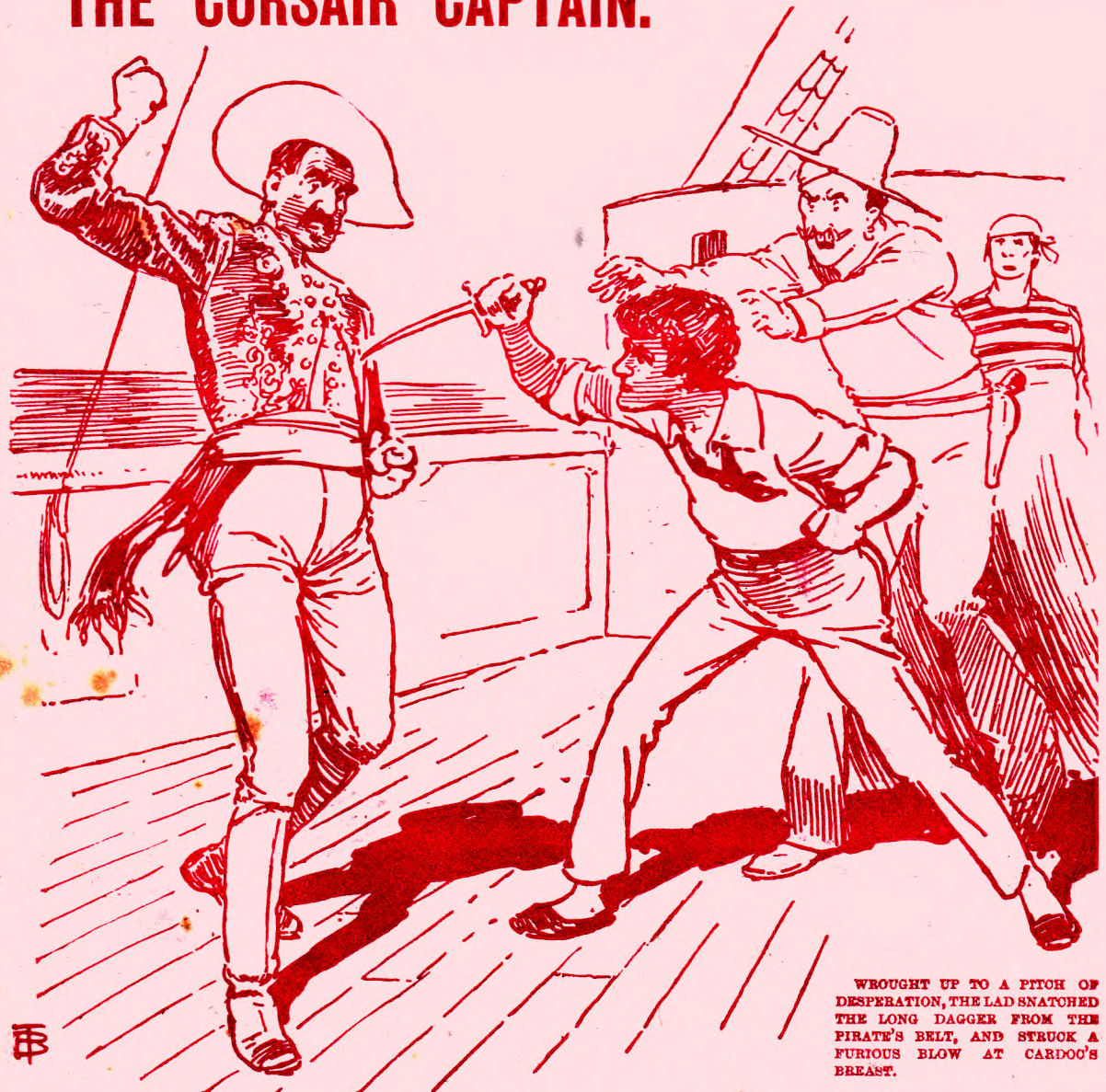


# THE UNION JACK



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No. 50. A LONG, COMPLETE NOVEL  
THE CORSAIR CAPTAIN.



WROUGHT UP TO A FITCH OF  
DESPERATION, THE LAD SNATCHED  
THE LONG DAGGER FROM THE  
PIRATE'S BELT, AND STRUCK A  
FURIOUS BLOW AT CARDON'S  
BREAST.

PUBLISHED EVERY FRIDAY. AT TUDOR STREET AND PRIMROSE HILL, LONDON, E.C.

# CORSAIR CAPTAIN.

A Story of the Slave Trade.

By CHARLES HAMILTON.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE "SEA QUEEN" AND HER CAPTAIN—A SAIL IN SIGHT.

In a small bay not many miles north of Loango, on the West Coast of Africa, a schooner rode at anchor.

It was mid-day, and the rays of a tropical sun beat down pitilessly upon the ocean and the sandy shore. A faint breeze ruffled the surface of the ocean, and raised clouds of dust on the beach. Further inland a mist hung over the landscape, caused by the fetid exhalations of the swamps and marshes



SUDDENLY A MAN LEAPED OVER THE TAFFRAIL, AND COMMENCED SWIMMING TOWARDS THE GOVERNMENT CRUISER.

that abounded near the Majana River, which emptied into the little bay.

On the stern of the schooner the name "Sea Queen" was neatly painted.

She was a trim little barque of about two hundred tons burden, and built regardless of expense. Her hull was low, and her masts taper; her sails white, and her decks the same.

She was painted tastefully: the masts black, the bulwarks green, with a thin red streak just above the water-line.

A beautiful vessel she was, yet she was engaged in the worst of all traffics—the odious slave-trade. No vessel was better known to the cruisers on the station than the "Sea Queen." Many times had she been chased by British ships; but the wonderful speed of the schooner and the skill of her commander enabled her to show a clean pair of heels to her pursuers.

Captain Carandel, of the "Sea Queen," was a Spaniard—a tall, dark, lithe fellow of about thirty-five, vigorous and

muscular withal. He sat in his cabin in company with his first officer, engaged in conversation. His attire was that of a Spanish naval officer. His jacket was velvet, adorned with an abundance of gold lace; a sash of crimson silk encircled his waist, and in it a long knife and a pair of pistols were thrust; a silver-hilted sword hung by his side, and report said that the slaver was not loth to use it when occasion offered. For rumour had it that Captain Carandel combined the trade of a pirate with that of a slaver whenever it happened to serve his turn.

Of the "Sea Queen's" captain some strange stories were told. It was said by some that he had been an officer in the Spanish Navy, and had been dismissed for some fault, and had then turned pirate and slaver.

Whatever his past, it was certain that he was now an unscrupulous adventurer, and his vessel was dreaded by all the traders on the coast.

But what of him with whom the captain talked? The second in command of the "Sea Queen" was a Portuguese—a dark-skinned, black-eyed fellow, lithe and sinewy, with black hair and brows. His name was Antonio Baricas.

"Baricas," exclaimed Captain Carandel suddenly, looking across the table at his lieutenant, who sat opposite him sipping a glass of sparkling Madeira, "I do not half like this conduct of old Gumbo!"

"What is the matter, captain?" asked the Portuguese lieutenant.

"Read this," replied Carandel, passing a paper over to Baricas; "it was brought by the nigger runner who came on board ten minutes ago."

Antonio Baricas glanced over the paper, and grinned as he read it. It was a note from King Gumbo, one of the potentates of the Congo River country, chief of a powerful tribe, and one of the biggest slave-dealers on the coast.

It was the special boast of this dusky monarch that he could speak and write English, and the note was in that language. It ran as follows:

"To Captain Candle. Kum to the town; I hav kargo of blaak ivory reddy four yew. Ther is koo danger of cruisers at present."

"What do you think of it, Antonio?" asked the commander of the "Sea Queen," when the lieutenant had finished perusing the note.

"I think his sable Majesty has invented a new style of spelling," answered Baricas.

"Yes," said Carandel, laughing; "he prides himself upon his English. But what do you think of his conduct in inviting us to his village to fetch the slaves?"

"Why, that's all right, I think. He says he has a good cargo ready, and—"

"But hitherto he has always sent the slaves down the river in canoes," said the captain, interrupting the lieutenant. "Why should he want us to go to his place this time?"

"Not knowing, can't say. He can't mean to try any tricks, do you think?"

"He's a sly old rascal; as treacherous as a wolf!" declared the Spaniard. "He would be glad to murder us all, if he thought he could gain anything by it. I don't trust him."

"But it's to his interest to keep in with us," urged the lieutenant; "he has nothing to gain by playing us false, that I can see."

"There's no telling," replied Captain Carandel, shaking his

head in a doubtful sort of way. "He would betray us to the cruisers if he could gain anything by doing so."

"I am sure of that," assented the lieutenant; "but whatever reward he could get would be small, and he would lose the profit he makes on his trade with us."

"He says there is no danger of falling in with cruisers," the captain remarked, in a thoughtful sort of way.

"That is true, in my opinion," replied Baricas.

"The schooner that chased us the other day, after the affair with the brig, must be somewhere about," said Captain Carandel.

"The 'Little Wonder,' you mean?"

"Yes."

"I don't think she can be near here," the Portuguese said.

"Why not?"

"Why, I don't think her commander could follow on our track so easily as to find out our retreat."

"Perhaps so. But we'll have to be very careful, you know, with our fair captive on board."

"I think Gumbo means to act honestly," said the Portuguese, after a pause.

"Yes; he has never given us any reason to doubt him yet," the captain observed reflectively. "But these blacks are very slippery customers."

"True," replied Antonio Baricas, with a smile that had a hidden meaning; "they are sometimes very treacherous."

"I want to get away from this locality as soon as I can," Captain Carandel went on, with a troubled look. "There is in this region a foe of mine who is seeking my life."

"Who is that, captain?"

"An old enemy," replied Carandel evasively.

"If you distrust old Gumbo you can take a strong party with you when you go for the 'black ivory,'" suggested Baricas.

"Yes, I can do that, of course; and if the old rascal tries any trickery we can give him a lesson."

"Yes; that would be easy."

"But we must avoid conflicts with the niggers as much as we can," said the captain. "If we get to fighting the native chiefs our trade will be ruined."

Just then a shout on deck interrupted the conversation.

"A sail in sight!" was the cry that came down the hatchway.

"A sail!" exclaimed Captain Carandel, as he rose from his seat and ascended the companion.

There were some high cliffs at the entrance to the bay, which concealed any vessel anchored inside from the outer ocean. The look-out at the masthead could see over the rocks out on the sea. The gleam of a white sail just rising above the horizon had caused his shout.

"Confound the luck!" exclaimed Captain Carandel, as he went on deck. "Ten to one it is a cruiser!"

"Very likely it's the 'Little Wonder,' sir," observed the second mate of the "Sea Queen," a long, raw-boned Yankee, rejoicing in the name of Hardin.

"How could she have found her way here?" exclaimed the captain.

"Mebbe that cussed deserter guided her here," suggested Hardin.

"Jack Travers, do you mean?"

"Yes."

"It's possible!" the slaver assented, scowling.

"I feel certain of it, captain," declared Hardin. "I know he'd do it if he could, to get square with you and to get the reward offered by the Admiralty for information regarding the slaver 'Sea Queen.'"

"It's possible!" said Carandel, with a darkening brow. "If I find that it is so, and I ever have the good fortune to meet him again, he will wish he had never been born!"

"Shall we slip out to sea, captain?" asked Antonio Baricas, who had come on deck.

"No," was the reply; "there's no wind, and we couldn't escape."

"The craft is heading for this bay, sir!" sang out the man with the telescope in the maintop.

"Can you make her out now?"

Yes, sir; a schooner, with all sails set."

"What flag?"

"I can't see. She's coming on fast, and bringing the breeze with her."

"A cursed cruiser, for certain!" exclaimed the commander, with an oath. "There will be a stiff breeze from the sea soon, and if we run out we shall come to grief on the sand-banks."

"What shall we do then, sir?"

"Run up the river."

"And hide until the cruiser departs?"

"Yes."

"Unless she takes a fancy to send her boats up the river," suggested the American.

"If she does we'll have to fight," continued Captain Carandel.

"Now, man the boats and hoist the anchor! Look alive, men!" The sailors now all swarmed on deck. The number of men

for such a small craft was remarkable. Full eighty men were there, when twenty or thirty would have been ample.

They were of a dozen different nations, although Spaniards and Lascars predominated. All were armed to the teeth. Their sashes were full of knives and pistols, and each man wore a cutlass. Two boats were lowered, manned, and attached by strong hawsers to the "Sea Queen." The anchor was raised; then the men bent to their oars, and began to tow the schooner into the little river that emptied into the bay.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE "LITTLE WONDER"—THE BRIG AND THE SLAVER—THE CHASE—JACK TRAVERS'S STORY.

Bowling along over the blue waters of the sunny Gulf of Guinea, before a ten-knot breeze, was a vessel which will play a prominent part in our story. She was a schooner, and almost a counterpart of the "Sea Queen." On her quarter could be seen the name "Little Wonder," in neatly-painted letters. She was well armed for a vessel of her size, carrying a long brass thirty-pounder amidships, fixed upon a pivot, so that it could be turned in any direction, and on each side of her white deck a row of six twelve-pounders. Around her masts were racks containing muskets, cutlasses, and boarding-pikes, all polished till they shone like silver.

On the quarter-deck, seated on a camp-stool, was a young man reading a newspaper. Herbert Somers, commander of the schooner, was dressed in the usual uniform of a lieutenant of the British Navy. Although only about twenty-two years of age, he had already attained that rank. He had belonged to the frigate "Cleopatra," and had been selected to command the "Little Wonder" on account of his well-known skill in seamanship and his knowledge of the African coast. The depredations committed by the "Sea Queen" among the shipping had induced the authorities at Sierra Leone to send several ships in search of her. The "Little Wonder" was one of them.

