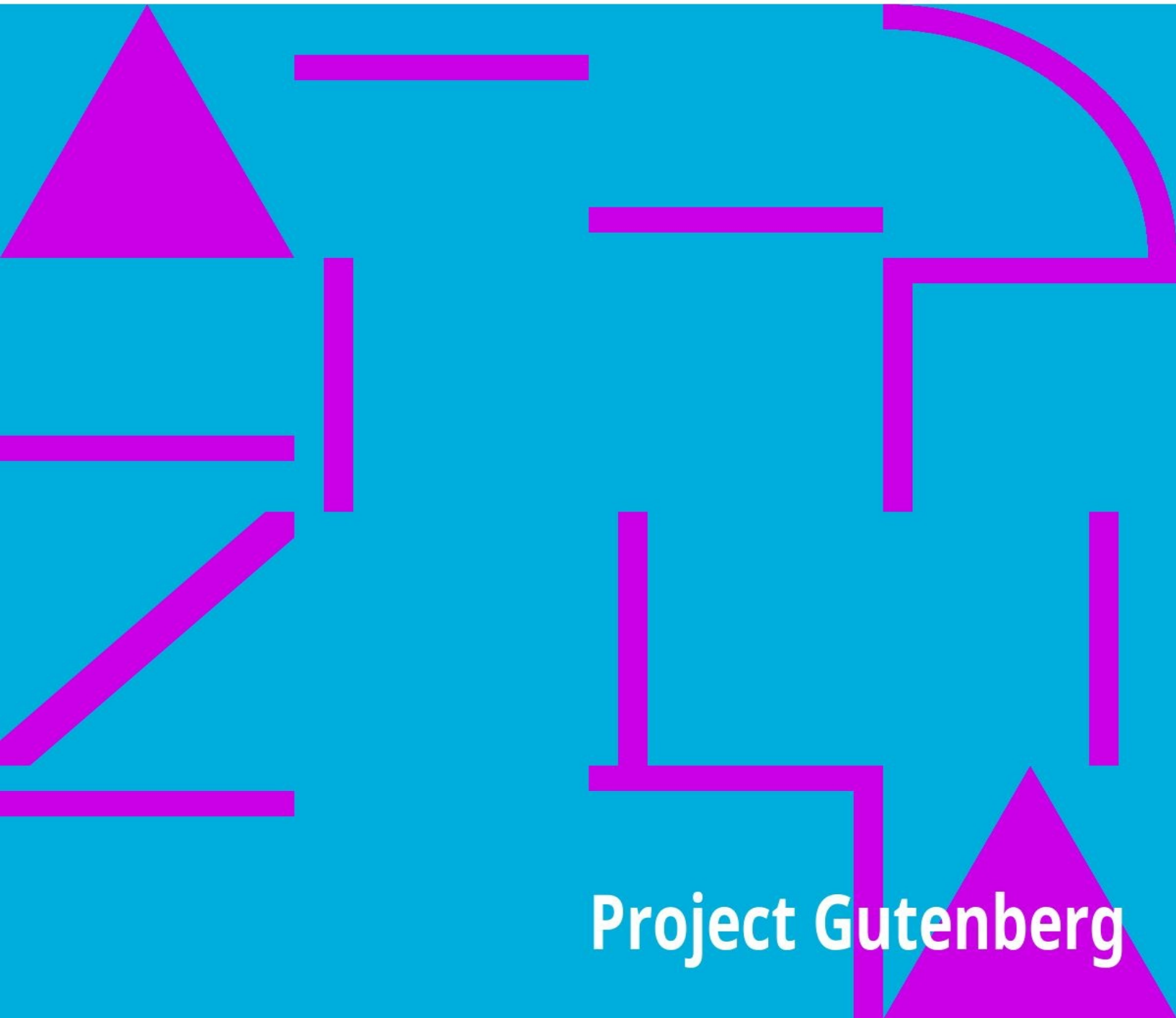
Adrift on the Pacific

A Boys [sic] Story of the Sea and its Perils

Edward Sylvester Ellis



Title: Adrift on the Pacific

Author: Edward S. Ellis

Release Date: August 11, 2009 [EBook #29667]

Language: English

Produced by Roger Frank and the Online Distributed
Proofreading Team at http://www.pgdp.net

Adrift on the Pacific

A Boys Story of the Sea and its Perils

By EDWARD S. ELLIS

Author of
“The Young Pioneers,” “Fighting to Win,” “Adrift in the Wilds,” “The Boy Patriot,” Etc.

emblem

A. L. BURT COMPANY; PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK

ADRIFT ON THE PACIFIC

Adrift on the Pacific

CHAPTER I

CAPTAIN STRATHMORE'S PASSENGER

A few hours before the sailing of the steamer *Polynesia*, from San Francisco to Japan, and while Captain Strathmore stood on deck watching the bustle and hurry, he was approached by a nervous, well-dressed gentleman, who was leading a little girl by the hand.

"I wish you to take a passenger to Tokio for me, Captain Strathmore," said the stranger.

The honest, bluff old captain, although tender of the feelings of others, never forgot the dignity and respect due to his position, and, looking sternly at the stranger, said:

"You should know, sir, that it is the purser and not the captain whom you should see."

"I have seen him, and cannot make a satisfactory arrangement."

"And that is no reason, sir, why you should approach me."

The captain was about moving away, when the stranger placed his hand on his arm, and said, in a hurried, anxious voice:

"It is not I who wish to go—it is this little girl. It is a case of life and death; she must go! You, as captain, can take her in your own cabin, and no one will be inconvenienced."

For the first time Captain Strathmore looked down at the little girl, who was staring around her with the wondering curiosity of childhood.

She was apparently about six years of age, and the picture of infantile innocence and loveliness. She was dressed with good taste, her little feet being incased in Cinderella-like slippers, while the pretty stockings and dress set off the figure to perfection. She wore a fashionable straw hat, with a gay ribbon, and indeed looked like a child of wealthy parents, who had let her out for a little jaunt along some shady avenue.

When Captain Strathmore looked down upon this sweet child, a great pang went through his heart, for she was the picture of the little girl that once called him father.

Her mother died while little Inez was an infant, and, as soon as the cherished one could dispense with the care of a nurse, she joined her father, the captain, and henceforth was not separated from him. She was always on ship or steamer, sharing his room and becoming the pet of every one who met her, no less from her loveliness than from her childish, winning ways.

But there came one awful dark day, away out in the Pacific, when the sweet voice was hushed forever, and the rugged old captain was bowed by a grief such as that which smites the mountain-oak to the earth.

The little girl who now looked up in the face of Captain Strathmore was the image of Inez, who years before had sunk to the bottom of the sea, carrying with her all the sunshine, music and loveliness that cheered her father's heart. With an impulse he could not resist, the captain reached out his arms and the little stranger instantly ran into them. Then she was lifted up, and the captain kissed her, saying:

"You look so much like the little girl I buried at sea that I could not help kissing you."

The child was not afraid of him, for her fairy-like fingers began playing with the grizzled whiskers, while the honest blue eyes of the old sailor grew dim and misty for the moment.

The gentleman who had brought the child to the steamer saw that this was a favorable time for him to urge his plea.

"That is the little girl whom I wished to send to Tokio by you."

"Have you no friend or acquaintance on board in whose care you can place her?"

"I do not know a soul."

"Is she any relative of yours?"

"She is my niece. Her father and mother are missionaries in Japan, and have been notified of her coming on this steamer."

"If that were so, why then were not preparations made for sending her in the care of some one, instead of waiting until the last minute, and then rushing down here and making application in such an irregular manner?"

“Her uncle, the brother of my wife, expected to make the voyage with her, and came to San Francisco for that purpose. He was taken dangerously ill at the hotel, and when I reached there, a few hours ago, he was dead, and my niece was in the care of the landlord’s family. My wife, who is out yonder in a carriage, had prepared to accompany me East to-morrow. Her brother had made no arrangements for taking the little one on the steamer, so I was forced into this unusual application.”

While the gentleman was making this explanation, the captain was holding the child in his arms, and admiring the beautiful countenance and loveliness of face and manner.

“She does look exactly like my poor little Inez,” was his thought, as he gently placed her on her feet again.

“If we take her to Japan, what then?”

“Her parents will be in Tokio, waiting for her. You, as captain, have the right, which no one would dare question, of taking her into your cabin with you, and I will compensate you in any manner you may wish.”

“What is her name?” asked Captain Strathmore.

“Inez.”

“She shall go,” said the sailor, in a husky voice.

CHAPTER II

THE CAPTAIN AND INEZ

The steamer *Polynesia* was steaming swiftly across the Pacific, in the direction of Japan—bravely plunging out into the mightiest expanse of water which spans the globe, and heading for the port that loomed up from the ocean almost ten thousand miles away.

Although but a few days out, little Inez had become the pet of the whole ship. She was full of high spirits, bounding health—a laughing, merry sprite, who made every portion of the steamer her home, and who was welcome wherever she went.

To the bronzed and rugged Captain Strathmore she was such a reminder of his own lost Inez that she became a second daughter to him, and something like a pang stirred his heart when he reflected upon his arrival at his destination and his parting from the little one.

Inez, as nearly as the captain could gather, had been living for several years with her uncle and aunt in San Francisco, from which port her parents had sailed a considerable time before. The stranger gave a very common name as his own—George Smith—and said he would await the return of the *Polynesia* with great anxiety, in order to learn the particulars of the arrival of his niece in Japan.

However, the captain did not allow his mind to be annoyed by any speculations as to the past of the little girl; but he could not avoid a strong yearning which was growing in his heart that something would turn up—something possibly in the shape of a social revolution or earthquake—that would place the little girl in his possession again.

And yet he trembled as he muttered the wish.

“How long would I keep her? I had such a girl once—her very counterpart—the sweet Inez, my own; and yet she is gone, and who shall say how long this one shall be mine?”

The weather remained all that could be wished for a number of days after steaming out of the Golden Gate. It was in the month of September, when a mild, dreamy languor seemed to rest upon everything, and the passage across the Pacific was like one long-continued dream of the Orient—excepting, perhaps, when the cyclone or hurricane, roused from its sleep, swept over the deep with a fury such as strews the shores with wrecks and the bottom with multitudes of bodies.

What more beautiful than a moonlight night on the Pacific?

The *Polynesia* was plowing the vast waste of waters which separates the two worlds, bearing upon her decks and in her cabins passengers from the four quarters of the globe.

They came from, and were going to, every portion of the wide world. Some were speeding toward their homes in Asia or Africa or the islands of the sea; and others living in Europe or America, or the remote corners of the earth, would finally return, after wandering over strange places, seeing singular sights, and treading in the footsteps of the armies who had gone before them in the dim ages of the past.

Now and then the great ship rose from some mighty swell, and then, settling down, drove ahead, cleaving the calm water and leaving a wide wake of foam behind. The black smoke poured out of the broad funnels, and sifted upward through the scant rigging, and was dissipated in the clear air above. The throbbing of the engine made its pulsations felt through the ponderous craft from stem to stern, as a giant breathes more powerfully when gathering his energy for the final effort of the race. A few drifting clouds moved along the sky, while, now and then, a starlike point of light, far away against the horizon, showed where some other caravansary of the sea was moving toward its destination, thousands of leagues away.

Although Captain Strathmore was on duty, and it was against the rules for any passenger to approach or address him, yet there was one who was unrestrained by rules or regulations, no matter how sternly they were enforced in other cases.

The captain was standing on the bridge, when he felt some one tugging at his coat, and he looked down.

There was Inez demanding his attention.

“Take me up, pop,” said she.

“Bless your heart!” laughed the captain as he obeyed the little empress; “you

would ruin the discipline of a man-of-war in a month."

While speaking, he perched her on his shoulder, as was a favorite custom with him.

The day had been unusually warm, and the night was so mild that the steady breeze made by the motion of the steamer was scarcely sufficient to keep one cool. Little Inez had thrown aside her hat with the setting of the sun, and now her wealth of golden hair streamed and fluttered in fleecy masses about her shoulders.

The steamer was plowing straight to the westward, cutting the waves so keenly that a thin parabola of water continually curved over in front of her from the knife-like prow.

Perched aloft on the shoulder of the captain, Inez naturally gazed ahead, and the figure was a striking one of innocence and infancy peering forward through the mists and clouds toward the unknown future. But Inez was too young to have any such poetical thoughts, and the captain was too practical to be troubled by "æsthetic meditations."

He chatted with her about their arrival in Japan, saying that she would be glad to see no more of him, when she replied:

"If you talk that way, I'll cry. You must go home and live with us. Uncle Con says papa has a big dog, and if we haven't room in the house, you can sleep with him, and I'll feed you each morning—oh, look!"

CHAPTER III

AN ACCIDENT

That which arrested the attention of the little girl in the arms of Captain Strathmore, was a sight—unique, rare and impressively beautiful.

All around the steamer stretched the vast Pacific, melting away into darkness, with here and there a star-like twinkle, showing where some ship was moving over the waste of waters. Overhead, the sky was clear, with a few stars faintly gleaming, while the round, full moon, for whose rising so many on the steamer had been watching, had just come up, its disk looking unusually large, as it always does when so close to the horizon.

Just when the moon was half above the ocean, and when the narrowing path of the illumination stretched from the ship to the outer edge of the world, a vessel under full sail slowly passed over the face of the moon.

The partial eclipse was so singular that it arrested the attention of Inez, who uttered the exclamation we have recorded. It was seen by nearly all the passengers, too, most of whom were looking toward the horizon for the rising of the orb, and expressions of delight were heard from every quarter, for such a sight, we say, is rare.

When observed by the passengers on board the *Polynesia*, the moon had barely cleared the horizon, as we have stated, and the top of the mainmast just reached the uppermost portion of the periphery, while spars, rigging and hull were marked against the yellow disk as distinctly as if painted in India ink.

Such an obscuration, like a total one of the sun, could last but a few seconds, for the *Polynesia* and the other ship were moving in opposite directions, while the moon itself was creeping upward toward the zenith. Slowly the black ship glided toward its destination—hull, masts and rigging gradually mingled with the gloom beyond, until the moon, as if shaking off the eclipse, mounted upward with its face unmarred, excepting by the peculiar figures stamped there when it was first launched into space.

When the wonderful exhibition was over there were murmurs of admiration from the passengers, who, grouped here and there, or promenading back and forth, had stood spellbound, as may be said, while it was in progress.

Captain Strathmore and two of his officers had seen the same thing once or twice before, but they had been favored in this respect above others, and could hardly expect anything of the kind again.

The captain now prepared for an interesting and novel ceremony, which he had announced would take place that evening by moonlight.

Descending to the deck, and approaching the stern, where the expectant passengers had gathered together, the group were silent a minute, while he stood among them holding little Inez by the hand. A few minutes later the purser came aft, carrying a parcel in his hand, which he carefully placed upon the taffrail. Then he spoke in a sepulchral voice.

“Ladies and gentlemen, we all have lost minutes and hours, but it is seldom that we deliberately throw away a day. But we are to do so now. We are about to bury a day. To-day is the Twentieth, to-morrow will be the Twenty-second, and where, then, is the Twenty-first? There it lies” (pointing to the parcel on the taffrail). “Life is short enough, without deliberately casting an entire day into the sea; but there is the consolation of knowing, on your return, that it shall be restored to you, and thus beautifully does nature preserve the equilibrium throughout the world. What more fitting than that the day should be buried by the hands of one whose life is as spotless as the snow upon the peaks of the Sierras we have left behind us?”

All now uncovered their heads—that is, the gentlemen did—and the captain advanced, leading Inez Hawthorne by the hand. Holding her up a short distance from the deck, she called out:

“Good-by, Twenty-first of September!”

She repeated the words correctly, for the captain whispered them in her ear, and as she spoke she gave the parcel a slight shove, and overboard it went, striking the water with a splash, and instantly sinking out of sight. The package was nothing but some old iron, wrapped about with coarse brown paper.

The ceremony of burying a day, as the reader knows, is a common, and it may be said, a necessary, one with vessels sailing westward over the Pacific, as the picking up of a day is necessary on the return. At first sight it seems incongruous, but it is in fact the only way in which the reckoning of time can be

kept correctly.

The little ceremony naturally caused the matter itself to become one of discussion, and probably a goodly number of young ladies and gentlemen picked up more knowledge of the matter than they had ever dreamed of before.

Two curious things happened within a half hour of this novel ceremony.

The *Polynesia* was driving along with that steady motion in which the throbbing of the vessel can only be detected by carefully standing still and watching for it, when every passenger, and especially the captain and his officers, suddenly felt an alarming jar, which shook the steamer from stem to stern. It was noticed that the engine instantly stopped and the enormous ship gradually came to rest upon the long, heaving swell of the Pacific.

In a few minutes it was ascertained that the steamer had broken the shaft of her propeller, thus rendering the all-important screw useless. This necessitated the hoisting of her sails, and a monotonous voyage to her destination, a return to San Francisco, or a long deviation to Honolulu for repairs.

While the necessary investigation was going on, a sail had been sighted bearing down upon them, and in half an hour it came-to, a short distance off, in the hope of being able to afford some assistance—as the sight of a steamer lying motionless on the water meant that something was amiss.

This new craft was the schooner *Coral*, a stanchly-built, sharp-bowed little vessel of forty tons burden, built for the Honolulu trade. She was about seven years old, very fast, and constructed as strongly as iron and wood could make her. The forecastle, cook’s quarters and cabin were all under deck, so that in heavy weather there was no danger of being washed from one’s bunk whenever a big sea came thundering over the rail.

The skipper or captain of this trim little craft was Jack Bergen, of Boston, and he with his mate, Abram Storms, had made the trip across the continent by rail to San Francisco—thus saving the long, dangerous and expensive voyage around Cape Horn.

In the Golden Gate City they—for the mate and captain were joint partners—bought the *Coral* at auction, paying just two-thirds the sum they expected to give for the vessel they needed. However, when she was fitted up and provisioned, they found very little of their funds left, and they could but feel some anxiety as to the result of the extraordinary enterprise upon which they were engaged. The crew of the little schooner consisted of the two sailors, Hyde Brazzier, Alfredo

Redvignez, and a huge African, Pomp Cooper, who shipped as cook and steward, with the liability of being called upon to do duty in an emergency.

But of these, more hereafter.

Captain Bergen, after his craft came-to, was rowed across the short, intervening distance with his mate, and they were assisted upon deck, where they were received most courteously.

“Is there anything I can do to help you?” he asked after he and his brother officer were received by Captain Strathmore.

“I’m obliged to you, but I’m afraid not,” was the courteous response. “You know, there’s no way of telling when a piece of iron is going to fracture, and so there is no way of providing against such an accident.”

“Is the shaft broke?”

“Yes; broken clean off.”

“Where?”

The captain of the steamer smiled, for he saw no need of such a question, since he considered the damage irremediable.

“Quite a distance from the screw, and it’s a curious fracture. Would you like to look at it?”

“I would, indeed. You see, we have got considerable out of our course—being too far west—and we shall make a pretty sharp turn to the south, toward Honolulu.”

“I am debating whether to go there, turn back to San Francisco, or keep on under sail to Tokio.”

“This is my mate, Abram Storms, from Enfield, Connecticut,” said Captain Bergen, introducing the two. “I bring him along because he is the most ingenious man ever turned out by that home of ingenuity; and when I saw that something was the matter with you, I came alongside, more because I believed he could help you, than in the expectation that I could be of any service.”

“Captain Bergen does me too much honor,” protested the stoop-shouldered New Englander, who, had there been more of daylight, would have been seen to blush under the compliment.

“I have no doubt he speaks the truth,” replied Captain Strathmore, leading the way below to where the broken shaft rested motionless; “but this trouble is too

much like a broken neck for any surgery to help."

A minute later, a group of half a dozen stood about and stooped over the broken shaft, and examined it by the aid of lanterns, the chief engineer showing a more courteous spirit than is usual under such circumstances.

As one looked at the huge cylinder of solid iron, gleaming with a silvery whiteness all over the jagged face where it had been twisted off, the wonder was how it could be possible for any force to be tremendous enough to do such damage. The peculiarity about the breakage, however, was that, instead of snapping nearly squarely off, the fracture extended longitudinally for fully eighteen inches, so that the face of each part was a great deal broader and longer than is generally the case in such accidents.

The group surveyed it a minute or two in silence, stooping down and feeling of the innumerable jagged protuberances, the indentations, and the exceedingly rough surface, the minute particles gleaming in the lamp-light like a mass of silver ore split apart.

The first remark came from the New Englander, Abe Storms.

"That is curious, for there are no signs of crystallization, nor can I detect a flaw."

"Nevertheless, it must be there, for perfect iron would not have broken in that manner," said the chief engineer.

"I beg your pardon," said the mate, courteously, "but it frequently happens. There has been some peculiar combination of the movement of the steamer on the swell of the sea, with the position of the screw at that moment—a convergence of a hundred conditions—some almost infinitesimal, but necessary, and which convergence is not likely to take place in a million revolutions of the screw—that has brought an irresistible strain upon the shaft—one that would have wrenched it off, had the diameter been twice what it is."

The group looked wonderingly at the speaker, for every intelligent man felt that the theory of the New Englander had a stratum of truth beneath it. It was hard to make clear what the mate meant, but all to a certain extent understood, and no one ventured to gainsay it.

"However," added Abe Storms, "there's one good thing about this; it will be easy to mend it."

Captain Bergen smiled, for he expected something of the kind, and he knew that that wonderful Yankee mate of his never boasted, and would demonstrate every

assertion he made. But the others stared at the speaker with something like consternation, and seemed to be debating whether he was crazy or a natural born idiot.

CHAPTER IV

MISSING

“Mend a broken shaft?” repeated the chief engineer, in amazement. “How do you expect to do that?”

“I will show you,” replied the mate of the little schooner, who immediately proceeded to business.

The first thing he asked for was several coils of wire, which were immediately furnished him. Then, with great labor, the two parts of the shaft were fitted together and the wire was twisted tightly around the fractured portion over and over again.

As the tenacity of iron is tremendous, the shaft was securely fastened, but this was not enough. Ropes and chains were bound around the iron in turn, until there was really no room to bandage the broken shaft further.

“There, sir!” exclaimed Storms, as he stepped back and viewed his work. “That is as secure as before, though, if you can possibly do so, you should avoid reversing the screw until you reach Tokio, for you can understand that to reverse and start will wrench the shaft to a dangerous degree.”

The captain now told the engineer, who had been assisting in the operation, to start the engine slowly and with great care.

Captain Bergen ran on deck to see that the *Coral* was in position to receive no harm from the forward motion, while the rest of the group watched the movements with intense interest, standing away from the shaft so as to escape the “splinters,” that more than one thought might be flying about their heads the next minute.

There came the sound of steam, of plunging rods and cylinders from ahead, then there was heard a furious splash at the stern, and all saw that the shaft in its entirety was revolving.

The keen eyes of Abe Storms, who had leaned directly over his handiwork, lamp in hand, his nose almost touching the gleaming chains, detected the very yielding which he had prophesied. He heard the creaking of the chains, the faint gasping, as it may be called, of the rope, and the soft grinding of the fine wire beneath.

All this showed what an enormous strain was brought upon them, and almost any other person detecting the rasping of the ragged edges of iron against each other would have started back appalled, believing that everything was about to fly apart. But it was precisely what the mate expected, and what was inevitable under the circumstances. Then, at his request, the engineer was ordered to put on a full head of steam, and the *Polynesia* plowed forward, cleaving the water before her.

Abe Storms knelt down and bent almost lovingly over the round mass revolving on its axis. Then he beckoned to the engineer to approach and do the same. He obeyed, as did several others, and placing their ears close, they listened intently to the revolution of the shaft.

Not even the faintest noise could be detected to show that there was anything but a normal movement of the shaft. Every one saw, too, that the revolutions were not only going on regularly, but would continue so for an indefinite time. The shaft was practically whole again, with the exception that a reverse movement would be likely to undo everything, and by scraping the corrugated surfaces of the fractures, render it impossible to do anything of the kind again.

Captain Strathmore and his officers stood for a full hour more steadily watching the revolving shaft, and at the end of that time they were satisfied. Then the new acquaintances saluted and bade each other good-by, the officers of the *Coral* passing over the rail, and were rowed back to their own vessel, which had followed in the wake of the steamer, as may be said.

By this time it was midnight, and the captain returned to his station on the bridge, reflecting to himself that some of the most insurmountable difficulties, apparently, are overcome by the simplest means, and that there are some persons in the world who really seem capable of inventing anything.

The hour was so late that all the passengers had retired, and little Inez, as a matter of course, had become invisible long before. She had declared several times that she was going to sit up with the captain, and she tried it, but, like most children under such circumstances, she dropped off into slumber by the time it was fairly dark, and was carried below to the cabin.

The child was like so much sunshine flitting hither and thither upon the steamer,

and whose presence would be sorely missed when the hour came for her to go. But Captain Strathmore was a disciplinarian, who could never forget his duty, and he remained at his post until the time came for him to go below to gain the few hours' sleep which cannot be safely dispensed with by any one, no matter how rugged his frame.

Tumbling into his berth, he stretched out with a sigh of comfort, and went to sleep.

"Inez will be in here bright and early to wake me," was his conclusion, as he closed his eyes in slumber.

But he was disappointed, for when he was called from his couch, it was not by the little one whom he expected to see. At the breakfast-table she did not appear, and then Captain Strathmore, fearing that she was ill, made inquiries. He heard nothing, and filled with a growing alarm, he instituted a thorough search of the vessel from stem to stern and high and low. Not a spot or corner was omitted where a cat could have been concealed, but she was not found.

And then the startling truth was established that little Inez Hawthorne was not on board the steamer.

"Oh!" groaned poor Captain Strathmore, "she became my own child! Now I have lost her a second time!"

CHAPTER V

THE NEW PASSENGER

Captain Strathmore rewarded Abe Storms liberally for the service he had rendered them, and the mate and captain of the schooner, as we have said, were rowed back to the boat by Hyde Brazzier.

Reaching the deck of the *Coral*, they watched the progress of the great steamer until she vanished from sight in the moonlight, and then the two friends went into the cabin to “study the chart,” as they expressed it.

It may be said that this had been the principal business of the two since leaving the States, though the statement is not strictly correct. The hum of conversation went on for hours; the night gradually wore away, but still the two men sat talking in low tones, and looking at the roll of paper spread out between them, and which was covered with numerous curious drawings. The theme must have been an absorbing one, since it banished all thought of the passage of time from their minds.

“I tell you,” said the captain, as he leaned back in his chair, “there isn’t the remotest doubt that a colossal fortune is awaiting us, and unless some extraordinary accident intervenes, we shall gather it up.”

“So it would seem,” replied the mate, with a weary look, “and yet I sometimes feel certain that it will never be ours—Good gracious!”

The two men almost leaped out of their chairs, and their hair fairly rose on end. They were absolutely certain that no one else was in the cabin besides themselves. Redvignez was at the wheel, and Brazzier awaited his call in turn at the end of the watch. But just then both heard a rustling, and saw a movement in the berth of Captain Bergen, which showed something was there. It couldn’t be a dog or cat, for there was nothing of the kind on board. Besides which, just then, the two men caught sight of the little white hand which clearly belonged to some one of their own species. Then the covering was thrown back; a mass of tangled golden hair was observed, and instantly after, the fair face of a young child

peered wonderingly out, as if seeking to learn where she was.

Of course the little one was Inez Hawthorne, though neither of the two men had ever seen or heard of her before, and it is, therefore, idle to attempt to picture their overwhelming astonishment when they became aware so suddenly of her presence in the cabin.

Neither of the two men was superstitious; but there was good excuse for their being wonder-struck. If an individual in the middle of a desert should suddenly become aware of the appearance of a strange person at his elbow, a situation apparently in which he could only be placed by supernatural means, it would be a very mild word to say he would be surprised.

Flinging the coverlet from her shoulders and throwing back her mass of rich golden hair, Inez assumed the sitting position, with her dimpled legs swinging over the side, and her little hands resting on the rail, as if to steady herself during the long swells of the sea, while she looked at the two men as if trying to recollect where she was and who they were.

“Well, if that doesn’t beat anything that was ever heard or read of before!” exclaimed the captain, turning about and staring at her. “Where in the name of the seven wonders did you come from?”

Abe Storms, the mate, did not speak, but seemed to be waiting to see whether the child had a voice, and thus settle the question in his mind as to whether it was mortal or not.

The problem was quickly solved, for Inez was never backward in asserting her individuality.

“How did I come here? That’s a great question to ask! I got tired and lay down to sleep, and have just woke up. I think this is a real nice boat. Are you the captain? My name is Inez Hawthorne—what is yours?”

These questions, uttered with childish rapidity and ingenuousness, threw some light upon the apparent mystery.

“She belongs to the steamer,” said Abe Storms, with his eyes fixed wonderingly upon her. “She has managed to get in our boat in some way, and we have carried her off. Did you ever see anything so pretty?”

As the reader has learned, there was good cause for this admiring question. Both of the men were bachelors, but they possessed natural refinement, and they could reverence the innocence and loveliness of childhood. With the discovery that she

was an actual human being, the awe-struck wonder of the two men vanished, though their curiosity was great to learn how it was she was carried away from the steamer.

“Won’t you come here and talk with me?” asked Storms, reaching out his arms invitingly, but a little doubtful whether she would respond, though the stoop-shouldered inventor was always popular with children. The answer of Inez was a sudden spring, which landed her plump into the lap of the mate, while she flung her arms around his neck with a merry laugh, and then wheeled about on his knee, so that she could look in the face of either of the men, who, not unnaturally, felt a strange and strong attraction toward the beautiful child.

Then the two began a series of questions that were answered in the characteristic fashion of childhood, but from which the friends succeeded in extracting something like a clear explanation of her presence on board the *Coral*—so many miles from the steamer on which she had set sail at San Francisco.

They learned that Inez—who was such a pet on the *Polynesia* that she was allowed to do as she chose—was invited by one of the crew to visit the *Coral*, while she lay so close to the disabled steamer. The one who gave this invitation was Hyde Brazzier, and he was struck with the wonderful loveliness of the child, when she questioned him about the schooner.

There is no nature, however steeped in crime, in which there is not a divine spark which may be fanned into a flame—which, perchance, may illumine the whole soul; and but for the subsequent strange events, little Inez Hawthorne might have proved, in the most literal sense, a heaven-sent messenger upon that craft, which carried so much wickedness in the forecastle.

Brazzier rowed the short intervening distance, and then took the child by the hand and showed her through the schooner, there being little to exhibit. Finally she was led into the cabin, where she said she was tired and wished to lie down. Thereupon Brazzier lifted her upon the captain’s berth and drew the coverlet over her. A minute later the weary eyes closed in slumber and he left the cabin.

Brazzier had no intention, up to this time, of using any deception in the matter; but, under the persuasion of Redvignez, he gave way to the innate wickedness of his nature, and chuckled over the lamentable occurrence. They felt pleasure in the certainty that what they were doing was sure to make other hearts ache.

CHAPTER VI

“PORT YOUR HELM!”

