Another deep reverberating roar thundered forth, with more cries and yells in the camp. Amos and his comrades had disposed of the men guarding the guns, and had turned these upon the enemy.

"Now!" cried Dennis.

Then a mighty shout broke from the throats of the little company, and with the roar of lusty British seamen mingled the weird "Yo peho! yo peho!" of the maroons. A volley flashed from the muzzles of nineteen calivers, and nineteen men dashed forward towards the camp, shouting like a hundred. On they rushed through the trees into the clearing. "Yo peho! yo peho!" And with yells of panic fear the Spaniards, like a flock of sheep, ran and ran and ran, helter-skelter, flinging their arms away, tumbling over one another, falling, rising again, pelting headlong through the woodland towards the marsh.

Again the guns on the opposite cliff thundered, but the shots did not now come plunging into the camp. How were the Spaniards, scared out of their wits, to know that Turnpenny and Copstone were now firing into the gully, lest they should hit their comrades? But in a few moments there was no risk of this, for Dennis wheeled about and led his men at a mad scamper down by the way they had come, never stopping until, bathed in sweat, panting for breath, they stood on the sea-shore, at the place from which they had started.

And now Dennis looked again towards the sea, and strained his ears to catch a sound he expected. Would his expectation be fulfilled? Would Fortune favour him? Would the Spanish officers aboard the ship do as Copstone and Turnpenny in their place would have done—lower boats in all haste and come to the aid of their comrades in peril? None knew the anxiety that troubled Dennis in those minutes of waiting. If the Spaniards were poltroons, if they were scared by the sudden outbreak and feared to venture shorewards in the dark, his bold scheme would fail, and then what the end would be he hardly dared to think. It was with real agony of soul he listened, listened for the sweep of oars.

Hark! On the silence of the sea comes a thud, a measured beat, growing in loudness, drawing near. As yet he can see nothing, but his comrades hear the sound; their hearts leap at it; they can scarcely check a shout of joy. On comes the boat; they hear the splash of oars, and voices, and by and by the grating of a keel. They wait in panting silence. Men are wading through the water; arms clash; a loud voice gives an order; and now a score of dark forms can be seen running up the beach, making for the very path lately traversed by the nineteen. The men, lurking beneath the bank, hold their breath; Dennis feels as though his very heart-beats must be heard; but the Spaniards pass, and disappear, and are now hasting up towards the camp. The sound of their footsteps dies away; Dennis can scarcely bear to wait, so eager is he to pursue his scheme to the end. At last he gives the word, and eighteen men rush after him, noiselessly on the sand, towards the boat, a hundred yards away.

The two Spaniards left on guard catch sight of the running men when they are half way across the beach. Why should they suspect that these are not their comrades who lately parted from them? What has happened? They are nervous, unstrung. "What is it?" they cry; but the words are choked in their throats, for two men have sprung upon them, and next moment they lie stunned on the sand. Four men return and bring their wounded comrades with what haste they may. Then lusty arms shove the boat from the shoal; nineteen men leap in after the two; the oars are out, and the boat's head points towards the vessel lying at anchor.

But it pauses as it comes level with the shoulder of the cliff. The four bold fellows who have so manfully played their part beyond the gully are not forgotten. And but a few moments after the boat has stopped, four figures come swimming out with mighty strokes, and are hauled aboard, dripping wet, but exultant. Again the oars strike the water and the boat moves out to sea. A dark hull looms up in front. Dennis whispers an order; all the oars are shipped but two; and the boat goes slowly, with no sign of haste. A voice hails it from the deck. "All's well!" calls Juan. The boat is now under the vessel's quarter: a lamp is slung over the bulwark to guide the returning crew; a rope is thrown out to steady her; and Turnpenny begins to clamber up by the battens. Before Dennis reaches the deck he hears a cry, then a heavy thud, and as he springs aboard he sees Amos with a prostrate Spaniard between his legs. Up they go, all twenty-five; only a dozen of the vessel's crew are left on board; and the long pent-up excitement of maroons and British mariners bursts forth in a shout of triumph; the ship is theirs.

