

THE SAUCIEST BOY IN THE SERVICE

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Title: The Sauciest Boy in the Service
A Story of Pluck and Perseverance

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Release Date: October 01, 2017 [eBook #55663]

Language: English

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THE SERVICE ***

Produced by Al Haines.

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"Knives glittered, and the two were in deadly embrace." (Page 68.)

THE SAUCIEST BOY IN THE SERVICE

A Story of Pluck and
Perseverance

By

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"In a Great White Land," etc., etc.*

COLOURED ILLUSTRATIONS BY HENRY AUSTIN

WARD, LOCK & CO., LIMITED
LONDON, MELBOURNE AND TORONTO
1911

PREFACE

Boys' books do not really need a preface. I only write a line or two to say my "Sauciest Boy" is a character drawn from real life.

Most of the adventures are from experiences of my own.

Scenery all painted from Nature, seascapes, cloudscapes and landscapes, with the glamour of old ocean over all.

W. GORDON-STABLES THE JUNGLE, TWYFORD, BERKS.

TO
LADY ANNE

CONTENTS

CHAP.

- I The Glamour of the Ocean
- II Kep was Gone
- III "Any Spot on Earth is a Home for the Brave"
- IV In Search of a Ship
- V The Ship "Macbeth"—Horrible Mutiny
- VI The Hurricane—Crusoes in Great Snake Island
- VII Sunken Gold—Jack's Career in Sidney
- VIII A Breezy Ship, a Breezy Captain, and a Breezy Crew
- IX Through the Hawse Hole
- X The Broadsword—Men of the Breezy—Kep Cuts off a Leg
- XI On the "Scout"
- XII A Startling Adventure in the Woods—The Chief's Plot
- XIII Preparing for the Fight
- XIV Within a Yard of them lay poor Fisher's Head
- XV The Attack upon the Barracoon
- XVI Poor Bungle! Just let him Sleep
- XVII The Midget Fleet—Bombardment—Fearful Scenes
- XVIII Furious Fighting on Sea and Land
- XIX Kep Commands a Dhow—A Deposed Sultan
- XX "That Bar of Gold was Stolen from Me," Said Kep
- XXI Tragedy on an Island—A Cannibal Witch
- XXII In Slumbering Woods—Kep Captured by Savages
- XXIII Fierce Fighting with the Cannibals
- XXIV "Good Heavens, this is my Sister Madge!"
- XXV A Great Ocean Race—"Goddard began to Shoot"
- XXVI Something Extraordinary Happened
- XXVII The Home-Coming of the Sauciest Boy

CHAPTER I

THE GLAMOUR OF THE OCEAN

There were few things that gave Kep Drummond more real pleasure than the graphic little descriptions of sea-scapes which occurred every here and there in the boys' stories he read. He knew the true from the false, and avoided tales by authors who had probably never been further from shore than one could pitch a biscuit.

Oh, if ever the glamour of old ocean had got right round a lad's heart and altered all his life and thoughts, that lad was Kep Drummond. The passages he chiefly delighted in were those that seemed to bring the scene right up before the boy's mind's eye, like pictures from a magic lantern. Though but little over fourteen years of age, he had a wonderful imagination and was full to the brim with the poetry of true feeling. *En rapport*, in fact, with all that is charming in nature, part and parcel of all the life and love he could see around him on such a sunny summer's day as that on which I now present him for the first time to my readers' notice.

Seated he is on the high and grassy top of a rocky cliff that beetles over what he calls his own sea, because the land all around here belongs to his father. Those tremendous rocks are the guardians of his father's Cornish estate. Behind him stretch wild moorlands and rising hills, while down below—peeping over the greenery of elm woods—red rise the turrets of what the boy knows as home.

But he leans his back against a hillock of tasseled turf, and opens a book; and as he reads his thoughts, his dreams, fly straight away through space, six thousand miles and over to the sylvan-bound silver sands of the Indian Ocean. And this is what he is reading: "How windless and warm it is! One's shoes take up the pitch and soil the ivory-white quarter-deck. We are only a gun-boat, but there isn't a yard-arm one inch out of the square, a rope's end uncoiled, nor a capstan bar awry; the wood work scintillates, the brass work shines like burnished gold, and our guns have the shimmer of papier maché. But our men to-day all look fagged and lazy. They are sun-weary. Yet every Jack amongst them is as neatly dressed as if he were about to take part in a nautical opera.

"The water round the ship, which is lying at anchor, is clearer to-day than

gum copal. Five fathoms beneath we can see the bottom well; see the coral rocks, see patches of coral sand and the ever waving mysterious-looking seaweed, the home of crustaceans black or blue and grey, and of curious fishes that glide and dart, clad in every colour of the rainbow.

"Nearer the surface are scores and scores of splendid medusæ or jelly-fishes; under their waving limbs glint and radiate rubies, emeralds and sapphires. On this brightest day of tropical sunshine they float lazily along with the tide, but they are perilously near to the shore, and hundreds will be stranded on the beach. Many a little azure nautilus or 'Portuguese man o' war' sails hither and thither on the gently-heaving waves.

"Seawards, if we look, the ocean's breast is flecked and patched with tender graze greens and with opal tints, but towards the horizon it is as blue as the sky itself. Landwards, in long white lines, the breakers roll in on the snow-white sands that are at present all but deserted by both negro and Somali, who will sleep in the shadows till the sun sinks lower and lower and kisses the sea good-night. Yonder are the silvery house-blocks of Zanzibar, but the flags on the various consulates droop listlessly roofwards, and our own white ensign is almost trailing in the waters astern."

Kep closes the book, closes his eyes, too, but he is not going to sleep, but only just to day-dream, and his long brown fingers keeps the place for him.

There is the thunder of waves beneath the cliffs leaping lion-like on the black and weed-trailed rocks; there is the scream of the British sea-mew too, and the long lorn wail of many another sea-bird that floats all day 'twixt sky and sea. They are all the boy's friends and favourites, and when at morn or noon he dashes into the water and breasts the billows far off the shore, they fly friendly around his head, or float so white and near he might almost touch their paddling feet.

The glamour of the ocean!

Yes, and all things of the ocean that he has ever seen or read about appeal to Kep. Realities, I mean. He thinks himself a man, and would be ashamed to recite "The boy stood on the burning deck." That was sheer nonsense. Why could he not have leapt into the blue bosom of kindly Mother Ocean? That is what Kep would have done. Some of the folk lore of the sea, however, still enamoured him. He wanted to believe, or liked to believe, there were real mermaids and sirens also, that sung by night on the rocks of fairy islands to lure the unsuspecting mariners to their doom.

But there were real sea-poems, that night after night in his turret chamber among the elm trees he loved to fall asleep thinking about.

Well for Kep Drummond, I ween, that he had such little sea-poems to call upon, especially during the long dark nights of winter, for he was a somewhat

excitable brainful boy. His chamber was an eerie one, but he had chosen it himself chiefly for that very eeriness. After bidding his father good-night and kissing Madge, his sister, and her pet Newfoundland, Bounder, he had to climb high, high up the winding stone stairs. There was said to be a ghost at Martello Castle, as the place was called, and if by any chance you had met the pensive dark-eyed boy, candle in hand, in the narrow stairway, you might have been somewhat startled.

The room itself was not large, and it was round. Kep's hammock was slung at one end near to two long narrow windows, and in winter time the leafless fingers of the elm-trees had an uncanny way of tapping on the panes. There were no blinds to these windows, because the boy liked to see out when skies were clear and stars shone, or the moon glinted laughingly through the branches.

One night as Kep was going to bed he met old Elspet coming down. A faithful old retainer she, but to-night her eyes were round and glassy, and the very flaps of her mob-cap seemed to have been stiffened with fear.

"Go not up, Keppie, darling; there is that in your room no boy should see!"

"Oh, if it is the ghost," cried Kep, "here's a boy who does want to see it, badly."

She tried to hold him. "It was a white face glaring in through the black, dark window!" she hissed. But Kep was off. She might as well have tried to restrain an eel.

The window was dark certainly, and yonder sure enough was the white face.

No ghost though, only the wondering eyes of a great white owl that often came to see the boy, for he laid up a little store of meat for this strange visitor, and sometimes a dead mouse or rat.

"It's you, is it?" said Kep, throwing open the casement. "Come in, Bob, and have your supper."

And Bob did. He ate and seemed thankful, and then spread his great white wings and flew out into the night and the darkness, taking the largest piece of meat with him.

As, like a true manly boy, Kep slept with open windows, and didn't put his light out until he had done reading by his small table, great bats often flew in, and did not leave until the candle was extinguished. Then seeing a distant star perhaps, they flew out towards that.

In this turret chamber Kep was high above the rookery, and could in February look down into the nests. But the birds all knew Kep.

When the boy tired of reading, then he crept into bed. He said his prayers, repeated some Latin hymns to himself, and soon after that—the sea-poems. One after another these sea-poems of his used to spread themselves out before him, and indeed he seemed part and parcel of the poem itself, and is it any wonder

that he should go to sleep right in the middle of one of them, the waking thoughts merging into delightful sea, seldom terrifying, dreams, and these into the sweetest, soundest kind of sleep that any young lad e'er enjoyed.

Mermaids were not realities. They belonged to the folk-lore of the ocean. Yet there were some nights he used to delight to dwell with them in their diamond-lit caves far down among the brown trailing sea-weed. He would imagine their revels and mingle with sea-fairies in their gladsome dances, or sit on rocks full fifty fathoms deep with strange wee water babies, listening to their stories or telling them stories of his own. Meanwhile there would be music everywhere in those fairy submarine gardens, for even the floating sea-weed emitted sweet sounds; the very sand was musical, and from under rocks or from caves came the songs of the sea-folk and the tinkle of lutes. And down there the mermaid peoples dwelt and would dwell ever and ever and ever, always, always happy and gay.

But the scene is changed—it is another sea-poem, but true, and tells its own story of the wonders of the mighty deep. For sailors who had been to the far-off northern seas had told him that oft-times when the ship was becalmed in a lonely expanse of ocean, mayhap a thousand miles wide, a solitary whale would be sighted, rising and falling on the sea's dark bosom, but heading steadily southwards, never varying a single point. What guided the lonesome leviathan? What story had it to tell could it but speak? Had it no friends? Had the great beast been deserted by all it had loved, and was it, with the sorrow of night at its heart, moving, sailing, plunging southwards and southwards, reckless, forsaken, unheeding, to be stranded on a reef and to die?

Mother Carey's chickens, the stormy petrels, were another sea-poem to Kep. He could see in his mind's eye the rise and fall of the stern of a big black ship, the quickly obliterated wake, the spume of a wind-tortured ocean, and across and across, darting over, darting under, these mysterious chips of darkness, the petrels, and he could hear their quick sharp shriek—was it a song or was it a wail? Did it portend joy to the crew, or sorrow and a sailor's grave? Bird of mystery! Ah, yes, but what a poem!

A shoal of porpoises. They seemed always busy always merry—diving, gambolling around a ship on voyage. Then dashing off again or disappearing over the horizon, followed by blessings from the seamen for the luck they always bring.

These are but samples of this strange boy's sea-poems. He would hear many more before he left his teens.

But now on the grassy cliff-top, Kep sits up once more and continues his story. Not for very long, however, because over the cliff-top yonder, or from, some part of the precipice itself, he can hear a young voice hailing him. Then

two great black paws, like those of a bear, claw at the cliff-brink. There is a serious black face with a long pink tongue and flashing ivory teeth between these paws, and, dropping his book, Kep dashes forward and at some risk to himself seizes Bounder's collar and brings the noble fellow to bank.

Then, facing the sea, the dog stands up to bark at Kep and towards the cliff.

"Poor Madge is down yonder," he seems to say. "Aren't you going to help her up also?"

But wild Madge needs no help. Next minute, with her lustrous black eyes a-sparkle, her cheeks aglow with exercise and pleasure, she stands beside her brother.

"It was a feat of rare daring, I suppose," she said, laughing, "and father will scold when I tell him. But Bounder is a poor cragsman, and I had to help him half the way."

Tall for her age—sixteen—hair and eyes as dark as night, an Italian night, and she was half Italian, ripe parted lips that showed even teeth as white as Bounder's, Madge Drummond was really a beautiful girl. Slender, though round in features, and with garments that draped naturally to her shapely limbs.

Kep saw little of all this. He only saw his big sister Madge and Bounder. And he felt but like a baby beside her.

"So you ran away from us, Kep," she said.

"Ran away to read, Madge."

"Well, come back from the cliff and sit down. I've had enough of that, and so has Bounder. And what have you been reading? Oh, a sea-story. Well, I like those, too, but I love a school-story with a somewhat naughty girl in it better."

It was the most natural thing in the world that Kep should slip his hand into Madge's and be led back to his seat.

"Well," she said a little later on, in answer to a remark of Kep's, "we are both of us sailors already. Haven't we been everywhere in father's yacht? Haven't we lived in sunny Italy, more on its waters than on shore? Have we not lived in France and Spain, and in Algiers itself? Father would let you go anywhere in his yacht, Kep, but you don't want to leave our father's Cornish home. Oh, I should miss you so. There would be nobody but me and Bounder and old nurse Elspet. Bounder is sympathetic, and sits and listens to my stories and licks my cheek or ear now and then, to show he understands. Ah! Kep, if you run away from home as you want to, I'd miss our mother more and more. I'd want to go back and sit and sing on her grave to keep her company."

Kep was silent for a short spell. His eyes were turned towards the horizon, his thoughts were far beyond it.

Oh, that glamour of the ocean!

When he spoke again it was more to himself than to his sister Madge.

"Yes, I must go to sea. Father will not send me. But they call me!"

"Who calls you?"

"The spirits that ride on the clouds, spirits of the wind and the waves. The sea itself is calling me now—listen to its friendly boom. It is the waves that speak. 'You are son of ours,' they are crying. 'Come to us. Come to us.' And the wild mews; Madge, hear you not their voices? 'Come—come—away—away—away—ay!'"

* * * * *

Slowly down the glen, hand in hand, sister and brother, to Martello Castle, and across the Martello lawns, but the lad's mind is made up. Kep will be a sailor.

CHAPTER II

KEP WAS GONE

Far round the point yonder, though it could not be seen even from the cliff top, was a town, an old-fashioned seaport, into which even big ships often came for shelter, such times as the sea-birds flew far inland. A town of narrow streets and quaintly gabled houses, a town that smelt of tar from end to end, and a beach with boats and broad-beamed fishermen who wore jerseys or baggy breeches and braces only, sou'-westers, and the everlasting short pipes that they leaned against post or pillar to smoke.

These seafaring folk looked lazy, dreamy and very quiet in manner, yet never were they afraid to face the stormiest billows on the stormiest of nights if danger or duty called. There was the might of Old England and its daring and pride of pluck in their half-shut eyes, and this only wanted waking. In the season, a signal from a hill would set them all astir like a swarming hive of bees. The mackerel or pilchards had been spotted in silvery millions, and if the French themselves had been threatening a landing, the stir and commotion could scarce have been more.

Kep Drummond loved that old town. There was the odour of brine about it. Sometimes, I must admit, even the odour of unburied fish that might have been better out of the way; but still a run over to Marshton to yarn with the fisher-folk was always a most pleasant trip for the boy.

The fishermen idolized him, so did their honest, rough and witty wives,

because Kep possessed the power of making them laugh at will. That is at his will, they had to laugh whether they willed it or not. There was not much about a ship of any kind that Kep wasn't up to long before he was fourteen. One might therefore have dubbed him a sailor born, and not been very far wrong.

But Kep had another reason for visiting Marshston, and that lay in the fact that here he met men of many various nations, and delighted in talking to them in their own languages.

Apart from his marvellous musical powers, he had one great gift, namely, that of language. To say nothing of English, French, Italian and Spanish, he could converse in several other tongues, and could pick up almost any language in an incredibly short time.

My own opinion is that music and the gift of tongues go hand in hand, and that they are far more common in foreign European countries than they are in Britain. Iverach Drummond, the children's father, was a true type of the wealthy Scotsman, and of the wandering Scot. One of the best yachtsmen who ever trod on the weather side of a quarter-deck, his devotion to travel took him everywhere, and when he got married to a noble Italian lady, for her sweet sake he bought the estates of Martello, so that she might be as near to the Mediterranean as possible.

Madge and Kep had been born here, but hitherto had been educated by worthy priests at their grandfather's home on the shores of the blue Levant.

When his wife died Drummond was inconsolable. He seemed to care no more for yachting, because at sea everything spoke to him of that gentle lady and mother of his children who had always been by his side in fair weather or in foul.

He was, at the commencement of this story, as handsome a specimen of the true Highlander as one could wish to see. But honourable, strict, and sternly religious. He had, moreover, that pride of birth and lineage which we find clings to the scions of Scottish chiefs, be they ever so poor.

The result, therefore, of an interview that Kep had with his sturdy father, some days after Madge's adventure on the cliff, is not to be wondered at.

"Father," said Kep, peeping round the edge of the library door, "may I come?"

"Certainly, my dear boy."

"Sure you are not too much pre-occupied to listen to what I have to say?"

"Unbend, my boy, unbend," cried Drummond, laughing, "that is hardly conversational English. What do you want? A new pony? Or have you taken the motor-car fever?"

"Oh no, my handsome and dearest father. I should smash a motor-car to pieces in a week. A steam-launch would be more in my way."

"And that shall be yours, Keppel, if you really think you can't live without it."

"I can live without it, father, and mean to. But I am a man now—fourteen last month—and so I want to go down to the sea in ships and see the Lord's wonders in the mighty deep."

"Well, my yacht is as taut and trim as she was on the day she was launched. Ah, lad, it was my—it was your dear mother who provided and baptized her."

"But—" The boy hesitated, as well he might. "I want to go farther afloat than any yacht could ever take me. I wish to go and see wild places such as my best authors speak of, to kill wild beasts, to fight with savages, and snakes, and sharks, and tigers."

"Pile it up, boy. You're not at all ambitious, are you? But, Kep, I'm not rich enough to buy you a ship, and I have other views for you. You are my only son, and heir to all my property. I want to take you into London society. I want you to have a career, to become member for the county, and probably eventually Leader of the House."

"Father, *you* are not at all ambitious, are you? But I hate society, I hate London, I hate M.P.s, and I hate the Leader of the House. I'd rather," he added determinedly, "go to sea before the stick, and if you do not send me to sea, I fear I'll run away."

Iverach Drummond was trying to keep down his prideful wrath. He sat silent and stern now, so stern that Kep was frightened.

"Oh father, oh daddy, you're not angry at little Kep?"

He was kneeling by the chief's side, passionately holding his father's hand and weeping.

"Your anger would kill me, dearest and best."

"Then you won't speak of sea to me again."

The boy let go his father's hand. There was a flash of Italian pride in his eyes. But he speedily turned them downwards, then glided away and closed the door.

And something at that moment told Drummond he should not see his boy more.

* * * * *

Martello Castle was really a fine old place, and historical also. Drummond—what will not love do—was as patriotic a Celt as ever drew blood in the Stuart cause, but for his wife's sake he had expatriated himself and come to live here, far away from his own mountain wilds.

And yet he had the satisfaction of remembering that Cornwall itself had

been a land of Celts, and, to some extent, the same blood that burned so fiercely in the bosoms of the ancient inhabitants was still alive in the people around him.

Drummond had shooting on this estate all the year round, and was lord of the manor, and yet, like Walter Scott, he would have died had he been prevented from seeing the heather that blooms on the Highland hills at least once a year.

He had, up to the time of his dear wife's death, mingled cheerfully with the landed gentry and best families of the county, but at present and lately he had been somewhat more of a recluse. He was feeling old now, he avowed, though he was but little over forty. And all his hopes and fears centred in his boy Keppel and his daughter Madge. For their sakes he was at home to all who did him the honour of calling. And Madge was as contented and cheerful as ever a girl needs to be, and had more than the average girl's opportunities of living an ideal life in her own grand gardens, or in woods and wilds. Though not so romantic and poetic at soul as her brother Kep, and with none of his extraordinary longings to see foreign life and seek for adventures abroad, she was nevertheless one of nature's children.

On the same day upon which Kep had held that meeting with his father, he picked up his little rifle, kissed his sister, and told her he was going for shooting practice over the hills. There was something in his face that told Madge he was not happy, and but for the fact that her governess was with her she would have accompanied him.

Kep went to the hill to practise making bull's eyes at boulders, as he phrased it, but his heart was not in the sport to-day, and presently he threw down the gun, and lay down himself to look at the sea, and to think.

What was he going to do? he asked himself. Going to run away from his parent, his sister, his home? There was only one word to answer the question, and that was "Yes."

But the morale of these questions was what puzzled his most, for he had been strictly religious trained. Was he about to commit deliberately a sin for which he might never be forgiven?

This was a question that took him a long time to argue. There were many sides to it. He was going to sea in obedience to an impulse. Nothing was there to prevent him. There are fathers and fathers, some of these would send forth a hue and cry and bring a boy back *volens volens*. His father, Kep knew well enough, was not one of these. He would be too proud to search for his lost boy, and he knew also the nature of that boy, knew that restraint and compulsion could only tend to harden him, and that the disgrace of being brought back a prisoner would break his brave heart.

No, there was little, if any, fear of pursuit, and he had some money of his own, enough at any rate to purchase his kit and rig-out. Yes, the world was all

before him. Yet the "sin" attached to his flight—ah! that was the word he could not keep from ringing in his ears.

His father's priest was Kep's best friend, and his tutor besides. Should he go and tell him? Perhaps he should, but he would not. You may get pardon for sins you have done—if you are genuinely penitent—but not for those you have it in your heart to commit. He would not see his priest. What, never again? The lad's heart gave an uneasy throb. That "never" is a long, long saddening word. So he told himself that he was not running away for good and all, only just for a few years, then if his father forgave him and asked him to return he would.

But his sister Madge—ah! how she would cry, and how bitter and hot and blinding would be those tears, for they loved each other, those two mitherless bairns, as only young sister and brother can. Kep was all the world to Madge. No boy ever so kind and gentle, so brave. None ever so pleasant and so wildly mirthfully, gleesome and humorous.

As he thought of this he took from his side pocket a tiny little black orchestra flute or piccolo. Not much bigger nor thicker was it than a fountain pen, but oh, the marvellous music he was wont to elicit from it. Mostly all Italian and German, chiefly operatic, yet the birds that perched on the golden scented furze in spring used to stop their songs to listen when Kep played, and little anxious creatures in fur used to peep wonderingly out of their holes. He took his pipe from his pocket, I say, and began to play—merrily at first, but soon mournfully and sadly. The music that he breathed into it or that welled out of it was such as he himself had never heard before. It seemed to come from his very soul, to be the very own voice of that soul; and what more sweet, if pure, than the soul of a boy of his still tender years?

This did not, could not, last long.

He dropped the magic pipe, and threw himself on his face to weep.

"Oh, Madge, oh, Madge," he sobbed, "I am going away, away—I am following destiny—and you—you—how I love you, sister! but distance can never, never divide nor sunder us. Never, Madge, never."

He spoke through his tears, as if his sister were close at his elbow.

"I'll write often and often, and you shall write to me. I may not always get your letters, but you shall always have mine. What is this?" he added, speaking more to himself now. He picked something off a bush of ling. It was one of wild Madge's hair-ribbons—they often sat down to rest, the brother and sister, in this very spot.

He looked at it. He held the bonnie blue silk to his lips, and sighed a sigh which gave him comfort. Then he attached the ribbon to his wee flute and tied it to a button hole.

He would never part from either ribbon or flute, go where he might, over

sea or land. The ribbon would be his mascot and charm danger away, the tie that would knit him to his sister and to home.

Don't laugh at poor Kep, if I tell you that he must now kneel down by the bush and pray. He marched off down the glen after this, but no farther than the house of Duncan Rae, one of his father's keepers.

Duncan was at home and glad to see Kep. Would he not step inside and have a bowl of milk, his wife would be so pleased.

"And there," continued Duncan, "comes Colie to bid you welcome and my two little lassies evermore. But has our good laird's boy been crying? But see, Keppie, my lad, go to the brook and wash your face, and it is myself that will run for a towel for you."

Kep always felt easy at that homely fireside, and in five minutes' time he was sitting with a child girl on his knee and two more curly-haired tots listening to and laughing at his strange stories.

"But you'll play a bit to us, Keppie, and sure the bairns will dance, for it is you that is the grand whistler. Never could scream of plover in the mist equal the shrill sweet music of your flute."

And Kep did play, and forgot his sorrow for the time. Then he got up to go, and handed Duncan Rae his little rifle to keep until he called for it.

"But eh! boy, there is the big sorrow in your heart this moment, and there is something there you won't tell your poor Duncan."

"No sorrow, Duncan. Only joy to come."

And he forced a smile as he waved his hand.

And Duncan stood looking after him till the hazel copse hid him from view. Then he sighed and went in doors.

* * * * *

Bob, the great white owl, came that night to stare in at the window of the little turret chamber, but all was dark.

And the cawing of the rooks to greet the rising sun brought no young face to the window next morning.

Kep was gone.

CHAPTER III

"ANY SPOT ON EARTH is A HOME FOR THE BRAVE."

About a week after this, rather a crack little cruiser was lying with steam up, or fires alit anyhow, in Plymouth Sound. Long, low, rakish she was, and looked just the craft to go anywhere and do anything, howsoever daring.

Kep Drummond stood gazing at her from the Hoe.

There was a sailor sitting on the end of a bench near by, and him Kep addressed. "What ship is that, mate?" he said.

"That is the *Breezy*, my son. She sails to-morrow."

"Do you belong to her?"

"Not I. Just come from China station."

"I think I should like to sail in that craft. There is a bit of romance about her, lying with her bowsprit pointing to the breakwater. I like her looks, and what a lot of boats are passing to and fro. How had I best get on board?"

"Why, with a shore-boat, of course. You don't imagine, do you, that they would call away the first whaler for a kinchin like you, though you do look pretty fit."

"Well, anyhow, I'm going to join that ship and sail in her."

The seaman laughed aloud.

"As what?" he asked. "Second lieutenant, paymaster, or what? Mebbe you'd like to take command of her. I'm sure you have only to wire the Admiralty to get appointed right away."

Kep's eyes were riveted on the *Breezy*, and he was all a-quiver with a new-born excitement.

"How old are you, sonny?"

The man now laid a kindly hand on his shoulder.

"Fourteen and begun again."

"Run away from your parents, haven't you?"

"That's my business, matey."

"Well, but take a man-o'-war sailor's advice. Don't go on board the *Breezy*; if you do, you'll get copped and sent home again. And it is there you should be. If I did my duty now—"

"Come and have a pint, Jack."

"Oh, I'm nothing loath," said Jack.

"Then we can yarn about it," said Kep.

They were soon seated in the parlour of an inn, where Jack seemed to be well known. There was a foaming tankard in front of the sailor and one by Kep, which he pretended to sip, but fought shy of.

Kep told Jack little bits about himself, but no more than Jack could conveniently swallow.

"Have you been much abroad, sir?" said Kep. The "sir" almost stuck in the boy's throat, but then, this man had many stripes on his sleeve, and Kep thought

it as well to err on the safe side.

"Been kicked about a lot, sonny, if that's what you mean. I'm eight and twenty, and next commission may be my last—"

"Why, you think you'll be drowned then?"

"No, no, lad, only if I do two years more, my time will be about up, but I'll join on again, 'cause I dearly love the sea. I say, young fellow, you're not drinking yours."

"Never meant to. Ordered it for company's sake."

"Thought so. There's a pal o' mine in the bar, he could let daylight inside that tankard if your lordship will allow me to call him in."

"Certainly—delighted."

The pal, a young man, clean-shaven and very baggy about the lower garments, did let daylight into the tankard after nodding frankly to Kep.

The boy had heard of boozing kens, and he wondered if he was in one now. Anyhow, he believed he could take care of himself.

A buxom middle-aged landlady presently came in, and Jack said something to her in an undertone. She smiled most pleasantly, and patted Kep's hand. "Poor boy!" she said, "nothing must come over him then."

Kep called for more stout all round, and threw down a sovereign. But this fresh supply stood for some time untouched, for the lads of the Royal Navy are not now what they were in the days of Dibdin.

"I'll call Katie, my daughter," said the landlady, "as I must attend to duty. Katie dear, come this way."

Kep thought he had never seen so winsome a girl before and he asked her to have something, but she took positively no notice.

Only a minute after, she pulled Kep on to her knee.

"The sweet little lamb," she said, "and oh, the black eyes of him. Jack, he is his mother's wopsy-popsy, I'll bet."

"What—how—why," the boy cried, wriggling away from her. "Can't you see I'm a man? Fourteen and began again?"

But Katie soothed him. "I'm sure you'd like a cup of tea," she said.

Kep would.

Yet he had some suspicions that if this were in reality a boozing den, the tea might be drugged, and that being hocused, he might be robbed. But one look at sweet Katie convinced him that his suspicions were really unmanly.

"You'll sleep here to-night, won't you?" she said.

"Yes, if they don't keep me on board the *Breezy*."

Jack roared with laughter and Katie couldn't help joining in.

"I think," said Jack, "that even the first lieutenant has been appointed, and they will have to dispense with your services, sonny. Why didn't you 'phone to

the Port Admiral, and say you were coming?"

"You *funny* boy!" said Katie. "But how much money is in that purse of yours, that makes your trousers pocket bulge out so?"

"Oh, enough to pay for the tea, twenty times over."

"Why dear, I don't mean that," and the girl reddened a little.

"Well," she added, "you'll count all your gold out there on the table, and give it to my mother except just a handful of silver. She'll give you a receipt for it, and you'll come back here to sleep."

Kep looked at Jack, and Jack nodded. Then the boy counted his gold and notes out as innocently as a boy of nine might have done, and Mrs. Monck, the landlady of the *Blue Ensign*, took it in charge.

Jack told him he would meet him here again that evening, told him also where to charter a shore-boat.

"Hillo you, what's the fare to the *Breezy*?"

"Three bob to you, cap'n."

"Take ye for 'arf," cried another.

"Jump in," said Kep.

The men jumped in and off they pulled. There was a rudder, and Kep took the tiller.

"Been at this game before, young sir?"

"I know what a boat is."

"Be ye a-goin' to join, sir?"

"Don't know yet. Going to see the first officer."

"Humph! well, that means the commander or first luff. The *Breezy* is a warship."

The way Kep steered that boat along-side the *Breezy*-sta'board side mind you-was a source of great fun to some middies.

"Admiral's sweep, by Jove! Why, he thinks himself quite a little toff. Wonder who the devil he is?"

"Couldn't say, I'm sure. May as well have sideboys, anyhow."

And down the steps the side-boys rattled and handed Kep the pipe-clayed ropes.

He was half-way up, when the man hailed, "Am I to wait, sir?"

"Er-um-you may as well, I think."

The side-boys were caught on the giggle and Kep frowned at them.

He saluted the quarter-deck as if to the manner born.

"What-er-can I do you for, youngster?" This from the midshipman of the after watch.

"I want to see the commander or Captain."

"Neither on board. Here comes the second lieutenant."

"Hullo, my lad"—he wasn't much more than a lad himself—"have you friends on board?"

"Soon will have, I hope, sir. I want to join the service, and this ship. Rather like the looks of her."

The middies pulled their handkerchiefs out, and seemed strangely convulsed. The officer raised his eye-brows, but appeared much amused.

"Come down to the ward-room, my boy," he said. "There is really nobody on board, yet. Sit down. You are smartly dressed, is your father a gentleman?"

"Yes, and all my forefathers, and I'm a gentleman myself."

"Undoubtedly, but you've run away from home, haven't you? What is your father's name?"

"Not over anxious to divulge, sir," replied Kep.

"Well, what name do you sail under?"

"Not particular. Call me Mr. Bowser."

"Well, Master Bowser, you say you are desirous of doing us the honour of sailing with us. May I presume to ask in what capacity?"

Kep jumped up.

"You are making fun of me, poking fun at me," he cried, now furiously red in the face.

"Sit down, you spitfire, and don't be a little fool, else, but there! now calm yourself and answer my question. What use do you think you'd be on H.M.S. *Breezy*?"

"Oh, I'm so willing, sir! I can be anything, or do anything. Could take charge of a watch or my turn at the wheel, or help the cook, or clean the boots. I can reef and steer, and box the compass, splice the main-brace, or work out the reckoning or—"

"Suppose, now, our captain were taken ill?"

"Oh, sir. I could soon learn to do the simple duties of a Naval Captain."

"Is there any other capacity in which you could serve?"

"Oh yes, I can speak six or seven languages fluently, and I could play on this little pipe while the sailor men danced."

The lieutenant was more amused than ever. He wanted a little fun, anyhow.

"Play something to me."

"What shall it be? Nocturne, Sonata, Valse, or, just name your opera. Come, here is a little bit of Wagner." The officer leaned back in his chair, really or truly delighted.

"Why," he said, "you are—why you are a juvenile freak. Come on deck with me."

"Quartermaster, just take this lad forward, and he'll play you a hornpipe."

He did. Kep played, and didn't the men dance too. It was half an hour of the best fun ever seen on board a man-o'-war.

Then the young lieutenant gave the boy ginger wine, grapes, and much good advice, and bade him be sure to go home to his parents.

No, Kep had not succeeded in joining the *Breezy*, but he really had made an impression on board, and those who met him would not soon forget him.

The boy did not go directly back to the *Blue Ensign*. The day was very beautiful and though already far spent there was plenty of time of stroll around and see things.

Now Plymouth down by the docks is always a busy place. It was ten times more so just at present, for complications had once more arisen betwixt this country and Russia. Since the close of the terrible war against the Japs, the Russians appeared to be intriguing very much in European politics. She desired a war with Britain, she longed to invade India, but the trouble was that unless supported by another power there was little chance of her being able to regain her lost prestige.

Be that as it may, orders had only a few days before Kep's arrival been received at Plymouth dockyards that make things hum, as the saying is, and the lad wondered a good deal at all he saw in the dockyards. A swarm of bees about to swarm could not have been more busy and bustling.

The tall policemen who guarded the gates eyed everyone who sought entrance with considerable suspicion unless wearing the king's uniform, and even Kep came in for his share of this.

"Are you a young officer, sir?" said one, as the lad essayed to pass in, just as coolly as if the place were all his own.

"Halt! Are you a young gentleman, sir?"

Kep smiled his blandest, though with a slight air of hauteur in his manner.

"I hope so," he replied emphatically.

The policeman touched his hat.

And an Irish marine who was doing sentry-go, seeing this, shouldered arms as he passed, and Kep returned the salute with a flourish of his hand capwards as he had seen real officers do on the street, when the blue-jackets saluted.

"This is all very sweet," thought Kep, though the fact was that he was sailing under false colours, for the policeman's "young gentleman," really meant "junior officer," although it ought to have struck him as strange that even a naval cadet, if appointed, should be marching through the dockyard in mufti. And this incident, trifling though it appears, pleased Kep. It proved that he looked a little gentleman, and not a second-class boy, nor shop-keeper's apprentice out for a day.

But everybody was not quite so polite to our little hero, for during his peregrination he happened to stumble against a red-faced pompous looking old officer, and made bold to salute.

This officer was in uniform and stopped to eye Kep for a moment.

"Hillo! young fellow, who are you, and what are you doing here?"

"Just having a look around, sir."

"Cool. You don't belong to the service?"

"No, sir. That *is not* yet."

The officer laughed.

"Here is sixpence for you," he said. "I rather like a cheeky boy. Yonder is a gate, they'll let you out and they shouldn't have let you in. Go and buy buns."

Poor Kep reddened to the roots of the hair. He took the coin, though it seemed to burn his fingers and marched on towards the gate.

A bo's'n'smate accosted him next. "What ho! younk, whither away? What's your tally?"

"I'm only just a little boy going to buy buns," said Kep, and they parted.

The first thing he did, when he emerged, was to give that sixpence to a small gutter-snipe girl. She examined it wonderingly.

"Taint a reel un, is it boss?"

"Yes, quite, go and buy buns for yourself."

"Well, you be a softy, anyhow," she cried and darted off, shrieking with delight. And, next moment, Kep ran right up against Jack himself.

"Come to bring you back home, sonny," said the kindly fellow. "Make sure, you know, that you don't fall into mischief."

About two hours after this, Kep might have been seen in the tap-room of the *Blue Ensign* piping to a lot of jolly young sailors, as he stood on the top of a table. A position, which I must admit was a trifle *infra dignitate*—beneath the dignity—of Keppel Drummond, only son of a lord of a manor. But Kep enjoyed it and so did the blue-jackets.

Well, Kep had supper with the landlady, Katie and Jack, in the cosy bar parlour, quite a private party, be assured, and a very merry one as well. This happened after ten o'clock, when the house was shut up for the night.

To have seen Kep now, and heard his ringing laughter, as Jack spun his droll service yarns, you could scarce have believed that he had any sorrow at all at his heart. He did have though, and it is not easy to forget so happy a home as that which he had just forsaken, only care lies lightly on the shoulders of a lad of fourteen. He compounded with his conscience, moreover, by promising to write nice letters home the very next morning.

He bade his friends good-night at last, and was shown up to his little room, a bit rough, perhaps, but everything as sweet and clean as new silver.

Never a dream, and it was far into the morning before the sun shimmering in through the window awoke him, and soon he was down to breakfast. There came word now that the *Breezy* was off, and so she was. Jack and Kep started for

the Hoe to see her sail past.

And Kep sighed. How he would have liked to be on board that low long craft. Not perhaps so poetic-looking was she as a ship under sail with every inch of canvas set to woo the wind, but her build and shape, and clean cut bows suggested terrific force, terrible possibilities.

The variegated flutter of her signal flags as she flew through the blue water, her great white ensign floating astern, and the sweet music of her band playing, "Good-bye, sweetheart, good-bye," everything about her in fact, thrilled poor Kep till the tears filled his eyes.

They watched her getting smaller and smaller as she went stretching seawards. Yes, and many more than they were watching her, for when our sailors leave their native bonnie British shores, they leave many a tearful face and many a breaking heart behind them.

There was more of sadness in Kep's breast as he walked back to the *Blue Ensign* than he had ever felt since the day his mother died.

He would work some of that off, however, by writing to his sister, and his father, to say nothing of the good old priest and Duncan Rae. He had much to write about to Madge, and, indeed, he felt somehow as if years had elapsed since he had sat beside her on the green cliff-top.

The landlady of the inn vouchsafed to Kep some very good advice. He must, she said, go back to his parents—Kep had not told her his story—there was nothing else for it.

Kep patted her white podgy hand, and thanked her. "Your advice, mammy," he said, "is very excellent in its way, but it is advice of the feminine gender, and I shall go to sea, whatever happens. I shall not return home until I can do so with honour. My proud father shall never have to say that his son is unworthy of his grand old name."

"And you really will go," said Katie mournfully.

"I must, Katie, but cheer up, my dear. O'er many seas and lands I'll roam. Yet the heart of your sailor shall ever be true, and when my wanderings are over, I'll return to Merrie England and marry my Katie."

This wasn't bad for a boy of fourteen, was it?

"Well, go if you must," said the landlady, "where are you bound to?"

"Yes," said Jack, "what is your next port, sonny?"

"I shall consider. Have you a Bradshaw, Katie?"

He opened the book at random, at the place where it tells one of steamers that sail away to every part of the known world. It opened at Southampton.

He closed his eyes now fast and hard, and stuck a pin into one of the pages. It struck the West Indies.

Even Jack, old sailor though he was, was taken aback at the boy's boldness.

"I shall go there!" he said. "My dear and charming Katie," he added heroically, "Any spot on earth is a home for the brave."

CHAPTER IV IN SEARCH OF A SHIP

That same day Keppel Drummond bade his friends of the *Blue Ensign* goodbye.

The good landlady gave the boy her blessing. Katie gave him a bunch of ribbons and he gave Katie a kiss. He was saucy enough almost for anything.

"Goodbye, sonny," said Jack, "the world isn't so very wide, and we may meet again."

Then with his bag over his shoulder Kep bore up for the railway-station straight away, and in due time was deposited at Southampton.

The ship would sail in two days' time, so he went straight away and booked himself a second-class passage. Then set out to purchase his travelling box and kit. Kep did not mean to let the grass grow up between his toes if he could help it.

I suppose the lad really had a good share of Scottish forethought in his nature, as well as Italian frugality, and he counted his cash again, and counted all costs before he booked. The landlady at the *Blue Ensign* on giving him back his money had refused to accept a single coin for her hospitality, and the boy had turned red when he remembered that he had at first positively taken her pretty little hostelry for a boozing ken.

