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THE SECRET OF THE IRON CHEST

By LIEUT. A. MANSON



The steps came distinctly nearer, together with the voices, and in a moment or two after the figure of a man darkened the entrance of the cave.

PUBLISHED EVERY FRIDAY.

No. 170.

THE
MUSEUM OF
ART AND
ARCHITECTURE

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The Secret of the Iron Chest.

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CHAPTER I.

A MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE—THE WRECK OF THE "ALBATROSS."

Some twenty years ago, in the seventies, the papers of the day came out with the following curious paragraph:

"Strange and mysterious disappearance of a wealthy eccentric.—Mr. Joseph Reginald Sinclair, a man of great wealth, and notorious for his eccentricity, has suddenly disappeared from his home at Peckham Rye. Inquiries by his afflicted relatives have resulted in the discovery that he has for some time past been steadily diminishing his balance at the bank, and has been realising all his available property. He is supposed to have thus come into possession of an immense sum, the disposal of which cannot be traced. There is a rumour to the effect that he was last seen in the vicinity of the London Docks in company with a tall, dark man, and a strange-looking iron chest, in which, it is suggested, he is carrying his wealth. This, however, is so fantastic a conjecture that it finds little credence."

This paragraph caused much astonishment and some amusement, for the old man was well-known on account of his eccentric habits, and people, having wondered and guessed till they were tired, gradually forgot the matter, and it went the way of all nine-day wonders.

Exactly ten years after the above paragraph appeared in the daily papers, the barque "Albatross," of Shields, captain John Hunter, had rounded the Cape, and had just got into the Atlantic current, when a violent storm arose, which severely taxed the energies of all on board.

One misfortune followed another, and in spite of the heroic efforts of captain and crew, the good ship went down in mid-ocean, carrying every soul on board of her, with the exception of three.

Two lads and an elderly gentleman had been standing near the deckhouse awaiting destruction.

It was not long coming.

A great wall of water uplifted itself with a howl of fury, and precipitated itself on the doomed vessel.

The two lads were swept away from the gentleman, and the next instant were battling for life in the raging sea.

Jack Harley, the elder of the two lads, had a dim consciousness of being seized by a strong arm—of hearing a voice he knew speaking encouragingly in his ear—and then all was silence and oblivion.

When his senses returned, he found himself lying on a stretch of yellow sand, with the bright sky over him, and the huge ocean glittering at his feet.

An arm was round his neck, and, turning his head, he saw the face of his chum, Harry Gaunt.

"What cheer, old chap?" cried the kindly voice, from which the speaker could hardly banish the sob of grief.

Jack Harley raised himself on his elbow, and asked:

"What has happened, Harry?"

"Happened, begob!" cried another voice at this moment. "There's plinty happened, avick! Sure, the poor owld 'Albatross' has gone to the bottom, with ivvery mortal soul aboard of her, barrin' us three."

Jack fell back with a look of horror in his face, and stared at his companion.

"It is true, Jack. All are gone—your uncle and all. Not one was saved but ourselves."

"Where are we?" asked Jack despairingly.

"Somewheer in lathichewd 35. Longichewd doubtful. Not a thousin' miles from Juan, and in as pretty a plight, me bhoy, as old Crusoe himself."

"Cast away!" murmured Jack sadly.

"Jist that, honey—niver a doubt ov it. Jist as much cast away as three poor mortals in the wurld ivver were."

Jack groaned.

"Cheer up, avick—cheer up! Niver say die! All's well, they say, that inds well. Don't think of giving up till there is not another shot in the locker!"

"I'm dripping wet!" moaned Jack dismally.

"Dhrippin' wet, is it? Why, thin, bad cess to ye for a great omadhaun. How d'ye think it's comin' through the say ye'd be wid dry togs?"

Jack moaned again.

"If me and yer mate there hadn't got a howld av ye, and



The startling apparition had long white hair, and was clad in a grey robe reaching to its feet.

dragged ye to land at the risk of our own two blessed lives, it's in Davy Jones's locker ye'd be at this blessed minit."

"Oh, Pat, I'm thankful to you, indeed!" said Jack, looking at the man, and holding Harry's hand in his own.

"Och, stow that, avick! Sure the man that wouldn't help another in the toime of peril wouldn't be worthy the name of man."

"That's right, Paddy!" said Harry. "And you did help us. If it hadn't been for you we should both ave perished."

"A—yeh. Nivver mind that. Git up wid yez both, and let's be findin' out what sort of a place it is at all, at all. Sure there's no use in life in our lying here groanin' and moanin'. Up wid yez, lads!"

He extended a hand to each boy as he spoke, and they all three stood on their feet, regarding each other with expressive looks.

Paddy was naked, save for a cotton shirt and a pair of cotton drawers tied about his waist, for the weather was hot, and he had been taking it easy till the moment of the catastrophe, when there was not time to think of habiliments of any kind.

The two lads were clad in white linen trousers and thin white jackets, all soaked and clinging to their frames.

Now that the storm had passed and the sky was clear, the sun was shining down, though it was getting towards evening, with terrible power, and seemed to scorch them as they stood.

"Now, lads!" cried Pat heartily, "let's away to yonder rocks, and see if there's a morsel of food to be got for beggin' or shtalm'."

In spite of their terror, and the agitation of their minds, the lads could not help smiling at the oddness of Paddy's speeches, and they followed him up the rocks.

Harry, seeing that Jack was still weak from the effects of the immersion, gave his companion his arm, and they followed closely in the footsteps of Paddy, who cheered them on with word and gestures of the merriest kind, and sprang up before them with all the agility of a deer.

They soon found themselves in a scene of wondrous splendour. Trees of enormous height, and bare of branches almost to the summits, where they spread out in feathery plumes, rose on every side, as well as gigantic ferns, and gorgeous flowers and fruit of every description.

Having at Paddy's invitation eaten some of the fruit that grew on the trees about them, they felt the better for it, and were disposed to take less gloomy view of things.

"Do you think, Pat, that all the people on the vessel were drowned, save ourselves?" asked Jack wistfully, as they gazed around them.

"Begob, thin, young sir, it looks very like it!"

"My uncle, Pat; do you think—?" Jack, poor lad, could go no further, but broke into a sob.

"Whist, thin—whist avick! Sure it's no use repining. We have all our time appointed to us, and if we're to go, we'll go, no matter whin or where we'll be at the same time. Cheer up, avick! We don't know what's in store for us, and mebbe, we'd get many a big surprise yet."

"Pat, you're a treasure!" cried Harry, with a grateful smile, as he noticed how these words brought a hopeful look into his chum's face. Paddy looked at him comically, and said:

"Musha, thin, 'tis good of ye to say so. Sure it's the first toime in me life I iver heard meself called be the name."

All three broke into a laugh at this speech of Paddy's, so drolly spoken, and they continued the ascent of the hill till they felt the unmistakable evidences of fatigue.

"Mebbe that isn't an opening in the ground I see over beyant, in the side of the hill forinst us?" said Pat, of a sudden, as he stopped and pointed to the spot.

"You are right, Pat. It's an opening in the side of the hill, sure enough. Let us go to it!" said Jack.

All three accordingly descended the hill on which they were standing, and proceeded to the one opposite them.

They had got about half-way down, when all three were startled by a loud cry as of a man in mortal agony.

"What's that at all, at all?" cried Pat.

The two lads shook their heads.

"Honeys! That cry came from someone who had got or was goin' to get it."

"Get what?" asked Harry.

"The knife, avicks! The cowlid shtale into the weasan. Oh, there's no manner of doubt about that, sorra a doubt!"

"Let us go and see," said Jack impulsively, and he started forward.

"Shtay, avick. Be said be me. It will be dark in a few minutes, but the moon is rising. Let us wait, or we might go ashtray, and be after losing one another in the night."