Herbert Somers had spent five years on the station, and was intimately acquainted with all the rivers, bays, and inlets on the coast from the Gaboon to the Congo. Although youthful, he had distinguished himself several times by his coolness and courage, and so he came to be entrusted with the command of the "Little Wonder."

Near Somers sat Harry Estcourt, a youth of about seventeen, a middy belonging to Somers's ship. He was engaged in the task of peeling an orange when suddenly he jumped up and dropped it on the deck.

"A gun, by Jove!" he cried excitedly.

Lieutenant Somers rose hastily and threw down the newspaper he had been reading, for echoing faintly over the water came that deep, sullen boom that can never be mistaken for anything save the report of a heavy gun.

"The deuce!" he exclaimed. "What can that be?"

"A gun, sir," said Harry, with a grin.

"I know that, my lad." Then, placing his hands to his mouth, he hailed the look-out. "Ho, the masthead!" he shouted.

"Ay, ay, sir!" came back the reply.

"Any sail in sight?"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"Where?"

"There's two, sir. Just sighted them between us and the Island of Annabon."

"How far away?"

"Four miles, I think, sir."

"Why didn't you see them before?" the officer shouted.

"Was looking towards the coast, sir."

"The fool has been asleep!" muttered the lieutenant savagely. "Harry, fetch me my glass—quick!"

"Yes, sir," and Estcourt ran down into the little cabin for the telescope. Another cannon-shot was heard a minute later.

As soon as the middy returned, Herbert took the glass and viewed the two ships. They could be easily seen from the deck, and would have been noticed before but for the dark, rocky island in the background.

"A schooner and a brig," muttered Herbert, as he surveyed the strange craft.

The state of affairs could easily be seen. The brig was a clumsy-looking old tub, and the schooner was a clipper—no other, in fact, than the "Sea Queen." The latter was attacking the brig, and the reports which had startled the men of the "Little Wonder" came from her long gun.

The brig was now close to the cliffs of the Isle of Annabon, and the "Sea Queen" was about a mile from her. The "Little Wonder" was three or four miles from the slaver, all three vessels being in a line. Every eye on board the "Sea Queen" was bent upon the brig, and so they had not noticed the approach of the Government vessel.

"By Jupiter! I believe that schooner is the 'Sea Queen,' the vessel I am looking for," thought Herbert Somers. "I am told she is an almost exact counterpart of my vessel, and that schooner certainly fits the description."

"Clap on an' sail!" he cried, turning to the seamen. "I believe that is the 'Sea Queen.' At any rate, she is a pirate, and if we capture her it will be prize-money in your pockets."

The sailors gave a cheer and worked with a will.

Every stitch of canvas that would draw was set, and the "Little Wonder" fairly flew through the yielding water.

"Beat to quarters!" commanded the lieutenant.

Arms were served out to the sailors, and men took their places at the guns.

Meanwhile the cannonade continued. The "Sea Queen" was armed with a long thirty-pounder like the one aboard the "Wonder," and she was using it with effect. Every shot that was fired was skillfully aimed, and struck right into the unfortunate brig. Several shots had struck her between wind and water, and the contest could have had but one ending had not the "Little Wonder" appeared upon the scene. Indeed, the crew of the brig were not making any resistance, for their ship was not armed; but they made efforts to escape the pirate schooner.

"Well just take a hand in this little game," muttered Herbert Somers.

"Load the Long Tom!" he called out; and the gunner, Nathaniel Daly, hastened to obey.

Taking up his speaking-trumpet, Herbert hailed the "Sea Queen," which was by this time only a mile or so distant.

"Schooner, ahoy!"

The British seamen could see the sudden confusion on board the "Sea Queen" as the voice of the young lieutenant rang out clear and distinct across the calm water. Herbert again took up his telescope and scanned the slaver vessel. He saw men run out on the yards, and saw the sails bent. The slaver-ship ceased her attack upon the merchant brig, and began to glide through the water at a spanking rate. No answer was made to Herbert's hail.

"Make chase!" said the officer; and the "Little Wonder" went tearing along in the track of the "Sea Queen."

Then suddenly a man leaped over the taffrail of the latter vessel, splashed into the sea, and commenced to swim towards the Government cruiser. A volley of bullets followed him into the water, and he appeared to be hit, for he sank below the surface.

"What can that be?" exclaimed Herbert.

"Looks like a prisoner escaping, sir," replied the midshipman, Harry Estcourt.

"We'll pick him up, at any rate," observed the young commander.

In a few minutes the "Little Wonder" reached the spot where the man had sunk, and she was quickly thrown up into the wind. Then a boat was dropped, Harry sprang in with half a dozen men, and a search was made for the supposed wounded man. In a few minutes his head appeared beside the boat.

"Lend me a hand!" he said.

Harry seized him by the collar and dragged him into the boat. In a few minutes he was taken aboard the "Little Wonder."

"Are you wounded?" Herbert asked him.

"No, sir."

"You sank when the volley was fired?"

"I knew they would fire, that was why I sank," explained the man, who was a big, broad-shouldered English sailor.

"I see. You are one of the crew, I presume?"

"You are mistaken, sir," answered the man quickly. "Do you know what that vessel is?"

"A slaver."

"Yes, and worse. She is a pirate when her captain can hoist the black flag with safety," continued the slaver.

"Who is her captain?"

"A Spaniard; his name is Carandel."

"Then that schooner is the 'Sea Queen'?"

"Yes; that is her name."

"Brig signalling, sir," interrupted the boatswain just then. Herbert glanced towards the merchant vessel, and his brow darkened.

"Sinking; come to our aid!" he made out.

The young officer glanced towards the "Sea Queen." If he went to the brig he would be compelled to relinquish the chase.

"Give her a shot," he said to Daly.

"Ay, ay, sir!" answered the gunner; and the boom of the thirty-pounder echoed across the waters. The ball splashed into the water half a mile to the windward of the slaver.

The gunner looked at Somers inquiringly.

The officer nodded in answer to the unspoken question. Again the gun was loaded. The old gunner dwelt long on his aim; he carefully sighted the piece. Again the roar of the cannon broke on the air.

The leaden messenger struck the starboard bulwark of the "Sea Queen," smashed through the planks, skipped over the

deck, killing two men in its passage, and then rolled into the souppens—spent. A couple of feet more to leeward and it would have settled the mainmast. But it was impossible to do more. The merchant ship was frantically signalling for aid. Reluctantly the young officer turned the head of his schooner back towards the island; before long he was on board the brig. He found that she was the "Pretty Mary," of Bristol, bound for Fernando Po with Government stores. She was badly knocked about by the shot of the slaver, and it took Herbert and his crew several hours to aid the brig's crew to repair her sufficiently to enable her to resume her voyage. Although chafing with anxiety to go in chase of Captain Carandel and his schooner, Herbert could not refuse to stay and help the disabled craft. It was nightfall before the "Little Wonder" left the brig.

Then Herbert Somers had the man who had escaped from the "Sea Queen" sent into his cabin.

"What is your name, my man?" he asked.

"Jack Travers," was the reply.

"What are you?"

"A man, sir."

"I don't mean that," said Herbert, with a smile. "I mean, what occupation do you follow?"

"I am a sailor, sir."

"Not one of the slavers?"

"No, sir. I was captured by them."

"When?"

"Three months ago, sir."

"Where?"

"The 'Sea Queen' attacked our ship, the 'Titania,' of Liverpool. She took out of her two men and a lady passenger."

"What for?"

"The two men were my cousin and me, and the lady was Miss Alice Trent. He took us for seamen, and the lady—well, you can guess."

"The scoundrel!" cried Herbert, springing to his feet.

"Has he harmed her?"

"No, sir; not as yet. He wants her to marry him, but she won't consent."

"So the pirate has fallen in love with his captive. Is that it?"

"I don't think so, sir. There's suthin' in it I can't understand. The slaver captain attacked our vessel for the purpose of catching Miss Trent, so he must have known beforehand that she would be on board. He seems to hate rather than love her. It's some old grudge, I reckon. He wanted me to fire on the brig, and had me whipped when I refused. That was why I jumped into the sea, although I knew there wasn't much chance of my being saved by your vessel."

"You are a brave man!" exclaimed Herbert. "Would you like to join my crew?"

"If you are going after the 'Sea Queen,' sir."

"I am, I assure you."

"Then I'm your man. I'd give ten years of my life to get within reach of Carandel!"

"Why?"

"To return the lashes he gave me!" exclaimed Travers, clenching his huge fists. "The Spanish rascal! I'll teach him to flog an Englishman!"

"Well," remarked Herbert, smiling, "you may have the opportunity soon. By the way, do you know what place the 'Sea Queen' will be likely to make for?"

"Yes," answered the Jack Tar confidently.

"Where?" asked Herbert eagerly.

"Portobello Bay, sir, at the head of the Majana River, just above the mouth of the Congo. She's bound there to get a cargo of slaves from King Gumbo, up the river."

"Do you think you could guide me there?"

"Certain, sir. I've been aboard the 'Sea Queen' three months, and I've been there twice. The captain has been waiting for Gumbo to get the slaves ready for embarkation, and he's been cruising about while he waited, and plundering all the small craft he fell in with."

"I see. Then to Portobello Bay we'll go."

And through the gathering darkness the "Little Wonder" sailed onward to the coast on the track of the "Sea Queen."

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE STRANGE SCHOONER—THE SLAVER'S CAPTIVE—UP THE RIVER—THE BLOCK HOUSE.

Captain Carandel was well acquainted with the little stream called the Majana, and he found no difficulty in piloting his vessel up the river when the strange sail hove in sight.

The Spaniard believed that the new-comer was the "Little Wonder," for he knew that Herbert Somers would be certain to chase him after his piratical attack upon the brig; but when he climbed to the masthead and viewed the approaching schooner through a telescope, he saw that he was mistaken.

The vessel was like the "Little Wonder," but the sharp eyes

of the slaver captain easily detected a difference. The cruiser's hull was painted in dark brown with a thin red line above the water-mark, while this vessel was black with a yellow line.

"It isn't the cruiser," he said to Baricas, when he descended to the deck, "but it's her counterpart in everything except paint. I never knew before that there were two vessels in existence that so nearly resembled the 'Sea Queen.'"

"I did," answered the Portuguese. "I heard a yarn about these three vessels. They were all built by a shipbuilder in Glasgow, who designed them to serve as tenders to men-of-war. One of them—the 'Little Wonder'—is still doing that; this vessel was sold, and you bought it, you remember, at Sierra Leone; the third one was cut out by some unknown persons in the Bay of Fernando Po, and has never been seen since."

"What was her name?"

"The 'Black Swan.'"

"I expect this vessel is the 'Black Swan,' then," observed Captain Carandel thoughtfully. "If so, I should think she is more likely to be a friend than a foe."

"Why, captain?"

"Why, she could only have been cut out for an illegal purpose. I suppose she is a slaver."

"Perhaps; or a pirate."

"Yes, or a pirate. In either case she won't harm us."

"Why should she not?"

"We're birds of a feather, you know."

"I reckon that won't make much difference to 'em, cap'n,"



OUTLASS IN HAND, THE STURDY SEAMEN SWARMED INTO THE POLACCA.

observed Hardin, the second mate of the "Sea Queen." "We oughtn't ter trust 'em too far."

"Just so," coincided Baricas.

"Well," continued the Spanish captain, "we will keep on up the river, and then in all probability we shall not be seen by the men of the 'Black Swan.' We don't want any fighting if we can help it."

"A leetle scrimmage would jest liven us up a bit," suggested the Yankee, who was a confirmed fire-eater.

"No. In a fight there is nothing to be gained but hard knocks," replied the prudent slaver. "Besides, I don't want to risk injuring our passenger."

Saying this, the captain went below, while Hardin winked at Baricas in a decidedly knowing way.

"Is it time yet?" he queried.

"Not yet," replied the Portuguese, grinning like a demon; "we'll let him run on for awhile. Wait till we get up the river, and then our gallant captain will hear something drop."

"How many of the men are for you?"

"Thirty, as yet. Others will follow."

"Good! And King Gumbo?"

"Yes."

"We're all right, then. Remember, the lady is to fall to my share," said the American.

A smile that was indefinable glided over the dark face of Antonio Baricas.

"Of course," he replied.

Evidently there was trouble brewing on board the "Sea Queen."

While the two officers were conversing the captain descended the hatchway and entered a small cabin. The apartment was luxuriously furnished, and looked more like a lady's boudoir than a cabin in a slave ship. On a soft divan reclined a young lady, whose face, though pale and anxious, was yet of rare loveliness. Her eyes were deep blue, her mouth small, with red lips and pearly little teeth; and a mass of dark-brown hair surmounted her shapely little head. Her form was graceful and lithe, her hands small and white; her features were regular and clearly marked.

An expression of suffering was upon her beautiful face; it changed to a look of dislike when the slaver captain entered.

"Well," began the commander, as he seated himself upon a couch, after closing the door. "How do you find yourself to-day, my fair captive?"

Alice Trent made no reply.

"Come," continued Carandel, "don't be contrary, little one."

Answer me."

"Why do you persist in annoying me?" the captive exclaimed. "If you will not set me free, you might at least relieve me of your hateful presence!"

"A little spitfire, by Jove!" ejaculated the slaver, smiling in an amused way. "But really, cara mia, you shouldn't be angry with me. I am your devoted admirer, I assure you."

Alice was silent.

"I did you the honour to make you a certain proposal a short time ago," went on the Spaniard; "allow me to renew it now."

"My answer is the same."

"You refuse?"

"I do, most decidedly!"

"You are very foolish, mi muchacha. If you marry me you will live a very happy life on board this vessel. You will be queen of the schooner; you shall have slaves to wait on you. All this if you will become Mrs. Captain Carandel."

"I never will!"

"I think I can make you change your mind," the slaver answered.

"I won't, and that settles it!"