"Heave up the anchor, my hearts!" cried Turnpenny. "Loose the mainsail, Tom; the wind serves."

"Stay, Amos," said Dennis, "we must not forget the pinnace. We cannot return to Master Drake without her."

"Nor shall not," replied the seaman; "but we'll first give the knavish vessels yonder a taste of our lead, an ye will but give us leave."

"A right good notion, Amos, if we can win to them at this low tide."

"That we can, sir; trust me."

With her courses set, and Turnpenny at the helm, the vessel stood out half a mile until all danger of striking a shoal was past; then she was headed southward. Meantime Dennis superintended the loading of all her ordnance, five guns on each side. Soon they saw the dark hulls of the two Spanish vessels anchored off the south-west corner of the island.

"There's room enough betwixt 'em, sir, for us to pass and rake 'em with a broadside. Not a man aboard 'em will suppose this craft is manned by any but their own comrades, nor will they know better till they hear our popguns."

As they approached, a voice hailed them from the vessel on the port side, asking the meaning of the uproar lately heard.

"A fight ashore, but it is now over," sang out Juan the maroon.

The *Minion* came between the two vessels. So confident was Turnpenny in the unpreparedness of the Spaniards that he hove to, not a dozen yards separating the ships on either side. The guns were manned; the matches, already lighted, were screened from observation; then, at the word, the five guns on the starboard side belched forth their heavy charges of round shot. Almost before the roar had died away the gunners rushed to the larboard. Again there was a mighty thunder and crash as the shots raked the hapless vessel. Through the cloud of smoke the adventurous bark was got under way. In a few minutes she ran clear; Turnpenny put the helm down, and she beat up against the wind until she reached her former anchorage westward of the gully.

Then Dennis, with Turnpenny and a dozen men, got into the boat which had followed astern at the end of a rope, and rowed for the entrance between the cliffs. There was no guard over the pinnace. The Spaniards who had been surprised in their camp had fled to the other side of the island. Even those who had lately landed, hearing the thunder of the guns to the south, had rushed inland, believing that El Draque, the terror of their coasts, had suddenly come upon them. Unmolested, Dennis and some of his party landed on the rocks. Turnpenny made a rapid inspection of the pinnace.

"Her stern works be sore battered and her rudder shivered to splinters," he said, "but she will take no water, a' b'lieve. With a strong pull we will have her off, sir."

The rope by which the Spaniards had attempted to tow her was still fixed. Under the haulage of twelve sturdy mariners she was slowly shifted; she floated; and in twenty minutes lay alongside the Spanish vessel.

Then, the men giving a parting cheer that echoed and re-echoed from the shore, the ship stood away under full sail with the pinnace riding merrily astern. And when morning broke the long coast-line of the mainland was already in sight.

CHAPTER XXV

The Mule Trains

"No Bobby Pike this time," whispered Turnpenny to Dennis, as they lay eating their supper amid the scrub a mile or more south of Nombre de Dios. "And with all my soul I hope the Frenchmen be sober men, for to fail of our

purpose now through any frowardness would break Master Drake his noble heart and send me into a decline."

"Hush!" returned Dennis, in a voice equally low. "List to the church bells, Amos, and the clatter of the hammers. Does it not mind you of home—the church on the cliff, and the busy carpenters in the docks below? My soul yearns for home, Amos."