They obeyed him, and, following his example, sat down at the foot of the hill, and looked up at the hole in the side of the hill opposite them.

As Pat had predicted, in a little while the darkness fell and deepened, till they were lost to each other's view. Soon,

however, from behind the opposite peak there streamed out a silvery radiance, showing that the moon had risen, and would soon be high in the heavens.

As they sat in silence watching the growing light, the awful cry of agony, of supplication for help, again rang out, and made the island resound with its terrible echoes.

Pat started up, and the two lads looked at him with wonder and inquiry in their eyes.

"Lads, will yez come wid me, or will yez stay here till I come back to yez?"

"Where are you going, Pat?" they asked uneasily, and with a shudder they could not repress.

"To the top of the hill beyant," replied Pat, pointing as he spoke to the opposite side of the valley, the hill on which side was much higher than that at the foot of which they were resting. "That seems to me to be the centre of the island, and we'll see from there, mebbe, better than from any other place, what's goin' on around us."

"We'll both go with you, Pat, of course!"

"More power to yez both. Come, thin!"

When they reached the top, a scene of surpassing beauty greeted them. Below was a flowery plain, with patches of tall, rank grass, and a little distance away a belt of tall trees, beyond which was the line of silver sea.

Through the plain a river ran, losing itself behind a dense thicket to the left.

"Do yez see any sign of a house or a habitation of any sort or kind?" asked Pat, after a thoughtful survey of the scene.

"Not a sign," said Jack. "That broad belt of trees yonder would be a likely place to hide a mystery. Suppose we go down?"

They made their way into the plain at the foot of the hill, and came at last to the thicket behind which the river disappeared.

They found on reaching it that the denseness of the foliage so obstructed the passage of the moon's rays, that the interior of the thicket, even at a few yards' distance from them, presented a veil of impenetrable gloom, through which it would be madness to attempt to find their way.

"It's no use in the wide wurld attimptin' it!" said Pat in a decided manner. "We'd be after goin' ashtray, and mebbe, fall victims our own selves to the rascals who may be lyin' in wait for us. 'Tis warm and light just here, so let us lie down, honeys, until the dawn comes, and thin we'll go forward and see what's to be seen."

The two boys agreed in the wisdom of this advice, and Jack, pointing to a large tree, led the way towards it.

CHAPTER II.

THE APPARITION—THE HUT AND ITS OCCUPANT.

All three were very tired, and two of them quickly yielded to slumber.

Jack, however, could not sleep. The thought of what had happened—the loss of the beautiful vessel—of his uncle—of all the pleasant faces he had known on board, surged through his mind, and kept him awake.

In moving about trying to get rest for his weary limbs in one position after another, his glance fell on another gigantic tree, which stood a few yards from the river's bank.

The spot was empty when his eyes sought it; but as he looked, to his inexpressible amazement, there came suddenly into sight the form of a venerable old man.

Jack rubbed his eyes, and for a few moments believed he was under the influence of a vision.

The startling apparition had long white hair, and was clad in a grey robe reaching to its feet, and girt about with a red cord. Its long white hair fell about the shoulders.

Jack looked at the figure, and the deep black eyes gazed at him with a strange, yet mild look, and the figure raised its hand in a beckoning attitude, and passed away into nothingness once more.

Jack sat for a moment frozen with horror, and then in a loud voice called his companions.

"Harry—Pat!" he cried wildly. "Awake—awake! Here is someone near us!"

"What's that?" cried Pat, immediately wideawake at the words. "Someone near us?"

"Yes. An old man, with white hair and dark eyes, dressed in a grey robe, with a red cord round his waist. He stood at that tree and beckoned me."

"Musha, Hivin presarve us!" cried Pat, looking as pale as a sheet at the hint of the supernatural. What was it you'd see at all, at all? And he looked in a scared way at the tree-trunk to which Jack was pointing, and from it to the boy's pale and frightened face.

"You've been dreaming, Jack!" expostulated Harry.

"No, chum, no. No dream, I'll swear! It was as real as you are."

"Maybe, honey, he is right, and 'tis dhramin' you were?" suggested Pat, in a tone which belied his belief in his own words.

"No, no. Don't drive me mad between you! I saw him as plainly as I see you two at this moment. He stood there just in front of the tree."

"Did he shpake to ye, avick?" asked Pat, shaking from head to foot.

"No. Only beckoned me with his hand like this—" And Jack imitated the gesture as closely as possible.

"Which way did he go when he left you?" asked Harry, impressed in spite of himself by Jack's earnest manner.

"He went as suddenly as he came," replied Jack. "I saw him but for an instant or two. He raised his hand—so, as I have said, and vanished."

"It's very strange," said Harry; "but the morn is breaking, and we shall have light to see what we are doing. Let us be patient, and not be frightened by shadows."

Harry rose as he spoke, and looked about him on every side.

Jack followed his example, and Pat stood staring at the tree, as if he expected every moment to see the apparition which had caused so much excitement.

"Let us go over and examine the tree," said Harry, who was the only one of the three who possessed his wits in their entirety.

Pat shuddered at the invitation, but, nevertheless, he accompanied the boys to the spot where the apparition had manifested itself.

The moon had now paled, and the red light of the sun was filling the morning air with warmth and light.

As Jack and Pat were looking about them, they were startled by a sudden exclamation from Harry, and they turned to him quickly.

On approaching him, they saw to their astonishment that he was looking at a well-defined footprint, or, rather, series of footprints, which formed nothing less than a track into the very heart of the thicket they had feared to penetrate in the darkness.

"What do you make of that, Pat?" asked Harry, looking at the elder man anxiously.

"It's the track of a man's feet!" gasped Jack—"a man's feet, and made long ago. No, recent tracks are these."

All three looked at each other with doubt and horror in their eyes, and at that moment, the sun having risen above the horizon, the way which had looked so dismal and forbidding the night before, now seemed plain and clear before them.

"In the name of goodness, honies, let us go and see what there is before us. Sure it ud be wise to know the worst at wanst, and get it over. There may be something more in this than we think for."

The two lads nodded their heads, and Pat, with a resumption of all his old courage, led the way along the well-marked track.

It led into a kind of clearing, which seemed at one time to have been under cultivation, and, passing through this, they came in front of a screen of dense bushes, seemingly planted by the hand of man.

Neither the whistle of a bird nor the rustle of an animal disturbed the deep silence of the place.

They passed round to the front of the screen in obedience to a sign from Pat, and all three stood silent with astonishment at sight of a hut!

"Well, by the hokey!" cried Pat, "we're in for it now! We are bound to see the ind of this. If there's anything to be seen, its inside we'll be afther seein' ov it. Come, boys!"

As he strode forward the boys followed. Then they stopped short, for as Pat reached the door and peeped in, he started back, and turned to his companions with a face as pale as death.

"What is it?" asked Jack in a whisper.

"Come and see."

They each took a stride forward, and looked through the door.

They saw a piteous sight.

On a low truckle bed lay a form silent and still, clad in a long grey robe, girt about the waist with a red cord. Long hair fell on the shoulders, and the face that stared out from the white mass was the face of death.

"You Believe me now—do you not?" asked Jack, with a faint smile.

Harry nodded his head slowly, and gazed intently at the body.

we heard last night, calling to someone to come and see the murder."

"Murder?" gasped Jack. "Do you think there has been a murder?"

Pat pointed in silence to the neck of the corpse, and the lads perceived the hilt of a dagger, as if the blade had been plunged into the throat itself.

"Poor creature!" said Harry. "Who was he?"

"Dade, thin, that ud puzzle any of us to tell; but come out into the fresh air, acushlas. Sure it doesn't same right to be pratin' in such a prinsace as that."

They went out into the open air, and then Pat, as if to divert his thoughts, said:

"Begob, honies, it's hungry work talkin', and I vote we have a morsel of something to ate before we say another word."