When a thorough search of the steamer *Polynesia* made known the truth that little Inez Hawthorne was nowhere upon it, the sorrowful conclusion was that she had fallen overboard in some manner and been drowned.

But the belief was scarcely formed, when the discovery was made that such was not the case; that in fact she had been taken away by the schooner *Coral*, whose mate performed such good service in mending the broken shaft of the *Polynesia*.

The story as told Captain Strathmore was as follows:

The two officers of the schooner were rowed to the steamer by one of the crew, who climbed up the ladder at the side of the *Polynesia*, and spent a few minutes in inspecting the broken shaft. He then came back. His attention was attracted to little Inez, whose childish curiosity was excited by the appearance of a stranger who had but one eye, and who looked so different from the trim-looking members of the steamer’s crew. The two fell into conversation, and Inez asked so many questions about the schooner that the stranger invited her to take a look at it. He was heard to say that the captain and mate would be engaged for two or three hours, and there would be plenty of time to row the child over the intervening distance, explore the *Coral*, and come back before Captain Bergen and his mate would be ready to leave.

Naturally, Inez gladly accepted the invitation, and the sinister-looking man, picking her up, carefully descended the ladder to his small boat, and rowed away to the schooner.

This story, it will be observed, corresponded with that told by Brazzier himself.

No one thought anything of the proceeding, which was one of the most natural in the world, and there was nothing to arouse misgiving on the part of those who witnessed it.

Inez was almost a spoiled child from the indulgence shown her by every one

with whom she came in contact. She distrusted no one, because she had never had any reason to do so. It was night when the officers of the schooner were rowed back, and those who had seen Inez taken away did not observe that the boat returned without her. Holding no thought of anything wrong, they gave no further attention to the strange sailor.

The moment Captain Strathmore learned these facts, he caused an abrupt change to be made in the course of the *Polynesia*. For he was determined that no effort should be spared to recover the lost child, who had so endeared herself to every one on board the steamer.

The precise point where the accident had befallen the shaft was recorded on the log, as a matter of course, and it was within the power of the chief officer to return wonderfully close to that spot. If the schooner *Coral* should remain anywhere in that latitude and longitude, she could be found and Inez recovered.

“But it is not likely the schooner is near there,” reflected Captain Strathmore, as he swept the horizon with his glass and failed to catch sight of a sail. “They could not have taken away the child ignorantly, and instead of remaining there or attempting to find us, the captain has headed in some direction which is not the one he named, as if by accident, when he was aboard.”

The captain was in that mood that it would have been dangerous for him to come upon the daring thieves. He could conceive of no explanation that would relieve them from his wrath, and as the steamer described a huge curve in the sea and headed toward the point where he hoped to gain sight of the sail, full steam was put on, and she ran at a rate of speed which, in the condition of her shaft, was certainly dangerous to a high degree.

It may be said there was not a heart on board the *Polynesia* that did not share in the general anxiety, and there was scarcely an eye that did not scan the broad ocean again and again in the hope of catching sight of the schooner.

Several sails were descried in the course of the day, but not one was that of the *Coral*, and when the night descended not only had there been a complete failure, but the captain was convinced that it was useless for him to delay the steamer by hunting further.

With an angry and sad heart he gave over the search, and the *Polynesia* was headed once more toward the far-off imperial Japanese city of Tokio.

“I would give a thousand dollars to know what it all means,” said Captain Strathmore, as he stood on the bridge debating the matter with himself. “There is

something about the whole business which I don't understand. In the first place, Inez came under my charge in an extraordinary way. I don't believe that that man who brought her down to the wharf told the truth, and I very much doubt whether the parents of the little one have ever been in Japan. She may have been stolen from some one, and this means has been resorted to in order to get her out of the way. I wish I had questioned her more closely," continued the perplexed captain, following up the train of thought, "for she let drop an expression or two now and then that showed she had some remembrances which it would have been interesting to call up. It's too late now," added the old sailor, with a sigh, "and probably I shall never see her again. She had nestled down into that spot in my heart which was left vacant many weary years ago, when my own Inez died and my only boy became as one dead, and there is no sacrifice I would not make would it but bring this one back to me. It is curious, but the feeling is strong upon me that somewhere at some time we shall meet again."

"Port your helm!"

This was the startling order which the quartermaster sent to the wheel-house at that moment, and which was obeyed with as much promptness as is possible on such a gigantic craft as an ocean steamer.

The night, for a rarity, was dark and misty, a peculiar fog resting upon the water, and shutting out the view in every direction. It would seem that there could be little danger of a collision on the broad bosom of the mightiest ocean of the globe, but there must always be a certain ratio of danger, and none realized this more than Captain Strathmore.

The *Polynesia* had been running at half speed ever since the sun went down, and her whistle blew at irregular intervals. At the moment the startling order was communicated to the man at the wheel, the lights of another steamer were discerned directly ahead. And these were scarcely observed when the mountainous hull loomed up to view in appalling proximity, and a cold shudder ran through every officer and sailor at the sight, for there was just a single second or two when it seemed certain that the two crafts would come together with an earthquake shock and such an irresistible momentum as would crash the two prodigious hulls to splinters, and send the crews and passengers to join the multitudes who have gone before them to the bottom of the sea.

Signals and commands were rapidly exchanged, and the slight misunderstanding which existed between the two steamers at first was quickly removed. The shouts and orders, the tinkling of the engineer's bell, and even the sound of hurrying feet, were heard on one ship as distinctly as on the other.

Most fortunately the officers of each were sensible men, who enforced discipline, and who, therefore, did not lose their heads when sudden peril came upon them.

There was desperate need of haste on the part of all, but the haste was intelligent, and something was accomplished.

The stranger instantly reversed her screw, while the *Polynesia* was equally prompt in her backward movement. They escaped by a chance so narrow that it was terrifying. The bow of the *Polynesia* grazed the side of the stranger as they passed upon their diagonal courses, and every one on the two ships who understood the dreadful peril drew a deep breath and uttered a prayer of thankfulness when it swept by, and the two steamers vanished from each other's sight in the misty darkness.

The engineer of the *Polynesia* was signaled to go forward again, and the screw was started; but, if the one who uttered the order had forgotten the contingency against which they had been warned, the one who executed that order had not, and he gave the engine just enough steam to start the shaft.

As he did so, listening intently the meanwhile, he heard an ominous crunching, grinding and jarring in the after hold, and he knew too well what it meant. He instantly shut off steam, and with the captain hastened to make the investigation. As they feared, the broken shaft had been wrenched apart again, and it looked as if it were injured beyond repair.

But what man has done, man can do, and the ingenious recourse of Abe Storms was resorted to again. With great care the fractured pieces were reunited and bound, but the task was, in reality, harder than before, since the terrific grinding and wrenching to which it had been subjected broke off much of the corrugated surface.

The work was completed after many long hours of hard work, and once more the *Polynesia* started slowly under steam for the strange island-empire of Asia. This unexpected delay, as the reader will see, doubtless had much to do with the failure of the schooner to find the steamer, since it threw out all possibility of calculating where the larger craft could be.

“Now, if we have no more vessels trying to run into us,” muttered the captain, as he resumed his place on the bridge, “we stand a chance of reaching Japan after all, without calling on our sails to help us.”

But, standing at his post, with everything going well, his thoughts naturally reverted to the strange mischance by which little Inez Hawthorne was lost to him.

“I don’t believe Captain Bergen or his mate, Abe Storms, would knowingly take off the child in that fashion, though the girl was enough to tempt any one to steal her. There is something about the whole business which I don’t understand. We ought to have found each other, though, if he is still hunting for me. This second breakage of the shaft will tend to keep us apart.”

The long voyage of the steamer to Japan terminated without any incident worth the recording, and Captain Strathmore naturally became anxious to meet the parents of Inez, though sorrowing very much over the story he would be forced to tell them. But no one appeared at Tokio to claim the child, and the wondering captain proceeded to make inquiries.

It was easy to obtain from the church authorities a list of the names of the Christian missionaries in Japan, and they were scanned carefully by the captain, who was given such assistance by the officials themselves that there could be no mistake. Among them was no one by the name of Hawthorne. It was plain then that deception had been used when the man in San Francisco declared that the parents of Inez were missionaries in Japan.

As day after day passed and the steamer *Polynesia* was gradually prepared for her return voyage to California, there was one strong, harrowing conviction which forced itself upon the distressed captain:

“Had Inez not been stolen from the steamer, no one would have come to claim her, and she would have been mine.”

His heart thrilled at the thought of how close he had come to obtaining such a priceless prize for his possession, and then he added, as if to cheer himself:

“Never mind; the earth is far and wide. She is alive somewhere upon its face, and at some time, at heaven’s own pleasure, she and I shall meet again.”

Brave and rugged Captain Strathmore! Was the spirit of prophecy upon you when you muttered the cheering words?

CHAPTER VII

THE REASON WHY THE VOYAGE WAS UNDERTAKEN

At this point it is necessary that the reader should be made acquainted with what has been only hinted up to this point. We mean the reason why it was that the little schooner *Coral*, under the charge of Captain Bergen and Abram Storms, the mate, was on the Pacific Ocean, voyaging toward the South Seas.

The skipper was fond of telling the strange story, and the mate heard it many times, as repeated to him one stormy night, around the roaring fire of Captain Bergen's hearthstone in New England. It ran thus:

"You see, Abe, I was going down Washington Street, in Boston, one day, when I came upon a drunken sailor, who was suffering a terrible beating at the hands of a couple of land-sharks, that were were evidently determined to rob him, if they had not already done so.

"It r'iled my blood to see such scandalous proceedings going on, and I sailed in.

"Then I helped pick up Jack tar, and he was taken to the hospital, where his wounds were found to be of a dangerous nature. His assailants were so badly hurt that they went to the hospital, and when they came out they were shifted to the penitentiary, where they're likely to stay for a good many years to come.

"Having taken the part of Bill Grebbens, as he told me his name was, I called at the hospital to see him every day, for I wasn't busy just then. The poor fellow was very grateful for the service I had done him, though sad to say I was too late.

"Bill had been on such a terrible spree that his system wasn't in condition to resist disease, and before long it was plain he was going to make a die of it. He was a plucky fellow, and when the doctor told him he had to go, he didn't weaken.

"Just before he died, he took me by the hand, and told me he hadn't a living relative in the world, nor one who had been such a friend to him as I had proved

to be. By that time my own eyes were getting misty, and I begged him to say nothing about it.

“I told him I would see that he had a decent burial, and would attend to anything he wanted me to do. He said there wasn’t anything, for it could make no difference to him what became of his body after his death, and for his part he would as lief the doctors should have it.

“However, he took this paper from under his pillow and showed it to me, and told me all about it. I thought at first his mind was wandering, but I soon saw that his head was level, and he knew what he was talking about.”

The paper which Captain Bergen produced at this point of his narrative was covered with some well-executed drawings, which, having been done by the sailor himself, showed that he was a man of education.

“Those dots there represent the King George Islands of the South Pacific, lying in about fifteen degrees south latitude and one hundred and forty-three degrees west longitude. To the north here is Mendina Archipelago, and here to the east are the Paumotu Islands, sometimes known as the Pearl Islands. There are a good many of them, and away to the northeast of the group is another island, which, although much the larger on the map, is really a small coral island, with a lagoon, and so unimportant that it has no name, and cannot be found on any map I ever saw.

“You will observe the figure and directions marked on this paper,” added Captain Bergen, who invariably became excited at this point in his narration, “which, with his explanations, are so easily understood that no one can go astray.

“Well, Bill Grebbens once belonged to a party of mutineers of a British vessel, who found it growing so hot for them that they put in to this island, scuttled and sunk their ship, and lived there two years. It was uninhabited, and they led a lazy, vagabond life in that charming climate till a strange sort of sickness broke out among them and carried off eight, leaving only Grebbens and a single shipmate.

“These two spent several months longer in wandering about the island looking for and yet dreading to see a sail, when one day they discovered a bed of pearl-oysters, which they examined and found to be of surpassing richness. The majority of the shells contained pearls, many of them of great size, and the two men saw that an immense fortune lay only a few fathoms under the surface.

“They instantly set to work with great eagerness; but it is seldom that a man obtains wealth in this world by walking over a path of roses.

“Within the first half-hour, a huge man-eating shark glided into the clear water, and with one snap of his enormous jaws actually bit the body of the other sailor in two. The horrified Grebbens managed to get out just in time to save himself.

“He had enough of pearl-diving, and he shudderingly turned his back upon the spot, and began looking out to sea again for a sail, determined now to leave, no matter if he should be carried to England and executed.

“He managed to set up the topmast of the wreck, and to catch the attention of a whaler a few days later, and was taken off. Before going, however, he made a careful drawing of the place, and by studying other charts on the American whaler which took him away he was able to locate the island with such correctness that he could return to it at any time, his intention, of course, being to do so at some period when he could go provided with means to prosecute his search without such frightful risk.

“But Bill never saw the time, for he was too fond of liquor when ashore. He met his death just as I told you, and he gave me this chart or map of the locality, telling me that a fortune lay at that point where my finger is resting to whosoever should go after it.”

Such was the story of Captain Bergen, as he related it to his friend, Abe Storms, to whom he proposed that they should fit out an expedition to go to the South Seas in quest of the fortune that awaited them in the shape of pearls.

Abe was slower and more deliberate, but he finally fell in with the scheme, and the two, as we have already stated, became joint partners in the grand enterprise.

Both were frugal men, and they now decided to invest all their funds in the scheme, which promised to make or break them. Instead of sailing from the port of Boston, they took an important cut “across lots” by going by rail to San Francisco, thus saving the longest and most dangerous portion of the voyage, which otherwise would be necessary. In San Francisco, at a sale of bankrupt property, they bought the schooner, which has already been described, and shipped their crew.

The wonder was that two men possessing the shrewdness of Storms and Bergen should have been so deceived respecting their men.

Hyde Brazzier was an American sailor, with blotched, bleared face, with one eye gone, while over the sunken, sightless cavity he wore a green patch, his face covered by a scraggly beard, and his single eye, small and deep-set, added to the sinister expression of his countenance.

He had the reputation of being a good seaman, and undoubtedly he was, and being strong and vigorous, in the prime of life, he was considered an especially valuable man to Captain Bergen, who paid him five dollars more per month than he expected.

Since Captain Bergen had pursued a rather original course from the beginning, he continued to do so. He engaged his men without any help from the shipping-master, and had hardly reached an understanding with the American when Alfredo Redvignez put in an appearance and applied for a berth, saying that he had heard the best kinds of accounts of the captain's seamanship and humanity—even in far-away Boston.

Redvig—so called for convenience—said that he had been employed in the East India trade, and was a sailor of nearly twenty years' experience. It struck both Captain Bergen and Mate Storms that, as they were going to the tropics, he was likely to prove a useful man, and he was engaged.

The captain ventured to ask Brazzier's opinion of the other sailor, but the American said he had never heard of him before—though he liked the cut of his jib, and was glad he had been hired. But had any one been watching the faces of the American and Spaniard, he would have detected several suspicious signals which passed between them; and this, added to the fact that, in a very short time, they became intimately acquainted, as may be said, looked as if there had been deception on that point.

The fact was, the two had arranged the matter beforehand, so as to go together in this business—somewhat on the same principle that their employers entered into partnership. They were both serving under assumed names, and were obliged to take no little precaution to keep their identity concealed, for they were "wanted" for serious crimes in more than one port.

Redvig was a small, swarthy, muscular man, with coal-black, curling hair, short, curly beard and mustache, black eyes, with an aquiline nose, and both he and Brazzier had a fashion of wearing small gold ear-rings. Their arms and breast were plentifully tattooed, so that but for the great exception of their evil dispositions, they might well have passed for good specimens of the proverbial Jack tar.

It was different with the huge colored man, Pomp Cooper, who had been known about the wharves of San Francisco for a number of years. He was jolly and good-natured, possessed of prodigious strength, and had been on shipboard enough to acquire a fair knowledge of navigating a coasting vessel.

While many believed he possessed the proverbial loyalty of his race, and could not be induced to commit any grave crime, yet it must be admitted that there were ugly rumors afloat concerning him. It was asserted by more than one that he was a river and harbor pirate, and belonged to one of the worst gangs that ever infested the harbor of San Francisco.

While Captain Bergen was not ignorant of these rumors, yet he placed no credence in them, and believed Pomp to be one of the most valuable men he could obtain. Such in brief was the crew of the *Coral*, when she sailed on her long voyage to the South Seas, in quest of pearls—the location of which had been given by the dying sailor in the Boston hospital.

CHAPTER VIII

VOYAGING SOUTHWARD

It was certainly very wonderful that little Inez Hawthorne should have been transferred from the steamer to the schooner, and that many hours should have passed before the discovery was made by the respective captains of the craft.

Yet such was the fact, and Captain Bergen and Mate Storms had no sooner learned the real situation than Hyde Brazzier was sent for to tell how it occurred. As he was the one who rowed the small boat, there could be no doubt that he knew. The story he told was the true one, with the exception of the supplement—that he actually forgot about the little girl after she went into the cabin and fell asleep.

It was impossible, it may be said, that such could be the fact, and the officers looked knowingly at each other. They knew he was falsifying, but they made no comment, except to declare that she must be taken back to the steamer without an hour's delay.

Captain Bergen learned from Inez that she had no relatives on board the steamer, and she did not show any special distress over being where she was. But, for all that, the honest New Englander felt that she should be restored, and he immediately took every means for doing so.

His supposition was that she would be speedily missed from the *Polynesia*, which would at once make search for the schooner. Accordingly, the *Coral* was headed northwest, under all sail, the sun just rising at the time this change of course was made.

"The steamer will go so much faster than we," said the captain, "that there is no possibility of overhauling her, unless her shaft should give out again."

"There's no danger of that. More likely she'll turn about and look for us."

As the sun climbed the heavens, the horizon was anxiously scanned for some point where the black column of a steamer's smokestack could be seen staining

the clear sky. Far away to the northward, a vapor was observed, which at first was set down as the sight for which they were searching; but it was soon learned that it was a peculiarly-formed cloud, resting almost upon the water.

The upper rigging and sails of possibly an American whaler were descried a long distance to the northward, and a full-rigged ship was detected closer in, and further to the eastward. But no sign of the *Polynesia* was discovered through the powerful binocular glasses with which Captain Bergen swept the horizon. There was strong hope, in spite of this, that she would be seen before sunset, and the *Coral* held to her course toward the southwest, not only for that day and night, but for the two succeeding ones. But it is useless to dwell upon the search made by the smaller vessel, which was without the faintest glimmer of success.

Captain Bergen and Mate Storms did their utmost to undo the wrong act of their sailors, but at the end of the third day they held an anxious consultation as to what was the right course left to pursue. They had given up hope of meeting the *Polynesia* except by chasing her all the way to Japan, they having learned that Tokio was her destination.

Should the *Coral* follow her there, or first fulfil its own destiny in the Paumotu Islands? This was the all-important matter to be settled.

When a man makes a great invention or discovery, his first dread is that some one else will anticipate him and gather to himself all the glory and profit. This had been a constant fear in the case of the captain and mate of the schooner *Coral* ever since they began their preparations for the journey to the South Seas. It cost them a pang of dread when, therefore, they headed the schooner about in the hunt for the steamer, for, as will be readily understood, the apprehension of which we have spoken intensifies the nearer one gets to the goal.

There were other considerations which entered into the question as to whether they should go on or turn about. Inez Hawthorne had, as might have been expected, adapted herself to her new position as passenger on the schooner, and ran hither and thither at will, just as she did on the *Polynesia*, and she climbed all over the captain and mate, as if they were Captain Strathmore and his officer, or some of the passengers.

She occasionally expressed a longing to see the grizzled old sea-captain, whom she called her second, or new “papa,” but there was no one else for whom she particularly longed. Her affection was distributed so equally and spontaneously that among several hundred it could not be very profound. Only in the case of the brave old Captain Strathmore was it deep and steadfast.

It would delay the voyage to the Pearl Islands not for weeks, but for months, to sail away to Asia, and then turn about and put back to the southern seas, and during that interval what might not take place? What assurance could there be that the precious pearl-bed would not be devastated?

With the plans which Abe Storms had perfected on the way from home, it was believed that a week's time after their arrival at their destination would be sufficient to make them enormously wealthy, and thus the voyage which they would afterward take to Japan would be delayed only a month or two, perhaps. Furthermore, the parents and friends of Inez would have every reason to believe she was in safe hands, and would soon be restored to them. All these were weighty considerations, it must be confessed, and they decided the question.

"We have done all that can be done," said Captain Bergen, standing at the stern with his hand upon the wheel, while Abe Storms, thoughtfully smoking his pipe, was at his elbow, with his arms folded and his eyes gazing dreamily toward the western horizon, where the sun was about to dip into the ocean.

"I agree with you," was the reply of his mate, who was as conscientious in everything he did as was the captain. "I consider that the chance is as one in a thousand that we shall meet the steamer this side of Tokio, and if we undertake to follow, we shall lose several months of most precious time, without accomplishing any commensurate good. The child is contented and happy here."

As if to emphasize this assertion, the laugh of Inez was heard at that moment as she came bounding up the steps of the cabin, and ran toward the bow, where the giant negro, Pomp, was leaning against the gunwale, his arms also folded, and an expression of contentment upon his broad, shiny countenance.

The instant he caught sight of Inez his face lighted up and his white, even teeth were displayed with pleasure, as she ran toward him.

It was singular, indeed, that, ever since her first awaking on board the *Coral*, Inez had shown not a positive dislike of Redvig and Brazzier, but what may be called a lack of friendship toward them. She was trusting and loving to Pomp and the two officers, but it was evident that she avoided the others. Possibly she could not have told the reason had she tried, and it is equally possible that she was not aware of it herself. But every one else on board saw it plainly.

When two men in authority talk as did the captain and mate of the schooner *Coral*, the conclusion is inevitable. The decision was made to go on to the Paumotu Islands, after which the voyage would be made to Japan, and, alas! that it was so.

CHAPTER IX

GROPING IN THE DARK

Life on board the schooner *Coral*, bound for the South Seas, now became like one delightful dream.

The sails, fanned by the steady trade-wind, hardly ever required attention, since the course of the craft never varied more than a few points for days at a time, and whoever it was at the wheel, he might as well have lashed it fast and gone to sleep, for all the necessity there was of keeping awake.

There had been some elemental disturbances which required seamanship to weather, but nothing like that usually encountered in the Atlantic. But there came a long spell of weather, faultless in every respect, and whose only drawback was the dread that each day would be the last of such delight. The sun rose clear and bright, and at high noon, as they approached the equator, it was sometimes hot, but the breeze which continually swept the deck tempered it to the crew and passenger. Had they been caught in a calm the heat would have been suffocating; but Providence favored them, and they sped along like a seagull toward their destination. There seemed to be times when the green surface of the sea was at perfect rest; but the regular rising and sinking of the *Coral* showed that the bosom of the great deep was heaving as it always does, though the long swells came only at extended intervals.

The water was of crystalline clearness, and, looking over the gunwale, one could see far into the depths, where strange-looking fish were sporting, sometimes coming to the surface and then shooting far down beyond the reach of human vision. Now and then, too, as little Inez leaned over the side of the vessel and peered downward, she caught sight of something like a shadow, gliding hither and thither, apparently without the slightest effort to keep pace with the schooner, which was bowling along at a rapid rate. It was one of those monstrous sharks, that will snap a man in two as quickly as if he were but an apple, should he fall overboard.

Not a day passed without descrying one or more sails at varying distances, but our friends did not hail or approach any. Both Captain Bergen and Mate Storms were in a nervous condition, and were morbidly apprehensive of being anticipated by some one in dredging for the invaluable pearl-oysters. They were afraid their errand would be suspected, or they would be attacked after they should secure their prize.

One day, under the pretense of wanting medicine, Hyde Brazzier suddenly appeared at the cabin door. The mate and captain were, as usual, studying the chart, and while the mate was ransacking the medicine chest for the drug, that single eye of the sailor secured five minutes' sharp scrutiny of the all-important map.

Redvignez and Brazzier were not much together, as a matter of course, for one was in the captain's watch and the other in the mate's, but during the long, pleasant days and nights when they were voyaging toward the South Seas, they obtained many opportunities for confidential talks. All this might have been in the natural order of things on board the schooner, where the discipline was not strict, but Abe Storms had become pretty well satisfied that harm was meant, and mischief was brewing. He saw it in the looks and manner of these two men, who, while they were watching others, did not suspect they were watched in turn.

About Pomp he was not so certain. The steward and cook seemed to be on good terms with the two sailors, and he frequently sat with them as they formed a little group forward, on the bright moonlight nights, when they preferred to sit thus and smoke and spin yarns to going below and catching slumber, when it was their privilege to do so.

"I believe he is in with them," was the conclusion which Storms, the mate, finally reached, after watching and listening as best he could for several days. "They're hatching some conspiracy—most likely a mutiny to take possession of the ship. Captain Bergen doesn't suspect it—he is so absorbed in the pearl business; and I'll let him alone for the present, though it may be best to give him a hint or two to keep him on his guard."

It never can be known what the restraining power of little Inez Hawthorne was on board that vessel on her extraordinary voyage to the Paumotu Islands, in the South Seas. She lived over again the same life that was hers during the few days spent on the *Polynesia*. She ran hither and thither, climbing into dangerous places at times, but with such grace and command of her limbs that she never once fell or even lost her balance. She chatted and laughed with Brazzier and

Redvig, but she preferred the others, and showed it so plainly in her manner, that, unfortunately, the two could not avoid noticing it.

“See here,” said Captain Bergen, one evening while sitting in the cabin with the child on his knee, “I want you to try and think hard and answer me all the questions I ask you. Will you?”

“Of course I will, if you don’t ask too hard ones.”

“Well, I will be easy as I can. You have told me all about the big steamer that you were on when we found you, and you said that you lived with your Uncle Con in San Francisco, and that it was he and your Aunt Jemima that put you on board.”

“I didn’t say any such thing!” indignantly protested Inez. “I haven’t got any Aunt Jemima—it was my Aunt Letitia.”

The captain and mate smiled, for a little piece of strategy had succeeded. They had never before got the girl to give the name of her aunt, though she mentioned that of her uncle. But she now spoke it, her memory refreshed by the slight teasing to which she was subjected.

“That’s very good. I’m glad to learn that your uncle and aunt had two such pretty names as Con and Letitia Bumblebee.”

“Ain’t you ashamed of yourself?” demanded Inez, turning upon him with flashing eyes. “I never heard of such a funny name as that.”

“I beg pardon. What, then, is their name?”

The little head was bent and the fair brow wrinkled with thought. She had tried the same thing before, though it must be believed that she could not have tried very hard, or she would not have failed to remember the name of those with whom she lived but a short time before. But she used her brain to its utmost now, and it did not take her long to solve the question. In a few seconds she looked up and laughed.

“Of course I know their name. It was Hermann, though he sometimes called himself George Smith.”

“The other sounds German,” remarked Storms, in a lower voice. “Go ahead and get all you can from her.”

“How long did you live with them?”

“Let me see,” said Inez, as she turned her lustrous blue eyes toward the roof of

the cabin, as if she expected to read the answer there. “I guess it was about two—three hundred years.”

She was in earnest, and Storms observed:

“She must be a little off on that; but take another tack.”

The captain did so.

“Do you remember living with any one excepting your Uncle George and Aunt Letitia?”

Inez thought hard again, and replied, after a few seconds:

“I don’t know. Sometimes he was Uncle George and sometimes Uncle Con. We lived in the city a good while, where there were, oh, such lots of houses! but there was a time before that when we come such a long, long way in the cars. We rode and rode, and I guess we must have come from the moon, for we was ten years on the road.”

“Do you remember what sort of looking place the moon was?”

“It was just like San Francisco—that is, it was full of houses.”

The officers looked at each other with a smile, and the mate said:

“It’s plain enough what that means. She has come from New York, over the Union Pacific, and her trip was probably the longest of her life.”

“Do you remember your father and mother?”

“I don’t know,” said Inez, with a look of perplexity on her young face which it was not pleasant to see. “Sometimes I remember or dream of them, before we took such a long ride on the cars. My mother used to hold me on her lap and kiss me, and so did my father, and then there was crying, and something dreadful happened in the house, and then I can’t remember anything more until I was on the cars.”

“It may be all right,” said Captain Bergen to his mate, “for this could occur without anything being amiss.”

“It is possible; but I have a conviction that there is something wrong about the whole business. I believe, in short, that the person who placed her on board the steamer *Polynesia* had no claim upon her at all.”

“That, in fact, the man stole her?”

“That’s it, exactly; and still further, I don’t believe she has any father or mother

in Japan, and that if we had gone thither we should have lost all the time and accomplished nothing."

"It may be, Abe, that you are right," said the captain, who held a great admiration for his mate, "but I must say you can build a fraud and conspiracy on the smallest foundation of any man I ever knew. But, Abe, you may be right, I say, and if you are, it's just as well that we didn't go on a fool's errand to Tokio, after all."

"The truth will soon be known, captain."

CHAPTER X

THE MUTINEERS

A few degrees south of the equator, the schooner *Coral* ran into a tempest of such fury that with all the skilful seamanship of her captain and crew, and the admirable qualities of the schooner itself, she narrowly escaped foundering.

There were two days when she was in such imminent peril that not an eye was closed in slumber, excepting in the case of little Inez Hawthorne, who felt the situation only to the extent that it compelled her to stay close in the cabin, while the vessel pitched and tossed from the crest of one tremendous billow, down, seemingly, into the fathomless depths between, and then laboriously climbed the mountain in front, with the spray and mist whirling about the deck and rigging like millions of fine shot. But the gallant *Coral* rode it out safely, and the steady breeze caught her and she sped swiftly in the direction of the Pearl Islands.

The little girl had run hither and thither, until, tired out, she had flung herself upon the berth in the cabin, where she was sleeping soundly, while the captain was doing the same; Abe Storms, the mate, being on deck at the wheel. It was yet early in the evening, and Hyde Brazzier and Alfredo Redvignez were sitting close together, forward, smoking their pipes and conversing in low tones. The breeze was almost directly abeam, so that the sails carried the craft along at a rapid rate, the water foaming and curling from the bow, while the rising and sinking of the schooner on the enormous swells were at such long intervals as almost to be imperceptible. As far as the eye could extend in every direction, no glimpse of a sail or light could be perceived, nor had any been observed through the day, which confirmed what Bill Grebbens, the sailor in the Boston hospital, said, to the effect that, despite the location of the Paumotu Islands, the approach to them from the direction of California took one in a section where the sails of commerce were rarely seen.

The captain and mate had been consulting their chart, and had taken their reckoning more frequently and with greater care than ever before. The

conclusion at which they arrived was that they were already south of the northernmost island of the Paumotu group, and were close to the Coral Island, along whose shore were to be found the precious pearls which were to make them all, or rather the two, wealthy.

“It’s a curious business,” reflected Abe Storms, while holding the wheel motionless. “When I consider the matter fairly, I don’t see why the expedition should not succeed. But it is so different from the coasting business, in which the captain and I have been engaged for years, that it is hard to believe we’re going to make anything out of it.”