"Ay, and so do I. But I would fain return home with full hands—money enough to buy a little fishing craft, and a cottage by the sea. 'Tis five year and more since I sailed in the *Jesus* out of Plimworth Sound, and there was Margery Tutt a-waving her little handkercher to me, thinking, poor soul, to see me again within a twelvemonth. And I warrant the pretty maid counted the days and went to every wedden in church, to larn the fearsome promises word by word, so that she might not fail when we should come to stand afore holy pa'son. 'With all my worldly goods I thee endow': so it runs for the man to say, and here I be, five year after, with not so much worldly goods as I had then, saving some few pearls; and I warrant some knavish land-lubber has come along and snatched up my little Margery, and I'll find her a bowerly 'ooman that has clean forgot poor Haymoss Turnpenny. Ah me! I be sick of adventures, be jowned if I bean't."

"Be of good cheer, Amos. If Fortune stand our friend, we shall have more gold and silver than we can bear away before this night be ended; and then Master Drake will sail away home, and who knows?—Margery may be looking for you even yet. 'Twas seven years that Jacob served for Rachel."

"Ay, but always within arm's length. I warrant he kept an eye on the wench. There was never a thousand leagues of sea betwixt him and the maid. Od-rat-en, if I find Margery have changed her name with any lubberly chaw-bacon, dang me if I don't deal en a clout he'll remember, good-now, I will."

Turnpenny relapsed into silence, brooding on his melancholy forebodings.

It was the night of March 31. Some forty men lay in the scrub overlooking Nombre de Dios, awaiting the clang of mule-bells that would announce the approach of a treasure train from Venta Cruz. Half of them were French, for a week or two before, as Drake and his men were sportively pitching stones at the land crabs on the beach, a ship came down from the west, whose captain proved to be a French Huguenot named Le Testu, with a company of some seventy men and boys. They were perishing for want of water. Having obtained from Drake, ever generous to adventurers like himself, the supplies they needed, they prepared to join themselves to him, in the hope of obtaining some share of Spanish gold.

Drake hesitated to admit the Frenchmen to a partnership, for he had but thirty-one men left, and feared that the seventy would claim too large a portion of the booty if his projected attack on the mule-train should succeed. But the matter was compromised by Captain Le Testu joining Drake with twenty men. These, with fifteen Englishmen and a few maroons, sailed in two of Drake's pinnaces for the mouth of the Francisco river, fifteen miles from Nombre de Dios. The rest of the company were left at a secret spot in charge of one Richard Doble. When the river mouth was made, Drake sent a few maroons back with the pinnaces, ordering them to remain in hiding with Doble and to return in four days' time to take off the adventurers.

Dennis and Turnpenny were among those who accompanied Drake in the *Minion*. They had won great praise from him for their exploits in Maiden Isle and their capture of the Spanish ship, whose stores of food and ammunition were very welcome. The damage to the pinnace was speedily repaired, Drake saying with a laugh that had she been rendered unseaworthy he would have pinioned Dennis between decks and kept him there until they dropped anchor in Plymouth Sound.

The adventurers were encamped on rising ground above the town. Taking a lesson from the previous failure, the men spoke in the lowest of whispers, even though they were a mile away from the track. All through the night they heard the clatter of hammers from the bay, where the Spanish shipwrights, avoiding the heat of the day, were preparing the ships of the treasure fleet for sea. The ambuscaders were grimly resolved that the cargoes should be less by the weight of a good many tons of silver and gold.

The hours passed too slowly for the impatient adventurers. But at length, a little before dawn, they heard a faint tinkle of bells afar in the woods, and soon the maroon scouts came in with the news that three trains, numbering nearly two hundred mules in all, were approaching from Venta Cruz. Such good fortune was unlooked for; and

though the scouts reported that the trains were escorted by soldiers, not a man gave a thought to the odds against them. Instantly they all seized their calivers and bows and arrows, and hastened to the trackway, where, as before, they posted themselves in the long grass on either side.