He did not go on board the *Paramaribo* until the very last bell, thinking that his youthful appearance might cause enquiries. It is so seldom, if ever, that a boy of fourteen starts on so long a voyage without a friend or guardian.

He posted another letter to Madge, his sister, before leaving, and a little pink note to Katie, quite a boy's love letter in fact and of no more value than most juvenile love letters. Only it pleased Katie. In addition to Jack Stormalong, she could now boast that she had a little boy lover far away on the stormy main.

Jack Stormalong was one day—if not eaten by blue sharks—going to marry Katie, and the two were to have the *Blue Ensign*. But she showed Kep's letter to Jack.

Jack took a pull at his beer and laughed. "Why, he *is* a precockshious lad and no mistake," he said. "He's bound to fall on his feet, Katie. Bound to come

out top-dog, or die for it.”

Once on board, and settled down, our Kep was not long in making himself friends. His flute with its blue ribbon did that for him. Of course, it was away forward that he made his first friends. But soon his fame became noised abroad and then Kep was invited aft to play. The boy’s knowledge of music was really phenomenal, and his execution on the piano astonished everybody.

He called himself Charlie Bowser because in his pride he considered it would be lowering his father’s caste somewhat to travel second class with his own name.

But apart from his musical talents some of the ladies aft took a great fancy for our saucy self-contained boy. There was a mystery about him, too, which was fascinating to many. Nor, when asked, did he hesitate to say that he was travelling under an assumed name.

”But why should you run away from home, Charlie?” asked one lady, ”so bright a lad as you?”

”Only just to see a little life, dear lady,” said the boy. ”Perhaps there is something radically wrong with my idiosyncrasy, you know, but I assure you I’m not running away an account of any evil I have done. I’m not cut-purse and I never held up a coach nor even a motor-car.”

”You are very young, Charlie!”

”A man,” he replied, ”is just as old as he feels, so I must be quite twenty.”

”I had the best Italian masters,” he replied to another lady, who was praising his musical talents. ”My father talks several languages.”

”And your mother, Charlie.”

”Mother talked many more languages than father. But mother is with the saints in Heaven, madam.” This with a sigh.

”And in Heaven,” he added, ”they talk Latin, I suppose, or a kind of refined Volapuk.”

* * * * *

How very quickly the days flew by in the *Paramaribo*, the ”old Pram,” as the sailors unceremoniously called her. But the life to Kep was all so new and delightful.

The voyage came to an end at last, and at Jamaica a really pleasant old lady, as Kep called her in his own mind, resolved to carry the boy away inland. Well, as he did not object to see a little of the beautiful interior, he readily consented.

What a tropical paradise it was she brought him to! And life amidst the sublimity of such mountain scenery, under a tropical sky, and with such magnificence of flowers around him, was to Kep with his ardent temperament and his

love of romance and poetry like a foretaste of Heaven.

The house itself was larger than his father's, as white as the snows of Ben Nevis, wherever a glimpse could be caught of its walls, through the wealth of climbing flowers that surrounded it and clustered over its verandas.

The gardens were gorgeous, and Kep laughed with delight to see the bright-winged birds dashing through and through the white spray of the fountains, that played here and there on the sward.

The lady had a quiet and gentle husband who seemed to be her loving slave, so fond was he of her. She had children too, boys and girls, dark-eyed like himself and browned-skinned as Ethiopians.

"Live here always, and for ever," said little Zuleika to him one day, "and be our brother."

But there was restlessness in the boy's heart before he had been among these enchanted hills and dells a fortnight.

"No, Zulee," he said. "I must away and soon," and then he told the child all about his sister and his own English home, all that she could understand.

"But take Zulee with you, home to your home, and your sister shall be Zulee's sister."

"Well," said Kep, returning her innocent embrace, "I must leave Zulee and come back for her some day—perhaps."

Kep was really burning to get away to sea in some capacity or another, so promising to return and bid his new friends all adieu, as soon as he had got a ship, our Kep journeyed back once more to Jamaica.

He had spent such a happy time, and they had been so good to him—but then everybody was.

"Heigho!" the boy sighed. "Heaven must be such a nice place, just because when you do make friends you keep them, and there are no more cruel partings."

Kep found apartments in a tiny cactus-surrounded cottage, not far from the busy parts of the city, yet cool and quiet—a little oasis in a somewhat objectionable desert.

He counted his cash again, and found to his surprise that it could not last for ever.

He must find work, and that work must be on board some sailing ship or steamer.

Now, strangely enough, he did not find this so easy to do as he had imagined. No one appeared to want a really talented boy on board ship, and his repeated rebuffs began to tell on him. He grew just a trifle less buoyant and hopeful.

How different were the shippy parts of the city into which trading skippers dived here in search of wretched crews from those of his own dear England.

There were "houffs" here, partly brandy shops, partly cafés, where these

same skippers were wont to call. And rough seamen frequented these in search of a job—seamen ever so rough, gallows rogues of all nations, apparently. And into these Kep had often to go and sit at some vile little table sipping his black coffee and waiting.

These places reeked with the scum of all kinds of sea-bred rascality. Reeked with sin and language so horrible that Kep was often terrified as he sat in his half dark corner waiting for that something that was sure to turn up some day, he told himself, but drink besotted men would swagger in with knives in their belts that Kep felt sure had been used in many a horrid *melée*. Then men would play dominoes with others of the same calibre, drinking the while, and using terrible imprecations. Or they would quarrel and fight or, if extra friendly, indulge in the *aguardiente*, until they reeled and got kicked into corners there to lie and snore, awaking only to call for more of their fiery potations.

Kep never took his money to such places, preferring to leave it at his little cottage. This was the house of two Creoles, but they were kindness personified to their brave little lodger, so he had no fear of dishonesty.

When Kep wrote to his sister now, he did not tell her a word about his anxiety and hardships, which would have grieved her, so all his letters breathed the poetry and romance of the beautiful island into which Fate had thrown him.

The boy was sitting one afternoon in a somewhat dark corner of a dingy café, making his cup last as long as possible before calling for another, when there entered and sat down at the long table about half a dozen men. One who appeared to be chief called for coffee and brandy.

The men whom the skipper, for such he turned out to be, was endeavouring to engage as seamen, were a mixed lot, and as villainous-looking as any Kep had yet seen in this particular café. Badly dressed, hulking fellows, with a cast of the butcher in every one of them. The boy felt sure these men would do anything or commit any crime for money. But the skipper experienced great difficulty in bargaining with them. One was an immense hulk of a negro, who spoke English after a fashion. Of the other five one only was a Britisher, and easily dealt with. It was different with the big Turk, the Italian, and the two Spaniards.

"I fear it is no go," grunted the skipper, himself an American. "Garçon!"

"Oui, m'sieu."

"Have you anyone in your place that can translate me the garble these chaps are talking? Can pay for an interpreter?"

Kep had been hustled into a corner by this tall skipper and was only waiting for a chance to escape.

As the *garçon* was unable to solve the difficulty and get the skipper out of the clove-hitch, the boy tapped him modestly on the shoulder.

He turned at once and gave Kep a little more room.

"Strike me lucky!" he said, "if I knowed there war any crittur there."

Kep smiled conciliatively.

"I know all that these men are saying," he said.

"Well, fire away, younk, and I pay you smartly."

"I don't want pay. I'm looking for a ship like the rest of them, and if you can help me, I'll be glad to do anything I can for you."

"You're true blue? Nothing of this sort?"

As he spoke he adroitly picked his red silk handkerchief from his own pocket and nimbly palmed it.

Kep laughed rightly merrily.

"Oh, no, I'm not a thief," he said.

"Waal, then, just look jerky, and tell these beggars all I ask you to."

So jerky did Kep look and act that in two minutes' time the men were engaged.

"And that," said the skipper, "makes up my complement, and when they've signed articles, we'll sail."

"Bothered!" he added, "if I don't think you'd do, boy, to help our steward and cook. You look a play-acting kind of a chap, can ye do anything likely to amoose us."

"I can pipe if the men want to dance on a Saturday night, or when you're heaving the capstan."

"Pipe? Waal, I'd like to hear yer."

Out came the little piccolo, and in half a minute Kep commanded the whole situation. Drunken sailors crawled out of their corners to dance, sailors' sweet-hearts all kinds and colours joined in, and even the doorway was blocked by dusky faces listening.

It was a mad five minutes.

"Hurrah!" cried the skipper, beating the table with his brown fist. "Strike me lucky if ever I heard its equal! Why, siree, the pied piper of Hamelin wouldn't be in it with you. Give us yer flipper, younk. Will you sign on?"

"Yes, you are going to queer places evidently. I'll sign on. I'll see life."

Something like a cloud shadow darkened the skipper's face for just an instant.

"You'll maybe see death, too, lad. But there, you look a good plucked one. Come, we'll march these beggars on board, else they'll get drunk and bilk us."

They had a long way to row, but at last found themselves alongside a tall dark taper-masted barque. Though the paint was washed off her sides a bit, she looked good and sea-worthy, and Kep liked the golden hue of her copper bottom as she heeled over now and then to the swell.

The skipper invited Kep down to the cabin, which was large and roomy

with doors off it, leading into staterooms at each side and the spirit-room abaft. It was comfortably, though not luxuriously furnished, and the great black tom-cat asleep in the captain's easychair gave an air of extra cosiness to the place.

"Have a drink? No? Better not. Had Nat Stainer, and that's me, never touched, tasted nor handled, he'd have been a Commodore in the United States Navy by this time."

Kep was sent on shore, promising to be off early in the morning.

He paid his bill, and bade his hostess a kindly good-bye, and at two bells next forenoon watch, his boat was rasping against the sides of the *Macbeth*.

A Jacob's ladder was thrown him carelessly, and up he scrambled and stood once more on deck.

General confusion reigned throughout, but probably not more than we usually find on ships of this kind about to leave for a long voyage. But this confusion was worse confused, owing to many of the crew being unacquainted with the language in which orders were given, for the second mate who had charge of this watch was a Finn.

To him Kep reported himself, saluting as he did so. All he received in return was a kind of grunt.

"We don't care much for man-o'-war prattle here," he said. "Go and find something, do. Translate my orders to these grub-eaters."

After doing so for a whole hour, Kep, who was willing and cheerful, bolted down the after companion to the pantry, where he found the steward, a little black-haired young man, with a pleasant face. He was an Austrian, or Swiss, at any rate he talked good French, and for this Kep was thankful.

He had not much to say at first, and the boy was unwilling to force the conversation. Presently, however, he wheeled round on Kep, rubbing hard at a spoon as he did so.

"I think you weel like dis sheep?" he said.

"I don't know yet," returned Kep. "I hope so. Do you?" He spoke in French now. The steward shook his head.

"Glad," he said, "you talk French; we will be companions, comrades. But I am so poor, I must sail in anything. See here."

He took two strides farther forward as he spoke and picked up an electric lantern.

"Follow me. The Capitan has not yet come off, and we sail this evening." He led the way into the saloon, and through it to the spirit-room door, which he opened with a bright and shining key. He now let the lantern's glare fall on the deck inside. It was splatched and spotted with black, so were the bulkheads.

"Claret?" said Kep.

"Blood," said the little steward. "They fought in there. Now come this way."

He threw open the door of the Captain's stateroom and kicked away a grass mat. Ominous stains again. "Just there," he continued, "the first mate died. Shot down he was by the master."

"Murder?" And Kep shuddered a little.

"Who can say, the mate had a knife, the Capitan was quicker, he had a revolver."

Kep was undoubtedly brave, yet for some seconds he seemed to be turned into stone.

"Was there an inquest, an enquiry?"

"No, we were far at sea. The mate was buried two hours afterwards *sans ceremonie*. The blood kept dropping through the blanket we had sewn him in, and the stains will never leave the stairs."

"But surely such things call aloud for--"

"Hush! hush!" cried Dolphin (his name was Adolphus), "we speak not so here. And list, that is the Capitan's voice, he is just coming over the side."

Dolphin hurried to the pantry and was singing cheerfully at his work when the Captain came down below.

He nearly run Kep down, being sun-blind for a time. "Hullo, little piper, I can feel it is you. Can't see much, though. Dolphin, knock the head off a bottle of fizz. We'll be out o' here by five."

"I say," he continued after swallowing a smoking tumblerful of the champagne. "I say, Dolphin, mum's the stuff I'm drinking, ain't it?"

"It is, sir."

"Waal, mum's the word you've got to remember when talking to any new hand, else--"

The rest of the sentence was hissed into the steward's ear, and the little man turned a shade paler.

There was some sort of mystery and horror about this ship that crept coldly round our Kep's heart. He had half a mind to ask to be put on shore, but that would have been cowardly. He did not even like the barque's name--*Macbeth*. There was something ominous about it, and the word rhymes with death.

"You are to be told off to do all sorts of odd jobs," said Dolphin, soon after this, "but I think you'll be principally the Capitan's servant and interpreter."

"I'll be glad to be busy," said Kep.

The anchor was got up, and sail set, and with much noise, and terrible shouting. Then she slid away towards the open sea, but the first watch had well begun before the cargo, heavy barrels and boxes, was stowed away even temporarily. Should it come on to blow a bit during the night this cargo would shift, and there would be more noise than ever.

Adolphus and Kep had a wretched little state-room next to the pantry.

Hardly six feet square was it, with a ventilator in the door and one scuttle which could only be carried open in calm weather.

There was the evil odour of cockroaches here too, and as soon as the light was put out they rustled and ran all over the beds in a way which was not at all pleasant for our hero.

But Kep was tired and was soon in the land of dreams.

He was up at four bells, and went on deck bare-footed—the men were washing decks—to splash about and see the red sun rise over hills of rolling water.

CHAPTER V

THE SHIP "MACBETH."—HORRIBLE MUTINY

Wind some points abaft the beam, the *Macbeth* on the starboard tack, and heeling prettily over to it, doing about ten knots.

On such a morning as this, in these warm and sparkling seas, on which showers of diamonds seemed to be falling, with the light blue overhead and the darker below, who could help being joyful.

In their curious and mixed "garble" the men laughed and joked, and even sang as they sluiced the water about and plied their scrubbers.

Now and then half a watch, obedient to the mate's command, would take a pull at the traces, "Lee-hoe-ing" as they did so, as musically as the song of the sea-birds, until the shout "Belay!" fell on their ears.

By sunset of that first day every man was acquainted with his quarters, so to speak, and the crew had settled down. The skipper, first and second mates, and bo's'n lived in the saloon, the older and best men, chips, the cooper, and so forth were in the half-deck, and forward, below or above deck, as suited them, the rest of the crew bunked.

Despite the terrible tale which Dolphin had told him, the tragedy of last voyage, Kep thought he was bound to be happy. At the same time he had already made up his mind that he would try to find another vessel when they reached Sidney. So he waited at table, he helped cook and steward, and he piped or played to the men in the evening, as well as being interpreter to the crew. He found that none of the officers or crew, except Dolphin, had been in her last voyage; I suppose the skipper made sure of that.

The men had all nicknames which seemed to grow upon them, or be sug-

gested by their general appearance. There was one low-built squat fellow his comrades called "Kruger." A black man of gigantic strength "Slogger." From the first Kep was half afraid of this fellow. His great bare black feet and ankles, his immense naked neck and tattooed chest, his brutal figure-head and daring looks, all were repulsive. And he was so black that when in the sunshine he scratched one forearm, he left white streaks on it. But he was a good seaman. There was only one worse-looking man in the ship, though he was white. This was "Bloody Tom." Then there was "Long-shanks," expressive enough; "Spider-legs," the "Turk," and so on and so forth.

These I have named were the men that really dominated the rest of the crew, and whom, some time after this, Kep had good reason to remember.

They all of them, notwithstanding their looks, were good to Kep. This almost goes without saying, for away forward, after sundown, he could spin yarns that kept them laughing by the hour.

The Turk turned out a decent kind of hulk, and Kep would tell even him droll stories in his own tongue.

One day this man, while alone with Kep in the ship's waist, asked the boy to feel the keenness of a huge knife he carried.

"If anything ever happens," he told the boy, "I'll be your friend."

This Turk was called the "Prophet." Why, Kep could not tell.

The *Macbeth* was partly in ballast, but she landed a good deal of stuff at Rio and took in much more heavy cargo. No man on board, except the captain, knew what this cargo was. It consisted chiefly of huge, square, very heavy boxes.

Some thought it must be specie, but the Turk declared it was sand.

But why sand? We shall soon see. The ship was now stretching away down the South Atlantic, and in good time for such a slow and heavy sailer she doubled Cape Horn, and now bore north and west. Dolphin said he had no faith in the skipper, and that he merely told this story of their being bound for the Cape as a blind. He was going to do something bad. Dolphin was sure of this.

Dolphin told Kep one night after they had retired, told him in French and in whispers, that when the skipper was on deck the day before, and it was "all hands shorten sail," he had found papers in the old man's stateroom which proved that the *Macbeth* was a coffin ship, and that he and the first mate had agreed for a large sum of money to scuttle and sink her first chance. There was to be no bloodshed if possible. The men were to take to the boats when not far off a certain island, and would be picked up by another vessel sent on purpose by the same company.

The *Macbeth*, of course, with her supposed cargo of considerable value, was heavily insured.

It might not be supposed that in the year of our Lord 1906, the date of this tale, such things could be possible; but list, my lads. Though this story is

predated, the facts actually occurred only a few years ago. And what happened in 1901 may well occur in 1906. As you are not reading fiction altogether, I like to paint the sea and sea-life in as bright colours as I can, but ah! while there is a romance about it, which is beautiful and glorious, the sea also hath its perils and its grim tragedies; and we are bound sometimes to look at the dark side.

Kep did not sleep a deal that night. He lay long awake thinking, and when slumber did at last seal his eyelids, it brought with it dreams that had more terror in them than even his waking thoughts.

The ship anyhow had not only proved herself a leaky and unseaworthy tub, the rattle of the pumping engine being heard in every watch, but the crew speedily became a discontented one. The skipper and first mate were only pleasant towards evening, while in their "cups." By day they behaved, often enough, like very fiends to the men. Rope's-ending was a daily matter of occurrence; men, lashed to the lower rigging, especially the young ones, were often heard shrieking in their agony.

One poor fellow was booted off the poop by the captain himself, and though his leg was smashed, he was clapped in irons for what was called mutinous conduct.

Adolphus now set himself to watch the captain and mate, who of a night used to be very much together in the chief state-room.

The steward about ten o'clock would beg leave to retire.

"Put the brandy and glasses in my room, then, and you may go, Dolphin," would be the usual reply.

But as soon as the saloon was in darkness and he could hear the sounds of carousal in the state-room, Dolphin crept on hands and knees towards the sanctum. The two conspirators one night had the chart between them.

"It is down here, just off these islands, we are to do the job," the former was saying.

He placed a finger on the chart as he spoke; and, raising himself gently—for death would have speedily followed discovery—the steward drew aside the curtain till he could see the very spot the finger indicated.

The mate started. "I declare I saw the curtain move, sir."

"The motion of the ship, you donkey."

"But I declare I saw a white face peep in."

"Here—here—drink this quickly, or you'll have those 'D.T.'s' again."

Adolphus had slipped speedily back, and he declared to Kep that should he live till doomsday he would not forget the expression on that evil mate's face.

The ship was steered south and away now, and every day the weather got colder and colder. Adolphus had been long at sea, and probably knew as much about plain-sailing as the mate himself, and every time he had a chance he studied

the chart, the compass, and the mate's reckoning slate.

"It cannot be long now," he told Kep one evening; "the wind is going down. We'll be becalmed to-morrow, mark my words, not far from the spot where the deed is to be done—the ship scuttled."

He was right, and next morning there was almost a complete calm. A round heaving swell, however, was coming in from the south-east, and the vessel rolled and pitched in a very uncomfortable fashion. The third mate came down below to report that she was making more water than ever.

"Strained herself, I suppose," growled the skipper. "She's only a bally old clothes'-basket at best. Waal, put more hands to the spare pumps and keep the engine going."

The third mate went on deck, and almost immediately after there was a hail from the mast-head.

"Land on the port bow!"

A long, low, cloud-like streak, with here and there a conical hill, that is all the men saw, and probably only the captain and mate knew what that land really was.

There was a gloom over the ship this forenoon that not even the bright sunshine could dispel. Now and then the land was obscured as if by rising clouds or fog.

Hardly a sound to be heard save that of the pumps at work. Never a word of command. The idle men in groups here and there about the fo'c'sle or ship's waist, but all silent and moody, though they cast wondering glances aft occasionally to where on the poop the skipper was walking up and down with the mate.

The quiet to-day seemed ominous. Nature herself appeared to be waiting and waiting for something to happen.

The skipper paused in his walk to leisurely fill his pipe, casting now and then furtive glances at the mate.

"God! sir," cried the latter at last, "don't look at me like that. See, sir, we—that is you and I—are both shareholders in this ship. If our plan succeeds we will win the stakes, but if I thought you meant to play me false, by heavens! I'd scupper you on the spot. You say it is all square between us? Then—don't eye me again like that."

"It is all right, mate, and you know it. There! don't be a fool. Go below and have some rum to straighten you out a bit."

"I've had too much. I'll be seeing things soon."

"Hillo! Dolphin. What do you want?"

"I came to know if I should draw enough grog to splice the main-brace."

"Do as you please. Go to the devil if you like."

The steward said no more. Leaving the two together, he hurried below, and entered the skipper's state-room. The spirit-room door was already open, and Kep was waiting for the men's grog. Dolphin opened a drawer, the keys of which had been left in it, and quickly and quietly possessed himself of a pair of revolvers and several ugly-looking knives. These he put in the pantry, and, returning, secured a hammer and chisel which were under the little chart-table.

That was all. The skipper came below and looked at him somewhat suspiciously.

"Been making your bed, sir. Shall you want some 'fizz'?"

"Yes. Ah! you know my little ways and weaknesses."

"I do," said Dolphin to himself.

The grog was served out, and, as usual, Kep piped to the crew while they ate their dinners. And so the afternoon wore on till within an hour of sunset.

Dolphin was forward again with a huge can containing double allowance of rum.

"Saturday night, gentlemen, and the captain says it is his birthday, and you are to drink his health."

Kep served out the double dose. Dolphin was talking down in the galley, talking seriously, but somewhat excitedly, with Kruger, Slogger, and the Turk.

"There must be no blood. We'll do things better than that. I'll give the signal."

Good luck or the devil seemed to be playing into Dolphin's hands, for just as he entered the saloon again he noticed the door of the skipper's state-room being silently shut. Both he and the mate were in there. Like a tiger on its prey, he sprang silently aft, and next moment the door was locked—the conspirators were prisoners.

They had heard the click of the lock, however, and at once began shaking the door.

"What in thunder does this mean?" roared the mate. "Dolphin, you devil, I'll have your life's blood."

"Listen!" replied Dolphin calmly; "if you remain quiet you will be safe; if not, I cannot be accountable for your lives."

The men by this time were fully alive to the horror of the situation.

The ship was slowly sinking. By either mate or master or by both she had been scuttled, and now these men were prisoners. They must get out the boats and leave her and those devils to their doom. Why work the pumps a moment longer?

There were many discontented voices, but evil took the lead, and Slogger, the terrible-looking negro, took command—the black would rule the white as an evil spirit ruled all.

"Aft, men; aft!" he shouted. "Let us up with the boats, get provisions and arms, and down with the men who would prevent us."

The brute bared his arm and flourished a knife as he spoke.

The Turk had run towards the saloon just as the mischief began to brew.

"You won't be safe, friend boy," he cried to poor Kep. Then he hurried the lad into his little cabin and locked the door.

He met the leader and mutineers as they were making aft.

"No blood," he cried. "Shed no blood."

The black man dashed him to the deck. Not stunned though, it would take a deal to quiet so powerful a Turk, he was on his feet in a moment; knives glittered, and the two were in deadly embrace. Both fell, but only one rose, and a rivulet of blood was straggling towards a scupper hole. The black man was triumphant.

It was the spirit-room that was first stormed, and soon the rum began to do its deadly work. Kep trembled in his den to hear the singing, shouting, and stamping. But there were wiser men on deck, and very quickly and even orderly the boats were hoisted to the davits and loaded. Some of the cases were opened, and found to contain sand, not specie.

I do not wish to redden my pages by describing the fearful scenes that followed, when the mutineers in the saloon quarrelled and fought.

Sounds of thuds and blows and shrieks and groans! It must indeed have been a terrible pandemonium.

After this, silence for a time. A consultation was evidently being held on deck. It was followed by a rush of feet down into the saloon again, and Kep could hear that the captain's stateroom was being opened—could hear the captain's voice, too, appealing for mercy.

Mercy from mutineers! He was being dragged on deck. A wild scream and a splash alongside—that was the mercy.

But for the mate a more ghastly doom was reserved. Dead men tell no tales, but a derelict ship may. The *Macbeth* might not sink soon enough. She might float till sunrise and be found by the islanders, the very islanders on whose shores the mutineers were to land with a lie on their lips.

The mate, then, was gagged and bound and laid on the state-room deck. Not far from him was placed a barrel of gunpowder, and in this a lighted candle was stuck. When it tilted or fell, or when it burned down say in two hours' time, the gunpowder would explode and the mate, who had kicked the poor young sailor off the poop, would go to his doom, and the ship be blown to pieces.

A whole hour went past, such a silent, such a nightmare hour, and Kep knew he was alone in a sinking ship with the dead.

Poor boy! he could do nothing there but weep and pray.

But he started up presently; there was a scuffling, rasping noise overhead,

and coming nearer and nearer to the companion. Now he could hear a groan, then some one staggered or half fell down the companion.

The key was turned in Kep's cabin-door, and next moment he was free.

"Thank Allah! I could not come before." It was the voice of the poor faithful Turk.

He never spoke more. He lay there dead and still in the passage.

CHAPTER VI

THE HURRICANE—CRUSOES IN GREAT SNAKE ISLAND.

Kep stepped lightly over the body of his friend, and found his way into the saloon. He sat down there, burying his face in his hands, and thanking God for something he hardly knew what.

Then the glimmer of the candle alight in the skipper's state-room attracted his attention. It was shining through the partially open doorway, and on tiptoe fearfully he approached it.

He saw at a glance what had happened and what had been intended.

Steadily now, slowly, almost mechanically he lifted out the guttering candle.

A little flat red crust had formed on the top of the wick, and this fell off just as he entered the saloon again.

Then the poor lad fainted.

Daylight was streaming in through the skylight when Kep re-opened his eyes, and found Dolphin himself bending over him.

"Oh, it is all so terrible!" were the first words Kep uttered when Dolphin helped him on deck, and the fresh air revived him.

"There is hope though," said the steward.

"Hope?"

"Yes, hope, friend, hope. They had locked me in forward, but I forced my way out and came aft. I thought you dead, so passed you by and entered the store-room. The mutineers had rifled this, and in doing so severed a rope and saved the ship."

"I do not understand?"

"No; but I will tell you. It was, of course, by mere accident that the rope was severed, and the men could not have known what they had done; but that rope

communicates with a sea-valve in the bilge—a hellish contrivance. I got down to the hold with the electric light, and when I pulled that rope the water was at once agitated as if by a huge spring beneath; when I let slack all was quiet again.

”And now, Kep, there are no living responsible beings on this ship but ourselves. For the mate—”

”Ah! yes; he is dead, is he not?”

”No; he was simply bound and gagged, but now, oh, horror, he is a gibbering maniac. He had been watching that candle getting shorter and shorter, knowing well what must follow. Is it any wonder he went mad?”

For long weeks Kep and the steward drifted to and fro with wind or tide in the derelict ship. They had managed to get up the dead from the charnel-house saloon, and, one by one, they were thrown overboard.

But over the Turk, who seemed peacefully sleeping, Kep shed many tears, and he was the only one they sewed up in a hammock and ballasted so that it might sink speedily down to the bottom, beyond the reach of the blue sharks with which this region abounds.

Then the mate. Well, they had cast off the ropes, for though he jabbered, he was quiet. He had apparently lost all memory, and it was sad to see him smile as he wandered about the deck touching things and trying to speak.

But on the third day he died, and was at once thrown overboard.

Strange it is, reader, that though the saying ”Murder will out” does not often come true on shore, at sea it is nearly always so, and murders and mutinies on the high seas have been discovered in the most miraculous ways.

Well Dolphin, or Adolphus, as we had best now call him, in order to get the odour of that ghastly ship out of our thoughts, had taken the bearings of the land near to which the tragedy had occurred, as well as—from the mate’s own slate—its latitude and longitude.

After a time, the weather being clear and fine, Adolphus and Kep managed to set a jib and a bit of square canvas also, and glad enough they were to find that she obeyed her helm.

So they took trick and trick at the wheel, and all day long were for ever on the watch for a sail.

But they had somehow drifted far out of ocean highways, and it was weeks before they could possibly get near one again, for they were doing little more than three knots an hour.

In their spare time they did all they could to clean ship, but the terrible stench still hung around the after cabin or saloon, and so they concluded to bunk aft. This was more cheerful, and Kep found heart enough to play on his marvellous piccolo again.

He called himself Captain Vanderdecken, and so baptized the ship the *Fly-*

ing *Dutchman*.

"Ah," he would say, "I fear, Adolph, we will never round the Cape."

* * * * *

One day the sky grew thick and dark to windward and the barometer went down and down, the mercury column sinking cup-shaped, and rapidly. Something was coming.

And something did come too, with a vengeance. Cold, bitterly cold; so cold that Adolphus had to blow on his hands at the wheel; dark, too, though it was but mid-day, and hail, which was accompanied by a storm of thunder and lightning, lay on the deck inches deep.

But the strength of the two of them could not command that wheel when the tempest began to blow and roar in earnest. Their bits of sails were soon torn into rattling rags, and they themselves, drenched and worn out, sought refuge below.

Would she founder?

They expected her to almost at any moment, but the *Macbeth* was heavily ballasted and broad in beam; she tumbled and rolled like a log or a dead porpoise, but staggered on or was driven on. They had managed to batten down fore and aft, and perhaps that saved her, for overcome by fatigue both slept at last, and when Kep, who was first awake, managed to get up on deck, he saw that his *Flying Dutchman* was sadly battered; bulwarks like sheep hurdles and yards fallen; but he saw something else that astonished him still more, for around the wreck were high rocks and cliffs, with bushes on top, and upon and among these rocks the ship was hard and fast, but on a very even keel.

It did not take him long to awaken Adolphus.

"Adolph," he shouted, as he let himself down the ladder. "Come on deck. Come at once. Here is a sight! Here is a plight!"

Adolph was quickly by his side.

"Well," he said, after a glance about him, "this is really better than foundering, Kep."

"Yes," admitted Kep, "we are still above the crust; but what are we going to do? What—"

"What—indeed. There are so many 'what's' about it, that I don't know which what to ask first. You've never seen a tidal wave, Kep?"

"Aren't all waves tidal?"

"Well, I don't know. The tides are caused by the suction of the sun and moon, a German philosopher told me once. Especially the moon; and I think it was suction he said. Never mind. Sometimes a black spot grows suddenly up in

the sun—that is the sun-mouth perhaps. Then he takes a bigger suck than usual, and this raises up tornadoes and whirlwinds and big, big tidal waves down below in the world here.”

”I understand.”

”Well, then, here is just what has happened. A huge, great tidal wave has been raised during the hurricane, and has rushed in up here into a kind of dry dock. It has gone now, and such another wave may not come again for a hundred years.”

”You are much wiser than I thought, Adolph.”

”No doubt, Kep; but no ordinary tide can touch us or poop us here, so we are not so badly off. We have provisions enough to last us for a year and more.”

”But we are a kind of Crusoes, aren’t we, comrade?”

”Kind of —. Yes, true.”

”And there will be a bit of fun in being Crusoes, won’t there?”

”No doubts of that.”

”And mayn’t there be some savages on this island, if it be an island? Mayn’t there?”

”There may be.”

”And that would mean some danger, wouldn’t it, Adolph?”

”Yes—yes—yes. But really, from the way you talk, Kep, one would think you really wanted savages and danger too.”

”Oh, if we are to be Crusoes, I should like everything ship-shape, and even the mark of the naked foot in the sand.”

”I suppose, Kep, you could manage to get up the cliffs?”

”Dear me, yes, Adolphus,” answered Kep somewhat proudly; ”my sister Madge and I were awfully good cragsmen. Oh, shouldn’t I like if Madge and Bounder were here.”

”Well, Madge isn’t here, and you can’t write home if you wished to. So content you.”

”But goodness knows, Adolph, there are scores and scores of empty bottles on board. Suppose we write scores and scores of letters and send them adrift in the scores and scores of bottles?”

”What would be the use?”

”Oh, some would be picked up, and then a ship would be sent to take us off.”

”Off? Do you know where we are, latitude and longitude and all that? If not, how could you tell them where to come to?”

Kep scratched his wise head. ”I daresay that is the drawback,” he said.

”We’ll just have to wait till the ship comes, Kep, as patiently as a penguin on a rock.”

"But the ship is sure to come, ain't it?"

"I reckon it will, some day."

"And we'll take turns at lighting fires on the rocks, and make a broom and hoist it. I think, Adolph, we can look forward to some real good fun."

"I wouldn't be too sure. But, I say, let us go below now, and I'll cook a nice comfortable bit of breakfast, and then we'll go on shore and spy out the land."

"That's it—spy out the land. We'll take our guns and creep from bush to bush like real wild Cuscorora Indians, and if we meet a savage we will say, 'O golly, foh true!' and he'll say 'Ugh!'"

"Well, here are some nice red herrings and hard biscuits, and preserved eggs and coffee."

"Any butter, waiter?" Kep was lively now.

"Yes, sir; butter, sir. Can't quite recommend it though. Has been to sea, sir, three times before."

These two shipwrecked mariners threw over a Jacob's ladder and descended one at a time. Adolph went first, but found he had to jump fully eight feet to the rock below.

"Hold on, Kep," he cried. "Don't you jump, else you will never get up again. Haul up the Jacob and lash a rope to it; we can shin up that."

The lad slung their rifles, and they found it easy enough to get up the rocks, though they were inhabited by malicious-looking snakes, who had come out to sun themselves.

Now, as I like to adhere most strictly to the truth, it is my duty to inform the reader that from a Crusoe point of view this island was a trifle disappointing.

First and foremost, it was only about two miles wide by three long, one bare and inhospitable-looking hill in the centre, which, from its conical shape and table-top, had doubtless been at one time, volcanic.

With the exception of this hill, all the rest of the land was covered with dense thick scrub and alive with snakes.

But there was a little lake of remarkably cool water, that was no doubt fed by springs from the higher and more hilly land they could see lying like clouds upon the horizon.

There was very little sand at the foot of the cliffs, so the mark of the savage's foot was not likely to be traced.

No inhabitants; nothing much to speak of in the fauna line, bar a species of rock rabbit and the snakes. Birds on the rocks though, and in some parts of the woods flowers of rare beauty.

"I'm disheartened, Adolph," said Kep.

"Yes; you look so."

Then the boy brightened up.

"I say, Adolph, my ancient mariner. Yonder is land, isn't there?"

"That is land. Bigger islands, I reckon, than ours."

"Well, it might be that Crusoes might come from there. And if there were too many we could retire to our ship and give them fits from over the bulwarks. I'm just spoiling for some fun, Adolph. Here, I know what I'll do. You saw that big grey snake that darted into a hole in yonder hillock? Well, just see if I can't entice him out again."

Out came the boy's piccolo. Down he sat, and began to play some melodies from *Faust*.

No effect.

"You'd better," said Adolph, "switch on Wagner."

Kep did, and the effect seemed magical. Not one, but three of these grey horrors appeared, and their horrid though graceful movements showed that for the time they were really fascinated.

"Come back on board," cried Adolph, "else I shall dream of these all night long."

I'm not sorry, however, that Kep did not find the Isle of Snakes altogether to his taste, because this is not a Crusoe story. Suffice it to say, after a few weeks they found the dead and awful monotony of the place almost unbearable. Moreover, there were but few books to read, no sport to speak of, and positively nothing to do.

But weeks and weeks passed by, and still came no sail in sight. They kept fires burning as much as they could, but neither the pillar of fire by night nor the pillar of smoke by day attracted anything.

Several times they thought they saw ships in the far distance, but looking at them through a telescope these turned out to be either floating sea-birds or the dorsal fins of some solitary basking shark, with birds perching on his back.

"Why," said Kep one day, "it is three whole months since we were cast away on this dreary shore, and never one single vessel has come near us. I tell you what it is, Dolphin, I am very weary of it all. Being a Crusoe is not half such good fun as I thought it would be."

"And I, too," said Adolph, "am weary."

"Tired of shooting those big tasteless rabbit-things; tired even of catching fish, though they are nice to eat, and so are rock oysters."

"But I say, Kep, I have a plan."

"Oh, have you? How delightful!"

"Well, you know we have had many a wild storm since we settled here, and you remember how the ship shook with the wind only last week."

"I won't forget that."

"No; and there is a bit of a list on her. She has heeled over a little to star-

board.”

”Yes.”

”And the next storm that comes from the same direction will blow her over.”

”Yes.”

”Yes; and there where will we be, Kep?”

”Why, we’ll be—we’ll be blown over.”

”You don’t know the real danger, Kep. She won’t simply heel over on her beam ends; she will go clean and clear over this cliff where the tidal wave dry-docked her so neatly, and ten to one we will never get out again. We should be buried alive.”

”Oh, I should hate being buried alive. Couldn’t we find a cave somewhere among the cliffs here, and shift our camp, in case of an accident?”

”But,” said Adolph, ”I have found one already. Yesterday, when you were fishing from a boulder; only, you know—”

”What, only?”

”There will be the snakes to contend with.”

”Yes; that is it, and they’re thicker than the rock-rabbits. Do you think,” he added, ”I could lure them away somewhere with my little flute, and murder them?”

”Well, you might try; only don’t let them get too familiar with you, else they’ll follow you everywhere, and get into your bed at night.”

”We can do our best, anyhow, Adolph. A fire in the cave to begin with would start them. Whatever men dare they can do. And there is nothing charms these snakes like Wagner.”

”Umph! Wagner never charmed me, Kep.”

”It’s all a matter of idiosyncrasy, comrade. It wouldn’t do if we all went in for Bach or Beethoven nor even for ’Annie Laurie.’ But now let us go on shore and see that cave of yours. A change is what we both need.”

CHAPTER VII

SUNKEN GOLD—JACK’S CAREER IN SIDNEY

”The cave seems first class,” cried Kep, looking round him delightedly. ”We shall be troglodytes now, Adolphus.”

”What are they? some kind of frog aren’t they?”

"No, people who live in caves, although frogs might be troglodytes, and sometimes are."

They now set to work at once. Though, to begin with, Kep tried Wagner just outside the cave. No snakes came out to dance, but behind them they heard a hissing noise, and found about half a score of the terrible reptiles had come from other rocks to be entertained. So that plan wouldn't work.

The cave was about half-way up the cliff, so, withered wood being very plentiful, a lot was gathered, and a big fire lighted in the centre of the floor of the place, Kep and Adolph taking good care to get outside when it began to crackle and burn.

But they stood by with fowling pieces, and as the reptiles came hurrying out, they took pot-shots, and killed quite a heap of them.

The ants of the shore picked the bones of these bare in two hours' time.

When the fire was out, and the cave swept, they set about getting things on shore, principally hammocks, provisions, a small cooking stove, boxes of candles, and in fact everything usually needed to make life enjoyable in tents.

They slept on board that night, and it took all next day to finish furnishing.

They slung hammocks and passed next night in the cave. But I cannot say that, after the light was put out, Kep felt particularly comfortable. He had an eerie creepie-creepie feeling, and more than once ere morning felt sure that serpents were crawling over him. Towards morning he put down his hand and touched something cold and round, He started with a shriek, and next moment heard the thud of something falling on the floor.

He had brought an electric telescope-shaped flashlight with him, and placed it in the hammock, and early in the morning—he hadn't slept again—he looked down, and saw it lying on the soft floor. So that was Kep's poisonous serpent.

Only the place seemed so hideously associated with these scaly horrors, that both Adolph and he made up their minds to use it only by day, and continue for a time to bunk aboard at night, taking all risks.

But they slept soundly. The ship had never moved.

It was Kep's turn next day to be struck with a new idea. He believed it possible, he said, to get out the one remaining boat, and pass her, by means of the davits over the side. Luckily, the latter had been left by the hurricane in good working order.