He listened a minute to the murmur of the voices forward, and then he added, pursuing the same train of thought:

“What an extraordinary thing it is that we should have this little girl for a passenger! Suppose we carry her back to Tokio after this pearl hunt, and fail to find her parents?”

He took but a minute to consider the question, when he answered:

“It can never make any difference to Inez herself, for her sweet face and winning ways will secure her a welcome and a home in a hundred different places.”

While the mate was indulging in these fancies and reveries, Brazzier and Redvignez were holding an important conference forward.

“I’m sure we won’t have much further to sail,” observed the Spaniard, with a slightly broken accent. “We’re in the latitude of the Paumotus.”

“Have you ever been there?” asked his companion.

“No; but I know something about them, and then you had a glimpse of the chart, which they’re continually looking at, and I’m certain from what you said that the particular spot we’re after isn’t far off.”

“I conclude you’re right, more from the way they’re acting than anything else. I wish I could get hold of that chart.”

“What would you do?” asked Redvignez, with a significant side-glance at his companion.

“What would I do? Why, I wouldn’t wait—that’s all.”

“I don’t see as it will make much difference,” said the other, in the most matter-of-fact voice, as he coolly puffed his pipe. “We might as well take them there and make sure of the spot, before we knock them in the head.”

Brazzier gave a contemptuous sniff and a vicious puff of his pipe, and remarked:

“Did you ever see two such fools, Redvig?” He continued, with mock solemnity: “Beware of the temptations of wealth. Behold those two specimens, who have come all the way from Boston to fish for pearls in the Paumotu Islands. Some old sailor had the secret, and told the captain about it, and he has told his friend, and they have formed a partnership and hired us to go with them to dredge up the oysters.”

“What is there so foolish in all that?” asked the Spaniard, with a grin, which showed his white teeth in the moonlight.

“Nothing; for you or I would have done the same had we been placed in their shoes. But we would have shown more sense than they. They believe we do not suspect what their business is; and yet we both understand the whole thing. Here we are within a few hours’ sail of the spot, and what’s to be done?”

The Spaniard indulged in a light laugh, and replied:

“To think that we should consent to take twenty-five dollars a month, while they scooped in their thousands—their millions—it strikes me sometimes as the greatest joke I ever heard. But, Brazzier, the best plan is for us to be good boys, and go on to the island and help take up the pearls; for then we shall be sure of the right spot, and there shall be no mistake; whereas, if we should take possession now, we might miss the place, even with the help of the chart.”

“I don’t know but what you’re right, Redvig, though it galls me to wait. You know a lot of us took charge of the *Spitfire*, and set the captain and first-mate adrift, off Valparaiso. You were in favor of waiting, and it was well if we had done so, for we came nearer running our necks into the halter that time than we ever did since, and there wasn’t anything aboard the old hulk that was worth the saving.”

“But what about Pomp?” asked Redvig, in a half-whisper, and with an accent which showed that he considered the question of the highest importance. “Is he all right?”

“You needn’t have any fear about him. I had a long talk with him last night, and we shook hands on the question.”

The negro was an important factor in this business, for, a giant in stature and strength, whichever side he precipitated himself and his prowess upon was sure to win—judging from the ordinary human standpoint.

Pomp, as we have hinted further back, was not an African with a perfectly clear record. The rumors about his belonging to a gang of river pirates in San Francisco were correct, and he had been engaged in some deeds which were of a character that the law puts the severest ban upon. He was known to be daring, and possessed such prodigious power, united to activity, that, beyond a doubt, if he were placed upon an even footing, he could have conquered the captain, mate and the two sailors, without any special effort upon his own part.

The importance of his declaring himself can therefore be understood. He was a far better man than either of the two Caucasians, who hesitated about approaching him. As it had to be done, however, the matter was skilfully broached, after they had left San Francisco and were sailing southward.

It was agreed by the two mutineers that, if the negro held off, he was to be gotten rid of by some treachery, though it was such a serious matter that they hesitated long as to how it could be safely accomplished. To their surprise and delight, however, Pomp listened eagerly to the project and expressed his willingness to go into it, though he insisted there should be no murdering done, as he was not base enough at heart to wish the death of either of the officers.

Brazzier consented; but in doing so he deceived the negro. A mutiny, such as he contemplated, could never be carried to a successful conclusion without disposing finally and forever of the two officers themselves. If they should be spared, the mutineers would never be safe. But Pomp was misled from the first, because it was believed he could be won over before the time came to strike the blow. Redvignez set himself very skilfully to do so, for Pomp was ignorant and exceedingly greedy for wealth. Redvignez began by telling him of a large number of fictitious mutinies, in which the mutineers had made their fortunes and lived happy and respected afterwards, and the narrator made certain to impress upon the African the fact that the job was rendered a perfect one by following out the proverb that dead men tell no tales. Then he incidentally mentioned others in which the mutineers came to grief, all from the fact that they allowed themselves to be controlled by a foolish sentiment of mercy. The evil seed thus sown did not fail to take root and bring forth its fruit, just as the sower intended.

These little incidents were multiplied, and by-and-by Pomp was told that there was but one way in which to secure the enormous riches that lay in the little bay in the South Seas, awaiting their coming, and that was by making themselves complete masters of the situation. The negro could not mistake the meaning of this, and, after a feeble opposition, he gave his assent, and said he would help

carry out the terrible programme, as it had been arranged from the first.

It was certainly very curious how the coming of little Inez Hawthorne upon the ship threatened for awhile to disarrange every plan; but so it was. There was a time when the better nature of the two evil men asserted itself, and they began to consider the question in the light of their awakened consciences; but these divine monitors were only roused into temporary wakefulness and speedily dropped asleep again. The manifest distrust which Inez showed toward them seemed to fill their hearts with the most atrocious feelings, and neither of them would have hesitated to fling her overboard, had the opportunity been given. Incredible as it may seem, it is the fact that they would have preferred to do so, being restrained by the simple question of policy. They saw that Pomp had grown very fond of her, and any such action on their part might alienate him—a catastrophe which they were anxious to avert above everything else.

“You say he shook hands with you upon it?” repeated Redvignez. “What does all that mean?”

“It means that he is with us heart and soul. He sees the necessity of putting the captain and mate out of the way, and he will help do it.”

“But what about the little girl—the viper?”

“It was a bad thing for us, Redvig, when we played that little trick, for I have been ready to despair more than once, but the remedy is so simple that I wonder we have not thought of it before.”

“How is that?”

“We will spare her, for Pomp gave me to understand that on no other conditions would he go into it. She will be a pleasant playmate for him, and will help keep him true to us. She is so young and simple-hearted that we can make her believe that some accident has befallen the other two, by which they came to their death, so there will be no danger from anything she ever can tell. When we have gathered in all the pearls we will set sail for South America. At Valparaiso or some of the ports we will place the girl in some convent or school, with enough money to take care of her, and then we will land at another port, sell the schooner, divide up the proceeds and separate, each taking a different route home, if we choose to go there, and then all we’ll have to do, Redvig, is to enjoy the wealth which shall be ours.”

“How much do you think it will be?” asked the Spaniard, with sparkling eyes.

“There is no telling,” was the reply. “I hardly dare think, but I know it runs into

the hundreds of thousands, and it is not at all impossible that it touches the millions."

Redvignez drew a deep breath and his heart gave a great throb, as would be the case with the most phlegmatic being who contemplated the near possession of such vast wealth. Visions of the wild round of dissipation and excesses in which they would indulge came up before the two evil men, and it was no wonder that they were impatient for the hour to come when they should strike the blow for the prize. Like the officers, they were so full of the scheme that they had no desire to sleep; and while the figure of Mr. Storms was visible at the wheel, and the *Coral* sped on to the southward over the calm, moonlit sea, these two men talked about and agreed upon the particulars of the frightful crime which had been in their hearts, as may be said, from the moment they hoisted sail and passed out of San Francisco harbor.

CHAPTER XI

CAPTAIN BERGEN MAKES TWO IMPORTANT DISCOVERIES

Before the faintest streak of light appeared in the eastern horizon, Captain Bergen was awake and in the rigging, with the binocular glasses in his hand.

The most careful computation showed they were in latitude about 19 south and longitude 140 west. They had passed to the eastward of the Mendina Archipelago, catching a glimpse of one of the islands, where the mate proposed they should touch and obtain some supplies. But the captain was too eager to push ahead, and Grebbens had told him that one peculiarity about the little island which was their destination was that it contained fresh water, with some tropical fruit, while there could be no difficulty in catching all the fish they wished.

Since the island was altogether uninhabited, and very rarely visited, it would have been a good thing for the party could the suggestion of the mate have been carried out. But it was the conviction of Captain Bergen that they would not spend more than two weeks at the fishery—if such it might be called—and, under the circumstances, it cannot be said he was imprudent. Steadying himself with one arm about the mast, the captain stood firmly in his elevated position, and, as the sun came slowly up and the golden radiance spread over the sky and sea, he swept the arch of the horizon to the south, east and west, straining his keen vision for the first sight of the eagerly-wished-for land.

“Water, water,” he murmured, despondingly. “Water everywhere, and no sight of the haven! Hello!”

His heart gave a great bound, for, just in the edge of the horizon—at the very point where ocean and sky met—he saw a dark substance, like a fleecy vapor, no bigger than a man’s hand.

“It may be a cloud,” said the captain to himself, as he carefully scrutinized it, “and it may be land; and, by the great horn spoon, it is land! Land ho!”

“Where away?” called back Storms, from below, quite confident what the

answer would be.

“Two points on the weather-bow.”

The mate headed toward the point indicated, and then silence reigned for awhile on board, excepting in the case of Inez, who bounded up on deck, and was here, there and everywhere.

The captain was left to himself, for Abe Storms knew he would come down and report as soon as he had anything definite; and, in the nature of things, he could know nothing positive for a considerable time to come.

As the *Coral* sped forward—sometimes on the long, sloping crest of an immense swell, and then again in the valley between—the captain saw and thought of nothing else but the little island ahead, which was slowly rising out of the ocean. He had discovered that it was circular in shape, quite small, and fringed with vegetation. This corresponded, in a general way, with the description given by the sailor in the hospital; but there are hundreds of other islands in the South Seas to which the same description will apply, and it was not impossible that the *Coral* was many a long league astray.

“When I was on the island, ten years ago,” said Grebbens, “I found remains of a ship that had been wrecked there but a short time before. There was a portion of the mast, which we managed to erect by scooping a deep hole in the beach and then packing the sand about the base. On the top of this we kept our signal of distress flying, in the hope of catching the notice of some passing vessel, as was the case after a long while. It was my jacket which fluttered from the top of that mast, and the old garment has been blown away long ago; but I don’t know any reason why the pole itself shouldn’t be standing, and if it is, you will find it on the right of the entrance to the lagoon.”

The island, it will be understood, was an atoll—that is, a circular fringe of coral, with a lagoon of the sea inside which was entered through a comparatively narrow passage from the ocean. The atoll to which the old sailor referred was extensive enough to furnish fresh water and fruit, while at the entrance, and in other places, there was a sufficient depth of sand to afford secure “anchorage” for the pole which they erected. Peering through the spy-glass, Captain Bergen could see the white line where the sea beat against the coral shores and was rolled back again in foam. And while he was gazing, his practiced eye detected a gap in the line of breakers—that is, a spot where the white foam did not show itself. This must necessarily be the opening through which the ocean flowed into the lagoon within the island. Since it met with no opposition, it swept inward

with a smooth, grand sweep, which proved that the water was deep and without any obstruction.

“Suppose he deceived me?”

Captain Bergen asked himself the question while he was scanning the island.

It was the first time the thought suggested that maybe the sailor, dying in the Boston hospital, had told him an untruth, and such a shuddering, overwhelming feeling of disappointment came over the poor fellow at that moment that he grew dizzy and sick at heart, and came nigh losing his balance.

“No, it cannot be,” he repeated, rallying himself, with a great effort. “I have a better opinion of human nature than that.”

His glasses were still pointed in the direction of the island, and he was peering with an intensity that was painful at the spot where the dark break in the foamy breakers showed the entrance to the atoll, when he detected a black, needle-like column which rose from the beach at one side of the entrance. It was so thin that he could not make sure it was not some trick of his straining vision, and in doubt as to its reality, he relieved his aching eye by removing the glass for a moment and looking down on the deck beneath him.

He saw Redvignez and Brazzier standing at the bow, also gazing toward the island, which was plainly visible from the deck. They occasionally spoke, but their tones were so low that no word could be distinguished by any ears excepting those for which they were intended. Mr. Storms was at his post, and as Pomp and Inez were invisible, the conclusion was inevitable that they were in the cabin, whence issued the appetizing odor of cooking fish, and where no doubt the young lady was receiving the attention which she expected as her right.

At this instant a peculiar experience came to the captain of the yacht *Coral*. A slight flaw in the breeze, which was bearing the vessel forward, caused the sails to flap, and must have made a sort of funnel of one of them for the moment; or rather, as may be said, it made a temporary whispering gallery of the deck and rigging of the craft. And being such, it bore the following ominous words to Captain Bergen, uttered, as they were, by Hyde Brazzier in a most guarded undertone:

“We shall be the two richest men in America!”

Captain Bergen was in that state of intense nervous sensibility in which his perceptions were unnaturally acute, and he felt, on the instant the words struck

his ear, that they had a frightful meaning.

The two continued their cautious conference, but the sail favored acoustics no longer, and the listener did not catch another syllable.

“They mean to kill Abe and me,” he said to himself, “and run away with the pearls. If they had determined to be honest men, and we had secured any particular amount of wealth, they would have been rewarded liberally. Forewarned is forearmed.”

Captain Bergen was a brave man, and there was no fear of his displaying any shrinking in the crisis which was evidently close at hand.

Once more he raised the glass to his eye and gazed toward the inlet of the atoll. During the few minutes that he had spent in looking down upon the deck and listening, the schooner had made good speed, and the island was less than a half mile distant. When the instrument was pointed toward the place, he saw clearly and unmistakably the figure of the mast standing beside the inlet, where it had been placed years before by Grebbens and his companions.

This, then, was Pearl Island, as the New Englanders had named it; and here it was that the bed of pearl oysters of fabulous richness was to be found.

Something like a feeling of depression came over the captain when he realized that the land of promise had risen on his vision at last. For days, weeks and months this had been the one absorbing theme of his mind. He had dreamed of it until he was almost, if not quite, a monomaniac, and he had built air-castles until the whole sky of his vision was filled with gorgeous structures. And it should be added, in justice to both Bergen and Storms, that these structures were creditable to the builders; for, realizing in the fullest sense that about all they could extract personally from riches was their own board and lodging, they had perfected a number of colossal schemes for benefiting humanity; indeed, charity was the foundation-stone of all these castles. And now, after these long months of waiting, he seemed to see the wealth lying within his grasp, and something like a reaction came to him.

“Is it worth all this?” he asked himself. “Is the gain likely to pay for the peril in which we have placed ourselves?”

Still further, the ominous words which he had overheard impressed him vividly with the impending danger in which he and his mate were placed. He saw now that in taking Brazzier and Redvignez he had taken two mutineers aboard, and two who, in all probability, had won the giant African, Pomp, over to their side.

What was to be the outcome of all this?

CHAPTER XII

IN THE HAVEN AT LAST

As Captain Bergen descended the rigging to the deck of the schooner he was greatly depressed, for the conviction was strong upon him that in entering this promised land—as he had sometimes termed the little circle of coral and earth which he had named Pearl Island—he would never leave it. The immense wealth which lay hidden along its coast, awaiting the coming of some one to gather it, would never be carried away by those who had already come more than half-way round the globe to garner it.

As the captain stepped upon deck, Redvignez and Brazzier respectfully saluted him, and looked as if they were the most loyal of sailors.

Captain Bergen forced himself to respond to their salute, and then he walked quietly over to where Abe stood at the wheel.

“Well, what do you make of it?” asked the mate, in a low voice.

“It’s the island!” replied Bergen.

“Are you sure of it?”

“Yes; there can be no doubt. I made out the landmark that Grebbens told me would identify it beyond all question. That’s the mast which they erected on the shore, close to the inlet. You can see it without the glass,” added the captain, turning about and looking in that direction.

Such was the case, and Storms observed it plainly.

“What’s the matter, captain?” asked the mate, bringing his gaze back to the face of his friend, and scrutinizing him keenly. “You look pale and agitated. Have your nerves given out after this strain?”

“Abe,” said the captain, in a carefully-guarded voice, and glancing over his shoulder, “I learned, a few minutes ago, that those two men forward intend to mutiny and run away with the pearls.”

“Is that all? Why, I knew that weeks ago!”

“You did?” demanded the astounded captain. “Why, then, didn’t you tell me?”

“I thought it was better to wait till we reached the island, by which time their plans were likely to be more fully developed.”

“That sort of reasoning I don’t understand,” said the captain, anything but pleased with his mate. “But never mind about it now. Tell me what you have learned.”

“Not a great deal more than you have told. Those two men, I am satisfied, are old acquaintances, who have been partners in more than one crime, though we supposed them strangers at the time we shipped them; and I have no doubt they began planning our deaths from the day we sailed out of San Francisco harbor.”

“What about Pomp?”

“They had a hard time, but they have won him over, and he is pledged to go with them.”

“And you have tried to gain the good will of Pomp?”

“I have done my utmost, and have treated him with unusual leniency, making him many presents, some of which I gave him to understand came from you. But they’ve got him, for all that. There’s our greatest safeguard.”

As the mate spoke, he pointed to Inez, who, at that moment, came bounding up the steps of the cabin and ran laughing forward.

“Pomp thinks all the world of her, and she will be the peacemaker, perhaps.”

“But don’t they like her as well?”

“No; they wouldn’t hesitate any more over killing her than they would in killing us.”

“The villains!” muttered the horrified captain. “I never conceived it possible that any human being could fail to love such beauty and innocence as hers.”

“There is no immediate danger,” said the mate, somewhat surprised to observe how completely the discovery had taken possession of the mind of the captain. “Let’s give our attention now to the business upon which we came, and there will be time enough to think of the other matter between now and nightfall.”

Captain Bergen was sorely perplexed, but the circumstances were such that he was able to follow the suggestion of his faithful mate. They were now close to

the island, which was of that singular formation so frequently seen in the Pacific. Countless millions of tiny insects, toiling through many years, had gradually lifted the foundations of coral from the depths of the ocean, until the mass, in the form of a gigantic ring or horse-shoe, was above the surface. Upon this had gradually gathered sand, seeds and vegetable matter, in the usual way, until beneath the tropical sun and the balmy climate the “desert blossomed like the rose.” This took a long while, but the process it went through was similar to that of hundreds of much larger islands which to-day rest like nosegays upon the bosom of the vast Pacific.

Among these fruits were the banana, plantain, breadfruit, and a sort of mango, found in Farther India, and which, at first disliked, becomes in time a great favorite with every one. Most singular of all was the fact that at two widely-separated points burst forth a spring of clear, fresh water.

One might well wonder where the supply for this came from, since the whole island had its foundation in salt water—but there are many strange distillations going on at all times in nature’s laboratory beyond the power of man to fathom.

These were probably stored away in some of the hidden vaults of the island, and bubbled forth, the fountain being renewed before the precious contents were exhausted.

The entrance to the interior was through a deep passage, toward which Mr. Storms directed the vessel. As the *Coral* glided into this “inland sea,” Captain Bergen took the helm, being as familiar with the contour of the atoll as if he had spent a dozen years upon it. He knew where the best anchorage was to be found, and he headed over toward the eastern shore, where it was safe to run close enough in to spring from the deck to the land. He was a good seaman, and he brought his craft to with as much skill as a stage-driver brings his team to a halt before the door of an inn. The anchor was let go at the proper moment, and the *Coral* slowly swung at her mooring in the very position her master desired, both bow and stern being so close to shore that there would be no occasion to use the small boat which is generally called into requisition on such occasions.

The scenery and situation were peculiar and novel in the highest degree. These atolls are the natural harbors of the ocean, and if any vessel can run through the openings into the calm waters within, she may ride in safety from the severest tempest.

The water within the lagoon was as calm as the surface of a mill-pond. On every hand rose the trees and vegetation so dense that the only portion where a glimpse

of the ocean could be caught was at the entrance, which, it would seem, the builders of the island had left on purpose for the ingress and exit of endangered shipping.

Despite the alarming discovery which Captain Bergen had made but a short time previous, he carried out the purpose formed weeks before, and which the mate urged him to fulfil. The schooner having been secured in position and everything put in ship-shape order, he addressed the three men who composed the crew:

“My friends, when I engaged you to go upon this voyage, I did not tell you whither, and you may think it is late in the day to give you such information, now that we have reached our destination. Some time ago, before I sailed, I received information that a bed of oysters existed at a certain portion of this island unusually rich in pearls. It is to obtain them I have come, and now I wish to say, what I determined to say from the first, that if you work faithfully, and give me all the assistance you can, each of you three shall receive enough to make you rich for life. In an enterprise of this kind the business is a partnership, and you shall be liberally treated, provided you prove worthy.”

During the utterance of these words, both the captain and the mate carefully watched the faces of the three men to see the effect produced.

Had the African been alone he would have been won over, and as it was he turned about in an inquiring way, and looked toward the two men as if seeking to see how they took it. Their countenances were so immobile that he gained no information from the looks there; but both the officers did. Abe Storms, especially, was a skilful physiognomist, and that which he saw convinced him that the speech, coming as it did, was a mistake. As is frequently the case, it was accepted as an evidence of timidity on the part of the officers, and the conspirators were given a confidence which otherwise would not have been theirs.

“It was a blunder,” whispered Storms, when the captain stepped beside him. “Those wretches mean mischief, and it is coming within twenty-four hours.”

CHAPTER XIII

THE OYSTER BED

Little Inez Hawthorne was overrunning with delight at the prospect of a romp on shore, after having been confined so long in the cramped quarters of the schooner, and she was darting hither and thither, eager to start upon her frolic.

“I say, captain,” said Hyde Brazzier, bowing profoundly and with great humility, “we be greatly surprised by what you tell us about the pearls, and we are very much obliged for your kindness, which the same is a great deal more than we expected; but it has set us all topsy-turvy, as we may say. If it’s all the same, we would like to go and take a look at that same pearl-oyster bed, if it isn’t inconvenient.”

The captain and mate both understood the meaning of this, for it showed only too clearly how impatient the men were to commit the crime which they had in mind. Still, there was no excuse for refusal, and the officers were anxious enough to see the place for themselves. Each had his revolver carefully shoved into his pocket, and each knew that the six chambers were fully charged, when they sprang over the vessel’s side and started toward the northernmost part of the island. The captain and mate led the way, for they were sure they were in no personal danger so long as the oyster-bed remained undiscovered.

The fringe of coral trees was quite broad, but, as the little party made their way through them, they could catch the gleam of the water on each side, while the roar and boom of the breakers never ceased.

The sun seemed to linger in the horizon to their left, as if to guide them in the search they were making.

As they advanced, all observed that the outer rim of this fringe was very irregular, as if it had been broken up and changed by the action of fierce tempests for many decades. This peculiarity, if such it may be termed, left many places where the ocean was as calm as within the atoll, and it was in one of these that the oyster-bed for which they were searching was to be found.

Mate and captain advanced quite spiritedly for some distance, until they were close to the northernmost portion, when they hesitated, slackened their gait, looked to the right and left, conferred in low tones, and then the captain suddenly exclaimed:

“This looks like the spot!”

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when the two men dashed down the slight slope, ran a short distance, and then abruptly halted close to the water’s edge, at a point where the sea was locked in so that it was only slightly disturbed by the ordinary swell. Close behind them were Redvignez and Brazzier, while Pomp brought up the rear. The three men exchanged only a word or two while following, and those were heard by the leaders, because they were of no significance, but it is safe to conclude they did a great deal of thinking.

The five grouped themselves along the water, standing side by side and peering down into the depths before them. This perhaps averaged three fathoms, and the water itself was as clear as crystal, without even the tinge of green generally seen in the ocean. The bottom was quite even and flat, resting upon a substratum of coral. The glinting rays of the sun helped, so that a marble could have been distinguished many fathoms down. And looking downward, the quintette saw the bottom strewn with oysters of unusual size, lying so close together that in many places they seemed to touch each other.

For a full minute the five stood motionless and speechless. It was Pomp who was the first to recover his voice:

“My gracious! am dem ’isters full of pearls?”

“That can only be told by examination,” was the quiet reply of Mr. Storms.

“Dat’s ruther deep to dive down, an’ how ’bout sharks?”

The mate smiled.

“We thought of all that before we left home, Pomp.”

“Well, what good did all de thinkin’ do? Dat won’t drive away de shark, dat would as lief bite a man in two as to swaller a fish.”

“If you and Redvig will return to the vessel and get that coat of mail on deck, I will agree to go down there and take all the risks.”

The three mutineers, as they may be called, exchanged glances, but said nothing. The captain and mate noted this telegraphy of the eyes, and they, too, were

silent, but it was a little test which they had determined upon before leaving the *Coral*, lying some distance away, safely moored close inshore. Evidently the three could think of no valid excuse, and Brazzier said, in a low voice, which was heard by all:

“Go, men, and hurry back.”

Pomp started off at once, Redvignez following close behind him. The mate and captain saw they were speaking together; but, of course, it could only be conjectured what they were talking about.

The three who remained behind were in an embarrassing situation, for there could be no doubt that Brazzier, the leader in the plot, had had his suspicions aroused by this little incident, and it was hard work for him to conceal a certain uneasiness at the thought that he had lost the confidence of the two officers of the *Coral*.

With a view of strengthening his position, Captain Bergen took out his revolver, looked at it in an inquiring way, and then shoved it back into his hip-pocket. Abe Storms did precisely the same thing, excepting that he perhaps made a little more display about it.

Not one of the three as yet had spoken a word; but Brazzier, as if to conceal his uneasiness, advanced to the edge of the water and peered down into the crystal depths at the supposed wealth which lay scattered over the bottom, awaiting the hour when some one should draw it forth from the hiding-place it had occupied for so many years.

“If they’ve got pearls in ’em,” observed Brazzier, “it’ll make a good haul for us.”

“There is reason to think so,” replied the captain, holding his peace, for he began to suspect that too much deference had already been paid to the crew.

Since Pomp and Redvignez were making good time, they soon reappeared, bearing between them the coat of armor which Abe Storms had constructed before leaving his New England home. This, it may be said, was an invention peculiarly his own, containing some conveniences not generally attributed to diving-bells or armor, and which, if they withstood the test to which they were sure to be subjected, would be a great step forward in the rapid improvements that have been made in submarine armor during the last few years. A superficial examination would not discover anything out of the usual order in the make of the armor, with its bulging glass eyes and general resemblance to the coats of mail such as were used by the crusaders and knights of the middle ages. There

were the two pipes, one of which went in at the top of the helmet, as if the man were going to breathe through the crown of his head, while the other was adjusted so as to come nearer the front of the face. One of these was for the admission of fresh air, and the other for the expulsion of that which was exhaled. Besides this, there was the rope, fastened around the waist of the diver, to assist him to the surface should a sudden necessity arise. But, without going into any detailed description, we may say that the ingenious New Englander had so constructed it that he required the assistance of no second person at any portion of the work.

Storms immediately began adjusting the apparatus, the others standing off and looking on, for he had declined their proffers of service. The armor had never been tested, and the man might well pause, now that he was going to stake his life upon the issue, as may be said.

But it was not that fact which caused the mate the most uneasiness, for his confidence in his own invention was so strong that he would not have hesitated a moment to trust himself in water of twice the depth. Indeed, the pearls were so near at hand that a very ordinary diver would have found no difficulty in bringing them up without the help of any armor at all—the latter being required by other considerations.

“Now, all I want done is to allow the two upper ends of the pipes to be kept clear,” said Storms, when he had adjusted the “harness” about him. “I will do the breathing for myself, provided I am not interfered with.”

The two ends were secured among the coral in such a way that there was no danger of their being drawn in by any action of the armor itself, and then Storms, taking an immense sheath-knife in his hand, promptly stepped off from the shore, and as promptly sank under water.

It was a singular sight the four companions whom he left behind saw, when they approached to the edge of the water and looked over.

The mate, incased in his armor, looked like some huge, curiously-shaped shellfish or monster, whose weight was such that he went as straight down as an arrow, and, a few seconds later, was seen bent over and moving about the bottom, loosening up the oysters.

This first venture of Storms’ was more in the nature of an experiment or preliminary reconnoissance. He wished to find how the land lay, as the expression goes. If everything should prove to be in good shape, he would venture down again, with a basket, and the real work of gathering the pearl-

oysters would begin.

As we have intimated, Abe Storms felt no misgivings concerning his armor when he moved off from solid land and was submerged in the edge of the Pacific, for he had constructed so many contrivances and machines that he had learned to understand fully what they would do before they were put to work. He carried the enormous sheath-knife in his right hand, and when his feet lightly touched the shells on the bottom, he began turning them over with the point of his knife. The depth of the water being so moderate, he found no difficulty in breathing, and indeed the conditions were such that whoever chose to collect the oysters in this armor was not likely to experience the slightest difficulty.

Down where he was at work the water seemed to be of a light-yellowish tint, caused by the refraction of the sunlight as it made its way to him. He noticed the mild glow, which, of course, would steadily diminish as the sun went down, when all at once it was eclipsed so suddenly by a dark shadow that he instantly suspected the true cause.

Looking upward, he saw an immense shark, certainly a dozen feet in length, that had halted and was evidently surveying with some curiosity this intruder upon his domains.

The man-eater being directly over the diver, was not in the best position to use his fearful jaws with effect, but he was evidently reconnoitering with a view to hostilities. Abe observed that this shadowy figure was motionless, its fins slightly moving back and forth as if it were using them like a balancing-pole, to maintain itself motionless in position, and he marked the horridly-shaped mouth which yawned over his head. Reaching upward with his long-bladed knife, he touched it against the white belly of the monster, and then gave it a strong push.

It was so keen and sharp that it entered deep into the yielding flesh and inflicted a severe wound. Just then the gigantic man-eater suspected he had committed a blunder, and with a lightning-like whirl of his huge body, he dashed out to sea, leaving a crimson trail after him.

Indeed, his charge was so sudden that the huge knife was wrenched from the grasp of Abe Storms, and he was drawn forward off his balance. Had it been in the open air, he would have been hurled to the ground with great force. But he managed to recover himself, and caught a shadowy glimpse of the great shark darting off, as the knife dropped from the wound and sank to the bottom. Not wishing to lose the valuable weapon, Storms walked forward, and seeing it lying on the bottom, at a point which seemed to be the edge of the oyster-bed, he

stooped over and recovered it.

He had now been down a considerable while, and muttered:

“The captain promised to signal me if trouble came, and he hasn’t done so. But, for all that, I don’t believe it will be safe for me to stay down here much longer. I may as well——”

The sentence was never finished, for it received a startling interruption. The rubber pipes by which he breathed were suddenly closed, and Abe Storms knew it had been done purposely by some one above.

