

*In the Enemy's Camp*

The glare of the torch, lighting up the interior of the block-house, showed me the worst of my apprehensions realized. The pirates were in possession of the house and stores; there was the cask of cognac, there were the pork and bread, as before; and, what tenfold increased my horror, not a sign of any prisoner. I could only judge that all had perished, and my heart smote me sorely that I had not been there to perish with them.

There were six of the buccaneers, all told; not another man was left alive. Five of them were on their feet, flushed and swollen, suddenly called out of the first sleep of drunkenness. The sixth had only risen upon his elbow: he was deadly pale, and the blood-stained bandage round his head told that he had recently been wounded, and still more recently dressed. I remembered the man who had been shot and had run back among the woods in the great attack, and doubted not that this was he.

The parrot sat, preening her plumage, on Long John's shoulder. He himself, I thought, looked somewhat paler



and more stern than I was used to. He still wore the fine broad-cloth suit in which he had fulfilled his mission, but it was bitterly the worse for wear, daubed with clay and torn with the sharp briars of the wood.

‘So,’ said he, ‘here’s Jim Hawkins, shiver my timbers! dropped in, like, eh? Well, come, I take that friendly!’

And thereupon he sat down across the brandy cask, and began to fill a pipe.

‘Give me a loan of the link, Dick,’ said he; and then, when he had a good light, ‘That’ll do, lad,’ he added, ‘stick the glim in the wood heap; and you, gentlemen, bring yourselves to! – you needn’t stand up for Mr Hawkins; *he’ll* excuse you, you may lay to that. And so, Jim’ – stopping the tobacco – ‘here you were, and quite a pleasant surprise for poor old John. I see you were smart when first I set my eyes on you; but this here gets away from me clean, it do.’

To all this, as may be well supposed, I made no answer.

They had set me with my back against the wall; and I stood there, looking Silver in the face, pluckily enough, I hope, to all outward appearance, but with black despair in my heart.

Silver took a whiff or two of his pipe with great composure, and then ran on again.

‘Now, you see, Jim, so be as you *are* here,’ says he, ‘I’ll give you a piece of my mind. I’ve always liked you, I have, for a lad of spirit, and the picter of my own self when I