Kep was very strong and hard for his age, and Adolphus was a man. Yet it took many hours to overcome the difficulties they had to encounter. Things had been terribly jammed and knocked about, but at last the boat hung straight, and clear right over the rocks and then they began cautiously to lower away.

It was found, after all, that the ropes or guys running through the blocks were not long enough. The boat hung twixt heaven and earth, like Mahomed's

coffin.

There was nothing for it but to haul up again, and belay.

But further operations were stayed by fatigue and hunger, so they went on shore to dine in the cave.

Adolphus was cook, and there was some splendid fish to-day, to broil or roast over a clear fire, and they had found some plantains in a grove on the other side of the island. Of course there was very little romance about Adolph just at present, there never is when one is cooking in either cave or camp. But the day was so dreamily beautiful that the glamour of old ocean held Kep spell-bound. There was brightness and music everywhere; the brightness of sun on wave, the azure blue of the cloudless sky, the wild music of seabirds, and the music of the sea itself, breaking listlessly, drowsily on the rocks.

The boy seated himself high on a boulder, that was shaped for all the world like an arm-chair, and the white-winged gulls swept nearer and nearer as he played "Low and sweet, Sweet and low."

A song of Bret Harte's came into his mind as he watched the birds. Only a simple thing. As simple and sweet as the soul of the bard himself.

Sauntering hither on listless wings,
 Careless vagabond of the sea,
 Little thou heed'st the surf that sings,
 The bar that thunders, the shale that rings.

Little thou hast, old friend, that's new,
 Storms and wrecks are old things to thee,
 Sick am I of those changes too;
 Little to care for, little to rue,
 I on the shore, and thou on the sea.

Lazily rocking on ocean's breast,
 Something in common old friend have we;
 Thou on the shingle seek'st thy nest,
 I to the waters look for rest,
 I on the shore, thou on the sea.

But Kep now began to think, to dream of home. What a long, long time had elapsed, reckoning by events, since he sailed away from the white cliffs of England. What would his brave, proud father be doing at this moment, and dear Madge and her playmate Bounder; Madge would be missing her letters, she would

be praying for him too, every night. Wonder if ever she went up alone to his turret chamber, high above the waving elms. Wonder if Bob, the great white owl, ever came more now to look in of a night, or if he had forgotten Kep entirely. Wonder how long it would take a sea gull to fly to England. If *he* had wings he wondered if-if—

”Koo-ee-ee!”

He started to his feet. He had fallen asleep in that grey old arm-chair.

”Koo-ee!”

”Coming, Adolph; coming, comrade, coming?”

That dinner was very good to eat.

But now they got them back to the ship, and it took all the afternoon to lengthen the guys, by splicing on additional pieces, for the work had to be very strong to stand the strain.

The boat was lowered and launched next day, and it really was new life for them to paddle around the coast in her.

The boat was anchored in a little cove every night now, and in her they slept. It was a capital arrangement, and they had no more bother with the snakes.

But on nights when the sea was rough—which was not very often, because when it blew, it did so in dead earnest, and soon had done with it—they hauled her well up on the sand, and slept peacefully as usual.

They went to the hill-top almost every day—but no, no, no, they never saw a sail, and they began to think they would live and die on Great Snake Island.

But as far as the boat was concerned, they grew bolder and bolder.

They stepped a little mast and a brief jib-boom, and set sail therein, and when the wind was favourable went quite a long way out. At last they determined to visit the far off and greater island. So one day, when the wind was favourable, they loaded up with everything needful, hoisted their canvas and started.

They had taken their rifles and plenty of ammunition with them, but Kep prayed that they might not have to use them.

This prayer was heard. But they found no savages on the islands, which they reached at last, nor was there any other land visible all the wide horizon around.

So they slept in their boat as usual, and next day set out to explore, and to climb the hills.

Everything most unsatisfactory. No beauty nor romance anywhere, except that of the sea itself.

So they determined to return next morning. But the wind had died down to a perfect calm, which held for three days, the stars at night blazing with a brilliancy such as Kep had never witnessed before in all his long life, of ”fourteen years, and begun again.”

On the third day of their imprisonment on this new island the sun shone with greater fierceness than ever, and Kep, who was a most daring swimmer and diver, stripped and dashed head first from a rock, down, down fathoms and fathoms into a blue-green pool beneath.

For just three minutes this boy had trained himself to hold his breath beneath the water. At the bottom he clutched at and held on to something, and for seconds remained motionless.

But what had he clutched at? Why, it was a piece of shell-encrusted iron—a ring-bolt. He stood on the deck of a sunken ship, and one, too, of olden build, and olden times.

All thought of returning to Great Snake Island was for the time abandoned, and about once an hour, until quite exhausted, Kep dived down, and each time returned to the surface with something strange and stranger to tell. She had sea-sworn guns on board. She looked like an old Spanish galleon, or a pirate, or a specie ship.

This last guess proved to be right; for the wreckage about the decks proved that the seamen, whoever they may have been, had tried to save heavy boxes, and from the side of one of these, a piece of gold had fallen, only a small bar, but this the boy took up with him.

He was tremendously excited. "Oh Adolph!" he cried, "we have discovered a treasure ship."

"You have, Kep, not I."

"But we shall be rich, Adolph. Rich beyond compare. In that blue-green pool millions may be awaiting us. Are you not glad?"

"We'll get back to our Island of Snakes, Kep, and when the ship that must come some day, arrives, they will tell us the latitude and longitude, which at present we can't even guess. Then, some day, perhaps—we may return and raise the gold. But there is many a slip, Kep, twixt the cup and the lip."

Kep wouldn't hear of slips and lips; he was very young and very buoyant. Yet he had grit in him. "Look here, Adolph," he said, "I'm a man of determination. If ever we leave these regions alive, depend upon it we shall return. This is as certain as sunrise. So there!"

Well, the boy really said what he thought, and meant all he said.

A fair wind at last, rather much of it, but life had suddenly become more joyful and hopeful, and they had no fear, when they hoisted their jib and little mainsail, that they would get safely across.

But, alas! the wind changed almost suddenly, and they had to tack. This was slow work, and dangerous too, for they shipped much water, and had they not baled and kept on baling, their boat would have been swamped.

Darkness came on. They had nothing now to guide them, for they had not

thought of bringing a compass.

They had the electric lantern, a strong one, and this they flashed from time to time across the awful sea, the waves of which looked doubly dreadful in the darkness.

It must have been some time past midnight, when suddenly Kep clutched at his comrade's arm.

"Adolph, Adolph! O God! what is that?"

It was a light. No, but lights, steadily advancing towards them.

They shouted now, yelled and shrieked, and flashed their light.

Was it seen? Were they heard? Yes, yes, even as God Himself hears prayer.

In less than ten minutes they were on board a strange Australian-bound ship, and telling their marvellous adventures to passengers and crew. But, it is needless to say, that one portion of their adventures they kept silent about, the discovery of the sunken treasure.

And more of sunken gold, I do believe, lies in the sea, or hidden on islands, than we are aware of.

In dim green depths rot ingot laden ships,
 While gold doubloons, that from the drowned hand fell,
 Lie nestled to the ocean-flowers' bell
 With love's gemmed rings once kissed by now dead lips.

And round some wrought-gold cup, the sea-grass whips,
 And hides lost pearls, near pearls still in their shell,
 Where sea-weed forests fill each ocean dell,
 And seek dim sunlight with their countless tips.

But adventures so terrible were not altogether credited by the skipper of the

Wampiri, nor by his few passengers either. Else the probability is, that the former would have gone some distance out of his way to salvage a portion of the *Macbeth's* cargo.

He was on a passage, and bad weather had blown him considerably out of his way. It would have been folly, therefore, to have delayed.

This ship was outward bound, and had rounded the Horn, and was under all sail for Adelaide and Sidney.

Sidney, why, the very name of the place made Kep's heart jump for joy. The *Breezy* might be there!

Both Adolph and Kep lived forward with the men, and were very snugly bunked indeed. They had come to like each other very much, and Kep felt a lit-

tle sad when he thought that in the ordinary course of things they might soon be parted. In one thing they swore to each other to be true. Namely, that neither should divulge the secret of the ingot-laden ship unless the other consented. Something grand might come of this secret, but it must, for the present, be theirs and theirs only.

Once more, even in the *Wampiri*, Kep's flute found him friends. The ship was a clipper of an almost obsolete type, and really belonged to one old man. She was good enough to have had engines put into her, but her owner, who had been at sea himself in his younger days, would not hear of his beautiful white-winged ship being turned into a blessed smoke-jack, and she never would be.

Suffice it to say, she got there all the same, and so Kep and his comrade were at last safely landed at Sidney.

And this beautiful and busy city, with its beautiful and busy great harbour, crowded with the ships of all nations, its streets thronged with well dressed people, its spacious public buildings, and its street cars, what a change all was from life on the lonesome ocean, and the death-life of those inhospitable and barren islands.

How Kep, in his boyish gratitude, thanked God for all He had done for them.

Sidney, but no *Breezy*.

And yet, somewhere in or about these seas, or on the shore of Eastern Africa, or the coral coast of New Guinea itself, something told Kep that the *Breezy* was. He had never forgotten the kind smiling face of the young lieutenant, who had taken him down to the wardroom; no, nor the reception that had been accorded him by the crew forward. He still harboured the impression that his fate would be to get appointed to the *Breezy* in some capacity or another.

But now he remembered that he must seek for employment of some kind. He had some money left, but this he shared with Adolph. He could not see his comrade badly off, and they meant to try hard to get berths in the same ship again.

It would have been easy for Adolph to book as steward's assistant, or even as steward in some homeward bound ship, but no one seemed to need Kep's peculiar talents.

His appointment to the *Macbeth* appeared to him, now, to have been but a fluke. Heigho! would he ever make such a fluke again.

Adolph got a position at last, as waiter in a good hotel, and Keppel Drummond, the son of a lord of an English manor, a place—as what? Why, as a boy to clean the knives and run messages at a neighbouring restaurant.

What a downfall! But really, such downfalls, if in cases such as Kep's they can be called so, are by no means uncommon in Australia. And, after all, honest

work is no disgrace.

So he kept up his heart, and was happy, and even hopeful—wasn't the *Breezy* coming some day. He had written to Madge during the voyage in the *Wampiri*, a mail-bag from which went home by a passing steamer. He had told her all his joys, but never a word about the horrors of the *Macbeth*. He would not shock her.

He was expecting a letter almost every day, and the time seemed long indeed. But then anything might have happened to prevent the delivery of his own letter to her. The address he had given was simply Poste Restante, Sidney. He went there every day for weeks, and noticing his woe-begone expressive face, a kindly clerk at last took pity on him, and promised in the event of a letter coming, to forward it at once to his lodgings.

But wonders will never cease, and one day, while hurrying to send off a telegram, who should Kep see coming, swinging along the street on the opposite pavement, but Jack Stormalong himself.

What a happy meeting! Kep begged a whole day off, namely, that evening and next forenoon, and he got it too.

"I knew we'd meet, my little friend. By the way, is your name still Bowser. And you haven't repented yet, and become a prodigal son."

"Well, I can't easily be a prodigal son, Jack, on ten shillings a week, and a tip once in a blue moon. But how is Katie and her mother?"

"Splendidiferous sonny, simply splendidiferous. Going to get married at the end of my time."

"Why, I thought *I* was going to marry Katie, and that you would marry the mother!"

Jack laughed so heartily that people looked at him and laughed too.

"You precockshious boy! But hold on a few years, my youngkie, and we'll raise and rear another Katie specially for you."

"But how came you here, Jack?"

"Well, you know, I couldn't well walk, and I like this station, so I volunteered like for the *Newt*, and yonder's the *Newt*, two guns, square and trig, and a regular one to jump the seas. And I'm one of the gunners, and good pay too. You've just got to wait a bit, and something will turn. Oh yes, sonny, something is sure to turn up. I say, though—I-I—that is, I am overflowing with useless money, lad, can I give you some?"

"Oh, thanks, a thousand times, Jack, but no, it ain't pride, Jack, it ain't pride. But I've sworn to work up the rigging of life without a helping hand, and I mean to do it. Why, Jack, since I saw you last, I've learned another language—the Arabic," he added.

"Why, you be a freak, sonny, and Jack Stormalong is proud to know you.

And you've still the little black flute, and its ribbon blue. Strike me lucky, lad, if I don't think you have a bit of a sweetheart in Old England."

Kep was merry to-day, madly merry.

"Look here, Jack, I've never done such a thing before, but just for a lark, I'll try the passers-by with a bit of Wagner, and see the effect. You stand by, will you? Don't laugh, but I've charmed snakes before to-day."

Kep was in beautiful form. He stood a yard or two off the pavement, it was a rather quiet street, and began.

Then goodness me, readers, how the music and melodies of the great composer did bubble and gush, and ripple and rush, from out the little black flute! He had a well-dressed crowd of listeners around him in a brace of shakes.

He finished off with a low, sweet, mournful air, that thrilled the listeners. Then, with downcast eyes and face a little red, he appeared to be putting back the flute in order to walk away.

"Here," cried a gentlemen in the crowd, "none of that. Over-modesty never pays, boy."

Off came his straw hat. He tossed a big silver bit into it, Jack threw in a shilling, and in less than a minute at least, five shillings found its way into the boy's pocket from out that hat.

But Kep's face was like a burning coal now. He bowed and thanked all hands, and Jack was following Kep, when the same gentleman tapped him on the shoulder.

"You seem to know the lad?"

"Yes, and his story too."

"Give me his address, there's a good sailor man."

Jack did so, and neither he nor Kep thought any more about it.

"By the way," said the latter, as if it did not matter much whether he received an answer or not, "ever hear anything about the *Breezy*?"

"Why," cried Jack, "the *Breezy* has been on this station for months, or here and hereabouts. She is going to do big licks," he added, "when the time comes, the *Breezy* is."

Well, they spent some jolly hours together, and as long as the *Newt* was in the harbour, they managed to see each other every evening.

But one day, soon after the street adventure, a gentleman called and asked to see Kep. He was the same who had collected the coin for the boy that day on which he had played on the street.

Very straight and business-like was this Mr. Howe, and concluded the interview in a few minutes.

"Wanted to know if you can manage to come to my house at seven, and play a bit to my wife and me."

Kep told him he would be very pleased indeed to do so.

"Here is my card then."

And this is what came of it. Kep was engaged at one of the best music halls in the city, to play solos, and not only this, but to tell in his own simple language, the terribly tragic story of the ship *Macbeth*, at a salary of three pounds a week.

Few believed the terrible tale. People seldom will believe what is true; but flowing so winningly and well from the lips of the handsome dark-eyed sailor boy, it was a bait.

Kep cleaned no more knives nor boots.

But his music hall career came to a conclusion almost as suddenly as it had commenced. Anyhow, his old pal, Jack Stormalong, had brought him good luck, and things looked brighter now, for he had a letter from his sister, and the *Breezy* came in.

CHAPTER VIII

A BREEZY SHIP, A BREEZY CAPTAIN, AND A BREEZY CREW

A sailor is quite within his rights in boasting about his ship. So is an author. Well I modestly advance that I have some little claim to be called sailor and author both. You must forgive me, then, if I do brag a little about my ship—the *Breezy*, and presently I will tell you how she came to be known by that name. Even a landsman would naturally conclude that a craft with such a name must be an airy and brisk little bit of steel. A naval officer might possibly think twice before coming to any such conclusion, for I myself have known tubs of things with pretty high-sounding "tallies," built let us say for coast defence, that went snorting and snoring round our shores, with the water gurgling up their "nos-trils," as a boy once called the hawse-holes, and out of which no commander ever yet succeeded in knocking eight knots an hour.

But on the other hand our British Navy ships are generally well-named. The small craft have wicked wee names, and many are called after insects and birds. In my own earlier days in the service there was a *Wasp*, and she was a wasp too, and made it hot many and many a time for gentlemen Arab slave dhows.

Well, there is a *Hornet* to-day, a 240-ton torpedo destroyer. And a twin-screw gunboat yclept the *Kite*. A bigger one is the *Landrail*, and of course there is a *Locust* and a *Lively* and a *Lizard*. You get to something higher when you find

the *Orion*, higher and heavier is the *Hawke*. But such names as the *Implacable* 15,000 tons, the *Irresistible*, the *Majestic*, or *Bulwark* thrill you to the marrow if it be a soul you have at all and not a gizzard.

I love that name *Bulwark*. It is grand. It is ringing, and brings to your memory the most splendid sea poem that has ever been written,

Britannia needs no bulwarks,
No towers along the steep.
Her march is o'er the mountain waves,
Her home is on the deep.

Well, Britannia has one *Bulwark*, and woe betide the first enemy's ship she talks to in anger.

But about the *Breezy*. You won't find her in the present Navy List because you are supposed to be reading a story of 1907. Yet, for all that, I have to use the past sense.

Well, Jack the ordinary seaman, or Able seaman, I mean—doesn't like a long name. So when this war-vessel was nearly all ready to slip off into the water a name had to be sought for her, and somebody suggested *Briareus*.

"Sounds well," said the Admiral, father of the little tottie who was going to baptize her, touch a button and let her go free.

"Sounds well," he said, "but what was *Briareus*?"

"Oh," was the answer, "he was a terrible Greek giant of bygone times, who wandered over the mountains and by the sad sea shore and was possessed of one hundred arms, and fifty heads."

"My word," said the Admiral, "he must have been a bruiser!"

"Well, Admiral, if he had fifty heads the probability is that he had nearly a hundred eyes, though a few of them had no doubt got knocked out, but for all that he must have been able to see well. And this ship is built for special surveying service, do you understand, sir.

"Capital! *Briareus*? A hundred eyes. First rate!"

There was only one hitch, and, not for the life of her could little Marie remember the word, though she lay awake half the night saying it over and over to herself.

She thought she had it at last, yet when the time came and just at the last moment, as one of the smartest sailors was holding her up in his arms to enable her to push the button, she forgot it again.

"Oh, what is it dear sailor," she whispered.

And Jack whispered too. "Call her the *Breezy*, my love, and be blowed to

her.”

And to the astonishment of everyone near by, Marie lisped out these very words: "The *Breezy* and *be blowed to her*."

* * * * *

Now when the *Breezy* left Plymouth Sound she was starting on her very first cruise—newly commissioned.

She had new guns, six of them; none very large but all fearful spitfires. She was steel—steel all over, but this same steel whether in masts, or tops, or decks, or plates, was a new invention, and to all intents and purposes impenetrable. There was no wood about her that was inflammable, and the officers' cabins were lined with a species of newly invented papier-maché, which by itself could resist rifle bullets. But above all, the marines or bluejackets who might be wanted to fight in exposed positions had light shields and breast-plates of this same marvellous material.

The *Breezy* was going surveying, but she had moreover special diving machines, of which more anon.

I have always looked upon a ship as a living, sensitive thing, and it seems right to call her "she," especially if she is sprightly and beautiful and obeys her helm well (I was very nearly saying "obeys her husband").

I am sure of one thing; that when on that bright and sunny morning the *Breezy* went clipping through the water and heading for the waves, she knew she was the cynosure of all eyes and every opera glass on the Hoe. She was as proud as a girl with a pink silk petticoat, as a sailor observed.

* * * * *

They were all young in the *Breezy's* wardroom, and the Commander himself, who, as befitted his rank lived in solitary grandeur in his quarters farther aft, was considerably under thirty.

To a great extent the grey-beards, as they were somewhat irreverently called, were cleared out of the Service as far as smaller ships on foreign stations were concerned. That is they had been placed on the retired list.

It was found that old men, though possessed of more experience, more grey matter on the brain, were hardly active enough in their lower extremities. They had the courage right enough, but they were somewhat deficient in dash and go.

In the wardroom there lived and moved and ate their beef, two lieutenants, a marine officer usually called our "soldier," the engineer lieutenant, the assistant pay-master in charge, and last, but certainly not least, for he stood six feet one

inch in his home made hose—the Surgeon.

When I tell you that the Captain—a Commander he really was in rank—was one of the jolliest round-faced and boyish-looking officers in the service, you will understand how pleasant it was to sail with him.

But his name was, or rather had been, Brazier before he took over the *Breezy*.

"Don't much like that name," said Jack Jewell, a sturdy built A.B. "Do you, Tom?"

Tom Davis said, "No, I don't either."

"Let's boil him down, Tom."

"Boil away, Jack."

So Captain Brazier was allowed to simmer a while in the brains of Jack Jewell, and lo! he came to the top of the pot as Captain *Breezy*. The name worked gradually aft. The boatswain got hold of it, the gunners also, then the officers and skipper himself.

The Captain didn't mind it a bit.

Captain *Breezy* of H.M.S. *Breezy* sounded smart. From bowsprit, then, to binnacle the *Breezy* really was a smart ship.

Surgeon McTavish, M.D., of the great Northern University of Aberdeen, had been the very last officer to join the ship. He came soon after Kep had left on the day of his visit.

Everyone had been wondering what manner of man the surgeon would turn out to be, and small innocent bets were made on the subject.

Mr. Sneyd, the assistant-paymaster, who was small himself, and wore a little nut-cracker of a face that would have done for a door-knocker, betted he was a short chap and red-haired, and couldn't speak intelligible English.

The marine officer said he was blue-faced and bulbous-nosed.

The engineer lieutenant thought that he could not know much, coming from so heathenish a country as Scotland.

"I don't bet," said Bertram Wynn, the first lieutenant, "but let me tell you, gentlemen, that proportionately more clever and scientific men come from the Scottish Universities than from any three English ones put together."

Well, at all events it was evident that his would-be messmates did not expect a very great deal out of the doctor. He would be disappointing.

His traps came on board hours before he himself did.

Little Mr. Sneyd came down below with very big eyes in his head.

"By gum!" he cried. "I've seen the doctor's traps and I've lost my little bet. Run in to his cabin, Sodjer, and see them."

The marine officer, who was still very young and therefore obedient, disappeared.

"Well, Sodjer?"

"I'm puzzled. Guess I'll lose my bet. Here are some of his things that I saw his servant putting away.

"Item:—Two Highland broadswords.

"Item:—A full kilt Highland dress, including dirks and sporrans, brogues and a bonnet and crest, and skean dhu mounted in cairngorm. (The kilt is presumedly a clan McTavish tartan one.)

"Item:—A set of great Highland bagpipes."

"Oh, Lord!" cried Guilford the second lieutenant, putting his fingers mechanically to his ears, "go on, Sodjer."

"Item:—A pair of dumb-bells, the fellows you've got to put up you know—80 lbs. each. And," added Sodjer, "my bet's lost, for no man with a bulbous nose could put up things like that."

"Heave round, Sodjer. Anything more?"

"Item:—About fifty volumes of scientific books including the British Encyclopædia."

"My bet's lost!" This from the engineer while the first lieutenant smiled.

"Item:—A ram's head snuff box. Twisted horns, tips mounted with silver and cairngorm.

"Item:—A big Bible. It is very likely—

"The big ha' Bible ance his father's pride."

Well, when the surgeon himself did appear, he certainly commanded respect. He was handsome as well as well-built. Indeed among the others he appeared a perfect Hercules as he undoubtedly was an athlete.

Englishmen cannot help admiring an athlete no matter what his nation may be. Then his uniform fitted him well. He appeared to have been melted and poured into it, while little Sneyd's seemed to have been put on with the aid of a hay fork.

The surgeon's smile was a winning one, and there was a quintessence of kindness lying half asleep in his dark-blue eyes that was very pleasant to behold.

He saluted the first lieutenant most respectfully, and the two men shook hands.

"Glad you've come at last, Surgeon McTavish We shall be friends. You are, I hear, a man of scientific attainments, and I dabble in science myself a little."

In the mess that evening Sneyd had said—

"Look here McTavish, I owe you an apology. I thought no good thing could come out of Nazareth—I mean Aberdeen, but now I cave in."

"Well spoken! Bravo, Sneyd," cried the others. Indeed there was a murmur of approbation all round the table. Sneyd was manly and truly English despite his queer little face.

But McTavish stood up. There was moisture in his eyes. But he stretched out across the table an arm half a fathom long and shook little Sneyd by the hand.

Sneyd suppressed a cry of pain, and there came moisture into his eyes next, though its origin was not quite the same.

The *Breezy* was to be something more than a mere surveying ship and that is the reason why her officers were one and all chosen from the best young fellows in the Service.

For Britain even now was—well apparently drifting gradually into war, and though the Admiralty believed it would be averted, a good deal of what might be called naval police work would devolve upon the *Breezy*. She had to be watchful and her duty would not consist entirely in sounding and chart-making.

The surgeon's cabin was not very large, but his books were, and of scientific instruments he possessed not a few. However there was the dispensary at his disposal and Lieut. Wynn also offered him space for books in his own cabin. So McTavish was soon very happy and quite settled down.

It was a merry mess, although very little wine was consumed except when guests came off, as they did at Madeira, St. Helena, Ascension and the Cape.

The middies' mess was just as jolly, and had five right hearty young lads in it, ready at any time to do anything for anybody or for their country.

In this year of 1907 pass exams for the Service were stricter than ever. There was a splendid staff of men at headquarters, and they would only have the *crème de la crème*.

Well, although nobody except the captain and first lieutenant were supposed to know what the *Breezy's* special instructions were, her duties were soon an open secret.

German ships of war were careering about and along both the west and east coasts of Africa. They wanted looking after. Then marvellous to say the Sultan of Zanzibar had somehow become very wealthy—diamond mines—and had built himself a really smart navy. But his ships were sentinels to the British Government for all that. It was deemed good and wise for Britain to have a scout fleet like this within jumping distance of India and the Red Sea.

The Admiralty had learned experience since 1904 and were making use of it.

They were, as every great nation should be, on the outlook for future eventualities. So, long before they reached the Cape everyone on board the *Breezy* had quite settled down into his place, and all the officers felt at home. Moreover they all knew each other thoroughly by this time, and knew each other's points of character also, whether hard or soft.

It is a good thing on board a ship during a long commission for officers to be like brothers. They are together in sunshine and in storm, in peace and in

danger. Moreover, they ought to respect even each other's foibles.

With so kind a captain and one so interested in the welfare of those under his command the *Breezy* promised from the very first to be a little community afloat, all willing to please and be pleased, and to adhere strictly in discipline and etiquette to the rules and regulations of the King's Navy.

As they were all young they naturally wanted to, and were determined to, see everything there was to be seen at every port.

They were treated well wherever they went, and if they stayed but a week at a place there was some social function or another every day, and sometimes twice. Dances and dinners, picnics, cricket-matches, or football-matches, fishing parties, shooting parties, or anything the *Breezies*, as they came to be called, were always in it.

Sometimes, too, they gave a dinner and a dance on board, and this was a real merry evening for all concerned.

Sailors, let me tell you reader, are far more hearty and as a rule better liked at ball or party than soldiers.

Sailors come and sailors go, but soldiers keep on for ever. The poor you have always with you. It is hardly fair of me to speak so perhaps, and I hope to be forgiven.

Well, the *Breezy* steamed up the East Coast of Africa and began work in earnest. They visited the Sultan and the Sultan's fleet and were very much struck with all they saw, and had a deal of as good fun as they could ever hope to enjoy.

About Madagascar and the Mauritius they did much surveying work, and after several months they were ordered to Australia.

By this time the Surgeon and Lieutenant Wynn had become almost indispensable to each other. Both were scientists. Indeed the lieutenant was studying hard for his D.Sc. (Doctor of Science), and there is no doubt that he would attain it.

In this year of 1907 and 8 the Admiralty at home had found the utility of always putting a round peg into a round hole, and not into a square one. The days of promotion by seniority alone were gone by and every officer knew that his own merits would score more than influence with big wigs at home. Good officers can only be had through a process of evolution. You cannot make them to order.

And it was just the same with the men forward. A smart boy who honoured discipline was certain of soon having stripes upon his sleeve that brought him respect, even when he went on a spell of leave back to the humble country village where his mother and father lived, and that necessity of life to a handsome young sailor—his little girl.

Talk of the Navy changing. The ships may change and do change, and will

keep on changing about every ten years, but Jack himself—Oh never.

He is still the handy man, and still the British heart of oak. "No laggard in love, no dastard in war," is your bold Jack Tar.

CHAPTER IX

THROUGH THE HAWSE HOLE

To the Temple of Varieties in the city of Sidney went one evening the young and rather girlish-faced marine officer, Surgeon McTavish, and Lieutenant Guilford all from the *Breezy*, in order to hear a good song. Only in mufti were they of course, but Mac's mufti was the Highland dress and a grand appearance it gave this bold and scientific Scot.

Indeed Mac's servant was a Scot, Sandie Reid was his name, and whenever the doctor told him to lay out his mufti it was the kilt and sporran he got ready.

"I meant English mufti," said the doctor to him one evening.

"You'll hae that or damn the thing else?" replied Sandie with the determination of a Scottish servant who loved his master. "You're no' goin to give Sandie Reid a red face by seein' his master's bonnie Hielan legs rammed into leathern drain-pipes. If ye do, ye'll hae to seek an English servant."

The first day that the surgeon put on the Highland garb to go on shore in was at St. Helena. The officers going on shore were waiting on the quarterdeck for the boat and talking and laughing, when little Sneyd the A.P. with the door-knocker countenance came up from below.

Now Sneyd was sometimes in a nasty temper and when he was so he was apt to be a little offensive.

He had got out of his bunk that day at the wrong side perhaps, but when he saw McTavish arrayed in the tartan of his clan, he pretended to be startled, stepped back a pace or two and looked at him up and down.

"Is this the twentieth century?" he cried, "and do you mean to say that the captain will allow one of his officers to go on shore dressed in that uncivilized semi-savage costume?"

Then suddenly pretending to be heroic, "Oh, I forgot the romance of Walter Scott," he said.

"Ne'er in battle-field beats heart more brave,

Than that which beats beneath the Scottish kilt.”

McTavish laughed. But Sneyd sneered. His shot hadn't hit the bull's eye.

“I suppose,” he said, “like most Scots that join our Service, you're the only gentleman in your family, Mr. McTavish.” This was mean, for the doctor's family were really only honest crofter folk.

“That's hitting beneath the belt,” cried the engineer.

“Apologise, Sneyd.”

And the others shouted for an apology.

“I refuse,” said Sneyd.

“The reason being,” said McTavish quietly, “that there wasn't even one gentleman in Sneyd's family.”

“Bravo, McTavish. Bravo!”

But McTavish wasn't quite done with little Sneyd.

“What's your weight, Sneyd?”

“Well, doctor,” replied the A.P., conscious now that he had gone too far, “just nine stone.”

“Pooh! that's nothing. I can put up 200 lbs.” And before Sneyd knew what was up, the surgeon had seized him by the collar of his upper garments and stood erect holding the little man straight over the sea.

“For God's sake let me down. Lower me. Lower me. I apologise!”

“Do you see the blue shark that has been following our ship for days?” cried McTavish.

“I see the blue devil. Do lower me, for mercy's sake.”

Next moment the doctor stood him on the deck.

He did apologise now, and all was forgiven.

“Lower me,” he had shouted while suspended over the sea, and everyone admitted that on the whole he had been lowered considerably. Yet Sneyd when not in the pet was really one of the best little men in the ship.

But about this night on shore? Well, in due course Kep came on the stage, most takingly dressed in the uniform of a middy of the Merchant Service.

He seemed to see no one, and probably he didn't; but he told his story—that tragedy of the sea which now was improved by appropriate scenery—the lantern.

His performance received round after round of applause, and when he returned with his piccolo, and said laughing, “Ladies and gentlemen, I'm going to play you the very Sonata from Wagner, with which I used to charm the snakes,” the cheering was renewed. He was recalled three times.

The last time he played a sweetly melancholy melody from Faust, and when he had finished and during the appreciation lull, he drew his sleeve across his eyes

as if to wipe away a tear.

"I've got a little gal in England, ladies, and that's how."

Then he bowed himself prettily off the stage.

"But I say, McTavish," cried young Guilford, "you're positively looking a bit pale."

"I'm taken aback," said the doctor. "I've met that boy, if boy he be, before. At Nice I think. But it is but a fancied resemblance I can now see to a charming Italian girl I knew for an all too brief period of my existence."

"Well, I happen to know the lad," said Guilford. "That is the boy Bowser. He came on board the day before we sailed, and he did make all hands laugh I assure you, and you should have seen our fellows dancing. We'll stroll round to the green room and see him." And so they did.

They knocked. "May we come in for one minute?" said Guilford.

"You do us honour. British Naval Officers are welcome everywhere," answered Mr. Howe.

Then Kep came blushing up, and Guilford shook him squarely by the hand. This is young Charlie Bowser, Dr. McTavish. He is down in the play bills as Gerald Montmorency.

"I say, Charlie, can you come off to-morrow evening? I'll send a boat."

"It must be at nine then, sir, after I get done here."

Charlie *alias* Kep, or Gerald Montmorency, did come off, and great things happened. He didn't get home till twelve, but that really didn't matter.

He made an impression again, for he was not only a freak with the piccolo, but the piano also, and he was a marvel from a linguistic point of view.

Just before he left he had another interview with Lieutenant Guilford.

"I've spoken to our Captain," he said, "and if you are still of the same mind I can get you a berth. Can you play in our little band?"

"I can lead, but would rather not join the Service, sir, to be rated as a bandsman. But," he added quickly, "it is the dream of my life to be in this same beautiful ship. Oh, I shed tears, sir, when you sailed past and left me on the Hoe. Yet I leave myself entirely in your hands." He was smiling merrily as he added, "I can clean knives and boots, sir."

"Your name isn't Bowser."

"It must remain so."

"You ran away from home."

"Yes, sir, but I won't run back, till I've seen the world and done something. My mind is made up."

"You are fifteen?"

"Nigh on it."

"You are of good birth. I believe you, your manners are quite a model. Will

you tell us your real name?"

"I promise to do so, I will do so *sine dubio, sed sine die*.^[1] When you left, sir," he continued, "I just stuck a pin in a page of Bradshaw's Guide, and it struck the West Indies. And thither I went. So you see. I came into the merchant service *ad aperturam libri*."

[1] Without a doubt, but without appointing a day.

"Through the hawse-hole. Eh?"

"That is it, sir. And here I am as willing as ever to make myself useful."

"But you are leaving a good thing. What do they pay you at the Variety Hall?"

"Oh, three pounds a week. But I get tips from gentlemen and lots of kisses from sweet ladies. Then I share some of my money with Adolph."

"And who may Adolph be?"

"Oh, he is head waiter at the C-- Hotel. He was steward of the *Macbeth*, and my comrade through all that terrible time on Great Snake Island."

"Then the mutiny and all that is really true, Charlie?"

"Yes sir, though the *plebs* hardly believe it, and I do love Adolph very much. An Austrian he is, sir, but we talk in French."

"Well, we have a berth open for your comrade, Charlie, and we'd like, but it is a matter of business.—We couldn't give you £3 a week, and there are no sweet ladies on board to shower kisses on you."

"Oh, sir," said Kep laughing, "I can easily go on shore for the kisses."

"We are going back to Africa again to make the slave-dealers hum, and there we need an interpreter, but he must understand Spanish and Portuguese as well as Arabic."

"Hurrah! Pardon me, Lieutenant Guilford, but I couldn't really help saying 'Hurrah!' I'm as good as rated—interpreter to H.M.S. *Breezy*."

"Good-night, boy. Come in the first dog watch to-morrow evening, and you shall hear our conclusion."

"Good-night, sir."

Kep went away in the dinghy.

It was a lovely starry night, with, high above, the southern cross, and the moon's rays shimmering on the water.

Kep, who was a good diplomatist, took out his piccolo, and quavering over the waters came now the unearthly music of that proud old song which touches the spine of every true British sailor or soldier, namely,

"Good-night. All's well."

"By George!" said Guilford to McTavish, "he is a broth of a boy."

"Yes, and we must have him. He is bound to be the sauciest boy in the Service."

Kep was rated all right—interpreter. And he so pleased the gun-room officers that he was invited to become an honorary member of their mess.

And Kep was happy now, more especially as Adolph was chosen to supersede the Captain's steward, who had died in the Mozambique channel.

One day very soon after, brown-faced Gunner Stormalong sought audience of the Commander of the *Newt*.

"If you'll excuse me, sir, I want to speak a moment."

"Certainly."

"Well, sir, the *Newt* I hear is ordered home, but the *Breezy* will be out for some years longer, and I'd like to be in her to serve out my time, and Gunner Myers would take my place, if so be, sir, that you'd let us exchange."

"Readily, Jack, readily, and if he is only half as good a man as you, he will do for us."

"Thank you, sir, and God bless you, sir."

And Jack bowed and retired, and next day he was a gunner on the *Breezy*. That's how things turn out in the Service.

CHAPTER X

THE BROADSWORD-MEN OF THE "BREEZY"—KEP CUTS OFF A LEG

Young Kep Drummond's work on board the *Breezy* was no sinecure from the very beginning. Not that any one forced him to do things, but he was good-hearted, and had all a well-bred boy's willingness to work and help as well.

From the very first he had taken to the doctor, probably from that law in nature which causes large bodies to attract smaller. This merely in a physical sense, but it is true from the mental side also. Dr. McTavish had a large and lofty mind. One of his chief studies was astronomy, or rather a study of the heavens and the illimitable star-depths. Like all students of science, he liked to be listened to by his juniors. Well, he had a good listener and an ardent admirer in Kep.

The *Breezy* was sent on a special mission back to the Cape of Good Hope, whence they would receive further instructions from the Admiral of that station,

and whose house was at Symon's Bay, but his home really on the rolling deep on board the huge flagship *Greater Britain*. She was one of a class then being built—30,000 tons, 30 guns, 30 knots an hour. She had a specially constructed bottom, and feared no danger from bursting torpedoes, for the Admiral of the ship and the others of its family could, when in action, so protect the ship that they would explode harmlessly in the water before they could touch her bilge.

The biggest of our present-day ships would look like pigmies beside a monster of the deep like this. The *Union* was needed in these waters, because the Germans and French had possessions in Africa. And in fact these two countries, although not our open foes, were jealous of our power at sea, and the vast amount of territory occupied. In some of their would-fain-be comic papers the Germans cartooned Britain as the young cuckoo who, as it grows, hustles all its other little comrades to whom the nest in reality belongs, out of it to die. Britain with America really meant not only to occupy the whole of Africa, and civilize it, but the whole world was in time to become an English-speaking world; then all wars would cease. It was a big scheme, but then, like everything else, civilization is, as far as this earth is concerned, infinite. It is a seed that once sown grows and expands with marvellous rapidity, especially when aided by the fostering power of true Christianity.

Well, in their way across the six thousand miles of lonesome water which stretches from Australia to the Cape, although the *Breezy* encountered many a storm, there were many and many beautiful nights, when the sky was clear, and the stars so near apparently, that the main truck appeared to be moving amongst them.

It was on such nights as these that Kep loved, figuratively, to sit at the feet of the sailor surgeon, and hear him tell the story of the star-depths, those greater universes that exist so far from ours, that even trying to imagine the distance has before now sent even a scientist mad.

But Kep assisted the doctor in the dispensary also, and this was quite as necessary on board the *Breezy* as a study of the star-depths. And Kep was ever handy with water, sponges, bandages and thread whenever an operation was being performed.

There is no harm in a boy having a good opinion of his abilities, so long as he does know a few things well.

One day the doctor, who was really and truly swinging himself hand over hand towards a main-top battery, when he sprained his ankle. He was so strong and so healthy that he felt he could almost fly, and this was the result.

Next morning early Kep entered his cabin on tiptoe with a bowl of nice ship's cocoa, which the bold surgeon, who had been awake nearly all night with pain, gratefully drank.

"You are a good lad, Charlie."

"Yes, I know that. I suppose I can't help being so. I suppose freaks are mostly always good-hearted. But, sir," he added coolly, "you won't turn out today. You may keep your mind perfectly easy. I will see the sick."

The doctor laughed aloud at the conceit of the lad.

An hour afterwards, with an improvised crutch under his arm and his bathing drawers on, McTavish was forward on the upper deck, with a man playing the sea-hose on him and his poor swollen ankle. There were forward also the middies, and one or two of the ward-room officers, all enjoying the same healthy fun. When stripped this marvellous athlete, who three years ago, when only twenty years of age and still a student, had wrestled with and overthrown a champion, was greatly admired. And though on that day the ankle was considerably swollen he put up his 80 lb. dumb-bells just as usual.

He put Kep himself under training, and the boy began to grow from the first fortnight thereof, though he was not tall.