On came the mules, their bells jangling and clanging in musical discord. In the grass lurked the raiders, silent—though Turnpenny gave Dennis a nudge and whispered, "'Tis All Fools' Day!" Suddenly there sounded a blast from Drake's whistle; the men started up, and, sending a volley of bullets and arrows at the Spanish infantrymen that guarded the convoy, made straight for the heads of the leading mules. Nothing loath to rest a while, the mules behind lay down contentedly on the ground. But the soldiers, who had blown on their matches as they marched, to keep them alight, rallied in a group and fired back at the assailants. A maroon was killed outright: Captain Le Testu fell seriously wounded; but the rest, kneeling down and supporting their weapons on the prostrate mules, briskly returned the fire; then, springing up before the enemy could reload, charged upon them with fierce cries and drove them helter-skelter towards the town. Immediately afterwards two men came rushing up to Turnpenny.

"Be jowned if it bean't Billy Hawk and fat Baltizar!" he cried in astonishment. "Oh Billy, poor soul, what a scarecrow 'ee do look! Get out, you jelly!" he cried to Baltizar, speeding him with a kick. "You be fat as butter; all is well with 'ee; get 'ee to the town after your masters, and thank God your oily carcass be not left to fatten the land.—Billy, dear heart, what hath happed to thee?"

Hawk told his story while Turnpenny and the other seamen, selecting the mules that bore the heaviest loads, with nimble fingers cast off their packs, unstrapped them, and helped themselves to the precious contents—bars and quoits of solid gold, and silver uncountable. He had followed Biddle and the other mutineers in the hope of persuading them to return to their duty; but they had soon fallen upon him, robbed him of his bag of pearls, and left him bound in the forest. There he had been found by some fugitives from the routed Spaniards, who carried him to their vessel, and conveyed him to Nombre de Dios. Believing him to be one of Drake's men, they tortured him to make him confess where his captain's secret haven was, which he stedfastly refused to do; and since then he had been kept in slavery, drudging as a muleteer between Nombre de Dios and Panama.

"God be praised we have found 'ee!" cried Turnpenny. "You shall come back with us, and I'll give 'ee a share of all my treasure."

The raiders did up in bundles and bestowed about their persons as much as they could stagger under, and set to work to bury what they could not carry in the burrows of landcrabs and under the great trunks of fallen trees. For two hours they toiled on; then, hearing the clatter of hoofs from the direction of the town, they seized their booty and made off to the woods. Up came a troop of horse; but when they reached the mules they halted, for they heard in the woods the "Yo peho!" of the maroons, and shrank from engaging those terrible forest fighters. Staggering under the weight of their treasure, the raiders tramped with what haste they might through the jungle. They had not gone far when Captain Le Testu lay down groaning; weak from loss of blood, he could go no farther. Two of his men volunteered to stay with him, and help him on after he had rested. The others hurried on, and after struggling through the forest for two days and nights, drenched by terrible rainstorms, burnt black by the torrid heat, reached their landing-place on the bank of the Francisco River.

It was four days since they had left it; the pinnaces should have been there awaiting them; but not a sign of them met their hungry eyes. Instead, seven Spanish pinnaces were observed rowing from the island, where the maroons had been ordered to shelter with Richard Doble. The drenched and footsore raiders were aghast. Had their enemies captured the pinnaces, and slain their comrades? Were they to be imprisoned in this swampy jungle, with no means of sailing or rowing away to Fort Diego? Loud murmurs, cries of despair, curses at being deserted, broke from the seamen. They cried out that they were betrayed; that the Spaniards would fall on them and overwhelm them; that they would never see home again. Drake expostulated with them; the maroons offered to lead them the sixteen days' journey overland, and promised, if the ships proved indeed to be taken, to give them shelter in their villages. But the men cried out the more; some threw down the treasure they had dared so much to win; some began to cry out against their leader himself.

Then Drake showed the stuff of which he was made.

"Silence, you knaves!" he cried. "Am I any whit better off than you? Is this a time to yield to craven fear? Nay, but rather to pluck up heart and play the man. If the Spaniards have in truth taken our pinnaces, which God forbid,

yet they must have time to search them, time to examine the mariners, and, if they compel them by torture to confess where our ships are, time to execute their resolution after it is determined. Before all these times be taken, we may get to our ships if ye will. We may not hope to go by land, for that the journey is too long and the ways too foul. But we may surely go by water. Look at the trees here rolling down upon the flood, thrown down by the storms that beset us so sorely. May we not build ourselves a raft, and put ourselves to sea? I will be one; who will be the others?"