"It does not settle it, my dear; not at all. I am not the sort of man to be foiled by a silly girl's whims."

"Why do you persecute me so? I have never injured you in any way."

"Haven't you?"

"No."

"Perhaps you have a bad memory. You do not know me, do you?"

"I do not—other than as Captain Carandel, the slaver," replied the girl.

"You don't recollect meeting me in the past, eh?"

"Certainly not."

"Well, you were very young at the time," the slaver observed, in a reflective sort of way, while a hard, grim look came over his face: "but if your father were here he would know me."

"Who are you?"

"At present I am Captain Carandel."

"Is that your real name?"

"No. Listen to me, Alice Trent. It was your father who made me what I am, and I have sworn to take vengeance upon him. You are in my power, and he will soon be. Then you will find out who Captain Carandel is!"

The girl shuddered as she saw the expression of diabolical ferocity that flashed across the face of the slaver captain as he spoke. He looked like a fiend.

"How has my father injured you?" Alice faltered, terrified by the look on Carandel's face.

"I was an officer in the Spanish Navy before I met Henry Trent. I owe to him my disgrace and dismissal. He caused

me to become what I now am—a human wolf. And he shall soon suffer for it!"

"You cannot harm him; he is safe at Fernando Po," replied Alice Trent.

"You are mistaken."

"Oh, no! I was on my way there to join him when I was kidnapped by you."

"Perhaps so. But he was sent by the Governor to make a survey of the coast a few miles north of here. I have despatched a party of my men to meet him there. In twenty-four hours he will be at my fort up the river, and I shall get there about the same time."

"Can this be true?" murmured Alice, in dismay.

"Oh, yes! it's true," exclaimed the Spaniard. "Through my spy in Fernando Po, I learned that he would be sent, and so I was ready for him. I found out from the same source that he expected his daughter in the 'Titania,' from Liverpool, and so lay in wait for the vessel."

"Is my father a prisoner now?" asked the girl, with sinking heart.

"He is, and twenty-four hours hence you shall see him. Alice Trent, when I captured you I intended to kill you before the eyes of your father, before I killed him. But now I have altered my mind. You shall marry me instead."

"Never!"

"I'll give you your choice—marriage or death."

"I prefer death a thousand times!" the brave girl cried.

"You have twenty-four hours to consider the matter in," the slaver answered, rising as he spoke.

"My answer then will be the same as now."

"We'll see about that." And then Captain Carandel went out of the little cabin, closing the door behind him with a slam.

Meanwhile the schooner glided rapidly along between banks covered with verdure. Huge trees reared their branches aloft, mangroves lined the banks, and masses of foliage floated on the bosom of the stream. Here and there a hideous alligator or slinky lizard would be seen wallowing in the thick mud.

At the helm of the "Sea Queen" stood a tall, swarthy mulatto, named Panajos. He was a native of the country, and a skilled pilot. Avoiding the rocks and reefs of the foul, marshy channel, he steered the schooner in safety for more than four miles. Then the "Sea Queen" anchored.

At that spot the river widened into a lagoon, and on the north bank stood a strongly-built log-house, surrounded by a wooden palisade. Evidently the hut was intended to serve as a fort in case of emergency, for the windows were provided with thick shutters pierced with loop-holes.

"Fetch the prisoner on deck!" commanded Captain Carandel, when the schooner had come to anchor.

The order was at once obeyed. Alice Trent was conducted to the deck.

"Well, my fair one, you see your future home," remarked the slaver, pointing to the house on the bank.

Alice did not answer, but scanned the faces of the crew, as if appealing for aid. Her heart sank as her gaze turned from one villainous face to the next. Only one seemed to express sympathy, and that was the face of honest Bill Travers, the sailor who had been taken prisoner by Carandel and forced to join his crew. He was the cousin of the Jack Travers who had escaped to the "Little Wonder" a week before.

Alice Travers felt cheered by the sight. Here, at least, was a friend who would aid her if he could.

"Lower a boat!" ordered the slaver captain; and when this was done he handed the fair prisoner into it, and, when he had seated himself by her side, the two were quickly rowed ashore, and the captain, with affected gallantry, assisted Alice to land.

Five minutes later Alice Trent was securely imprisoned in a small apartment, behind a barred and bolted door.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE CORSAIR CAPTAIN—THE BOY SLAVE—IN THE BAY.

And now let us revisit the vessel whose appearance had caused the slaver captain to beat such a precipitate retreat from the little bay at the mouth of the Majana River. As stated, the new arrival was a schooner of the same size as the "Sea Queen." Painted in small white letters on her stern was the name "Black Swan." Her hull, bulwarks, masts, and blocks were all painted in sombre black, contrasting strangely with the snowy white of her decks and her polished brass capstan, that shone like gold in the rays of the mid-day sun. The vessel was armed, too, in precisely the same manner as the two already described; in fact, the three schooners were as alike as three peas.

Christo Cardoc, captain of the "Black Swan," commanded a crew of sixty or seventy, mostly English and American, with a mixture of negroes and Lascars, and a score of Malays.

Quite a young man was Captain Cardoc—not more than thirty—with a swarthy skin that showed his Southern blood. Clad

in a gorgeous costume—velvet jacket, trimmed with gold lace, boots of Cordova leather, sash of crimson silk, vest of satin, and hat ornamented with a gold cord—he looked what he was, a pirate chief.

When the look-out aboard the "Sea Queen" discovered the "Black Swan" approaching the bay, the corsair was dining in company with his officers. Near Captain Cardoc sat Lucas Dinwiddie, first mate, an American from Virginia; Carolus Bernal, a Swede, the second mate; and Red Garcias, a Spaniard, third mate.

A lad dressed in a fanciful Eastern costume waited at table. The appearance of the boy was so striking that few would have passed him without a second glance. He was about sixteen years of age, tall, well-formed, lithe, yet firm-set; with a handsome face, and long, curly brown hair. His features were of the Anglo-Saxon type, bronzed by continual exposure to a tropical sun; his good looks, however, were marred by a sullen, discontented expression. Whenever he glanced at Captain Cardoc a look of hatred gleamed in his dark eyes. Saxon—for so the pirates called him—was the drudge of the ship.

Dinwiddie, when Saxon had left the cabin, remarked:

"That's a strange boy of yours, captain. Where did you pick him up?"

"At a sale of slaves at Mayomba," replied Cardoc the Corsair, puffing at his cigar.

"Why, the boy is white!"

"So I believe, although the dealer who sold him to me declared that he was a mulatto."

"Well's that's strange, I declare!" said Dinwiddie.

"How could he have got into the slave-dealer's hands?" observed Carolus Bernal.

"Can't say," replied the captain. "All I know is that the dealer sold him to me as a slave. I bought him because I thought he would be handy as a cabin-boy."

"You call him Saxon—is that his name?"

"I don't know his name. I call him Saxon because he has an English look. He's no more a negro than I am."

"That's plain," observed Red Garcias.

"Where are we bound now, captain?" asked Lucas Dinwiddie, changing the subject.

"To Portobello Bay," answered Cardoc.

"Not for slaves?"

"Oh, no! I've done trading in black ivory. We're after something else now."

"Is it a secret, captain?" asked Bernal.

"Not at all. I intend to hunt up the schooner we've heard so much about lately."

"You don't expect to gain much by plundering a slaver, do you, captain?"

"Yes, I do; in more ways than one. Besides, I have a personal reason."

"Oh, I see!"

"An enemy of mine is aboard the 'Sea Queen,'" the pirate captain explained. "I intend to capture the 'Sea Queen' to get at him. Then we can sell the vessel in some port, and pick out the best of the slaves to join our crew."

"What is the name of the man you are in search of, captain?" asked Dinwiddie.

"Juan Cavillo, a Spaniard. I saw him at Loango four months ago. I immediately followed him, intending to force him into a duel at once, and settle the account that had been open so long. But he saw me, and, without waiting to fight, he sprang into a boat and rowed to his vessel, instantly weighed anchor, and stood out to sea. I was baffled for the time. I inquired the name of the schooner I saw him board, and found that it was the 'Sea Queen.' That is why I know that Juan Cavillo is aboard the 'Sea Queen!'"

"Land ho!" called out the man at the wheel at this moment.

"Come, let us go on deck, gentlemen," added Captain Cardoc, rising from his seat.

They ascended the companion.

The thin blue line that marked the coast was plainly visible from the deck.

"Steer for Portobello Bay," ordered Captain Cardoc. And half an hour later the "Black Swan" passed over the sand-bar and anchored in the spot which only an hour previous had been occupied by the "Sea Queen."

## CHAPTER V.

### THE POLACCA—AT CLOSE QUARTERS—PURSUING THE PIRATES—SAXON.

Herbert Somers did not let the grass grow under his feet. He was an active young officer, and eager to distinguish himself and gain promotion by capturing the slaver. After Jack Travers had expressed his confidence in his ability to guide the ship to Portobello Bay, where he expected Captain Carandel would go to get his cargo of "black ivory" on board, the young commander at once repaired thither.

The seaman knew the whereabouts of the bay pretty well,

and before the week was out the "Little Wonder" was in sight of the coast a few miles from the Majana River.

Early on the day when the "Black Swan" entered Portobello Bay the look-out reported a sail in sight. Herbert made out through his glass that the vessel was a polacca—a small craft common in the Mediterranean and the Gulf of Guinea. The little barque was anchored in a small indentation of the coast, hardly large enough to be called a bay, and its only sail was furled. The British ensign floated lazily in the breeze at the masthead.

"Run in shore," Herbert said to Jack Travers, who was at the wheel. "We'll speak this vessel, and see if she has seen anything of the 'Sea Queen.'" The lieutenant had taken a great liking to the sturdy seaman, and had made him a sort of second officer on board the "Little Wonder."

"Looks like a polacca, sir."

"Yes. I know a Government officer was going to be sent to this part of the coast to make a survey, as it was reported that there were several dangerous sandbanks hereabouts. Possibly that is the vessel of the survey party."

The "Little Wonder" skimmed over the water at a good speed, and soon ran into the open bay where lay the polacca. Just then the sound of firearms, rapidly discharged, fell upon their ears.

"Guns!" exclaimed Jack Travers.

"There's fighting going on somewhere!" cried the midshipman, Harry Estcourt.

Now that the "Little Wonder" was only a mile from the polacca, the seamen saw a boat full of men pull off from the shore and quickly row to the vessel.

Reaching the polacca's side, they rapidly boarded the vessel; and then arose a commotion on the little deck.

"Piracy, by Jupiter!" ejaculated Herbert.

Quickly he ordered his men to prepare for action. The honest tars gladly seized their cutlasses, eager for the fight.

A battle was now being waged on board the polacca. The crew—not more than a dozen men—were manfully resisting the assailants. Swiftly the "Little Wonder" approached the scene of combat, Herbert eagerly watching the fight. Suddenly the attacking party seemed to perceive the approach of the cruiser, hitherto unnoticed. There was a lull in the battle, and several made a rush for the boat; but Herbert Somers's vessel was now alongside, and the word given to board.

Outlass in hand, the sturdy seamen swarmed into the polacca. The pirates (if such they were) were surprised at the sudden attack. They numbered about twenty, and were led by a dark-skinned, Italian-looking fellow, who was armed with a long, keen Toledo, with which he slashed about like one possessed. But their ferocity availed but little against the calm courage of the English tars.

Step by step the pirates were driven back. Some threw down their weapons and sprang overboard to swim ashore; others fought on in sullen despair. The polacca's deck was encumbered by corpses, and blood flowed freely. Herbert, a master of fence, disarmed the Italian leader, and bade him surrender.

The pirate drew a pistol and fired at the young commander, but missed. Then, with a bitter imprecation, the Italian turned to fly. Too late. Travers's heavy cutlass descended upon his head, and the sharp blade sank deep into his skull. With a groan the stricken wretch dropped upon the deck. That ended the battle. The surviving pirates—numbering six—threw down their weapons and begged for quarter.

Herbert ordered them to be put in irons and confined in the hold of his vessel.

Of the original crew of the polacca, four were still alive. Herbert asked for the captain.

"He's gone ashore," one of the sailors replied.

"Gone ashore! Alone?"

"No, sir; Mr. Trent, the surveyor, was with him."

"Trent!" exclaimed the officer, remembering the name.

"Wasn't that the name of Captain Carandel's prisoner, Jack?"

"Yes, sir."

"What place did Mr. Trent go to?" asked Somers.

"Dunno, sir," answered the sailor who had spoken first.

"He went with Captain Watson on shore, to look round, not thinkin' of danger. Then these pirates came swarming out of the woods and surrounded them."

"Then they are prisoners?" asked Herbert.

"I expect so; unless they're killed. After that the pirates attacked us, and you know the rest," continued the sailor.

"Yes; but why did they attack you? There was nothing to be gained by capturing the polacca, for there are, I should think, no valuables on board, and they would not be likely to make the attack out of pure mischief."

"Jes' so, sir. I can't think why they troubled themselves about us."

"Even the vessel itself wouldn't be of any value to them," remarked Jack Travers; "it wouldn't fetch fifty pounds at a sale, I should think."

"You are right, Jack. But now we must go ashore and look for Captain Watson and the surveyor."

A boat was lowered, and Herbert took his seat in the stern-sheets while the sailors took their oars. Twenty men accompanied him. In a few minutes the boat grated upon the sandy beach, and the seamen sprang ashore. Several of the pirates were seen running at full speed to the southward along the beach. The bluejackets wanted to pursue them, but Somers did not think it safe. For all he knew, the woods might be full of pirates, and an ambushade might be prepared for him. Meanwhile the sailors spread over the shore to search for the bodies of the two missing men, for Herbert believed they had been killed.

A loud shout soon announced a discovery. Herbert hurried to the spot, and found half a dozen seamen collected round a body lying on the sand.

"It's poor Captain Watson!" exclaimed Brown, the sailor from the polacca.