CHAPTER XIV

THE REVOLT

For a brief while after the descent of the mate of the *Coral*, incased in his new diving armor, the four men above did nothing more than merely wait for his coming up. But all the time the parties were watching each other, for Captain Bergen was convinced that the crisis was at hand. The mutineers had learned where the oyster-bed was, and therefore could be no longer restrained by that consideration. They could get on without the diving-armor, though they saw how convenient it might be to have it; but, since it was connected with the shore, it could be drawn in and recovered if they should need it.

The mate was down in the ocean, and the captain was standing on terra firma. What more favorable separation was likely to present itself? Here were three men against one, and the three had gained the secret which had restrained them so long.

“I say,” said Hyde Brazzier, “does the mate down there find things as he expected?”

“We can tell that better after he comes up,” was the reply of the captain, who kept his hand at his hip, where it could rest on the butt of his revolver. “But there is reason to believe that he isn’t disappointed.”

“And he breathes through these pipes that lie here?” pursued Brazzier, while the expression on the face of Pomp and Redvignez convinced Skipper Bergen that serious mischief was coming.

“You can see that without asking me,” replied he, stepping back a pace or two so as to keep the men before him.

“Well, if a man can’t get what air he wants, what is likely to happen?” continued Brazzier, with an insolent swagger that was exasperating, following upon his fawning sycophancy.

“Any fool would know that he would die.”

“Well, now that we’ve landed, I don’t see as there is any need of a mate or a captain neither, with this crew—do you, boys?”

And he turned toward his companions with a laugh.

“Of course not. The best place for him is in Davy Jones’ locker!” said Redvignez.

“Now you is talkin’ right!” was the characteristic comment of the negro, Pomp, who seemed the most eager of the three, when the mutiny had come to a head.

It was evident that Brazzier had determined to drown the mate while he was below the surface.

“The first man who interferes with those pipes I will shoot dead!”

Captain Bergen spoke the words in a low voice, but there could be no mistaking his deadly earnestness. Feeling that the crisis had come, the captain determined to give the signal agreed upon with Abe Storms, which was a sudden jerk of the rope fastened to the one around the waist of the mate. The latter would understand that his presence above was needed at once.

The captain was in the act of stooping over, when Redvignez sprang behind him with the stealth and agility of a cat, and struck his arm a violent blow. His purpose was to knock the revolver out of the captain’s hand, so that he and his friends could secure the use of it. But he overdid the matter, for the revolver went spinning out of the captain’s hand and dropped into the water, where it sank out of sight. Startled and shocked, he straightened up without giving the signal to Abe Storms below the surface.

None of the party had any firearms, but Captain Bergen saw it would be madness for him to make any resistance. Without a moment’s hesitation, therefore, he wheeled about and ran with all the speed of which he was capable.

His flight was not altogether an aimless one, for he hoped to reach the schooner, lying an eighth of a mile away, far enough in advance of his pursuers to seize one of the rifles carefully concealed there, and to make defense against his foes. The instant he broke into a run, his pursuers did the same, uttering loud shouts, as if they were American Indians who were certain of their prey.

For the time, it was a question of speed between pursuers and pursued. If the latter could reach the craft considerably ahead of the others, there was a chance of his making a successful defense against the three who were seeking his life. If he failed to attain the goal, he felt it would be all over with him, for they were

not the men to show any mercy.

Darting among the palm-trees, therefore, he strained every nerve to draw away from his enemies, while they strove, with equal desperation, to overtake him.

It was a straight run, and comparatively an unobstructed one, for the palm-trees were far enough apart to give him a pretty fair course, which was of equal advantage to all parties. Perhaps it is possible, therefore, to imagine the anxiety with which, after running a short distance, Captain Bergen glanced over his shoulder to see how his pursuers were making out. But it is not possible to appreciate his consternation when he saw that two of them were outrunning him, and, as he had striven to his very utmost, the frightful truth was manifest that he was sure to be overtaken before he could reach the *Coral*.

Those who were gaining upon him were Pomp, the negro, and Brazzier himself. But the fact that they were gaining upon him was no cause for the fugitive falling down and yielding without a struggle. He still had his sheath-knife, which he grasped with a despairing feeling as he realized, during those awful seconds, that complete, disastrous failure, instead of the brilliant success he had counted upon, had overtaken him at last.

The pursuers gained rapidly, and not one-half the distance was passed, when all three of the men were almost within striking distance, for Redvignez was at the elbow of his companions. Captain Bergen looked over his shoulder, and was about to throw his back against a palm-tree, with the view of turning at bay and fighting to the last, when, like the historical John Smith of our own earlier times, his lack of attention to his feet precipitated the very fate against which he was struggling. His feet struck some obstruction, and being exhausted from his extraordinary exertion, he pitched forward and fell on his face. As he went down he was conscious of hearing two widely different sounds—one the exultant cries of the pursuers, and the other the terrified scream of a little girl.

Captain Bergen attempted to rise, but Redvignez and Brazzier were upon him, and the knife of the latter was upraised with the purpose of ending the matter then and there forever, when the cry of the child was heard the second time, and little Inez sprang, like Pocahontas, between the uplifted arm and the intended victim.

“Oh, don’t hurt him! Please don’t hurt him! Please, please don’t hurt him, ’cause I love him!” pleaded the agonized child, with all the earnestness of her nature.

The position of the prostrate captain attempting to rise, and the little one interceding for him, was such that the mutineer hesitated for the moment, for he

could not strike without endangering her life. Seeing this, with the wonderful quickness which sometimes comes over the youngest child in such a crisis, Inez persistently forced her body with amazing quickness in the way of the poised knife as it started to descend more than once—the other two holding back for their leader to finish the work.

Brazzier was a man of tigerish temper, and he became infuriated in a few seconds at this repeated baffling of his purpose.

“Confound you!” he suddenly exclaimed, with a fierce execration. “If you will keep in the way, then you must take it!”

The arm was drawn still further back, with the intention of carrying out this dreadful threat, when the wrist was seized in the iron grip of Black Pomp, who said:

“Hold on, dere! None ob dat! De man dat hurts a ha’r ob dat little gal’s head will got sot down on by me, an’ mashed so flat dat he’ll neber rose ag’in. Does you hear me, sah?”

CHAPTER XV

THE FRIEND IN NEED

There was no excuse for not hearing this warning, for it was uttered in a voice loud enough to reach over the whole extent of the atoll.

Both Redvignez and Brazzier were enraged at the interference, and there was an instant of time when the two were on the point of attacking him. But he was a terrible foe for any one to assail, and he would have made warm work, as they well knew, for he was not afraid of the two together.

Brazzier was quick to comprehend the situation, and he refrained.

“Take away the girl, then,” he commanded, “so I can get at him.”

“I will not leave him,” declared Inez, throwing her arms about the neck of the captain, who was rising to his feet. “You mean to hurt him, and you shan’t hurt him without hurting me. He has been kind, and he’s a good man.”

“Take her away,” commanded Brazzier, with difficulty repressing his anger at the repeated delay.

“Oh, Pomp! You won’t let him hurt the captain?” pleaded Inez, turning toward him, and ready to throw her arms about his dusky neck, were it not that she was afraid to leave the captain for the moment—he having risen to his feet, while he held her hand and looked at his enemies, panting from his own great exertion, though he did not speak a word.

Even in the dreadful peril which enveloped him, he was too proud to ask for mercy from such wretches.

But the appeal of Inez to Pomp had produced its effect. When she turned her misty eyes upon him, and pleaded in such piteous tones for mercy, the mouth of the huge African twitched, and any one could see that a hard struggle was going on within.

“If you don’t keep those bad men from hurting Captain Bergen,” she added, in

the same impassioned manner, “I’ll never speak to you—never, never, never—there!”

This was accompanied by a stamp of her tiny foot, and then she burst into weeping—sobbing as if her heart would break.

Hyde Brazzier stood irresolute, and seemed on the point of leaping, knife in hand, upon the captain. But the prayer of the innocent child had settled the question, and the sable Hercules sprang in front of the endangered man.

“Dis ’ere thing hab gone fur ’nough; let de cap’in alone. If dere’s any killin’ to be done, why I’m de one dat’s gwine to do it.”

The two mutineers were wild with fury, for this unexpected show of mercy promised to upset the whole scheme they had been hatching for weeks. Both Redvignez and Brazzier protested vehemently, seeking to show that it was imperatively necessary that both the officers should be put out of the way, and that since the mate was gone, it was the sheerest folly to allow the captain to remain.

But the words were thrown away.

The prayer of little Inez Hawthorne had reached the heart of the gigantic African, and the sight of the child standing there weeping was more than he could bear, although it but served to add to the exasperation of the other two savages.

Captain Bergen did not stand mute and motionless during all this rush of events, which really occupied but a few seconds. As soon as he saw the way open, he took the hand of little Inez and began moving in the direction of the schooner, his purpose being to secure refuge upon that if possible. As he moved away he saw Pomp and the two mutineers in conference, for Brazzier and Redvignez at that moment would have given a large share of their prospective wealth for the purpose of disposing finally and forever of the captain.

“We have been in mutinies before, Pomp, and the only safe course—and that ain’t safe by any means—is to follow the rule that dead men tell no tales.”

“Dat may be de rule, but it ain’t gwine to work in dis case; an’ de reason am ’cause de little gal dere don’t want it done. You can talk an’ argufy fo’ fourteen years, but it won’t do no good. De only way you can finish up de job am by killin’ me fust.”

The foregoing is the substance of the protests and replies of the two parties to the

angry discussion. It so happened, as we have shown, that the African held the balance of power. He was strong and courageous, and he was armed and ready to fight, and they knew it. They did not dare to attack him openly, where the result was so likely to be disastrous to both, and they were compelled to fall in with his scheme of saving the captain, though it can well be understood that it was the most distasteful thing to which they could consent.

This discussion lasted but a few minutes; but, as we have said, it was improved by Captain Bergen, who saw that the wisest course for him to pursue was to remove the cause as far as practical. He walked backward a few steps until he was some way off, when he turned about, still holding the hand of Inez in his, and they continued until a number of palm-trees intervened, when he sped so rapidly that the child was kept on a run to maintain her place at his side. She had ceased her crying, but her face and eyes were red, and she was in an apprehensive, nervous and almost hysterical condition from the terrible scene she had witnessed—a scene such as should never be looked upon by one of her tender years.

A minute later Captain Bergen caught sight of the trimly-built schooner lying at rest in the lagoon, close to the shore, and his heart gave a throb of hope, that, if he could once secure position on her deck, he would be able to hold his own against the mutineers.

During the next few hurried minutes occupied in the passage to the schooner, the conviction had grown upon him that this mercy which had spared his life for a brief while would not be continued. Pomp Cooper would not continue to be his friend after his spasm of affection for Inez should spend itself, and devoid as the African was of intellect, he was likely to understand that the true course of the party who had entered upon the villainy was to make thorough work of it.

The captain saw the three men still talking and gesticulating angrily when he reached the schooner.

In a twinkling he had lifted Inez upon the deck, and then he sprang after her. He ran into the cabin, reappearing in an instant with the three loaded rifles.

“Now,” said he, with a sigh of relief, “let them come! I am ready.”

CHAPTER XVI

A STRANGE VISITOR

But the mutineers took good care not to show themselves just then; and the captain, deeming such a course prudent, tugged at the anchor until it was lifted, when he managed to shove the craft off, and reaching the middle of the lagoon, the anchor was dropped.

“Now they won’t be likely to approach without my seeing them,” was his conclusion; “and so long as I can keep awake, I can hold them at bay. I hate to shoot a man, but if ever a person had justification for doing so, I have. I am rather inclined to think that if either Brazzier or Redvignez should wander into range, one of these rifles would be likely to go off!”

Seeing no immediate danger, Captain Bergen descended into the cabin for a few minutes. Poor, tired Inez had thrown herself on the hammock and was sound asleep.

“Sleep, little one,” murmured the captain, as he lingered for a minute to look at the sweet, infantile face, in the gathering twilight. “It is a sad fate which orders you to witness so much violence, and sorry I am that it is so; but where would I have been excepting for you?”

Then he softly left the cabin and took his position on deck. The moon was full, which was gratefully noticed by the captain, for he could easily keep awake all night, and thus detect the approach of his enemies. In fact, his nerves were so unstrung that he would not be able to sleep for many hours to come.

“But what is to be done hereafter?”

This was the question he put to himself, and which had to be answered.

The mutineers kept carefully out of sight, and, as night settled over the scene, the captain remained wide awake and vigilant. There was ample food for thought and reflection—the cutting of the hose-pipes of the diving apparatus, the attack by the mutineers, the terrible flight and pursuit, the interference of Inez—all

these and more surged through the brain of the captain, while he slowly paced back and forth, with eyes and ears wide open. Inez still slumbered, and all was silent, excepting the boom of the ocean against the coral-reef; while, as the night wore on, the captain maintained his lonely watch.

Captain Bergen scanned the fringe of shore which circled about him, like a great wall thrown up between the lagoon and the Pacific, that steadily broke on the outside. But turn his keen eyes wheresoever he chose, he could detect not the slightest sign of the mutineers. He thought it likely they would start a fire somewhere, but no starlike point of light twinkled from beneath the palm-trees, and he was left to conjecture where they were and what they were doing.

“They will probably wait till they think I am asleep,” was his thought, “and then they will swim quietly out and try to board.”

He believed it would be either that way or they would construct a raft and paddle themselves out to the schooner. Knowing the captain was on the Coral, and knowing how important it was that he should not be allowed to run away and leave them there, they would neglect no precaution to prevent his going off. They, too, would understand what it was he was waiting for, and they were seamen enough to know the hour when he would be able to sail, and, consequently, what they were to do to prevent it.

“They have no way of closing the channel, or they would do so, and it remains——Hello!”

He was standing at the prow, looking carefully about him, and with all his senses alert, and he stood thus fully twenty minutes, expecting something whose precise nature he had already conjectured.

“That splash meant something, and I think——”

Just then he heard a commotion in the water directly under the prow, and, looking over, he saw a strange-looking object, like one of the uncouth monsters of the deep, come to the surface and begin climbing up by aid of the fore-chains.

“I say, cap’n, can’t you give a fellow a lift?”

It was the mate, Abe Storms, who asked the question, and, as the captain extended his hand, he said, in a low, fervent voice:

“Thank heaven! I was about giving you up for lost!”

CHAPTER XVII

ON THE CORAL

Captain Bergen and Abe Storms, as may be supposed, greeted each other ardently when the latter stepped upon the deck of the schooner, clad in his diving-suit.

“I was growing very anxious about you,” said the captain, “for I could not understand what kept you away so long.”

The eccentric New Englander, removing his headgear, but leaving the rest of his armor on, laughed and asked:

“Tell me what took place after I went down.”

The captain hurriedly related his experience, which has been already told the reader.

“We took a good deal of risk, as you know,” said the mate, “and when I went down in the water, I was a great deal more uneasy than I seemed to be. I was expecting a signal from you, and when it did not come I started for the surface. The shore is rough and craggy, you know, so that it was something like climbing up stairs.

“Well, I had got pretty well up when the pipes were cut. I understood what it meant, and, holding my breath, with the water rushing down the two hose-pipes, I scrambled for the top.

“It may have been a perilous thing for you that the rascals pursued you with such enthusiasm, but it was fortunate for me, for, although I had a dry revolver under my armor, it was several minutes before I was in a condition to use it.

“As soon as possible, however, I made ready, believing you were in sore need of help. Crawling forward on my hands and knees, I took a quick look over the bank, and saw you and Inez walking off in the direction of the schooner, with the three scamps sullenly watching you.

“I suspected what you tell me was the truth, and I was on the point of rushing forward and making short work of them with my revolver, but it flashed upon me that they possessed a fearful advantage over us. Redvignez and Brazzier are as cunning as serpents, and one of them, more than likely, would have caught up the little girl and held her in front of him as a screen.

“Inez would have proved an effectual armor, indeed, and, with her in their possession, they would have been masters of the situation, and could have dictated whatever terms they chose to us. Pomp would have been transformed into a bitter enemy at once, and the chances of disaster to us all were so great that I remained quiet, but watchful, ready to dash forward to your assistance should it become necessary.

“I lay down in a secluded place to rest, when—shall I confess it?—I fell asleep, and did not wake up until half an hour ago. After thinking the matter over, I decided still to deceive the rascals. I was quite certain that the water in the lagoon was not very deep, so I fastened the upper ends of the hose to floats, and walked out here on the bottom.”

“Did you see anything of them?”

“No; I don’t know where they are; but you can feel sure they’ll never take their eyes off the schooner.”

After further discussing the exciting events of the day, they considered the all-important question as to what should be their own line of action. The decision which they reached was a most remarkable one, being no less than to make a direct proposition to the mutineers to turn over the schooner to them, with a portion of the oysters, and to allow them to depart, while the captain, mate and little girl were left upon the island.

The captain was not convinced that this was altogether wise, and he said:

“Since your plan is for us to stay on the island, and allow them to leave with the schooner, will you tell me how we are to depart, when ready?”

The mate indicated the inlet, where the mast was still pointing toward the sky.

“We’ve got to run our chances. We may be taken off in a week, and possibly not for years; but, with all these probabilities before us, I am in favor of surrendering the schooner, and allowing them to leave us forever, if they will agree to do so.”

“But, if we make the proposition, will they not suspect our purpose, or take it as a confession of weakness on our part?”

“We must prevent that. But, captain, I’ve had all the sleep I want, and you are in need of it. Better secure it, therefore, while you can. Go below in the cabin and take your rest. I will stand guard here, and you need have no fear of my dropping into slumber again.”

The captain remained some time longer, and even then was loth to leave, but he consented to do so, and finally descended into the cabin, where he threw himself upon his hammock without removing his clothes.

The incidents of the day were exciting enough to keep him awake, and, despite the exhaustion of his body, he lay a long time before he closed his eyes in slumber. Even then his sleep was haunted by horrible dreams, in which he lived over again the scenes through which he had passed, when, but for the piteous pleadings of little Inez, he would have fallen a victim to the ferocity of the mutineers, and he awoke more than once with a gasp and a start, which showed how disturbed his mind was.

He had not slept long when he suddenly awoke again, and looked around in the gloom. The lamp overhead had been extinguished, and he was in utter darkness, though the silvery glow of the moonlight outside was perceptible through the windows and partly-open door. He could hear the dull booming of the breakers on the outside of the atoll, but all else was quiet, except the gentle breathing of Inez, in the berth beneath his.

“God protect her and us all!” he prayed, his heart, in the solemn stillness and solitude, ascending to the only being who could assist him and his friend in their dire extremity; for Captain Bergen was sure that no one could be placed in greater peril than were he and Abe Storms, so long as they remained among the Pearl Islands.

CHAPTER XVIII

A VISIT FROM SHORE

In the meantime Abram Storms was acting the part of a vigilant sentinel at his station on deck.

There was no doubt in his mind that the mutineers were fearful the schooner would sail away and leave them on the lonely coral island, and they were certain, as he viewed it, to make some effort to prevent such a disaster to them. But precisely how this was to be done was a serious question. They knew that the captain, having reached the *Coral*, had several rifles at command, and would not hesitate to shoot them the instant any attempt was made against him or little Inez, under his charge.

Nothing was more certain than that an unremitting watch would be kept upon the *Coral*, and, though they might believe there was but the single man there, yet unquestionably he commanded the situation.

“They will try some trick,” muttered the mate; “but I shall have a very small opinion of myself if they win. Pomp Cooper’s affection for Inez led him to interfere, when his interference accomplished a good deal more than he imagined. Ah!”

At that moment the mate heard a ghostly “Halloo!” from the shore, and he recognized the voice as belonging to Pomp.

“Just as I suspected,” said Storms, to himself; “they’re using the negro as a cat’s-paw. Well, I’ll see what they are driving at.”

Imitating the tones of Captain Bergen as closely as possible, the mate shouted:

“What do you want?”

“Am you dere?” was the rather superfluous question.

“Yes.”

“Won’t you let me come on board?”

“What for?”

“I’m sick ob dis business. I hab quarreled wid Redvig an’ Brazzier, an’ I want to jine you an’ git away from dis place.”

Abe Storms was not deceived for a moment by this transparent story. He knew there had been no quarrel, but that the mutineers had planned to get the negro on the schooner with the hope of deceiving the captain and gaining a chance to overpower him when off his guard.

“Come on out here, then,” replied the mate, who quickly determined his course of action.

Almost at the same instant a loud splash was heard, and the head of Pomp was descried in the moonlight, swimming toward the boat. The mate kept himself concealed as much as he could, stepping back when the negro began clambering up the fore-chains. Panting from his exertion, he speedily came over the gunwale upon the deck.

“Yes, cap’in, I’s tired ob dem willains, an’ I’m gwine——Oh! oh! oh!”

At that instant his eyes fell upon the figure of the mate, clad in his diving-armor, with the exception of his face, which was so clearly revealed in the moonlight that there could be no mistaking his identity.

Worse than that, the mate, standing as rigid as iron, had a gleaming revolver pointed straight at him. Pomp sank on his knees in the most abject terror.

“Oh, my heben!” he chattered, clasping his hands, “I t’ought dat you was drowned. Am you sartin dat you ain’t?”

“I am quite well satisfied on that point. But, Pomp, get up; I’ve got a word or two to say to you.”

“I will, I will; but please p’int dat weepon some oder way.”

The mate complied, and the African, somewhat reassured, though still considerably frightened, listened to the words of the man who he supposed was drowned hours before.

“I am alive and well, Pomp, as you can see, and so is the captain, who is taking a short nap in the cabin. We are well armed, as you know——”

“Yas! yas! yas!” chattered the negro.

“And we can sail away in the morning, at the turning of the tide, and leave you here——”

“Dat’s what I want you to do, an’ I’ll go wid you.”

“You can’t go! I know well enough what you came out here for. You thought you would find a chance to get the upper hand of the captain, and would let the other villains on board. There! you needn’t deny it. I understand the matter too well to be deceived.”

“Didn’t I sabe de cap’in’s life?” quavered Pomp, still fearful of the cold, measured tones of the mate.

“You befriended him at a critical moment, and therefore I won’t shoot you, when I have such a good chance to do so. But you have regretted your interference more than once, and you are seeking now to undo all the good you have done. We have it in our power not only to go away, but to bring back a force which shall hang every one of you three, as you deserve to be, but——”

“Oh! oh-o-o-o!”

“But we don’t propose to do it. We are not going away to leave you here. To-morrow we shall have a proposal to offer to your mates, which they will be glad to accept. That is about all I have to say to you.”

CHAPTER XIX

THE DEPARTURE

As Mate Storms said, he had but little more communication to make with the negro.

“You may now swim back to your friends and say that we will be ready to negotiate to-morrow morning. If they will come down to the shore, we will have a talk and arrange the whole business. Now, perhaps, you had better go back.”

Pomp Cooper was quick-witted enough to understand that this utterance was in the nature of a hint for him to depart, and he stood not on the order of his going.

“Good-by, sah,” he called out. “Much obleege fo’ your kindness, dat I shall remember a good while.”

Mate Storms stood motionless, watching him until he was perhaps a hundred feet from the craft, when he said, just loud enough to be heard:

“Sharks are mighty plenty hereabout, and I saw a big one yesterday. Shouldn’t wonder if he has a leg bit off before he gets back.”

Pomp heard the words, and they “disturbed” him, to put it mildly. Evidently he had forgotten the peril to which all persons are exposed in tropical waters, and, as the truth was impressed upon him with such suddenness, he uttered a “whiff” like a porpoise and began swimming with fierce energy toward the shore. In fact, he never put forth so much effort in all his life. The expectation of feeling a huge man-eating monster gliding beneath you when in the water is enough to shake the nerves of the strongest swimmer. He kept diving and swimming as far as he could below the surface, and then came up and continued his desperate efforts until he reached the land, where he joined his companions.

Abe Storms stood looking and listening, his face expanded in a broad smile, when he heard a light laugh at his elbow. Turning his head, he found the captain there.

“I heard your summons to him,” said the captain, by way of explanation, “and I came up to hear what it meant. I must admit, you managed the case well.”

“It might have been worse. My only fear is that the imps won’t believe we honestly intend to hold the conference with them, and offer a compromise.”

“They will find it out at daylight, and meanwhile they can’t help themselves. It is useless for me to stay below, Abe,” added the nervous captain. “There’s too much on my mind to sleep.”

Therefore, the two remained on watch until the sun rose, at which time there was nothing to be seen of the mutineers.

“They’re suspicious,” concluded the mate, who called out, in a loud voice that reached every portion of the island:

“Hello, men! come and show yourselves. We want to have a talk with you!”

A few minutes later Hyde Brazzier appeared on the shore and answered back again. It was deemed best to give the mutineers a proof of their sincerity, and instead, therefore, of holding the conversation from the deck of the schooner, the small boat was lowered, and both the captain and mate entered it and rowed ashore, where all three awaited them, as may be supposed, with some degree of astonishment.

Storms and Captain Bergen were not without some misgivings, and they did not venture unprepared into the lion’s den. Both carried a loaded revolver at command, and in case of an attack the business would have been lively. But it was unreasonable to suppose that our friends would be assailed under the peculiar circumstances. Furthermore, as the parties understood each other, there was no time wasted in reproaches or recriminations, but Captain Bergen came directly to the point.

“This state of things can’t last,” said he; “we are deadly enemies, and we would kill each other on the slightest pretext. The island is too small to contain us all. Either you three or we two must leave before the sun reaches meridian, or we shall go to fighting like caged tigers. Neither can we go away together, for I would not trust any of you again, nor would you trust either of us; therefore, one party must go, and the other must stay—which shall it be? We were prepared to leave, when we reflected that if we should be caught in some of the storms which sweep over this region, the mate and I would hardly be able to manage the schooner, and we are anxious to take care of the little girl, to whom we are greatly attached. There are three of you, all able-bodied seamen, and in case of a

tempest you would be able to navigate the *Coral*. It would be safer, therefore, for you to take the vessel and go to some of the ports, secure assistance and send them after us. We make, therefore, this proposition: We will turn over the schooner to you, on condition that you leave with us such stores as we may choose to take, and that you proceed at once to the nearest of the inhabited Paumotu Islands and send assistance to us. Furthermore, as you know all about the pearl-oysters, we will agree to divide with you. You can take up half of what are on the bed out yonder, and you may carry them away with you, leaving a moiety to us. You are to sail just as soon as the oysters are placed on board. That's our proposition—what do you say?"

There could be no doubt that the mutineers were astonished by the generosity of the offer, coming, as it did, from those who were in reality masters of the situation.

Had they been a little more cunning, they might have suspected there was something behind it all, which was kept carefully out of sight; but the terms were so good that Brazzier answered, the instant the question was put to him:

"We'll do it, and carry out our part fair and square."

"Very well; there's no need of delay. We'll bring the schooner inshore and take out what we want, and then turn the craft over to you."

This amazing programme was carried out to the letter. Captain and mate, accompanied by Pomp, rowed back in the small boat, and the schooner was carefully worked toward the shore.

Abe Storms and Captain Bergen saw that among the possibilities of the future was a long stay on the lonely island, and they therefore prepared for such a contingency, having an eye mainly to securing that which little Inez would be likely to need. Pomp informed the officers that there was a small cabin a short distance away, which had no doubt been put up by the sailors of whom Grebbens had told the captain. It was made of planking that had come ashore from the wreck, and the fact that it had stood so long proved that it must have been built with much skill as well as strength.

It was found just as represented by Pomp—there being two compartments, each a dozen feet or so square, and one of these was so well put together that it seemed to be waterproof. Our friends were greatly surprised and pleased over the discovery, for Grebbens had never said anything about the structure.

The goods from the *Coral* were carried to this building and deposited in the rear

room, which was so tight that one would have almost suffocated had he remained in it during the tropical weather which prevails among the Paumotu Islands most of the time.

The goods stowed there were of a varied assortment, including the three breech-loading rifles, ammunition, tool-chest and contents, a portion of the medicine-chest, some biscuits, cooking utensils, and a trunk of calicoes, linens and materials such as are used in the making of feminine costumes. It was a singular coincidence that Abe Storms had provided a considerable quantity of this before leaving San Francisco, knowing as he did the fondness of savages for such finery, and having a suspicion that it might be turned to good account in the way of barter in some of the South Sea islands. Little did he suspect the use to which it would be put, and thankful indeed was he that it was at his command, when it was so likely to be needed for Inez Hawthorne.

There was a goodly amount of stock, which was transferred to the cabin, the mutineers assisting with the rest, for all felt there was no time to lose. There was mistrust at first, each party seeming to be suspicious of the other, but it soon wore off, and any one looking upon them could not have been made to believe they were deadly enemies.

When the transfer was completed, it was evident that the current was close upon its turn, and unless they should leave the island soon, they would be compelled to wait perhaps twelve or twenty-four hours longer.

Since the sea was very calm, Hyde Brazzier proposed that the schooner should be taken outside and anchored directly over the pearl-oyster bed, so that sail could be hoisted as soon as they were ready. There was a slight risk in the action, but it was done, and after some careful maneuvering the *Coral* was secured in position.

It looked very magnanimous and somewhat stupid for Abe Storms to volunteer to go down in his coat of armor and scoop the oysters into a huge basket, for the very parties who had tried so hard to drown him when similarly engaged the day before. Nothing, it would seem, could be more absurd, and yet the reader is requested to suspend judgment until he shall have read the following chapter.

All this was done, and in the course of the succeeding two hours fully three-fourths of the oysters scattered over that particular bed were dumped upon the deck of the *Coral*, and Abe Storms, pretty well exhausted, was pulled to the surface. The captain and mate, with the armor, rowed themselves the short distance ashore in the small boat. The *Coral* hoisted sail, and, heading out to sea,

rapidly sped away over the Pacific.

And all this time the three mutineers felicitated themselves upon the manner in which they had gotten the best of the bargain. And yet, never in all their lives had they been so completely outwitted as they were by Abe Storms and Captain Jack Bergen, as we shall now proceed to show.

CHAPTER XX

HOW DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND

The three mutineers on board the schooner Coral had sailed away and disappeared from view on the face of the vast Pacific, and the captain and mate were left with little Inez alone upon a small, lonely member of the Paumotu Group, in the distant South Seas.

Inez was too young to realize the gravity of the situation, and she ran hither and thither, delighted with her new home, though she found the cabin too warm inside to be comfortable, and she made frequent draughts upon the spring of cool, clear water near which the former residents of the atoll had built the cabin. Then, too, she had found that there was considerable tropical fruit growing in the place, and she made such havoc among it that Captain Bergen felt impelled to caution her, if she should become sick on their hands, she would be apt to fare ill, for they had little medicine at command.

While she was thus engaged, captain and mate were reclining on the ground, in the shade of the palm-trees. They spoke only now and then, but there was a peculiar expression on their faces as they watched the schooner gradually disappearing in the distance, for it was a long while in sight. The time came at last, however, when even their straining vision could not detect the faintest resemblance to a sail in the horizon, though it was still visible, as a matter of course, through their glasses.

“I believe she is gone,” said Storms, looking toward the captain.

“Yes; I see nothing of her.”

“Then it’s about time to shake.”

The two brawny hands clasped, and the friends greeted each other with remarkable cordiality; and, as they did so, they laughed heartily, and the mate almost shouted:

“Captain, but it was a good trick!”