He ran over to an adjacent tree, and, collecting some of the fine fruit growing on it, brought it to the boys, who ate it to please him, and felt much refreshed.

"The first thing to be done, boys, before we say another word, is to give the poor old chap in there a decent funeral."

They found in a shed at the rear of the hut some tools much used, and, taking these, they began their search for a likely place for the grave.

"There," said Jack, after a short journey in the neighbourhood of the hut—"there's the spot."

It was a small hill, with a flat, level top, in the midst of which grew a gigantic tree, whose boughs spread out, and covered nearly the whole of the miniature plateau.

"Yes," said Harry, "the poor fellow will rest as quietly there as in a grave of his own choosing."

They ascended the hill; Pat quickly marked out a trench, and set to work to excavate it.

He had proceeded for some little time with great vigour, when the spade suddenly struck against some object, which gave forth a ringing metallic sound.

"Begob!" said he. "What's this at all, at all? Sure it's not a box of treasure we'd be afther findin'?" And he looked at the two boys.

"No such luck!" said both the lads, returning his look.

"Begob, thin, there's many a thrue word said in a joke, so there is!" And he began to shovel away the loose earth which hid the top of the obstacle.

It would be impossible to describe the emotions that filled the breasts of all three, as, the earth being cleared away, there was disclosed to view the lid of a large, square iron chest.

Pat went to work again around the sides of the box, till it stood in about two inches of soil, and then, with an effort of his prodigious strength, tore it free from the encumbering earth.

Great as was his strength, however, he could not lift the chest from the hole. He tried several times, groaning and straining heavily; but it was not until the combined strength of the two lads was joined to his own, that he was able to lift the box high enough to get it free of the trench.

All three examined it carefully, wondering what was in it, and looking in vain for any sign of a lock or opening.

Finding all their efforts baffled in this direction, they turned their attention once more to the object which had formerly engaged their thoughts.

"We are forgetting our duty, me boys. Let's do what is right first ov all, and thin we'll turn our thoughts to the iron chest."

They went back to the hut, with slow and solemn steps, for the thought of what they were about to do filled them with melancholy.

"We must lift him, boys—bed and all, or he'll be thumbing to pieces in our hands."

The two comrades nodded and shuddered.

"Courage, me boys, courage!" said Pat. And in a few moments they had removed the body from the hut, and up the hill to the grave they had prepared for it.

It was no weight. There was nothing but the dried skeleton within the garb, and they laid it, bed and all, in the trench.

They threw some fern branches into the grave to cover the body, and then Pat, taking the shovel, and each of the boys a spade, they soon hid the body from mortal eye.

"What shall we do with the box?" asked Jack, when they had finished their mournful task.

"That can stay where it is for the prinsint," said Pat. "We can do nothin' wid it at the prinsint moment, till we'll be afther findin' out the saycret of the lock, which will not be long, plaza goodness."

"I should very much like to know what is inside of it," said Jack, regarding it wistfully.

"Something valuable to be so heavy?" suggested Harry.

"Maybe—maybe. Bud it'll take not the laste taste ov harm where it is; so there, for the prinsint, at all events, we'll lave it."

When they returned to the hut they noticed it with more attention than before, and saw that it possessed several articles

CHAPTER III.

THE LONELY GRAVE—THE IRON CHEST—THE BLACK WALLET.

"This is an old deed. And yet it might have been this man

of furniture, which could have been procured only in some large civilised town.

The same questions presented themselves to the minds of each.

How had those articles been brought to their present position? And why, if brought by anyone, was the dead man allowed to remain in his solitary existence? Surely those who brought him these things must have known of his existence, and the dangers he was incurring?

"I don't understand it at all!" said Harry. "This man must have had friends to bring him these things. Why did they not look after him?"

"Maybe," said Pat shrewdly, "he brought them here with his own hands, and wanted to live here all alone by himself?"

"But he couldn't have come all alone," said Jack. "Someone must have brought him, and known his intentions, and why did they leave him to die?"

"Well, avick," said Pat, with a deep look, "you, at all events same to be in the owld man's confidence, and who knows but he may be afther comin' agin to let yez know all about it."

"What do you mean, Pat?" asked Jack in dire alarm.

"Don't be upset, avick; but I am sartin' sure that the owld man'll be payin' one of us another visit."

"Let us change the subject," said Harry significantly, as he put his arm across Jack's shoulder to calm his distress.

They seated themselves in the comfortable lounging-chairs, of which there were three in the room—that is, the two boys did, for Pat contented himself with a corner of the truckle-bed frame, as if to make a little distance between himself and the two young gentlemen, as he knew them to be.

"It would seem the old party had company some time or other," observed Jack, "else why should he want three chairs?"

Without making an answer to this question of the lad's, Pat rose from his seat, and turned to examine the truckle on which he had been seated.

He pulled out the frame from the wall with a jerk, and exposed the space of floor beneath. A broad, dark stain ran down the boards at the side, and spread out on the floor—terrible evidence of the crime that had been committed in that lonely place.

It was then that Jack's eye caught sight of a small wallet, which had doubtless fallen from the bed while they were in the act of moving the body.

He put out his hand and grasped it, and, rising to his feet, showed it triumphantly to the others.

"Open it, avick!—open it!" cried Pat eagerly.

Jack's hands trembled as he opened the black wallet, and saw that some loose leaves were lying within, covered with close writing.

They took their seats again on the chairs and looked at each other.

"Read it, Jack—read it!" cried Harry eagerly.

Clearing his throat, Jack read out the contents.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PASSAGE THROUGH THE HILL—A SWIFT DESCENT TO THE CAVE.

The writing in the loose pages of the wallet was thus:

"The end draws near. I see—I feel it. He will not let me live. Should other eyes read these lines, let them know my death will have been encompassed by John Treloar. I pray for strength to hide the treasure, so that his greedy soul shall be disappointed. But for him I should now be in my happy home, surrounded by friends who would have cheered my declining years. He persuaded me to realise all I possess, and—"

Here the writing abruptly ceased.

"What do you make of it, so far?" asked Jack, looking from one to the other of his companions.

"I confess I can't make anything of it," replied Harry.

"Musha, thin, 'tis a puzzle to meself also," said Pat.

"One thing is clear enough to my mind," observed Jack, "and that is, that he was persuaded to run away from somewhere, with a large sum of money, and that he was deceived by the man he trusted, who had filled his head with a wild plan, and was playing his own game with the poor old fellow."

"Hallo!" cried Harry, at this moment, as he turned over the leaves of the wallet he had taken from Jack's hand, "here's some more writing!"

"Rade it—rade it, avick!" cried Pat, his eyes nearly starting from his head with eagerness.

Harry read:

"I see his plan. He intends only to frighten me. After all I have done for him, he could not do so cruel a thing as take my life. He offers to go away and live by himself in some other part of the island. Yet I am growing more and more afraid of him. One day he levelled a pistol at me; but

I took an opportunity of stealing all the firearms, and hiding them away—"

"Where?" shouted Pat, jumping to his feet.

Harry showed him the page. The writing ceased with the last word he had uttered.

"Begob, I wish we could find the firearms!" said Pat fervently.

"Let us search for them," suggested Harry.

"A—ye! We might as well have gone a-searchin' for the iron box beyant," said Pat gravely. "We might have looked for that for a blue moon, and never have found it. But we was led to it, and, so—mark me—we'll be led to anything else we are wanted to know about."

"This man—this Treloar—what has become of him?" asked Harry, after a pause.

"Got away, no doubt," replied Jack, looking at Pat for a confirmation of the theory he had just broached.

"I wouldn't doubt it!" cried Pat, nodding his head. "There does be many ships passing along in these latches, and a very little stress of weather would blow one of them out of her course, whin they'd be glad enough to land to get wood and water, which is always welcome to ships on a long voyage."