"The skipper of the polacca!" observed Travers.

The man was quite dead. A deep cut across the temple, from which the blood was welling slowly, told how he had died. The sand was trampled and disturbed, showing that the two men had made a stout fight for their lives.

"But Trent! where was he?"

"I think I can see how it is," said Jack Travers to the lieutenant, in an undertone. He drew his commander aside, and continued:

"I know Miss Alice Trent was going to the port of Fernando Po to meet her father. I believe this Mr. Trent is the man."

"And so Captain Carandel has kidnapped both father and daughter?"

"That's about the size of it. He has some deep game on hand," the seaman went on. "I am certain he boarded the 'Titania,' my ship, simply to take out Miss Trent. He has attacked the polacca to capture her father, you may depend upon it. I thought from his conduct to the young lady that he had some old grudge agin her or her family. I reckon that is so, and he has captured them to square the account. See?"

Herbert saw, and said so. "As a naval officer, it is my duty to pursue the pirates and save the prisoners," he remarked.

"So I should think, sir."

"It will be a splendid thing if we capture the 'Sea Queen,'" put in Harry Estcourt.

"You are right, my lad."

Shortly afterwards the men were called together, and, when informed of the commander's intention, were in great glee at the prospect of another brush with the slavers. The "Little Wonder" was to be left in charge of Daly, the old gunner, a seaman who had seen fifty years' service.

"You will take the vessel into Portobello Bay," Herbert said, just before leaving. "If you find the 'Sea Queen' there, you know what to do; if not, anchor there and wait for me."

"Shall I go with you, sir?" asked Travers.

"Certainly. You will be useful, especially as you know Miss Trent."

Thirty men, armed to the teeth and carrying provisions for seven days, landed with Lieutenant Somers, and the expedition started off southward in the track of the slavers.

For several hours Herbert and his men pressed on through the dense West African forest, and then halted in a little glade for dinner and rest.

While the bluejackets were busy with their meal, a human form was stealthily approaching their camp. Gliding unseen through the wooded dells and natural arbours, the new-comer, all unsuspected, reached the edge of the little glade where the party had halted. He looked upon the sturdy seamen, and an exclamation of satisfaction came from his lips.

He stepped boldly forth and advanced towards the British sailors, who sprang up and seized their weapons at this unexpected intrusion.

"Hold!" he cried, lifting his hand. "I am a friend!"

"Who are you?" demanded Herbert.

"My name is Saxon, and I come to give you information concerning the pirate schooner," was the unexpected reply.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE PORTUGUESE PLOT—THE PRISONER—AN OLD FOE.

Antonio Baricas, the Portuguese first mate of the schooner "Sea Queen," after the vessel was anchored in the lagoon, advised the captain to proceed at once to King Gumbo's town, up the Majana, and bring down the convoy of slaves.

"There is no telling how soon the cruiser may be upon us, capitan mio," the wily Portuguese said. "You know that fellow Travers escaped to the 'Little Wonder,' and he had been here often enough to know how to guide a vessel here."

"Just so, Baricas," said Captain Carandel; "the sooner we are off the better, for more reasons than one. But we cannot

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get away yet. The party I sent to catch old Trent has not yet returned, and I must settle accounts with him before I leave here."

"How has he injured you, captain?" the mate asked curiously.

"Never mind that, Baricas!" Carandel replied brusquely; he did not like the prying of the first mate.

The Portuguese scowled, and changed the subject.

"When will you go to King Gumbo's place?"

"To-morrow, I think," was the reply.

Baricas sought out Hardin, the second mate.

"He says he's going to-morrow," he began.

"The blow can be struck then," observed the American.

"Gumbo will act straight by us, if the inducement is sufficient."

"I have offered him the price of two cargoes of slaves," said the Portuguese.

"Humph! Don't you think it possible that the old skin may make a bargain with the skipper when he gets to the village?"

"I think not. Anyhow, I'll see that the men that accompany Carandel are those who are not in the secret. While he is absent I and my party can seize the schooner and weigh anchor."

"Good! And when the 'Sea Queen' is yours I am to have a

he concluded, "the sooner we get away from this neighbourhood the better. I will go to Gumbo's first thing in the morning. We must get the slaves on board, and clear out as quick as we know how."

"How many men will you take?"

"Thirty. I half suspect that the old black rascal means to play us false, for I don't like the tone of his letter, so let the men be all well armed."

"I'll see to it, captain."

Baricas went off in high glee, and Captain Carandel went ashore to the house wherein his prisoners were confined. Entering, he went up a ladder to the second floor, for stairs there were none. He unlocked and unbarred a door, and strode into a small, cell-like apartment, where a man lay on the floor bound hand and foot. The rays of the setting sun streamed in through a small window and lighted the little room.

"Who comes?" said the prisoner.

"I do, Henry Trent," replied the slaver. "Maybe you'll recognise me," he added, bending down and bringing his face close to that of Trent.

A sudden startled exclamation broke from the bound man.

"Ruez Carmen!" he ejaculated.

"Yes, Ruez Carmen!" answered the slaver captain, in a tone of ferocity. "You remember me, do you not?"

"Yes, villain, I do!" cried Trent. "Where is my boy that you kidnapped?"

"I'll tell you," answered the Spaniard. "Listen, Henry Trent! It was you who caused my dismissal from the Spanish Navy."

"It was not! You brought it upon yourself by your rascality!" interrupted Trent.

"I swore to take vengeance upon you for my disgrace," went on the slaver. "I vowed to wreck your life as you had wrecked mine. You had two children—a girl and a boy. The boy I stole from your home—"

"What have you done with him?"

"I'll tell you soon. I took him ten years ago and carried him aboard my schooner. I took him with me to Loango, and left him there."

"Left him there? Marooned him on the coast, you mean?"

"Oh, no! worse than that. I sold him as a slave."

"Sold my son as a slave!" the prostrate man gasped.

"That was the first blow," continued the slaver captain, glaring at his victim, his eyes inflamed with hatred and malicious triumph. "Then I left you in peace until now. Of course you heard that the 'Titania' had been robbed of its fair passenger by Captain Carandel?"

"Yes."

"Well, I am Captain Carandel, the slaver."

"You? You are Ruez Carmen!"

"Yes, that was my name in the old time; but on engaging in the slave-trade I changed it to Carandel. Do you see, mi amigo?"

"Then my daughter is in your power?" faltered the unfortunate captive.

"Yes; and I am going to marry her."

"She will never consent."

"Oh, I think I can persuade her to do so!" replied Carandel, with a horrible grin. "You don't know how persuasive I can be at times."

"Wretch! if you harm a single hair of her head, I will—"

"Don't threaten, Senor Trent," interjected the Spaniard. "You are quite powerless in this matter, and you know it."

"What are you going to do with me?" asked the prisoner.

"Kill you!" was the ferocious rejoinder.

"When, and how?"

"Not yet. You shall see the priest unite your daughter and myself in wedlock. You shall rue the day you provoked the enmity of Ruez Carmen!"

Saying which the Spaniard left the room, carefully closing the door after him and bolting it.

He left Henry Trent a prey to despair. The unfortunate victim of the slaver's revenge lay upon the floor in silent misery.

Darkness descended, and enveloped sea and land in a sable mantle.



AS THE TWO BOATS CAME ABEAST OF THE NEGROES' POSITION, TWO DENSE VOLLEYS OF ARROWS WERE DISCHARGED.

thousand doubloons from the strong-box. That was the agreement, wasn't it?"

"Yes. And don't fear but I'll keep faith with you as long as you do with me."

And then the wily plotters separated, evidently well satisfied with the progress of their scheme.

Antonio Baricas had won nearly half the crew from their allegiance to the slaver captain, and, backed by them, he intended to seize the vessel during the absence of her legitimate commander. He was glad of Hardin's help, but as to his reward, the wily Portuguese had his ideas about that, too. "Honour among thieves!" is an old saying, but not always a true one.

Just an hour before sunset a man came on board to report that the party had returned, with Mr. Trent a prisoner. A glint of triumph and anticipated revenge shone from the black eyes of the slaver captain.

"At last!" he muttered. "Where is he?" he asked the man.

"We've put him inter the room next to the lady," replied the man, who was one of those who had participated in the attack on the polacca, the failure of which he proceeded to relate to Captain Carandel.

"Confound the luck!" said the captain. "So it was the 'Little Wonder' that attacked you?"

The slaver captain was thoughtful for a few minutes. Then he called Baricas, and re-told Williams's story. "You see,"

Story begins. "FROM CLUE TO CLUE" will be the story of the Strange in Search of a Hidden Fortune.



Then Trent heard a footstep outside his door. The bolts were silently withdrawn, and the door slowly opened.

"Hist!" came a deep whisper. "Silence! I am a friend."  
Then a dark figure strode into the room, and the door was closed again.

## CHAPTER VII.

SAXON ESCAPES FROM THE CORSAIR SCHOONER  
—THE "BLACK SWAN" GOES UP THE MAJANA  
—THE ARRIVAL OF THE "LITTLE WONDER."

Captain Cardoc, the commander of the corsair schooner "Black Swan," after anchoring in the little bay vacated by the "Sea Queen," did not remain idle. He had taken a great deal of trouble to find out as much as possible of the movements of the schooner of Captain Carandel.

The corsair had formerly been a slaver, and had had dealings with most of the negro chiefs from the Congo to the Gaboon. Indeed, it was King Gumbo himself that gave him information of the "Sea Queen's" intended visit to the River Majana. The pirate now resolved to anchor in Portobello Bay, and send his boats up the river to find out if the slaver was there.

Saxon tried hard to obtain permission to go with the boats. "Oh, no, my lad!" answered the corsair chief, when the boy slave made the request; "you cost me too much money to lose, you know. You intend to cut and run, if you get a chance."

"I am not your property!" growled the boy, in an angry tone.

"Oh, yes you are, boy!" the pirate replied. "I bought you and paid for you, and if that doesn't make you my property I'm much mistaken."

"You had no right to buy me. I am not a negro, and, if I was, you have no authority over me. Slavery is illegal, and I am as free as you are."

"Don't be saucy, my lad, if you value a whole skin!" cautioned the corsair.

"I ask for my freedom! When I am free I can work, and earn money to pay back to you whatever you gave for me."

"I tell you I won't let you go!" Cardoc cried angrily. "And now go away and don't annoy me any more, or I'll have you flogged!"

"You won't give me my liberty?"

"I won't, confound you!"

"You won't let me go with the boats?"

"No."

"Then there is only one thing for me to do," continued the young slave.

"Well?"

"And I'll do it."

Wrought up to a pitch of desperation, the lad snatched the long dagger from the pirate's belt and struck a furious blow at Cardoc's breast. This movement took the pirate captain by surprise; he was not prepared for such an act on the part of his victim. The captain was cruel by nature, and it delighted him to taunt the high-spirited lad. He had gone too far at last.

Had not Lucas Dinwiddie, the first mate of the "Black Swan," struck aside the dagger ere the boy's arm descended, the corsair captain would have gone to his last account. Before the lad could strike again, Carolus Bernal seized him from behind and pinioned his arms.

"You young rascal!" shouted Captain Cardoc, mad with rage, as he drew a pistol from his belt and cocked it.

"Are you going to kill him, captain?"

"Yes!"

"Fire!" exclaimed Saxon defiantly. "Death is better than slavery."

"Blow out the young cub's brains!" said Carolus Bernal.

Captain Cardoc took deliberate aim at the youth's breast.

"Got any prayers to say?" he asked.

Saxon looked round as if seeking an avenue of escape. Bernal had released him, and stepped back to get out of the line of fire. The boy suddenly rushed to the side and sprang into the water. He was a good swimmer. Down he went into the depths, and swam under water as long as he could towards the shore. Only a hundred yards separated the schooner and the land. Saxon had covered a third of the distance, when he rose to the surface to breathe.

"Lower a boat!" yelled Cardoc, in a rage.

"Fire after him!" said Dinwiddie.

The corsair took aim at the swimmer and fired. The ball splashed into the water a few feet from the boy, who continued his strenuous efforts to reach the shore. By the time the boat was lowered Saxon had scrambled up on the rocks. Without stopping to look back, he bounded away and disappeared into the woods.

"Confound the boy!" exclaimed Cardoc; "it's no use pursuing him. We could never catch him in the forest."

"He's worse off there than here," observed Dinwiddie. "He can't live long in the woods."

"No," said Red Garcias; "the lions or the snakes will soon make an end of him."

"I hope so!" the captain exclaimed vindictively. "The young rascal! to attempt my life!"

The corsair captain then gave orders to prepare for the expedition up the river. Two boats, under the charge of Dinwiddie and Bernal, pulled up the river with muffled oars, and just before sunset reached the entrance of the lagoon where the "Sea Queen" rode at anchor.

"There she is!" exclaimed Dinwiddie, pointing to the slaver. "They're too strong for us to tackle now," the American remarked. "We had better return and report to the skipper, I reckon."

Accordingly the party returned. When they were once more on board the schooner, the captain was informed of what they had seen.

"If that vessel is there the river must be navigable for our ship also," Captain Cardoc observed thoughtfully.

"Yes, captain; that is so."

"Then in the morning we will go up the river," said the pirate captain.

And at the first streak of dawn the "Black Swan" was in motion. A fair breeze blew from the sea, and the schooner's passage up the Majana was easy if not rapid.

Portobello Bay was left vacant by the departure of the "Black Swan," but not for long.

Daly, who had the command of the "Little Wonder," had some difficulty in discovering Portobello Bay, and it was not until after nightfall that he approached it.

He decided not to take the risk of running in after dark, so he stood off and on at the entrance until morning was well advanced. The high rocks at the mouth of the bay concealed the "Black Swan" from the eyes of those on board the "Little Wonder."

Half an hour after Captain Cardoc's schooner had sailed up the Majana stream the "Little Wonder" glided into the bay and anchored there.