"That will I," said Dennis, stepping forward.

"And I too, good-now," cried Turnpenny.

"Nay, Master Hazelrig, you I will leave to command these timid rascals if ill befall me; but Amos I will take, and go fetch those laggard pinnaces."

Then the maroons, taking hands and forming into a line, stepped into the river and intercepted the trees as they came down on the torrent. With their hatchets they lopped off the branches; they bound the trunks together with leathern thongs taken from the mules, and with tendrils of creepers from the jungle. A stout sapling was reared as a mast, and with his own hands Turnpenny rigged up a biscuit sack for a sail, and fashioned a crutch in which another sapling might serve as a rudder. The raft being now ready, Drake selected two of the Frenchmen who could swim well to accompany him and Turnpenny. The four men stepped on to the frail craft, and as she was hauled off over the bar at the river mouth, Drake cried out:

"Be of good cheer, my hearts. If it please God I put my foot in safety aboard my frigate, I shall, God willing, by one means or other get ye all aboard, in despite of all the Spaniards in the Indies."

And the seamen, with new hope born within their breasts, sped their gallant captain with a cheer.

"My heart, 'twas a fearsome voyage!" said Turnpenny, relating the adventure to Dennis afterwards. "We sat inches deep in water, holding on for very life, and the sea came tumbling aboard, swingeing us to the armpits at every surge of the waves. We scudded along before the wind, but though 'twas strong, it scarce tempered the great heat; and what with the parching of the sun, and what with the beating of the salt water, we had all of us our skins much fretted away. We had sailed for six hours, and were making our third league, when God gave us the sight of two pinnaces bearing towards us. 'God be praised!' cried our captain; 'there is now no cause to fear.' But the sky was become dark, and the men on the pinnaces as they laboured towards us, the wind driving the spray into their eyes, did not perceive us; and the gale being exceedingly fierce, they bore up to the lee of a point of land, and vanished from our sight. Whereupon our captain ran ashore to windward of the headland, and being mightily enraged for that the knaves had not obeyed his command to wait us at the river, he was minded to play a trick on them and turn their hearts sick with very fear. So when we did land, we ran in great haste towards where the pinnaces were at anchor, making such speed as if we had been chased by the enemy. My heart! their eyes were astare with fear when they espied us. They hauled us aboard their boats, crying out, this one and that, 'Where be our comrades?' 'How fares it with them?' and other such questions, to all which our Captain in a cold voice did answer only 'Well!' Whereupon they began to lament with tears, crying out that verily their dear comrades were dead or in captivity.

"Our captain for a space looked sternly upon them in their misery. But then, being willing to rid all doubts and fill them with joy, he took from out his shirt a quoit of gold, and bade them praise God, for their comrades were safe and had of that treasure enough and for all. Then he commanded them to get their anchors up, for that he was resolved that very night to come back to the river. And we rowed hard through the darkness and in the teeth of the gale, and here we be, with blistered skins indeed, but sound men and hearty."

Dennis had collected the men on the shore, and built a fire to keep their spirits up. With great joy they heard their comrades hailing them as the vessels came up out of the dark, and they begged Drake's forgiveness for their mutinous murmurs. As soon as day dawned they embarked; the pinnaces ran before the wind, picked up Richard Doble in his frigate, and before noon arrived safely at Port Diego. The treasure was carried on shore, and in the middle of the smooth open space, amidst cries of wonderment from those who had not had a part in the adventure, Drake weighed the gold and silver on the steward's meat-scales, delivering to the Frenchmen the half agreed upon. These then sailed away westward, to get news of their ill-fated captain.