"Let us go out, now, and see if there is a ship passing!" cried Jack, much moved by the possibilities opened up by this saying of Pat.

The latter laughed good-humouredly, and, passing out of the hut, they ascended the nearest hill, which was the one they had descended the night before, and which Pat had conjectured to be the highest point on the island.

They turned their eyes on the flashing sea; but it was empty, not a sail of any kind was to be seen.

Pat felt for the two boys as he noticed the look of disappointment on their faces, and strove to encourage them with hopeful words, in which task he fairly succeeded.

They set to work to refresh themselves with some fruit Pat procured for them, and sat for some time watching the great sea.

This spot became a favourite resting-place with them from that time, and scarcely a day passed without their visiting it, and spending an hour or two watching the vast expanse of water.

Some days had passed away, and the three comrades were on this favourite spot, when Harry became curious to see what was peeping out so white from a dense mass of bushes a few yards from them.

He arose without saying a word to the others, whose eyes were fixed on the sea, and found on nearing the bushes that the object which had attracted his attention was a large lump of white, chalk-like rock. It was quite unlike any of the other rocky masses that peeped out from the soil here and there.

Something induced him to put his hand on it, and endeavour to remove it from its place.

"Hallo, chum. What are you trying to do?" called out Jack in a tone of wonder.

"Trying to move this lump of rock!" replied Harry, laughing.

Pat and Jack arose, went to the spot, and, putting their hands on the mass altogether, in a few seconds had pulled it from its resting-place.

"A passage into the hill!" cried Jack in a tone of wonder.

"Dade, and it is!" said Pat, looking at it curiously.

"Shall we see where it goes to?" asked Harry.

"Dade, and we will! We'll see all there is to be seen, as long as we're here."

"Who shall go first?" asked Jack, looking very much as if he would like to venture.

"Go yerself, honey, or master Harry will go. It 'ud be dangerous for me, d'ye see, for I am bigger than either of yez, and if I got lumbered up, ye'd have a difficultly in getting me back agin, and, maybe, it wouldn't be very agreeable to be stuck fast in a hole like that!"

Both lads laughed at the idea of Paddy being stuck fast, and they tugging at his heels to get him back again, and Jack volunteered for the task.

He went in on his hands and knees, and had not proceeded very far down a steep incline, when the way widened considerably; so he crawled back, and told Pat there was not the slightest danger of his sticking fast.

"Good, avick, thin jest allow me to lade the way, as it were, and if there's any danger to be met with, I'll be afther breakin' the shock of it for yez."

In went Pat on hands and knees, and the boys followed.

They had gone in some distance, and at the rate they were descending, imagined they must be reaching the level of the valley, when Pat stopped, and suddenly cried out:

"What noise is that, avicks! Do yez hear it?"

"Yes. It is the dropping of water," answered Harry.

"Be me sowkins, thin, it's careful we must be, or, maybe, 'tis droppin' into it head foremost we'll be!"

He went forward with great caution, and presently called out:

"It's all right, avicks! I'm thinkin' I do be seein' a glimmer of light."

"Where?" cried both lads together.

"Don't stir the sixteenth of an inch, honies. Just look down betune the legs ov ye."

"Why, the light is coming from the ground!" said Jack in great astonishment.

"Begob, it sames so; but it isn't, for all that. 'Tis at the bottom of a stape hill it is, and we are standing on the very edge of it. If we'd budge another step 'tis straight down to the bottom we'd a-gone, and be lyin' this blessed 'minit wid broken necks."

The two lads shuddered, and asked what was to be done.

"Howld on awhile, honies, and I'll tell yez. Ye see the light is entherin' from below there, and if we wait a bit we'll maybe get enough of it to see what we are doin'."

They waited a little, and it was as Pat had suggested. Their eyes gradually becoming accustomed to the gloom, they were able to use the faint rays that streamed up from below. In a little while they began to see the steep incline on the very



The chest was packed with small bags, each of which was full of gold.

edge of which Pat was kneeling, reaching down an immense distance till it ended in a spark of light.

"What light is that?" asked Harry.

"Light from an opening into the outer air."

"If we could reach it, we should not have to go back the way we came," suggested Jack.

"Begob, thin, 'tis afther shlidin' down we'll be!" laughed Pat.

"Sliding down?" asked both boys in horror.

"Yis, honies. Why not? There's not a thrifle of danger. Come you here in front of me. Now, Master Harry, get in front of your frind, and sit in his lap. Howld him tight, avick, as I am howldin' you. Don't wriggle for the wurrld, or slide off me lap. Look out, now, me jewels!—howld tight!—away we go!"

The two friends sat perfectly still, one arm of Pat's clasping Jack's waist, and the other working his passage down, and presently, with a swift, gliding motion, they felt they were descending the steep declivity.

The star grew larger and larger, and brighter and brighter, till they saw at last the rays streaming through a circular opening, letting in the light of day, a few yards from where they came down, breathless and amazed at the strangeness of their journey.

CHAPTER V.

A STRANGE DISCOVERY—ARMS AND AMMUNITION—THE MANIAC LAUGH.

They found themselves in a kind of cave, large and gloomy, and when they looked back they shuddered at the thick darkness through which they had descended.

They strolled out into the open air, and were surprised to see the river gleaming a little to their left, and to the right the thicket behind which was the hut.

"Why, we are back at the hut!" cried Harry gladly.

"Dade that's jest where we are, honey; but before we go back to it, maybe, we wouldn't find it a bad plan jest to take a squint round us a little."

They walked back into the cave, and, feeling round its walls, found another opening, quite concealed by the dense gloom, at the very back of the cave.

Pat, with his hand on the wall of the cave, thrust his leg in as far as it would go, and, finding firm ground, ventured in, bidding his young companions stay without until he had reconnoitred a little.

Both lads stood without, and became at last somewhat uneasy at their friend's long absence; but presently he emerged from the darkness uttering a triumphant cry, and carrying something in his right hand.

They looked at him as he strode forward into the light, and, running up to him, found him examining a pair of large, silver-mounted pistols.

"Found, be the hokey!" he cried. "Ammunition and all!" And he showed a long belt stuffed full of cartridges. "Oh, if we only had but a taste of light to show us all there is!"

"Cannot you get a light by means of those?" asked Harry, pointing to the pistols.

"Musha, thin, what an omadhawn I am! To be sure I can, and will, in a jiffy."

They ran to the nearest trees outside the cave, and, gathering a mass of dry material, disposed it in the cave where Pat directed them, and to this he at once directed his attention.

He soon disposed the twigs and leaves in the fittest way for his purpose, and, having opened a cartridge or two, the contents of which he strewed over the material, he fired one of the pistols into the midst.

The dry powder caught immediately, and a moment after the cave was illumined by a ruddy blaze.

Directing the two lads to follow his example, he collected a number of dry twigs, and, lighting them at the fire, carried them into the cave.

The sight that met their eyes filled them with astonishment.

Littered over the floor were broken boxes, articles of clothing, and other things, which had formerly filled the boxes, all strewn about, as if they had

been trampled on by someone in a fit of demoniac rage.

But, more interesting than all besides, there stood in the corner two or three small kegs, with a pair of guns and a sword.

Pat strode over to these, and examined them in the failing light of the burning twigs, which the lads had constantly to renew.

"Take this, avick!" he said, handing a gun to each of them. "Myself'll carry the pistols and the sword, as I'm the commander-in-chafe."

"Hurrah!" cried the two subalterns, almost crazy with excitement and joy together.

The weapons were all as bright as if they had been newly polished, showing how dry was the atmosphere of the cave.

Taking a weapon from the ground, Pat girded it on, stuck in the pair of pistols and the sword, and then, returning to the inner cave, lighted by the lads, brought out the two kegs, which he set down carefully near the entry, and, turning to the boys, said:

"We don't know how soon we may be wanting these."

The two lads murmured their approval.