It was not long before the roar of cannon awoke the echoes of the woods. Startled by the sound, the cruiser's crew knew not what to make of it. Daly decided to run his vessel up the river to the scene of combat.

And so it happened that the "Little Wonder" followed in the wake of the outlaw schooners.

## CHAPTER VIII.

THE YOUNG WHITE SLAVE—DESPATCHING A MESSENGER—DEEP IN THE FOREST—THE FORT—IN THE HANDS OF THE ENEMY.

Lieutenant Somers, the young commander of the "Little Wonder," and his followers, heard the words of the lad Saxon in astonishment.

"What do you know about the pirate vessel?" Herbert asked, looking curiously at the boy.

"A great deal," was the prompt reply. "I've been on board her for years."

"You are English, if I mistake not?"

"Yes, sir, I believe I am. I heard the captain say he thought so too the other day."

Saxon related the story of his life and the incidents of his escape to the officer. The sailors listened, and many were their expressions of anger at the conduct of the corsair captain.

"You are English seamen," said the boy, when he had concluded his story; "are you after the pirates?"

"Yes."

"I can lead you to the 'Black Swan,' if you like!" exclaimed the boy, his eyes flashing with pleasure at the prospect of giving up Captain Cardoc and his crew into the hands of the cruiser's men.

"The 'Black Swan!'" ejaculated Herbert.

"Yes, sir; the vessel I came from."

"I thought you came from the 'Sea Queen.'"

"No, sir; I belonged to Captain Cardoc, the corsair," replied the boy.

"Where is the 'Black Swan' now?" asked Somers.

"At anchor in Portobello Bay."

"Do you know aught of the 'Sea Queen?'"

"Yes; a little. She is a slaver, and Captain Cardoc intends to attack her. He thinks she is somewhere up the Majana, and he is now sending his boats up the river to find out."

"All this confirms your idea," Herbert said aside to Jack Travers. "If the 'Sea Queen' is hidden somewhere up the Majana, it would be easy for her men to be the parties concerned in the attack on the polacca."

"Yes, sir. I know Captain Carandel has a stronghold on the bank of the Majana," Jack Travers replied. "And then the young man says the corsair captain is going to go for the slaver captain. If we let them hammer at each other till one's settled, then we can step in and collar both."

"That's a good idea, Travers," declared the young officer. "We'll do that, I think. But we'll go on and scout round the slaver's stronghold a bit first. When we strike we must make a clean sweep."

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"Will you come with us, my boy?" Herbert asked, addressing Saxon.

"Certainly, sir; I'll be glad to."

"Very well. Now, Jack," resumed Herbert Somers, "I think I'll send a man to wait near the mouth of the Majana for the 'Little Wonder,' and warn Daly when he comes not to attack the pirate, but to merely guard the mouth of the river so that she cannot escape."

"But if the pirate sees her he'll take the alarm," said Jack.

"She won't get there before dark, and the gunner has too

"Robinson," said Herbert, "I have picked you out to do a dangerous service because I know you to be a brave man."

The honest tar touched his hat and blushed at the compliment.

"I allers try to do my duty, sir," he replied.

"I know that, or I should not have selected you for this. Now," continued Herbert, "I want you to go to Portobello Bay from here, and wait on the shore until the 'Little Wonder' comes into the bay. Then you are to go on board and deliver a note, which I will give you, to Mr. Daly, who is in charge of the schooner."

And Herbert hastily scribbled a few lines on a leaf of paper he tore out of his note-book, folded it, and handed it to the sailor, who, again touching his hat, departed.

"Now!" said Herbert briskly, "we must be moving."

The day was now nearly over. The sailors resumed the order



WROUGHT UP TO A PITCH OF DESPERATION, THE LAD SNATCHED THE LONG DAGGER FROM THE PIRATE'S BELT, AND STRUCK A FURIOUS BLOW AT CARDOC'S BREAST.

much sense to attempt to enter the bay after nightfall. He won't go in till dawn to-morrow, and by that time I suppose the 'Black Swan' will be miles up the river, engaged in attacking the 'Sea Queen.'

"That seems to be about right, sir," assented the clear-headed sailor. "Who will you send?"

"Walter Robinson, I think. He's a good man and a sharp one. Call him, will you?"

Robinson was called. He was a big, brawny sailor, with an honest, intelligent face and muscular limbs.

of march, and the thirty-two men trudged on through the darkening forest.

As night deepened thunderous roars, that told of the presence of the king of beasts, resounded through the recesses of the forest. The hoarse cry of the chimpanzee mingled discordantly with the shrill screech of the tiger-cat, the snarl of jackals sounded dismally, and the hiss of startled serpents was often heard. Fireflies flashed and glittered amongst the thick leaves of the baobab and the light, feathery frondage of palms.

Awed by the solitude and grandeur of the magnificent, un-

there will appear a thrilling Thugs of India.

SEE NEXT WEEK'S "U. J."

trodden forest, the seamen kept silence. Not a word was heard as the stalwart bluejackets traversed the wood.

Herbert Somers was at the head of the line, and Jack Travers next.

Half a mile after mile was so covered. At nine o'clock, Jack made a signal to the men to stop. He raised his arm and pointed forward. They had reached a spot where trees were fewer, and the sound of dull splashing told of the proximity of the river.

"What is it, Jack?" asked Herbert, as he glanced in the direction indicated by the seaman's outstretched finger.

"See that big palm?" asked Travers. "I know it well. It ain't a hundred yards from the house of Captain Carandel—his fort, as he calls it."

"Then we are almost upon them!" exclaimed Herbert excitedly. "How many entrances are there to the house?"

"Two—back and front. But the place is surrounded by a strong palisade about ten feet high."

"Listen, my men," said Herbert, addressing the sailors, who all crowded close to listen to his words. "In that den of iniquity yonder are two prisoners at the mercy of that villain Captain Carandel, the Spanish slaver and pirate. It is our duty as British seamen to effect their rescue. We may have to contend with odds of two to one, but that will not daunt English hearts. I feel convinced that you are all ready to do your duty, even if death stands in the way. Is it not so?"

"Ay, ay, sir!" came in a deep whisper from the assembled tars. A cheer trembled upon their lips, and only the knowledge that the least noise would alarm the pirates stopped its utterance.

"Now, I am going to have a look around before we make an attack on the slaver's den," continued the youthful commander. "You come with me, Jack. Leave you, Marvell, in charge of the party. Keep here in this spot, and don't make any noise that will attract attention."

"Shall I stop here, sir?" asked the lad Saxon.

"Yes, my boy," answered Herbert.

"Come, Jack," he added. And then the two men rapidly strode away through the gloom and disappeared from sight. Left alone, the sailors sat down on rocks and fallen trunks of trees to await the return of their leader.

An hour glided past, but still the young commander remained absent; another followed, and yet another. The sailors in vain listened for returning footsteps. Midnight came and passed, but still no sign of Herbert or Jack.

At last old Mark Marvell gave vent to his apprehensions in words. "What kin have become of the cap'n?" he said uneasily. "He said he'd be back in an hour or two, and he's bin gone four now."

"Mebbe the slavers have got him," suggested a seaman named Andrew Benson.

"I hope not," growled Marvell. "If so, we orter try ter save him; but he gave orders fur us not to move from here."

"Let's wait till daylight, and if he's not here by then we'll search for him," one of the sailors remarked.

"I s'pose that's what we had better do," answered Mark Marvell. "We can't do nothin' afore daylight."

If old Mark had counted his men at that moment he would have found one missing. Saxon, suspecting that Herbert and his companion had fallen into the hands of the slavers, had followed in their track to ascertain the truth.

Let us now follow the fortunes of the two bold men who had thus ventured into the lions' den.

Leaving their companions, Herbert and Jack Travers went swiftly on until the forest was passed. They then found themselves in a little clearing just at the back of the block house. A few yards to the right the waters of the Majana glistened as they murmured and tumbled among the tall rushes and mangrove bushes. There was no moon, and the gloom was intense. The house loomed up before them like a huge shadow, dimly outlined against the dark background of the sky. It was closed and silent, and showed no sign of being inhabited.

"Looks as if it is deserted," Herbert remarked, as they came to a halt.

"Not it," replied Jack; "the slavers are there right enough. Look!" And Jack pointed to where the "Sea Queen" rode at anchor in the lagoon. The schooner was just visible in the gloom.

"Hallo!" whispered Jack; "there's somethin' up!"

A sudden commotion was visible in the house; lights gleamed in the windows, and voices were heard. Noiselessly creeping round to the front, the two watchers tried to learn the cause of the disturbance. The front gate of the palisade stood wide open, and a crowd of men were collected near it. Several torches lighted up the scene.

Two men stood in the midst of the clamorous crew, whose villainous faces and numerous weapons showed them to be sailors belonging to the slave ship. The slavers were making excited gestures, and seemed to be menacing the two men.

"By Jupiter!" ejaculated Jack Travers, as he and his com-

panion came in sight of the animated group. "There's my cousin Bill. And I'll bet that other chap is Mr. Trent."

"An attempted escape, I suppose," remarked Herbert, looking with interest at the scene. "It looks as if the slavers intended to kill them. Jack, you had better hasten back to where we left the men, and fetch them up. The prisoners there must be saved at all hazards."

"I'll be off like a rocket, sir."

"Will you?" said a mocking voice beside them. They turned in amazement and alarm, and beheld the dark, saturnine face of Antonio Baricas, the first mate of the "Sea Queen."

"Oh, no, you won't!" continued the Portuguese, with a malevolent grin. "I happened to run across you as I came from the ship," he explained, "and I decided to take you in and introduce you to our captain."

"I'll never surrender!" grated Jack.

"Never!" echoed Lieutenant Somers.

The Portuguese laughed jeeringly.

"Mira!" (behold) cried he; and a dozen men stepped from the thicket, with muskets levelled at the two brave Englishmen. "Surrender or die!" cried the Portuguese.

Resistance was hopeless. A single volley would settle the question, if the two men showed fight.

"We give in!" snapped Herbert, throwing down his cutlass angrily.

"Shows your good sense!" grinned Baricas.

Four of the ruffian slavers grasped the arms of the two prisoners, and, surrounded by the wild, lawless crew, they were hurried on to the fort.

But the swarthy scoundrel Baricas had no suspicion that the capture had been seen by anyone not of the slaver crew. Nevertheless, the slave lad, Saxon, from the branches of a wide-spreading banyan, had witnessed the whole transaction.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE ESCAPE AND THE RECAPTURE—IN DURANCE VILE—SAXON'S PLAN.

Henry Trent, bound and helpless on the floor of his cell, watched his mysterious visitor with eager eyes. Had the slaver captain returned to kill him at once? He knew that Captain Carandel only spared him for the present in order to inflict further tortures upon him.

Closing the door, the intruder turned on the light of a bull's-eye lantern.

"You are Mr. Trent?"

"I am," answered the prisoner, wondering what his visitor wanted. At the first glance he saw that the new-comer was not Captain Carandel. He beheld instead a brawny, sturdy seaman, with a bearded, bronzed face.

"Father of Miss Alice Trent?" added the man.

"Yes."

"I am Bill Travers. I am an English sailor taken prisoner by the pirates," the man went on. "I have come to help you to escape."

"Thanks, friend. And my daughter?"

"And Miss Alice as well, of course."

Without further parley, the sailor severed the prisoner's bonds with his sharp clasp-knife. In a few minutes Henry Trent rose to his feet, a free man.

"Have you weapons?" he then asked.

"Here! take this," and Bill thrust a long cutlass into his hand. "Don't hesitate to use it if necessary. Miss Alice is in the next room."

"Let us go to her, I pray!" exclaimed Trent hastily.

"Right you are." And Bill put out the lantern, so that its light should not betray them to the pirates. The two then crept towards the cell in which the fair prisoner was kept. In a minute the door was open.

"Hush!" said Bill, warningly, fearful lest the startled girl might cry out, and thus alarm the ruffians below.

"Who comes?" came a tremulous voice from the darkness within.

"My child!" exclaimed Mr. Trent, rushing into the room.

The next moment the girl was clasped in the arms of her parent.

"There's no time to lose," said Bill. "At any moment we are liable to be discovered by those scoundrels downstairs. Follow me."

He led the way out of the room to a window which overlooked the enclosure at the back of the house.

"Ten feet below this window there is a shed," he whispered.

"Once we reach that we can easily get to the ground."

"But how are we to reach it?"

Travers indicated a rope which hung out of the window, secured to a stout beam within. The cord was thick and strong, capable of supporting a dozen men.

"Slide down?" asked Henry Trent.

"Yes."

"PETER SLIM" is the best Story we have yet follows "PETER SLIM," will

"But Alice—"

"I will assist the lady," interrupted the seaman; and he swung himself out of the window. "Give her out to me," he continued, holding to the rope with his legs and right hand, and keeping the left arm free to support Alice in the descent. The young lady hesitated a moment, and then slid out of the window, clutching the rope with both her little hands, while the strong arm of the sailor was passed around her slender waist. Down they went, slowly at first, then more rapidly. Travers had taken the precaution to knot the rope in many places, so that the descent, although he was so encumbered, was not very difficult. Once safe upon terra firma, Bill said:

"Wait a minute here, while I go up and help your dad."

Alice assented, and the big sailor climbed up the rope again as nimbly as a monkey. Trent was waiting anxiously at the window.

"Is my daughter safe?" he asked, as the seaman reached the window again.

"Safe and sound, Mr. Trent," replied the bluejacket, as he clambered in. "Now, you next. Grip the rope tightly, and I'll help you out."

Trent was not a particularly active man, but the knowledge that his life depended upon his exertions caused him to make an effort, and so he performed the descent in safety. Bill was about to follow when he heard a creaking on the ladder that formed the stairway.

He listened intently, and ground his teeth with fury as he realised that someone was ascending to the second story.