His father, however, had taught him swordmanship, and at this work he could beat every gun-room officer.

There was one man forward, namely Jack Stormalong, Kep's friend, the gunner, who was almost as tall and well-developed as the sailor-surgeon, who saw him stripped once, and felt his muscles.

"What arms and chest and legs for broadsword exercise *à la Scottice*," said the doctor.

"Be they, sir?"

"By St. Andrew, they are, Stormalong. You're good with the cutlass, I hear."

"Fair."

"Well, I think I've found a hero worthy of my steel, and with the permission of the first lieutenant, I shall put you under special training, and teach you the broadsword. I've got two of those old Highlanders, splendid bits of steel, so we shall see."

Well, Jack just set his mind to it, and soon mastered the art, and became nearly as proficient as his master. Whenever it was possible the doctor and Jack had broadsword play after the wash-deck bath, and before dressing. McTavish never towelled down, and wouldn't let Jack do so.

"It isn't Scotch style," he said, to the middies who were there in full bathing costume—drawers. "You can't have too much salt on your skin, boys."

Even older officers would crowd forward to see the play at early morning. They had, as usual, small bets on, and ridiculous ones, such as "a postage stamp that has only been used once," or "a hair of the dog that bit you," etc.

The man who was severely pressed lowered sword, and the bout was over. But often Highland targes—two at the surgeon's directions were made by the

armourer—were used, and long, strong sword-sticks instead of the claymores. There was good fun with these, and they were not so dangerous. Besides, umpiring was more easy, because if one man was marked on the skin above an important group of muscles, or received the point, he was declared *hors de combat*.

But soon not only the gun-room officers, but the engineers became enamoured of the play, and in time as many as ten couples might be seen fighting like Red Indians on the deck at one time.

Finally, by the time they reached the Cape, a corps was formed of the best athletes, men with timber on hip and calf, and these were called the Broadsword men of the *Breezy*.

But there was an engineer from Cumberland, a splendid fellow, and another of the same build belonging to Glasgow, who were both desperate wrestlers, though this was unknown to any save themselves. Well, one day there was a kind of gala performance took place on the *Breezy*, to be followed by music and dancing in the evening, and the two engineers resolved to vary the performance. They told the doctor, and he sanctioned it. It would be a bit of extra fun anyhow.

It was, moreover, the captain's birthday, and the ship was beautifully dressed with gay bunting below and aloft. The party was very select, and many soldiers were there, and beautiful women, chiefly to see the Broadsword-men of the *Breezy*, and to listen to Kep's piping of his favourite *Faust* and *Wagner*.

The deck was so seated that everyone had a good view, while the crew clustered everywhere. There were fifteen couples entered the arena with targe and broadsword stick. And the performance was a never-to-be-forgotten one.

The athletes on this occasion wore the costume of stage wrestlers, but the light jerseys of one half were crimson, the other yellow. After an exhausting and beautifully exciting combat the yellows were declared winners, but bouquets of splendid wild flowers from the mountains were handed by the ladies each to the champion she favoured, whether victor or vanquished. The giant surgeon and Jack Stormalong fought with naked claymores, and after a time the former received a scratch on the left shoulder. Blood ran over his shirt, but Kep was at hand, and speedily put matters to rights, and the combat was renewed. After a display that brought down the house, swords were lowered, the combatants saluted and retired. The battle was a drawn one.

Then came Cumberland and Glasgow.

The onlookers received them with rapturous applause and admiration of their splendid formation and muscle. Theirs was claymore and targe, and after a short spell of this, with defiant shout each athlete dashed claymore and targe away, and crouched like panthers watching for the chance to spring.

It was catch where you can wrestling, but Donald Dinnie rules, that is, one

man must not only throw his opponent, but keep him down for one minute. The struggle lasted for sixteen minutes, and Cumberland was victor.

Scotland stood with arms folded across the chest grimly surveying his friendly foe.

The doctor approached to where the Admiral and his two daughters were seated.

"They want to have one more tulzie," he said, saluting.

"Only one then, whoever wins," said the Admiral.

Ten minutes more, and Scotland stood erect. Cumberland was carried off the deck.

He had only been put to sleep, and soon recovered.

The Admiral recalled all the combatants now, and thanked and praised them. So long, he said, as Britain had men like this, both Scotch and English, to say nothing of the brave Irish, she need never fear a foreign foe, afloat or on shore.

And the cheering almost drowned the music of the band that had struck up "Rule, Britannia," the men singing to the melody.

"Rule Britannia, Britannia rules the waves,
Britons never, never, never shall be slaves."

It all ended in dinner and dancing, but every one was happy, the Admiral's girls especially.

They had never, they said, spent a breezier evening than among the Broadsword-men of the *Breezy*.

* * * * *

But this cruiser was too smart a ship to be allowed to remain at peace in any place for more than a week. And now receiving orders that some underhand work was taking place up Zanzibar way, the ship was coaled hurriedly.

This coaling in double-quick time was not a real necessity be it known. It is, was, ever, and will be, a species of extra drill in the service.

There was a large number of Kroomen on board, and to them fell the largest share of the dirty work.

These sturdy blacks came from the neighbourhood of Sierra Leone. They were not borne in the ship's books, being working hands pure and simple. They were under the command of their own head Krooman. This man was a forest chief in his own wild back country. He ruled his men not with a rod of iron, but

the end of a stout manilla rope, and woe betide the backs of any who tried to shirk his duty.

But if one gave his chief an insolent word, or even look, he was tied up and had forty lashes there and then. That was called by the Kroomen "fum-fum."

On this particular day Surgeon McTavish had gone on shore to shoot anything he might come across among the heath-and-geranium-clad mountains that cluster like the hills of an earthly paradise all around the gulph or bay.

He was an ardent student of Natural History, and his gun helped him in his studies.

But he blamed himself to-day for taking leave on a coaling day, for some poor fellow might have an accident. And this made him hurry back, with his bag mostly filled with rock-rabbits and big snakes fully two hours before sundown.

About half an hour before this a bag of coals had fallen from the dock down upon a poor Krooman, smashing his leg in a very dreadful fashion. The man was carried at once to the sick-bay bleeding terribly below the knee, and a boat despatched forthwith to seek for surgical aid from the nearest ship. There was no doctor on board that, nor on another one. The day was exceptionally fine, even for the Cape in summer, and nearly all surgeons had gone on shore.

"We'd better go straight to the Naval Hospital now," said the middy in charge of the boat.

Meanwhile the man was bleeding to death in the sick bay, when Kep, with all the coolness of a man of fifty from St. Thomas's, came upon the scene. The lower part of the leg was "smashed to smithereens," as the sick-bay attendant said.

"Have to come off, I think, sir?"

"Mind your own business," cried Kep haughtily. "Why on earth did you not apply a tourniquet to the femoral artery?"

"Was taken aback, sir, and couldn't manage the thing."

"How long have you been in the Service, sir?" asked Kep indignantly, as his busy fingers were fastening the instrument and stopping the bleeding.

"Five years, sir."

"A jolly sight too long. I'll have you disrated. Bring the anesthetics at once. Here, you're too slow. I'll manage that. Get out the instruments. Lively does it. Bear a hand, while I send the man off."

"Yes, certainly, the largest amputating knife; this poor man has a thigh like an ox."

The attendant bustled now; at the same time he was utterly surprised at the audacity of this boy of barely fifteen.

The man was asleep, and would be kept so.

Kep had taken off his jacket, rolled up his sleeves, and looked at the in-

struments. He knew that every one of them was chemically clean, and saw that everything was handy on the table.

"What, sir! Excuse me, sir, but *you* are surely not going to operate?"

"Undoubtedly I am. Don't you know that on board of the old *Victory* in Nelson's day a loblolly boy cut the limbs from no less than five sailors while the battle was raging? Now then," he added, "stand by to hand me what I want."

He made the flaps *Secundem Artem* and sawed the bone.

"The doctor's boat!" was the shout from aft one minute after, and when the hospital surgeon entered the poor man's leg was already raw side down in a pail of water, and Kep coolly picking up and tying the arteries with the shaky assistance of the attendant.

"The devil!" cried the doctor.

"No, sir," cried the attendant, "only the boy Bowser, the sauciest boy in the Service."

"Well," said the hospital doctor, as he began to complete the operation, laughing as he spoke, "the devil himself couldn't have done the job half as well."

"How old are you?" he said to Kep after the poor Krooman had been put in his cot.

"Fifteen in five days," he answered proudly. "Quite old, isn't it, sir?"

"Did the surgeon leave you in charge of the ship?"

"Oh no, sir. Dr. McTavish is away in the mountains shooting cobras and things, but really, he is such a nice, affable fellow, that I shall always be only too pleased to do any little job like this in his absence."

The doctor was more amused than ever, and had a rattling good story to tell that evening to his mess-mates.

CHAPTER XI ON THE "SCOUT"

Because Dr. McTavish was a scientist and a thinker was no reason why he should be otherwise than hearty and jolly.

Indeed, he was admitted to be the life and soul of the mess. He had travelled a good deal before joining the Service, but had never quite lost his accent. He rather preferred to retain it. But this was only when chaffed about his tongue, and when little Mr. Sneyd, for example, rubbed it in too hard.

But the anecdotes, often against his own country, which the surgeon used to retail of an evening, couched in this broad accent, were often highly laughable. As a raconteur there was little chance of his being beaten in the *Breezy* for some time to come.

The Captain himself never spliced the main-brace; it was his duty or pleasure to ask the surgeon if the men needed that extra glass of grog. But Mac loved the old tales of the sea that he had read when a boy, and sometimes, especially on a Saturday night, he would inform Captain Breezy or the first lieutenant that the men looked rather pallid from the heat of the day, and that splicing the main-brace would do good.

The Captain laughed at the idea of his men looking pale, for they were as weather-beaten as New Forest oaks, and as red in face as a full moon setting in a fog.

But on certain Saturday nights, if the weather was all that could be expected, Captain Breezy himself came as an invited guest into the ward-room, and often thus assembled the officers would have what was called a night with Burns. At dinner the band—a string one, and led on such occasions by Kep himself—played little else save Scottish music.

Kep would play a solo on piano or piccolo, and then recite, as he well could do, selections from Burns, notably "The Cottar's Saturday Night," or "Tam o' Shanter."

The anecdotes must all be Scotch, some serious and terrible enough, but some highly ludicrous.

More than once did McTavish play solos on his great Highland bagpipes, or dance the sword-dance, if the ship were steady enough.

Pibrochs such as this sailor-surgeon could play were not simply the jig sort of pieces you find in books, and labelled "Pibrochs." No, they were real Highland battle-pieces. And nowhere else would he play these except high on the bridge, where he could walk slowly to and fro, and a fine figure he looked arrayed in the full Highland dress. In these Highland pibroch pieces you seemed to hear everything connected with the gathering of the clans and the raid, from end to end.

There were the wild cries of the men who ran through the glens holding the fiery cross in their hands, the hurrying hither and thither of the clansmen, then the farewells to their wives or the girls they left behind them, for as the music welled forth they were marching away

Maybe to return to Lochaber no more.

But soon, wild and terrible, you seemed to hear the slogan cries of the Highlanders, as a quick-step was changed into a charge, then the shouts of battle, the cry of the victor, the groaning of the wounded; then a brief pause, succeeded by the most mournful music it is possible to listen to, the coronach or lament for those who had fallen in battle in their country's cause.

There was no Englishman in the ship who did not sympathize with music like this, and Scottish sailors forward did not seek to hide their excitement, or even their tears.

The band would play up again after this, and both officers and men, the latter forward, the former aft, would mingle in the mazy dance.

Kep, as interpreter, was dressed in very neat uniform, that of a midshipman, but without distinctive marks. He frequently went forward of an evening with his marvellous piccolo to play hornpipes to the men, and give them a change of swinging their legs about, and really to witness the motions of some of the *Breezy* best dancers one could not have helped wondering why they did not shake their legs off, as the jellyfishes sometimes do.

So we must admit that the *Breezy* was a merry as well as a happy ship.

There were times, however, when there was very little merriness in their heads.

Terrible storms sometimes raged, especially in the regions round Madagascar, where surveying had to be carried on day after day, if possible, for weeks at a time.

Into gulfs or bays the surveying boats had sometimes to fly, and probably barely save their lives, so suddenly did squalls, that ended in fierce hurricanes, come on.

The squalls would come first, and, raging and tearing hither and thither for a time, churning the sea into a chaos of froth or spume, suddenly retire, when there would be an ominous lull for a time. They had been but acting as vanguard to the advance of the great army of cloud and storm that followed, startling the fish of the sea and beasts of the mountains with its thunders, lighting the darkness of day with the red-blue blinding glare of the electric hurricane—the thick and fearful darkness of the day.

But the boats that were away surveying usually had a pleasant time. Kep was always on board one of these, for his gift of tongues often came in handy with the natives, many of whom were French or Portuguese.

Once no less than three men were washed overboard from a boat, which was almost capsized. No, their bodies were never recovered, and there would be sad hearts somewhere in England when the news reached home.

From the ship itself in many places soundings were taken, and the executive officers and navigating lieutenant had plenty to do in the making of fresh charts.

For a country like ours to know every part of the sea's bottom is highly important, because in a naval battle, say somewhere round the coast of the Mauritius, or in coral seas of the far Pacific ocean, the side that had the best charts of reefs and deep water would almost surely manoeuvre the enemy into a tight corner, from which there would be no exit.

The *Breezy* carried a new invention in the shape of a diving bell with strong plate-glass windows, with a telephone by means of which the officer on board could converse with the workmen below. In this wonderful bell men could examine the bottom either by night or by day, and wonderful were the sights they saw at times, and awful nightmare faces used often to glare in at them.

All sunken wrecks were sometimes examined with the aid of the bell, and more than once gold was found. This was treasure trove; nevertheless, though it belonged to the king, much of it would be paid back in prize-money to the officers and crew.

* * * * *

For two long months did the *Breezy* haunt the eastern shores of Africa. There were men in the Admiralty then, and they would have things done well, no matter what the cost might be.

It is needless to say that the ship received mails periodically from home, and a tiny dispatch boat—a kind of steam-and-sail dhow—used to be sent to seek for the *Breezy*, and deliver the letters, papers, and sealed orders to the crew.

Needless to say, it was a red-letter day when a mail-bag came, and though both officers and men sometimes received news that did not please them, or even caused them grief, no one, unless asked, was unmanly enough to speak of his own troubles. It was the custom rather to seek to know the sorrows of others, and try to console them.

Kep's letters from his sister were always long and delightful. But one day he was startled to be told that his father was in difficulties, and in terrible grief in consequence.

"And oh, dear Kep," the letter went on, "though I am eighteen, I feel but a child. I care for nobody now save father, but two years younger I thought I did care for some one. I have never told you this; I would not even now, but father considered him unworthy to marry the daughter of a wealthy Drummond, and forbade him the house. He never came again; but if a girl of sixteen, my age at the time—you were in Scotland, dear—can love, he took my heart with him. My grief was more poignant and lasting than when our dear mother passed away.

"But, Kep, to save us from the ruin that like a thunder-cloud must burst over Martello Castle, father wants me to, almost commands me to, marry a wealthy

Jew, whom I can never, never love. He is not only wealthy, but handsome and distinguished, and my union with him would save the situation, and perhaps poor father's life. I cannot, oh, I cannot, yet do not be surprised to find that I am driven to it, etc., etc."

The steam dhow was to wait for letters, and Kep had to write against time. But the gist of his letter was—"Marry no one you cannot both respect and love. Death is to be preferred. Trust in God, Sissie dear. I am very young, but I do think God will forsake no one who puts his trust in Him. If father is so ill-advised as to try to force you into a marriage with this man, leave Martello, and reside with some friend or friendly relative until my ship comes home."

Kep was naturally a happy-minded, hopeful boy, and though he prayed longer that night in his hammock than usual, and even in his fervour shed a few tears, he fell soundly asleep, and next morning was his own old self again, feeling satisfied that no storm would ever burst on the Martello estate.

* * * * *

For many years there had been a lull in the slave-trade. Few dhows were now captured, and it was believed the Arabs had almost given up the terrible game.

But lately, strange to say, it had broken out with greater vigour than ever.

There was some secret power behind the daring raids of these Arab gentlemen. This was supposed to be Portugal, for she—though ever fair-tongued and cringing to the British—had always been in favour of slavery, and would have given a good deal to see even Germany predominant along the shores, and on the sea as well.

But there had very recently been a new Sultan raised to the throne of Zanzibar, and so frequently was he found to be in league with the German Consulate there, that acting on orders from home the Captain of the *Breezy* paid the Palace a visit.

His arrival was by appointment made by the Sultan, and the visit paid was, to all appearance, unofficial.

But after the usual courtesies, and meat and betelnut, Captain Breezy, with his first lieutenant, and Kep as interpreter, opened the real "talkee-talkee."

There was much shilly-shallying, and much untruth and fighting shy of the subject on the part of the youthful potentate, so that the honest sailor was disgusted, and through Kep told the Sultan that as the British had placed him on the throne, so the British would pull him down if he attempted to kick over the traces.

"Down goes the Palace about your Sultanic ears, and up goes another Sultan, if you do not within twenty-four hours sign a treaty with us, and henceforth

leave Germans and Portuguese severely alone.”

That treaty was signed, for the Sultan was little more than a boy, but the intriguing was continued from another direction.

For the city of Lamoo on the equator, and many miles up the river, had of late years become greatly improved and powerful.

It had been but a protectorate of Zanzibar and its Sultan. Now it suddenly began to be independent, and shortly after the events I am now going to relate showed signs of unusual activity.

Rich diamond mines had been found, it was said, in the far interior, and why should not Lamoo go in for its navy as well as Zanzibar.

I fear that most of Zanzibar’s ships were put there by means of British coin, and not diamond mines, so if Lamoo’s men-o’-war were lent her or given to her by Portugal or Germany, it would be simply a matter of diamond cut diamond when the crisis came.

Meanwhile Britain was, to all appearance, hoodwinked. On the coast of Africa her only policy appeared to be to sweep slaving Arab dhows from off the Indian Ocean.

In this she was assisted by other ships of the station, all of which by means of wireless telegraphy were within hail of each other.

Officers going on shore from a ship are usually met by a nigger, who may be of any age from fourteen to forty, only he is always called a boy, and acts for the time being as a city guide or guide through the beautifully-wooded island.

The gentlemen Arabs had their own plan of espionage. In intellect they considered themselves far above a Briton, and in this same art of espionage they undoubtedly were, as well as in every devilish device that might be applied to it.

Never an officer who landed on the white sands but was shadowed, and never even an ordinary seaman. Of a party of these latter they took but little heed, well knowing that as a general rule they betook themselves to some hotel, where they might drink a glass or two, have a song and smoke and yarn and be down in time to the beach to meet the liberty boat. A single officer, or even two, were warily followed wherever they went.

Kep’s boy was a clever little rascal, not a day older than himself. A Somali he was, but knew a little English, and plenty of Arabic. As they generally set off to the woods to gather butterflies or lizard-hunting, the Arabs took very little heed of them.

But all the while Kep was picking up the Swahili or Somali language. Out in the forest the two together performed all kinds of monkey tricks, and Kep could soon climb cocoa-nut trees and pitch down the fruit as cleverly even as quick young Bungle. He had some other name, but Bungle suited him well enough, and the lad was rather proud of it than otherwise.

Kep on these little rambles managed to mix a good deal with both low-class and high-class Arabs, but he always kept his ears pricked and his weather-eye lifting.

When in an Arab's house, presumably to drink the splendid coffee which only an Arab can make, Kep pretended not to know a single word of either Somali or Arabic, and thus he gained a considerable deal of information, which was of great use to Captain Breezy.

The Arabs watched the *Breezy* put to sea to the nor'ard. They had counted every man and officer who went on board, then they sighed sighs of relief, and thanked Allah that the villainous Britons had gone.

But one thing none of them had noticed, for when night had fallen, and the *Breezy* was opposite a wooded point of the island, she was stopped.

A light was flashed over her side just once, and presently out from the dark forest shadows stole a tiny black out-rigger boat, and was rowed silently across the star-lit sea, till she reached the ship's side.

"Good-bye, dear lad; good-bye, and Heaven bless and keep you."

It was Kep whom the officers were saying farewell to and seeing over the side.

He was an adept at disguise, and now it seemed no longer Kep that was standing among the officers, but a very handsome Arab boy. He had even stained his feet, legs, arms and face an olive tint. He wore sandals on his feet, a little turban on his head, and carried a spear.

It was McTavish himself that spoke the last farewell.

"Take care of yourself, boy," he said. "May God bring you safe back to us. Good-bye."

And waving a salute, Kep passed silently over the side, and the ship went on.

CHAPTER XII

A STARTLING ADVENTURE IN THE WOODS—THE CHIEF'S PLOT

Without Kep on board, the *Breezy* didn't seem the same that night either to officers or men. He was missed in the gun-room mess, and missed in the ward-room, while the crew sadly missed the merry notes of his little black flute. But Kep was by this time alone in the woods with his faithful little black guide Bungle.

Brave though Kep undoubtedly was, he felt a little nervous to-night in those dreary woods. There are strange weird sounds in them by night.

Bungle could find his way here on the darkest night, but the dread that they might be watched was in both hearts, and several times they stopped and crept farther into the gloom as the sound of approaching footsteps fell upon their ears. Kep had two tiny revolvers of the best make, and meant to use them if attacked. His life was of some little value to him, and he would sell it dearly.

They saw figures glide past them, but these passed on, and they resumed their journey.

It was five long miles to the suburbs of this half-barbarian city. But once they began to come among the glimmering lights, Bungle and Kep separated. They knew when and where to meet again.

Kep held on now, boldly exchanging a "Yambo" or "Yambo Sana" with a stranger, until he entered a side lane and darted quickly into a house. The house of an Arab friend it was. He lived there all alone with his child, a soft-eyed little Arab maid of some ten years, whose life Kep had saved in the street by shooting dead in his tracks a hulking black naked and low-caste Arab, who had seized the child with the intention of abducting her.

She had been able to tell Kep, frightened though she was, where she lived, and the strong, hardy British boy had mounted her on his shoulder and carried her to her grateful father's house.

The fellow he had shot was buried out of the way, and no questions asked.

Such a favour as this no Arab could forget, so Kep knew he was safe enough there. But at first the Arab did not know the boy in his disguise.

The child knew him first, and ran to embrace him.

"You are very beautiful now," she said in her pretty Arabic, "and little Zeena loves you."

A steamer from India was due at Zanzibar next day, and all unsuspected, though gazed at by a thousand eyes, Kep betook himself to the beach and soon was engaged as guide to a lady who seemed fascinated with him.

He talked to her in broken English, called her "Meesie" (little Miss), and took her all through the town all day long and into the woods.

On parting with him, Kep certainly was not the loser, for he found half-a-crown in his hand, and a kiss on his cheek.

"Mamma," the girl told her mother frankly when she returned, "I've had the sweetest Arab boy for a guide ever any one saw, and he seemed so pleased when I kissed him."

The ship lay coaling, etc., for four days, and every day Kep was on the beach to guide the young lady.

Though Arabs did not know him, they put him down as simply a boy of a

different tribe, trying to make some money.

But in this way Kep was able to confer with Bungle any day he liked, and every night he lay *perdu* in his friend's house.

He was soon able to mingle freely in the best and worst Arab society, and one night, to his great joy but quite by accident, he made a marvellous discovery, which, as it turned out, was of the greatest importance.

His residence with this faithful Arab Kep enjoyed most thoroughly. In fact, he was very much at home, and did not for the present, at all events, long for the return of the *Breezy*. She was gone on a cruise up Aden way, and it would be six weeks before she could again cast anchor in Zanzibar waters.

Kep had a capital opportunity now of improving his Arabic and Swahili, and he was not slow in taking advantage of it.

The Arab himself taught him a great deal, especially as to writing, and the construction of words and phrases. But Zeena taught him much more, and her language was probably more useful, as it was of a conversational kind. Zeena was very clever, as well as very innocent and charming. But Arab children in these tropical countries are like tropical flowers, they come early to maturity, and Zeena, though but ten, had all the wisdom of, and perhaps a good deal more, than an English girl of sixteen. Yet she was as sweet and innocent in all her ways as a baby.

There are white Arabs, swarthy olive Arabs, and black. Zeena and her father were white and of high caste.

I don't think I should be going a bit too far if I told you that Kep came to love the child almost as much he loved Madge his sister.

Zeena's rapt attention to all he told her about his own far-away land was very flattering to the boy. She seemed to hang on every word he said. When the great lamp was lit, she sat cross-legged on a pretty ottoman beside him, and when tired of listening, she leaned back and fell sound asleep, looking then in her crimson evening robes of silk, so Kep told himself, as beautiful as an houri of the Arab's paradise. This room, with its strange furniture and rich hangings was paradise enough to Kep. Meanwhile, the father sat quietly by, reading, ever reading.

It was one night when belated in the forest or jungle that Kep had a strange adventure. He came upon a group of Arabs, all armed to the teeth and talking round a fire.

The boy crept nearer and nearer, till he could hear every word spoken. Yet well he knew that discovery meant imprisonment or even death itself.

They were gentlemen Arabs, soldiers and slave-raiders all in one, and some, Kep could tell from their uniforms, were servants of the Sultan of Lamoo himself.

Their meeting here in the open forest probably showed a want of caution.

But they believed they had no need to fear anything. There was not a warship anywhere on the coast, and all in this island were friends. So they drank their coffee and squatted round the fire, conversing freely. Just beyond the spot where under a bush Kep lay hidden, a sentinel had been placed, and into whose arms the boy at first had almost precipitated himself. The duty of this man was to keep walking round in a circle, stopping occasionally to give vent to a long, low, bird-like whistle, as a signal that all was well.

Kep smiled at this. Had the sentry only known how near to him Kep was!

By raising a little of the foliage that screened him, the boy could not only hear better, but see the faces of the men as well. One was a bold and peculiarly good-featured man. His sword and sword-belt were bejewelled. He wore a gilded turban, and the huge dark-green cloak that covered him, showed he was a scion of the prophet's. The others addressed him with tokens of great respect, and listened almost in silence to his proposals.

One of these was of so terrible and daring a character that Kep could hardly believe that they were made in earnest, and he shuddered as he listened.

The plot that more immediately concerned Kep was one to get the British cruisers sent off from the equatorial part of the coasts, in order that they might run an immense cargo of slaves from villages far in the interior, and get safely away before they could possibly be discovered.

This chief was well known to the gun-boats and cruisers on the coast. A price had been set on his head. If caught, his would indeed be a short shrift, for he had been guilty of wholesale murder and slaughter.

At this moment he had a fleet of dhows under his command, of which he was admiral; he had a whole army of Arabs and Somalis on shore, of which a brother of his was general; and the two between them had managed to make fools of the British times without number.

Abdularram, as the chief was called, and his brother had been very active lately. The latter had journeyed into the far interior of Africa with his followers. In this wild foray the brother of Abdul had been more than usually fortunate. He had made a *détour*, and had come to pastures new, swooping down upon defenceless village after defenceless village, laying them waste with fire and sword, and bearing thence the strongest and youngest of the men and women.

These attacks were accompanied by all the horrors incidental to the slave trade, but probably worse even than ever they had been in the older days.

They were worse, for this reason. As a rule, the Arabs do not at once attack primitive villages. They prefer to pretend friendship for the unsuspecting and innocent natives. They follow the same tactics as did the brutal soldiery at the massacre of Glencoe. When they succeed in lulling to sleep every suspicion, and causing the poor blades to believe firmly that the strangers are their friends,

then they rise. And for a night or two hell itself seems let loose upon earth. The midnight darkness is lit up by the blazing of the grass huts; in the lurid glare the wild and beautiful scenery, its rolling hills, its waving woods and lakes, look strangely weird; but in the stillness of the night the most heart-rending screams and mournful pleadings for mercy may be heard even miles away, the pop-pop-popping of rifles also, if resistance has been made to the onslaught; if not, sounds that are more sickening still—dull, heavy thuds that speak of brains dashed out and of old men and women lying murdered in cold blood.

But in the present instance there had been no time to form sham friendships with the natives. The attack on each village had been therefore made suddenly, and without warning of any kind. The fighting natives were speedily driven in, the conqueror followed, and the butchery began.

The best of the natives were soon weeded out and placed in chained gangs, paralysed with fear, smitten to the heart with the awful calamity that had come upon them like a bolt from the blue, and hardly daring to utter a cry, though low moans and piteous cries escaped the poor women as they saw perhaps their babies tossed on the spears of the Arabs, and their grey-headed fathers and mothers clubbed as ruthlessly as if they were but cattle led out for slaughter.

Village after village was raided and laid in ashes, and probably the biggest haul of slaves ever taken eastward was soon *en route* for the distant coast.

All this and much more Kep learned from the conversation of these Arabs to-night.

He was thanking his stars for his good fortune, when close beside him in the bush there was a rustle and the sound of a breaking twig.

The sentry had heard it too, and suddenly gave the alarm. Every Arab sprang to his feet and laid his hand on his sword.

Poor Kep's heart seemed to cease beating. He thought his last hour had come, but he kept his place and remained quiet and still. Suddenly the chief broke into a fit of laughing, as an enormous grey and warty lizard crept silently into the light.

Kep's life was spared. Had this lizard gone the other way and not been seen by the Arabs, spears would have prodded the bush, and his doom would have been sealed.

As it was, he was glad when they left, glad to find himself alone once more, and gladder still when he reached the friendly Arab's house and received his

evening welcome from him and little Zeena.

CHAPTER XIII

PREPARING FOR THE FIGHT

Two weeks passed away, and happy though he was, Kep was longing for his ship to return in order that he might report what he had found out, and so frustrate the plans of the savage Arab chief.

He watched for her in vain however.

But one evening while alone with his friends, the door was quietly opened, and Bungle himself entered as silently as a gecko lizard.

That he had something important to communicate could, however, be seen in his very look and gesture.

"Hist!" he said, pointing towards the door, which he had carefully closed. "P'haps bad man he follow Bungle."

He spoke in a solemn whisper, and coming nearer to Kep's side, uttered just two words that caused our little hero's heart to rejoice.

"Ship come."

"Truly?"

"Foh true, sah. She dere now."

Kep forgot everything else in his excitement. For the time being even his little Zeena counted for nothing.

He hurried beachwards alone.

There was a ship in the roadstead certainly, but it was not the *Breezy*.

He was not even certain she was British, but he waited and waited. And not far off Bungle was waiting too.

By and bye a white boat came rushing through the water shorewards, and Kep could tell even by the sturdy thump-thump of oars in rowlocks that they were hearts of oak who manned her.

She was smartly hauled up, and a young lieutenant sprang out.

Kep rushed up to him.

"You wantee one boy guide, sah? I plenty goodee guide, plenty goodee!"

The lieutenant looked down.

"Thank you, little man, but I know my way. I am going no further than the Consulate to-night."

But Kep followed, as if importunate, and when they were alone—
"One moment, sir," he said in a low voice, "I am not what I seem, but interpreter to H.M.S. *Breezy*. I have most important news to give or to send."

"Can you not come off with me then, and see our Captain?"

"No, sir, if I did so I should be suspected as a spy and my throat cut, for I must remain in this town until the *Breezy* returns. I will now pretend to be guiding you to a hotel, and tell you all as I trot along by your side."

"All right, boy. You seem to be trustworthy."

"I am true as steel."

Then he shouted as Arab guide boys do.

"Dis way den. Dis way, sah, to de best hotel in Zanzeebar."

And in this clever way he was able to tell the officer this whole story.

The ship lying in the offing, the officer told Kep, was the cruiser gun-boat *Marten*, and she was on her way to the Cape with important despatches to the Admiral of that station. But he must first see the British Consul, and report to him what had already happened. The *Marten* was on her way, it appeared, from Bombay, and had received orders to look out for and capture if possible a large three-masted ship called the *Annabel Lee*. This capture the *Marten* was only to effect if she fell in with the ship (which was flying American colours), before she, the gun-boat, reached Zanzibar. However, the *Marten* had broke down for a time, and while undergoing repairs a current had drifted her nearer to the coast than she ought to have been, and her fore-foot got on a bank. This was bad enough, certainly, but what made it all the more provoking was the fact that it came on to blow to the extent of a ten-knot breeze, and that during the night—it was one of the brightest moonlight—a large ship, answering in every way to the description given of the *Annabel Lee*, sailed past within a quarter of a mile of her.

The *Marten* had fired a gun or two; but the vessel took not the slightest notice, simply keeping on her course. She was seen, however, to hoist more sail, and soon she disappeared. After a delay of a day, the *Marten* got off the bank with merely the loss of a portion of her false keel, and made the best of her way to a town not far from Zanzibar; but only to find that the American ship—if she was American—had been there and had hurriedly bought and shipped stores; after which she speedily hoisted sail and bore up for the south. It was the opinion of every one, therefore, that the *Annabel Lee* was a slaver. So the *Marten*, hardly delaying an hour, set off in chase, but in three days' time came here unsuccessful, to Zanzibar roadstead, and anchored.

So Kep promised to meet this officer next day, meanwhile going as far with him as the British Consulate, for everything bordering on suspicion must be avoided. The Arabs even then might be watching.

Kep then returned to his home, and thinking that something terrible had

happened, for it was now long past eleven, the Arab had sat up for him with little Zeena, who was on the ottoman weeping when the lad entered.

He had to tell all his story now with the girl on his knee.

Bungle sat thinking.

"He is one devil," he said at last.

"Who are you talking about, Bungle?"

"About de wicked Chief Abdullarram."

"From what I heard him say that night in the jungle," returned Kep, "he is not one devil, but a thousand devils rolled into one."

The *Marten* was busy coaling next forenoon, but men were allowed on shore after twelve o'clock, and when the liberty boat returned at six o'clock from the shore two of them were missing. Very early next morning a party of marines, under the charge of a sergeant, landed to hunt these men up.

They found them at last, or rather they found their dead bodies. The poor fellows had been inveigled into a compound, some little way off one of the main streets, and then stabbed to the heart, and their faces frightfully gashed and mutilated. They had not been robbed. Both men possessed watches and had money also, but nothing had been abstracted. It was a case of revenge pure and simple. Not that the Arab perpetrators had borne any personal grudge against these men. They were Britishers, that was all.

Next day, with others, Kep went to the spot where the men were murdered. Bungle was there also, but they pretended not to know each other.

Kep noticed that this clever little fellow picked up something with his toes, and slipped it into his hand, and that same evening he came as before to our young hero's quarters and showed him the something.

It was a beautiful large ring, set with sparkling stones, and evidently of great value.

When Kep saw it he started.

"Good gracious!" he cried, "that very ring I saw on the chief's finger as he squatted by the forest fire."

The *Marten* started next morning. The despatches would not wait, but the officer left letters at the Consulate for the *Breezy*, which was now overdue, and left orders also with the Consul to investigate the murder and punish, if possible, the perpetrators of this terrible crime.

Just three nights after this, and at the very time that Kep was thinking of turning in, the boy Bungle again appeared. There was joy on his face this time.

"One oder ship come," he cried. "'Tis you ship foh true dis time."

Kep bade the Arab and his little daughter a hurried adieu! He must get on board at all risks immediately.

Poor little Zeena was inconsolable, and he only got away with a promise

to come back again some day.

"Ah!" he thought to himself, "that some day may never come!"

Yet he really meant to return to see his little Araby maid, as he called her, if ever he got a chance.

Bungle met him on the beach, and together they walked fully a mile along it, and here they found Bungle's dug-out, and quickly entering it shoved off.

There was a strong current running, but they managed to stem it, and in due time got near to the *Breezy*.

"Boat ahoy," shouted a sentry.

"No, no," was the answering hail, which meant that the occupants would come on board at the port side.

Most of the officers had turned in. Only the doctor and Wynn sat together, working out some sort of problem.

"I'll be shot," cried McTavish, "if that isn't young Bowser's voice."

He didn't need to be shot, for next moment Kep, still dressed as an Arab, walked in and saluted.

You may be certain the welcome he received was a hearty one.

"May I bring Bungle in?"

"Certainly, lad," said the first lieutenant, "and meanwhile I'll report your arrival to the Captain."

When Wynn returned the captain was with him. The assistant paymaster and the young marine both crept in with only their pyjamas on.

Then the boy told his story, pausing here and there to permit Bungle to work in a word or two.

Then Kep, during the brief spell of silence that followed, handed the ring to Captain Breezy.

"What is this?"

"That is the chief murderer's ring."

The chief murderer, however, had sailed days ago, probably to join his brother. Indeed, from further evidence brought next day by an old interpreter, there was little doubt left that Abdularram was in hiding somewhere about the line or farther north, with a fleet of northern or fighting dhows, and also that his brother was marching upon the coast with his slaves, if indeed he had not already reached his barracoon. Their object, therefore, was to strike a blow both on shore and at sea that the Arabs would feel the effects of for many and many a day to come.

Fore and aft, on this very account, the officers and bluejackets were the merriest of the merry; swords and cutlasses were being sharpened; guns received an extra polish; revolvers were cleaned and cartridges were served out; while, though they were all busy attending to the duties that devolved upon them,

laughing and joking were heard all day long.

A row was coming, and they would be in it, and from the fight they felt certain they would come out victorious.

CHAPTER XIV

WITHIN A YARD OF THEM LAY POOR FISHER'S HEAD

Admittedly the best warrant officer on board the *Breezy* was the chief boatswain, Fisher. He had been on the coast years and years ago, and knew the Arabs well, and all their tricks and manners too. He hated them with a fiery kind of hatred that nothing could have quenched.

Nothing ever did, he once told McTavish, except blood, and that blood had to be Arab blood.

"If you had seen what I have seen in the old days," he added, "but now I'm wearin' on, sir, and soon will get my pension, or my last shot."

"You've been wounded before, then?"

"Good lord, yes! You see this slash across my brow, doctor?"

"A blind man could see that, Fisher."

He drew up his right trouser leg and disclosed an ugly hole below the knee.

"A bullet, sir. No, it didn't splinter. It went clean through. I have another in the right wrist. Another skirmish, sir. And I had a spear-wound right through me. I stuck to my man that day though, and pretty nigh cut him to the chin. Oh yes, I've knocked about a piece. Most of the swell Arabs know me and would pot me anywhere if sure of getting away with whole skins or an unstretched neck."

In the coming affray this man had command of a boat.

Well, the *Breezy* stole away in the evening, and those that watched her from cocoa-nut trees saw her heading south and went to bed contented. But after darkness, the *Breezy* put all lights out and passed Zanzibar once again.

There was another cruiser on this coast not far off, and to her Captain Breezy sent a wireless message to follow on after and assist.

Instead of landing his forces south of the Lamoo river at Durva, and proceeding thence to the interior to attack the brother of Abdullarram with his wild hordes of Arabs and Somalis, the Commander of the *Breezy* ought to have awaited the arrival of the other cruiser, which had been hourly expected at Zanzibar, and gone north in her company.

McTavish had even proposed this to him, but he only laughed.

"No, Doctor, no," he said. "I won't wait. Do or die is my motto. You don't catch me sharing prize-money or honour and glory and hopes of promotion with any one. Not if I can help it."

They landed at night, and a dark and starless night it was, although towards morning the moon would sail silently up from the sea. But they did not wish for her light to guide them up the tree-shaded creek, for the presence of the moon might but serve to reveal their position to the eyes of a watchful foe.

They were all armed to the teeth; even Bungle had been entrusted with a cutlass and a revolver. They rowed silently and with muffled oars towards the shore, and no one spoke a word above his breath.

Their whole force consisted of but sixty blue-jackets and ten marines. Captain Breezy, their commander, being himself in charge, with Guilford and Fisher under him.

Bungle was their guide, and right faithfully and well he did his duty. It certainly was no fault of his that the expedition, which from the very beginning was one of great peril and danger, came to so disastrous an end. Nor was it from any lack of courage and daring on the part of the brave sailors and marines and those who led them.

The boats were hidden under the trees, five men being left in charge of them. But these five men were probably the best in the ship, and they left them with their Maxim gun, which they found it would be inconvenient to take with them inland.

Then began the long silent march through the woods towards the barracoon, which was full fifteen miles from the shore.

It was a forced march, and one that only men in the very best form could have accomplished in the comparatively short space of five hours.

When within about three miles of the barracoon a halt was called, or rather whispered, and sentries being set, the men lay down to rest, after partaking of food.