"We'll take them to the hut, and we'll make things as comfortable as we can for ourselves. We'll be aisyer in our minds now that we have some weapons to defend ourselves with."

When they had returned to the hut, the door of which stood open as if inviting them to enter, they deposited their prizes in one corner, and seated themselves for a chat over what had occurred.

"That was a strange place, and a strange sight in it, too!" said Jack, beginning the conversation.

"Some savage beast must have got in and done all that mischief?" said Harry.

"Dickens a baste!—except a baste of a man!" said Pat, nodding his head significantly.

"A man?" cried both lads in a voice of supreme wonder.

"No wun else. That yez may take yer davy on! That cave, me bhoys, has not been entered be man or baste since the night of the murder."

"The murder?" asked the lads in a low, awe-struck tone.

"To be sure. As it was left thin, it is now—just as we found it."

"Do you think it was the man John Treloar who did this?"

"Begob, I do! Who else?"

"Where is he now? What has become of him?" asked Jack.

"Och! He got away all right, niver doubt it. Some vessel or other tuck him off, yez may depend on it."

"I suppose he would be clever enough to tell them some fine story that would satisfy them as to his presence on the island?"

"Niver a doubt of it, avick!"

"How long ago is it since this happened should you think?"

"Years and years. The state of the body shows that, and the look of things all around us."

"Have you noticed how beautifully this hut is put together?" asked Jack. "Do you think they built it themselves?"

"They put it together themselves, widout doubt; but they brought the pieces wid them, I'll go bail."

"Then that would seem as if they had intended to come here and stay?" suggested Harry in a tone of surprise.

"What a queer idea!" said Jack.

"Quare enough; but, cunnin', too, on the wan side," said Pat shrewdly. "I have not the taste of a doubt, but that it was a dape plan got up be this Treloar, who had a half-crazy man to dale with, it strikes me, to get the poor fellow here in this lonely place to rob and murder him."

"He didn't succeed, then!" said Jack. "At all events, he didn't find the box!"

"That's true," said Harry. "But all the same, he would want to get away from the scene of his crime, when there was nothing more to be gained by staying."

In such conversation the evening passed, and at length, wearied out by the excitement and labours of the day, they all three fell into a profound slumber. The two boys slept in the chairs, Pat choosing for his resting-place the framework of the bed.

They had been sleeping some time, when Jack awoke with an uneasy feeling that something was happening.

It seemed as if a loud laugh rang in his ears.

"It is Pat dreaming!" he thought. And he was about to sleep again, when he was brought wideawake in an instant by a loud and ringing laugh of triumph, apparently at some distance from the hut.

He looked over to Pat, with the intention of awakening that worthy; but Pat was already awake, and looking with eager eyes towards the window through which the sounds appeared to come.

"What is it? An animal?" he asked in a whisper.

"Faix, thin, I shouldn't wonder if it was, now that you mention it. It reminded me of nothin' so much as a hyena that had picked up somethin' nice and tasty, and that plazed the crayther."

As he spoke, the laugh rang out again, wild, savage, and triumphant, but with an unmistakably human articulation.

As they listened Harry awoke, and Pat, jumping up, seized a gun from the corner, with his ammunition-belt, and strode toward the door.

The two lads sprang up and followed.

The night was now brilliant with the moon, as it had been the night before, and they strode forward till they had cleared the screen of bushes, and looked around them.

All was still—not even the sighing of the leaves in the night breeze was heard.

They gazed at each other doubtfully, when they all three gave a bound as there rang out from the rear of the hut, in a hoarse, discordant voice, evidently belonging to the laugher, the following words, to a nondescript sort of tune:

"Ho, ho! for the iron chest,

Ho, ho! for the gold within.

Ha, ha! for the guilty breast,

And its bloody load of sin!"

Then there rang out another laugh, so long, so loud, so demoniacal in its glee, that the two lads shrank closer to Pat,

who was gazing sternly, gun in hand, towards the quarter whence the voice proceeded.

Suddenly he started, and cried out in a loud and excited tone:

"The chest—the chest!" And, looking round at the two lads, added: "The treasure chest—on the hill!"

Without another word he rushed forward, the two lads keeping close to him, till they came in sight of the place where the murdered man was buried.

The top was covered by the impenetrable shadow of the giant tree, and they could distinguish nothing till they got closer. Then Pat cried out in a despairing roar:

"The chest is gone!"

It was true. The chest was gone!

CHAPTER VI.

THE SEARCH FOR THE IRON CHEST—AN AWFUL DISCOVERY.

They bounded to the top of the hill, which was sufficiently illumined by the rays of the moon reflected from the ground below to allow them to inspect its surface.

There was the grave marked by its little tumulus of earth; but no sign of the chest.

"Here it stood!" cried Pat fiercely, pointing to the spot where the weight of the chest had made a dent in the soft ground—"here it stood, and it has been lifted and carried off—not dhragged, mind yez! but lifted bodily—a weight that I, strong as I am, couldn't manage!"

The two lads looked at the speaker, appalled by the fury in his face. He went on:

"No one but a spirit could have done that same!"

"Or a madman!" suggested Harry, moved by a sudden inspiration.

Pat was silent for a moment as he looked in the lad's face, and then he said, in a tone of fierce resolution:

"Me bouchals, there's throuble in store for us. But the chest must be found. Sure we owe it to the poor owld man that met his death at the vaggybone's hands that the villyan should not get the benefit of his crime!"

From that moment, the three dwellers on the island set before them one sole object—the search for the iron chest and the man who had taken it.

"We'll never rest, nor allow that vaggybone to rest, till we find the chest, and bring him to account for his crime."

The two lads bowed their heads, and the quest began.

For the first few days it was exciting enough, and engaged all their thoughts; then, as the excitement died out, the situation grew monotonous.

"It is a strange thing," said Jack, after their return one evening, weary and unsuccessful—"it is a strange thing where this mysterious being can have secreted himself, as well as the chest."

"Begob," said Pat, "that's the quarest part of it. He might very well manage to hide his own carcase from our eyes; but how in the world he managed to get away with the chest, that was as much as two of us could lift, bangs creation!"

"Maniacs are sometimes endowed with extraordinary strength," said Jack solemnly.

"Dade, and that's thrue for ye, avick! Sure it 'ud be nothin' short of shupernatural for one man to carry off such a load."

"Have you formed any idea in your own mind as to who the individual is?" asked Harry, looking eagerly at him.

"Dade I have! And so, I'll go bail, have you?"

"Who do you think it is, Pat?" asked Jack curiously.

"Musha, thin, who else 'ud it be but the blaygyardhimself?"

"John Treloar?"

"Sorra wan else in the mortal wurld. No other man 'ud have the same intherest in the chest. Sorra a wan else 'ud sing that blaygyard song, 'The guilty breast,' and all the rest of it. Yez may take me word for it, 'tis with Johnny Treloar ye'll have to square accounts."

"But," said Jack, "the chest will be of little use to him if he does not possess the secret of the lock?"

"True for ye, avick! 'Tis that same reflection does be giving me comfort in the mather. He can do nothin' with the contents of that same chest, and the box itself is so heavy he can do nowt wid it but hide it away. And what I say is this, that if we kape on searchin', we're bound to come on it at long last!"

"We'll make another start out in the morning," said Harry, "and try in a new direction."

With the first beam of light they were abroad, and, having partaken of their usual breakfast, took possession of their arms—Pat his sword and pistols, and each lad a gun.

They did not get away from the hut so soon as they expected, for their attention was attracted by a number of small animals—the first they had seen on the island, and which they were desirous of a closer acquaintance with.

They chased the creatures for some distance, and were about to retrace their steps for the purpose of proceeding with their search, when Jack exclaimed suddenly:

"Look at the opening between those four large trees. We have never been that way yet. Let us go down and see where it leads to, at any rate. We ought to be satisfied of what every spot covers in our present state of uncertainty."