"Hang it!" he muttered, under his breath. "To be baulked now, just at the moment of success. By Jupiter! I won't be taken again."

He crept towards the ladder, reaching it just as a burly, half-drunken Basque sailor came up. Crouching in the darkness, the Englishman remained unseen by the slaver, until it was too late. The Basque had just caught sight of the dark figure, and was about to open his mouth to utter a yell, when the huge fist of the British sailor struck him between the eyes. The blow was delivered with all the force of the sturdy seaman's brawny arm, and the unlucky ruffian staggered back stunned. He would have fallen had not Bill caught him in his arms. Gently and noiselessly the sailor lowered the insensible Basque to the floor. The man lay as still as a log of wood.

Bill knew that the slavers below would soon discover the absence of their comrade, so he made haste to get out of the window and join his friends outside. They had been anxiously awaiting his appearance, alarmed by the delay.

"Anything happened?" asked Mr. Trent.

"Yes," answered Bill shortly. "Come on."

Quickly they passed round the house, keeping close in the shadow of the circle of palisades, until they reached the gate in the front.

This Bill proceeded to unfasten. Barely had he done so than an uproar in the house told them that the escape had been discovered by the slaver crew. One of the men, going upstairs to find out what had become of the Basque, found him lying insensible on the floor. The open window and the rope showed the means used to leave the house by the fugitives.

"Out, out! search for them!" yelled the slaver captain. And, as the crew rushed out of the house like a pack of wolves, he slid down the rope and reached the ground. The noise of the opening gate showed the direction taken by the escaped prisoners. The slaver captain dashed across the yard, and reached the gate just as his followers came up. Bill had succeeded in opening the heavy gate, but before the three runaways could pass out they were surrounded by the howling crew.

"Checkmate!" cried Captain Carandel, as he seized the arm of Alice. The poor girl uttered a scream of terror, and, overcome by the bitter disappointment, fainted dead away.

The men laid hold of Bill Travers and Henry Trent, who did not attempt to resist. The odds were too overwhelming for that. And a few minutes later Antonio Baricas and the Yankee, Hardin, coming ashore from the schooner with a dozen others to learn the cause of the disturbance, captured Herbert Somers and Jack Travers in the manner described in a previous chapter. The Portuguese brought in his prisoners in triumph. Captain Carandel's eyes sparkled as he saw them.

"Ah, so you are here again, Travers!" he cried. "And who is this other, Baricas?"

"Don't know, captain. Found them together over yonder, and brought 'em in."

"He's the skipper of the 'Little Wonder,' sir," said one of the slavers who had fought against Herbert on the deck of the polacca.

"Is that so?" demanded Captain Carandel, turning to the young officer.

"It is," answered Herbert calmly.

"You came here to attack my schooner, eh? You have companions near at hand?"

"Perhaps."

"Is it so? Answer me, sir!"

But Herbert was silent. The Spaniard scowled darkly. He

did not like the bold words and independent bearing of the man who was completely at his mercy. He grasped the hilt of his cutlass threateningly.

"Will you tell me if you have any friends near at hand? You had better do so!"

"I'll tell you nothing," answered Herbert.

"Take them into the house!" cried the slaver. And the two men were dragged away along with Bill and Mr. Trent. Alice was removed to her cell. In their hurry the ruffians looked all the men in one room. Then they returned to the captain.

"Search the woods!" ordered Captain Carandel. "I don't believe that that infernal English officer came here with only one companion. Most likely there is a strong force stationed near at hand. Be careful; keep your eyes open, and if you see anything suspicious return at once and report to me."

The slaver crew began to search for the men whose presence they suspected. It was now past midnight, and the night was intensely dark. Captain Carandel sent a man on board the "Sea Queen" to tell the twenty men left in charge of her to be on the watch for an attack. He left twenty well-armed men in charge of the little fort, and with the rest began to hunt for Herbert's party.

But the slaver captain did not intend to brave the dangers of the forest at midnight. He knew that the thickets abounded with poisonous serpents and ferocious animals, and so he contented himself with standing under a tree, where a fire had been ignited to light up the surrounding jungle.

"We must find out whether there is any danger of an attack to-night," the slaver captain remarked to Antonio Baricas, who stood by his side. "If there is, of course I shall not be able to go up to King Gumbo's village to-morrow."

"I don't think there's anybody near," the Portuguese replied. As the reader knows, the intended mutineer was anxious that the slaver captain should go to the village of the sable monarch.

"Those two fellows," he continued, referring to Herbert and Jack, "evidently followed up the party that attacked the polacca."

"Evidently," replied Carandel. "And don't you think it unlikely that only those two would come?"

"Not at all," replied Baricas; and here he spoke out what he really thought. "In my opinion they merely came to scout round, and spy on our position before leading a party to attack us. I think that young Somers would not leave less than half his crew on board the 'Little Wonder,' and in that case he could not have more than twenty or thirty to follow him ashore. With such a puny force he would be a fool to risk an attack before finding out the force of his opponents. So he came on, with that man Travers as a guide, to get a look at our defences, intending to return and bring on his men afterwards. How does that strike you?"

"Well, that seems about correct," Carandel admitted. "If so, we have nothing to fear from Somers's men. Still, I'll let the men look round a bit. There's nothing like being sure."

"And if they find nobody you'll go to Gumbo's place to-morrow?"

"Yes. This locality is too dangerous to stay in longer than can be helped."

Little did the two scoundrels dream that a spy was listening to every word they uttered.

Saxon, the boy slave, was in the branches of the banyan-tree under which they stood.

He heard the plans of Captain Carandel, and, without waiting to hear more, he slid down the trunk of the tree and darted away, unnoticed in the deep gloom. He ran swiftly, and in ten minutes reached the place where he had left his friends.

"Hallo, my lad!" exclaimed old Mark Marvell, as he appeared, "where have you been?"

The boy quickly explained. Marvell listened in astonishment.

"What will you do?" asked Andrew Benson.

"Go and rescue the captain, of course."

"Don't go to-night, sir," interposed Saxon. "I heard the slaver captain say that he would be going to King Gumbo's village to-morrow. The slaver's force is treble yours; but if he takes a large force with him to-morrow the odds will be less."

"True, youngster," assented the grizzled old seaman. "But in the meantime they may kill our captain, you see."

"They won't," replied the lad; "they have locked him up in a room in their house. They won't dare to kill a Government officer. If you attack them now, your defeat is certain. I counted more than eighty men, and they are all on the alert now."

Marvell looked grave at this information. He was a brave man, but he did not care to risk an attack upon such overwhelming odds. Such a proceeding could only end in defeat, which would leave matters worse than ever.

"Are you sure that the slaver skipper is going away to-morrow, my lad?" he asked dubiously.

"Quite," replied Saxon. And then he related how he had heard Captain Carandel and the Portuguese discussing their plans while he was concealed in the branches of the banyan.

"Besides, to-morrow Captain Cardoc, the corsair, will be here, and if you attack then you'll take them between two fires."  
 "But if, as you say, the slavers are searching the woods for us, they're bound to find us here."  
 "Not if you all climb up trees."  
 This suggestion was acted upon, and the thirty seamen concealed themselves in the wide-spreading boughs overhead. The slavers in their search once passed the place where they

the enemy, came to the conclusion that Herbert and Jack were indeed alone. Under these circumstances, Carandel had no hesitation in going to the village of the Royal slave-dealer.  
 Ordering two boats to be lowered and manned, intending to proceed to the negro town by water, he took his place in one of them just as the sun rose, and the men pulled up the river. Once the boats were lost to view among the mangroves, Antonio Baricas breathed more freely. He felt that everything was working just as he desired. He sought out Hardin, and the two mutineers quietly went to work. Nearly fifty men had been left behind. Of these, twenty were in the house and thirty on the schooner. All but five of the latter were the confederates of the two mates. Baricas bade his adherents arm themselves, and then called the men all on deck and made a speech, setting forth that he had decided that it would benefit the whole ship's company if Carandel were replaced by a new captain, that dealing in slaves was precarious work, and was growing more risky every day. If the crew would stand by him he would assume the command of the "Sea Queen," hoist the black flag, and fill their pockets with gold.



"Who's for me, lads?" he concluded. His confederates gave a cheer, and those who were not in the plot, finding themselves in the minority, joined in to ensure their own safety. And so Antonio Baricas was unanimously elected captain of the "Sea Queen," vice Captain Carandel, deposed.

This done, the new commander and his followers landed and proceeded into the house. There a similar scene occurred. The men who were faithful to the captain did not care to risk their lives in a contest with the larger force of mutineers. So every man sided with the usurper.

Hardin then claimed his reward. But the treacherous Portuguese had not the slightest intention of keeping his word with his former confederate. He refused to comply with Hardin's demands, and the Yankee, in a boiling rage, struck him in the face. That was just what Baricas wanted. As he was now firmly established as the captain of the "Sea Queen," Hardin's conduct was rank mutiny, and punishable with death. He did not give the unfortunate man time to prepare. As the Yankee struck him Baricas drew a dagger and plunged it to the hilt in the breast of his ally. Hardin uttered one yell, and fell a corpse at the feet of his ruthless murderer. This dreadful deed awed the unruly crew, and showed them that the new captain meant to use his authority to the full.

THE YOUNG LADY HESITATED A MOMENT, AND THEN SLID OUT OF THE WINDOW, CLUTCHING THE ROPE WITH BOTH HER LITTLE HANDS, WHILE THE STRONG ARM OF THE SAILOR PASSED AROUND HER WAIST.

were hidden, but nothing was noticed in the darkness. It was not until the light of dawn once more appeared in the sky that the sailors descended from their uncomfortable perches.

**CHAPTER X.**

THE MUTINY—ARRIVAL OF THE "BLACK SWAN"—A BATTLE ROYAL—THE CORSAIR'S VICTORY.  
 The projects of Antonio Baricas seemed about to prove successful. The slaver captain, as his men had found no traces of

By this time the "Black Swan," which started up the river at day-break, had reached the lagoon where the slaver schooner rode at anchor.

"The 'Black Swan,' by thunder!" cried Baricas, in dismay, as the corsair schooner glided into the lagoon with the emblem of rapine flying at her peak. But, whatever his faults, the Portuguese was no coward, and he prepared to face the danger with a bold front. He acted with quick decision when the pirate schooner was first sighted. He bade his men prepare to fight for their lives, feeling certain that the "Black Swan" meant to attack him, for already he could descry signs of warlike preparations on board the pirate vessel.  
 He placed ten well-armed men in the log fort on shore, and

then, with the rest of the men, numbering about forty, got the "Sea Queen" into fighting trim.

"Sea Queen, ahoy!" rang out the voice of the corsair captain, when only half a mile of muddy water separated the two vessels.

"Ahoy, the 'Black Swan'!" shouted back the Portuguese.

"Have you a man aboard your vessel named Juan Cavillo?" sang out Captain Cardoc.

"No."

"You lie, confound you! If you will give up Juan Cavillo into my hands I'll not attack you."

"I tell you there's nobody of that name aboard this vessel," declared Baricas, who knew that none of the men of the "Sea Queen" bore that appellation.

"Very well, I'll come and look myself."

"Try it, and you'll meet with a warm reception!" the Portuguese cried grimly.

No more words were wasted, but both parties prepared for war. The decks of the "Black Swan" absolutely swarmed with men. Antonio Baricas ground his teeth with rage when he saw that the pirates mustered nearly twice the number of his own crew.

The battle was opened by the "Black Swan." A ball from her long thirty-pounder went between the masts of the "Sea Queen," cutting away a spar and killing two men.

Then the "Sea Queen," guided by the skilful hand of the mulatto pilot, Panajos, glided across the bows of the "Black Swan," and a broadside was discharged just at the right moment, raking her fore and aft. Terrible was the havoc aboard the corsair schooner. Fifteen men were killed or disabled, the spars and rigging were badly torn, and Lucas Dinwiddie, the first mate, had his left arm carried off by a cannon-ball.

A fierce oath burst from the lips of the corsair captain, as he surveyed the scene of ruin and devastation around him.

Then the Long Tom, the thirty-pounder of the "Sea Queen," came into play. The first ball pierced the mainmast of the corsair and made a hole through it. The pirate was armed with a long gun similar to that on board the "Sea Queen." Captain Cardoc sighted it with his own hand, and sent a ball skipping over the water towards the slaver. A howl of dismay went up from the throats of the slavers at the result; for the cannon-ball had struck the Long Tom and tumbled it over.

Quick to improve the occasion, the corsair sent shot after shot into the "Sea Queen." Baricas replied as well as he could with his small guns, but such puny weapons were no match for the terrible cannon on board the "Black Swan."

One of the well-aimed balls struck the slaver's foremast close to the deck, and with a terrific crash it went by the board, causing the "Sea Queen" to heel over to starboard until her yards touched the surface of the water.

"Cut away the wreck!" yelled Baricas, in a paroxysm of rage, realising that the fate of the "Sea Queen" was sealed.

The slaver crew attempted to obey; but, before the broken mast could be cut free, the mainmast, weakened by the strain, fell as another ball ploughed through the wood. This disaster completely disabled the "Sea Queen," and left her at the mercy of her antagonist. A broadside from the pirate crashed through her hull, and she lay almost on her beam-ends. Then the "Black Swan" ranged up alongside the doomed schooner, and the despairing ruffians heard the voice of the corsair captain calling for boarders.

"Men!" shouted Baricas, in a voice that rang like a clarion across the lagoon. "We are all doomed. No quarter will be shown. As we must die, let us die sword in hand!"

A frenzied yell answered this speech, and the ruffians rushed like tigers to repel the attack. One last broadside the "Sea Queen" fired as the "Black Swan" came alongside, and the leaden balls went through and through the hull of the corsair, laying low a quarter of her crew. Then a horde of armed men, headed by Captain Cardoc, Carolus Bernal, and Red Garcias, came pouring upon the decks of the luckless slaver.