They had dressed Bungle, while on board the *Breezy*, in a tailor-made coat and trousers, which latter he afterwards abandoned, and now, when of his own accord he proposed to go forward and reconnoitre, he divested himself even of his coat.

The moon had by this time risen, so that the men had to lie close among the long rank grass and stunted bushes, for they were now in a kind of open country. But more than once that night, before the sun rose up over the woods, Kep thought he could perceive dark figures skulking in the bush or stealing through the grass. Was their presence in the forest already discovered? This, was a question it was impossible as yet to answer. Alas! it was answered all too soon for

their comfort.

What a long, long time Bungle seemed to be absent. One hour, two hours glided by, and still there was no sign of his return. Meanwhile, and just as day-dawn was beginning to reveal itself in the east, like the reflection of some far-off city, Jones, a sturdy marine, crept up towards the Captain and whispered—"Bungle is amissing, sir!"

Meanwhile the sun had risen, and with it a babel of sounds from the woods, which was very far indeed from being musical, for they were not far from the river, and birds of all kinds abounded, and inquisitive chattering apes as well.

The men now made a hurried meal, and prepared to advance.

"Bowser," Captain Breezy said to Kep, "do you know what I begin to think?"

"Perfectly well," Kep replied. "You think my boy Bungle has led us astray, and probably into an ambushade. But, sir, I will stake my life on his honesty and faithfulness."

Hardly had he finished speaking when a shout was heard from the bush ahead, and every man immediately fell into order prepared for an attack. But next minute Bungle himself, wounded, and limping along, entered the little camp.

"No timee talk, no time," he cried excitedly, half rising from the ground on which he had thrown himself, "in two tree minute, plaps, de wild Arab man come fightee. He two tree thousand strong!"

Here was news with a vengeance!

Although the boy had lost much blood, the wound was not serious.

Kep stayed behind to attend to him, and his companions went on.

Just before they started, Fisher came running up. He pulled out his flask.

"Here, Bungle," he cried, "have a drop of my rum."

Whether it was the rum or not I cannot say, but in twenty minutes' time Bungle was able to bring up the rear guard with Kep. That is, Bungle and Kep formed the rear guard; their friends were far ahead.

They had not proceeded a mile when they heard firing in front of them. The gallant fellows were at it, hammer and tongs, and the boys redoubled their speed.

But Bungle stopped short.

"No good go dat way, sah! Def lie in dat dilection, foh true."

Thinking it was wise to be guided by the boy, Kep followed him, and they made a wide *détour*. If he had been obstinate the probability is that both would have been killed. They reached the barracoon at last, just in time to enter with the bluejackets.

And these were victorious; but, alas! victory had cost them dear.

For more than three hours the men had fought with clouds of Arabs and spear-armed Somali Indians. They had at last cut their way right through them;

and, scaling palisade after palisade, captured the barracoon, driving the defenders into the woods at the point of the bayonet.

All throughout that long, hot day, McTavish laboured hard among his wounded men, of whom no less than twenty had been brought in, and at least fifteen lay dead in the forest. Among these last was poor Fisher. Nor had it been possible to recover his body.

The enemy had drawn off, although we knew it would be but for a time.

The doctor had so much to do that it was within an hour of sunset before he could find time to look about him. But at last he finished making the poor men as comfortable as circumstances would permit, and then went in search of the Captain.

He was busy enough, so were the men under the charge of Guilford, the gunner, and the officer of marines.

But the palisades, both the inner and the outer, had been already repaired, and the whole place put into position to stand a siege of days—so they hoped, at least.

Guilford came up to him, smiling. "Why, Doctor," he said, "how pale you look!"

"Tired," McTavish answered brightly.

"Have a drop of my rum."

Next minute the flask was popped into his hand.

"We've got a thrashing, haven't we?"

"Rayther," he replied. "Out-numbered, you see. Only five-and-thirty men left in whole skins. And poor Fisher, he—he--"

He turned away to hide a tear.

"Come," he said, fronting McTavish again. "Let us take a turn round the camp before it gets dark. Can you spare me, sir?"

"Certainly," said the commander.

Then away they went.

They had captured 720 slaves in all. And so quickly had the bluejackets, after cutting their way through the Arab horde, scaled the palisades, and driven the barracoon-keepers out, that these had had no time to scatter the rice and waste the water, which otherwise they certainly would have done. The water was bad enough in all conscience, but it was better than none.

"Come in here," said Guilford.

McTavish entered a compound with him, and there to his astonishment found a grass tent, furnished not only with luxury, but with some degree of elegance also. And there, too, was a supply of excellent water, with plenty of fruit and even wine, so that his wounded men would be in clover.

This tent doubtless belonged to the general himself.

Once more the sun went down, and almost immediately afterwards it was night.

Soon the Captain himself entered the tent, and all hands had dinner.

"Doctor," said the Captain, "I have sent the boy Bungle back to report to the ship the fix we are in. If the Arabs attack us to-night, or even to-morrow, nothing I fear will save us. But if a few more bluejackets can reach us, and the Maxim gun, we can defy these Arab fiends, and give a good account of them."

After dinner, Guilford and the surgeon went towards the spot where, under a canopy of green boughs, the latter had placed his wounded men.

They found Kep wandering about busy enough in his own way, soothing and sympathising with the patients, administering a drop of water or wine to one, and an orange or lime to another; but shedding comfort in every place where the light from the hurricane lamp he carried fell.

However small this boy's capabilities as a surgeon or physician might be, he made a very excellent nurse.

Guilford kindly took the first watch with the wounded men, so that the doctor might have a few hours' sleep, and Kep as well.

McTavish awoke quite refreshed about four o'clock, and took watch himself.

"I have a mind to sit with you a short time," said Guilford, and down they both sat, after the doctor had taken a turn or two among the men. Meanwhile the moon had risen and was shedding her silvery light all over camp and barracoon, beautifying and spiritualising everything.

They had hidden the hurricane lamp behind a bush, and were talking low to each other, as they sat beneath a banana tree.

Suddenly McTavish clutched Guilford by the shoulder.

"Hush!" he whispered. "Did you not hear a sound as of advancing footsteps?"

They had both drawn their revolvers and sat waiting, fearfully, hardly daring to draw breath.

A moment after something fell with a dull thud almost at their feet.

"What was that?" said Guilford.

"A cocoa-nut, I think."

McTavish lit a match and held it above his head.

Judge of the feeling of horror that took possession of them now.

There, within a yard of them, lay poor Fisher's head.

CHAPTER XV

THE ATTACK UPON THE BARRACoon

More accustomed to seeing fearsome sights than his friend Guilford, the doctor called to him to make all speed and alarm the sentries, to cut off if possible the retreating enemy. Then he took up the head. Superstitious themselves to a degree, it is no uncommon thing for an Arab foe to endeavour to strike a strange terror into the hearts of their enemies by such ghoulish tricks as this. But it had certainly failed in its object for once.

McTavish stroked the cold, hard brow and pressed down the lids on the half-open eyes; and then laid it aside, covering it with a cloth and bushes, so that it might receive Christian burial when they should succeed in finding the body.

When daylight returned there were no signs of an attempt to renew the fight. Indeed, from the outlook station, which was the top of a tall cocoa-nut palm, there was nothing to be seen of the enemy.

Not a sound came from bush or forest except that made by birds or beasts, nor was there any smoke curling up into the now clear air.

Being accustomed from his boyhood to climbing trees, Kep got up into the feathery crown of the palm. The exercise revived him, the fresh air, breathed at this elevated situation, calmed the nerves and brain. The scene all around as far as eye could reach was very impressive, very beautiful; but nearer at hand, near to the palisades and here and there in the bush close beneath, was many a dark spot, that it needed not lorgnettes to tell were the bodies of the slain. He would not let his eyes rest on these. They saddened him, and one should never seek for the sorrow it is possible to avoid.

But was the forest and bush as deserted as it seemed? Well, all knew it was not. Every bush concealed a foe. They were thirsting for blood, and their object in lying hidden was but to entice the British out. These felt thankful, however, in their very souls, that the attack which they knew would be made was delayed.

Meanwhile, there was plenty to do in the camp. The doctor had his wounded to attend to, and those poor slaves were in charge of all.

It was difficult at first to make them understand that they were really free. But they had knocked those galling chains off, and they fed them and talked to

them kindly. True, they might not understand the words, but the actions and the tone of the men's voices were unmistakable.

There were several dead among those poor, unhappy wretches, and these their companions buried. Luckily they found Arab spades and other tools in the barracoon, and hours were spent by the male liberated slaves in attending to the sanitary condition of the whole camp. And much, indeed, it had needed such attention.

The day wore slowly by. Before eventide, despite every attention, despite even the nursing of Kep, no less than five of the wounded men had crossed the bourne whence travellers ne'er return. But the others bade fair to do well.

Meanwhile, they counted the hours that must elapse before poor wounded Bungle could possibly return with relief. At the very shortest another night must pass before he could come—if come he ever would.

Towards sunset it was determined to make a sally, and to bring in the dead for burial. The graves were already dug. They took with them a very large carrying party, consisting of the sturdiest of the freed slaves, under command of a gunner, an old coast hand who could talk a little of nearly all the native languages.

Would the Arabs attack? that was the question. Luckily they did not; and not only was poor Fisher's body found, but the bodies of every one of the brave fellows.

It was not difficult to understand why the Arabs had refrained from attacking. Their object was to lead to the belief that they had gone. Could they but succeed in enticing the *Breezy's* people from the barracoon, then, hampered as they would be with the wounded and the slaves, their victory would be an easy one indeed. It would be nothing less than a massacre.

And sad was the burial scene. The dead were laid out in rows, and before a prayer was said the men were allowed to walk round, to speak to, to apostrophise and bid farewell to their dead chums and messmates. Many of the severely wounded were assisted to the spot where the bodies lay, just that they might say "Good-bye" to "poor Jack" or "poor Bill," or whatever might be the name of a dead comrade.

Captain Breezy himself read the burial service from memory. He got no further than "We give their dead bodies to the dust," before stopping suddenly, with choking voice.

Nor was there a dry eye amongst the crew.

But the last sod is laid over the dead. No one will ever disturb them in this lonesome spot, so the burial party come sadly and silently away, and leave them to sleep.

Then fell night and darkness over the forest land.

Would the Arabs now attack?

Extra ammunition was given out, and those of the brave fellows not on watch or doing sentry-go slept beside their loaded rifles, their bayonets fixed and loaded revolvers in their belts.

But all the men that could be shared to watch were hardly sufficient to guard against attack, so the freed men were requisitioned.

And indeed all of these that were strong enough to fight were armed with weapons of some kind; empty rifles to use as clubs, tools of various kinds, and the spare cutlasses that had belonged to those now dead or to the wounded.

Slowly and wearily the night wore away, and I do not think that anyone really slept.

Guilford and McTavish were watching among the wounded, and towards morning the latter had fallen into an uneasy kind of doze, when he was suddenly awakened by Kep himself.

"A negro wants to speak to you, sir."

Beside the boy Kep, and full in the light of the newly risen moon, stood one of the freed slaves, wildly but silently gesticulating and pointing to a far-off corner of the barracoon.

Something must have happened; in a few minutes the camp was astir, and the men had fallen in, prepared for anything.

The quick ear of the savage had detected the advance of armed men. But whether friends or foes as yet they could not tell. Birds, however, were flying over the camp in dozens, and it was this fact that had told the clever savage that people were approaching.

The British sentries would have taken but little, if any, heed of a sign like this, and the probability therefore would have been that an attack in force would have been made before the men were half awake.

They now lay concealed in the bush, rifles pointed towards the still coming flights of birds.

Nearly a whole hour passed. The moon was high and the night very clear. Now and then a wild and uncanny scream was heard far away in the forest depths; but whether it proceeded from man or beast no one could tell.

A whole hour! Yes, and what an interminable time it seemed to be.

But list! Beyond the palisade there are sounds now. Ay, and shouts too; and next moment, between them and the moonlight, they could see the whole top of the barricade covered with yelling Arabs.

But the men had their orders, and not a shot was fired on these.

They were allowed to leap inside.

Mercy on us, what an end was theirs! The freed men caught them almost before they had alighted, and the wild screams and demon shouts told of the fearful tragedy that was being enacted.

But another row of devil Arabs lines the palisades, and now rifles speak out. Pop-pop-pop-pop-pop-pop-pop-pop. It is one continuous rattle, and as fast as the Arabs scale the height, just as fast do they fall; while those who succeed in leaping down are quickly seized upon and butchered by the very men to whom they had dealt out such fearful treatment in their far-off peaceful land.

Worsted for a time, the Arabs withdrew, after making several attempts to carry the barracoon by storm.

But that they would return ere long right well those Breezies knew.

Although the Arabs had fired volley after volley, yet, strange to say, they had not in this attack a single man wounded, so well did they keep to the bush and so steady was their fire.

All the Arabs that fell into the hands of the blacks were slain; indeed, they were almost rent limb from limb, and it was with the greatest difficulty Captain *Breezy* succeeded at last in preventing the freed men from expending their fury on the mutilated corpses, which they even bit and tore with their teeth, till, dancing there in the moonlight, they looked more like devils incarnate than human beings.

There was but little chance that the enemy would attack again at the same place, so a little black slave was sent up the tree, instructed to signal whenever the foe was approaching, and point out his position.

They found they had still about seventy rounds of ammunition left per man, but, as this would not stand a long siege, orders were given not to throw way a single shot.

The next attack was made about half an hour before sunrise, and a sudden determined and terrible one it was.

The first the Breezies knew of its commencement was from a fusillade delivered from the bush. Although such splendid swordsmen, the Arabs are not good marksmen, and their rifles are usually bad. In this case it appeared they had determined to make sure. Not fewer than twenty rifles must have been aimed at the cocoa-nut palm, hidden in which was our little black sentry.

Next moment his body fell at their feet with a dull and awful splashing thud, the sound of which could never be forgotten.

The Arabs attacked about five minutes after, and from a side of the barracoon—so wily were they—that the white men fancied they would never attempt to scale.

Before they had fired two volleys they were over the palisade, not in scores but in hundreds apparently. One more rifle volley was filed, then the Breezies advanced at the double to meet the foe.

I cannot describe that terrible *mêlée*. The charge of those sword-armed Arabs seemed like "the shock of Hell" that Scott speaks of in *Marmion*.

Sword in hand, McTavish was in it. He was stunned very early in the engagement by a blow from something, he knew not what, and fell between two dead men, namely, an Arab whom Kep's sword had gone clean through, and a freed slave that the Arab had cloven to the chin.

When the surgeon recovered consciousness and looked up, the tide of battle had rolled away from him. Strangely enough, as he gazed for a few moments, still confused and bewildered, at the fearful fight that was raging, a passage from Scott kept running in his mind and memory—

They close in clouds of smoke and dust,
With sword-sway and with lance's thrust,
And such a yell was there,
Of sudden and portentous birth,
As if men fought upon this earth,
And fiends in upper air.

While he was staggering to his feet, a sound fell upon his ears that told him they were saved. It was the rolling, rattling sound of a maxim gun.

The Arabs heard it too. Next minute the great gate of the barracoon was burst open, and not twenty bluejackets, but fully a hundred came pouring in. That brave British cheer, as the bluejackets came rushing onwards, cutlass in hand, was the signal for the enemy's flight.

Seeing the gate open, they made a slight *détour*, which was but a feint; then rushed madly for the opening.

Outside was the maxim gun!

Does not that one little sentence tell a tale. That maxim gun! How awful its voice. How deathlike its rattle!

Well, the battle was won.

Did they extend mercy to the retreating Arabs? Not *very* much, I fear. In fact, the freed slaves took up the chase, and in the bush completed the deadly work the maxim gun had begun.

Right faithfully and well had poor Bungle done his duty. But, poor fellow, it was noticed at once he was not among the new comers, who consisted chiefly of men from the other cruiser under the command of the first lieutenant, a larger vessel than the *Breezy*.

Kep hastened to inquire about his little friend.

"He arrived at the place where you left your gun and boats," was the reply, "almost dead. He had only time to tell your fellows that assistance was sorely needed and that they must take the gun and follow your trail, when he fainted.

Your men came off to our ship, and here we are.”

”But the boy is not dead?” Kep asked anxiously.

”I fear that by this time he is.”

”Why, Guilford, who is this?” said McTavish next minute, for as they walked slowly towards the tent they came across the corpse of a richly-dressed Arab, who, the doctor felt certain at first, was Abdullarram himself.

Guilford only laughed. ”That’s the general.” he said. ”And I guess he’s only waiting patiently to be buried.”

”Who killed him? Guilford, *you* did!”

Guilford only laughed again, but said nothing.

* * * * *

It took them two whole days to reach the coast with the wounded and slaves, and very anxious Kep was to know the fate of Bungle.

They arrived at the creek safely at last, and here a temporary camp was formed and fortified, in which to house these freed slaves until an opportunity came to ship them off to Zanzibar.

CHAPTER XVI

POOR BUNGLE! JUST LET HIM SLEEP

Sail in sight!

It was a shout from a man on the outlook on the fore-topmast cross-trees.

”Where away?” sang Guilford, who was on duty.

”On the starboard bow, sir. Well in towards the land. Just coming round the wooded point yonder.”

”Why, sir,” he hailed a few minutes afterwards, ”it ain’t one, but three, four o’ them there is.”

Guilford went scrambling up into the maintop with his glasses slung over his shoulder. He was too tall to make a very graceful sailor, but he got there all the same.

It was in the forenoon watch, just two days after they had left the slave camp in the creek. The other cruiser had gone on before with a large cargo of the freed slaves, and would be in Zanzibar ere now.

At the very first hail from aloft everyone had hurried on deck, to get if possible a peep at the enemy, for no one doubted for a moment that these great dhows, now slowly rounding the point, were the fighting fleet of the daring Arab Viking, Abdularram.

They were prettily manoeuvred, and at first it was hoped that they would bear down upon the *Breezy* and attack.

But Abdularram—who had not been killed after all—was too good an admiral to do anything of the kind. His tactics were those of naval guerilla warfare, and now he filled sail and stood out to sea, bearing up for the south and east. The reason was simply because the wind blew in this direction, and before a breeze a well-rigged dhow is as fleet as a drifting cloud.

”Prepare for action!”

Right merrily now the bugle rang out over the clear, blue rippling water. The very sea-birds seemed to rejoice at the sound, and came sweeping nearer and nearer, apparently trying to repeat the call.

In a few minutes’ time all was ready as far as arms were concerned.

Full speed was now the order on board the *Breezy*, and steam was got up, for the fires had only been banked.

Meanwhile, it is needless to say that the doctor was not idle, nor his able assistant, Kep, either. The wounded men, with the exception of a few of the worst cases that had been sent on in the other ship, had been placed under a canvas screen, forward near the bows on the upper deck, and these had to be carefully moved below.

Your British tar makes a most kindly and gentle nurse, and it was a pleasure to note how tenderly the seamen McTavish had called to his assistance bore their shipmates down below, and laid them on the deck.

Meanwhile the chase went on. The dhows had a long start; but by afternoon the wind had gone down somewhat, and the *Breezy* was soon coming up hand over hand. At three o’clock she succeeded in disabling two with shot and shell. A third had escaped. Seeing boats lower to board the crippled dhows, No. 4 bore down upon them and prepared to render assistance, but a shell from the *Breezy* went screaming through her rigging; then she filled and fled, leaving her comrades to their fate. They made a gallant resistance; but their defenders were finally beaten off their own blood-slippery decks and battened down below. Prize crews were put on board with orders to bear up for Zanzibar; and then the *Breezy* went on after the largest dhow, the flagship of Abdularram himself.

Abdularram in his great dhow escaped entirely when the darkness fell like a pall over sea and land, for to-night there was never a star, the glass was going down, and there was every likelihood of a storm. And it soon began to blow.

This made it hard for every one.

[image]

"A shell from the Breezy went screaming through her rigging."

"Bad luck," said Guilford, "not to catch that scoundrel."

"Bad luck for the wounded also," said McTavish; and so it turned out, for several of these died before morning, the pitching and rolling of the *Breezy* being very great.

"How is your boy Bungle?" asked one of the middies as Kep, looking somewhat crest-fallen, entered the gun-room.

"He is very low indeed," replied Kep, "and the doctor thinks he cannot live."

"Going to slip his moorings, is he? Poor little devil! Is he sensible?"

"Oh, yes, and bears his sufferings like a small hero, as indeed he is."

"Ah, well!" said the middy, "that's the tack we'll all be on—some day. Mellor, give that decanter of wine you seem to stick to, a fair wind this way."

"I'm holding on to it," said Mellor, "because it has a ball-bottom and won't stand on the table."

"Of course it won't. It was made like that on purpose, you untamed idiot, so that dolts like you should pass it round."

* * * * *

The *Breezy* arrived at Zanzibar all right in two days' time, in spite of the storm.

War-worn and weary, that same night the good surgeon had sunk to sleep among his wounded men on deck, and some kind-hearted sailor had drawn a tarpaulin over him. It was broad daylight when he awoke him.

"I let you sleep, sir. I thought you needed it. Another man dead, sir, and poor boy Bungle going fast, I fear. Insensible now."

"Just let him sleep," said McTavish.

But when Kep went back to the brave little lad's hammock Bungle opened his eyes, and smiled faintly.

"Is there anything you would like, Bungle?"

"In dis world, no," was the faint reply. "But you speakee my ole mudder. Tell she, dat Bungle nevah fo'got."

Then his left hand was half raised to his brow as if to touch his forehead. Next moment it fell heavily on the coverlet.

Bungle was gone.

Only a little black boy? True, but may we all do our duty as bravely and

well in the world as Bungle did his.

The wounded were all sent to hospital. They would be conveyed to the Cape by the very next steamer.

But something was in the wind surely, for the fleet on this station now received orders by cable to return to Symon's Bay with all speed after taking in sufficient coal.

Kep had time to go on shore. He went in mufti, not his Arab dress. In mufti and after dark. He could do nothing to find out the whereabouts of little boy Bungle's "ole mudder," and so she would never know what had been the fate of her little son.

Perhaps it was better so. For she would do now as most mothers do—just live on in hope of one day seeing him back again.

Taking great care not to be seen, Kep now went to pay a visit to his friend the Arab and to wee Zeena.

I need not waste a sentence in telling of the reception he had nor of the happy evening he spent, or the farewells said. Zeena was Kep's little romance, and it would be very long indeed before he could forget the child.

* * * * *

Why had the ships been ordered down to the Cape? It is a question I cannot really answer. It was now the year 1908, and notwithstanding the great advances in every kind of science, there will still be a few blind men at the Admiralty and in the Government generally. The consequence was that there was far too much wire-pulling. Much was lost by our fleets on the various stations having to wait for orders from home.

The scare on this particular occasion was brought about by what was called an unpremeditated attack by a supposed German cruiser on some British merchant steamers.

In fact some of the latter had been looted and sunk, and their crews and passengers landed almost starving on the nearest land. But as the Germans disclaimed all knowledge of the cruiser, which they advanced in their arguments must be a sort of pirate or *Alabama*, then the British bull-dog began to growl, and the peace-at-any-price tried to appease him, and said he must not fly at poor Germany, for that heavenly land and all in it were most friendly to the bull-dog. Negotiation, negotiation, that, they said, would settle all disputes.

Well, it eventually did in this case at all events. But there were wheels within wheels, political mining and counter-mining, and intrigues deep and shallow.

Be all this as it may, Zanzibar was for the present left unprotected save by

its own fleet. Now this fleet was a very good one, as I have before hinted, and if manned by British seamen it could really have done some splendid execution when it came to be wanted. At present it lay in the open roadstead, and was even anchored without much system.

The new Sultan was very easy-minded. The ships made a fine show. That was delightful, and especially did he love to look upon them on gala days. In fact, he made gala days and kept birthdays and high days, just for the pleasure of seeing his war-ships dressed all over with bunting. And such a blaze of colour had really a fine back-ground by day in the blue bright Indian Ocean.

Then when darkness came the Sultan spent a deal of his pocket money precisely as boys do in the first week in November. He went in heavily for fireworks, and the ships were all lit up with blue or crimson fire. The Sultan of Lamoo was not a fool, and he had some heavy men (of other nations be it whispered) who backed him. He had, moreover, a splendid admiral in Abdularram. Perhaps he knew more about dhow-fleets than gun-boats or cruisers, but he had men on board the spit-fire shipleets of Lamoo that knew far more about the newest class of torpedoes than they did about the Koran.

There is a tradition (as in a former book of mine I mentioned) that one time—date forgotten—when Zanzibar was not so valuable a possession, but a city nevertheless of some 300,000 inhabitants, an enormous fleet of armed dhows suddenly appeared like a cloud of locusts on the distant horizon. And like the locust-cloud, it bore right down upon the city, and an army of strange men was thrown upon the beach and at once attacked the Sultan's forces. These had soon been made an end of, and the palace was robbed.

The whole town was looted—women carried off, and all who resisted slain.

But, so says the tradition, the army at last re-embarked, carrying with them their dead and wounded, then this Armada put to sea again. They disappeared beyond the horizon and were never seen nor heard tell of in this world again.

They were foreign men, they were foreign dhows, foreign devils all, but who they were or whence they came may never be known.

However, history was now going in some measure to repeat itself, without so much of the mysterious.

Down the beautiful river, therefore, which after gliding through a quiet landscape of green and charming forest, rolls over a sandy bar and empties itself into the Indian Ocean, there dropped one day the midget fleet of Lamoo, and one by one braved the danger of the only opening in the reef, and got clear and safely out.

They were small vessels, very, but every one of them carried death on her decks, and death between decks, in the shape of guns and torpedoes.

They numbered only ten and were all of the same class.

If they were lacking in anything it was speed, and although they had good gunnery men on board their engineers had none too much skill. In addition to sailors proper their decks were crowded with dare-devil fighting Arabs, many of the chiefs of whom had old scores to settle with the inhabitants of Zanzibar.

They had orders from the Sultan of Lamoo to bring back with them the Sultan of Zanzibar—alive. He must be alive, Lamoo said, for in the fierce heat of the tropics, "if dead he would not keep a day."

The Sultan of Lamoo found great pleasure in preparing quarters for his coming sovereign guest. The palace, which looks a very noble one and quite imposing from the broad river front, was specially refurnished, and all that the art of the twentieth century could suggest was lavished thereon. He had even ordered new dresses for himself all ablaze with the most precious stones, and the ladies of his harem were also, much to their delight, refitted as it were. For this wicked Sultan was to lead his august prisoner all through the palace—securely manacled of course—in order to dazzle his eyes with its gorgeoussness.

He had bought the best new gramophones and pianolas for this especial purpose, with pictures galore, and carpets as soft as feather beds. Indeed he had not regarded expense in any way, and determined even to permit his majesty to have a peep inside his beautiful harem, the ladies of which he had specially trained to close on his entry in every form of gracefulness imaginable, and on these as they posed colour flash lights were to be turned.

This was all very delightful, especially for Lamoo himself, but his guest's bedroom had also to be refitted and replenished, for here he was to remain for a week, or as much longer as he chose to live without food, unless he chose to devour the awful rats and reptiles with which this slimy dungeon was purposely stored.

When the fleet was once fairly at sea, the three happiest men anywhere on the coast of Africa were Admiral Abdularram, who gloated on the thoughts of the coming bombardment, the Sultan of Zanzibar because he was in blissful ignorance of what was to happen, and Lamoo himself, as he mused all day and dreamt all night about the treat he had in store for his kingly guest.

CHAPTER XVII

THE MIDGET FLEET. BOMBARDMENT. FEARFUL SCENES

When nations or peoples go to war, they invest the Supreme Being with a new title, which is, in my opinion, blasphemous in the extreme. They speak of Him, address Him, pray to Him, as the God of War, or God of Battles.

And, indeed, the priests of both sides do a large amount of praying. Each thinks his own cause the most just, and endeavours to invoke from Heaven strength for armies and navies, and blessings on every shot, so to speak, that shall be fired. And yet, every bursting shell may send hundreds into eternity and seal their doom for ever.

The Prince of Lamoo certainly did his share of praying. He prayed so much on that holy carpet of his, that he narrowly escaped having housemaid's knee.

But—and it is just here where the absurdity of the situation comes in—between the hours of prayer he went to have another look through his splendid palace, or gave orders for a few more loathsome reptiles to be introduced into the coming king's bedroom.

And as his fleet sailed south and away, Abdularram prayed also many times and often, never failing between whiles to note whether or not the scimitars and swords of his men, and his own pet dagger, which had so often wept blood, possessed sufficient keenness of edge to please him.

In four or five days' time the midget fleet were within an easy distance of Zanzibar, but stopped dead now till the darkness should fall.

About six o'clock, as usual in those regions, the sun sank behind the horizon, casting a red gleam of light across the waves, crimson as the blood that would flow ere he once more appeared in the golden east.

Wireless telegraphy had reached its highest pitch of perfection by this time. Indeed, it was possible then to wire wirelessly round the world, as an Irishman expressed it.

And long before the arrival of the little Armada, a passenger steamer, which had it seen it, came tearing into Zanzibar, and made her report to the British Consul.

There was not a moment to spare. A rumour of something terrible on the wing had already reached his ears, and he lost no time in dispatching messages in every direction.

He warned the Sultan also, and his fleet. Then he warned different consulates.

The Sultan had the utmost confidence in his fleet. The fleet hardly scarcely troubled to prepare.

The insolent Armada could be sunk very easily when it came—to-morrow.

The torpedo nets and booms were all in beautiful confusion, but, of course, they could be easily put into order and lowered if necessary—to-morrow.

It was observed, however, that the German and Portuguese consulates had

already retired into their forest homes, and as for the Americans, well, they took the hint so kindly given.

The U.S.A. Consul, in a polite note to the British, thanked him for the tip, which would be taken forthwith. The consulate, luckily, he said, was well insured against burglars and fire, in five or six offices. Meanwhile, would the British Consul be good enough to give *his*, the American Consul's compliments to the ladies, and say, under the circumstances, it would be impossible to play that game of poker next evening, but that he hoped, etc., etc., etc.

But before either battle or bombardment began, needles began to waggle and prattle on no less than three British cruisers that were on their way from India, also in the wireless telegraphic office at the Cape, and from that messages flew over the sea to send back the *Breezy*, and on towards Zanzibar with all speed. If the midget fleet had done any mischief, they were to capture, burn, or in other ways destroy it, wherever it could be found.

Nor were the Americans behind hand. The signalling station might be knocked down, or fired, so they must make good use of it before such an accident befel it. As good luck would have it, two Yankee battle-ships of tremendous strength were well within hail. The consul wired them at once, well, he wirelessly wired them, and the message ran somewhat as follows:

"If this Marconi reaches the American battle-ships, *Niagara* and *Delaware*, alias *Blue Blazes*, and the *Plunger*, will they please make all speed hither to save us, and other American citizens, from the wrath to come to-morrow. Come with your thunders and defend the flag. A fleet of pirates is now on its way to bombard us, and in Zanzibar to-morrow the devil himself will be let loose, and the whole show painted red."

Nothing more could be done. For shortly after dark, cleared for action, the midget fleet was once more on the wing. A darker nor more dismal night had never been seen in the roadstead before. Nor a wilder, for as if to aid the Armada, a breeze had sprung up, which rapidly increased to half a gale, with the usual accompaniments in these latitudes, of loud thunder and rain, that at one time more resembled the bursting of a waterspout than anything else.

The Sultan's ships twitched and tugged at their anchors, which some of them even dragged.

On so fearful a night surely the Armada would dare to do nothing, could do nothing. Like the Spanish Armada of the brave days of old, Lamoo's midget fleet would be scattered or sunk.

The *Breezy* was making good way southward, when old Marconi began to speak.

Sometime after, little Sneyd ran into the ward-room with a bit of flimsy in his hand. The officers were discussing nips of sherry and bitters, or curaçoa and

brandy, or anything good and handy, that would encourage the appetite. Very wrong this was indeed, but dinner would soon be laid, and there was a sad want of excitement among all hands, the depression that always follows a fight, whether victorious or the reverse.

"Honolulu!" cried Sneyd, "I'd give a day's pay to know who on earth does hold the ribbons in the British Navy."

"If you did," said Guilford quietly, "you would make things hum, wouldn't you, my dear little jumping Moses?"

"But look here. Here's a pretty go. Here is a blooming muddle! First, we were ordered to fly to the Cape, now we are called back, ordered back, kicked back, confound 'em, I say,

"Confound their politics,
Frustrate their Navy tricks."

"Hurrah! Hear, hear; but what is it all about?"

"They're going to board and burn Zanzibar, as far as I can see of it—a fleet from Lamoo is going to bring down the sleepy Sultan by the run."

The Captain at this moment sent for the first lieutenant, and in two minutes' time, if not less, the *Breezy* had turned almost on her own length, and was rushing through the waves at full speed, on her way back to the city of the Arab Sultan.

At this time it was quite the fashionable thing for the foreign resident gentry of this place to have lodges in the sylvan interior, to which they could retreat for real quiet, and real hygiene, for as regards matters sanitary, there was still in the city itself much to be desired.

There were good roads thereto, so men mounted their motors, and hurried their families into what they looked upon as places of safety.

But for the most part, they themselves returned to see the fun, as they phrased it. Then came on the terrible storm. Whatever might happen now, they must bear the brunt of it.

* * * * *

Abdularram was as fierce in his wrath as any Viking of old, for his hatred of his foes, the British, no amount of blood could ever quench. He had felt highly honoured when he was appointed Arab Admiral of the midget fleet. His Sultan told him that he admired his courage, his wisdom, and fighting qualities. But, there was one proviso that, brave as he was, Abdularram did not quite care about.

He, this mighty chieftain, would remain Admiral of the fleet as long as he lived, on one condition only, namely, that he returned to the palace with his enemy alive, if he did not, he should be deposed, and cast into the dungeon, so well prepared, there to die and rot. He even permitted Abdularram to take a lantern, and enter the dreadful place, and have one look around. This, he felt certain, would impress his Admiral. Abdularram did as he was bid, had one peep round, and rushed out again, apparently in all the terrors of some ghastly nightmare. The dungeon had certainly impressed him, so much so, that he made a vow never to enter there again.

On such a night as this no officer of the Sultan's fleet dreamt of an attack. If the enemy were really approaching, they would wait for sunrise, then the Sultan's fleet would be under weigh to meet theirs.

Had it been calm, it would have been impossible for a ship of any kind to approach the anchored fleet without being heard. There were the roar of the wind, the rage of the lashing waves, lit up every now and then by spectral lightning, and the artillery crash of the thunder.

But shortly before midnight, and while the British Consul himself, with one or two friends, sat in an unlit room, smoking and occasionally gazing seawards, suddenly the pitch darkness out yonder was lit up with the fires of death and destruction. An explosion was heard, far louder and awe-inspiring than any that ever before had shaken the city's foundations.

One of the biggest ships was blown up, literally broken into two gigantic fragments, the red ends of which shot up into the air in the centre of a perfect volcano of light and fire. In the midst of this, could be seen, along with debris of every description, the mangled and dismembered bodies of scores of poor wretches, who had not been given time even to utter a cry or explanation.

Then a seething plunge, as the wreck sunk down, followed by a darkness that could be, metaphorically speaking, cut with a sabre.

But pieces of the wreck were hurled as far as the sands, on which they fell, still hot and blazing.

Another explosion took place very soon after. It was, if anything, more horrible. A third, a fourth, and a fifth.

The torpedoes had done their terrible work with a completeness that had never before been equalled.

Two vessels, had not been sunk, but one of these had taken fire, white smoke spued up from her first, then flames quickly spreading fore and aft.

And by the light of this blaze of war the Sultan's flagship could still be seen swaying safe and stately at her moorings.

A more terrible, because less sudden fate was reserved for her.

Abdularram knew his business. He knew that three or four times a week

the youthful Sultan was in the habit of sleeping on board this battle-ship, the after quarters having been furnished for his sake with all the luxuriousness of an eastern palace.

"He may be there to-night," thought the great chief, "and I have orders to make him prisoner. Never a torpedo must be fired in her direction, never a hair of the monarch's head must fall to the ground."

Guided by telephonic communication with Admiral Abdullarram's ship, the midget fleet had pierced the darkness in two lines, and taken up positions in the same formation in which Nelson had placed his ships at the battle of the Nile.

Arab's eyes are more used to darkness than a European's, so with their twinkling lights, that the Zanzibarees had not even taken the precaution to put out, each ship in the anchored fleet could be correctly positioned. Apart from this, the lightning that flickered and flashed ghost-like about their hulls would have given the clue to the enemy.

This great flagship now began to vomit forth fire and shot and shell, and the rattle of her belching guns was louder far than the loudest thunder.

But in the inky night there was now no visible target, for the burning ship had soon blown up. They might as well have fired in the empty air.

Then flashlights were turned upon her by the enemy, lighting her up fitfully, and for a moment or two only.

For the time being, the streams of electric light were only necessary to guide the midgets towards her.

Five of these latter surrounded her, and a hellish legion of fierce cutlass-armed fighting Arabs swarmed on board of her.

There had been a sudden lull in the storm, the thunder had also ceased to rattle, though the seas still lashed in fury. It was as if Nature appalled, held her breath to witness the horrors of the fight that was now raging on the battle decks of the Sultan's flagship.

The cries, the yells, the wild appeals for mercy, could be distinctly heard at the Consul's window, and added to the horror of this terrible night.

But it was soon over. The crew had all been slain, or leapt overboard in wild panic, and those who remained alive were rushed below and imprisoned. The Sultan was not found.

The flagship's fires had been found banked, and soon after her capture, with every light extinguished, she was steaming out to sea.

About the same time flash lights began to gleam from the Sultan's palace, and the forts opened fire at last.

A bit of useless braggadocio, for had the enemy been visible, which they were not, those gunners could not have hit a single ship. In fact, there is strong reason for believing that when a gun was trained, or a broadside to be fired by

electricity the men placed their fingers in their ears and fell flat on the gallery floor.

The midget fleet, it was believed, had gone for the night. It was swallowed up in the black beyond. The Sultan, terror-stricken now, and weeping like a boy of ten, had been shut up in the inner recesses of his palace, and his bodyguard tripled.

The enemy had retired, it is true, but in three hours' time it gave ample evidence that, instead of having gone for good, it lingered out yonder for evil.

Without doubt it had come to stay until it had accomplished the object of its mission.

But now the sky had cleared, and the calm had come.

Out shone the radiant stars, and a moon in its last quarter shed silver radiance on the sea.

The beach at Zanzibar is of clearest sand, the blocks of buildings facing the roadstead whiter than granite, and in the dim light of the stars and scimitar moon they could be easily seen at a distance of two miles, and even at this long distance, with his midget fleet, Abdularram, knowing well the accuracy of his gunners' aim, commenced the bombardment of Zanzibar.

Their plan was to watch and wait till a volume of white smoke with a centre of fire showed out on shore, and to aim and fire at that particular spot.

The Admiral of the fleet thought that by this means he would manage soon to silence the forts.

He knew the British Consulate, and guns were laid, and, indeed, for every white block of building it was possible to distinguish, with the exception of the palace itself.

His desire was to show the Sultan that so long as he remained there he was safe.

Zanzibar's guns, however, took much longer to silence than Abdularram could have credited; and when the sun once more rose over the sea, the shells from the fort being now better planted, he considered it prudent to take up a position farther away, where he knew his vessel would be safe.

This Arab Viking, if the truth must be told, was more at home in a sailing fighting dhow than in a ship of war.

He had, nevertheless, performed one of the most wonderful feats of modern times, namely, the boarding and carrying by cutlass and revolver of a great and mighty battle-ship.

After a time there was a lull in the firing from both sides.

Abdularram felt himself sure of that city. Zanzibar, he told his captain, was sure to fall, and its Sultan, to say nothing of the best part of his harem, would be in his power.

"And after that, your Highness?" the captain asked, with an evil glare in his eye.

"After that," replied Abdularram, "the looting and sacking of the city."

He smiled grimly as he thought of it. The cruelty of the pirates in days of old has hardly any parallel in the twentieth century, and I now ask myself, ere penning the concluding lines of this chapter, whether I should tell my young readers anything of the tragedy that now took place on board the conquered battleship. I shall do so in the simplest language I can command, and in the least graphic. And I do this much, because I know and feel that our British boys, who I trust will grow up good and brave defenders of their fatherland, may realize some of the horrors of naval warfare.

And savage and ruthless as Abdularram was, he was no worse than Napoleon Buonaparte, who slew his prisoners by thousands.