"Dade, thin, it's right ye are. I've been thinkin' about that very same place. I was going to shpake to yez about it this mornin'."

"I've been dreaming about it," said Jack.

"Begob, that stittles the matter, thin, for, would yez belave me, I've been dhramin' about it, too!"

All three looked at each other curiously and then, with one consent, they turned their heads and went towards the trees.

They found to their surprise there was a kind of beaten track, well-defined, and seemingly recently used, under the shade of the trees, but scarcely wide enough for more than one to pass at a time.

This they knew led down to an open space, for they could see the sunlight streaming through at the other end of the dense thicket in which they found themselves.

"Go carefully, me bouchals!" whispered Pat. And they obeyed, stepping as lightly as possible in single file after Pat, the leader.

As they neared the end of the track, it suddenly widened, allowing two of them to walk abreast, and, stopping dead on the edge of a hollow, they looked down.

It was a kind of basin covered with the finest turf, reminding them of the cloth of a billiard-table, so smooth and fine was it—though, of course, it was a hollow.

"Hivins!" cried Pat at this moment, "look beyant!"

The lads looked in the direction whither his finger pointed, and uttered a low cry.

In the very centre of the hollow, beside a drooping bush, was an almost naked figure.

It was the crouching figure of a man, and he appeared to be covering something with outstretched arms.

In a voice that trembled with exultation, Pat cried out:

"Be me sowl, it is the iron chest!"

They turned their eyes on each other for a brief moment, and then looked again towards the spot.

The man sat motionless, as if he had not the least idea of their proximity, and Pat, motioning to the boys, prepared to descend.

The figure took no notice of their approach, but sat in the same absorbed way, crouching over the iron chest.

As they got near him, Pat rushed forward, and, making a bound, clutched the figure in his arms.

The next instant, with a dismal cry, he jumped back, and the crouching figure tumbled in a heap to the ground.

The man was dead!

CHAPTER VII.

THE FINDING OF THE IRON CHEST—THE SECRET OF THE LOCK.

"Merciful heavens!" cried Pat. "Only to think ov me clutchin' him wid murder in me sowl, and him dead!"

The two lads shivered from head to foot, and it was some time before either of them recovered sufficient coolness to consider on their course of action.

There was the chest, unopened, of course, which Pat tried to lift, and found it impossible.

"How did he get it all this distance?" asked Harry, looking in Pat's face with a gaze of bewilderment.

"Nivver a wan ov me knows. Stop, begob! Look over there beyant. There's where it tumbled down. And see, along here the ground is all torn up."

It was clear enough from the marks on the ground that the box had been tumbled over the edge of the hollow, and then partly lifted, partly rolled to its present position.

"It was too much for him," observed Jack. "He injured himself in the struggle. He must have exerted and strained himself furiously to get it from the place it was resting in."

"Sorra doubt ov it!" murmured Pat, looking closely at the inanimate figure. "But let us see where in the wurld this place lades to?"

They climbed the side of the basin, where the chest had been tumbled down, and to their intense surprise found they were on the little plateau where the old man lay buried.

For a few seconds they could scarcely believe their eyes.

There, however, was the grave in the centre, and the wide-spreading tree. There could be no doubt of the matter.

"Musha, thin, but this bangs creation!" cried Pat, scarcely able to articulate, so astonished was he.

"How on earth could we have missed it?" asked Jack.

Harry shook his head, though he remembered well enough that when they searched the top of the hill on the night of the

discovery of the loss of the chest, they had never given the smallest attention to the other side, nor, indeed, could he remember their even glancing in that direction.

"Well, there is the chest," said Jack.

"Musha, yis. There it is, safe enough. And there it may remain for the prisint—at all evints, till we'll be aather findin' some manes of removin' it to other quarters."

"There's not another John Treloar on the island," said Harry meaningly.

"Yours right, avick!—you're right!" said Pat, nodding his head approvingly.

As they were preparing to descend the hill on the other side, Harry touched Pat on the arm, and, looking back, pointed to the hollow, where the tumbled mass of humanity lay in the shadow of the bush.

"You're right, avick!—you're right!" said Pat, noting his gesture. "We'll just go back to the hut, and get the tools, and we'll give him what he didn't give his poor owld victim—a decent burial."

It was a work of little time for three stout pairs of arms, and having dug a trench near the bush, they put in the body, and covered it from sight.

As they returned to the hut, Pat stopped, and, with the keen eye of an old salt, looked attentively at the sky.

"Look at yan sky, me boys," said he. "That bethokens a storm ov wind, or I'm no Irishman!"

He was right. Such a storm of wind and rain they had never before experienced—not even on the night of the loss of the "Albatross."

The wind blew through every crevice of the hut, and especially through a crack in the floor by the side of the bed-frame.

"Musha, thin, bad cess to ye for a wind, that's blowin' the legs ov me!" cried Pat, in a huff, after bearing the infliction patiently for some time. And he pulled the bedstead out from the wall in the hope of finding the crevice.

This removal exposed once more the hideous stain on the floor, and brought back the dreadful memories of the past. In a few moments, however, they had other material for their thoughts, for Pat exclaimed in a loud and exasperated tone:

"Bad cess to me, thin, if the wind don't come up here like a whirligig! Why, begob, the board is loose!"

The two lads watched him for some minutes endeavouring to prize up the board, so as to discover and stop the crevice by which the wind entered.

It resisted their united efforts for some time, and it was not until all three had broken their nails to the quick, that they managed to lift one corner, and revealed a cavity in the soil beneath.

It was merely a shallow hole; but at the bottom lay a small tin box.

"Begob, here's the saycret of somethin'!" cried Pat, as he picked out the box, and handed it to Jack.

The lad pulled off the lid, and turned out in his hand two queer objects to have been concealed with such care.

Pat and Harry looked at them with wonder.

One was a small piece of cardboard, and the other a peculiar little instrument of silver, looking for all the world like a miniature gridiron.

"Well, well, well!" cried Pat. "And fwhat do yez make ov thim two things, honies?"

"Well," said Jack, with a smile of deep meaning, "at all events you can see where the wind comes in!" And he pointed to the crevice under the logs, which Pat at once set himself to stop.

The wind all this time was blowing a gale, and threatened every moment to uplift the hut with its occupants, and carry them all bodily out to sea.

Jack, meantime, had been studying the piece of cardboard and the silver gridiron.

"Pat," said he, after a while, "what do you think this is?" And he held out the small article as he spoke.

"Nivver a wan ov me knows. An ornamin't for your watch-guard, maybe?"

"No. It's a key!"

"A key?" he repeated scornfully. "Arrah! of what, I dunno?" Then seeing the peculiar look in Jack's face, he added: "A key? What of? Not of the—"

"Yes. Of the iron chest."

Pat laughed, and said in a tone of banter:

"Well, well, avick! And have ye got the kayhole as well? For, be me sowkins, there's nivver a taste of a kayhole in the iron chest."

"Yes," said Jack triumphantly. "I have got the keyhole as well!"

His companions looked at him with surprise. He held out the card to Harry, and said:

"There, my boy, is the secret of the iron chest."