Drake was not easy in mind about Le Testu. It was pitiful to think of him wounded and left with only two of his men deep in the woods. So while his vessel, the *Pascha*, too foul to be easily fitted for the voyage home, was being stripped to equip the Spanish frigate Dennis had captured, he prepared to lead an expedition in search of the French Captain. But his men raised such an outcry at his leaving them that he gave the command to Oxnam, contenting himself with accompanying them to the Francisco River.

Oxnam had not gone far up stream when a haggard figure emerged tottering from the reeds, and falling on his knees, burst into tears and thanked God that help had come. Not many minutes after Drake had left him and his comrade with Captain Le Testu, some Spanish arquebusiers came upon them. The Captain bade the two men flee, and they ran off in haste, carrying their treasure. But the Spaniards gave chase, and this man, fearing that, burdened as he was, he must be overtaken, flung away his possessions one after another. Among them was a box of jewels, and this his comrade, cupidity getting the better of his fear, stopped to pick up. The delay was fatal. He was caught and carried away with the captain. The other fugitive was not farther pursued; he reached the river after wandering for several days, during which he had seen a great host of near two thousand Spaniards and negroes searching for the treasure that had been buried.

Hearing this, Oxnam was not willing to return until he had seen whether anything was left. The Spaniards had dug up the ground over nearly a square mile; but Oxnam found in the crab-holes a small quantity of gold, with silver weighing about five hundred pounds. Loaded with this, his men returned to their pinnace, and came merrily back to Port Diego.

Now all thoughts turned longingly homewards. The value of the treasure taken from the Spaniards was near £50,000, and it was not to be supposed that so great a loss would be accepted by them with equanimity. Before long ships of war would doubtless be fitted out to punish this audacious sea-rover who had made himself a terror throughout the Main, and Drake thought it but prudent to get away with his booty before his little band was overwhelmed. He still needed a vessel to serve as victualler to the frigate in which he purposed to sail for England. With his usual daring he set off for the mouth of the Grande river, running right under the guns of Cartagena. In the middle of the night he chased and boarded a frigate that endeavoured to slip past him to the west, and, returning to his secret haven with his prize, he unloaded her cargo of maize, hens, hogs, and wild honey, and prepared for the voyage home.

All hands were set to break up the pinnaces, which had been brought in sections from England and were now, after a year's sailing, past further service. Their timbers were burned on the beach; their ironwork was given to the maroons. The two Spanish frigates were overhauled, their keels cleared of barnacles, their spars and rigging put in good repair, their holds filled with a plentiful store of food. Then, when all was ready, Drake invited Pedro, the maroon chief, and three of his best men to choose some reward for their good and loyal services. Pedro took a great fancy to a splendid scimitar which had been given to Drake by Captain Le Testu and had once belonged to the King of France. Drake would rather he had chosen something else, but he handed over the weapon with a good grace, and accompanied it with a present of silk and fine cloth for the maroons' wives. Pedro was so much delighted that he begged Drake to accept four wedges of gold in return, which the Captain threw into the common stock, saying it was only just that those who had shared with him the dangers and hardships of the adventures should share also in the full profits.

Dennis did not part from Juan without giving him a token of his thanks and a memento of their common adventures. He had lost almost all that he had saved from the *Maid Marian*; with the *Mirandola* it had fallen into the hands of the Spaniards; and the division of the spoils of the mule-train would not be made until they reached Plymouth. But he had always kept the sword of Sir Martin Blunt, and this he gave to Juan, who received it with great satisfaction.

On the 17th of July the company went aboard the two frigates; the anchors were heaved, all sail was set, and the little craft stood out to sea. The flag of St. George flew at their maintops; silk streamers and ensigns dipped down to the water; a parting salute was fired; the trumpeters blew a blast; and the English mariners shouted a farewell cheer to the maroons gathered on the beach. Down in the hold lay Jan Biddle, repenting in darkness, it is to be hoped, his treacherous conduct. He alone of the company had no treasure to rejoice in; Drake had sternly decreed that he should go home empty-handed, a prisoner throughout the long voyage.