“So it was; and I give you the credit of inventing it. I never would have thought of it.”

“Shake again; and now to work.”

The mate had deposited some of the oysters brought up on the bank, and they were carefully opened. They were eight in number, and there was not found a single pearl among them.

In all probability the entire lot which were carried away upon the schooner were not worth as much as the same quantity of bivalves from Chesapeake Bay. In short, this was not the pearl-oyster bed which had brought the two friends the greater part of the way around the globe. Suspecting—or, rather, knowing—the evil intentions of the mutineers, Abe Storms proposed the ruse, by which the visit was made to the wrong place. The mutineers themselves were outwitted, and, under the belief that they were carrying away a cargo of fabulous wealth, they did not wait to make an examination of the mollusks until they were well out to sea.

When they should open and examine them they were not likely to suspect the trick, but would think that the whole journey was a failure, and the three left on the island were, in reality, worse off than themselves.

And yet the true bed of oyster-pearls remained to be visited.

“It is possible they may suspect something and come back again,” said the mate, “but it is hardly probable.”

“Are they likely to send any friends to take us off?” asked the captain, with a quizzical look.

“Not to any great extent. They will be sure to give us as wide a berth hereafter as possible. In the meantime, I propose that we investigate.”

The two rose to their feet, and, lugging the armor between them, moved off toward a point whose location was as well known to them as if they had spent years upon the atoll.

While they were thus walking, the mate, who was much the better-educated man, said:

“This pearl-hunting is a curious business. Those specimens that I brought up were the genuine species, and yet they have very few or no pearls among them. It must be because the conditions are not favorable for their creation or development, while, at the place we are about to visit, the mollusks are the same,

and yet there are conditions existing there which cause an abnormal growth of the precious jewels."

"Did you make a careful examination of those other oysters?"

"Yes. As I told you, they are genuine, but they have no pearls of any account, the conditions being unfavorable for their formation. You know the pearls grow within the oysters, being composed of slimy secretions deposited around some foreign substance that enters them. It may be that a peculiar action of the tide drives a grain of sand into the mollusks, where we are to visit—though that is all conjecture."

But Mate Storms, who was only fairly launched out in the discourse upon pearls, was here interrupted by the captain exclaiming:

"This must be the spot."

The particular bank had been designated so clearly that there could be no mistake, and had the chart, or map, fallen into the hands of the mutineers, they would have discovered the trick played on them in an instant. The spot was a peculiar one where the two friends stopped. Instead of being partly landlocked like the other, it opened out fairly upon the sea, and appeared to be entirely unprotected from the force of the breakers, which boomed against the beach.

It would have been supposed naturally that the true course was for the fishermen to go out in a small boat, and make their explorations from that, but Grebbens had instructed the captain that the formation was so peculiar that nothing would be gained by this course. The shore sank like the side of a wall to a considerable depth, and the oysters lay on the bottom, with some clusters clinging to the rocks, where they could be torn off like sponges.

It can be understood that the work of removing these would be almost impossible for any one excepting a professional diver, unless, as was the case with our friends, he should have some artificial assistance. But for the diving-armor, it is hardly possible that Abe Storms would have made a serious attempt to secure anything, knowing the danger from sharks, and the difficulty of retaining his breath for any extended time below the surface of the water.

It was near the middle of the afternoon when this spot was reached. The sea was calm, but there were signs in the sky ominous of a coming storm, so that the two were anxious to make a beginning without any unnecessary delay. Stooping almost upon their faces, when the swell had receded enough to permit them, they peered down into the crystal depths, and caught shadowy glimpses of the prizes.

They saw the craggy clusters, big and brown, clinging to the rocks, while others were outlined on the floor of the bank.

“They’re there, beyond a doubt,” said Storms, “and it now remains to see whether they are worth the gathering. Help me get on this suit.”

Both worked deftly, and it was soon adjusted. The main thing was the breathing apparatus, Storms having some fear that at such a depth the pressure would be so great as to close the pipes, and thus shut out the air. However, the only way to learn was by experiment, and he did not wait. Carefully coiling his pipe, he took the rope in his hand and began descending, the two having arranged the signals so that with ordinary care no accident need result. Captain Bergen held one end of the rope in his hand, ready to draw his friend to the surface the instant he should receive notice that it was necessary.

“It is a long way to the bottom!” exclaimed the captain, standing like the harpooner in a whale-boat, and saw the line steadily paying out.

“It won’t do for him to go much further,” was his conclusion, noticing, with some alarm, that but little more of the hose was left on the ground. “I wish those pearls had fixed themselves not quite——Hello!”

He knew from the instant cessation of the weight on the rope, and the motionless condition of the hose, that the bottom had been reached by Abe Storms, and none too soon, either. Peering carefully into the clear depths, Captain Bergen saw, too, that his mate was attending to business.

CHAPTER XXI

AT LAST

Mate Storms, so far as could be seen, looked like an immense crab at work on the bottom of the pearl bank and along the rough rocks. He was so far below the surface that he was insensible to the long, heavy swells, which at intervals broke upon the beach with a thunderous boom, and so long as the breathing apparatus kept right he could pursue his labor without difficulty.

As he anticipated, he had not been long at work when several sharks made their appearance and reconnoitered the mysterious intruder upon their domains. They were evidently puzzled over the appearance of the strange visitor, and when Storms gave one of them an ugly prod with the point of his knife, he darted out of sight, instantly followed by the others, who seemed to suspect they were in danger from the monster, whose slightest touch was so emphatic.

It did not take long for the diver to fill his basket, and when he gave the signal, Captain Bergen pulled with might and main, and, a few minutes after, the man in his armor scrambled upon shore, tumbled over by a huge swell, which broke at that moment. The basket was full, and catching it up, Captain Bergen left his friend to himself and began hurriedly prying open the mollusks with his sheath-knife. His heart throbbed, for they were the largest oysters he had ever seen, and he was full of high hope.

The first bivalve opened disclosed a pearl almost as large as a robin’s egg. It possessed the faint yellowish tinge which is recognized in the East as belonging to the most valuable species.

With trembling, eager hands, Captain Bergen opened the second, and discovered another, nearly as large as the first. Half beside himself, he snatched up the largest oyster in the heap, and forced it apart with such precipitancy that he cut his hand. There lay a pearl before him fully a third larger than the first, with the purest tint, oval in form, and worth thousands of dollars.

Captain Bergen could contain himself no longer, but springing to his feet he

threw his hat in the air, and shouted, and danced about like a madman.

Mr. Storms did not remove his armor, for he intended to go down again. His laugh, muffled and sounding strangely from within the visor, was heard as he joined in the demonstrations of his companion.

When, encumbered as he was with his awkward armor, he began executing a double shuffle on the beach, the sight was so grotesque that the captain came near going into convulsions. But the exercise was too exhausting, and the mate speedily sat down on the shore and also began opening oysters. His ardor was somewhat dampened when he failed to discover anything in the first, and he became quite solemn when the second was equally barren of results; but the third yielded a beautiful pearl, fully equal to the first which the captain brought forth. There could be no doubt now that the men had struck a pearl bank of marvelous richness.

“There are plenty more down there,” said the mate, preparing to descend with his knife and basket again.

Captain Bergen allowed him to go, while he took the rope in hand, restraining his excitement with difficulty, for he was now sure that the wildest dreams in which he had indulged promised to be more than realized, and he considered the fortune of himself and friend assured.

“The fools,” he muttered, referring to the mutineers; “if they had acted the part of honest men they might have shared this, but they chose to be scoundrels, and truly they have had their reward.”

He noticed this time that the mate drew more upon the hose than before—so much so, indeed, that he threatened to draw the upper ends under water—and the captain gave a warning tug at the rope, to apprise him that he must venture no further. The warning was heeded, and when, a few minutes later, the diver was helped to terra firma again, his basket was filled heaping full.

This was dumped out, and he prepared to descend once more. Captain Bergen was so occupied in attending to his friend that he gained little time to open the oysters, and could only look longingly at them. Now and then, while the diver was cautiously working below, the captain snatched one up and pried the shells apart, and the success he met with was enough to turn the head of the coolest and most unconcerned of men. Beyond question, as we have said, the bank contained oysters of astonishing richness, fully three-fourths possessing pearls of extraordinary size and value.

Abe Storms went down and came up with the basket heaped to the top six separate times, and then doffed his armor.

“What’s the matter?” asked the captain, in surprise.

“That’s all!”

“What! are there no more?”

“Not another one, so far as I can see.”

“That’s too bad,” observed the captain, in a tone of disappointment. “I supposed there was enough to keep us employed several days.”

“Ah, Jack,” replied the mate, in a reproving tone, “see the emptiness of riches, and how little they can do to satisfy the cravings of the human heart. There is enough wealth there at your feet to make you and me independently rich for life, and yet you complain because you have so little.”

“It was wrong,” said the captain, meekly. “I am in such a nervous condition that I’m hardly myself. I am truly grateful for what we have here, and glad that we made the long voyage to secure them. We have enough—to crave more is wicked.”

They now set to work opening the shells between which were nestling the pearls, and the result was simply astonishing. It was hard work to get some of the thick, ridgy bivalves apart, but when they succeeded they rarely failed to be rewarded munificently. Some of the pearls were small, the majority large, and about twenty of enormous size and clearness. When the entire lot was placed in a little pile, there were found to be one hundred and twenty-odd; and, although it was impossible to estimate their value, Mate Storms—who was the better informed—believed they were worth at least a quarter of a million of dollars. All these had been taken in a few hours, though the preparations and the voyage thither had occupied many long, long months.

“I think I will go down and take a farewell look,” said Abe, when the task was finished. “I have a suspicion that I may have missed something.”

“I am quite sure you have,” replied the captain, assisting him with his armor; “and you have but a short time at your disposal, either, for I think a storm is brewing.”

This time the mate meant to proceed differently. In descending along the rocks the first time, he paused to break off some of the clusters, and he thought he caught the shadowy glimpse of an enormous oyster, further in; but there were so

many closer at hand, and he was so excited—despite his natural coolness—that he forgot about it until now, when he determined to look further, half hoping, more than believing, that it might possess a still larger pearl than any he had seen. He was confident that this was the only one he had missed, for the search he made during his last descent, in other respects, was thorough and left nothing to be done over again.

Carefully he sank into the depths of the ocean, with one hand grasping the rope, ready to give the signal to stop lowering the instant it should become necessary. He passed several yawning crevices in the rocks, which, of course, were of coral formation, and all at once he tugged smartly at the rope. He recognized the spot, and his feet were still about three yards from the bank upon which he had walked back and forth so many times. Captain Bergen responded at once, and held him suspended where he was, which was anything but a comfortable position, inasmuch as he could find no support for his feet, and his left hand was of little use.

Immediately before his face the rock made an inward sweep, showing an abrupt ledge, a yard in width and depth. Scanning this as closely as he could in the dim twilight of the ocean-cavern, Storms thought he saw something resembling an oyster, which was fully a foot in length. Uncertain as to its identity, he shoved his hand in and found it was suspended to the rock above, and after two or three violent wrenches, and by using his knife as well as he could, he broke it loose and drew it out.

It was an oyster, indeed, of prodigious size, and he instantly signaled to the captain to draw him up. The latter did so with a vigor that threatened to dislocate the armor itself.

“Here it is,” he exclaimed, the moment he reached the air. “But I don’t know whether there is anything in it or not.”

“My stars! Is that an oyster?” asked the captain, picking it up and turning it over like a huge stone, with inquiring eyes.

Little Inez Hawthorne had come to the spot while the mate was down the last time, and she danced with delight at the sight of the beautiful pearls piled upon the ground like a heap of tiny cannon balls.

“What are you going to do with that?” she asked, surveying the big bivalve, with an expression of disgust on her pretty face.

“That is yours,” said the captain, earnestly.

The mate looked at him and said:

“Do you mean that, captain?”

“I do. Whatever we find inside of that shall be consecrated to the use of Inez Hawthorne—to be hers absolutely. There may be nothing at all, but if there be a pearl, it will possess a value which we cannot estimate.”

The mate reached out his hand.

“The proposition does credit to your heart, captain, and I join it without reservation. Now do you open it.”

The captain hesitated a moment and looked at the big shell curiously, as if afraid to make the investigation.

While thus employed, Storms called attention to the fact that the two shells were already slightly separated, as if the mollusk were gasping for air, which could not be the case. Captain Bergen held up the huge shell and peeped inside. He did so but an instant, when he dropped it upon the sand, and exclaimed, with a pale face and trembling voice:

“It’s there!”

Mate Storms knew what it meant, and he in turn raised the oyster, ran his knife in carefully, worked hard for a minute, and then managed to get the two shells apart.

CHAPTER XXII

THE PEARL OF THE PACIFIC

There, at the front of the oyster, and slightly to one side, was the most marvelous pearl upon which the eyes of the men had ever rested. It was the size of an ordinary hen’s egg, clear and pure, and worth a sum of money which neither of the astounded men dared attempt to guess.

For a few seconds they were speechless, and then Inez clapped her hands with delight, and asked:

“Is that for me?”

“Yes, that is yours,” replied Captain Bergen. “The mate and I give it to you, to be yours and no one’s else.”

“Isn’t it splendid?” cried Inez, catching it up, passing it from one hand to the other, holding it up in the sunlight, and showing as much genuine pleasure as if she were a veritable South Sea Islander, presented with some new trinket.

“That,” said Mate Storms, “may be called The Pearl of the Pacific!”

“No,” objected the captain, “it is she who is the pearl of this great ocean, for it was upon its surface that we first saw her, and she has proved herself far above the worth of pearls or diamonds or rubies. To her, under heaven, my life, and not impossibly yours, is owing. The greatest pleasure of this voyage has come from her companionship, and all that I ask now is that we shall be able to preserve this wealth for her, and that the opportunity may be ours to do our full duty toward her.”

Mate Storms looked admiringly at the captain, who had so eloquently expressed his own sentiments.

“You are right, Jack,” said he, speaking in his familiar way. “It is she who is the Pearl of the Pacific!”

The men surveyed, with the greatest pleasure, the frolicsome delight of the little

one, who was all unmindful of the immense treasure which had fallen to her lot, and of the title of honor which her friends had given her. Naturally, the entire party were so absorbed that for a time they hardly glanced beyond their immediate surroundings; but when Abe Storms came up for the last time, he glanced, by the merest accident, out to sea, and exclaimed:

“Oh, my goodness! Just look there, Jack!”

No more than half a mile distant, a flying proa was seen, speeding with great swiftness over the water, while a number of dark figures were discovered on the deck, evidently looking with no little curiosity at the white men.

The singular craft, however, came no nearer, and soon vanished in the distance. Its appearance caused some apprehension and uneasiness on the part of our friends, and after discussing the matter they decided, as a matter of precaution, to bury the pearls.

Inez was persuaded, without difficulty, to trust hers to the keeping of her friends, who dug a small well in the sand, and inclosing the entire number of pearls in strong canvas bags, made for that purpose, buried them out of sight, there to remain until one or both of the men should choose to dig them up again, and it was agreed that that should not be done until the way opened for them to leave the island.

The long afternoon was well advanced when this task was completed, they fixing the precise spot so clearly in their minds that there was no necessity of landmarks, either being sure of finding it whenever it should become necessary.

“It seems to me the swells are larger than usual, and they make more noise when they break upon the beach,” observed Mr. Storms, looking curiously at the sky.

They had just dumped back the remains of the pearl-oysters into the sea, so as to leave no trace of their work, and Captain Bergen straightened up and surveyed the sky.

“There’s a storm coming—a regular screamer! Look, by the great horn spoon!” he added, in no little excitement.

There was good cause for the emotion of the captain, for the light of the sun was obscured by a thick, yellow haze, which was fast overspreading the sky, and, far out to sea, the long line of mist seemed to be churning the water into foam, and to be advancing rapidly toward the island, where stood the two men contemplating the coming fury of the elements.

The light of the sun was obscured, and there was a perceptible chilliness in the air, and the barometer—which they had brought from the *Coral*—showed a most startling change. One of the fiercest of the tropical tempests was gathering, and was sure to break upon the island in a few minutes.

This was alarming to contemplate, for the men knew well what kind of elemental disturbances spring up on the shortest notice in the South Seas. But it was not this alone which startled them.

Looking directly out to sea, toward the yeasty waters, they saw a schooner sinking and rising upon the long swells, and certain to be caught, in the very vortex, as may be said, of the hurricane, or tornado, or typhoon, or whatever it should be termed. The craft was not an unfamiliar one—both knew it well—for it was the *Coral*, with the mutineers on board.

Unarmed as they were, they would not dare place themselves in the power of those toward whom they had shown such enmity, but that they were literally forced to do so to escape almost certain destruction from the impending tempest.

If they should run into the lagoon to wait until the storm should subside, neither the captain nor mate would disturb them—provided they took their departure as soon as it became safe. Still, knowing their treacherous character so well, Bergen and Storms did not mean to trust them at all. Inez was therefore placed within the cabin, while her protectors made certain they were armed and ready for any contingency.

Now that the sun was shut out from sight, a darkness like that of night overspread land and water, while the strong gale howled among the palms, which swayed and bent as if they would soon be uprooted and flung out into the boiling sea. The swells were topped with foam, and large drops of rain, sweeping almost horizontally across the island, struck against the face like pebbles.

The mutineers were heading, so far as was possible, towards the opening in the atoll, but they were not in position to strike it, and, with the deepening darkness and increasing tempest, the task was becoming more difficult every minute. Suddenly a vivid flash of lightning illumined the gloom, and the schooner *Coral* was observed on the crest of a high wave, heading toward the island; but the two men who saw her, saw also, that she missed the opening and was too close in to make it.

The rumble of thunder continued for some minutes, when once more a blinding flash swept across the murky sky, lighting up sea and island for the instant, as if with the glare of the noonday sun. Captain Bergen and Mate Storms were

straining their eyes to catch sight of the little schooner and its crew, but it was invisible. In that single searching glance, they could not have failed to see her had she been afloat. The conclusion, therefore, was inevitable. She and her crew had gone to the bottom of the sea.

Such was the fact. The mutineers had met a frightful though merited fate, and could trouble our friends no more.

CHAPTER XXIII

A DISMAL HOME

Captain Bergen and his mate were not certain that one or more of the mutineers had not survived the foundering of the schooner *Coral*, and had managed to reach the island.

If such were the case, they considered it important that it should be known as soon as possible, and on the morrow, therefore, they made careful search, but none of the three men was ever seen again. A few fragments of spars, floating here and there, were all the signs that such a craft had ever sailed over the Pacific.

Since the captain and mate were now given the opportunity to think of their own situation, they did so like men of gravity and sense. They were safely upon Pearl Island, as they had named it. They had secured the prize for which they had come so many thousand miles, and they were, as the world goes, wealthy men. More than that, they had found a pearl of such marvelous size and purity that, being dedicated to little Inez Hawthorne, it was a great fortune indeed to her.

And yet, in one sense, the little party were paupers; that is, so long as they were held prisoners upon the atoll, for the treasure of pearls could not purchase them food, clothing, friends, happiness—nor, in fact, were they anything more than so many valueless pebbles. They must reach civilization again to realize anything from the riches which had come into their possession.

But how were they to leave the island? This was the one great question which faced them, and which they were called upon to solve, for now that there was no further cause for staying, the homesickness of the men increased, and it was not long before they felt they would give half their wealth for the means of getting back to Boston.

Since they were absolutely without this means, it was evident they could do nothing but rely upon Providence to send some vessel to their relief. It was not impossible that Abe Storms, gifted as he was with so much wonderful ingenuity,

might have attempted to construct some sort of craft from the palm trees, and it is quite likely he would have succeeded in making something that could be utilized. But the awful blotting out of the *Coral*, before their eyes, had alarmed both, and made them more timid than they otherwise would have been.

It was a good many miles to the nearest inhabited island, as laid down on their chart, and they might succeed in reaching it, provided they could be assured of a week of good weather. But there could be no such assurance, and a disturbance meant the same fate that overtook the mutineers.

It is not at all unlikely, too, that the presence of little Inez Hawthorne increased this timidity. Had they been without her, they would not have hesitated to take great risks, but, somehow or other, her life was inestimably precious in their eyes, and they would never have forgiven themselves had any ill befallen her through their dereliction of duty.

“There is a mystery about her life which shall yet be cleared up,” Abe Storms frequently remarked; “and we must not do aught that shall endanger or delay the solution of the question.”

There were comparatively few stores which the schooner had left them before its final departure, and the survivors were forced to rely mainly upon what the island afforded. Of course there were fish in abundance, and they frequently rowed out in the lagoon in the tender, or small boat, or cast out their lines from shore, and never failed in a short time to catch all they wanted.

The spring of clear, cool water bubbled and trickled steadily, and never failed them. And the several species of tropical fruits about them were used sparingly, the men having the prudence to seek to prevent the supply giving out.

It was a great relief to Storms and Bergen to find, after the most thorough exploration they could make, that there were no poisonous reptiles upon the island.

“We may as well face the situation,” said Captain Bergen, after they had held frequent consultations; “we have been here five weeks now, and we haven’t caught sight of the first sail, with the exception of our own, which has gone to the bottom, and it may be that weeks and months more may pass before we shall see another.”

“It is not unlikely that it may be years,” added Storms, gravely; “for, according to the narrative of Grebbens himself, he was here a long time before he was taken away. The wisest thing we can do is to prepare ourselves for an indefinite

stay.”

A long time before, the captain had laboriously climbed the mast which was erected in the sand by the inlet, and had securely fastened an old garment to the highest point. There it was still, fluttering in the wind, when there was enough breeze to raise the irregular folds, but, alas! it had not brought the friendly sail which they longed for, and they had been forced at last to look upon an extended residence upon the island as not only possible, but very probable.

Like philosophers, they governed themselves accordingly. The signal was kept flying and they busied themselves fishing, talking or doing odd things which were done simply to pass away time. But the two felt that a most urgent duty was upon them, respecting Inez Hawthorne.

“We must do what we can for her,” said Storms. “With the material which I have on hand we can construct garments that will keep her clad with comeliness, though she may not be in the fashion; and yet I don’t know but what she will,” he added, with a smile, “for we may strike some of the vagaries without knowing it. Then, too, she must be educated.”

“I’m not well up in the line of an education,” said the captain, with some embarrassment, “being as I never attended any other than a district school, but I believe you graduated, didn’t you, Abe?”

“Yes, I went through Harvard three years ago, and stood second in my class. I haven’t any fear that I won’t be able to teach her, for she is a child of unusual brightness.”

And, as may be supposed, the mate went to work thoroughly in the instruction of Inez Hawthorne, who proved herself one of the most apt of pupils, and advanced with a rapidity which delighted her teacher.

CHAPTER XXIV

THREE YEARS

Three years have passed, and still Captain Bergen, Mate Storms and Inez Hawthorne are upon the lonely Pearl Island in the South Sea.

Could they have believed when they left Boston that they would be doomed to such an imprisonment, it may well be doubted whether they would have made the voyage, even if assured of the vast fortune which thereby came into their hands.

The three years had been dismally monotonous to them, and their courage had been tried to the utmost, for there had been times when both agreed that they would probably stay there until released by death, and then they fell to speculating as to which would be the last one to survive. According to human logic, it would seem that that lot would fall to Inez, and their hearts sank at the thought of her being left to perish in the lonely spot.

When the coat fluttering from the top of the mast was blown away by the gale, Captain Bergen climbed up and nailed another in its place, grimly remarking that it looked as if they were going down with their colors flying.

It was surprising what was done by Mate Storms, whose ingenuity was almost incredible. With the material at his command, he kept Inez clothed in a tasteful manner.

She wore dresses and shoes which fitted her well, and her hat was renewed with extraordinary skill, from material obtained from the palm-trees.

Those three years, although of indescribable weariness at times, were marked by some startling incidents, and by many worthy of record. The great object of Storms was to educate Inez, and he did his utmost in that direction, assisted by the bright intellect of the girl and her own ardent desire to explore the wonders of knowledge.

There were few facilities in the way of furniture, considered so indispensable in

these later days. He had no pens or ink, and only a Bible in the way of books. He had some blank paper and a single lead pencil, which were utilized to their fullest extent. For a slate or blackboard, he used the beach, as did Archimedes of the olden time.

Selecting a place where the water had left it hard and smooth, Storms, with a sharp-pointed stick, made his characters and gave his instruction in the mysteries of mathematics.

It would sound incredible were we to say that, during those three years, the dwellers on the lonely atoll had never descried a sail; and such was not a fact, for there are few shores on this globe where a human being can bury himself so long from sight of the white-winged birds of commerce. They had seen many ships, but it looked very much as if they themselves had not been seen, nor had their presence been suspected by any of them.

“The idea of our being so nervous lest some one should get here ahead of us,” remarked Storms, more than once, “when we might have delayed our coming a dozen years without any danger from that cause.”

They had discovered the cloud-like picture of the canvas sail as it came up over the horizon, and their hearts swelled as it expanded and came closer. But all hope faded again when it grew less in the distance and finally passed from view altogether.

This had happened repeatedly, and more than once Captain Bergen had laboriously made his way up the smooth mast to the very top, where he swung his hat wildly; but it must have been that the little island in the South Seas possessed slight interest in the eyes of the navigators who occasionally drifted in that direction, for had they seen the signal of distress, or caught sight of the man frantically waving his hat from the top, they would have learned what its meaning was.

The greatest dejection which took possession of the couple was when they, through the glass, saw the Stars and Stripes fluttering from the mizzen of the ship which came the nearest and then made off again. The sight of that most beautiful banner in the world was like a glimpse of their distant New England home, and they seemed to feel the cool breeze fanning their hot brows as it bore steadily toward them.

When it went over the convex sea out of sight, Captain Bergen covered his face with his hands and wept, and when, after awhile, he looked up again, he saw the tears on the cheeks of Abe Storms, who stood motionless and gazing silently off

upon the deep, as if he expected the vessel would come back to them. It was a severe blow, and it was a long time before they recovered from it.

The exact age of Inez Hawthorne when she became, by an extraordinary turn of the wheel of fortune, the protégée of the two sailors, was, as given by herself, six years, but both the captain and mate were confident that she was fully one, if not two years older.

Now, at the termination of the period named, she was a girl as fully developed mentally and physically as one of a dozen years, and she was growing into a woman of striking beauty. She was still a child, with all the innocence and simplicity which distinguished her at the time she was taken from the deck of the steamer *Polynesia*, but in a few years more, should she be spared, she would become a woman.

Captain Bergen and Mate Storms were honest, conscientious men, and Christians, and they performed their full duty in that most important respect to Inez Hawthorne. Never passed a day in which Storms did not read, in an impressive voice, from the great Book of all books, and the sublime passages, the wonderful precepts, the divine truths and the sacred instruction from that volume were seed which fell upon good ground and bore its fruit in due season.

If ever there was a good, pure, devout Christian, Inez Hawthorne became one, and her greatest desire, as she repeatedly expressed it, was that she might go out in the great world among all people, and do her utmost to carry the glad tidings to them.

“The time will come,” replied Abe Storms, when he listened to these glowing wishes. “God never intended you should live and die upon this lonely island when there is such need for missionaries like you. I don’t see that we are of much account, but I believe He has something for us, too, and we shall be given the opportunity to do it.”

“Ah,” said the skipper, with a sigh, “you have been saying that for three years, and the sails that come go again and care nothing for us. I am beginning to believe we are to stay here for the rest of our lives, and that I am to be the first one to take the long, last sleep that awaits us all.”

CHAPTER XXV

AN ARRIVAL

When Captain Bergen was inclined to become pessimistic, the mate treated it lightly, for he feared the strong sailor would break before long from sheer homesickness.

It was fortunate that neither had any family, the mate being one of those who are without any close living relative, while the captain had a sister in New England, and his aged mother was in San Francisco, living with a nephew, of whom she was very fond.

Thus the three years passed away, and the second era in their lives approached. There was something curious in the fact that all the inhabitants of the lonely Pearl Island had lost their reckoning. No two could agree on the day of the week, and when they compromised on one, which was called Sunday, and observed as such, they were much in doubt whether they were right, and, as it afterward proved, they were not.

One afternoon, when the sun had hardly passed the meridian, the mate and captain were stretched upon the beach under the shade of a palm-tree, and looking out upon the sea, over which they had come to this desolate spot so long before. The day was cooler than usual, and a steady breeze blew, rendering the position of the friends in that respect as pleasant as they could wish, though their weary, homesick feeling was telling upon them. Both the ragged sailors were thinner, and there was a yearning, far-away look in their eyes, especially in those of the captain, which presaged the approach of insanity or death at no distant day, unless a change were made in their condition and surroundings. This lamentable state was partly due, no doubt, to the diet to which they had been subjected for many months.

Inez, who seemed happy everywhere and at all times, was busying herself in the cabin, where she could find plenty to do; and ever and anon the sound of her voice could be heard, as she sang some snatch of song, which came through the

mist of memory from her infancy.

“I tell you what it is,” said Captain Bergen, in his low, determined voice, “this thing cannot continue much longer.”

“You are no more weary of it than I, Jack; but show me the way in which it can be ended.”

“We’ve got to take the risk. The tender there is large enough to carry us and a good supply of provisions—that is, enough water, to last several days. We can rig some sort of sail, and, in less than a week, by keeping to the northwest, we shall reach some inhabited island, unless we should be picked up before that time, which I consider quite likely.”

“I’ve thought a good deal of it, Jack,” said the mate, in a voice of equal seriousness. “We have been restrained heretofore by the fear that it would endanger too greatly the safety of Inez, and mainly by the feeling that we couldn’t stay here long without assistance being summoned by that signal fluttering up there. And yet, three years have come and gone,” continued the mate, “and not a living soul has come to us. There have been hundreds of days within this long period when we might have embarked on board the little boat and safely made our way to some other port, but we could not know it, and the result is—here we are.”

“And the situation is very different from what it was when we first landed, for it is now a choice between staying here with the certainty of miserably perishing—every one of us—and of starting boldly out upon an unknown sea, as it may be called, with the chances between life and death about even.”

“You have stated the case correctly,” assented Mr. Storms; “and though it is your place to command, yet as you have deferred to me, I give you my promise that to-morrow we shall begin rigging the best sort of sail we can, and at daylight on the next day we will start for whatever port Providence directs us.”

“That has put new life into me, Abe. I feel now as I did three years ago, when we first caught sight of those pearls. I am ten years younger. I prefer a bold stroke for life to a weak submission to fate, with this dismal waiting for help to come to us. By the great horn spoon! a thousand such pearl banks as we cleaned out wouldn’t tempt me to spend another year on this hated island——”

At this instant the voice of Inez was heard, excitedly calling to them, and while they rose to the sitting position and looked inquiringly in that direction, she was seen to spring through the open door of the cabin, and to come running toward

them on the beach, bareheaded and with her long, yellow hair streaming in the wind.

“What can be the matter with her?” exclaimed the captain, rising to his feet. “What is she saying?”

“Hark!”

The distance was so short that the girl was at their side a second or two later. She was laughing, and uttering something in her excitement, which, until that moment, they did not understand.