Harry took the piece of cardboard from him, and, having looked at it curiously, said in an incredulous tone:

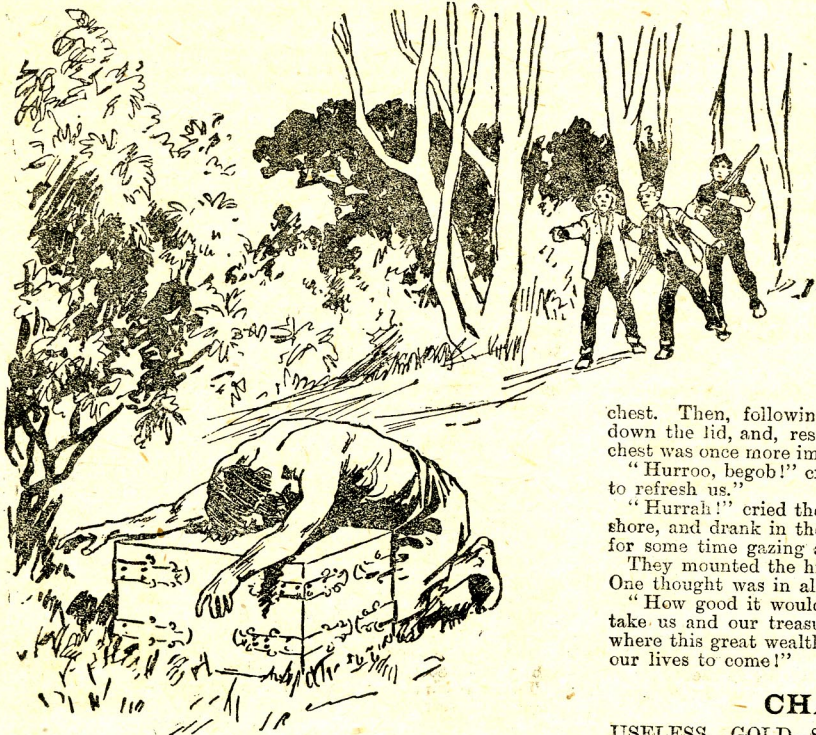
"Never, Jack!"

"Read it, lad! Read it out to Pat."

Harry complied, and then handed the card to Pat, who also studied it for a few seconds.

"Begob, avick, I belave you're right. This is the saycret we were wanting."

It required great persuasion on the part of the two boys to



In a voice that trembled with exultation, Pat cried out, "By me sow! it's the iron chest!"

prevent Pat from going out then and there to test the merit of the discovery. The wind was howling furiously, and Harry said:

"Don't attempt it to-night, Pat. No harm can happen to the chest from the storm, and in the morning, when the tempest has abated, we'll go out and learn all we want to know."

"You're right, avick!—you're right!"

They sat down in their chairs again. It was useless to attempt to go to sleep, for the shrieking and howling of the wind became every moment more fierce, and it became so dark they could not see each other's faces. That, however, did not prevent them from talking, and, as well as the howling of the storm permitted, they kept up their conversation through the night.

At last the dawn came, and the storm subsided as quickly as it had arisen, and in a little while the sun appeared in the Eastern sky, and morn was come. Then Pat, rising from his recumbent position, and stretching himself to his full height, said:

"Come, me bouchals, let's be off! I'm stifling for a breath of the fresh air.

"And a sight of the iron chest?" said Jack mischievously.

There was a good-natured laugh from all three, and they hurried from the hut.

They crossed the hill—that being the nearer way—and saw the chest lying just as they had left it the evening before.

"Hurroo!" cried Pat. "'Tis all right!" He uttered these words in a tone of great relief, as if he had half-expected to see the spot vacant where they had left the treasure on their last visit.

They hurried down. Jack handed the piece of cardboard to Pat, and all three compared the sketch on the card with the chest itself.

"Here it is!" cried Jack, putting his finger on the spot marked by a cross on the card.

He pressed it gently with his hand, using a sliding motion, and a portion of the box glided up with the greatest ease, as if the mechanism had been newly oiled.

They now saw in the side of the box, about six inches from the top, a small narrow slit.

Into this Jack inserted the blade—if it may be so called—of the little silver instrument—the scrolls in it being wards—gave it a push upward according to the directions on the card, and, slowly at first, and then with a heavy jerk, the lid flew open, and stood upright and motionless.

Pat uttered a yell that must have been heard miles out at sea, had there been any listeners, for he saw the chest was full of small bags, on each of which were three figures.

He opened one, and found it was full of gold pieces, old and new. He opened a second and a third, till he had opened all, and all were full of money—gold, old and new.

They examined the bags, and marvelled at the strength of the chest containing them, which, together with the gold, had made the enormous weight.

There were fifty bags, each containing, according to the figures painted on each bag, £500.

It took them some time to convey the bags into the cave, and they were quite fatigued when the work was done, but very happy.

When all the bags had been carried in, they bore the chest thither also, and amused themselves with recounting the bags, as they replaced them in the

chest. Then, following the directions on the card, they shut down the lid, and, restoring the slide to its proper place, the chest was once more impregnable.

"Hurroo, begob!" cried Pat. "Now for a turn by the shore to refresh us."

"Hurrah!" cried the two lads. And they went down to the shore, and drank in the refreshing breeze from the sea, and sat for some time gazing at the waters.

They mounted the hill, and looked out over the silent waste. One thought was in all minds now.

"How good it would be if a ship should come in sight, and take us and our treasure away to the abode of civilised men, where this great wealth would bring us peace and happiness all our lives to come!"

CHAPTER VIII.

USELESS GOLD—STRANGE VISITORS—WHERE IS THE IRON CHEST?—VENGEANCE.

Some few weeks had elapsed, and then it was discovered that Harry's health was beginning to suffer. He got feeble and languid, and was often left behind in the hut, while the other two went out to collect food, or to mount the hill for the purpose of catching sight of any passing vessel.

Harry was intensely keen on this last object, and would not let them miss it on any account.

It was in the second week of this indisposition, and for the last few hours the lad had shown signs of mending, so that Pat promised him, if he continued to make such progress, he should accompany his two friends on their next expedition to the top of the hill.

He was alone in the hut, half-dozing, and his mind busy in a dreamy way with the anticipation of the coming excursion to-morrow or the next day, when he became conscious of the sound of voices near him, and he listened placidly as in a dream.

"'Tis twelve year ago, or more. The old 'un 'll be dead, no doubt; but Johnny 'll be alive, if nothing has happened to him. He's one of the tough sort."

"But—who is this kiddy here?" asked another voice, in a tone of extreme astonishment.

"Is it a boy or a girl?" asked yet another voice.

"A girl by the long hair."

"No, fool—a boy!" said the first voice.

Harry opened his eyes slowly, and they roved round the room sleepily till they reached the window, and then, with a start, he sat up wide awake, indeed.

Crowded at the small window, and looking in at him with grinning faces and wagging heads, were three of the most villainous-looking faces he had ever beheld.

They mocked and bowed, and shook their heads at the bewildered lad in the most grotesque fashion, and suddenly there rose over the heads of the others a man with a thick dark beard, who wore on his head a long blue bag with a red tassel.

They all gave a loud, discordant laugh at the boy's scared look, and left the window.

The next moment their heavy feet sounded as if they were coming round to the door. They pushed it open, and thronged into the room.

"Hallo, younker, where's the old 'un?" cried the man in the blue cap.

"Where's Johnny—Johnny Treloar?" asked another.

Harry made no answer. His tongue seemed to stick hard in his throat. On their repeating their questions in a fierce and peremptory manner, he replied:

"Both those you mention are dead."

"And who are you?"

"A poor castaway."

"How long have you been on the island?"

"Many months, I think."

"Were they alive when you came here first?"

"One of them was."

"Which one?"

"John Treloar."

"And when did he die?"

"A short time since."

"What'd he die of?"

The lad was silent, not knowing what answer to make to this, when the blue-capped man interposed roughly:

"What's the use wasting time asking such rot as that, with a Government cruiser on our track! Where's the money, boy—the money in the iron chest? We are the rightful owners, don't you know, not Johnny Treloar, or anyone connected with him. Come, speak out. Tell us where to find the money in the iron chest."

Harry made no answer, but, leaning back in his chair, he closed his eyes, as if determined to say no more to anyone.

"Durn his young blood, he's going to sleep! Prick him up with your knife, Steve!"

A quick prod in the fleshy part of the thigh with the sharp point of a knife made Harry spring up smartly, and the ruffians burst into a roar of laughter.