Few Arabs are such devils at heart as Buonaparte was, and even this man before giving orders for the deed of horror to be committed, led gradually up to it in a conversation with Captain Suleiman.

"My Captain," he said, "those men of the *Mahomed's Pride* (the flagship) fought well and bravely."

"Alas! yes, as our dead and wounded can testify," was the cautious reply.

"They nevertheless encumber us greatly; but though, no doubt, you have them securely battened down they were sealed up so quickly that it was impossible disarm them. They have still their swords and cutlasses?"

"Yes, sahib."

"I mean to man the guns of *Mahomed* with our own brave fellows, and turn them against the city.

"Yes, good sahib."

"But what if, at the very commencement of the fight, the prisoners break loose from the hold, like a horde of foul fiends, and attempt to retake the ship, and if successful, turn her powerful guns on our midget fleet?"

"I do not fear for that; we could overpower them, I think," said Suleiman.

"Yes, I believe we might, but the slaughter would be harrowing."

His captain did not answer. He waited.

"It would be best of all," said the Admiral, at last, "to get rid of them in a more humane and safer way. Suleiman," he added, "it must be done!"

And Suleiman knew what was meant, and that the order for the execution of two hundred prisoners had to be given by him.

"The die is cast!" said Abdularram.

And he walked aft to smoke a pipe of opium. The plank was rigged, it was long, wide, well-balanced, and commanded at the ship end by a strong rope.

The further end was made slippery with vegetable oil.

The prisoners were then ordered up in batches of ten—disarmed, of course. The poor fellows knew their doom, and most of them went quietly to death. But the scene was soul-harrowing, for some of them refused to mount, and even attempted to fly at the necks of their enemies.

I'll go no further, only to say, that all throughout this awful and sickening execution, the battle-ship was *going ahead at full speed, lest some of the unhappy wretches should attempt in their agony to clamber back on board again.*

When it was all over, the decks were sluiced down, but not properly cleaned, so that blood still lurked dark in cracks and seams.

Then laying down his little pipe, Abdullarram, in his jewelled uniform, stalked stately forth from his room.

"They have gone?" he said.

"Yes, sahib."

"Thank Allah! He has delivered His enemies and ours into our hands. Breakfast, and prayers, now, Suleiman."

The breakfast was no mockery, but surely the prayers were.

After all this, well knowing the advantage and restorative power of rest, Abdullarram ordered every man who could be spared to lie down and sleep.

And motionless for hours upon the blue bosom of the great deep, lay the midget fleet, and the huge and stately battleship.

CHAPTER XVIII

FURIOUS FIGHTING ON SEA AND LAND

The bombardment began in earnest about midday.

The midget fleet remained at a respectable distance, keeping up a plunging fire. Abdullarram meant to keep his own ships afloat though he cared nothing about the mighty leviathan that had been flagship to the feeble-kneed young Sultan of Zanzibar. Indeed, she was advanced later on in the day very close indeed to the city.

She was prettily manoeuvred too, and poured broadside after broadside into the principal part of the town, which now lay completely at its mercy.

The British Consul had remained and also the American, and about four in the afternoon they succeeded in getting audience of the Sultan himself. They had been unable to see him sooner. He had a headache, and was lying down, his

prime minister told them.

The Sultan received him in what we may call his reception room, for want of a better name.

He remained seated and looked ghastly pale and old. Indeed, though little more than twenty, he seemed quite an aged man, with the exception of his black and flowing locks.

The British Consul stopped to bow at the audience chamber door.

So quickly had he stopped that the tall raw-boned American Consul, who appeared always to be in a hurry, and who was coming up behind, ran foul of him with such force that both were precipitated on the carpet.

The carpet was exceedingly rich and soft, yet, to say the least of it, this was rather an undignified way of entering into the presence of so great a Sultan.

"Come, I say," cried Munro the American, as he gathered himself up, fold after fold, from off the floor, "why the old Harry did you stop and protrude your stern like that? I believe I've split my blessed breeches."

Before Mr. Johnson could gather himself up, for he was somewhat John Bull-ish fore and aft, Munro had stepped over him, and advanced to the regal chair.

"Shake," he said, holding out a long, bony, twelve-inch hand.

The Sultan moved not, nor answered. Was he not a king?

"Shake!" shouted the Consul, in a voice that made the jewelled ornaments round the room ring and tinkle. "How long have you been deaf?"

The Sultan now condescended to shake hands with both Consuls.

Munro wheeled quickly round to a liveried or uniformed attendant.

"I say," he cried, "fetch us two brandies and a split, I see this is going to be dry work."

The gentleman whom he addressed was really one of the Sultan's ministers and advisers.

He smiled as he looked comically at Munro. "Would ye no hae a drap o' the auld kirk," he said. "It's prime stuff and a' the wey fae Glendronach."

"Ho, ho, ho," laughed Munro. "You're Scotch are you?"

"Ay, man, and a Banffshire laddie for bye. But, dod, man, I have ma ain adees (troubles) wi' that fushionless sinner, yonder."

A shell at this moment burst in the air outside, and the concussion shattered the glass in the window.

"Losh!" said the Scot, "that's gey near and vera emphatic."

The Sultan leapt up and would have bolted had not Sandie caught him by the skirts and thrust him back into his chair of state again.

"Off you go, my friend, and order the drinks; I'm going to talk big to this little Arab."

There was no respect for "nigger Sultans" in Munro's mind.

"I say, young fellow," he cried, "this is a pretty kettle of fish, ain't it? You're in a jolly tight corner you know."

"Oh! Can you save me?" whimpered the Sultan. "That pirate king will slay us all."

"Not he. He will pay some degree of respect for the Stars and Stripes and the Yewnton Jack, you may bet your bottom dollar on that. No, young fellow, it is you they are after, and they're going to catch you alive too. Your fleet is all down below among the jelly-fish except your flag-ship. They are knocking everything about but sparing your palace."

"Where shall I hide? whither shall I fly? I must hie me to my harem.

"Nary a hie my dear boy; if that pirate king, as you call him, comes on shore, one of the first places he will visit will be your harem. He will soon have you out of there."

"But where—where—can I go?"

"Well, to tell you the truth the coal cellar would be the best place for a potentate like you. Ah, here come the drinks. I suppose your Highness won't join us? No?"

"Now then," he continued, "let us finish this talkee-talkee. I'm not giving John Bull here a show, but he can put in his oar when he pleases."

"I'll leave the talking to you, sir," said Johnson.

"And, young fellow, have you called out your troops?"

"They are assembling. They are now in the bush," said the Sultan.

"Well, I'd keep them there for a time. How many maxims?"

"Only a few."

"Get them under weigh. Then I think we may be able to repel these fellows if they attempt to land. Write us a note now, introducing us to your general, and John Bull and I will take it."

"Meanwhile where shall I hide my august person?"

"There is a rare lot of the august about your high-and-mightiness I must say, but 'pon honour, old chap, you'll feel safer and more at home in the coal cellar. I'm not joking, really."

Then both consuls bowed, and made for the door.

Mr. Johnson lingered a moment to smile and say, "Keep up your heart, Sultan; it is sure to come right in the end."

"Allah be praised for those words of comfort!" whimpered the Sultan, "I shall do what is best in His sight."

At this moment the bombardment seemed to be at its fiercest and the inhabitants of the doomed city were terror-stricken. Never before had anyone here, Arab, Parsee, Hindu, or negro slave, heard the sound of a gun fired in anger, nor

the sound of a bursting shell. For the most part they lay low in their houses, fearing to go into the open or trust themselves in the bush, so that the usually crowded streets were now almost deserted.

Johnson and Munro got horses from the Sultan's stables and went tearing out to the sylvan suburbs.

They found here about 5,000 Arab soldiers. Only the ghost of an army, for of late years it had been much neglected, and many of the men were now unarmed while others had merely the long, old-fashioned Arab guns. But they had all spears and swords.

Darkness fell before the two consuls were able to evoke something like order and arrangement in this force. Only their presence had been a comfort to the officers, while the men were in good spirits and evidently burning for a fight.

Would the enemy land, and if so where and when? A complete row of sentinels were spread within hail of each other as far round the beach as they could be extended, and the Sultan's troops were held in readiness to march, upon any given spot.

But the night passed quietly away. Abdularram saw the futility now of wasting his ammunition in the darkness.

The name of the gunner who fired the shot in a moment of forgetfulness at the palace itself, was taken, and for the present he went unpunished, as the Admiral could not spare him, but he was to fight now under the not very comforting assurance that the moment the city capitulated or was carried by assault he would be hanged or thrown into the sea, which after the fearful tragedy of the day before was now alive with monstrous sharks. The hundreds of poor fellows who had become their prey had only whetted their appetites as a few oysters before dinner would that of a gourmand.

Many of the houses far beyond the beach had been knocked down by shells, and set fire to over the heads of the buried inmates, alive or dead. The glare from these lit up the sky, but as yet there was no general conflagration.

Another night wore on, and at sunrise the bombardment was recommenced and kept up intermittently all day long. The shooting of the Zanzibar gunners was very bad indeed. But the forts themselves, which had only been built to replace older walls about a year ago, were of great strength, and faced with metal, so that it was evident they would take a much longer time to silence than Abdularram had calculated on. As some of these commanded the entrance of the palace, silenced they would have to be before Lamoo's great admiral could capture the Sultan.

Day after day the desultory fire was kept up, but on the sixth it became fierce and fearful, and it was evident to everyone that Abdularram was about to attempt a *coup de main*.

That night shells rained and burst over the old town itself, and soon it was on fire from end to end, and the flame-stricken inhabitants, hundreds of whom had been slain, were fleeing to the bush for their lives.

From the sea the conflagration was an impressive and awful spectacle.

It must be seen from the mainland even from B— itself and Abdularram had two of his best vessels to intercept any vessel who might send assistance. These did patrol duty and warned off all ships of all sorts.

Meanwhile in the darkness, and in a distant part of the island, Abdularram had landed 2,000 of his fighting braves. This from the flag-ship and with very great caution, his object being to make a forced, but silent march on the city, taking it in flank or rear.

The sentinels, there were six of these to one mile of beach, were keeping their lonely vigil, honestly enough, but they neither saw nor heard a black and armed boat glide in and land about a dozen warriors. The oars had been muffled, and the men were half naked and black from head to foot. Armed with daggers only.

They crept silently through the bush in pairs, and approached as stealthily as tigers till within a yard or two of their victims, and these were knifed before they could utter a cry or give an alarm.

The beach thus cleared offered an easy landing to the troops, and long before daylight they had reached the camp of the Sultan's army, and attacked it with such fearful determination that in a few minutes what remained of it were scattered panic-stricken into the woodlands, or hurled back towards the flaming city.

Few who witnessed even a tithe of the horrors of that dread night will be likely to forget it till their dying day.

Those victorious tigers of the sea cared neither for drink nor food, it was blood, blood, blood, they thirsted for, money that they sought, but vice and lust also held their souls enthralled, and it is well to draw a veil—it needs a big one—over the scenes that took place in almost every street that the fire had spared.

But in the darkness they must attack and carry the palace.

Little did they know what was prepared for them. For here by the gates maxim guns had been stationed manned by men, both British and American, men who knew what maxims were too, for some had been volunteers in well-beloved Britain, and others had served in American regiments.

Abdularram's little army was foiled. It was driven back decimated by the hell-fire of these guns without having been able to cross a bridge or force a gate.

They retreated in some sort of order, however, and made their way to the beach, and here they speedily threw up trenches some distance away from the frowning forts.

They were making signals, too, for assistance. And just before daylight assistance did come. But it was not for them.

The brave *Breezy* had come in by stealth, attracted by the lights of the flagship some time after she had landed the fighting forces.

They understood now at once what the position of affairs was and, before Abdullarram realised what was up, torpedoed the ship, which, although she but lifted her bows a little way out of the water, it was evident had received her death blow, for she began now to fill rapidly and to settle. Abdullarram himself was seen on her deck, coolly giving orders for guns to be fired at the *Breezy*.

Before the broadside could be delivered, however, the doom of the mighty battleship was sealed. Even after she had sunk, men were seen struggling in the seething waters, and boats from the *Breezy* were at once sent to save them.

Many, glad of their lives, were quiet enough, but others drew their knives as soon as they got over the gunwale and attacked the sailors. They wounded several before they had their quietus.

Swimming powerfully in the glare of the searchlight and heading for the shore was a tall and powerful Arab officer. His turban had fallen off and his long black hair was floating on the water like sea-weed.

He was caught by the boat commanded by Guilford himself, and in which Kep had entered to help the rescue.

He drew his dagger, and the blow he aimed at Kep had it descended would have closed this story as far as that poor boy was concerned.

But Abdullarram, for it was no other, was struck down by a blow from the fist of the stroke-oar. And that man was Jack Stormalong.

The Arab Admiral fell on his face at Kep's feet, and to all appearance dead, for he had been put to sleep and had an ugly gash on the forehead caused by coming in contact with the side of the boat.

"Thank you, Jack, a thousand times and o'er," said Kep with a smile; "my old friend here, who now so lowly lies, certainly didn't mean to be sparing in his attentions to poor little me."

"You're kindly welcome, sir," said Jack; "you would do as much for me any day, that I know."

"Ay, that I would."

It was the boats of the *Breezy* that were coming in and that the piratical soldiers mistook for their friends. They were at once undeceived, as soon as the quick-firers opened upon them.

They were driven into desperate confusion.

But now the Sultan's troops, whom the American Consul had succeeded in getting together, approached and quickly attacked the pirates at the point of the bayonet. And the battle was soon over.

There was still the fleet to deal with, and for hours it looked an ugly business for the *Breezy*. She had to make a running fight of it all day long, but after getting two of the midget fleet well away from the others, she attacked now with her heaviest guns, and was not long in sinking both.

Meanwhile others of the fleet had made a *détour*, and cutting her off from the south and seaward began to close in upon her from all round.

"By George!" cried the Captain, "this is being between the devil and the deep sea with a vengeance."

But suddenly the enemy ceased firing, and went off at full speed towards the south. And while everyone on the *Breezy* was wondering what this extraordinary move meant, there came a hail from one of the fighting tops.

"Two powerful battle-ships just in sight on the horizon. No, sir, I can only raise their tops."

A middy was sent up at once and presently he hailed:

"I can see the flags, sir."

"Well, what can you make of them?"

The middy had another long look.

"Why sir, they are Stars and Stripes."

"That must be the *Niagara* and the *Delaware*."

On board the *Breezy* there was shaking of hands all round, and laughing and talking and general jollity fore and aft.

Then up marched the doctor.

"Pardon me, sir, but I think that the crew now will be none the worse of some medical comforts."

"Certainly, by all means," replied Captain Breezy. "Pipe to dinner, officer of the watch, and we'll splice the main-brace, Surgeon McTavish."

* * * * *

The end had not yet come however. The midget fleet must not escape.

So now, although she was somewhat damaged, the *Breezy* put on all speed in order to meet the Americans as quickly as possible, and hold a conference, and in about an hour's time the two nations, Britain and America, were exchanging salutes.

When Captain Breezy of H.M.S. *Breezy* went on board the *Niagara*, he found the Captain of the *Delaware* there already, and Captain Breezy, wasting as few words as possible, told the whole sad story, and it was unanimously agreed that something must be done at once.

"There is no doubt," said Breezy, "that the Lamoo fleet will get back to their own Sultan as soon as possible, and there is only one way for them to get there,

they must cross the bar one by one, and," he continued, "it is better, in my opinion, that we should sail for the mouth of that river and wait their appearance. Their sailing south was only to avoid meeting you. They will make a wide *détour* after they are out of sight, and come straight for the equatorial coast again."

This was agreed to. A steam launch was sent back to Zanzibar to advise the consuls as to their movements.

They were going on a punitive expedition now—that was the message—they were to be found near to the mouth of the river, and should a torpedo boat or destroyer come in as well as the large man o' war which had been signalled, the former were to come to the river's mouth, the latter to lie at Zanzibar to defend it.

CHAPTER XIX

KEP COMMANDS A DHOW. A DEPOSED SULTAN

The weather was now splendid, and the sea smooth and blue like the sky itself. Just a snow-flake of a cloud here and there, and that was all.

So quickly did these three grand ships dash through the water that they reached their destination in little over a day's time.

They kept well out to sea however. Had they gone close enough to the shore to be seen by a sentinel from Lamoo, no doubt the Sultan would have been apprised of their arrival, and suspecting that something had gone wrong would have adopted some means or other of warning his ships.

With steam up they lay at a little distance north of the river, for if some tell-tale dhow had met them to the south, it was within the bounds of possibility that the master thereof might have reported their presence.

But only one dhow appeared, and she was requisitioned, much to her disgust. She was two-masted and very fleet. Her men were taken on board the battleship to be well tended and cared for. Then the dhow was manned with enough Kroomen to sail her, and to his great delight Kep himself, once more got up as an Arab, was put in charge.

This clever lad had spent nearly all his spare time since he joined the Service in learning the duties of a midshipman, and so hard a student had he been, that already he could have done all that was required of such an officer.

He was now to cruise in his dhow near to the mouth of the river, and on

the appearance of the midget fleet coming east again make all sail far enough to signal to the warships.

It was a glorious thing, Kep thought, to tread the decks of his own ship. For the time being he felt a real captain and monarch of all he surveyed. It would be only for a short time, but Kep would have liked to be skipper of this dhow for a year he thought. The owner of the craft, had a most superbly furnished poop saloon. The dhow was one of the largest of its class, and its owner evidently a man of wealth.

By day and by night watches were kept and a constant look out. But it was the morning of the fourth day before Kep caught sight of the midget fleet creeping up in line and as near to the wooded shore as it could get with safety, but slowly, because two were crippled.

"Ready about!" shouted Kep, and at the touch of the helm the great sails came round and the dhow was soon dashing eastwards.

As soon as the tops of the warships were visible he signalled, and in a very short time he had the pleasure of seeing them bearing down towards him.

He waited until he could point out the right direction, and as he was not ordered to come on board he thought he might as well follow on in his dhow and see the fun.

It was terrible fun, for the warships certainly gave the enemy little time to say his prayers. The result was that half the fleet was sunk, and four captured, others escaped to be captured another day.

It was lucky they had captured those four midgets for the *Breezy* could never have crossed that fearful bar. There was but one opening in and that not wide, and breakers roar and dash to starboard and port as you enter.

The day was spent in manning and re-arming those midgets, and there could be no getting up the river in the darkness.

But when another glorious day awakened those silent forests to life and love, the bluejackets and marines, to the number of seventeen hundred Americans and British, and with a few sturdy Kroomen, were put on board and started with three ringing cheers; there was little else but standing room, for Jack Stormalong knew every inch of this river, and he was made pilot. Captain Breezy himself took command, Guilford was there as well as the tall athletic surgeon, and Kep, still in his Arab dress, was taken as interpreter.

In dealing with savages or semi-savages, and the inhabitants of Lamoo were little better, there is nothing beats audacious coolness coupled with firmness.

This scoundrel Sultan was taken unawares, the flower of his little army had gone with the expedition. Those he had left he could not trust, so, as Jack Stormalong phrased it, he was up aloft and the rigging cut.

Captain Breezy in full uniform landed with Kep in his own, with only a

few marines as a body guard, and landed on the beach with the greatest *sang froid*. This sailor had never known what fear was, and the British navy owned no braver man. He asked for a guide to the Sultan's palace and half a dozen sooty scoundrels begged for the honour of conducting him.

They were dressed only in cummerbunds or little canvas kilts, and each carried a spear. Corner boys were they of this wild city, the only thing stately about which were the forts and the lofty palace.

When the Sultan heard an hour before this that his fleet was returning triumphant, he rejoiced and was exceedingly glad. His greatest enemy would soon be in his clutches and he would have the rarest fun on earth.

He was resting in his audience chamber when Captain Breezy with Kep—leaving the marines outside—were shown in. If a half-black Arab could turn pale that Sultan would have done so now. The Captain and Kep bowed low and the Sultan advanced and held out his hand. Captain Breezy did not see it.

"Tell the fellow all I told you," he said to Kep.

Kep appeared to grow suddenly three inches taller. He held his head erect and cleared his throat.

"Ahem! you see before you, Mr. Sultan," he said in his best Arabic, "the might, and pomp, and power of the British nation."

That seemed a good beginning, and the Sultan, who really was a splendid specimen of the dark Arabs, looked at Kep from toe to top somewhat curiously.

"You see before you," continued Kep, "the offended dignity of that nation. Your accursed fleet has laid most of the city of Zanzibar in ashes, has destroyed and burned the British and American Consulate, and we come in our might and strength to demand redress."

An amused and somewhat haughty smile was visible for a moment on the Sultan's face. Then an angry frown.

"What is to hinder me," he cried, "from throwing the might and power of Britain, in the persons of you two badly armed men, into my handsomely furnished dungeon. One word and—"

"You dare not. If we are not safely back in one brief half hour, our fleet shall silence your forts, set your palace on fire, and your city as well, and you shall see the inside of a British ship as our prisoner, on your way to Ceylon or St. Helena.

"And now we leave you to your reflections. If we have no answer in one hour's time we shall proceed to action."

Next moment they marched out with marvellous coolness and soon reached the boat.

Breezy took out his watch.

"A quarter to twelve," he said. "By a quarter to one the men will have finished dinner, and then for business, for I expect no answer from that fellow."

The forts, although the guns were good, were badly positioned, and the little fleet lay just round the bend of the river in a most commanding situation.

Now this Sultan—Said Hassam to name—was the most unpopular man on the coast at this time, and his own people were only waiting for an excuse to depose him.

It was half-past twelve when a magnificently adorned gondola-looking barge swept round the corner, and three richly dressed Arabs requested audience of Captain Breezy.

The interview took place aft on the upper deck, and was just as brief as it was important. One a very old man, who looked like a prophet, Kep thought, told the Captain, through Kep, that they had been opposed to the sending of an expedition against Zanzibar, but were over-ruled by the Sultan himself, and that the city had been about to rise and depose him even had the ships not arrived.

"This is very satisfactory if true."

"You have our word of honour."

"We shall have to be paid a large indemnity, which my Government," said Breezy, "must fix."

"We will pay it willingly if not too large and if time be allowed us."

"And the present Sultan must be deposed immediately. We shall take him prisoner with us to the Cape."

"He is already deposed," answered the old minister smiling grimly, "and his son reigns in his place. It was all done very quietly."

"He must be brought here," said the Captain, and Kep translated.

"But he is here. I will give orders to have him up at once."

He stepped to the side, and next minute a powerful and burly black staggered up the ladder with a heavy sack, and, much to the astonishment of all, threw the body of the late Sultan at the Captain's feet.

There was no mistake about it. He had been deposed with a vengeance.

But this is only an example of the neat and effective way they have of settling political difference in those regions.

There was no danger now in landing, and not only the officers but even boatloads of the crews were allowed to go on shore and stretch their legs.

All agreements having been arranged to the satisfaction of Captain Breezy, and visits interchanged with the great men of the town, the fleet dropped down the river next morning, and their friends very much astonished as well as pleased at their early return.

On the other hand Captain Breezy was not surprised that during his absence Abdularram had succeeded in committing suicide. He preferred death to imprisonment.

On board the mighty American ship the British officers dined that evening,

and to his great delight Kep was among the invited.

The Admiral himself took a great pleasure in talking to him.

Kep dined in his handsome Arab suit, and after dinner delighted the Americans with his marvellous fluting and piano-playing.

He was permitted to go forward while the elder men sat at their wine.

As in the British Service, the men had all extra grog to-night, and a merry hour was spent in dancing when Kep came amongst them.

Among the toasts of the evening was one which I hope will never be forgot. It came from the lips of Admiral Gray himself. "This is the first time," he said, "that the British have fought shoulder to shoulder with the Americans. Together may we stand in many a stout fight yet to come."

CHAPTER XX

"THAT BAR OF GOLD WAS STOLEN FROM ME," SAID KEP

In six weeks' time they were once more leaving Zanzibar and heading southward for the Cape.

The men of the midget fleet, whom they had taken prisoners, were left at Zanzibar, and in due time would be tried for piracy and murder on the high seas, and no doubt many of them would meet the doom they so richly deserved.

Kep had searched for his Arab friend high and low, but he was not to be found, and neither he nor dear Zeena would he ever see again. He would have given a good deal to know they were safe, or even to know something of their fate, whate'er it may have been.

Kep's little romance was ended.

There were no letters from either Madge or his father, for whom he cared so much, but he felt sure that both must have written and that their letters had been destroyed in the bombardment.

The *Breezy* entered Symon's Bay in triumph. No wonder, for under her wing were the four captured gun-boats of the midget fleet. And all the English-speaking world had been singing the praises of the broadsword-men of the *Breezy*.

Dispatches, of course, and private letters from men in the Admiralty.

Very simple had been the narrative which the bold sailor *Breezy* had sent to the Lords Commissioners. But they could read between the lines, and he was

promised his promotion at once if he chose to leave the ship and go home to take it up.

He decided to hold on to the end of the commission. The officers, too, would certainly be promoted, and even Kep, it was hinted, was to receive an appointment when he arrived in England that doubtless would be very much to his taste—this was mentioned in private letters only. The Admiralty never forgets its dignity. But what pleased the Captain most of all was an autograph letter from the King himself, thanking him and his officers for so bravely upholding the glory of the Royal navy. The King commanded him also to visit him on his return, if God in His goodness should spare both their lives.

A mail came in from England before the *Breezy* once more sailed for the still-farther east.

There were letters from home for nearly all hands, and one from Kep's father inside Madge's. Sore and sad was Kep's heart when he read it.

Both were well and likewise Bounder, but Martello Castle and lands were let, and they were living in a small cottage near the sea. "Very happy, though," Madge's letter said, and poverty made her love her father all the more, and he is now proud of you, Kep, so he told her, and we all long so much to see our dear boy again. There was a postscript, as there is in most young ladies' letters. It ran as follows: "P.S.—Old Elspet sends her love, and I haven't married the wealthy Israelite yet."

The last word was strongly underlined. Kep kissed the letter, and there were tears in his eyes as he refolded it.

He would put it under his pillow to-night just to see what he should dream about. Well, I for one cannot laugh at Kep, for often enough when far away at sea I've kept letters from home under my pillow for weeks. It was hours and hours before Kep fell asleep that night, notwithstanding. Madge's letter brought the past back again so vividly. Ah! he had been happier than he knew of.

The splendid old castle, the cliffs and rocks and moorlands wild and wide, and his own little turret chamber high above the rookery in the rustling elms. Was he never to see them more?

Never as a boy, and, ah! boyhood is life's brightest happiest season.

The *Breezy* had been in commission nearly two and a half years, and there was at least a year to go by yet, and then Kep was to have an appointment.

It could not be as a middy, or anything of that sort, of course, because the laws of the Admiralty are inflexible. The executive officers have all to enter the service between the ages of twelve and thirteen.

Never mind, Kep determined to continue his study of languages, and of everything else, and who could tell what he might not rise to in course of time.

Kep, the reader does not need to be told, was very clever, and moreover he

had a first-class idea of himself, and I never blame any boy for that.

At all events one never does get to the top of the tree unless he tries to, and Kep made a vow that night that he was going to try and keep on trying hard as ever he knew how to.

As to the letter under his pillow well—he never dreamt a single dream.
That was droll perhaps, but a fact.

* * * * *

Before stretching away out into the limitless ocean again, the *Breezy* lay for a few days at Cape Town.

Do you know Cape Town, boys, and the charming scenery around? The wild mountains that frown over it, ablaze with greenery, and the crimson of heaths and wild flowers, such as we in this tame domestic England can only cultivate in our hot-houses.

The brown soil and the bare brown bluffs that peep through here and there, only adding an extra charm to their beauty. To see these grand old hills even at a distance and gaze up into their enchanted glens and valleys, is something worth journeying six thousand miles to behold. Beautiful under the midday sun, still more lovely when sunset sheds its rainbow hues over them and over the sea; something to dream about when the mystic moonlight tones and softens their lines. Have you seen them at a distance? Nay, but have you wandered among them, wandered and wondered at all you saw! Then have you in reality seen a bit of life.

A fig for some men and women, who have rushed such places, hurriedly and excitedly "doing" them. These know no more about their true grandeur, beauty and solemnity than does a child with a South African picture postcard in its chubby hands.

Well, Kep asked leave to go on shore one day here, and of course obtained it, and was permitted to take his friend Adolph with him.

They were going to have a little pic-nic all to themselves.

"Take your gun, Charlie," McTavish said, and bring me off the biggest black snake you can find. I want to skeletonise the beggar, in order to solve a little problem in Natural History that Mr. Wynn and I are not on the same platform about.

They landed in a shore-boat, he and Adolph, as they wanted to be all by themselves. Past the busy quays and docks and along through the busy well-thronged streets—Kep loved not these, loved not civilization of any kind. It was nature, and its wilds alone that had charms for this strange boy.

They did not speak a deal until they got out of the suburbs, and up, up, up

to the top of a high mountain. Adolph was a little out of wind ere he reached the summit, and had to lie down for a breather. But Kep, as light as a lark and as hard as heather, felt fit to soar to any height.

"Oh, look around you, Adolph. Look at the sea. Doesn't its beauty thrill you? Ah! who could settle down as a landsman, who has ever felt the glamour of old ocean in his heart. But now, old comrade, let us eat and drink, and then talk. It is just like old times to have you all to myself. Do you mind the Island of Snakes, Adolphus?"

He spoke in French.

"Oui, oui," said Adolph, "and I remember the gold also. I knew when you brought me here that you meant to speak of that. But the gold is all yours, Kep. It was you who found it. You who dived and discovered the treasure, and—"

"Hold one minute, comrade. That gold is not yet found. Don't forget that; or there may be so little to find, that it may not pay the expense of searching for it."

"Ah, but, Kep, I know you mean to try."

"Mean to? Well, yes, and I long to do so so far more now than ever. I have had letters from home and they have stirred and subdued me. Nay, but they have aged me. I'm a boy no longer, but a thinking, busy-brained man."

Adolph was silent.

"My father has let and left his fine estate. He has come down in the world, Adolph, and I fear it may break the old man's heart. He is living by the sea which he loves so well, living in peace and quiet, that is if a seaman-bred can ever be restful. And I fear that Madge, my dear sister, may now think it her duty to marry a certain wealthy man whom she hates, in order to please father. He is older far than she, and on his death all the wealth would be hers."

"I should say she could not do better. That is my continental view of the matter, Kep."

"Ah! but comrade, poor Madge has had a little *affaire de coeur*, which I did not tell you. Only a child's romance."

"That might alter the case," said Adolph demurely enough now, because he saw that Kep was very much in earnest.

"See," said the boy, "I have worn myself almost thin, brain-working and studying, for a time to come, when I shall be great, though never perhaps wealthy."

"What, not even if we recover those sunken millions?"

"I don't even allow these to count for anything, Adolph. Money can do much, but it never can satisfy the longings of an ambitious boy. I have," he added, "a double incentive now to struggle to rise. I have always loved my father and he loves me, although we are both too Scotch ever to have shown it. But, Adolph, I

never felt I loved him half so much as I find I now do.

"He, the quiet, the unobtrusive unselfish man, who never in all his life lived half so much for himself as for those around him, he, a true-born Nature's King, to be hurled from his high estate and forced to live in a cottage. He whom—Oh, but I cannot bear to speak of it, Adolph, and I groan in bed when I think that my conduct may have contributed extra sorrow to his blameless life. But listen, Adolphus—"

Here the boy sprang to his feet on the mountain top, extending his right arm heavenwards in the impressive attitude the Scottish people assume when taking an oath—

"Young in years though I be, I shall now live for the father I have wronged, live for him, work for him, until he is once more restored to his princely Martello Castle. Don't smile at me even in your heart, Adolphus. I am romantic, impulsive, foolish, but, oh comrade, I am sincere." Then Kep became the boy again.

"I'm happier now," he said laughing. "I've found a peg to hang my mental hat upon. I feel I have now something to live for. Come, I shall pipe to show you I am quite recovered."

"A touch of Wagner then," said Adolph merrily, "and we'll imagine we're back again on the island."

It was like the piping of Pan. It appeared not to come from any earthly instrument. In the silence it seemed to stir the mountains all around. Shrill yet poetical, as the song of the lark, or sweet and sad, like the love notes of Philomel in his native England.

Then suddenly it ceased, and Kep threw himself down to gaze for a moment at a white-winged ship on the blue of the far-off horizon.

"Ah! my old comrade," he said at last, "we must let our millions slumber for a time down in old ocean's slimy bed, and when we have time we may go in search of them. You got the latitude and longitude, didn't you, and have written it down?"

"There it is, Kep, that is your copy; I have mine, and I keep it under the lining of my sea-chest lid. It must neither be lost nor shown to anyone."

"True."

"Yes, true, because I have more hopes than you."

"But even should there be gold there, it is safe. No one could dream of diving for sunken treasure in a place like that."

"I suppose," said Adolph, "you still have the bar of gold, though it was not large, which you brought up."

"Oh! I forgot to tell you. That bit of stuff was stolen from me on board the ship that saved us!"

"Bad news, Kep. I don't half like it. Did you suspect anyone?"

"Only that first mate. He drank on the sly, and he was the only one who ever came in to yarn with me."

"Well, Kep, it *may* be all right. But that evil-looking man, if ever his mind was a moment clear, would naturally wonder where you got that bar. It was a shelly-looking piece, and he would judge it came from the sea-bottom, and— Well, there are a good many 'ands,' for it is always the improbable that happens on the ocean-wave, Kep."

"Nothing is going to trouble me," said Kep, "one way or the other. But now come, let us be going. I've got Dr. McTavish's snake to shoot yet."

CHAPTER XXI

TRAGEDY ON AN ISLAND—A CANNIBAL WITCH

The *Breezy* would have reached the shores of that marvel island, New Guinea, far sooner, had she not to go south, to lonely Kerguelin, on her voyage, to take some soundings there, and also chart some rocky bottom on the coast of New Zealand, as well.

Kep was permitted to go down to the sea bottom sometimes by day. He wanted to get thoroughly up to the workings of the bell. The invention was altogether so perfect, and at the same time so simple, that he soon mastered it.

It sunk sometimes as low as 350 feet. Strong though the plate-glass windows were, had it sunk much lower the pressure of the water would have smashed them, then you may judge yourself, reader, what a horrible death those inside would have met.

It was at night, when off the New Guinea rocks, that Kep loved best to go down. What a terrible sight it was, the illimitable marine aquarium he saw around him. There was a silent solemnity about it that is indescribable. And not in Dante's *Inferno* itself could more horrible monsters exist than those which occasionally flitted to and fro in the glare of that submarine flash-light. Here also was beauty mingled with the fearful, for the foliage and flowers of the deep-sea gardens waved and moved in a thousand tints and colour, on the white sands. Sea ferns grow here, ocean cactuses, trees and flowers and shrubs.

But there was a spice of danger down here, for great sharks, three fathoms long, with terrifying open mouths, made for the windows, and grabbed at Kep. They knew not what glass was, and thought that to swallow the boy was the

easiest thing in the world. When they found that they had not succeeded, they would swish their tails about, and dash off angry and disappointed.

Fishes with large glaring eyes and heads clad in shields of bone at times dashed against the plate-glass. They looked like miniature iron-clads, as they sailed towards Kep, and the marvel was that they did not break the diving bell to pieces.

* * * * *

If you look at a good map of the world, gentle reader—by the way, *are you gentle*, I wonder?—you will be able to discover at a single peep where New Guinea is. But the map is not made yet that can show you all the outs and ins, the gulfs and bays and locks of the island's entrancing fore-shores.

You will look up north from Australia for New Guinea, and be surprised at its strange, ungainly shape, its points and promontories, its immense size, and the multitude of small islands around it on every side. Nor'ard and west, if you wandered along its beautiful shores, north and west and far away, you would find yourself—if you had not previously been killed and eaten by cannibals—at McLuer inlet, or Triton Bay, or at Cape Spencer on the shores of Dampier Strait, looking out across a fiery blue ocean at clusters of green cocoa-nut crowned islands, on almost any one of which you could have but little difficulty indeed in becoming something of a real Crusoe. But after a time, I guess, it would not be one marked footprint on the wet sand you might find, but fifty.

You would naturally imagine then, that you were come for, and that you were soon to figure as a cold sirloin or side-dish at a feast and wild dance given by some Papuan chief. N.B.—The inhabitants of New Guinea are called Papuans.

Oh dear, what a region of beauty and romance is embodied in these simple words, "the South Sea Islands."

But if up there, you got a dhow, and went cruising west, and had the good luck not to be eaten, and thus enjoy yourself instead of being devoured for the enjoyment of some else, a blue shark for example, the trip would be delightful, though dangerous. You would have plenty of food, and the seas are studded with green islands, that appear from a distance to be floating, like great emeralds, twixt sea and sky, so that, when thirsty, you could go on shore, and get little black boys to climb the tasseled trees and pitch down cocoa-nuts for you. It would be a charming holiday, and you would not want much to wear. But in time you would reach Celebes itself, another great spreading insect of an island, on which many and many a terrible murder has been committed, and many a missionary massacred.

Resuming your journey, you would in time reach Borneo. Well, by its

shores you would find that civilization and trade, and all that has made the marvellous progress of our world, was there to greet you. You would meet English-speaking friends there, but you would have to run up a pretty heavy tailors' bill before you could, with any show of modesty, visit their houses.

You've heard of the "Wild Man of Borneo"? Well, he is still up there, among the midland mountains, and though he might still lick his lips after eating some roast long-pig, he is now a much more respectable member of society than when I first knew him. At that time he was a real and terrible head-hunter. He wanted me to part with mine. I told him I could not see where the fun came in. Then he tried to convince me, by waving a terrible iron-spiked club. But not being used to carry on a conversation through such a medium, I shot him through the shoulder, and he bolted home to thrash one of his fifteen wives.

But when I last met him, he was wearing a long, somewhat shabby top-hat, and a frock-coat without any sleeves to it. Nothing else earthly, except his long black bare legs and his black bare arms.

He was quite chatty, too, and asked kindly after "de Breetish King ob Englan'."

"I quite civilise now, all same," he said, and had I any rum?

Well, so far so good, and a map is a handy contrivance, but, alas! a map tells you nothing of the magnificence of New Guinean forests, woods, and wilds, of the heights of its ranges of mountains that are everywhere, nor the solitary grandeur of its scenery, whether in inland glens or mirrored in the deep bosom of its lonely lochs and bays.

The home these latter are of the strangest-looking fishes in the sea, and millions of birds of the ocean, whose nesting places are on the rocks, above the rocks, or in the woods themselves. Some of these sea-gulfs, I feel sure, are haunted. I've taken a little boat and rowed me all alone for miles up darksome inlets, o'erhung with wild woods thickening green, but so drearily silent in the sunshine, that when I have lain on my oars, as sailors say, not a sound could I hear except the drip, drip, from the blades.

Yet sometimes a wild, unearthly scream would come out of the forest, so wailing, so agonizing, that I have felt sure some terrible tragedy had just been enacted within its darkest shades.

* * * * *

It was among such scenery as this that the gallant broadswords of the *Breezy* lived and laboured, surveying, charting, and learning the tricks and manners of the vast varieties of natives we find in these islands, but all the while keeping a good look out for British interests.

The old days of kidnapping were then about over. If there was now any such thing, it was on a smaller scale, just as smuggling is still carried on around our little island at home here.

But Captain Breezy and his officers, did not forget that nearly every-man-Jack in the ship was supposed to be studying to become a pilot of these maritime regions.

Our men-o'-war's men are the best and most daring seamen in the world, and so carefully are they trained, no matter should they come in the first place from the lowest slums of Edinburgh or London, that they become wise and thinking men. And I believe that seven month's cruising and surveying among the South Sea Islands, and around New Guinea generally, would enable even an ordinary seamen to pilot a ship through the channels or along the shores.

Moreover, of so much consequence did the Admiralty consider good sea-charts, that copies of those made were sent to the lower decks, and the men were advised to study them, and copy them as often as they chose. Of course, a deal of chart-making was done in the ward-room.

Kep was marvellously clever at this kind of thing, though the navigating officer was better. On the other hand, the marine officer, or Sodjer, was a capital sketcher in water-colours, as well as an excellent photographer.

Many of the men made small collections of "curios," but McTavish himself studied the geology of the coast; its flora and fauna, and its peoples. Even their folk-lore was not neglected by him.

The language was different on almost every island; but Kep, with his wondrous gifts, was not long in finding out, that through all there ran a thread which, when found out, made a good clue for the study of all.