“Who ever saw any one so stupid?” she called out, cheerily. “What are your eyes for? Why don’t you look out to sea?”

The two obeyed, and an exclamation of amazement escaped both, for there, while they had lain on the beach talking in such disconsolate tones, and looking dreamily out upon the ocean, a craft had been steadily approaching, and neither of the two saw it.

At the furthest, it was no more than a mile distant, and, since it was heading straight in toward the atoll, the chances were a hundred to one that the signal of distress had been seen, and the lonely island at last was going to have a visitor.

Captain Bergen muttered something about the “great horn spoon,” under his breath, while Storms said nothing, but gazed steadily at the craft, upon which his hopes were so suddenly and strongly fixed. It might be that the hearts of all three bounded with hope at this sight of a vessel, but the hope was mixed with apprehension, for the sailors saw it was not the sort of vessel for which they had been praying so long.

Instead of a gallant ship, with the Stars and Stripes streaming from the fore, it was what is termed a flying proa, which is the name applied to the narrow canoes used principally in the Ladrone Islands. They are about thirty feet long, three feet wide, and are steered by a paddle at either end. The sail is lateen, with a boom upon one mast; the prow and stern curve to a high point, and the depth being considerably greater than the width, the proa would, if unsupported, capsize instantly, but a hollow log or heavy-pointed spar rests on the water, parallel with the windward side, and, being secured in place, acts as an outrigger and removes the danger of overturning. The same name is applied to the boats used by the Malays, and which are propelled by both oars and sails.

But the one which greeted the astonished eyes of Storms and Bergen had its huge lateen sail spread, and was moving with great velocity, for the proas of the

Indian and Pacific oceans are probably the fastest boats in the world. It rode the waters like a bird, and would soon enter the lagoon within the island, for there could be no doubt that the men on board had seen not only the signal, but the persons themselves who were waiting for them.

Inasmuch as a couple of men were discernible with the naked eye on the proa, it followed that the latter must descry the three individuals who were standing out in full view upon the shore of the island.

“How about this?” asked Captain Bergen, stepping to the side of his mate, and speaking in an undertone. “Shall we rejoice or not?”

“It’s uncertain,” was the dubious reply. “Those boats generally carry the vagabonds of the ocean, and the last motive which, as a rule, brings them to a spot like this is humanity.”

“Where’s your glass?”

“I declare, I never thought of that—I was so surprised!”

Storms carried it with him always, and he now brought it to bear upon the singular-looking craft approaching. It was so close inshore that, with the aid of the instrument, he was able to see everything distinctly, especially as the boat at that moment bore off a little and then headed toward the entrance again.

So far as could be ascertained, there were three persons on the boat, and the captain reached the same conclusion after using the glass.

“If that’s the case,” said Captain Bergen, “we haven’t anything to fear from them, for, with our guns and ammunition, we can hold our own against a dozen South Sea Islanders.”

“There may be others concealed about the craft, but I incline to think not. However, it’s best to be prepared. So let’s get to the house and make ready to receive them—whether they come as enemies or friends.”

The suggestion was a prudent one, and the two men hurried up the beach in the direction of the cabin, while Inez remained to watch the proa. The men examined their rifles and saw they were loaded and ready for instant use, and then, bearing one apiece, they came forth again. As they did so, something like a shadow seemed to shoot through the trees, and, looking toward the lagoon, they saw the cause. The proa had entered the quiet waters within, and was coming to rest as gracefully as a sea gull stops in its flight.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE FLYING PROA AND ITS COMMANDER

The lateen sail of the proa descended with a rattle and bang, the man at the oar gave it several vigorous sweeps, and the strange-looking but astonishingly swift craft came to rest almost in the same position that the schooner *Coral* occupied three years before.

“Helloa, there! How are you? How long have you been here?”

When it is stated that this hail came from aboard the proa, it is unnecessary to say that our two friends were surprised, for they supposed that the visitors were natives, who at the best could not speak more than a few words of broken English.

This astonishment was turned to literal amazement when they saw that the speaker was a Caucasian like themselves, one of the two standing at the prow, and looking out upon them with a smiling countenance. There was no mistaking the ruddy, sunburned face, the curling hair, and the regular, European features of the young man, whose expanded smile showed a set of white, even teeth, and he seemed to enjoy their astonishment after hearing his words.

It was curious that they had failed to notice him before, inasmuch as his dress was dissimilar from the others, he having the usual tarpaulin hat and the broad trowsers of the American and English sailor. It was plain, too, that he was scarcely a man, being, in fact, a boy, who by some strange means was adrift in this part of the world.

As soon as the proa was within reach of land, the youth sprang ashore, and, walking straight up to Captain Bergen, extended his right hand to him and his left to Mr. Storms, shaking both warmly, while, as he spoke, he looked from the face of one to the other.

“How long have you been in this place? Judging from your clothes and looks, I should say about twenty years? Do you want to emigrate? Where are you from?

What are your names? How came you here? My name is Fred Sanders, and I've been knocking about among the South Sea Islands for the last five years."

There was no resisting the jolly good-nature of the young man, who had a habit of laughing heartily, when no one else could see anything to laugh at, and whose high spirits always infected others with whom he came in contact. But it would not have required much study for any one to discover that he was a wild, reckless youth, who had probably run away from home, and taken to bad ways from a natural inclination in that direction.

While this interview was going on, Inez Hawthorne was absent, she having withdrawn at the suggestion of her friends, though of course the visitors knew of her presence, from having seen her on the beach.

Captain Bergen replied to the greeting of his friend:

"We have been here full three years. If I'm not mistaken, it is three years and two weeks this very Thursday."

"Then that's just where you *are* mistaken!" broke in Fred Sanders, with his ringing laugh, "for it so happens that to-day isn't Thursday, by a long shot!"

"Of course not," Mr. Storms hastened to say. "I don't know how many arguments I have had with the captain to prove he was wrong, and that this is Friday——"

And Fred threw back his head and roared louder than ever.

"It's a toss up between you. I don't wonder that you got muddled when you were forced to stay in such an outlandish place as this so long. I think I would have got mixed myself."

"Pray tell me what day of the week it is."

"This is Tuesday afternoon, with a half-dozen hours of daylight left to you yet."

While this brief conversation was going on, the two natives were upon the boat, waiting as if for permission to land. They sat as meekly as children, in a partly crouching position, intently watching, with their glittering black eyes, the three figures before them. They appeared to listen with absorbing attention to the words, as if they understood them—which they did not, excepting so far as they were interpreted by the vigorous gestures.

Inez Hawthorne, as we have stated, had withdrawn to the house, when requested to do so by her teacher, but her curiosity led her to step forth and look upon the

parties and listen to the conversation—the distance being so short that she could hear all that was said. The natives saw her, and so did Fred Sanders, who occasionally glanced over the shoulders of the two men with whom he was talking, in a way which they understood. The visitors could not fail to be greatly interested in her, but Fred refrained for a time from referring to the girl.

Mate Storms explained that the craft in which they came to this portion of the world was wrecked, and that three of the crew were lost, and the captain, mate and a single passenger saved. Since then they had looked in vain for the coming of some friendly sail; plenty enough, however, having appeared, only to depart again and leave them in greater depths of gloom than before.

“Where are you from?” asked the captain, putting the question directly to the young man.

“I’m an American, born in New England, and am seventeen years old, and it is a long time since I have seen my home.”

“How came you in this part of the world?”

“Why not here as well as anywhere else?” asked Fred Sanders, in reply. “I left home when I was only ten years of age, and have knocked about the world ever since.”

“But you are now among the Paumotu Islands.”

“Where I have been for a good while. Some time, perhaps, I will give you the whole history, but it is too long to tell now.”

It was apparent, from the manner of the boy, that he wished to conceal some facts of his previous life, and neither the captain nor mate pressed him—for, in truth, it was of no special interest to them, their all-absorbing subject of mental anxiety being as to how they were to get away from the hated place.

“Where are you directly from?” asked Mr. Storms.

“From an island, the name of which I have never heard in English, though its native name is something like Wauparmur.”

“Inhabited, of course?”

“Yes. There are four or five hundred natives and their families. The island is a dozen miles in extent, is very fertile, and has several native towns. At one place is a good harbor, and nearly always some foreign vessel is there. Sometimes I have seen three or more, and when I left, four days ago, a trading-ship from

Boston had arrived.”

“Oh!” exclaimed Abe Storms. “So near and yet so far!”

“I think it will probably stay a week longer, for they are doing a good trade with the islanders.”

“You have awakened a hope that is really painful,” said Captain Bergen, while the pale face of Mr. Storms showed he was affected fully as profoundly.

“I don’t know why it need be painful,” said the young man, in his off-hand manner, which was so captivating; “for we were going on a little cruise, when we caught sight of your signal flying, and we put in to find out what the trouble was.”

“And are you willing to take us off?” asked Storms, who, while he felt the question was unnecessary, was still trembling with anxiety lest something should prevent their going.

“Will we take you off?” asked Fred, with a ringing laugh. “That’s a pretty question to ask us, when we came for the express purpose of doing so. Of course, we’ll take you straight away to the island we came from, and, of course, we’ll put you in the way of getting back to Boston as soon as possible, and we only regret that we hadn’t the chance to get here three years sooner, so as to save you this dreary waste of time.”

Tears came to the eyes of both the men, and, as Captain Bergen took the hand of the youth, he said:

“We will thank you forever, and will pay you well.”

It was an unfortunate speech, and the cooler-headed mate would never have uttered it.

It might result in no harm; but why let the reckless youth know that they possessed the ability to pay him well? It would be time enough to present him with some of their valuable pearls after reaching Wauparmur, when no possible complication could result from Sanders knowing that these two ragged sailors were very wealthy men. But the words had been said, and could not be recalled, though a vague uneasiness shot through the mind of Abe Storms when he saw a sudden flash of the dark eyes of the youth, who said, in the cheeriest of voices, slapping the captain on the shoulder with a vigor that staggered him:

“Who talks of paying one for doing his simple duty? If you or your friend repeats that insult, there will be war between us; and then—excuse me, but ain’t

you joking when you talk of paying well? For, begging pardon again, you don’t look like millionaires with a very heavy bank account.”

Storms trembled, but he could not restrain the captain.

“Of course, we wouldn’t insult you, but you will be remembered; and though we are not very extravagant in the way of dress, and don’t look like very wealthy men, yet I can promise you you shall be well recompensed, and, what is more, we can carry out the promise, too, in a way that will open your eyes.”

Having uttered these compromising words, Captain Bergen laughed in a way which alarmed the mate still more; for there was a peculiarity in his friend’s actions which he had never noticed before.

“I know we are dressed very poorly,” added the captain, “and we wouldn’t be very popular in a drawing-room, but if you set us down as poor men you will make a great mistake. Won’t he, Abe—eh, boy?”

And he facetiously punched the astonished and grieved mate in the side, and danced about as if he had perpetrated the best joke of his life.

Just then Storms caught the eye of Fred Sanders, and he significantly tapped his own forehead to signify that the captain was not exactly right, mentally. And, when he did so, the kind-hearted mate spoke the truth.

CHAPTER XXVII

FRED SANDERS

Captain Bergen was so affected by the joyful awakening to the fact that his long, dismal sojourn on the lonely island in the Pacific had reached the end at last, and by the belief that now he would be carried as rapidly as wind and sail could take him to his beloved New England again, that his mind was unsettled and he behaved in a way that pained, as much as it astonished, his companion.

Inasmuch as such was the fact, Mr. Storms hoped that it would be accepted as an explanation of the strange utterances in which he had indulged, for he believed that the cupidity of the young man had already been excited, and a most unfortunate complication threatened.

“You will excuse the excitement of my friend,” said he to Sanders, “though mine is nearly as great; but he had almost settled into the belief that we were doomed to perish in this desolate spot, and the reaction caused by your joyous tidings is too much for him.”

“Oh, that’s all right!” was the cheery response. “I understand how that is. But, begging pardon, I believe you have another companion?”

Fred looked so earnestly at the figure of Inez Hawthorne, standing a short distance off, that his meaning could not be mistaken.

“It is I who should beg your pardon,” said Storms, in turn, beckoning to Inez to approach; “but we were so much interested in you that we forgot her for the time.”

While the girl was approaching the group, Captain Bergen turned about, and without a word, walked slowly away in the direction of the cabin, his manner showing still more clearly than ever that his mind was unbalanced—a fact which caused Storms great discomfort. Aside from his love for the good, honest man, he saw that he had already imperiled, and was likely still further to imperil, their great possessions by his rambling, and yet significant, talk.

The pearls still lay some distance away, buried in the sand in their canvas bags, and must be procured before leaving the island.

Since the captain had already awakened suspicion respecting the truth, the difficulty of getting the prizes away without detection was immeasurably increased, while the likelihood of his making still further disclosures remained.

Storms was fearful that this sudden movement on the part of Bergen meant something of the kind, but the situation was such that he could not interfere, and all he could do during the few minutes remaining of the trying interview, was to keep a furtive watch, so far as possible, upon the movements of the captain.

“Mr. Sanders,” said the mate, “this is Inez Hawthorne—a little girl who became a companion of ours through no fault of hers or of either of us. She has been here during the three years we have spent on the island, and though she has stood it so much better than we, she is fully as anxious to get away. Inez, this is Mr. Fred Sanders, who has come to take us off.”

The handsome young fellow doffed his hat and bowed with a certain grace and deferential regard in his manner, which led Storms, who was narrowly watching him, to suspect that he was of high birth and had moved in good circles before he had made his début in this strange part of the world. Inez possessed the same charming simplicity which had distinguished her in her earlier years, though she was more reserved, as was natural with her. She extended her hand to Sanders, who gave it a gentle pressure, while he said:

“When I saw the signal fluttering up there I suspected there were persons here who wanted help, but I never dreamed that we should find you.”

“And why not me as well as any one else?” asked Inez, with a smile. “Is there any reason why I shouldn’t have misfortune the same as other persons? If there is any such rule, I have never heard of it.”

“I know of none; but shipwreck, as a general thing—and certainly in the case of your companions—has been a great injury to them. They look emaciated and ill, and the captain is surely injured in the mind. But you—why—well, never mind.”

Fred laughed and broke down, for he really meant to say nothing that could be construed into flattery or impertinence. There was an air of goodness and refinement about the girl which compelled the respect, for the time at least, of the wild youth.

“I am so glad you have come,” said Inez, without commenting upon his last words; “for though I have been as cheerful as I could, it has been mainly on

account of the captain and Mr. Storms. I saw how dejected they were, and tried to cheer them as best I could."

"Which was very kind in you. But, thank heaven! it is all over now, and I hope we shall soon bear you away from this place, that no doubt has become so detestable in your eyes that you never want to see it again."

“I cannot say how dreadful it is and how much I dislike it. The ship which ought to have taken us away as it brought us, was broken to pieces on the beach, and the mutineers, who thirsted for our lives, were drowned when almost in reach, as may be said, of the shore.”

Here was some more unexpected information that greatly interested Fred Sanders, who began to think he would get at all the facts by interviewing each member of the little company.

Mr. Storms heard the remark of Inez; but, while he regretted it—on the ground that it might raise some more uncomfortable suspicions—he did not care particularly, for the sad story was one that could easily be told, and upon which he was ready for cross-examination. But what more interested him at that moment was the fact that Captain Bergen just then reached the cabin, and, instead of stopping within, passed on beyond.

The conclusion of Storms was natural that he had gone to the upper part of the island to dig up the pearls; in which case, in his peculiar mental condition, he would, most likely, lose them all. This would never do, and the mate excused himself, saying:

“I am a little uneasy respecting the captain, and I will leave you two here while I look after him.”

Fred Sanders saluted him, and told the truth when he said he would forgive his departure with pleasure; with which the ragged mate went hurrying after the ragged captain.

“Won’t you step on board the proa for a little while?” asked Fred, who was rather tired of standing on the sand under the palm-trees. “As it is to be your dwelling-place for a few days, you may like to select your apartments.”

Inez said she would be glad to do so, and Fred uttered some sharp exclamation, which caused both of the dusky natives to spring to their feet and hasten to the side of the proa nearest the shore, where they waited the chance to help her aboard. Inez noticed that the islanders were muscular, athletic fellows, with such a peculiar appearance that she could not avoid staring at them for a few seconds. Each was fully six feet in height—an unusual stature among the South Sea Islanders—and their breasts, arms and legs were tattooed with all sorts of figures and representations. Since these portions of their anatomy were uncovered, the singular ornamentation was very prominent.

They had the curious tattooing on their cheeks, noses and foreheads, so that their

appearance was repellent. Besides this, their teeth were black, their noses large and flat, and their mouths wider than there was any necessity for. Their heads were bare, and, indeed, were furnished by nature with all the covering they could need. The hair was very long, but frizzly, so that as it curled up about their ears and crowns, it formed an immense bushy screen, which gave their heads prodigious size. Their hands and feet were very large, and it would have been hard, in short, to discover anything in their looks that could attract a person toward them. Surveying them dispassionately, one could not help suspecting they belonged to a tribe of cannibals.

However, Inez did not show any repulsion which she might have felt, but stepping close to the proa took the extended hand, and sprang lightly aboard of the strange craft. The natives immediately withdrew, leaving the young captain, as he appeared to be, to conduct the fair visitor around the “ship,” whose dimensions did not require much time to investigate.

Fred explained that the proa was a vessel peculiar to the Indian and Central Pacific oceans, and that it could sail with great swiftness, going either forward or backward with equal readiness. It is a favorite boat used for inter-communication between hundreds of the islands of the South Seas, and the Malays employ them in a different form for their piratical expeditions. They owe their swiftness mainly to the fact that they stand so high out of the water, are very narrow, and present such a large surface to the wind.

“They are good for short voyages,” said Fred, “but I shouldn’t want to start for New York or Liverpool in one of them.”

“How long will it take us to reach the island from which you came?” asked Inez.

“If we start early to-morrow morning, with a good wind, we ought to be there at the end of two days.”

This was shorter time than he had given Mate Storms, but he was now striving to speak the truth.

“And suppose we are overtaken by one of those terrible tempests which sometimes visit this part of the world?”

“We cannot escape the risk, no matter where we are. The storm that would sink a proa might cause a seventy-four to founder, and the only way you can shun danger is to stay here all your life. I hardly think that such is your wish, Miss Inez.”

“No; I am as anxious to leave as are Mr. Storms and the captain. Indeed, I think I

am more so, for I understand that they expect to wait until to-morrow morning, while if I had my wish I would start this very hour."

"We are at the disposal of yourself and friends," Sanders courteously responded; "but the reason for delay is that thereby we expect to be compelled to spend but a single night on the voyage, while if we started now we should have two."

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE MATE BECOMES CAPTAIN

“Poor Jack!” murmured Abe Storms, hastening after him. “I have been fearing this very thing. He has taken the matter more to heart than I, and there has been a look in his eye in the last few weeks which showed he was not right; but I thought, when he found he was going back to his home again, he would almost instantly regain his mental equipoise.

“But it has operated the other way, and I shouldn’t wonder if he is as wild as a loon. When we get him away, dress him up, change his food, and give him a sight of a Boston vessel, he will be sure to come around; but, he has said too much already.

“I wonder what sort of a fellow that Fred Sanders is?” added Storms, whose intellect seemed to be sharpened by the same cause which overturned that of the captain. “I would be glad to trust him fully, but somehow, I can’t. While he is courteous and kind—and, no doubt, means to carry us all to the inhabited island, where we shall be able to take care of ourselves—there is something about him that awakens distrust. The fact of his having been five years, as he says, in these South Sea Islands, shows that all is not right, which is confirmed by his dislike of saying anything about his earlier history.

“The best thing in his favor is his youth, and yet,” continued Storms, thoughtfully, “that, after all, may be the worst. It would seem that he is too young to have done a great deal of evil; and yet, if he has committed many transgressions, it is a woful record for such a lad. It was too bad that the captain hinted that we have so much means, and he wouldn’t have done it had he been in his right mind; but it has produced an effect upon Sanders, as I could see by the flash of his eyes, and the apparently indifferent questions he asked afterwards.

“But we have saved our ammunition,” muttered Storms, a minute later, compressing his lips; “and I know how to use my revolver, and it is only for a short time that I shall have to maintain watch.”

While Abe Storms was talking to himself in this fashion, he had his eye on the captain, who was walking slowly toward that portion of the island where the pearls had been concealed so carefully, and there could be no doubt of his errand. He did not hear the soft footstep behind him, which was so regulated that it came up with him just as the latter paused at the all-important spot.

The captain first looked out to sea, and then behind him, catching sight, as he did so, of the smiling countenance of his mate—so far as his countenance could be seen through the wealth of beard.

“Hello! What are you doing here?” asked the captain, in a voice which showed some perplexity, if not displeasure.

“What are you doing here?” asked Storms, in turn, slapping him familiarly on the shoulder. “I suppose we came upon the same errand, as we are so soon to leave for home. The pearls are buried here, and we must carry them away with us.”

“How do you know that’s what I came for, Abe?”

“I’m only saying I suspect it’s your business. I know it’s mine.”

Captain Bergen was a little bewildered by the sharp manner in which the good-natured mate caught him up, and, while he seemed to be debating with himself what to say, Storms took his arm and led him a short distance off, and, seating him on the beach, said:

“There’s no hurry about the business, Jack, for we won’t start until to-morrow morning at daylight, so as to have as few nights on the voyage as possible, and we had better decide on the proper course for us to take.”

“That is correct,” replied the captain, assenting so quietly that his friend hoped he would remain easily manageable.

“You remember, Jack, that when we buried the pearls there, we divided them—your half is in a strong canvas bag, so packed that they won’t rub together, or make any noise; and mine are in another sack. The single pearl which belongs to Inez is also carefully covered; and now we must manage to get away with them, without letting Sanders know they are in our possession.”

“What do you want to do that for?” demanded the captain, turning fiercely upon the mate. “I like that fellow. He’s going to put me on a ship and send me back to Boston; and any one who does that does me a service worth more than all the pearls in the world. I am going to give him all mine, and I hope Inez will do the

same. I shall do my best to persuade her, and if you don't, Abe, you and I are deadly enemies, and I'll kill you the first chance!"

Storms showed his shrewdness by the manner in which he managed the poor fellow.

"That's all right, Jack," he replied, assuming a look and expression of anger, as he glared upon the lunatic, well aware that he must make him afraid of him. "If it's any fun for you to talk in that style, I'll let you do it once, but don't you try it again. Did I ever tell you about those sixteen persons that I killed up in New Hampshire before we started out with the *Coral?*"

"No!" gasped the captain, looking at him with awe.

"Well, I won't tell you now," said the mate, with the same frightful earnestness, "for it would make you feel too bad. If they hadn't made me mad, I wouldn't have killed them, and I'll let up on you if you do not say anything of the kind again. If you do, I'll get mad, Jack."

"By the great horn spoon!" exclaimed the alarmed captain, "I'll let the matter drop, if you will."

"All right," said the mate, relenting somewhat. "And, mind you, don't you go to talking to Sanders about it. Don't you tell him another thing, and never mention the word pearls."

"I won't—I won't!" was the meek rejoinder of poor Captain Bergen, who had been completely cowed by the fierceness of his mate.

"I'm an awful man when my wrath is roused!" Abe Storms thought it best to add; "and it was just rising to the boiling-point when you were lucky enough to take back your foolish expression."

"What are we going to do now?" asked the captain, apparently anxious to turn the current of conversation into a more agreeable channel.

"We'll go back and make ready to leave on the proa. We have considerable to do before we depart. There are a number of things in the cabin that we must carry with us."

"Yes, that's so; I forgot that. But, Abe—don't you get mad!—what about them?"

"Just never you mind," replied the mate with an important wave of the hand. "I'll attend to them."

"All right. I was afraid you would forget 'em!"

It pained Storms to tyrannize over his superior officer in this fashion, but stern necessity compelled him to become the real captain. The intention of the mate when he first followed his friend was to dig up the pearls and give him his share, but he saw that that would never do. It would precipitate a tragedy to allow the lunatic any option in the matter. So, without any further reference to the pearls, the two rose to their feet and walked slowly back in the direction of the proa, talking on no particular subject, since the mate was desirous of diverting the mind of the captain as much as possible.

The discoveries of the next few minutes did not serve to lighten the apprehension of Storms, for when he reached the proa the two islanders seemed to be enjoying a siesta, while neither Fred Sanders nor Inez was in sight.

Suspecting what was wanted, one of the natives roused up and pointed toward the sea, jabbering some odd words, which could not be understood, but which Storms concluded were meant to indicate the direction taken by the couple.

“That’s almost the path to the spot where we were,” he thought, as he turned and walked away, holding the arm of the captain within his own.

Sure enough, they had not gone far when they caught sight of Fred and Inez sitting on the beach, just as if they were at some fashionable seaside resort in summer time, and were chattering no particular sense at all. Storms noticed that the place was such as to command a view of that where he and the captain had held their conversation, and where their precious possessions were buried.

“I wonder whether that was done on purpose?” he thought. “It may be he meant nothing, but I fear he took Inez along merely to hide the fact that he was playing the spy upon us.”

It was not pleasant to believe this, and yet the suspicion was rooted pretty firmly in the mind of the mate, who, perhaps, was becoming over-suspicious.

“Ah, how are you?” asked Sanders, with a laugh, changing his lounging to the sitting position. “I conducted Miss Inez over the proa, so as to make her acquainted with the craft, as you may say, and since that didn’t take long, we thought we would try a little stroll down here, where we could have a talk without those natives staring at us. How is your friend?” asked the young man, suddenly lowering his voice to such a sympathetic key that Storms felt guilty for the moment for ever having suspected him capable of wrong.

“I’m a little uneasy about him,” was the reply, as both glanced at the captain, who sat down beside Inez and began talking to her, “for he seems to have broken

up all at once. He was such a strong man, just in the prime of vigorous manhood, that it would hardly be supposed he would give away so suddenly."

"I think he will soon recover, for the change will be so radical, and the awakened hope so strong, that he will be sure to rally in the course of a few days."

"I hope so," was the response, "but he must be watched very carefully."

CHAPTER XXIX

FAREWELL TO THE ISLAND

The weather remained enchanting. The tropical heat was tempered by the ocean breeze, which stole among the palms, and across the island, and where the crew, and those who had lived there so long, lounged in the shadow, or sauntered in the sunshine, when the orb sank low in the western sky.

It was curious that now, after the coming of the proa, when no other help was needed, the signal at the masthead, as it may be called, seemed to have acquired an unusual potency; for, on two separate occasions during the afternoon, the island was approached by vessels, who were given to understand that the parties on shore were provided for. Mate Storms, now the captain, very much doubted whether he did a wise thing in declining this proffered assistance, but the main reason for doing so was the fact that the pearls were still buried, and he knew of no way of getting them without discovery.

One of the ships was a Dutch one, from Java, and the other was British, bound for Ceylon—neither very desirable, as they would have compelled a long, roundabout voyage home. But Storms would have accepted the offer of one on account of his distrust of the young man, Fred Sanders, but for the reason given.

Captain Bergen, after the “setting back” given him by Storms, became quiet and tractable, and stayed almost entirely with Inez, for whom he showed the greatest affection. Since she was tenderly attached to him, and sympathized in his affliction, this kept the two together almost continually—an arrangement which it was plain to see was not agreeable to Fred Sanders, though he was too courteous to make any mention of it.

During the afternoon such goods as were deemed necessary were transferred to the proa, which lay at anchor in the lagoon. These were not very numerous or valuable, and consisted mostly of garments which Storms had manufactured for Inez.

When night came, after a meal had been eaten on shore close to where the proa

lay, it was arranged that Sanders should sleep on board with his crew—if two men might be termed such—while the others should stay in their cabin, as was their wont.

Storms contrived this on the plea that his companion, the captain, would be more tractable. His real purpose was to gain a chance to secure the pearls unnoticed. The young man made not the slightest objection to the plan, for he had too good sense to do so; nor did his silence in that respect lull the suspicions of Storms himself.

“I wish there was not such a bright moon,” said the mate to himself, not far from midnight, “for I need all the quiet and darkness I can get; and I don’t see any use of waiting longer,” he added.

Captain Bergen had been sleeping quietly for several hours, while the silence in the apartment of Inez showed that she, too, was wrapped in slumber, and possibly dreaming of far-away scenes, of which her memory was so misty and indistinct.

As to those upon the proa, everything must necessarily be conjecture; but, in the middle of the night, with his senses on the alert, and his imagination excited, Abe Storms conjured up all sorts of fancies and suspicions. There were many times when he believed that these men, including the boyish leader, were the worst kind of pirates, who were only waiting the chance to secure the pearls, when they would either desert or treacherously slay them. But, since meditation and idleness could avail nothing, he rose from his couch upon the floor, and, making sure that his loaded revolver was in place, he stole out from among the palm trees, and began moving in the direction of the spot where his treasures lay hid.

He did this with the utmost precaution, glancing in every direction at each step, frequently pausing and changing the course he was pursuing, and, in short, doing everything he could think of to prevent detection. The full moon rode high in an almost unclouded sky, and the air was as charming as that of Italy. The solemn roar of the ocean and the irregular boom of the long, immense swells breaking against the shore and sending the thin sheets of foam sliding swiftly up the bank, were the only sounds that greeted his ears.

“That is wonderful!” exclaimed the searcher, for all at once he descried a ship, under full sail, seemingly within two hundred yards of shore. “If these parties hadn’t arrived to-day this craft wouldn’t have come within a score of miles of us.”

The ship looked like a vast bird, when with all sail set and her black hull careening to one side under the wind, she drove the foaming water away from her bows, and sped forward as if pursuing or fleeing from some enemy.

Whether the watch saw the signal of distress in the moonlight, cannot be known, but the vessel speedily passed on, and vanished in the night, while Mate Storms, recalling his thoughts, and seeing no one near him, moved directly to where he had deposited his riches such a long time before, and to which he only made an occasional visit.

He had advanced too far to retreat, whether he was seen or not, and he stooped down and began digging with his hands and sheath-knife. It was only a short distance, when he struck something, and a moment after drew up a small, strong canvas bag. Soon came another, and then a smaller one, which contained the wonderful pearl that belonged to Inez Hawthorne. They were all there, and had not been disturbed.

“Now, it only remains to keep these in my possession,” was his thought, as he straightened up and started to return. “I would give half of them if they were at home and safe in the bank—Hello!”

Perhaps the vision of the sailor was unusually keen just then, for when he paused with a start he caught sight of a shadowy figure, which seemed to glide, without any effort of its own, over the sand, and immediately disappeared among the palm trees. There was something so peculiar in its movements that Abe was chilled with awe as he stood still and watched it for the few seconds it remained in view. But there could be no doubt of its identity. It was Fred Sanders, who had been on the watch, and who must have seen the mate dig up the treasures, and knew they were now in his possession.

Storms was in anything but a comfortable frame of mind while walking thoughtfully back to the cabin, which he entered.

“What more likely than that he will steal up here in the night, believing I am asleep, and try to shoot me? Well, if he does so, he shall find me prepared for him, anyway.”