High up in the rigging sat a monkey, blinking and chattering, wondering perhaps into what further perils his

adventurous master would lead him.

"There is our Maiden Isle," said Dennis to Turnpenny, as they sailed merrily northward. "My vice-royalty was but brief; and methinks 'tis but a poor jewel in the crown of Queen Bess. Yet will it be a precious jewel in my memory, for there I found a true friend in thee, Amos, and we two have been enabled by God's providence to do somewhat for our countrymen in distress."

"Good-now, Master Hazelrig," said Drake, coming up to them; "art wishing to return and set up a monarchy on yonder small isle?"

"Nay, sir, it is already bespoke for our gracious queen, though meseems the sovereignty belongs rightly to Mirandola, who now sits aloft, with a most forlorn and wistful look."

"Well, my lad, maybe you and I shall live to see Her Majesty's sway extend over all these islands, and far beyond. Meantime, what think 'ee is my dearest wish at this moment?"

"I know not, sir."

"Why," said Drake, with a smile, "'tis to bowl at the jack once more on Plymouth Hoe."

Conclusion

Little more than three weeks later, on Sunday, August 9, 1573, about noon, the congregation in St. Andrew's church at Plymouth was startled into wakefulness by the booming of guns. The vicar was in the midst of his sermon, and the good people were torn between their desire not to offend the worthy parson and their longing to see what was happening at the harbour. A few minutes passed; then a whisper began to run through the church: "Master Drake is home again!" One looked at another; anxious eyes were cast at the high pews where the gentry sat; then, careless what squire or parson might think, by ones and twos and threes the people stole from the church, and, when once outside, set off running with all their might to the harbour. And before they got there a merry peal of bells rang out behind them. The ringers in the belfry, knowing, we must suppose, that their vicar was an easy man, a patriot, and a Devonian to boot, were handling the ropes most lustily.

The two little frigates had just dropped anchor, and the men were putting off in boats. On shore men shouted, women wept and waved handkerchiefs, boys yelled and dodged among their elders; but nobody minded hustling and knocks, for was not Master Drake home again? Deafening cheers rent the air as he landed; hundreds thronged around him to clasp his hand.

"Good-now, dear friends," he said with a laugh as he passed through: "ye'll do me more hurt than the Spaniards ever did."

"Huzzay! huzzay! Spaniards be jowned! What have 'ee got in thikky ships, Master Drake?"

"Where be Bobby Pike?" cried a buxom dame with half a dozen children clinging to her skirts.

"Here I be, Mally," cried the seaman, catching her in his arms, "and i'fecks, I'll be sober for ever more, my lass."

"On my soul and body there be Ned Whiddon, and Tom Copstone, and Hugh Curder, and Billy Hawk!" cried several voices in the crowd. "Huzzay! huzzay! we never thought to see 'ee more."

"And Haymoss Turnpenny! Od's my life, what a day for Margery Tutt!"

And when Dennis, with Mirandola on his shoulder, returning glance for glance with interest, got clear of the press, he saw Amos marching along with a girl on each arm, his ruddy face beaming like the rising sun.

"Why, Amos," said Dennis, "are there two Margerys?"

"My heart, I know a score!" cried Amos. "But this be Margery Tutt, sir, thikky wench on my left. Loose my arm, lass, and drop a curtsey to Master Hazelrig, for 'ithout him I'd never have been here this day. She've waited for me, sir, bided single for my sake, and there's no landlubber to whop after all. T'other wench be Tom Copstone's Joan; his mother's most terrible jealous, and she've got a hold of Tom now; so 'You and me, Haymoss!' he sings out, and I've got his Joan under convoy till the old 'ooman 's done a-kissing of him. Margery, lass, if 'ee be willing, I'll go up along and see pa'son this very day and ax en to call us next Sunday, for I've gold and silver and pearls, lass, and won't they become your little plum neck! Master Hazelrig, I do pity 'ee, I do so. Bean't there a lass to welcome 'ee? Good-now, bear up, for 'ee be but a stripling yet."