"Forward, my men!" roared the corsair captain. And he rushed headlong into the thick of the fray, brandishing his cutlass and dealing death on every side.

"Fight to the last!" yelled Baricas, as he crossed swords with Carolus Bernal.

"No quarter!" retorted the pirates, pressing forward upon the men of the "Sea Queen."

Pirates and slavers were mingled in a fearful conflict. Amongst the scattered spars and the wreck of the broken masts, over the bodies of the dead and dying, on decks slippery with blood, the battle raged. The slavers, though terribly outnumbered, fought like tigers, and for ten minutes the fight went on with unabated fury. Every man knew that quarter would not be given, and none felt inclined to show mercy. Cutlasses were dyed crimson, pistols were emptied, and the number of the combatants grew fewer, as one by one they fell to the deck, dead or wounded.

But it was inevitable that the superior force would win. Every slaver was attacked by two pirates, and, of course, the

unequal conflict could only end one way. A bullet from Cardoc's pistol disabled the sword-arm of the Portuguese captain, and then Red Garcias struck him over the shoulder with his cutlass. Baricas, knowing that everything was lost, made a bold dash for life and liberty. He suddenly rushed to the side, and, wounded as he was, sprang into the water. Striking out sturdily, he made for the shore, and then his men, demoralised by the desertion of their leader, followed his example. Twenty or thirty men leaped into the lagoon and swam towards the shore, which they were destined never to reach.

"Fire after them! give them a volley!" the corsair captain shouted.

Every one of the pirates who possessed a firearm discharged it at the fugitives, and a perfect storm of pistol-shots and musket-balls swept the surface of the lagoon. When the smoke had cleared away not a single swimmer was to be seen.

"They're ended," said the pitiless pirate chief. "Now search the vessel, and see if anyone is concealed. I'll give a hundred doubloons to the man who finds Juan Cavillo!"

The ruffians spread over the vessel, eager to earn the reward.

"May he not be among those who are drowned, captain?" said Red Garcias.

"No," replied the corsair, "for if he had been on deck I should have recognised him. If he is not below, then he is not on board this vessel."

"Perhaps he is in that log-hut on the shore," suggested Garcias.

"That is what I think. If I can't find him in this ship I shall immediately attack that building," answered the corsair captain.

The pirates ransacked the "Sea Queen" from stem to stern, appropriating whatever they took a fancy to, and slaying all the skulkers they found below decks. But no Juan Cavillo was to be found.

"Am I never to find him?" muttered the corsair captain fiercely.

"Maybe this Cavillo sails under another name, captain?" suggested Red Garcias.

"Ah! that's not unlikely."

"Boats coming down the river!" sang out one of the pirate crew at that moment.

"It must be the slavers returning!" exclaimed the corsair captain excitedly. "Yes, yes!" he continued, in a tone of exultation; "I can see Juan Cavillo among them."

"Then you've got him at last," remarked Garcias.

"At last! yes, at last! Men, load the gun and aim at the leading boat!"

A surprise awaited the returning slavers.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE AMBUSH—A PRECIPITATE RETREAT—THE "LITTLE WONDER" ANCHORS IN THE MAJANA.

When Captain Carandel rowed away from the "Sea Queen" at dawn that morning he little anticipated the tragic scene that would be enacted before his return.

The village of the native potentate was nearly twenty miles from the lagoon where lay the "Sea Queen." Before he accomplished a third of the distance, Captain Carandel fell into a cunningly prepared ambush.

Though he had suspected King Gumbo of treacherous designs, he believed that he had nothing to fear until he reached the village of the sable monarch. He was mistaken. The wily king had placed five hundred men on each bank of the Majana, about five miles from the anchorage of the "Sea Queen," and, as the two boats came fairly abreast the negroes' position, the two bands discharged volleys of arrows at the unlucky slavers. A bitter imprecation burst from the captain as he found his forebodings realised.

The slavers, having no protection against the arrows of the blacks, suffered great loss as the well-directed shafts poured into the boats. At the first discharge, fifteen men were killed and several more wounded.

"Back!" shouted Captain Carandel.

The sailors, seeing that their lives depended upon swift action, quickly turned round the boats and got out their oars. Aided by the current, they rapidly beat a retreat.

But the black warriors were not inclined to let them off so easily. They ran along the banks, yelling and shooting. Two or three men let go their oars and fell back, and when at last the boats outdistanced the negroes, more than half the party had gone to their long account. The corpses were thrown into the river without ceremony, and the boats, thus lightened, made rapid headway. The men rowed with all their strength, for they were anxious to get beyond reach of the ferocious savages.

At last the lagoon was gained, and then their startled eyes

fell upon the disabled "Sea Queen," and the "Black Swan" lying alongside her.

"Diavolo! what has happened?" the slaver captain cried.

Barely had the words left his lips when the roar of a cannon smote on their ears, and a ball came across the intervening space and plunged into the water a few yards from the boats.

"It is the 'Black Swan!'" muttered Carandel.

"The pirate!" cried one of the men.

"We are doomed!" howled the slavers in despair.

Then came another cannon-ball, striking the leading boat amidst ships and cutting it in two.

"Quick, my lads!" shouted Captain Carandel, to his companions in the second boat. "To the shore! to the shore!"

"We are doomed!" screamed the terrified ruffians.

"Fools! Row to the shore, and we may yet be saved! You forget the fort!"

Thus urged, the slavers bent to their oars, and in two minutes the boat grated on the beach. As the men leaped ashore another ball from the pirate struck the boat and smashed in one side.

"To the fort!" cried Captain Carandel.

At the top of their speed, the ten men from the second boat, with two who had swum ashore from the first, darted towards the house.

Had they arrived an hour earlier a volley would have greeted them; but, since the end of Baricas and the capture of the "Sea Queen" by the corsairs, the mutineers in the fort were glad to have their captain back again. So the gate was opened and the fugitives rushed in.

The captain at once asked to be enlightened as to what had taken place during his absence.

Panajos, who had escaped meeting the fate of his comrades on board the "Sea Queen" by swimming ashore, told Carandel the story of his first mate's treachery.

"The scoundrel! Where is he?"

"In the lagoon. He was killed by the pirates on board the 'Sea Queen.'"

The slaver captain knew that Panajos was a thorough-paced liar, and he had some shrewd suspicions that the men before him were not so innocent as they pretended to be; but, as he was in need of the services of all, he appeared to be satisfied, reserving his vengeance for some future day.

"Now, my men!" said he briskly, "the pirates will attack us soon, and we must be ready for them. They will show no mercy, so we must defend ourselves to the last gasp. Get your guns and go to your posts."

The men obeyed. Only sixteen of the slaver band were now left, but that number was sufficient to defend the little fort.

From the roof of the house, Captain Carandel saw two boats lowered by the corsairs and filled with men. With Cardoc in command of one and Red Garcias of the other, they approached the shore.

The face of the slaver became deadly pale as he caught sight of the swarthy face of Christo Cardoc.

"Diavolo! He of all others!" he almost groaned, gazing at the corsair captain with eyes full of fear and dismay. "I am doomed beyond hope, with that demon amongst my foes. But I'll die game! Like the cornered wolf, I'll turn and fight, and die rending my enemies!"

The pirates landed out of range of the fort, and took up their position under the shelter of some huge trees a hundred yards from the fort. The band numbered forty, all well armed.

Then the long gun of the "Black Swan" opened fire upon the wooden palisades that encircled the little fort. A furious oath came from the Spaniard.

"We can't stand that," muttered the wretched man, in despair. "But I'll have my revenge before I die!" he added, with a sudden ferocity. He descended from the roof to the ground.

"Fetch out all the prisoners!" he ordered.

Herbert Somers and his companions had all spent the night in the little cell, and, when the cannonade awoke them in the morning, they began to hope that the "Little Wonder" had arrived and attacked the slavers.

Herbert climbed on Jack Travers's shoulders, and looked out of the window, which commanded a view of the lagoon. He saw the engagement between the "Black Swan" and the "Sea Queen," and witnessed the defeat of the latter. He remembered that the boy Saxon had told him of the intention of the corsair captain to attack the slave-traders.

"The pirate vessel has arrived," he told his companions. "The rogues are falling out, and perhaps we may get a chance to escape in the confusion. The slavers have got the worst of it."

Shortly after that the door was unlocked, and the five prisoners taken out into the courtyard.

Meanwhile, with guns double-shotted and every man at his post, the "Little Wonder" awaited in the bay the approach of the slavers or pirates, determined to dispute their passage, even if they came in company.

## CHAPTER XII.

### CARDOC'S STORY—RUEZ CARMEN'S REVENGE—THE PIRATES' VICTORY—LAST OF THE SLAVERS.

The men who landed from the "Black Swan" collected just out of range of the block house.

"When the walls are beaten down you mean to make an assault, captain?" asked Red Garcias.

"Yes, mi amigo. I would wait to starve them out, but that might take months to do. There can't be very many of them left, and our attack will be certain to carry their position."

"So I think, mi amo. Are you sure that your man is in yonder house?" the lieutenant asked.

"Quite. I saw him in the returning boat, and he was one of those who reached the house in safety."

"I s'pose he's done you some serious injury, captain?" remarked Red Garcias curiously.

"He has," answered Cardoc moodily.

All this time the long gun aboard the "Black Swan" had kept up a continuous cannonade. Both the gate and the palisades now showed signs of weakening. Meanwhile Captain Carandel was not idle. He knew that the fort must soon fall into the hands of the pirates, and so he resolved to take immediate vengeance on his old foe Henry Trent.

The cause of his hatred of the Englishman may be briefly told.

Many years before Henry Trent had met Ruez Carmen—for that was Captain Carandel's real name—at a ball in Madrid. Carmen was then an officer in the Spanish Navy. A quarrel had arisen between them, caused by the fickleness of a certain signorita, and the Spaniard challenged the Englishman to fight a duel. The challenge was accepted, but the Spaniard bribed Trent's second to omit the bullet when he loaded the pistol. The consequence was that Trent was wounded, while the officer remained uninjured. But the treacherous second confessed afterwards what he had done, and Ruez Carmen was arrested, disgraced, and dismissed from the service. Smarting under this treatment, he resolved to take vengeance on the Englishman. He first stole the son of Mr. Trent, then aged six years, and sold him as a slave to a native chief of Loango, one Modoca. Afterwards he kidnapped Alice Trent and her father, intending to force the girl into a marriage with himself and then slay her parent with his own hand.

But while the attention of all the slavers was directed to the prisoners, the pirates, headed by Captain Cardoc and Red Garcias, were swiftly approaching the stronghold.

Captain Carandel called to his men to prepare. But to his astonishment no answer was returned. Looking round, he saw that every one of his followers had disappeared.

Seeing that all who remained were doomed, the men had made a dash for liberty. The enemy were collected in front of the fort, so the slavers scaled the back wall and fled to the woods.

Captain Carandel realised that he was alone with his five prisoners. For a moment he was dismayed. Then he shrugged his shoulders with philosophic indifference.

"At least you shall not escape me!" he cried; and he drew his sword and rushed upon Trent. But as he did so Captain Cardoc and his men came swarming over the broken palisades. A long pistol gleamed in the hand of the corsair captain, and as he sprang inside he took aim at Captain Carandel and fired.

The slaver's sword dropped from his nerveless grasp. He halted, and staggered back a few paces, vainly clutching at the air in the effort to retain his balance. Then a hoarse, choking yell of bitter agony burst from his throat, and he reeled and fell to the ground, where he lay still.

"That's the end of Juan Cavillo!" quoth Christo Cardoc triumphantly.

"Ha!" he added, as he caught sight of the bound prisoners. "Whom have we here?"

Herbert explained the matter to him.

"Well, we'll finish Carandel's work for him," said the brutal ruffian. "Here, men, load your guns, and give these fellows a volley! Kill all except the girl."

The pirates prepared to obey this inhuman order, and the prisoners had given themselves up for lost, when suddenly a sound broke on the air which struck dismay to the hearts of the corsairs, and caused Herbert to utter a shout of joy.

It was a sound which can never be mistaken—a hearty cheer from the throats of British sailors.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### RESCUE—A STARTLING RECOGNITION—THE CONCLUSION.

As the Englishmen charged in at one side of the building the dismayed pirates surged out at the other. Captain Cardoc tried in vain to rally his men. The victory was rapid and

In next Friday's "UNION JACK" "PETER SLIM" concludes, and a new and varied Adventures of a Young Man

complete. Quickly the prisoners were freed from their bonds.

Saxon had been one of the foremost in the attack, and when the pirates retreated he was the one to untie the bonds of Mr. Trent. The prisoner, seeing the face of the boy, started violently.

"Who are you?" he cried agitatedly.

"I am called Saxon," replied the boy, in surprise at the strange emotion of the other.

"But your real name—what is it?"

"I don't know."

"Is it possible that this is he?" murmured Henry Trent, with deep emotion. "Alice," turning to his daughter, "does not this young man's face seem familiar to you?"

"Yes," replied Alice, after looking at Saxon.

"Who does he resemble?"

"Yourself," was the reply.

"I am right," said Mr. Trent. "Boy, where did you come from?"

"Captain Cardoc bought me as a slave from a native chief, named Modoca," replied Saxon, trembling with a strange emotion.

"I thought so!" cried Trent, his face illumined with joy. "It is Henry, my lost son!"

A grain from Captain Carandel interrupted him. The slaver captain was still alive.

Trent knelt beside Ruez Carmen, and the eyes of the slaver slowly opened his eyes as he returned to consciousness.

"Ruez Carmen," said Trent earnestly, drawing the lad close to the slaver, so that the glazing eyes of the dying man were fixed upon him, "do you recognise this boy?"

"It is Henry Trent, the son of my foe," murmured the slaver, speaking to himself. "My plot of vengeance has miscarried."

There could be no further doubt. Mr. Trent had at last regained his long-lost son, the little Henry who had been stolen and sold into bondage by the slaver captain.