The first proceeding of the mate was to deposit the pearls contained in the three diminutive canvas sacks in a small valise, which he had carefully preserved all through the years, and which now held a few necessities that he meant to take away with him. The addition of these precious contents taxed the receptacle to its fullest capacity, but, after all, this was the best thing to do, and he believed he would be able to keep it under his eye during the comparatively short time they

would be on the voyage to Wauparmur Island.

It may be said, indeed, that there was nothing else to be done, which rendered it unfortunate that he could not secure a few hours' sleep before venturing away in the proa. But the nerves of the mate were too unstrung by his position to feel easy, and he placed himself by the opening of the cabin, with his hand upon the weapon, prepared to watch until daylight.

As might have been supposed, in spite of his uneasiness, he gradually became drowsy, and it was not long before his head sank on his breast, and he, too, was asleep. It was well he did so, for he gained the rest so necessary, and as it was, he might have slept longer had he not been awakened by outside causes.

Captain Bergen slept on, but Inez was on her feet at an early hour, and seeing that Storms was unconscious, she passed out without disturbing him, and made her way to the spring, where she always performed her morning ablutions.

It was natural that the mate, going to sleep as he did, with his mind filled with the most dismal of fancies, should find his slumbers visited by horrible phantasies. He was struggling with the figure of a man, who had the face of Fred Sanders, and they were bearing each other over an immense cliff, when his opponent got the upper hand, and, holding him suspended for the moment, began to laugh at his calamity. The laugh grew louder, until it awoke the startled sleeper, who, opening wide his eyes, saw the veritable figure of Fred Sanders before him, laughing as heartily as he had been doing in the struggle in sleep.

"Mercy! where's the valise?" gasped the bewildered Storms, clutching at the receptacle which lay at his side. "I thought you had stolen it——"

Just then the quick-witted sailor recalled his situation, and he, too, broke into mirth, in which there was not much heartiness.

"What a curious dream I had, Sanders! I really believe I have been asleep!"

"And what is strange about that, since a full night has passed since we last met? I hope you have had a good rest, even though your awaking was not so pleasant."

Abe Storms was excessively chagrined, for his very action, when aroused so unexpectedly, would, of itself, have turned suspicion to the satchel, which he snatched up like a startled miser. This action, united with what Captain Bergen had said, and with what the young man himself had witnessed the preceding night, could not have failed to tell him that that rusty-looking valise—about which the owner was so careful—contained a great amount of wealth in some form.

But what of it?

This was the question Storms put to himself as he sprang up and called to Inez—who immediately appeared—and began the preparation for the last meal they expected to eat upon the detested island.

Captain Bergen was quiet and thoughtful, but the others were in high spirits.

The two natives made their meal on board the proa, where they stolidly awaited the coming of the passengers, the “baggage” having been transferred the day before. And the sun was no more than fairly above the horizon when the proa started on her eventful voyage to Wauparmur Island—a voyage destined to be marked by events of which no one on board dreamed.

CHAPTER XXX

ON THE FLYING PROA

At last the friends who had been left on Pearl Island three years before, and whose hearts had been bowed with despair more than once, saw the atoll gradually fade from view, until the top of the tallest palm-tree dipped out of sight in the blue Pacific and vanished from view forever.

“It seems hardly possible,” said Abe Storms, when at last his straining vision could detect no shadow of the spot, “that we have been rescued. I’m so full of joy and hope at the prospect before me that it is hard work to restrain myself from shouting and jumping overboard.”

“What is your idea in jumping overboard?” asked Sanders, with a laugh, in which Inez Hawthorne joined.

“Merely to give expression to my exuberance of joy; after I should cool off, I would be cooler, of course.”

Captain Bergen, to the grief of his friends, showed no signs of mental improvement, though his hallucination took a different form. Instead of being talkative, like he was the day before, he became reserved, saying nothing to any one, not even to answer a simple question when it was put to him. He ensconced himself at the stern in such a position that he was out of the way of the man with the steering oar, where he curled up like one who wished neither to be seen nor heard.

“Humor his fancies,” said Sanders, “for it will only aggravate him to notice them. It was the same with Redvignez and Brazzier that I was speaking about last night.”

“Redvignez and Brazzier?” repeated Inez; “where did you ever see them?”

“I sailed a voyage with them once from Liverpool, and I was telling Mr. Storms last night that I saw them both so frightened without cause that their minds were upset for a while. And may I ask whether you know them?” asked the young

man, with a flush of surprise, addressing the girl.

“Why, they and a negro, Pomp, were the three mutineers who were the means of our staying on the island. They tried to kill the captain and mate, but——”

“She saved us,” broke in Storms, who thereupon gave the narrative told long ago to the reader, omitting the attempt that was made upon his own life by cutting the hose-pipes which let the air down to him, inasmuch as that would have caused the telling of the pearl fishing also.

Fred Sanders listened with great interest, for he had known the men well, and it may as well be stated that the danger to which the scoundrels were exposed, as referred to by him, was that of being executed for mutiny; and, as it was, the part of Sanders himself was such that he would have been strung up at the yard-arm in short order had it not been his extreme youth, which pleaded in his favor.

Since Storms and his companions had revealed some things that might have been better concealed, so Fred Sanders himself felt he had hinted at a little story which was likely to injure his standing in the eyes of those toward whom he was playing the part of the good Samaritan.

The proa was arranged as comfortably as possible, Inez Hawthorne being given a place in front, where a sort of compartment was made for her, by means of stretching awnings of cocoa-matting and a portion of the reserve fund of lateen on hand. The others disposed themselves so that she was left undisturbed whenever she chose to withdraw to her “state room,” as Captain Fred Sanders facetiously termed it.

The two natives had little to say, and they obeyed orders like the veritable slaves they were. There could be no doubt they understood the management of the proa to perfection, and the strange craft spun through the water with astonishing speed.

Mr. Storms deposited his valise, with its valuable contents, forward, where he seemed to bestow little attention on it, though, as may well be supposed, it was ever present in his thoughts, and quite often in his eye.

Several times in the course of the day they caught sight of sails in the distance, but approached none; for, as Sanders said, the all-important thing now was to make the most speed possible, while the opportunity remained to them. There was a freshening of the breeze and a haziness which spread through the northern horizon that caused some misgiving on the part of all, for the proa would be a poor shelter in case they were overtaken by one of those terrific tempests they

had seen more than once.

Toward the middle of the afternoon something like a low bank of clouds appeared to the left, or in the west, which, being scrutinized through the glasses, proved to be a low-lying island. Sanders knew of it, and said they passed it still closer on their way to the atoll.

It was also an atoll like that, but much smaller in size, and, of course, uninhabited. It might do for a refuge in case of the coming of a violent storm, while in the vicinity; but otherwise it would only be a loss of time to pause at it. The fact that such a place existed so near them caused something like a feeling of security upon the part of Mate Storms, such as comes over one on learning he has a good friend at his elbow in face of some coming trouble.

As the afternoon advanced, and the proa bounded forward before a strong, steady breeze, Storms thought the occasion a good one to obtain some sleep, with a view of keeping awake during the coming night, and he assumed an easy position, where, his mind being comparatively free from apprehension, he soon sank into slumber.

This left Inez Hawthorne with no one to talk to excepting Fred Sanders, who seemed in better spirits than usual. When they had discussed the voyage, and he had given her as good an account as he could of the island toward which they were hastening, and after she had answered all his questions as best she could, she turned upon him and asked:

“How long did you say you had spent in these islands?”

“As nearly as I can recollect, it is about five years.”

“And, as you are now seventeen, you must have been only twelve years old when you first came here.”

“That agrees with my figuring,” said Sanders, with a nod of his head. “You can’t be far out of the way.”

“Where did you live before that?”

“Well, I lived in a good many places—that is, for two years. I was on the Atlantic and on the Pacific and—well, it would take me a good long while to tell of all that I passed through. I may as well own up to you, Inez, that it was a wild, rough life for a man, even without taking into account the fact that I was a boy.”

“Then you went to sea when you were only ten years old?”

“That also coincides with my mathematical calculations,” replied Sanders, somewhat embarrassed, for he saw they were approaching delicate ground.

“Then before you were ten years of age?”

“I lived at home, of course.”

“And where was that?”

“You will excuse me, Inez, from answering that question. I have reasons for doing so. Let me say that I stayed at home for the first ten years of my existence, and was as bad a boy as can be imagined. I fell into the worst kind of habits, and it was through the two men—Redvignez and Brazzier—whom I’ve heard you speak of, that I was persuaded to go to sea with them, when I ought to have been at home with my father.”

“Is your mother living, Mr. Sanders?”

The youth turned his head away, so she could not see his face, and when he moved it back and spoke again there was a tear on his cheek, and he replied, in a voice of sadness:

“My mother is in heaven, where her son will never be.”

Inez was inexpressibly shocked.

“Why, Mr. Sanders, what do you mean by that?”

“A better woman than she never lived, nor a worse boy than I. You can’t understand, Inez. You are too young and too good yourself to realize what a wretch I was. I deliberately ran away from home seven years ago, and have never been within a thousand miles of it since, and I never expected to do so, until within the last day or so; somehow or other, I’ve fallen to thinking more than before.”

“Have you a father?”

“I don’t know. I think he is dead, too, for I was enough to break his heart, and I have never heard of him since. I hadn’t any brothers or sisters when I came away. I’m all that’s left, and now there is a longing coming over me to hunt up my father again before he dies, that is—if—he—isn’t—already—gone!”

It was no use. Fred Sanders, the wild, reckless youth, who had passed through many a scene that would have made a man shudder, suddenly put his hands to his face, and his whole frame shook with emotion. The memories of his early childhood came back to him, and he saw again the forms of those who loved him

so fondly, and whose affection he returned with such piercing ingratitude. Conscience had slept for many years, but the gentle words of Inez had awakened its voice again. The goodness of the girl, who was already like a loved sister to Sanders, had stirred up the better part of his nature, and he looked upon himself with a shudder, that one so young as he should have committed his many transgressions.

No wonder that he felt so pressed down that he cried out in the bitterness of his spirit that heaven was shut from him. It was hard for Inez to keep back the sympathizing tears herself when she witnessed the overwhelming grief of the strong youth.

The latter sat silent for some minutes, holding his face partly averted, as if ashamed of this evidence of weakness—an evidence which it is safe to say he had not shown for years, young as he was.

Ah, there were memories that had slumbered long which came crowding upon the boy—memories whose import no one on board that strange craft could suspect but himself, and whose work was soon to appear in a form and with a force that neither Inez Hawthorne nor Mate Storms so much as dreamed of.

CHAPTER XXXI

A STRANGE CRAFT

“I tell you a boy who uses his mother bad is sure to suffer for it some time. I’ve seen so many cases that I know there’s such a law that governs the whole world. I thank heaven that I never brought a tear to my mother’s eyes.”

The speaker was Captain Bergen, who was talking to Fred Sanders while the two sat together on the proa, near midnight succeeding the conversation mentioned between Inez and the youth Fred.

The latter might have believed, as he had jocosely remarked, that he had captured a small party of missionaries, who were making a dead set at him; but his feelings had been touched in a most tender manner, and he had done more thinking during the last few hours than in all his previous life.

The only one on the proa who was on duty was Fred, who held the steering-oar in place, while the curiously-shaped vessel sped through the water. The sea was very calm and the wind so slight that they were in reality going slower than at any previous time, and the task of guiding the boat was hardly a task at all.

Fred sat looking up at the stars half the time, with his memory and conscience doing their work. His two men had lain down, and were asleep, for they were regular in all their habits, and he had seen nothing of Inez since she had withdrawn to her “apartment.”

Mate Storms kept up a fragmentary conversation with the young captain until quite late, when he withdrew, and Fred was left with himself for fully two hours, when Mr. Bergen crept softly forth and took a seat near him, even getting in such a position that he would have been very much in the way had any emergency arisen. The captain was disposed to talk—somewhat to Fred’s dislike—for he was in that mood when he desired to be alone; but he was also in a more gracious and charitable temper than usual, and he answered the old captain quite kindly.

“You’ve a good deal to be thankful for,” said he, in reply to the remark above given. “But my mother has been in heaven for many a year.”

“She is fortunate, after all,” said the captain, with a sigh, and a far-away look over the moonlit sea.

“Yes, a great deal more fortunate than her son will ever be.”

“It all depends on you, young man,” said the captain, severely. “Heaven is reached step by step, and there’s no one who cannot make it. If you haven’t started in the right direction, now’s the time to do so.”

Fred Sanders may have assented to this, but he was silent, and he, too, looked off over the sea as if his thoughts were running in a new and unaccustomed channel. “My mother must be a very old woman by this time,” added the captain, after a minute or more of silence, during which nothing but the rushing of the water was heard.

“How old is she?” asked Fred.

“She must be close on to eighty; and I think she’s dead, for she was very feeble when I saw her, three years ago, in San Francisco. But I’m going to see her very soon; yes, very soon—very soon.”

“It’s a long way to ’Frisco,” ventured Fred, mildly; “but I hope you will have a quick voyage.”

“I am not going to wait till we get there.”

“How are you going to manage it, then?”

“This way. I’m coming, mother!”

And Captain Jack Bergen sprang overboard and went out of sight.

“Heavens! what was that?” exclaimed Mate Storms, leaping forward from where he had been dozing upon his couch.

“The captain has jumped overboard!” was the horrified reply of Fred Sanders, who was bringing the proa around as fast as he could.

Without another word, Mate Storms made a bounding plunge after him, leaving the young captain to manage the craft as best he could. The latter uttered a sharp command which brought the crew to their feet in an instant, and, in an incredibly short space of time, the proa came around, and, scarcely losing any headway, moved back toward the spot where the demented man had sprung into the sea, which was now a long distance astern.

It was a startling awaking for Abram Storms, who did his utmost for his unfortunate captain. The mate was a splendid swimmer, and, plunging forward with a powerful stroke, he called to his friend again and again, frequently lifting himself far out of the water, when on the crest of a swell, and straining his eyes to pierce the moonlight about him, hoping to catch sight of the figure of the captain, who was also a strong swimmer. But if he had jumped overboard with the intention of suicide, it was not to be supposed he would continue swimming. The mate, however, was hopeful that in that awful minute when he went beneath the waters, something like a realizing sense of what he had done would come to him and he would struggle to save himself.

But, alas, for poor Captain Jack Bergen, who had journeyed so many thousand miles, and had endured such a long imprisonment upon a lonely island! He sent back no answering shout to the repeated calls of his mate, whose eyes failed to catch sight of his gray head as he rose and sank for a brief while on the water.

When Fred Sanders got the proa about he guided its movements by the sound of the mate's voice, and, in a short while, he ran alongside and assisted him on board. Nothing had been seen nor heard of the captain, and there could be no doubt now that he was gone forever. Nevertheless, the proa continued cruising around the place for fully an hour, in widening circles, until all were convinced that not a particle of hope remained, when they filled away again, and a long, last farewell was uttered to Captain Jack Bergen.

He had procured a fortune in a comparatively easy manner, and it looked for a time as if the payment was small; but the price demanded now was his life, and what more can a man give, excepting his soul?—which, most happily, was not the case with him.

During these minutes of excitement, Inez Hawthorne slept soundly, and she never knew anything of the sad occurrence until the morrow was well advanced. Her grief prostrated her for many hours, for she was a child unusually affectionate by nature, and she had been tenderly attached to the captain, who had been such a father to her.

It spread a gloom over the boat, as may be said, the only ones who showed no sorrow in their countenances being the dusky islanders, who seemed to take everything as it came along as a matter of course, and who obeyed the Caucasian captain like so many machines under the control of an engineer.

Fred Sanders was thoughtful, and, what was rather curious, had little to say to Inez during the first portion of the day. He uttered a few words of sympathy

when she sought to restrain her tears, but after that he kept very much to himself, as if there was some new and important matter on his mind, as was indeed the case.

It will be remembered that the expectation was that the voyage of the proa would terminate that night by their arrival at their destination, but the delay caused by the moderate wind and the search for the lost captain led Mate Storms to feel some doubt, and he asked Captain Sanders his view of the matter.

“I can’t tell you anything about it!”

It was not these words alone, so much as the abrupt manner, which set the mate somewhat back. He had received nothing of the kind from the youth since their meeting, and it astonished him.

A hot reply rose to the lips of Abe Storms, but he suppressed it and moved away.

“I wonder whether he doesn’t feel soured at the thought that the death of the captain will prevent his getting such a large reward for his services?” said the mate to himself, who, after thinking over the matter for a few minutes longer, reached a conclusion. “We expected to reach Wauparmur Island to-night, before dark. We shall be late, but, as it is, I shall have no trouble in keeping awake the rest of the voyage, and I’ve little fear that I will not be able to protect my property as well as myself.”

With this, he moved back to the youth, and said, in a cheery voice:

“You recall, sir, that poor Captain Bergen made some promises to you about rewarding you liberally for your services. My friend was a little wild in what he said, but he was right when he declared we had the means, and I wish simply to say that his wishes and intentions in that respect, which accorded with my own from the start, shall be carried out to the letter.”

Mr. Storms immediately joined Inez, while the captain made no reply, much to the discomfiture of the mate, who said to Inez:

“What’s the matter with Sanders?”

“He is watching an object over the sea yonder. He has been expecting to discover something, and he has caught sight of it at last.”

The mate instantly produced his glasses, and leveled them in the direction the young captain was looking.

There was something, indeed.

As revealed by the instrument, it was what might be termed a double canoe, or proa—that is, two narrow canoes were joined together, side by side, and connected by a sort of framework, while an enormous lateen sail towered above them, and carried it forward with remarkable speed.

The surprised mate carefully scrutinized the strange craft, and saw that it contained a large crew, there being, as he estimated, fully twenty men on board. It was to the westward of the smaller proa, and like that was pursuing almost a northerly course, though the experienced eyes of the sailor told him that the paths of the two were converging, and that, unless changed, they undoubtedly would meet before nightfall.

The double canoe was about two miles distant, and as it rose on the crest of a

swell the glass revealed the white foam which curled away from the bows, and there could be no doubt of its remarkable swiftness.

After watching this strange craft for a few minutes, Mr. Storms devoted some time to a furtive but careful study of the face of Fred Sanders, who was on the most elevated portion of the proa, and was carefully noting the course of the two vessels.

The alarming conclusion reached by Abram Storms was that the other craft contained a gang of pirates; that Fred Sanders knew them, and he was guiding his own proa by an understanding previously had with them.

And Abram Storms was right.

CHAPTER XXXII

A FRIEND AMONG ENEMIES

The double canoe, with its cumbersome lateen sail and its crew of twenty-odd pirates, had stolen down from somewhere among the Paumotu Islands, and was now gradually approaching the proa which contained Abram Storms and Inez Hawthorne.

The experience of the preceding few years, and especially of the last day or two, had given Mr. Storms an astonishing acuteness, which enabled him often to detect the truth without difficulty. The strong suspicion he now formed was that Fred Sanders was expecting the appearance of the craft, and that he was guiding his own proa in accordance with some prearranged plan. This was an alarming conclusion to reach, but Storms felt hardly a particle of doubt that he was right.

“He intends to betray us, and has intended to do so from the first.”

The New Englander took another look at the double canoe, and he saw, even in the few minutes that had passed, that they were closer together. And now that his suspicions were aroused, he detected several other little things which only confirmed all that had entered his mind. The two islanders who composed the crew were continually glancing off at their brothers, and frequently spoke in low tones, and showed by the gleam of their swarthy faces that they were on the tip-toe of expectation.

From one corner of the lateen sail, Storms now noticed that a large crimson handkerchief was fluttering in the wind.

“It is put there as a signal,” was the decision respecting that, “and doubtless signifies that they have us on board and all is going right.”

Fred Sanders was so occupied with this business that he never once suspected that he himself was being watched in turn.

“Inez,” said the mate, “go to the captain and speak a few words to him.”

“But he is so occupied that he will not wish to be disturbed.”

“Never mind about that; I wish you to go and say a few pleasant words to him. Let them be sympathetic.”

“What shall I say?”

“I can give you no further directions.”

“I am loth to do so, but if you wish it——”

“I wish it very much.”

That was enough, and the girl, with some natural hesitation of manner, advanced to the young captain, who did not notice her until she was at his elbow.

“Good-day, Captain Fred,” she said; “you have been busy so long that you must be tired, for you slept none last night.”

He looked toward her with a quick, curious expression. There was a half-smile on his face, while his forehead was wrinkled with displeasure. Inez noticed this, and would have withdrawn had she not recalled the strange earnestness with which Storms made the request for her to utter a few pleasant words to the youth. She therefore determined to carry out his wishes.

“Can’t we relieve you of your work?” continued she.

Sanders was in reality doing nothing in the way of physical labor, since the steering oar was in the hands of one of the crew, but he was absorbed in “watching things,” as the expression goes.

“I am sure there is no way in which you can relieve me,” said Fred, unbending somewhat from his reserve.

“We are in such deep water, and the wind is so fair, that there can be no danger, I suppose. But tell me, what sort of a boat is that yonder which is pursuing nearly the same course with us?”

“That—I presume,” was the hesitating response, as the young man glanced in that direction, “is one of the double canoes or proas which are often seen among these islands.”

“And who are the crew?”

“Islanders, like my own.”

“Are we going to meet them?”

“I hardly know what to answer to that,” said Fred, looking inquiringly toward the large proa again, as if he had not seen it before.

“Well, Captain Sanders, they must be pirates,” said Inez, stepping close to him, and speaking in a low, tremulous voice; “but whether they are or not, my faith in God and in you cannot be changed. I know you will do all you can for us——”

“There! there!” protested the young captain, with an expression of pain on his face, “say no more. Please go away, Inez, and leave me alone.”

“Of course I will leave you, if you do not wish me here, but gratitude would not let me keep silent. I know, from what you said last night, that you have a good heart, and henceforth conscience is to be your master and guide.”

And without looking to see the effect of her words, Inez left the captain to his own thoughts.

Abram Storms, with folded arms, was intently watching him, and he carefully studied his countenance. He was still doing so, when Inez turned her back upon Sanders. Mr. Storms noted the strange expression on the handsome countenance, and just then Sanders turned and looked straight at the man before the latter could withdraw his gaze. As their eyes met, he signaled to Storms to approach, and the latter, with no little wonderment and some misgiving, did so.

“Mr. Storms,” said he, “that double canoe off yonder has twenty-three pirates on board.”

“I suspected as much,” coolly replied the other.

“And a set of worse villains cannot be found in the South Seas.”

“I am sure you are quite right.”

“These two men that I have on board belong to the same crew.”

“Indeed! I hadn’t thought of that.”

“I belong to the same gang.”

“I suspected that!”

“You did, eh? Did you suspect that I was in the plot to obtain possession of your pearls?”

“I did not suspect it; I was sure of it, which is why I have carried my loaded revolver with me.”

“That wouldn’t have defeated the plan we had laid, for when twenty-three odd

savages, with their spears, war-clubs and a few muskets, had stolen up to the island in the darkness, and crept silently into your cabin, what good would your guns and revolvers have done you?"

"Was that the plan?"

"That was it precisely. By some means or other, which I never could understand, rumors reached Wauparmur, months ago, that two men and a child were on an island to the south of us, and that they had an immense lot of the most valuable pearls. I cannot comprehend how it was the natives gained such knowledge, for it must have had some basis of truth, inasmuch as it proved to be true."

"There was a proa which passed close to the island while we were opening the pearl-oysters," said Storms. "We all saw it."

"The rumor came from them, then," continued Sanders, "and a party was formed to go down there, and find out whether it was true, and, in case it was, the white men were to be overcome by treachery, and their possessions in the shape of pearls taken. Since there is no more desperate and wicked member of the gang than am I, of course I was one of the first chosen.

"We started in two boats, and, as we went along, I could see difficulties in the way which never occurred to them. It was not likely you carried the pearls about with you, as a person wears his jewelry; but most likely they were buried, so that if we came down upon you and made an overwhelming attack, as was first intended, we might put you all to death, and then be unable to find where you had hidden your treasures. Besides that, I saw that it was more than probable you had firearms, with which you could successfully hold out against a large force, and it would prove no easy thing to subdue you."

"You were correct in both your surmises," said Storms. "We were always prepared to make a fight, and, with our guns against your spears, we would have beaten you off. The pearls, too, were carefully concealed where you never would have found them."

"I was well convinced of that, so we resorted to strategy. I was to go with a couple of the men and bring you away, trying all the time if I could to secure the pearls, which, of course, were afterwards to be disposed of and the proceeds divided among us—the intention being that when we got you on the proa, you would be pitched overboard, for then the situation would be so changed that we could manage it without trouble. If I thought it unsafe to make the attempt, I had only to wait until reinforcements should come up; for the larger boat, knowing the course I was to take on my return, had only to be on the lookout for us, and

we would be sure to descry each other."

"And that was to be your signal that you had us aboard?" said Storms, pointing to the fluttering handkerchief.

"That's it precisely," assented Sanders. "But there was one force which we did not think to provide against," added the young man, in a low voice, in which Storms detected a slight tremor.

"What was that?"

"An awakened conscience," was the impressive answer. "And it was she who aroused the sleeper. There was something in the goodness of the girl—the faith which she showed not only in heaven but in me as well—that upset all my calculations. Then, too, she seemed to say the right words just at the right time; and you saw how I suffered."

"Yes; and it gave me great hope; for, Fred, I distrusted you from the beginning. I saw many little things which you never supposed I nor any one else would notice. And I may add," said the mate, with a sly twinkle, "that I endeavored always to be prepared for you."

The face of Sanders flushed, but he added, with the same seriousness:

"Matters now are going in accordance with the program arranged days ago. The large proa yonder has been waiting for us, and we are now to keep on converging lines until we meet to-night."

"Do you intend to follow out your agreement?"

"No; I had an awful struggle with my conscience last night, after my talk with Inez and with the poor captain, but the evil triumphed in me, despite all I could do. The fight was still going on, being renewed this morning, and I had about yielded to Satan, when she came and spoke to me. That," said Fred Sanders, with a compression of the lips, "has settled it forever. I am now your friend, and I am ready to give up my life for the safety of you and her, hoping that heaven will take it, with my repentance, as some atonement for the many sins I have committed."

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE PURSUIT

There are two angels within us forever struggling for the mastery: One is the angel of darkness, and the other of light—of evil and of good.

They had waged their battle in the heart of Fred Sanders for a long time, and too often did the restraining spirit fold her hands over her face and withdraw in sorrow at the triumph of the other. But the final struggle—the decisive warfare—was now ended, and the beauteous countenance of the good angel was radiant with hope and courage, for a soul had been saved.

Abram Storms smiled with pleasure as he looked upon the manly young fellow, and he was filled with delight at the resolution shown by him.

“There is no shrinking or trembling there,” said Storms to himself. “He means every word he says, and he will stick to the end.”

The man tried to look calm and self-possessed, when he moved forward and extended his hand, but there were tears in his eyes, and he could only murmur:

“God bless you, my boy! You have chosen the better part.”

They were silent for a minute or so, each one’s thoughts active, when Fred said:

“If you please, I would rather that Inez should know nothing of this.”

“She never shall know a word of it from me.”

“One of these days, perhaps, I will tell her what a villain she was the means of saving from destruction.”

Fred appreciated the skill, seamanship and shrewdness of Storms, and consulted fully with him, saying that, as he himself was captain, he would appoint the other to his old position—that of mate.

The whole scheme had already been made clear by the youth. The large proa was in sight, by appointment, having been cruising back and forth for several days,

on the lookout for the smaller boat with the party who it was expected would be robbed and killed for the valuable pearls in their possession. The signal of the fluttering handkerchief from the triangular sail meant that the party were on board, and the original program was to be carried out. That is, the pursuing boat was to hold off until after dark. She was to keep on a converging course, so as not to lose sight of the small proa, and gradually approaching, overhaul and attack her at the time when the chances of success were at the best.

The plan decided upon by Captain Sanders was simply to keep away from the larger craft, and to do his utmost to prevent being overhauled; and he showed his earnestness in this respect by taking the steering oar and bearing away from the other, so that, instead of being converging, they became parallel.

The two natives displayed some surprise when they observed this action, but they said nothing, and most likely felt no suspicion as yet of their captain, whose desperation and heartlessness on more than one previous occasion had won the confidence of the islanders.

It was not long before the change was noticed on board the pursuer, where, most likely, it was accepted as the proper thing, possibly on account of the fear from the passengers.

“I have no revolver like you,” said Captain Fred, after they had kept this up for a couple of hours, “but I have a double-barreled pistol which is loaded to the muzzle. You have your six-chambered weapon, and you must keep it ready, for, when the two islanders here become certain of the truth, it is more than probable they will make a savage attack on us, for two more desperate demons never lived.”

“I should hardly think so,” said the mate, glancing furtively at them.

“No; they are as meek looking as lambs, but they were sent with me on account of their fierce courage. Why, they were ready and eager, when we visited you upon the island, to make an open attack, where the chances of their defeat were about even. They would rather fight and kill any moment than eat, and I had to be pretty sharp to restrain them.”

“I shan’t forget your warning.”

“It won’t do for either of us to sleep to-night, for they are as treacherous as cobras. They would feign slumber on purpose to put us off our guard, and then stab us to death in our sleep.”

“Will we not reach Wauparmur to-night?”

“It is doubtful, for the change we have made in the course is taking us away from the true direction and gives the advantage to them, as they are closer in than we. We have lost some good ground from the lightness of the wind, and we shall be fortunate if we catch sight of the place before to-morrow’s sunrise.”

“After all, Captain Fred, it must be a question of speed between us and our pursuer. Which, therefore, is the faster, the double canoe yonder or ourselves?”

A troubled expression came over the face of the young captain, as he answered:

“I don’t know, for there has never been a test. We kept company most of the way out, but we rattled along without any thought of speed, sometimes together and sometimes apart; but my opinion is that in moderate weather like the present there is little difference between us, or if there is any it is in our favor. In a strong wind, the other would he apt to outspeed us.”

“We are going to have more wind,” said the mate, looking anxiously about him. “I think I perceive it freshening already.”

“I fear the same thing,” said Fred, who was manifestly very uneasy. “We are now about two miles apart, and the prospect is that that will be cut down one-half by sunset.”

“And then?”

Fred shrugged his shoulders.

“All is not lost. When the sun goes down, with us a mile apart, we shall be invisible; but they will crowd all speed, and stand a good chance of coming up with us again.”

“But we gain a chance to maneuver.”

“There is hope and yet great risk in that, for if we can throw them off the track we shall be safe, for we can easily get beyond their range of vision long before sunrise; but at the same time, in making these sharp turns, we shall lose a great deal of ground, provided we don’t succeed, and if they once get in sight of us after the moon rises, the race will be ended, for we won’t gain a chance to dodge them again.”

“And then?”

“There will be the worst fight you ever saw. We shall have to begin by shooting these two, or pitching them overboard, if they don’t happen to get their work in ahead of us, and then we shall have more than twenty savage islanders to keep

off—if we can.”

“We are pretty well armed, Captain Fred.”

“Yes, we have our pistols, and there is a musket apiece for you, me and Inez—for she will have to take a hand in the fight.”