Independently of this, there were many men and women who had been recruited here—bought and sold in fact—and who, after spending years in Queensland, had been sent back, and getting clear for ever of the white man's clothes and the white man's religion, returned again to the life of a happy-go-lucky naked, or nearly naked, savage. And these understood English.

But the cruise of the *Breezy* had a political side as well; for the eastern side of New Guinea belonged to Germany, the west to Britain, with, in some places, only in the far interior, a kind of no-man's-land, usually mountainous, between the two countries. In these inland recesses still existed, which no white traveller had ever entered, or if he had, was only too glad to get away again with a whole skin.

The Germans could do what they liked with their territory, they are bad colonizers at best, but we Britons have long necks; we look into futurity, and we see and know that, in years to come, this same island will be a gem in the crowns of our coming kings. Even at the date of this part of my story, 1909, the

real riches of the great land was only being discovered, its splendid agricultural districts, and above all, its mineral wealth.

"Our surplus population," as Lieutenant Wynn well said one evening, "needs some great outlet. We cannot be content even with Africa, and in this far off New Guinea it yet will live and thrive."

You will note then that the *Breezy* was not only a happy ship, but a very busy one.

There were few places now where they could receive letters from home. But letters were sent to England, and despatches also, by every opportunity, and such opportunities come to ships long at sea far oftener than landsmen would or could imagine.

It was only by overhauling mercantile vessels that any news of the country at all could be obtained. But some of these had somewhat recent newspapers, and what a grand gift to the *Breezy* was a bundle of them!

They were read and re-read by the officers. Their pages were kept as clean as the leaves of a Bible. When the ward-room officers had them about all by heart, the warrant officers had them, and finally, the best of the crew, who read them to their respective messmates.

The adventures of the men of the *Breezy* were mostly those of all men who go down to the sea in ships. But, dangers and difficulties more numerous. They saw, during those busy nine months, every conceivable phase of sea life. They had to battle with winds and currents, encountered terrible storms, the life of the ship and the lives of the crew oftentimes hanging literally on the thread of a screw, or on a bolt.

It was the shoal water and the reefs, however, that formed the principal danger, and these they were nearly almost among.

The savages they seldom feared, but the savages feared them, never having seen such a strange naval monstrosity as the *Breezy* in their lives before. Some of the islanders, both men and women, were meek and mild, as well as fearless, and though armed to the teeth, the men at least, with bows and poisoned arrows, and clubs, axes and spears, it was safe enough to mingle with them.

They would part with anything for calico, tobacco, or tinned provisions. They surrounded the *Breezy* in canoes laden to the gunwale with all manner of delicious fruit and vegetables, to say nothing of edible birds, lizards, etc., some even brought flowers.

On the other hand, they expressed themselves ready and willing to barter their wives or daughters away, or even fine fat little baby boys, for anything.

I never have found why savage islanders sometimes press sailors to purchase a fat little baby boy. I suppose they fancy our fellows make meat of such little chaps, because I've heard of one being offered in barter along with a bunch

of forest fowls, or edible lizards.

Some rather wild adventures our *Breezy* men had among the wilder and more treacherous of these islanders, many of them loaded with Brummagem rifles, which, though they could carry farther than arrows, were seldom well aimed.

But boats going in search of young cocoa-nuts, yams, and fruit, and "yum-yums" generally, were more than once led into an ambushade. The *Breezy* men had learned by experience to be suspicious of beaches on which only children played or the belles disported their charms.

They were black sirens, and their braves were hidden in the bush not far off, only they didn't get over Jack. Captain Breezy was ever on the alert to avert anything that was likely to lead to bloodshed, and even if fired upon by tribes who in all probability had good reason to hate and fear white men, he did not retaliate, unless sailors were wounded. But *then*, he taught the savages to respect man-o'-war's men in the future.

They dread our firearms, but it is better to go on shore apparently unarmed. Some savages are untameable, and the sight of a rifle, or even a fowling piece, causes them to think they are to be attacked, and their wives and little ones carried off. Yet it is best always to carry a tiny revolver in your hip-pocket, presuming that you know how to hit a haystack. The *Breezy's* men were mostly all crack shots.

It is not so well known as it should be, that to some portions of the territory that fringes the sea come, at times, wandering tribes from the very far interior.

In Kanaka days, when among the Sandwich Islands kidnapping and massacre too was common enough, the recruiters being most to blame, ships of this sort often visited the Papuan coasts, and found great trouble from these wandering tribes. The more peaceful 'longshore natives had nothing to do with it. And yet, if a white man were killed, boats' crews would land, and the real culprits having fled back into their fastnesses, take terrible revenge.

Captain Breezy was a very patient man, but of course patience has a limit. That limit was reached one day. An old chief begged to come on board, to see the ship. He talked pidgin English, and had seen the world. With him was a very handsome young lady, though, like the heroine in "Tam o' Shanter," she wore but scanty clothing, consisting for the most part of bangles, anklets, and beads.

He introduced her as his last new wife, and was high in her praises.

He received some presents, and so did the lady, and then he wandered forward among the crew, and had a little gentle talkee-talkee, and the men laughed a good deal, especially a reckless fellow, called Tom Haslar. Tom was about the only bad hat in the ship.

He drank too, when he could find liquor, and he would and did manage to buy their allowance from those men who did not care much for it.

Tom felt in form, as he called it, that forenoon, and full of fun.

He chaffed the chief a bit, and even dug him in the fat stomach, but this savage seemed splendidly good-natured.

"Ah!" he returned, "you are one goodee boy. You been dlinkee-dlinkee. You too muchee laugh now. Bymebye you muchee thlisty and sad. Savez?"

"You've been there yourself," said Tom, "my gay and reverend seignor."

"You come alonga me, Jack."

"Tom, please, Tom Haslar, at your royal highness's service!"

"Den Tom, you come along ashore? I get you plentee dlinkee. Plenty dam goodee gin."

The boatswain's mate intimated now to the chief that his absence would be a deal better than his company, and after a little further palaver, he got into his dug-out and landed.

It was a cocoa-nut wooded beach, with a rather better class of plantain-covered cottages, well back in the shade, and the natives were supposed to be harmless.

It was very dark that night, and Tom was in the middle watch. Next morning he was missing. He had evidently swam on shore, to complete his orgie, enticed by the affable chief's promise.

That same chief was off in his dug-out early next morning.

"I hab Tom Haseelar," he cried, "I keep 'im fah away in de bush. Keepee all same one hostage. What you pay me foh Tom?"

"Nothing, you scoundrel, and if he isn't returned in half an hour I will fire your village." Thus spoke Guilford, whose watch it was.

There was plenty of bobbery and noise in the village now, and armed savages were seen rushing about, waving their spears aloft.

It was a beautiful, but a wild scene. How white the sands, how green the forests that climbed up the romantic glen and to the top of the highest hills. There was the bright blue of a calm sea, a cloudless azure sky, and every tree stem had a shadow black as night.

Another hour was spent, waiting in vain for Tom. Then the order was given by the Captain:-

"Man and arm boats."

"May I go, sir?" said Kep.

"Most certainly."

And away the boats sped with all the way on them that lusty arms could lend.

There was now silence in the village, a stillness indeed, that was ominous. But fearing an ambush, Guilford advanced his men with great caution.

Every cottage was empty. The savages had fled to the forest, nor in its dark

recesses could any trail be found visible to white men's eyes.

So the men, in some sort of skirmishing order, but almost within touch of each other, went on and on up the wooded defile, expecting to be attacked at any moment.

Nearly at the top of the glen, suddenly out from the black darkness of a small cave sprang the most hideous-looking old hag of a naked savage anyone had ever looked upon.

She stood upon a ledge of a rock, and stretched a skinny arm towards Guilford.

"What seek you, white man?"

"Who are you, and where are the rest of the tribe?" shouted the officer.

"I one witch. I been Queensland. You not come kidnap poh Gwalee once moh? Ha, ha, ha. I too ole now, and ugly. My tribe gone ober de sea in big, big war canoe. You seek you white sailor? He down in de ribber pool."

Near by, under the cliff, was a still, brown pool in the stream, and from this was fished out poor Tom's body, the neck half severed with a battle axe.

Poor Tom, it was his last adventure on this shore.

The island, which was not large, was searched from end to end, but no other human body was found.

To have fired the forest could have done no good, only birds and beasts and the old witch would have suffered. So before the sudden darkness of a tropical night fell, the men entered the boats and shoved off.

One boat contained the remains of their unfortunate shipmate, and next morning steam was got up, and Tom sleeps in the green depths of the coral sea.

How quickly such things are forgotten in the Service. Tom's clothes were sold by auction, but his ditty box and its trinkets of value, including a letter from the lass who had loved Tom, were kept, and sent home to England, to his old mother. These trinkets and the letter were sacred things, they were holy, no man on board would have bought them. Then everything went on us usual on board the *Breezy*.

CHAPTER XXII

IN SLUMBERING WOODS—KEP CAPTURED BY SAVAGES

Brawny Surgeon McTavish, and almost equally sturdy Stormalong, with Kep,

had many a ramble among the woods and hills of New Guinea. They were collecting specimens, they were studying Nature in the concrete. God's glorious and thrilling fantasia of woods and wilds and water and of rolling tree-clad hills. But into the deepest darkness of the forests they seldom penetrated, tempting though it looked. For it was not merely bright-winged birds and strange mammals that these stately forests gave homes to, but wandering savages, as implacably fierce as any the world contains.

And still, as seen from the sea, these landscapes looked so peaceful and serene, one could scarcely believe that any evil thing could dwell therein. There was a charm to a mind like the doctor's about its very stillness, that often lured him farther into it than it was at all times safe to venture. Wherever he went, the others would follow.

Creeping one day through the slumbering woods and by the broad river's banks, they came suddenly upon a somewhat elderly chief, who was seated on a rock, with a fish net depending from a long rod. In the evening of his days he was enjoying himself apparently at this placid sport. With the exception of beads and bangles, and his massive crown of feather-adorned hair, he was naked as the lizards that crawled on the adjoining trees.

Beside him lay bow and arrows and spear, while an ugly knife was fastened to his girdle of rope.

Our heroes had been a good ten miles into the interior that day, and were now returning, Kep carrying specimens of flora and fauna, Stormalong with a wild pig slung over his back.

Fishing is so civil a pastime that they at once threw down their burdens and squatted near the fellow.

A more hideous savage Kep had not yet beheld. Tattooed all over the body, pebeles in his ears, a ring of gold attached to one nostril, and the upper lip slit in two to show his terrible red-stained triangular teeth.

One glance at that mouth, and his black hide spotted with red paint, proclaimed him a cannibal.

He clutched his bunch of poisoned arrows, and started to his feet.

"Sit down, my friend," said McTavish coolly. "I could lift you by the neck, man, and throw you across the boulders into the centre stream. Sit down, friend, and tell me all about yourself."

This chief grumbly obeyed.

He had in his youth been kidnapped to Queensland and knew the white man's speech.

Strangely enough this fellow, like all who have come back from civilization to their native fastnesses, are the fiercest and most wily savages of all.

"What fob you callee me 'fliend'? I not lub de Engleese.

"The natives are all friends of mine."

"Ugh! Dat because you one big woman."

McTavish wore a plain grey kilt and badger-head sporran.

"By gum!" said Stormalong, laughing, "there is enough of you, sir, to make two women instead of one."

"You big bigee woman, and lub ebery man. Dat is how. But," he went on, "Fadder-landee[1] much more goodee as Bleetish man. Bleetish man wuff-wuff (rough and unkind), he call me, Gobolohlo, one dam niggah. All same Gobolohlo chief from far ober de mountain."

[1] The German Colonist.

He struck his painted chest with his fist, to show that he was Gobolohlo, and that he wasn't to be scorned.

But McTavish appeased him with tobacco, which he began to tear and chew.

"Fadder-landee," he continued, "he come on soh (shore) in he boat. He seek for Gobolohlo in de fah inteliol (far interior). He touch Gobolohlo, he gibe me mooch dlink to dlink, mooch fine baccy, and so I lub he.

"Den he say to me, Gobolohlo, he say, 'Fadder-landee not make goodee meat. Engleese man mooch fine long-pig. Fadder-landee no goodee eat. Taste.' Den I take he hand and lick. Foo-foo. Bad, bad.[2] But, 'poh chief,' he tellee me now. You lookee pale. All you fightee men lookee sick. Go to de Bleetish side, and get flesh (fresh) air, you soon be bettah after dat.

[2] This German officer had no doubt rubbed his hands with quinine. A good idea when one visits cannibals.

"So, Gobolohlo he come back. Plenty fightee man yondeh in de bush."

Soothed by the baccy, Gobolohlo grew more communicative.

"Kill missionaly one day," he told the surgeon confidentially. "Missionaly fly in bush to hidee he'sef. But my walliols dey soon catchee he, and kill fo' rost. Ah dat Bleetish missionaly, he make fine pork. Yum! yum!"

He patted his stomach as he spoke.

McTavish was a man of quick action, when he saw his duty clear before him.

He hit that cannibal chief clean off the boulder on which he sat. And before he woke, our heroes had bound and gagged him.

"Leave that wild pig," said the doctor quietly, "and hoist this wilder pig on your broad back, Stormalong. Why, we've caught the very cannibal who killed poor Mr. Tain, just three years ago. And now, lads, let us to our boat. We may be

attacked at any moment. Sly dogs those Germans! but they've played into our hands this time."

There was about half a mile of open country near the beach, with a village in its rear, a village of friendlies. If they could but reach this, they thought they would be safe.

However, Kep was sent off in front, to signal the ship for armed assistance. Poor lad, he never reached the shore, and it was not till an hour later that Captain Breezy noticed that there was mischief on shore.

The ship lay in deep water not far off, and the day was singularly quiet and still.

Both McTavish and Stormalong, carried two revolvers each, and the ringing of these, followed by the wild cries of the attacking cannibals, told its own terrible tale.

Never were boats manned and armed more quickly. Hardly three minutes had elapsed, before they were speeding shorewards.

They found the doctor and gunner besieged in the strongest house of the village, into which they had dragged their prisoner Gobolohlo.

A message from the ship, in the shape of a shell, that burst in the rear of the bamboo village, had startled the savages, who imagining they were being surrounded, fled into the forest.

Neither McTavish nor his companion were injured. They had fought with their clubbed rifles, and more than one dead cannibal lay out there on the street of sand to prove their prowess.

The bluejackets chased the enemy a long distance, and giving them pepper, so there was plenty of food for rats and ants in the woods that night.

* * * * *

Meanwhile, where was Kep?

Far enough away by this time. He had been captured by the cannibals, and borne off inland. Indeed, in his haste, he had stumbled right into the arms of natives, who had been hurried to the beach to try to outflank the doctor.

Gobolohlo was placed in irons in the cells, as soon as taken on board, and a sentry set to watch him. No wild beast ever looked more terrible behind bars than did this fearful cannibal.

The mountain savages were in full retreat now, back to the recesses of their own land. Kep, bound hand and foot, was carried on a litter in the vanguard, for even savages have some method in their military madness.

The cannibals kept up their march until nearly midnight, and at last lit fires, and huge ones they were.

Kep, who knew a little of their language, lay for a time in a kind of apathetic stupor. He did not even feel afraid. He had been terribly frightened at first, but knowing what his end must be, and that, as soon as he was bludgeoned, he would be cooked and eaten, all fear had fled. He only hoped it would all be over quickly. He even found himself wondering apathetically on which of the fires the rude gridiron of hard wood would be placed to receive his body.

Then two of the very wildest and most grotesquely tattooed savages approached the spot where he lay. Each had an ugly naked knife in his belt, and one carried a large wooden bowl.

[image]

"Then two of the very wildest and most grotesquely tattooed savages approached the spot where he lay."

They were coming to kill him. And a knife is so much more awful than a bludgeon.

He closed his eyes, and shuddered a little.

They murder their victims with coolness, too, these cannibals. They are as pitiless, as merciless, as a butcher slaying a lamb. They made him sit up now.

"Be quick, be quick," cried the poor lad. "Oh God, be quick!" But Kep was mistaken.

The bowl was not to hold his blood. It was filled with a mess of fruit, mixed with cocoa-nut milk, made by rubbing the kernel down in water.

"Dlink," they told him, and Kep managed to empty the basin, under threats of instant death if he refused.

They now felt him all over, and pinched his arms and legs. Kep was hard and firm, but carried no fat. The boy knew the worst now, he was to be fattened up for a feast.

Tired and weary, he sank into a deep sleep so soon as his captors had left him, and could hardly remember all he had come through, when he at last awoke, just as the red gleams of the newly risen sun shone like fire among the tallest trees.

Again was he fed. This time with some sort of grain, like arrow-root, boiled, and mixed with a little kava.

Camp was then struck, and the march was a long one of some fifty miles, but during the day, he was fed three or four times. And, tied to one of the most brutal-looking of the savages, was led as if he had been a wild beast. He had to walk nearly all the distance. Luckily for him, he was strong enough to stand it,

else would he have been clubbed to death. Hope now began to tell him a flattering tale? Was there not a chance of escape. It seemed impossible, but--

The thought of it, anyhow, made the poor prisoner happier.

He had not forgotten his piccolo, the little black flute that had charmed even cobras. They had not taken this away, for he wore that under his jersey, and though his captors had felt it, they evidently thought it was a rib.

His couch by night, was made of green boughs, and his sleep was sound enough.

One day a band of armed savages came shouting to meet them, and then Kep knew that he had reached his new home.

The camp that night was at the foot of a mountain, that towered high and steep for full four thousand feet into the blue sky. It was up to the top of this hill he had to march next morning, and very much surprised he was when he found himself in the crater of an extinct volcano. It was fully a mile in diameter, with a very large building in the centre.

The village—a very quaint one—was built around this palace of Gobolohlo. There he had dwelt with his two wives, who if they were not widows already, would very soon be.

The depths of this crater, and even the sides all around, were covered with bushes and verdure, and adorned by Nature with the rarest and most beautiful of flowers.

Now, right to this palace, Kep was dragged, and introduced to the cannibal queens, who were well clad in short, bright-coloured frocks of calico, with feather-fringed skirts. Both were young, both interesting looking, and one really pretty. Their naked ankles and bare arms were encircled with bands of gold set with precious stones.

They evidently admired the boy, just as a farmer or butcher may admire a calf. For they prodded him with their little fat forefingers, then laughed scornfully and shook their heads.

"He not much meat," said the younger queen, in English. She had been captured by the recruiters, when a mere child, and carried to Queensland, but was sent back in a few years to her own wild island.

"I'm no good to eat at all, your lovely majesty."

"In three weeks' time, though," she smiled.

Then Kep's food was brought, his hands were freed, and Gobolohlo's queens screamed with laughter to behold him eat so heartily, which on this occasion he really did, to please them.

He was ordered to sit down till they should study him a little longer.

He really appeared to afford great fun to their majesties.

But when he took out his piccolo, and begun to breathe his griefs and sor-

rows into that, their mirth changed into pensive melancholy. They listened enraptured. He changed his tune, and turned on the sailor's hornpipe. They were all smiles once more, and giving the attendants a sign, they withdrew, and in about half an hour the hall was nearly filled with dancing flower-adorned cannibal maidens.

It was a strange wild scene, and stranger from the fact, that in this case, youth and beauty was dressed in nothing else save flowers and feathers.

At the end of the ball, the younger queen rushed forward and saluted Kep, by rubbing her nose against his.

"You good, good, goodee boy," she cried. "For tree week you play to me, den--"

"Then what, your majesty?"

"I lub you so much den, dat I eatee you. Plenty ob kava and spice-Yum! yum!"

"This is something to look forward to, with a vengeance," said Kep to himself.

The next two days and evenings, passed in much the same way.

Their majesties had been told of the capture of their united husband, but it didn't affect them a great deal.

"Pah!" the younger said, "Gobolohlo good king, but he not make plenty good meat fo' de Bleetish mans ob war."

But the very next day, Boona, the younger queen, seemed very sad, and after the boy had done piping, she came and squatted beside him.

"You too good foh kill. All same to-morrow you be kill and eat."

This was certainly somewhat disquieting news, and he naturally wanted to know why this change of plans had come about.

His voice trembled a little as he spoke.

"De oder queen, she hate pooh Boona. Den she think I lub you vely mooch. She de stronger queen, and so she killee you to-morrow."

Kep could see now that it was a case of jealousy. Boona laid her naked arm across Kep's shoulder, and once more rubbed noses.

"Goodeebye," she said; "only I nebber see you mo, till you dead and roas', and de oder queen, she eatee all de bes' bits ob my boy. No let Boona taste."

For the last two or three nights Kep had been allowed to sleep without the galling fetters, but this evening he was more strongly bound than ever.

He did not close his eyes once. He knew the end had come, and that his messmates would be able only to guess how he had suffered.

It was late next day, when he was dragged from his prison, and made to sit down, not far from a bigger fire than he had yet seen. And the great grid was being got ready.

This was all so horrible, that Kep felt going out of his mind. He could only close his eyes and pray.

Pray for death; delivery, he believed, was out of the question. If they would kill him first; but he had received the news, very unceremoniously given, that he was to be stripped, and tied alive to the gridiron, which would then be lowered over the fire, when the latter was fierce enough.

He had been too deep in thought, and too distraught—he felt that he was going mad—to notice a great cloud that was rising slowly up in the east.

But now the day suddenly grew as dark as night, and the rain came down in torrents, while thunder pealed nearer and nearer, the savages looking like demons in the lightning's glare.

Then Kep remembered no more. He had fainted away.

When he came to himself again, the darkness all around was intense.

CHAPTER XXIII

FIERCE FIGHTING WITH THE CANNIBALS

Impenetrable darkness! Nothing to be seen.

Not a sound to be heard save now and then the cry of a night bird far below in the forest, or the rustle of a lizard in the now dry grass. He could not tell the time. Morning might already be close at hand, and up from the sea the sun would leap and silver the trees and the clouds.

Kep trembled when he thought that this day would surely be his last, and that the fearful death was yet before him.

List! It is a step that comes softly nearer and nearer. Then he feels warmth on his cheek as some one by his side whispers in his ear. "Hushee. Hush. No speak me."

Then his bonds are severed with a sharp knife or dagger and he is free though weak and feeble in his knees.

"Are you the beautiful queen?"

"I is Boona. But come alonga me. You too good, vely good a boy to eat. Sides you no fat yet."

He felt himself being led by a soft, soft hand. Out and away into the blackness of night. Out and away through the flowers of the bushes, and up the crater's craggy side.

"Run, run, we mus' be fah, fah away before the sun he shinee again. Run, cause if dey catches we, bof must die. I hab jus' kill de ugly old queen."

Despite his gratitude, Kep shivered a little as he thought that the hand which held his was that of a murderess, and that the backs of the fingers might still be stained with human blood. Yet who was he that he should judge of or attempt to weigh the sum of this girl's guiltiness.

In the days of his real boyhood he had been used to running barefooted in moors and on hills, so he hardly missed the shoes the savages had stolen from him.

Long before daybreak they were fifteen miles at least from Cannibal Mountain, and soon they found themselves on the banks of a broad river.

The queen made Kep rest far up in the green foliage of a vast spreading tree while she herself ran off to find food. She soon returned bringing many kinds of delicious fruits. For a while they rested, then from the bushes close by the river she dragged a light black canoe, and beckoned him to take his seat.

He did so, and next moment the boat was rapidly being paddled down the beautiful river.

Kep was too full of thought to take much heed of the sweet romantic scenery that changed and changed at every bend of the stream. But he observed by looking at the sun and judging the time, that they were not taking the direction in which the *Breezy* lay. Sometimes, indeed, they were facing directly east.

This was indeed a mystery. But he determined not even to ask the queen, lest he might seem to doubt her goodness and honesty.

Just one question however he asked. Did, he wanted to know, the lovely young queen Boona kill the ugly old one with her own hands.

"Pah! no," she answered. "I not hab her black blood run ober my hands and spit on my booful dless (dress). No, no, Boona hab plenty fliends in the palace."

She rose higher in his estimation now. Much higher. He was not sitting near a murderess after all. So now he determined to let things slide. And thinking thus, the boy, just where he sat, dropped into a sound sleep unlike anything he had ever enjoyed before.

* * * * *

We must be done now with the cannibal chief, Gobolohlo. He was tried just there on the beach by drum-head court martial, sentenced, tied to a tree, and a volley of rifle bullets fired into him. His body was left for the ants to pick.

Meanwhile Jack Stormalong was missed, but before an hour had passed his manly voice was heard singing aloud, as he came staggering along, bearing the

wild pig on his back.

"Catch Jack," he said as he flung it down, "leave a bit o' good food like that to go to waste."

No trace nor trail had the savages left behind, so Jack Stormalong, who was perfectly at home among savages, retreated once more, while at the same time boats were plying hastily twixt ship and shore and a punitive expedition was being formed.

He was not long in finding a beach-man who knew the stronghold of Gob-olohlo and his queens. A bargain was soon struck, and that very night sixty fully armed bluejackets and marines with one maxim were on track and trail of the cannibals, and moving eastwards with all possible speed.

Their route however could not be the same direct one which the savages had taken but a longer and easier.

Kivi, the guide, seemed faithful and honest, but he was very well watched indeed, in case he might lead the party into an ambush.

Luckily the weather kept fine and clear. They were making forced marches.

They passed through or up wide valleys, forded rivers carrying the maxim, and clambered over bare hills and plunged into deep, dark forests.

With them they had brought red paint, beads, calico, sugar, and tinned meats, with trinkets of Birmingham gold and silver, so that though the wild natives would take no silver it was easy to barter for fruit, fowls, or whatever they needed.

The villagers usually retired at first into their sago-palm dwellings, but were afraid to attack, but a present brought them to reason, then they swarmed around the British bluejackets and were only too familiar.

The doctor or Guilford warned their guide to keep strict silence. If he but opened his mouth to speak one word, they told him he would have his tongue cut out.

Sometimes they had to cut down great trees to form bridges across the dark deep streams.

It was a hard and hazardous march, which few save British sailors could have continued with so little sleep.

At one village of unfriendly savages arrows were fired and spears thrown. One of the marines was injured so that it became necessary to stop to fight these wild fellows. After a volley or two, however, they fled howling into the forest. Only after this the watch by night was stricter than ever.

There was but little hope, they knew well, of saving poor Kep, but they were determined to punish the cannibals, and to know the youth's fate.

One broiling hot day, the sun so fierce that birds with gaping bills sat silent on the boughs, and the very lizards panted, they were suddenly confronted by a

tall burly naked savage. He was as much taken aback as the sailors themselves.

He let fly an arrow and then turned and fled. Jack Stormalong and a first-class boy took up the running and kept the savage in sight for miles, till he began to scramble up a high mountain's side, when they returned.

"Dat am Gobolohlo palace," said their guide, "all along de mountain top."

"Hurrah!" cried McTavish, and began singing—

Now's the day and now's the hour
See the point of battle lower.

"We may not find the boy," he said to Guilford, "but I for one feel brimful of fight, and we will at any rate revenge his death."

They were guided out now on to the open, and after feeding, it could hardly be called dinner, they started away across the moor, for that it was in every respect.

Gobolohlo's mountain soon came in view, and then the front of battle did begin to lower.

The mountain path seemed alive with wildly gesticulating savages brandishing clubs and spears and shouting.

They formed themselves into all sorts of grotesque attitudes too; they crawled or crept like wild beasts, and one lot on a bit of flat ground stood, one above the other, in a spear-armed pyramid.

"Bring down that top fellow, Jones," cried Guilford.

Jones was the crack shot of the ship, and one bullet brought the savage's body right on top of the spears of his comrades.

The pyramid dissolved itself after that, and presently a cloud of these blacks came leaping and yelling down.

Three or four volleys were fired and did good service, but, finding that the rear-guard was pushing on, the marines had recourse to the maxim, and soon scores of cannibals were in a heap, wounded or dead, and the rest were flying for their lives up the mountain side.

There was only one gateway or rent in the mountain top to give admission to the crater, and this was stoutly held.

Showers of arrows came pouring down and several of the *Breezy's* men fell.

A charge was made now with fixed bayonets, and the officers' revolvers begun to do their deadly work.

But in less than ten minutes the gangway, as Stormalong called it, was carried and the enemy were in full flight down into the crater. The bluejackets and marines must follow up their victory till it became a permanent one. This they did with splendid heroism, but the foe had rallied, and at one time it was

touch and go with the athlete McTavish and Stormalong. They were completely surrounded, but they stood back to back, and fought like lions at bay, the surgeon with his broadsword, Jack with his great pet cutlass.

It was a grand but terrible sight, and both sides paused, as if by common consent, to witness it.

Here was brawny Scotland and brave England fighting back to back in the same cause, turning round and round as they hung together, and showering their blows like wintry rain.

Guilford declared afterwards that no less than five men were cloven to the shoulders by the claymore of McTavish.

The fight on the side of the cannibals was but feebly sustained after this; and when the maxim was once again brought into play the dusky warriors turned and fled.

They could be seen on the ridge of the crater escaping, and many were shot and their bodies rolled over the hilltop. The whole place was then cleared and sentries set to guard the gangway.

Expecting a night attack, no fires were built, and the men laid themselves down and slept, tired and weary enough, till at last the sun appeared over the rim of the crater and saw them safe.

Their own casualties were but small, though seven poor fellows would never see the chalky cliffs of dear old England again.

These were solemnly borne down to be buried far in the forest shade where no foe would ever find them. The wounded were helped along.

They could find no trace of Kep, except the awful grid on which he was to have been roasted. This they smashed to pieces, the king's castle was fired, then slowly and sadly the long march back was commenced.

The guide took them a nearer way now. There was little danger from enemies and nothing else to be feared.

McTavish took the very greatest care of his wounded, and on their account solely he would not permit the march homewards to be hurried. The worst cases were carried on litters.

There would have been plenty of time even to collect specimens. But somehow the honest Scot, whose heart was the quintessence of kindness, never once left camp for that purpose.

He had become strangely attached to Kep. He was certainly a lovable lad, and besides there was still the mystery about him which had not yet been cleared up. Indeed, McTavish knowing that any reference thereto appeared to hurt the boy's feelings, refrained from making any attempt to do so.

When they had reached a spot within about ten miles of the beach shortly before sunset one evening, a halt was called for the night, and the guide, who ap-

peared to know nothing of fatigue, was started on ahead to announce the tidings of their arrival. He was to remain on board as the rest of the track was familiar enough to both McTavish and Jack Stormalong.

All hands were glad of a good night's rest. The wounded were doing well, and the very worst cases could now walk.

So after breakfast next day, all hands feeling happier now at heart, the journey was resumed beachwards.

McTavish, trudging sturdily ahead of the troop, had just issued from the forest and sighted the *Breezy*.

She had never looked more beautiful in his eyes, nor had the sunshine on the soft waters, but the flag was flying half mast, and McTavish knew by this that the guide had told the tale of grim fighting and death.

But he started back in amazement to see marching as slowly along the beach as lovers twain, a handsome young gentleman and a gaily dressed brown woman.

"By George!" That is what McTavish exclaimed. But Jack who had just joined him put it stronger.

"By thunder!" he roared, "if that ain't Charlie Bowser himself, all alive low and aloft, may the winds of heaven split my bally old bags."

And Kep it was without a doubt, as smiling and as saucy as ever.

He and Boona hurried up to meet the returning heroes, and the shaking of hands and British cheering that ensued was such as had certainly never been heard before on these lonely shores.

"And now," said Kep, as soon as silence was partially restored, "now Dr. McTavish and Lieutenant Guilford, with your permissions, I will present you to Queen Boona, widow of the late Gobolohlo, whose skeleton now adorns yonder tree stem."

With much solemnity both officers lifted their caps and bowed with befitting dignity.

"She's a deuced handsome girl, anyhow," cried Guilford laughing, and the doctor nodded. He felt very happy now and still more so when Kep handed him a parcel containing his instrument. He laughed at the strange conceit of his boy friend, but willingly tuned up, and so they marched to the boats to the wild skirl of the great Highland bagpipe.

As they passed the tree at the foot of which Gobolohlo expiated his crimes, Kep pointed to the bleached skeleton that rattled in the breeze. It had been wired and fixed up on chains, and above it a large board on which were painted the words—

Here hangs

The mortal remains of King Gobolohlo,
 Who was shot for
 Murder and Cannibalism,
 By
 The Crew of His British Majesty's ship *Breezy*.
 God save the King!

But when Boona smiling curtsied to the skeleton, there was some laughing in the ranks. "Good goodee bye, ole Gobolohlo, goodee bye," she cried. "I is goin' back to Queensland. Not mourn long foh you. Pah!"

Then she flung a kiss from her chubby fingers at the grinning skeleton, took Kep by the arm, and marched cheerfully down to the boats.

CHAPTER XXIV "GOOD HEAVENS! THIS IS MY SISTER MADGE"

The *Breezy* was back once more in the grand old harbour of Sidney. The mails from home had come on board and been distributed. It was the reading, thinking hour on board, which invariably comes, and comes immediately, after news from England has reached a ship of war on a far-off foreign station.

Everyone on board had retired with his own letters into his own cabin, den, or cosy corner. Everybody in fact seemed to evince a desire to be as remote, for the time being, from everybody else, as possible.

But gradually, on this bright and sparkling day, with the bonnie white flag aloft, draping itself on the breeze in every conceivable shape of beauty, the ship returned to its ordinary equanimity.

Captain Breezy came now quietly into the ward-room. He was smiling bashfully somewhat. Trying in fact to hide the pleasure afloat and flowing in his heart, that couldn't be controlled.

Every face was turned towards him.

"Ordered home, sir?"

"Ordered home. Yes."

"Hurrah!" And the good news spread like wildfire from end to end of the ship. All hands had it, from ward-room to galley, from the officer on watch to

the cook's slush boy. Ordered home!

Yet mingled with the joy that was general, was one little blue thread of sadness. In storm or tempest, in fair weather or foul, for three long years and a half, the broadsword-men of the *Breezy* had hung together. Their dangers had been one another's on sea or land, and they had fought shoulder to shoulder in many a bloody tulzie, and a spirit of camaraderie had always pervaded the ship, walked the decks, and dwelt in the hearts of the crew. The *Breezy* had been to them a real home and a happy one at that, a home on the ocean wave. But in a few weeks, they would all be sundered.

Ah, well, such is life to our sailors.

McTavish himself had few letters. Principally from his sisters and the old folks at home.

Nor were Kep's letters very stirring this time. Madge had not yet married the wealthy old man. Father had become settled as it were. Was falling more easily into the new groove, and really, Madge said, life in a cottage by the sea was rather nice than otherwise. "But," she added, "father is longing, and I am longing, for our dear boy and his piccolo back home again to cheer our hearts."

With Madge's letter in his pocket and a photo in it sent to show how she looked at twenty, Kep went below to the doctor's cabin and glided in. His friend was sitting there, lonesome-looking enough, and gazing at a carte intensely, earnestly, in the uncertain light.

"Do I interrupt?"

"No, no, dear boy. Sit you down."

"Mac—may I see that?"

"Oh! it is but a romance and dream I had. It is gone now, and people seldom dream the same dream over again, much though they might desire to."

Kep pulled out his letter and the two exchanged pasteboards.

Both started, as if stung.

"Good heavens!" cried the boy, "this is my sister Madge!"

"And this also is your sister Madge!"

Then hand clasped hand and there was moisture in the eyes of both.

"And I am Keppel Drummond."

"Fool and dolt I was not before to have guessed it."

"But, McTavish, though very young when she met you, she had a romance, and her romance was yours, Mac. She never told me your name, but now I see it all, all clearly."

The two sat down as if under the same impulse, and there, in the cabin alone, Kep told the doctor all his strange story from beginning to end and all his longings as a boy and ambitions as well.

McTavish was silent for a time. He was thinking out the whole situation.

Then his duty seeming to stand out before him clearly and distinctly, he stood up. "Keppel," he said, "don't you think you had better tell the Captain all this? I do not wonder now that you thought fit to conceal your name from us. You believed you were doing right; so, I think, you were. You were acting honourably in hiding from the world that you were the only son of Iverach Drummond, of Martello Castle, because he was moving in the highest society and you were—well, cleaning knives and boots. But now all that is altered. You have by your energy and grit attained to a honourable position as interpreter to a King's ship, while on the other hand your father is now living under a cloud—for a time. Let us hope it is only for a time, Keppel. But now you are going to let me introduce you to the ward-room and gun-room officers as the blue-blooded boy, we have all of us, always, believed you to be. But first and foremost let us see Captain Breezy, than which a better fellow never lived."

The Captain was in his own quarters, when, passing the sentry, McTavish knocked and entered.

Very much interested indeed was he, when Kep briefly retold his story.

To their astonishment the Captain got slowly up from his chair, and took a Yorkshire weekly newspaper from his pile. Then he touched a button and Adolph himself entered.

"I am not to be disturbed," he said, "until I ring again. That is all."

And Adolph retired.

"An article in this paper caught my eye, strange to say, only a few minutes ago, but I hardly glanced at it. I think I can now read it to you with some degree of interest. It is called

"A SECRET OF THE SEA.

"A story was current three or four years ago concerning the mate of a clipper-built Australian barque or ship, who, on his return home about three years ago, boasted of the possession of a large nugget or rather bar of gold. The story he told about it was that being sent on shore one day to bring off some fruit from an uninhabited island in the South Seas he picked up this lump of gold, which it was evident had lain in the water for a period of many years.

"'Where there was one there must more,' he said, and as soon as he could charter a ship he could raise the sunken treasure and become a millionaire. As he never let his friends handle the nugget, if nugget of gold it was, and as he was somewhat dissipated in his mode of life, he got no one to believe him. He had lost his ship owing to drunkenness while in charge of a watch and hadn't found another.

"Reduced at last to penury he determined to pawn his nugget, and for that purpose it seems he visited his uncle as the saying is. The pawn-broker was a shrewd old Jew. But although he called the nugget a mere trinket, he was glad to offer money on it nevertheless. Not enough, however, to satisfy the man, who picked up the sea-worn gold and quickly left the shop. He was followed at once to his lodgings and the address taken.

"A few nights after this he was waited upon not by one Jew but two.

"They had been, they said, thinking over his story, and were willing to advance a considerable sum not on the bit of gold, but if the ex-mate would show them a chart and give the exact latitude and longitude of the unknown island.

"A magnum of champagne was sent for and they three talked over the matter.

"But the mate's ultimatum was this: he refused to give the position of the island, but would take command of the search-ship, and the Jews should have half of all the gold, the other to be his unreservedly.

"Before coming to terms one of the Jews hazarded a last shot. Doubtless, he said, they could find the latitude and longitude from some of the others that had been on board the barque at the time.

"The mate helped himself to more wine. He was a man who could fill his hold without fear of his ballast shifting.

"That you won't," he said. "I knew the only two young fellows that had the secret. One was a steward, the other a ship's cook's slush boy. Both, I've heard, were killed by cannibals, and I alone possess the secret, which I means to stick to, till I find more generous partners than you. Good-night."

"But it seems the mate's last shot told home.

"Brother," said the elder, "let us accept this honest fellow's offer at once. We'll get out the ship then, though it will take a bit of time, and my brother and I will both go out in her. We'd like a bit of fresh air, anyhow."

"Well," the article went on, "extraordinary as the story is it is a true one. The ship is a great object of interest to the residents of Cardiff, and will be all ready to leave in four months' time. She is a strongly built Aberdeen clipper, not large but well armed, and even carries a quick firer, trouble with savages being feared."

"Keppel, I fear," said Captain Breezy, "they will have the weather gauge of you. But I am interested and will see the Admiral of this station about other matters and take his opinion on this at the same time. Meanwhile you had better say nothing about the sunken treasure. Let this be our secret."

"One word, sir," said Kep, "for you are no doubt a trifle wiser than I."

The Captain couldn't help smiling at the lad's pretty conceit.

"Suppose I found those in this city willing at once to start in search of this

sunken treasure, to whom would it belong when raised? To the Crown?"

"Certainly not, boy; but to you, unless the owners came back from the grave. And not only the gold, but the islands themselves, as you were the first inhabitant and it is no portion of British territory. No, the gold would be indisputably yours and Adolph's, your shipwrecked fellow Crusoe. You may go now. I have many matters to think about."

So Captain Breezy had, but he was a brisk, determined man. He lighted his cigar now and leaned back in his easy chair, and began to arrange his ideas.

"That's what I'll do," he said to himself at last.

Next minute the Captain's gig was called away, and it did not take him long to board the flagship.