Captain Carandel was buried by the side of his ancient enemy Christo Cardoc, the corsair captain.

The English sailors, with Mr. Trent and his son and daughter, made a voyage down the Majana River in one of the pirate's boats. As Herbert Somers expected, they found that the "Black Swan" had been captured by the "Little Wonder."

Herbert once more had the pleasure of pacing the deck of his own vessel. He had another pleasure, too—the great pleasure of welcoming aboard his craft the lovely girl whom he had rescued from a living death, and who was destined, before the "Little Wonder" regained old England's shores, to become the wife of Lieutenant Herbert Somers. And in their great happiness these two forgot the perils through which they had passed and the dangers which had threatened them.

THE END.

## PETER SLIM, THE WONDERFUL YOUNG VENTRILOQUIST.

Peter Slim, in the opening chapters of our story, was shown to be very unhappy, on account of the unkind and unjust manner in which he was treated. Peter and his cousin Peroy—a detestable youth—were sent to school. Peter and his chum, Ned Powell, being badly treated on every occasion, made up their minds to run away. Mr. Kimber, a circus proprietor, engaged them, Peter being a splendid ventriloquist. He was enabled, by his ventriloquial talent, to save a tiger-tamer's wife from death, thereby incurring the hatred of one Stalwart Tom, who became his implacable enemy. Captured by Peter, this man promised to reveal a great secret if set free, but played Peter false, and lured him to an ambush. In escaping, Peter was arrested as a burglar, but again escaped. One afternoon he saved a schoolgirl, named Muriel Hamilton, from the clutches of Stalwart Tom, and lost his heart to her. Skating on the ice together, they exchanged keepsakes, Peter presenting Muriel with a locket, and Muriel giving Peter a silver bangle. Coming to London to seek the conjurer Salvini, Peter Slim was the means of averting a dynamite outrage, thereby incurring the hatred of one Bollini, an Anarchist. The latter made several attempts on Peter's life, and at last the Anarchist's weapon was turned against himself—the bomb he carried burst whilst in his own pocket. Shortly after this, Peter had the good fortune to save a military gentleman from the hands of two footpads by means of his ventriloquial powers. After an adventure with coiners, Peter again met the military gentleman whose life he had saved, and discovered, to his intense surprise, that he was Sir Claude Hamilton, the father of his sweetheart Muriel. Discovering that the secret of his uncle's will was in Stalwart Tom's possession, Peter repaired to the cottage of that worthy's

brother Reuben. In one corner of the room stood a large iron safe, which Peter managed to induce Reuben Nuttall to open. Inside he found papers relating to himself; and our hero went to bed that night very well satisfied with his day's work.

It was the middle of the night, and Peter was sleeping soundly. He was unaware, therefore, that someone was stealthily ascending the stairs towards the room he occupied at the top of the house.

The house itself was in one of the poorer streets of the town, and Peter had selected his lodging more on account of the cheapness of rent than because of its desirability.

As a rule, Ned and he shared a room, or lived in one of the small circus tents; but since Livingstone had met with his accident, Ned had insisted in helping to nurse him during the night.

It chanced, too, that the two floors beneath that on which Peter's room was situated were just now unoccupied.

At last the steps halted outside the room in which Peter was sleeping. The door-handle was turned, the door was opened, and a man entered. He stood still for a moment just outside the room, and then began to advance softly. The room was in black darkness, and though the intruder carried a dark lantern he had not turned it on. He moved with great caution, but nevertheless he suddenly overturned a chair, which fell with such a crash that Peter was awakened. He was not one of those people who take a long time to take things in when coming from sleep, and in an instant his active mind was on the alert.

He listened intently, breathing as quietly as possible, and was soon able to hear the deeper respirations of the person who had entered his room, even though the latter was also doing his utmost to make no noise.

"No friend would enter one's room in this fashion," said Peter to himself. And then, throwing his voice to the opposite side of the room to where he was lying, he made it seem as though he were breathing heavily.

"He will awake in a moment," he heard a voice say in a whisper. "I'll choke the breath out of him while he sleeps!"

And then there was a sudden rush across the room in the direction from which Peter seemed to be breathing. An instant later there was a loud crash, followed by an oath, and someone fell heavily to the ground.

Peter jumped out of bed, his intention being to leave the room and turn the key in the door, thus making the man, whoever he might be, a prisoner. But before he could carry this project into effect the dark lantern was turned on, and a voice cried:

"Stay where you are, or I will fire!"

Peter saw the glint of the nickel-silver barrel of a revolver, and he knew the voice to belong to a man who meant what he said, for the latter was no less a person than Stalwart Tom himself.

"I've got you at last!" he cried. "This is the last time you have deceived me with your hateful ventriloquism!"

He had rushed at the washstand—as Peter's voice had sounded from there—and with such force that he had borne it to the ground. He was now sitting on the floor, not having quite recovered from the shock.

"You do look funny sitting there!" cried Peter; and he could not refrain from laughing.

"It's a good thing I retained hold of my lamp, and chanced to have a revolver in my pocket," said the other, struggling to his feet, "or I might have lost you after all. You'd better make the most of this laugh, for it will be your last. I'm going to kill you! But, first of all, I want to have a little conversation with you."

He was now standing up, and had placed the bull's-eye lantern on a chest of drawers, though he still held the pistol. Peter saw no better course before him than to try and prolong the conversation as much as possible, in the hope that some chance for escape might occur; but he did not shut his eyes to the fact that the position of affairs was most serious.

"It is unlucky for you that there is no one in the house except the old couple in the basement," said Stalwart Tom.

"How did you find that out, or that I lived here at all, for the matter of that?"

"I did find out; that is enough for you. You did a bad day's work when you saw the inside of that safe. I did not believe you until I got home, and then I lost no time in taking the next train to this place, where I knew the circus was. Of course I knew you would put the police on my track. I guess they were disappointed when they found the bird flown. There was only one thing to do, I thought, and that was to kill the person who had caused me so much annoyance."

"You talk as though your conduct was above reproach," answered Peter, "and as if I, for no reason, had interfered with the affairs of some worthy citizen, instead of having merely tried to get my own property from one of the greatest villains on earth."

This was, under the circumstances, far from being a wise speech; but Peter could not restrain his tongue when he looked

Story begins. "FROM CLUE TO CLUE" will be the story of a Strange in Search of a Hidden Fortune.



at the man who had always been such a deadly enemy to him.

Stalwart Tom, after glaring at him for an instant with a look of the most intense hatred, suddenly made a rush at him, and, seizing him by the throat, hurled him on to the bed.

"I'll choke the life out of you!" he hissed; and his fingers pressed closer and closer round Peter's throat.

The latter struggled with all his might, but he was no match for one with the prodigious strength of his opponent, and his efforts grew gradually fainter and fainter, until at last he lay there, still conscious, but without power to resist the terrible pressure round his throat that was rapidly squeezing the breath out of his body.

A few seconds more and nothing could have saved him; he would have crossed the narrow boundary which separates life from death, and gone "to that bourne from which no traveller e'er returns." But just at the supreme moment help arrived, and from an unlooked-for quarter.

Stalwart Tom felt something jump on to his back, and then a small, brown hand was put round his neck and began to tear at his throat. With a yell of fear, he let go his hold of Peter and tried to seize the thing that was on his back, but in this he was unsuccessful. Like many wicked men, he was very superstitious, and he imagined in his terror this thing was some creature from another world. The huge fantastic shadow cast on the wall through the medium of the localised light of the lantern went to strengthen this impression. He ran round the room in a very agony of fear, but he could not free himself from—it!

And yet the "it" was nothing more awful than the monkey Jack, which Peter (as readers will remember) had many months since promised the Italian organ-grinder to take care of. It always slept in Peter's room. When Stalwart Tom first entered the room and knocked over the chair, it had been frightened, and remained cowering in a dark corner of the room; but now it had suddenly plucked up courage, and stuck to Stalwart Tom like a leech.

Peter meanwhile, the pressure having been taken from his throat, revived sufficiently to sit up, and he at once took in the position of affairs. If only he could have mustered sufficient strength to rush out of the room and lock the door behind him all would have been well. But he knew he could not do this, and, by the time he was able to do so, Stalwart Tom would, in all probability, have discovered that the creature of which he was in such fear was nothing worse than a small monkey.

Suddenly his eyes fell upon something that lay on the bed beside him. It was the revolver, which Stalwart Tom had dropped on seizing him by the throat. He put out his hand and clutched it eagerly, and at last felt that he had saved his life.

He rose from the bed slowly and made his way towards the door. By this time Stalwart Tom had succeeded in freeing himself from the monkey, and noticed Peter when he was still several steps from the door.

"No, you don't!" he yelled. "You don't escape me like this. By heavens, you shall die!"

And he strode towards Peter. But the latter did not budge an inch; he merely raised his right arm and cocked the revolver.

"If you move another step," he cried, "I will fire!"

But Stalwart Tom, blind with rage, took no heed of this threat, and still advanced on Peter.

A sharp report rang out, and, with a cry of pain, Stalwart Tom put his left hand on his right arm.

"The next bullet goes through your heart!" cried Peter.

This brought the ruffian to his senses, and he stopped and stood glowering at Peter, while the latter stepped backwards towards the door, still keeping the revolver pointed at his enemy.

A minute later and he had left the room and turned the key in the lock, thus making Stalwart Tom a prisoner. He hastened downstairs and out of the house, and proceeded in search of one of the few policemen with which it was thought necessary to guard the town at night. He found one after a few minutes' search, and to him Peter gave an account of what had just occurred.

The policeman knew where to find another constable, as he did not care to take the risk of arresting such a desperate character single-handed.

The two policemen and Peter then proceeded to the house in which Stalwart Tom was incarcerated. On arriving outside the room they heard him doing his utmost to force open the door; but luckily it was stoutly built, and defied his every effort.

One of the constables turned the key and threw open the door, and the two of them then advanced. Peter was also present, but he was too exhausted to take any part in the proceedings. And then ensued a truly desperate fight, and the two constables, strong men as they were, had to strain every nerve to its fullest tension before they had finally made a prisoner of Stalwart Tom, and this in spite of the wound in his arm. When at last he had been removed from the room on his way to the police-station, Peter flung himself down on his bed, and was soon in a heavy slumber.

The next day he obtained leave from Mr. Kimber to visit his native place; and then he called on Sir Claude Hamilton to tell him what had happened during the night, and also because he wanted to see Muriel.

"I think you are getting to the end of your troubles," said Sir Claude. "And now tell me what your object is in going to see your uncle and aunt. Why don't you manage the whole affair through lawyers?"

"I want to see their faces when they find I am not only still alive, but that I have discovered and thwarted the plot to keep me from what is my own."

Muriel also tried to dissuade him from going.

"I know they will try and do you some harm," she said.

But Peter was obstinate on this point. And so it came about that Sir Claude and Muriel saw him off by one of the morning trains booked for Bluntford.

It was a long journey, and the afternoon was drawing to a close by the time the train steamed into Bluntford Station.

"I'll go and see my dear relations to-morrow morning," thought Peter. "It's too late to begin operations to-day."

He put up at the nearest inn, and after dinner went out for a stroll.

"I must just have a look at the old house," he thought, "but I will take care that I am not seen."

It was twilight by the time he was standing at the end of the long garden, looking down at the house. He was keeping behind the hedge, and it would have been almost impossible for anyone to have seen him from the other side.

"And these people are my relations!" he thought bitterly.

At last he turned to go back to the inn; but no sooner had he turned than he stood still again. There, not ten yards from him, stood his uncle and aunt, and his cousins Percy and Selma.

"Peter!" cried his uncle, in tones of fear.

But his aunt hastened to speak.

"Nonsense!" she cried; "he is not Peter. Peter was drowned, as you know."

"Pardon me," said Peter. "Peter was not drowned, and I am Peter—come to claim my own."

"I don't know what you mean!" said his aunt angrily.

"We can prove that Peter is dead and buried."

"I told you I'd seen his ghost," said Selma.

"And I told you I'd seen his double," chimed in Percy.

"Nonsense!" said Peter; "you both of you saw me. I have come down here to tell you that I have discovered the whole of your abominable plot, and that I have ample proofs. You must make arrangements to hand the whole of the property my father left me over to me by this day month. There is no use in your protesting that you do not know what I mean. You know perfectly well; and you also know that I am Peter Slim. If you do not do as I say, I will hand the whole affair over to my lawyers."

"Nothing will make me give up anything!" cried Mrs. Slim, in a fury. And she snatched the stick from her husband's hand and rushed at Peter.

(To be concluded next Friday, when a new and thrilling story, "From Clue to Clue," will be commenced.)

## FROM THE QUARTER-DECK.

Very little space is left for "Quarter-Deck" this week—just when I most needed it, too. Such is a poor Editor's luck. I wanted to tell you all about the new serial story beginning next week, and about Mr. Norman Brood, its author. As it is, I must leave the story to speak for itself. "From Clue to Clue"—for so will the story be called—will be a powerful narrative of thrilling adventure, dramatically told. It will be illustrated with portraits and incidental pictures by our best artists, and, in deference to the wishes of numerous readers, I shall try to give a larger instalment in each issue than has been customary with "Peter Slim."

Speaking of "Peter Slim," this story will probably not be published in volume form. The only way of preserving the tale complete will be to save all the numbers of the UNION JACK in which it appears. This for the information of numerous readers who have written to me on the subject.

Whatever you do, be sure to order your next week's UNION JACK in advance, otherwise I am sure you will be disappointed. The demand will be enormous. In addition to the new serial tale, there will be a novelty in the shape of the first of a series of military illustrations—"The Soldiers of the World." The complete story itself will be unusually interesting, being devoted to the Thugs of India—that barbarous sect whose religion teaches them to regard robbery and murder as the highest of human virtues.

THE EDITOR.

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