And then he was borne away by the crowd, and Dennis saw him no more that day.

Dennis found himself, when the treasure was divided, the possessor of £2,000 in money in addition to the pearls he had got at Fort Aguila. He devoted a goodly sum to the erection of a monument in his parish church to the memory of Sir Martin Blunt and the other adventurers who had sailed in the *Maid Marian* eighteen months before. A smaller amount sufficed for a stone over the grave of Mirandola, who died in the following winter. The greater part of the money Dennis gave into the hands of John Holles, his steward, who received it with all due gravity, expressing the hope that his young master had had his fill of adventuring and would now remain at home.

For a time Dennis was content to live in his rambling old house at Shaston. But four years later, learning that Drake was fitting out five ships for a voyage round the world, he asked to be allowed to join the expedition at his own charge. His offer was accepted, and he shared in the joys and sorrows, the failures and successes, of that three years' voyage. With closer intercourse he admired the great Captain more and more; and Drake on his part came to regard him with peculiar affection. During the five years spent on shore after his return, Sir Francis, as he now was, paid many visits to the house at Shaston, and often played bowls with Dennis on the lawn behind.

In 1585, when Drake went out to the West Indies with a direct commission from the Queen, Dennis was of his company. He was one of the first to enter the town of St. Domingo when it was assaulted; and in the subsequent attack on Cartagena he was seriously wounded. To his great disappointment, he had not fully recovered in time to take part in the famous expedition to Cadiz, when Drake "singed the King of Spain's beard." But next year, when all England was stirred at the news that the long-expected Armada was at last approaching, Dennis joined Drake on the *Revenge*, and had his part in the work of fighting in the Channel and the North Sea.

At the conclusion of this year Dennis, now in his thirty-fourth year, married the daughter of a neighbouring squire. Her name happened to be Margery. Soon after the marriage Dennis took her to Plymouth on a visit to his old comrade Amos Turnpenny, who was now blest with a family of five boys and five girls.

"Do 'ee mind, sir," said Amos with a twinkling eye—"do 'ee mind the day when we landed, and you axed me whether there were two Margerys? Seems as if there be, sir; ay, and more; your madam be one, and my 'ooman be two, and my darter yonder be three, and Tom Copstone's darter be four, and I shouldn't be mazed if there was five some day. 'A good name,' says the Book, 'is rayther to be chosen than great riches.' Margery be a good name, to be sure—a better name than Mirandola, poor fond beast! Next to Margery comes *Anne Gallant*, and that be my second darter yonder."

Dennis Hazelrig became a man of weight in his county. His wife and little daughter—the fifth Margery—dissuaded him from joining Drake and Hawkins in their fatal expedition to the Main in 1594, and he found an outlet for his energies in organizing the yeomanry of Devon.

When James the First came to the throne Dennis received the honour of knighthood. None of his old friends was more delighted than Amos Turnpenny, who was by this time nearly eighty, and a hale old grandfather.

"Ay, I says to Tom Copstone when I heard the news, 'Tom,' says I, 'we've a king again now, my lad, though by all I hear tell he bean't so proper a man as King Hal. But he do have his good points too. What be fust thing 'ee done, think 'ee?' 'Be jowned if I know,' says Tom. (He do have common ways o' speech, poor soul!) 'Why, 'fecks,' says I,

'he bin and made Master Hazelrig a noble knight, and we must call en Sir Dennis to's face for ever more.' 'Well,' says Tom, 'we won't mind that,—night or day,' says he—'you and me, Haymoss?' And be jowned if they were not the very words of my dream!"

[The end of With Drake on the Spanish Main by Ely, George Herbert]