He transacted all his business coolly and soon had his papers all signed and his instructions to weigh anchor and sail for home any day he pleased. Then he told him Kep's story and all about the treasure.

"And a son of Iverach Drummond. Why, dear old Drummond and I were at school together. I'm surprised, but I'm glad for Keppel's sake, or at least I should be if things go right with him."

"But about the other ship that is fitted out?"

"We'll send a cablegram at once home to hear about it."

They did and the answer came in reasonable time to the effect that the barque *Fortuna*, having engines on board, or what is called auxiliary steam-power, had sailed a month ago by Suez, bound for the South Sea Islands.

"A month ago. Why, Breezy," cried the Admiral, "you can beat her yet, and beat her easily unless you break down. It's only a matter of a few weeks' delay. I'll make that all right, and you have my permission now to go anywhere on your way home and do just as you please."

"A thousand thanks, sir. I shall soon speak my fond farewells to Sidney city, and be under weigh and on the wing by to-morrow forenoon. It may be a bit of a race between the *Breezy* and the *Fortuna*, but I think I know who will win, sir."

"Good morning. Shall be happy to hear from you."

And back to the *Breezy* went bold Captain Breezy.

* * * * *

That evening and night all farewells were said to those on shore. The broadsword-men of the *Breezy* had a good send off and left Sidney homeward bound next forenoon at four bells.

Said Jack Stormalong to a brother gunner as the ship got well away from the shore, "Ned, my old shippie, we're homeward bound, you know, but there's something in the wind, and I'm ready to bet my best new jacket to a pint o' tar

that we won't touch England's happy shores for months to come yet."

"On with you," said Ned. "I'll have your swagger jacket or you'll have my pint o' tar with a cinder in it for luck."

CHAPTER XXV

A GREAT OCEAN RACE.—"GODDARD BEGAN TO SHOOT"

It wasn't only Jack Stormalong and his chum who "kind o' felt" there was something in the air but all hands. There was, maybe, going to be a fight with a pirate, or more savages were coming to the front, or war was declared against Germany; but they didn't mind, and A.B.'s said to each other: "We may be content if it ain't straight home, old pal. We'll git there some time."

"And the more months, the more money, eh?"

But there was no grumbling. Even little Sneyd, the Acting Paymaster, forbore to growl.

The Captain studied the chart, and sailed east and away with a point or two of south in it after they rounded Australia. Making all calculations, he believed he could reach the island some days at all events before the *Fortuna*, who must already have reached the straits of Java, or be about the south end of Borneo. No one could guess what the mate, who was now, of course, captain of the sail-search-of-fortune barque might do.

Now that they were fairly away at sea, there was no harm in all hands knowing the meaning of the enterprise.

It was not merely a voyage they were making, but they were engaged in a great ocean race, and there was therefore a good deal of excitement fore and aft. But all felt sure of winning.

The engineers were advised to make the best of each day's journey, but to exercise the greatest care. For to breakdown in these seas might prove a terrible calamity from every point of view.

The engines worked splendidly under the almost continual attention of the engineer-lieutenant. They were beautiful pets, these of his. He was never happier than when he was down among them, talking to them and touching them as if they were sentient beings, things of life as well as beauty.

Once or twice during the long, long voyage the engines had been suddenly stopped, and the hearts of those on board seemed to stop with them. When they

went on again, however, no sweeter sound ever fell upon their ears than the hum of the polished wheels.

They were delayed for a time by a circular storm. In just such a hurricane many and many a good ship has foundered with all hands, and never more will be heard of them till the sea gives up its dead. But all was soon right again.

When in the South Seas constant watch had to be kept from the mast-head for shoal water, and greater caution had to be observed by night.

This was a trying time in a great ocean race like this.

But the depth of the sea increased at last, and they were now quite out of the ordinary ocean highways, though they at times crossed them and met ships.

They hailed every one of them in the usual way. They spoke them, as sailors say.

They might have been about three days' steam from the islands they were in search of.

Adolph had most carefully retained the position of Great Snake Island, but still there might have been an error in calculation made by the first mate of the *Wampiri*. He was a steady man then, though drinking when off duty, and so this was improbable.

He tried to be steady during the present voyage of the *Fortuna*, and touched no spirits nor wines for a time. He knew right well how much he had at stake, and was cautious.

He himself, moreover, saw to all calculations and made reckonings, and on the whole, as his two Jewish owners remarked, a more trustworthy and reliable sailing master could not have been found. This for the first five weeks.

The broadswords of the *Breezy* began to be a little anxious when next day passed and no *Fortuna* hove in sight. She must have already found the islands, and her crew by now must have commenced the work of diving.

But about an hour after sunrise next day every heart was gladdened by the appearance, far away on the weather bow, of a barque under steam and easy sail, answering exactly to the right build of the *Fortuna*. They overhauled her easily. Indeed, they were coming up hand over hand in her wake, then keeping off a point or two, the *Breezy* hailed her.

"What vessel is that?"

Everyone on the *Breezy* held his breath to listen.

"The *Fortuna*!"

At the word a little cheer had to be repressed on board the man-o'-war.

"Bound for the Horn, and home."

"So are we. We'll be there before you, though. Can we take letters?"

"No, thanks."

"*Bon voyage* then."

"*Bon voyage!*"

"Hurrah!" said Wynn. "No doubt we'll be there before her in more ways than one."

But next day, no ship being then in sight, the glass indicated a depression, the clouds rolled up till the horizon was close aboard of them, and somehow or another the broadswords' hearts went down with the falling glass. In dirty weather like what was coming anything might happen to mar their success.

It really gave the *Fortuna* almost as good a chance of reaching the island first as the *Breezy*.

The gale was at its height when the sable plumes of night trailed over the sea.

The *Breezy* was making good knotage, but, fearful that she might pass the small islands in the darkness, they were obliged to stop ship.

Yet this storm appeared to have driven the *Breezy* out of her way. There were both winds and currents to reckon with.

It was terribly tantalising, and just so near game too. But towards the middle of the morning watch sea and wind went down, the stars shone out, and the red fire of the rising sun opened a splendid day.

Probably this storm and the fact of the *Breezy* having been drifted to leeward saved the situation, for there—not two miles ahead—was the Island of Snakes itself, and no *Fortuna* in sight.

They sailed round this that they might recall the wrecked *Macbeth*, and enable Kep and Adolphus to take their bearings.

They found the spot, but the ship of death lay crushed and broken among the rocks.

It was easy for Kep now to point out the route to the little inlet where the treasure ship had been sunk, and in a couple of hours they had reached it.

No time was lost in sending a boat on shore.

It was the captain's gig, Captain Breezy himself on board her, with Kep and Adolph and McTavish. Everything above seemed precisely the same as when Kep and his comrade had left it years ago.

"But how about the treasure ship?" said Captain Breezy.

"Well, sir," replied Kep, "she ought to be just down there among the weeds. But I can soon see. I can dive down as I did before."

"But is there not a danger of your becoming entangled among the deep sea weeds and drowned?"

"I was entangled last time, sir, though I did not tell Adolph when I got up; so maybe, sir, I might have a bit of a life-line round me this time. I don't want to die to-day, sir, anyhow."

A pole had been brought on shore with a British flag, in order that they

might hoist it and so take possession of the island in the King of Britain's name.

This pole and flag would do capitally. In less than a minute Kep was back again with another bar of gold, which he placed at the captain's feet.

He was gasping a bit, but soon recovered.

"All is just as I left it, sir," he said.

Then there was a ringing cheer from the men on shore, responded to heartily by those on board.

"We'll hoist the flag-pole now," cried Breezy, and the men quickly drove the halliard through the pulley and set to work to step the mast. In a quarter of an hour all was ready for the ceremony.

But McTavish now boldly stepped forward. "I don't think, sir," he said, "that the flag should be hoisted till the sunken ship is cleared."

"And why, my worthy doctor?"

"Well, sir, so long as this island belongs to Keppel here and Adolph, they can do as they please with it and all in it and round it. But as soon as the *Union Jack* is hoisted the island becomes the King's—God bless him!—with all its appurtenances; all above ground and all below becomes treasure-trove, flotsam, jetsam, ligan, or whatever other puzzling names a man of law chooses to put on them."

Captain Breezy laughed. "You're right, doctor. Dash it, doctor, I'll take your advice; but I had no idea we had a sea-lawyer on board of the *Breezy*, else we could have consulted him in many a difficulty before now."

"Sail in sight!"

The hail came from the tops of the ship itself, but could be heard distinctly enough by those on shore.

"That's the *Fortuna* again. Let her come now we have anchored the *Breezy* on Keppel's Isle, and I don't think we'll sever till we see what is below yonder."

The *Fortuna* could be distinctly seen now coming at full speed towards the bay.

"We'll go on board and get things ready. Adolph, you may remain here for a short time. You are the man in possession, and we shan't forget you. Tumble in, boys!"

Once on board preparations to get to work were commenced immediately.

The great diving-bell was overhauled to see that everything was in perfect order.

"I guess," said little Sneyd, the A.-P., as he came bustling into the ward-room, "we're going to have some real good fun with that scoundrel of a skipper on the *Fortuna*." He continued, "Kep, my lucky youngster, you are to keep out of sight below and not appear until you get the signal. But you'd better be half way up the companion ladder so that you can't be seen. That's what your orders are, and if the skipper comes on board the rest of us are to be on the quarter-deck."

Two boats were called away, and, after being manned and armed, lay easily at the shore side of the *Breezy*. They might be wanted; if so, they had their orders, one under the charge of Guilford, the other commanded by a midshipmite.

There is no doubt the skipper of the *Fortuna* smelt a rat, but he determined to face every difficulty. The two Jews were nervous and excited. Indeed, they had already come to open rupture with Goddard.

"If, Captain G.," they told him, "you have fooled us, and we are foiled, we shall maroon you on the nearest uninhabited island, with a keg of rum and a small barrel of salt herrings. Won't we, Moses?"

The skipper took no further notice of the *Breezy*, but stepped into the boat he had lowered and, hoisting the red ensign astern, ordered his fellows to pull to the point within five hundred yards of Golden Inlet.

"Lieutenant Guilford," cried Captain Breezy, "be off now, and see that yonder fellow doesn't land with his flag. I think I know what he is up to, so bring them here, boat and all."

"Ay, ay, sir. Down oars lads. Cheerily does it, and this is race number two in the programme. The winner to receive a bottle of rum."

"Hooray!" Away they went.

But there were good British tars in the *Fortuna's* boat also.

"Up with her, lads; up with her with a will!" Goddard was heard shouting. "We'll beat the beggars yet."

Sturdy and strong as the man-o'-war's men were, they had twice as far to pull, and could never have done the distance, but away went a shot from the *Breezy*. It was splendidly aimed by Stormalong himself, and took the water close to the port bow of the *Fortunes* boat, treating all on board to a most disheartening shower-bath.

"Game's up!" cried Goddard. "In oars, boys. The next shot would sink us."

Then the war-boats got alongside.

"Whither away, my hearty," cried Guilford.

"I am the captain of the *Fortuna*. Yonder is my island, and I'm going to land there and take possession in the King's name."

"You may save yourself the trouble. We ourselves have virtually annexed it. But we've got to take you back to H.M.S. *Breezy* now, Mr. Master-mariner. Are you going to come quietly?"

"Suppose I must, but don't imagine I'm going to take it lying down."

"Don't care how you take it, skipper. You may take cold without, if you choose, or if you prefer it hot—you can have that."

"I shall not give orders to pull a stroke," cried Goddard.

Guilford pulled out two revolvers. "Up hands, in the King's name!" he shouted as he stood in the bows.

Up hands it was, and the boat was taken in tow, and soon her men were safe on board the *Breezy*.

"Show Mr. Goddard aft," cried Breezy. "Midshipman of the watch."

The middy was a merry little boy, and this is the polite way he showed the gentleman aft.

"Luff, you lubber," he cried, "and if ye dare to back sail or heave to before you stand before the captain of this ship, I'll stick a pin in your hip right up to the hilt. March!"

"Now, Mr. Goddard, I hope for your own sake you will not give trouble, else it will be your own fault if anything occurs. You came to look for a sunken treasure ship?" began Captain Breezy.

"Yes, Cap'n, and yonder is the treasure island on which I was landed for fruit. I was therefore first owner, and there I dredged up this bar of gold, therefore the rest of it is mine by rights."

The two stood now in the waist of the ship, confronting each other, with the rest of the officers near, and Goddard's own surly men looking on.

"Mr. Keppel Drummond!"

Keppel was by the captain's side in two bounds.

"I'd be sorry," he said, "to use an ugly word on the deck of the King's ship, so I shall speak in the mildest and calmest language possible."

Goddard had turned pale.

Keppel raised his fist and his voice at the same time. "Goddard," he yelled, "you are not only a liar, but a thief. Hand me the gold."

Goddard was crushed, and parted company with the nugget as a whipped schoolboy might have done.

"If you do not now apologise to this young gentleman," said Breezy, "for the injury you would have done him, I will lodge you in our cells, and hand you over to the police the moment we return to England."

Goddard tried to smile, but in vain.

"You see, young sir, you was eaten by cannibiles."

"Never one put a tooth in me," cried Keppel.

"And was in consequence dead."

"I was never dead in all my life."

"And now," moaned Goddard, "I'm done for. My owners will maroon me."

He talked so sadly, that Captain Breezy felt a bit sorry for him.

"We'll take care they don't maroon you, Mr. Goddard. If you will lie to for a couple of days between the Isle of Snakes yonder and Keppel's Isle here, you may or you may not hear of something to your advantage. Please yourself, Master-mariner. Good day."

Everything was ready that day, a raft rigged and attached thereto the huge

diving-bell, and at early morning, in the short twilight, for the island lies well down south, the men commenced work right gaily.

The *Fortuna* was hove to about three miles from the shore.

The men in the bell were as busy as bonnet-makers, Kep and McTavish roaming over the island accompanied by two bluejackets.

It was not snakes that the brawny surgeon was in search of this time, but Kep had suggested that the crew of the sunken treasure might have made some effort to get a portion of the gold on shore, and there was not a yard of the island anywhere within a mile of the creek or inlet that they did not search. But all in vain, and ere twilight fell, they were back to dinner on board the *Breezy*.

The news was most exhilarating. The bell had been most effective. The men could see everything, and work from inside with levers, or, entering a chamber beneath, get out and walk about the bottom of the sea itself. This work was first executed, and the old galleon, evidently Spanish, was cleared of weeds, and a space many yards all around her; then these were dragged away up the creek, and the divers had a clear field for investigation. No less a sum than £50,000 in gold bars and doubloons were sent up the first day, in boxes weighing about two hundred pounds each.

The *Breezy* spent seven days more at the work, during which time all the men did their duty well and heartily.

The ship was finally blown to pieces on the ocean's bed, and every piece of her was examined. In one box were many precious stones of great value.

On the third day Stormalong was sent to tell the skipper of the *Fortuna* about the wreck that lay on the other island.

The two brothers, the Jewish gentlemen, received him most affably. The skipper himself was sulky, and gave evidence that he had once more resorted to the rum cask to drown his sorrows and keep up his heart.

"But there are good men and true on board, only they are timid and over-awed by the bad hats among the crew." This is what Moses told Stormalong. "These are mutinous even already."

"If you want any help," said the gunner heartily, "I am sure that our Captain Breezy will be glad to let you have it."

"This voyage," the Jew said, "will almost ruin us. But we willingly accept your aid. It is thus with my brother and me: the only way we can save our lives after you leave is by destroying the brandy and the rum, leaving only enough for a smell for the captain and each man, to be doled out daily."

"Now," said Stormalong, "I see how it is. The men sailed, poor beggars, with high hopes of getting rich, and they think they will have to go home in ballast. But they need not. The derelict is worth a deal to you. Give the men work; break her up and load up her brass work and iron, her best timbers, and everything else

of value.”

”Goot! goot! goot!” cried Moses, forgetting his best English.

”Meanwhile, we will send an armed boat on board. We will take your grog and wine and pay you for it.”

”Goot!”

”I’m only *saying* this, but I feel sure I will get leave to.”

”Goot! goot!”

”You may also dredge the wreck yonder, and if you find more gold after we leave, you are welcome to it.”

”Goot! goot! goot!”

The surgeon came off next time in an armed boat. With the men growling all around, they coolly lowered the grog into the steam launch.

When his back was turned, the skipper suddenly pulled out a revolver and began to shoot.

He was speedily secured and bound. Then they left him raving. For the time being the man was mad.

After returning to the *Breezy* the doctor reported what had happened. A bullet had cut the gunner on the shoulder, and so close had the revolver been fired, that part of the poor fellow’s jacket was burned.

Breezy immediately gave orders that Goddard should be taken on board and placed in the cells. He died raving mad just three days after, and so that was the end of *his* story.

CHAPTER XXVI

SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARY HAPPENED

Of gold and precious stones the men of the *Breezy* had lifted quite two millions and two hundred thousand pounds’ worth.

And the happy ship was homeward bound in earnest. Joy fore and aft. Ah, you landsmen, cannot easily understand the feeling in a sailor’s heart; whose every footstep, as he walks the quarter-deck, seems to draw nearer and nearer to the bold bluff coast of Southern Britain.

Before they reached Rio de Janeiro, where Captain Breezy had orders to call and where letters for the crew were expected, Kep and Adolphus had a little private meeting and confab. They settled money matters between them, and then

Keppel Drummond sought audience of the captain, asking permission for Adolph to come with him.

This was gladly granted, and the interview was but a short one.

"It seems, sir," said Kep, "that treasure will pan out to £2,200,000, and if so—"

"Oh, Kep, my lad," interrupted Breezy, "it will do more than that."

"Well, sir, this money belongs to Adolph and me, does it not?"

"Every penny, Keppel."

Kep then told him of his father's grief and illness from his downfall from Martello Castle to a small cottage by the sea, and how he, Kep, meant to set up his daddy and sister in their former state, and to do all he could to make his life happy.

"Adolphus here will, no doubt," he continued, "know what to do with his. And now, sir, I have only to ask that we may have the pleasure and honour of distributing all but the two millions to the officers and men of the ship."

Breezy grasped Kep by the hand and then Adolph. He was visibly affected.

"Let it be divided, as usual, with prize-money, only in this case your share, sir, must not be less than £50,000; nor any man's less than £1,000."

A public meeting was held next day, on the quarterdeck, all hands being called to hear the gladsome tidings. And I need not say that the cheering was such as is seldom heard on board a navy cruiser or battle-ship. Then the little band struck up; both Kep and Adolph were picked up and carried shoulder high around the deck, even the bayoneted sentries saluting as they passed.

It happened to be Saturday night, and so in good old fashion the main-brace was spliced and wives and sweethearts drank right joyfully.

They rounded the Horn in rough and tumbling weather, and in course of time reached Rio, the most beautiful and romantic city on the coast of South America. Almost as splendid with its surroundings of mountains and glens as Edinburgh itself.

Captain Breezy would have liked to have given the men and officers leave, but considering that they were now a treasure ship, and that men who take grog on shore are apt to open their minds too confidentially, he stopped all leave, and the ship was coaled from lighters.

He went on shore himself, taking only Kep and Adolph with him.

Yes; letters were here for all hands.

But terrible news as well, for Britain had just declared war on Russia and Germany, and dispatches from the Admiralty warned the captain that cruisers from each nation were scouring the seas and damaging or destroying British commerce.

He, the Captain, was to keep a good look-out day and night on his way

home.

The news on board was received with an outbreak of cheering, and every man on board was full of fight, and trusted they would soon meet a Russian cruiser.

Captain Breezy had no need to remind them that they were a treasure ship, and that if they fell into the hands of the foe short indeed would be their shrift, and all the gold and precious stones would fall into the hands of the enemy.

Britain at war! Who could have dreamed of such a thing. On the ward-room and gun-room officers the tidings fell like a bolt from a summer sky.

Meanwhile all hands took to reading their letters. Some few were sad, but all the rest were filled with joy and hope.

Kep's heart was filled with feelings of love and gratitude as soon as his eyes fell upon the well-known handwriting of his sister.

In a former letter he had mentioned to her all about the photo of hers that the good and brave Dr. McTavish had shown him. It was he, Kep said, that had been the hero of her little romance in Italy.

And this was Madge's letter in return, or at least a portion of it. Kep had retired to the privacy of his own cabin and easy chair in order to read it.

"DEAR OLD KEP,—For you must, like myself, be getting old now. Would you believe it that I, your little sister, am on the borders of twenty, and not the green side of the border either, but the other. It was sweet of you to write me so long a letter. Quite brotherly too, and in some parts a bit bluff, but I loved it for all that.

"Do you know, Kep, that for dear Daddy's sake I was greatly tempted to let him sell me to the rich old man. I am often sorry for father. This villa is charmingly pretty, and its flowery lawns flow as it were, down almost to the edge of the cliff. But father sits in his chair sometimes for an hour thinking, thinking. I fill his meerschaum for him, and he dreams and dreams of his dear old home till he nods and sleeps.

"We have many neighbours; but though very kind, they are of the commoner middle classes, and though we don't entertain except to tea, I often have them and they me.

"The village where we live is on Cornish shores, and is well named Margetown (but the people don't sound the *e*, and pronounce it Mairtown). The beauty of the bay on an early summer morning is indescribable. Below the cliffs, which are yellowed o'er with scented furze and many a lovely wild flower, the wavelets break when the tide is high over the black rocks at the foot, with a strange murmur that seems to suit the cry of the sea-gulls.

"When the sea is back, it leaves long points of dark seaweed-covered rocks, with patches between of the yellowest of sand, and the long snow-like fringe of

sea moans far away now.

"I'm often among the rocks, and find in pools such lots of darling funny wee fish and crabs and shells.

"But I love the sea in all its moods, by day or by night, when it lulls me to sleep.

"Sometimes I speak to it, sometimes I sing to it, or rather with it, for it is the same sea over which my darling brother sailed so long ago.

"At sunset I seem to love it best, Keppel."

When the burning golden Rose of the day
 Droops down to the Western sea,
 And the amber and purple flush of the sky
 And the crimson glow of the sea,
 Ebb, ebb away, -fade, fade and die;
 While the earth all mantled in shadowy grey,
 Washes her brow with a restful sigh
 In the cool sweet dews of the morning.

Then the letter goes on to tell of all the fun and capers of Bounder and herself,

and how lively and lovely is Bounder still, and how she swims far out with him into the sea, and, when tired, puts one arm over his strong neck, her head on his shoulder, closes her eyes, and allows him to swim back with her to the sandy shore.

"And the boatmen are so kind, Kep," she adds, "and carry me and Bounder into their boats and take us for long, long sails.

"You ask me if I am pretty. Some say I am.

"But good-night, dear Kep, and sound be your sleep, 'rocked in the cradle of the deep.'

"Your ever loving,

"SISTER MADGE."

"P.S.-Oh, I had almost forgotten about your friend, Dr. McTavish. He might come down with you for a day or two. Do you think he would?"

Kep showed that letter to McTavish, and at the postscript he laughed enough to have exploded a torpedo.

"Might come down? By thunder!" he roared. "I'll come down whether anybody asks me or not. Ha! ha! ha!"

* * * * *

But the idea of a "scrape" with a Russian seemed to tickle the crew.

How clean her decks were kept now, and the great guns worked as smoothly as the chronometer. Every sword was sharpened, every cutlass as well; the best revolvers in the ship were served out. Moreover, ammunition was handy, and torpedoes too, and every day the men were exercised in clearing for action.

"By George! Tom, lad," Stormalong said to a pal, "we're not going to lose our gold, if we knows it."

"No; we'll fight like wild cats. Blowed if I wouldn't rather run along sich, like they did in the brave old times, and board the enemy."

But the *Breezy* got among the Azores, and one night, when some miles off the island of Flores, something extraordinary happened, which is well worthy of the beginning of another chapter to itself.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE HOME-COMING OF THE "SAUCIEST BOY"

Probably so extraordinary a battle had never yet been fought at sea in modern times.

It must have been pretty nearly eight bells in the night-watch, when suddenly sweeping round a headland, with the Russian flag flying, the *Breezy* found herself almost cheek by jowl with a great German cruiser. Not far off were five British merchantmen, all evidently prisoners. This was perceived by search-light.

The interpreter Kep roared through the great megaphone in German—

"What ship is that?"

"*Kaiser the Second* of Germany. Who are you?"

"The Russian cruiser *Borloff*, Captain, his Excellency the Count Kaskovisky."

"We don't believe you."

"Take that, then, as you can take no snuff!"

Immediately a torpedo was let fly, followed by the roar of big artillery that all but swept the German into the sea, guns and all. She was hard hit and reeled and swayed like an old tub.

At that very moment the spirit of old Nelson seemed to entered into the

soul of Captain Breezy.

"Away boarders!" he yelled. "Steer her close alongside. Hurrah! boys, Hurrah! We'll give her old fashioned fits. Keep the flash-light on us. Follow me!" and he was the first himself to board, all the officers and men that could be spared scrambling after him.

Kep, too, was near him, with his borrowed cutlass.

Oh, God! what a *mêlée*.

The Germans fought well for a short time. The big doctor with his broadsword must have slain a dozen.

The ring of revolvers, the clashing of steel, the thuds, the blows, the cries and groans, ay, and the terrible oaths as men struck home with knife or bayonet.

In fifteen minutes the crew had sought shelter below, and the Captain himself and those of his officers not killed or wounded had handed their swords to Captain Breezy. Breezy thanked them coolly and quietly.

"And now, sir, your ship is sinking and on fire forward. Call your men up unarmed to take refuge on our ship. Quickly too, or we must haul off, and leave you."

Kep rushed aft and hauled down the German flag. He wrapped it around him like a Scottish plaid, and shouted Hurrah!

No attempt was made to quench the fire; but side by side British and Germans worked bravely for nearly half an hour under the command of McTavish, till they got the wounded taken on board the *Breezy*, then the latter speedily steamed off and away.

None too soon, for they were but half a mile off when the *Kaiser* blew up. Oh, a terrible sight, such as I trust your eyes, my youthful readers, may never behold.

The Germans were really good fellows, and thought of the loss of their ship as a mere trick of fortune.

The unwounded men were landed as prisoners next morning on this thrice beautiful Isle. But Captain and officers as well as the wounded were kept as prisoners of war.

The British merchant ships went on their several ways rejoicing at the turn of the tide, and the German prisoners seemed as happy as schoolboys in a strawberry patch, only they smoked all day, a thing that boys who want to grow up hardy and well should never do.

The Captain of the sunken cruiser could talk good English and so could his officers, and they told many a side-splitting yarn after dinner, so they were really good company.

They were good musicians too, and were both thrilled and delighted when Kep took out his magical little black flute with which he had charmed both snakes

and savages.

But they would have McTavish to play them on the great Highland bagpipes, laments, coronachs, and battle pieces. They had never heard so wonderful or warlike an instrument before.

"Shall I play you a lullaby or cradle hymn, Captain?"

"Mein Gott!" exclaimed the German. "You think you can play a lullaby on that."

"Sit here a moment, sir. The skylights are open and I am going to play well forward, or in the ship's waist. Listen."

He went below first to the cook's galley to tune properly up.

Then in a few minutes the lullaby began. It seemed the lowest and dreamiest music those Germans ever listened to, and appeared to be coming up out of some dreary pine-forest, or from far away behind a heather hill.

"Dat was glorious," cried the German. "Oh, Captain Breezy, send a sentry to request an encore." When the last notes filled the air in cadence long and low, there were tears in that Captain's eyes.

"You are a wonderful peoples, you Scotch," he said, as McTavish flung the pipes on the sofa. "Love, romance and music dwells only in a mountain-land."

One day, not long after this, the *Breezy* was sighted by a Russian battleship. Had this vessel overhauled her, they would have fought like mountain cats, and would have probably sunk with the British colours flying.

There was no occasion, for just then a huge and majestic British ship hove in sight, and the Russian now took to her heels, showing her ugly stern, with the Britisher, after an exchange of salutes with the *Breezy*, going full speed after her.

They passed to the east of the Channel Islands that evening.

"Now," said Breezy to Kep, "we have some considerable amount of repairs to make, as I don't want to go into port like a lame duck. So, lad, if you choose, I shall cast anchor just off your father's village of Mareton and complete repairs there, and you can ask your people to come off every day."

"Oh, how can I ever thank you, sir?"

"By holding your peace, lad. But," he added, "I'll be bound that the broadsword-men of the *Breezy* will manage to amuse them."

When big McTavish heard this, strong though he was, he became almost hysterical at the thought of seeing Madge again once more.

Says Kep: "I say, old Mac, let me give you a straight tip. Not a word then about your having any money, nor about the treasure. My family are proud, and if my sister does not marry you for your own dear self, sister of mine though she be, she is not worth having."

"So be it, Kep, my friend."

Next morning the good people of Maretown were surprised to see a bonnie

cruiser lying at anchor in the bay, her beautiful flag almost trailing on the surface of the calm unruffled ocean. And about two bells in the forenoon watch, a light boat was lowered nimbly and came dancing shorewards, a young officer holding the ribbons.

She was beached on the sand, and in a few minutes' time Kep was rattling up the green cliffs and landed just opposite his dear father's door.

He knew it, because Bounder—the same dear old Bounder—came fiercely on him when he attempted to open the gate. But a word from the boy changed all this to wildest joy, and the boy received a real dog-welcome. Not content with kissing him and knocking his cap off, he seized that cap and went bounding round and round on a grand circus tour with it. Round and round he dashed through the shrubberies and ferns, across the lawns and over flower-beds and borders, finally darting in through the hall doorway, where he laid the cap graciously at the feet of his mistress. And then they knew by that dog's joyous countenance, and his smiles canine, that it was the *Breezy* that lay at anchor in the blue summer-lit bay, and that the long lost boy had indeed returned.

Both father and sister rushed out, meeting Kep on the lawn, and I just leave it to yourself to imagine what his reception was.

Why, while the sister hugged and kissed him, poor Drummond himself, with tears in his eyes, stood holding his hand, bare-headed in the sunshine.

They led him in and he spent a whole all too short hour with him, and then went off with reluctance.

He promised to bring a bigger boat for them at one bell for luncheon.

"I think," said Kep, as he said good-bye for a time, "I think, when you hear my record from Captain's lips, you will believe that I never disgraced the grand old name of Drummond."

McTavish himself was at the gangway when the Captain's boat brought Drummond and his daughter Madge off to luncheon. He helped them on deck, Madge first tenderly, but shyly, the father next, somewhat reservedly.

And Madge, who walked up and down the deck with McTavish, she asking the drollest questions imaginable about great guns and torpedoes, never heeding or caring what the answers were, because she was thinking of matters far different, Madge, I say, captivated all hands, from the Captain right down to the cook's slush boy. No wonder, with her dark and beautiful eyes, her gentle ways, her wealth of hair and pearly teeth, and her ripe red lips that so strangely contrasted with her almost brown skin, for she was half an Italian and sea breezes had done the rest. For Madge from her very infancy had loved the ocean wild and wide, ni sunshine or in howling storm.

So these two walked together, saying not a word that would have revealed to them how very nearly their hearts were one.

But the steward himself came up at last to tell them that luncheon was about to be served. Then below they went hand in hand, and took their places quietly, she between her father and Kep, McTavish to the left of Kep.

The Captain lunched in the ward-room to-day, and everyone at table was very happy and gay. And all talked about their wild adventures, but never a soul spoke about the treasure that lay below.

Somehow or other, Drummond was captivated by the stalwart doctor. The latter listened respectfully to all the Squire said, but by no means in a cringing way. Drummond came of a good old family, but the doctor's was older still.

The Squire was not yet fifty, but through long worry and sorrow his hair was white as snow. Consequently the middies called him old.

McTavish had the gift of diplomacy.

And here is a hint or two to my younger readers, who may wish to curry favour with some white-haired uncle they have not seen before, but think old.

You will naturally imagine that he is deaf. Make no such mistake. Don't shout at him while at table, lowering your voice when you turn to talk to others. If you do so what a little ill-mannered brat he will consider you.

Never tell him that he looks a little poorly, "sir." In fact the less you "sir" the better.

Never, in asking a question, prefix it with the words: "I suppose when you were young, sir."

Never, if talking about ages or the long ago, make use of the words: "Oh! you may live a good few years yet, sir."

For there is a good chance of the boy who smokes cigarettes and reads the sporting papers being dead long, long before the man of fifty.

And never on any account hold out your arm as if to support him when alighting from a carriage, or ten to one you'll receive a snub.

If invited to such a gentleman's house, leave all your swagger at home, and don't go chucking the maids under the chin and calling them "Mary." The result would probably be that you would be speedily kicked out by the old guv'nor.

And men of fifty can kick too. It is the scientific kick, not done with the toe of the boot but the flat sole. You get there all the same, however, that is, sprawling on your face on the muddy pavement.

These words may be a digression, boys, but they are very true.

The engineers all that day were busy repairing, but next day was Saturday, and till well into the dog watches McTavish thought he had never spent such an anxious day, but about five o'clock the gig was called away, and the doctor himself went in her.

He almost lifted Madge into the boat, but said laughingly to her father, "I needn't assist you, Squire; you've been in many a brave boat." And Drummond

felt as lively as a kitten.

Such a really delightful evening was spent, and so downright happy were Madge and McTavish, to say nothing of everybody else, that naughty old Time flew as quickly by as if he had hired a motor-car for the express purpose.

CHAPTER XXVIII

NOT ANOTHER "BUT" ABOUT IT

The dinner that evening was a great success, as society reporters say. But I am writing facts—true facts, not the ordinary kind that are good enough for newspapers.

Happy crew, happy officers! Madge was very much at home, and at ease, but who would not be so at a Royal Navy mess dinner.

Only sometimes McTavish was too quiet, and apparently a trifle sad. He was wondering to himself what this depression might portend.

"What are you thinking about, Mac," cried Guilford; "why, you've got a face like a latter day saint."

Mac laughed, blushed a little—for it is only men nowadays who do blush—but with an extreme effort he shook himself, mentally that is, and for the remainder of the evening was the life and soul of the ward-room.

No one spoke much about adventures. When the Captain was asked about those in New Guinea, he only laughed. "We sailor men," he said, "think little of adventure, so used to it, and as for bravery in the battlefield, why my worthy surgeon McTavish will tell you that to be slain is a far less cruel death than dying in bed."

The band to-night was playing at first delightful selections from operas, then they got on to the sweet bonnie lilt of old Scotland. Then to waltzes, and this was more than blood of sailors could stand. The middies had turned out in a body, and the men forward, too, kept it up.

Then McTavish, with Madge, and every other wardroom officer with any partner they could pick up.

"May I lead you forward sister dear, just to show you how our fellows can hornpipe."

The band stopped now. Kep's marvellous pipe soon filled the deck with hornpipe dancers. As soon as one dropped out of the ring another hopped in and

this continued for an hour.

Then came the broadsword-men of the *Breezy* on deck, and this was the grandest treat ever Madge had known in all her young lifetime. But the duel between Stormalong and McTavish fairly brought down the house.

Mac of course had the tartans on, and being begged of to dance the sword dance, he did so, and with real Highland glee too.

Poor Squire Drummond was visibly affected,

But pleasures are like poppies spread,
 You seize the flow'r, the bloom is shed;
 Or like the snow falls in the river,
 A moment white, then melts for ever;
 Or like the borealis race,
 That flit ere you can point their place.

Every good time has an end. And so had this evening.

Kep and Mac took Madge and her father on shore. Hardly anyone spoke. No one could under such a starlit canopy with the big moon silvering all the sea southwards.

I wonder what made Mac squeeze the little hand that somehow—accident, I suppose—found its way into his, and was the gentle pressure he thought was returned, all mere imagination on his part?

* * * * *

Next evening Kep went on shore with his friend McTavish. They went long, long before sundown, because first the surgeon must talk a bit with the Squire, then Madge and the young men were going to be off on a ramble over the moor with Bounder.

The Squire and the gallant Navy surgeon talked chiefly about Scotland and the Clans. The ancestors of both had been out in the 45.

Drummond found that Mac was descended directly from a chief of the McTavish clan, which delighted the old man.

What delighted him most, however, was Mac's sturdily stating the facts which English boys need so much to be taught, that the short but bloody war that took place between the Jacobites and the Hanoverian was decidedly not a war between Scotland and England. There were as many so-called "Royalists" in Scotland as there were so-called rebels. That had Prince Charlie reached Norfolk his army would have been trebled in number.

"God bless you, young fellow."

And hand met hand in a hearty shake.

Away over hill and dale now for a long stroll. But where was Kep and Bounder. The restless Kep had gone on before. He left word with the housekeeper that he had gone on and that they would find him—forest way. I'm really afraid that Kep was a sly little dog.

"Oh, we'll find him," said McTavish, and away the two went together up and across the moor.

I'm sure of one thing, that McTavish, did not talk about Scotland and the Clans to his sweet and beautiful companion. They gathered wild flowers instead, and Mac could name them all and tell the story of their lives.

Sweet occupation!

Then, by chance I suppose, they entered a shady, ferny dell, and down they sat upon a rock. Then the past somehow came back and their romance in fair Italy.

Suddenly the girl burst into tears.

He was an awkward fellow, this Mac, and really was at a loss what to do or what to say.

But he blurted out at last—"Oh, dearest on earth, life of my life, soul of my soul, we love each other. Will you not be mine?"

She did not lip out like a Society belle—"It's so sudden."

But her tearful face was upturned to his.

"Yes, dear, if father can be got over."

"That is nothing," said bold Mac. "I'll manage father. Then--"

Well, then Bounder put in an appearance with his red tongue out over his white teeth and laughing all down both sides.

"Hilloa! you fellows"—it was Kep's voice—"I've been looking for you everywhere."

The journey back to the Cottage was a lightsome and happy one. The dinner was a splendid one. All McTavish's despondency had fled, and he kept his host laughing almost continuously all the while with the strange stories he told.

After dinner the Squire and he went out to smoke in the garden, while the full moon rose silently up and sparkled on the beautiful sea.

You must have known long before this that this great athlete surgeon was not the man to hang fire about anything. His motto was, if you've got to fight, why, the sooner you charge the better.

He stopped so quickly in his walk that the Squire had forged ahead a few paces before he too could stop ship and get about.

Thus the two men faced each other.

"Squire Drummond, I love your daughter, and have reason to believe she is

fond of me. Squire Drummond, may I call you father?"

The Squire looked the bold young rascal up and down, then burst out laughing. And here is what he said as he held out his hand—

"Damn *me*, Duncan McTavish, if I think I can do better."

So there was an end of the whole matter. Dr. McTavish was a bold young fellow, and you know

He either fears his fate too much
Or his deserts are small
Who dares not put it to the test,
To win or lose it all.

But I say you know, according to Mac, there never was a moon so bright as that under which our heroes returned to the *Breezy*, nor a perfume half so sweet as that which arose from the cliffs clad with yellow gorse.

* * * * *

Now time is up, and reader and author have to part till another Christmas, if God in His goodness should see fit to spare us.

The *Breezy* arrived safely at Plymouth and had a very happy home coming. Captain Breezy was made Rear Admiral almost at once, and the King gave him a C.B.

Each officer and man was paid his share of the treasure as soon as its value was ascertained in the Bank of England. And here it was stored for a time.

But before I drop the curtain for the last time, I may tell you that every one of the *Breezy's* crew attended the marriage of McTavish and his bonnie bride, and they departed on their honeymoon in a special train for London.

It was not until Kep's return from town that he told his father about the treasure.

Three months after that, Drummond was back home and his daughter with Mac had come to live with father and comfort him.

Kep received a capital appointment as interpreter and secretary at Whitehall, where he remained till the terrible war was over.

Adolph went back to Austria, but promised to visit Martello many times and oft.

I need hardly say a word about Stormalong. Fact is he married his Katie, who had been as true to her sailor boy as the needle to the pole.

The *Blue Ensign* was transformed completely, and made into a really fash-

ionable hotel, and everybody was proud of the jolly sailor landlord, who often condescended even to appear at the bar counter itself, and his laugh at such time, shook the very rigging, as Stormalong himself would have described it.

But in this hotel there was a snugger, called the Man-o'-War Sailors' own room. Only sailors and sailor's friends were ever admitted, but to drop in there of an evening and listen to the yarns that the seamen spun—each with his pipe and his pint—would have made life seem pleasanter to the veriest hypochondriac.

But—but—why I don't think there is another "but" about it.

Lower away with the curtain. Good-bye, my brave British boys. And just one little cheer for the British Royal Navy.

THE END.

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