“And there will be no braver than she. Have they any firearms on board?”

“I’m sorry to say they have, and that’s what makes me more anxious than anything else. There are spears, knives, battle-axes and at least six loaded muskets, and what is more, the men who have them in hand know how to use them.”

Mate Storms looked anxious, as well he might, for this was a phase of the question which had not presented itself to him. The case being as it was, the pursuers would be likely to begin firing as soon as they came within range, and when close in, the matter would be entirely within their hands.

Everything seemed to augur ill for the fugitives. The wind was steadily increasing and the flying proa was dashing through the water at a tremendous rate. The pursuing one had already shifted its course, so that this early in the afternoon the struggle had begun and settled down to a virtual test of speed.

“What do you suppose they think of the whole business?” asked Mate Storms, looking back at the double canoe as it rose on a huge swell at the same moment that they themselves sank in the vast, watery waste.

“I don’t know whether they think anything is wrong yet or not, but imagine I am trying to keep off until after dark.”

“Why, then, don’t they respect your purpose and work with you?”

“The leader of that company is an islander who is somewhat jealous of me. He believes he knows more about such business than I do, and he has made up his mind to keep this in hand, no matter what my wishes are. So, though he may think I mean all right, yet he is sure he knows better, and governs himself accordingly.”

“These two men here on board try to look indifferent, but they act suspiciously to me.”

“And they are suspicious, too.”

Fred Sanders might have added further that they were not only suspicious, but had actually discovered the truth.

They understood the purpose which had brought all three to the lonely island, and they knew that that purpose had been changed.

Inez Hawthorne, the girl of his own race, had caused this wonderful transformation in the heart of the young captain, and instead of being her enemy, he had become the devoted friend of herself and companion. While they could not understand the English tongue as they heard it spoken, they could read the meaning of looks and gestures and the confidential talks which they saw going on around them. They were convinced that their captain intended to betray them, and prevent the wealth from falling into their hands.

Would they submit?

Far from it. They would not only refuse to give their assent to any such perfidy, but they would use their utmost endeavors to defeat it. Such was their purpose, and Fred Sanders knew it, for he understood the character of the wretches; well, therefore, was it that he whispered the warning in the ear of Mate Abram Storms.

Inez Hawthorne sat at the front of the proa, in the place that had been assigned her, for something seemed to tell her that the men were so occupied with their duties that it would be better for her to keep away from them. It was with much reluctance that she consented to exchange the few words with Captain Fred Sanders, and little did she dream that it was those same few words which turned the young man from a deadly enemy into the most devoted ally, and gave some promise of life to herself and her companion. Yet, as we have shown, such was the fact.

CHAPTER XXXIV

CLOSING IN

When the sun sank in the western horizon, the situation of the two craft had not materially changed. The larger had perceptibly gained upon the smaller; but a good distance still separated them, and both parties were doing their utmost. The wind was blowing stronger than at mid-day, but it was not such a gale as had been feared, and our friends were not without hope of eluding the natives, who were endeavoring to overtake them.

Inez Hawthorne could not avoid seeing how matters stood, though she was far from suspecting the whole truth. Mr. Storms told her that the other boat contained pirates, who were doing their utmost to overtake them, and they were striving their hardest to prevent it. As it stood, there was a prospect of a fight, in which she would likely be called upon to take part. She smiled, looked reverently upward, and said she was ready whenever needed, and then she remained as cool and watchful as either of her friends.

Mr. Storms advised her not to go to sleep, as the coming night must decide the case one way or the other for them.

“No fear of my sleeping,” she said. “I realize our position too well to do that.”

“And Inez,” whispered Storms, “these two savages on board are the worst sort of men. Keep watch, and do not place yourself in too dangerous a position respecting them.”

“I have been alarmed more than once at their looks and mutterings.”

As the sun went down, it was a curious sight when the double canoe rose on a swell and was outlined against the flaming disc behind, as we have described the ship and the moon more than three years before.

The sight was a strange one, though it lasted but a moment, when the craft went down, and the smaller proa swiftly climbed the long slope of the watery mountain in front. The round moon speedily rose in the sky, and it was so bright

that it was hard to tell when twilight ended and its light began.

Never did Storms and Sanders long for utter darkness more than on the present occasion. Had the moon been obscured, they would have made a sharp turn in their flight, with every prospect of throwing the others completely off their trail, and with every reason to hope for a clean escape before sunrise.

But the flood of moon light prevented either proa losing sight of the other.

“There’s only one thing left to us now,” said the young captain.

“And that’s to fight.”

Fred nodded his head.

“Well, we can do that. But I wish we were well rid of these fellows with us. It puts us between two fires, and there can be no doubt they suspect the truth.”

“I am sure of that. Hello!”

Mr. Storms had hold of the steering-oar, and Fred was sitting close to him when he uttered the last exclamation, and, springing forward, hastily drew his pistol, took a quick aim and fired.

A frenzied howl followed, and one of the crew made a furious plunge far out into the sea, and, going down like a log, never came up again.

“Over with you, too!” shouted Sanders, in their native tongue, his eyes flashing; “not an instant, or I’ll shoot!”

The savage did not hesitate, with his knife clenched in his hand, and the young captain leveled his pistol at him.

The sight of the muzzle so close to his skull, and the finger resolutely pressing the trigger, were too much, and the savage made a tremendous leap, like a tiger springing from his hiding-place, went far out into the sea, and, quickly coming to the surface, blew the water from his mouth, and began swimming with a swift, powerful stroke in the direction of the pursuing boat.

“Did you see that?” inquired Sanders, beginning coolly to reload his pistol.

“What do you mean?”

“Did you know why I fired as quickly as I did?”

“No.”

“That wretch had drawn his knife, and was moving in the direction of the

unsuspecting Inez, sitting there. I overheard him say something which aroused my suspicion, and he was in the very act of raising his knife when I fired."

"Is it possible? He deserved death, then, and you finished him. But what purpose could they have in killing an innocent girl like her?"

"Pure fiendishness—that's all. Then they meant to make their attack upon us, and they would have made things lively."

"But how much better it would have been had they waited until the others attacked, when they could have made a fatal diversion?"

"Most certainly; but their course shows the nature of the wretches. They are so fiendish and so eager to fight that they have no judgment."

"Are we heading toward Wauparmur, Fred?"

"No; we are steering wide of it."

"Since, then, we are engaged in a regular chase for that port, why not head straight for the island, so as to have that advantage, at least?"

"You are right, for there is nothing to be gained by maneuvering to throw them off the track."

Fred Sanders took a small compass from his pocket, and studied it carefully for a minute or two by the light of the moon. Then he gave directions to Storms to bear more to the left, or the westward, until finally he informed him that they were heading directly for the port where all their hopes were now centered.

The wind fell slightly, but the pursuing boat steadily gained, and it was impossible to see how our friends could escape a hand-to-hand fight with the pirates, and there could be but one issue to such an encounter.

The islanders were thoughtful enough to lower their immense sail, and stand by until they could pick up their comrade struggling in the water, actuated probably as much by curiosity to know the facts as by humanity.

This gave our friends a show once more, and they drew away from their pursuers; but, alas! not to an extent to leave them out of sight, and until they could do so, they could not hope to accomplish anything.

Mr. Storms was not without a strong hope of seeing some friendly sail, to which they could hasten for assistance, and he continually searched the horizon, telling Inez to do the same.

Captain Fred did not expect anything of that nature, and, since the glasses were

in his hands, he kept them turned most of the time in the direction of the double canoe, and called out his information and orders to his mate at the helm.

Of course the distance was much less than a mile, or the proa would scarcely have been discernible, but the moonlight was strong, such as those who live in temperate zones can hardly realize, and the illumination of the sea was wonderfully brilliant.

Both Fred and Storms, who had spent years in the South Seas, agreed that they had never seen anything like it before, and, for all purposes, it might as well have been broad day. The finest print could have been read with ease, and the glasses leveled at the approaching boat showed the crowds of swarthy pirates on board, all as eager as wolves to come up with the craft, which they were gaining so steadily upon.

And the fugitives knew well enough what the sequel would be. The rival of Captain Fred would want no better excuse for cutting him and his companions to pieces, and the wealth in their possession would be more “loot” than the same parties could obtain in a dozen piratical expeditions.

“But they shall never get a pennyworth of it!” said Abe Storms to Fred.

The latter lowered his glass and looked inquiringly at him.

“When it becomes absolutely certain that they have got us, I shall throw all the pearls overboard, so that they shall gain nothing more than our lives.”

“That’s right; only,” said the young captain, with a smile, “I advise you not to be in too much of a hurry about it, for you will feel somewhat mortified if we reach Wauparmur, after all, and you find you have cast your whole wealth into the sea.”

“I shan’t lose my head,” said the mate, with a laugh, “unless one of them takes it off.”

Inez Hawthorne was silent at the prow of the proa, where she was looking for the longed-for sail, which, alas! was never to appear, for she, too, had come to believe there was no other hope for her and her friends.

Mate Storms and Captain Fred happened to turn their heads at the same moment, and were looking at the double proa coming up with them very rapidly, when each uttered an exclamation, for they suddenly saw a red flash at the prow of the boat, a puff of smoke, and then the report of a musket reached them almost at the same instant that the whistle of the bullet through the rigging was heard.

“By George, they are firing at us!” said Fred, as if it was not the most natural thing in the world for them to do.

“Yes, and they’re aiming pretty well, too, for that shot went through the sail!”

“I hardly supposed they were near enough to do that, but they are in earnest. Wouldn’t it be a good idea to reply to their hail?”

“It would, most undoubtedly!”

Putting up his glass, Captain Fred dived forward, brought out one of the muskets, and taking deliberate aim, fired at the approaching craft.

His shot was a fortunate one, too, for the cry which instantly followed showed that some one was struck. The others did not fire again for some time, but seemed to concentrate all their energies and attention upon the pursuit, which was turning more and more every minute in their favor.

“I don’t see any escaping a fight,” said Fred Sanders. “Inez says she hasn’t caught a glimpse of a sail, and I am sure she won’t. We may as well bring our guns here and be ready to repel boarders.”

CHAPTER XXXV

WAUPARMUR

Oftener than we suppose does heaven interfere directly in the affairs of men. Minutes had passed since Sanders and Storms had agreed that no earthly occurrence could avert a fight with the dusky demons, with scarcely a grain of hope for escape from them, when Inez uttered the astounding exclamation:

“We are gaining on them!”

It was inconceivable, and the two looked again to the rear to learn the cause of her unaccountable delusion. Five minutes later Sanders added in a husky gasp:

“She is right; we are not only gaining, but we are gaining fast.”

“How do you account for it?”

“I can’t account for it.”

“I can.”

“How?” asked the amazed youth.

“God interposes many times when mortals do not see it,” said the New Englander reverently; “there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth. You have repented, and He has extended his hand to help you.”

“Perhaps you are right,” replied Sanders, much impressed.

“I *know* I am right.”

“And I hope to prove worthy of such undeserved kindness. All I ask is the opportunity.”

“It shall be granted you. But, humanly speaking, there has been some accident on board that craft yonder.”

“It must be that; as a sailor, you know any one of a half dozen things would be sufficient to throw them out of the race. A ripping of the sail, a fracture of the

mast, the breaking of the steering gear, or some sudden quarrel would do the trick. Sufficient for us is it to know that it has been done."

"God helps them that helps themselves," added Storms, "and we must improve to the utmost the chance thrown in our way."

Naturally the fear of the two was that their pursuers might repair the accident which was throwing them to the rear for the time, and regain what was lost. They steadily fell behind, and, as soon as invisible, the proa made an abrupt change in her course, with the view of defeating the calamity that they feared threatened them. When this had lasted for an hour, another change was effected, with the result, as Sanders announced, that they were now heading directly for Wauparmur.

The eyes peering backward through the vivid moonlight failed to bring the dreaded craft to view, and it was not yet midnight when Sanders announced the thrilling fact that the twinkling lights, which appeared in front like a constellation in the horizon, were made by the dwellings in the native South Sea town of Wauparmur. All danger was past, and about an hour later the proa glided in among the shipping in that excellent harbor, made fast to the wharf, and the three disembarked.

Fred led the way to a house of entertainment near the harbor, in which he found good lodging for his friends.

Abram Storms carried all the precious pearls to his room and carefully secured the door, after which he threw himself upon the bed and slept as soundly as an infant.

Inez Hawthorne, in the solitude of her apartment, devoutly thanked her Heavenly Father for His care, and then she, too, slept the sleep of exhaustion and perfect health.

It was near noon on the succeeding day when both rose and found Fred Sanders awaiting them. The young man had not slept at all, and was uneasy.

"It won't do to stay here another night," said he, in explanation, as soon as the meal was concluded.

"I am sure we have no wish to do so," replied Storms. "But wherein lies the particular peril?"

"That whole crew of the double canoe are scattered through town, and they only await the chance to kill us. They will find the chance, too, to-night, if we remain

here."

"But what is the prospect of getting away?"

"I was in despair nearly all the forenoon; but a little while ago I came upon a schooner which sails for San Francisco at three o'clock this afternoon. I have engaged passage on it for us three, for you know I go with you."

"How can we ever repay you for your kindness?" said Inez, her lustrous eyes speaking eloquently her gratitude to the youth.

"There's no service on earth that I can render you which will compare with what you have done for me," was the reply of Captain Fred, whose manner showed his sincerity. Inez Hawthorne did not understand what all this meant, but the speaker ventured upon no explanation at the time.

As the three were about to start upon a long voyage, it was decided that some indispensable articles should be procured, and, since they had little spare time at command, the three set out immediately after dinner.

Wauparmur, as we have already intimated, is a town numbering several hundreds—perhaps more than a thousand—in population. Among these are a number of foreign shopkeepers, whose places are close along shore, so as to be the more readily accessible to their customers, who are almost exclusively confined to those on board the vessels which stop at the island.

Back from the town the land rises into hills, and the settlement becomes straggling and scattered. In these portions it is composed entirely of rude huts and cabins, in which none but natives live, and they are a bad lot.

It was from among those who lived in the "suburbs" that the wretches were gathered with which to attempt to capture and murder the little party of Europeans for the sake of the invaluable pearls they had in their possession.

Fred Sanders shuddered when he thought of the risk he and his friends ran by going straight to the inn and taking quarters for the night, for these miscreants must, after all, have reached Wauparmur only a few hours after the proa, and the wonder was that they did not manage to slay the fugitives in their beds.

The first thing Fred did in the morning was to slip out and buy a revolver, and his second act was to load it.

While engaged in hunting a vessel upon which to take passage, he encountered his own acquaintances continually, and he needed not their black faces and scowling eyes to tell how they thirsted to kill him for his treachery. It was only

by his bold front and constant watchfulness that he kept the dusky demons at a distance. Some of them were seen when the three ventured out, and though the pirates dared not attack them in open daylight, they were on the verge of doing so more than once. But their fury was directed principally against Captain Fred Sanders, and there can be no doubt the youth spoke the truth when he declared that if he attempted to stay on land until morning, he would not live till midnight.

Mr. Storms laid in a good supply of clothing, shoes and knick-knacks for himself and Inez, and with as little delay as possible. When they reached the wharf and approached the plank leading to the deck of the schooner, Mr. Storms noticed a small man standing a few feet off, with a blanket drawn up about his shoulders and neck like an Indian. His legs, feet and head were bare, but a huge bandage was bound around his forehead, giving him a grotesque appearance.

His position was like a statue, and he held the blanket so high that little could be seen except his black, glittering eyes. Some distance off, on the street close to the shop-houses, was a group of other natives, who looked as if they were expecting some important event.

So they were, indeed!

CHAPTER XXXVI

HOMEWARD BOUND

“Storms, do you notice that fellow?” asked Fred Sanders, as they approached the plank.

“Yes; it looks odd to see him standing there so motionless, and yet with his eyes fixed upon us.”

“He’s Weroo, the man who led that gang of pirates last night, and he hates me with such a consuming hate that he sent out his men to kill me, and in case they fail to do so, he has stationed himself there with the determination to assassinate me, for he is ready to run any risk rather than allow me to get away.”

“Are you prepared?” asked Storms, with no little anxiety.

“I rather guess so! Walk ahead with Inez and leave him to me.”

With some hesitation, Storms did as requested, though he placed his hand on his revolver, so as to be ready for any emergency, the crew of the *Albatross*, who were busying themselves around, seeming to hold no suspicion of the situation.

Just as Captain Fred put his foot on the plank, the islander took a short step forward, like a panther gathering himself for the leap upon its victim. At that very instant, as if by intuition, Captain Fred turned about and leveled his revolver at the muffled figure, which paused. Every one who was looking on supposed, of course, the boy was going to fire, but, though his finger pressed the trigger, he did not discharge his weapon. With the pistol pointed straight at the savage, Fred slowly backed up the plank, keeping his foe covered until he himself was on the deck of the schooner.

The barbarian seemed paralyzed. After taking the slight step forward, he paused and stood motionless, staring and transfixed, until his victim was beyond his reach. Then, without a word or exclamation, he turned about, and strode away to where his infuriated and discomfited comrades were watching him with not the slightest doubt he would prevent the escape of the white boy. Within the

succeeding hour the *Albatross* was standing down the bay, with all sail spread; and her long voyage to distant California was begun.

Ah, that journey from the South Seas across the equator and northward into the stern climate of the Temperate Zone!

Not one of those who participated in it can forget it to his dying day. They had many hours of fierce, wild weather, in which the *Albatross* was more than once in danger, but Captain Hardy was a good sailor, he had a good crew, and he safely rode through it all.

Then came those delightful nights which seem peculiar to the Pacific, when the moonlight takes on a witchery of its own, and the calm sea becomes like an enchanted lake as the vessel glides over it.

Captain Hardy was a kind man as well as a skilful sailor, and, since he received a most liberal price for the passage of the three persons who joined him at Wauparmur, the best treatment was given them.

It was on this homeward voyage that Captain Fred Sanders told to Mate Storms and Inez Hawthorne the story of his life, the main points of which have already been hinted to the reader. He ran away from his home in San Francisco when but a mere boy, scarcely ten years old. He was led into all sorts of evil, and was so deeply implicated in a fierce mutiny that, as we have said, he would have been strung up at the yard-arm, excepting for his extreme youth.

He then joined a trading vessel in the South Seas, but the crew were attacked and massacred by a band of pirates, and he was taken off a prisoner. These pirates belonged to the Wauparmur settlement, and they were so pleased with the bravery displayed by the boy that they adopted him among them. There was something in the life which was attractive to the wild American lad, and he embraced it eagerly, and spent five years among them. His bravery, skill, and natural “smartness,” advanced him rapidly along the line of promotion, until, while yet a boy, he became an acknowledged leader.

Captain Fred spent a portion of his time in the settlement, where he showed his good sense, in one respect at least, by picking up all the education he could from the instructors who were to be found there. He succeeded well—which will explain the intelligence he displayed in this respect while conversing with his friends.

He confessed all this, and said further that his mother died before he ran away, and he had no idea where his father was; but, if he were alive, the son

determined to find him, no matter where he might be on the broad earth. Now that his conscience had been awakened, his affection came back with it, and his great fear was that he would not see his parent alive.

It was a source of never-ending wonder to Fred Sanders how it was he could have been so wicked a lad, and how it was that his moral sense could have been so totally eclipsed for years. The gentle, winning words of Inez Hawthorne had first aroused his conscience, until finally it would not allow him to rest until he had made his peace with it.

CHAPTER XXXVII

CONCLUSION

Many a long hour did the two—Fred and Inez—spend in talking together of the past and their future. They were as brother and sister to each other, and their prospects were discussed as if it were fixed that they should never lose sight of each other again.

It was on this voyage, too, that Abram Storms disclosed the plan of action he had decided upon.

“The pearls which I have in my possession I shall dispose of in San Francisco—or at least a portion of them. Those which were my share, according to the original agreement, I shall keep. The single pearl, which will doubtless bring a large price in New York, is the property of Inez, and shall be devoted to her benefit. I intend to place her in a school and make a systematic effort to trace her parentage. The pearls left by Captain Bergen go to you, Fred.”

But here occurred the first stumbling-block. Fred Sanders refused pointedly, but firmly, to accept a single one of them. He declared he had no claim upon any one of that little party, and he would not suffer himself to be dissuaded from his position.

He was yet young, vigorous and ambitious, and with the help of heaven he would carve out his own fortune. Seeing it was useless to argue the question, Storms fell back upon the original intention of Captain Bergen, which was to devote the greater portion of his wealth to charity.

In due time, the *Albatross* glided through the Golden Gate, and our friends found themselves in San Francisco, whose streets all had trod years before.

The first thing Storms did after establishing Inez in pleasant quarters was to hunt up the mother of Captain Bergen, and he prosecuted his search with a heavy heart, bearing the bad news which he did. He was relieved to find that she had been dead fully two years, and the nearest relative of the captain remaining was

his cousin, who was in such affluent circumstances that Storms decided not to give him any portion of the wealth left by the deceased captain.

While Abe Storms was engaged upon his duty, young Fred Sanders was busy.

Although he had revealed a great deal of his past life, there remained one great secret, which he had reserved as a final surprise, especially to Inez Hawthorne, who, as yet, had not formed the slightest idea of what was coming. And what this secret was, and the particulars of not one but two astounding discoveries, we will now proceed to relate.

The grim old sailor, Captain Strathmore, of the steamer *Polynesia,* has made many voyages between San Francisco and the Imperial Japanese city of Tokio since we last saw him, more than three years ago. There is little change, however, in his appearance, and the same kindly heart, tempered in the furnace of affliction and sorrow, throbs beneath his rough exterior. There are few officers holding such a responsible position as he who are greater favorites with the multitudes that go down to the sea in ships, and he promises to perform many valuable years of service to his employers, who appreciate the sterling worth of the brave, noble man.

The steamer has been at the dock several days, and soon is to leave for her long voyage across the Pacific. The captain is sitting in his cabin, reading and writing some letters. By-and-by he lays down his pen, and wheeling his chair around, gives utterance to his thoughts, as he has grown in the habit of doing of late.

“I shall keep in harness till I die, for idleness would take me off in a short time. I have striven to do my duty to God and my fellow-man—and though much sorrow has come to me, yet I shall never murmur nor complain, when I see so much around me and know that no race and no place in society is exempt from it.

“Years ago I placed away my beloved wife in the distant New England hills, and then when the fair bud which she left behind blossomed, that, too, was gathered by the angels and I was left alone.

“The darling son upon whom I centered all my hopes was a wild, wayward boy, and he left my roof and has never come back again. Whether he is or is not, I cannot tell, but I fear that, if he still treads the earth, he is sowing the wind and will reap the whirlwind. I have striven to forget that I was ever afflicted in being the parent of such a child. But alas, the roots of affection are planted so deep that it is hard to withdraw them.

“Then there came to me a second Inez, and I loved her as I did the first. Just as she nestled around my heart, she was taken away in the most surprising manner. I believed then that I should see and clasp her again in my arms. But the years have come and gone, and still she comes not to me. Ah! could I but hear the music of that voice—could I but feel those dimpled arms about my neck as I used to do—–Helloa!”

Just then Fred Sanders walked briskly into the cabin, doffed his hat, made a bow, laughed and said:

“Helloa, pop! how are you?”

Captain Strathmore gasped, stared and replied:

“No—no—no—Fred. Is that you, my own boy?”

And Fred laughed, and then, with tears in his eyes, leaped forward and threw his arms about the old captain’s neck and cried like a child, while the parent, fondly caressing him, cried too, and for a minute neither could speak an intelligible word.

“Pop,” finally said the youth, raising his head and sitting upon the strong knee, “I have been a bad boy. I have brought trouble to you, but I have come thousands of miles to ask your forgiveness and to try to cheer your declining years.”

“What are you talking about declining years for, you young rascal? I never was so strong and hearty in my life. You have made me twenty years younger! Ah, if your mother could but see this! But she is smiling in heaven over it, and so is our darling Inez, who joined her long ago. God be thanked! my boy is dead but is alive again!”

And, laughing and crying, they shook hands, and talked and talked.

“Tell me everything that has befallen you, my dear son.”

And Fred did so, as we have already told the reader, adding that he never so far forgot himself as to dishonor his father by bearing his name. He was known everywhere as Frederic Sanders, whereas his full name was Frederic Sanders Strathmore—which he was now proud to assume, and which, with God’s help, he meant to honor.

They sat a long time in loving converse, and, finally, Captain Strathmore told the story of Inez Hawthorne, who came to and went from him in such an extraordinary manner, and for whom he sighed and longed as he had for his own child, taken from him years before.

Fred smiled in an odd way, while this story was being told, and then asked his father to walk down to the Occidental Hotel with him.

“I have some very particular business,” he added, “and will take it as a great favor if you will so so.”

“Of course I will,” responded the cheery old captain, springing to his feet. “I will walk if I can, but I feel more like flying; and if there’s any more good news, I’ll set up a dancing and yelling carnival.”

“Well, there is good news awaiting you, so you had better get ready to put on the brakes.”

“What do you mean, Fred?”

“Wait, and you will see.”

A few minutes later there was a gentle tap on the door of Inez Hawthorne’s room at the Occidental. She was busy sewing, and she called out in a somewhat startled voice:

“Come in!”

Fred Strathmore threw the door wide open, and, taking hold of his father’s arm, gave him such a vigorous shove that he was forced several steps into the apartment before he could stop himself.

He caught sight of a beautiful, scared face, which stared with something like terror at him for a moment; and then there was a scream, and she made one bound forward.

“Oh, father, father! my own dear father! I am so glad!”

Again the arms were about the neck of the weather-beaten sea-dog; again the kisses were showered upon his bronzed face; again his own lost Inez was in his arms.

Poor Captain Strathmore broke down completely. Instead of shouting and dancing, as he threatened to do, he sat in his chair, and, with Inez on his knee, overrunning with joy, delight and supreme happiness, he could do nothing but cry, cry, cry, and murmur his gratitude and thankfulness.

But, after a time, he did recover himself; and then he became aware for the first time, as did the others, that a fourth party was present. This was Mate Storms, who suspected the situation before he was introduced to the happy captain of the *Polynesia*. Since they all had such an extraordinary story to relate, the captain

had an equally remarkable one to tell them.

The persistent and never-ending investigation which he set on foot concerning the lost Inez had resulted, not in finding her, but in unearthing her entire history.

She was a native of the city of New York, and her father died there before she was a year old. A former suitor of her mother, angered because she would not become his wife, even after her husband was deceased, resorted to the atrocious revenge of stealing Inez when she was but an infant, and he hastened across the continent with her.

When he had kept her there a brief time, he sought to open negotiations with the mother, with a view of delivering back her child on condition that the parent should become his wife; but he was shocked to learn that the poor, heartbroken mother had died from grief, and the child was upon his hands.

This man finally married a woman in San Francisco, but neither of them could ever feel any affection for the little girl (whom, however, they treated quite fairly), and the wife insisted that she should be gotten rid of in some way. Through some whim or other, the abductor had always called her by her right name—Inez Hawthorne—and, seeing some mention of it in the newspapers, he resorted to the means which we described, at the opening of this story, for ridding himself forever of her.

As soon as Inez was safely placed on the steamer, this wicked couple disappeared, and no further trace of them could be found. Captain Strathmore, who was anxious to punish them, believed they had left the country. Inez, therefore, was an orphan, and while a gentle sadness filled her affectionate heart—as she heard the particulars of her own history for the first time, and reflected upon that poor, heartbroken mother, who had gone to her rest long ago—she could not feel any poignant grief, for her memory of the lost one was too shadowy and faint. But she had found a home and friends for life.

Abram Storms explained that he had met three English gentlemen who were making a tour of the world in a large steam yacht; and, since they possessed abundant means, and were very social, he had shown them the pearls in his possession and offered to dispose of them all. They were delighted with the specimens, and especially with the enormous one belonging to Inez. They offered twenty-five thousand dollars for the single one, and just one hundred thousand for the rest. This was less than Storms had counted upon—and doubtless less than he could have secured by consulting leading lapidaries in other parts of the world—but he was inclined to end the transaction by accepting

it, and he asked the advice of his friends. After fully discussing the matter, it was agreed to close with the offer, and the exchange was completed that afternoon, and the money belonging to Inez was placed in the bank the next morning.

Since Storms was anxious to return to his home, and since there was no call for his remaining longer in San Francisco, it was arranged that Inez should enter an excellent school in the Golden Gate City, where she should spend several years, while Captain Strathmore was to act as her guardian until she should attain her legal majority. The captain's position enabled him to find a berth under him for Fred on the steamer *Polynesia*, and the boy sailed with him on the next voyage to Tokio, and on many a subsequent one.

Abe Storms is as poor as he was before he made his voyage to the South Seas, for, having dedicated the wealth left by Captain Bergen to charitable purposes, he felt it his duty to do the same with his own, and, since he has no one besides himself dependent upon him, he is not troubled by fears of not being able to make a comfortable living.

THE END

ad page

ad page

ad page

ad page

ad page

ad page

ad page

ad page

ad page

ad page

ad page

ad page

End of Project Gutenberg's Adrift on the Pacific, by Edward S. Ellis

*** END OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK ADRIFT ON THE PACIFIC ***

***** This file should be named 29667-h.htm or 29667-h.zip *****
This and all associated files of various formats will be found in:
http://www.gutenberg.org/2/9/6/6/29667/

Produced by Roger Frank and the Online Distributed
Proofreading Team at http://www.pgdp.net

Updated editions will replace the previous one--the old editions
will be renamed.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg-tm electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg-tm License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg-tm License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg-tm.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg-tm License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg-tm work in a format other than "Plain Vanilla ASCII" or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg-tm web site (www.gutenberg.net), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original "Plain Vanilla ASCII" or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg-tm License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg-tm works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works provided that

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg-tm works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg-tm trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, "Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation."

- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg-tm License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg-tm works.

- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.

- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg-tm works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg-tm electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from both the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and Michael Hart, the owner of the Project Gutenberg-tm trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread public domain works in creating the Project Gutenberg-tm collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain "Defects," such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the "Right of Replacement or Refund" described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg-tm trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg-tm electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH F3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you 'AS-IS' WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTIBILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the

trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg-tm work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg-tm work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg-tm

Project Gutenberg-tm is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg-tm's goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg-tm collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg-tm and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation web page at http://www.pglaf.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Its 501(c)(3) letter is posted at http://pglaf.org/fundraising. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's principal office is located at 4557 Melan Dr. S. Fairbanks, AK, 99712., but its volunteers and employees are scattered throughout numerous locations. Its business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887, email business@pglaf.org. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's web site and official page at http://pglaf.org

For additional contact information:

Dr. Gregory B. Newby
Chief Executive and Director
gbnewby@pglaf.org

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg-tm depends upon and cannot survive without wide spread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations

($1 to $5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit http://pglaf.org

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg Web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: http://pglaf.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works.

Professor Michael S. Hart is the originator of the Project Gutenberg-tm concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For thirty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg-tm eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg-tm eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as Public Domain in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our Web site which has the main PG search facility:

http://www.gutenberg.net

This Web site includes information about Project Gutenberg-tm, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.