"Now, younker, are you going to tell us where that chest is?" roared the man in the blue cap. "If so be as you don't tell before I count five, we'll take you outside and riddle you with bullets."

He touched the butt-end of a pistol in his belt as he spoke, and the rest did the same.

Only one thought was in Harry's mind at that moment—
anxiety for Jack and Pat. Where were they? What would become of them if they should reappear suddenly in the midst of this truculent band.

"While he thought thus, the man was counting.

"Three, four, five! Will you tell? No answer? Take him up, lads, and we'll make him sing out for his mother!"

The ruffians seized the lad, dragged him from the chair, and carried him unresisting to the outside of the hut, where stood a withered sapling, which had grown up by chance since the neglect of the place.

To this they carried him, and, drawing his hands behind him, one of the men slipped off his own belt, and fastened it round the boy, so that he was incapable of motion.

He, indeed, had no desire to move. He only hoped he should die quickly.

"Now, younker, for the last time, will you speak?"

The boy opened his eyes, and looked at the foe, and then closed them quickly, lest the man should read there what was coming.

In that brief moment he had seen two figures flying towards him like the wind, with streaming hair, and noiseless feet.

The two were Pat and Jack.

With a yell of fury the band had dispersed at the leader's command, and had returned with a pile of brushwood, which they heaped up about the doomed lad.

"Set fire to it!" cried the leader.

Harry heard the striking of a match, and then there followed quickly another sound, sickening, appalling, and something warm splashed on his face.

Another smash, and yet another followed the first—all in the space of a lightning flash.

He opened his eyes, and saw one man lying on his face, quivering from head to foot like a stricken bullock. A second lay on his side, a hideous sight, while a third had fallen on his knees, and was clutching at the ground with his hands.

The fourth had stepped back in terror, and had pulled the pistol from his belt, which he fired at the very

moment Harry opened his eyes. The next instant he too sank under the mighty crash of the butt of Pat's fiercely-wielded musket.

Then the avenger turned towards the bound lad, and, assisted by Jack, kicked away the flaming brushwood from about him, and, catching him in their arms, drew him from the spot.

"Run, run, the two of yez!" cried Pat earnestly. "There's a boatload of the rascals on the beach."

"And you?" asked Jack, looking at him appealingly.

"I'll be afther ye in a brace of shakes. I'm goin' first of all to the hut to get some arms and ammunition, and will be afther yez in no time at all. Go quick, honies!"

They yielded to the persuasions of their elder friend, and Harry staggered away on Jack's arm.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ARRIVAL OF THE PIRATE HORDE—THE BOOM OF A GUN—FLIGHT.

When the two lads reached the cave, they crept into it as far as they could go, and awaited the arrival of Pat.

"Who were those men?" asked Harry of his companion. The latter shook his head, and could give no explanation.

In mingled doubt and surmise they passed the time till the arrival of Pat, who soon found his way into the corner where they were seated.

"All right, honies!" he cried cheerfully. "If they thrack us here, every mother's son of them that comes in at that opening beyant shall fall benathe this hand of mine, mark me words."

"Who are these men, Pat?" asked Jack, repeating the question which had just before been put by Harry.

"Dade, thin, not wan o' me knows. They're afther no good."

"They're after the iron chest!" said Harry gravely.

"How do you know, honey?"

"They asked me to tell them where it was. That was why they tied me up to make me answer."

"How did they know about it?" asked Jack curiously.

"They knew all about it. They asked where Treloar was, and how he died. And they asked about the 'old 'un,' too!"

"Hush!" said Pat at this moment. "Here they are—the rogues! There's a nice sight for them when they do come!"

The two lads shuddered at the thought of the dreadful scene which awaited the desperadoes when they came near the hut.

Their anticipations were realised very shortly, for the air was rent by a terrible yell, followed by the most frightful impre-



He went in on his hands and knees.

NEXT
WEEK.

"CAPTAIN NEMO."

By
CHAS. HAMILTON.

cations, and they knew the miscreants had come on the slaughtered bodies of their companions.

The voices increased in fury and volume, and fitted from point to point, as if the ruffians were in search of those who had done the deed.

"They are searching for us," suggested Jack.

"Let them search, begob!" said Pat, with a meaning look. "We have plenty of powder and shot. Ye two kape the guns loaded, while I do the firin', and it's Paddy Lynn that'll take toll of ache man that attempts to inter that hole."

"They are coming!" whispered Jack.

Pat seized his gun.

The steps came distinctly nearer, together with the voices, and in a moment or two after the body of a man darkened the entry of the cave.

No sooner did his form show in the opening than a spurt of flame shot out from the dark corner where the three were seated, and with a cry of pain the wretch fell forward on the floor of the cave.

There was dead silence for a while, and then a howl of vengeance rose on the air.

Three other forms, ferocious and grim, thrust each other aside to push in first; but another sharp crack rang out, the cave was illumined for a moment by a lightning flash, and one of the men fell forward beside his companion, while the others stepped quickly back without the cave.

There was a tremendous clamour of voices, and then a hoarse bass, dominating the rest, cried out:

"There's enough of us lost over this trumpery affair. It's their turn now. Not another man risk his life by entering the cave. They have had all the play. It's time we had our innings!"

"Hear, hear!" shouted the chorus. "Block them in and starve them."

"Nay, nay!" said another voice, that rose shrill and tigerish in its anger, "smoke them out, and let them run the gauntlet!"

"Hear, hear!" howled the chorus. "Smoke them out!—smoke them out!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Smoke away, me jewels! Sorra wan ha'porth or harm yez'll be ather doin' us, if yez smoke away till St. Tib's Eve, and that, me darlins, comes neither before nor after Christmas."

The two lads laughed a little at this joke of Pat's; but they were speedily rendered grave again by the sight of the proceedings of the rascals without.

They were now busy piling heaps of brushwood and dry branches in the entry of the cave.

Just before the opening was blocked up a head was thrust cautiously in, and a voice cried out:

"Where is the iron chest? Tell us where that is, and we will forgive you all you have done to us."

The three nudged each other, but made no answer.

"Do you hear? We are going to fire this stuff, and grill you to death. We have already burnt that domicile of yours, and if you don't answer we'll find the chest without your aid."

He had hardly concluded the last words, when the sharp crack of the weapon in Pat's hand was heard, and with a yell the speaker fell back.

"Set fire to it!" cried the same hoarse voice as before, "and let them grill."

There was an answering shout, a bright sheet of flame illumined the front of the cave, and the three fell back into the inner darkness.

It was impossible they could be seen, though they could see plainly enough.

Now the whole entry was filled with fire, and dense columns of smoke rolled in, and passed up like a blast through the shaft, which they had left open at the other end.

They could hear the shouts of glee from the outside, as the rascals threw on more fuel, thinking they were reducing the prisoners to ashes.

The draught was so intense that the fire quickly burned out, and the ruffians were kept well employed, adding to the rapidly consumed material.

They could hear the leader cursing at his men for their tardiness in bringing the fuel, and the shouts of glee which greeted each fresh bundle thrown on, causing a shower of sparks to fly out into their faces.

In the midst of the uproar and confusion, a new sound broke on the ears of all.

It was the sullen boom of a big gun, rising over the tumult, and sounding afar off on the ocean.

"Hark, boys!" cried Pat. "Did yez hear that? 'Tis the bark of a British bulldog!"

"A bulldog?" asked Jack wonderingly.

"Begob, yis!" replied Pat. "That was a gun from a British crusher, and, if I'm not mistaken entirely, we shall soon see the tables turned. Hark to thim!—musha, thim, more power to yer elbows, me hearties!"

Again the sullen boom rolled over the sea, echoing from shore

to shore, and the hearts of the three beleaguered mortals throbbed quick with hope, as they believed help was near.

"Do you think they are being chased?" asked Harry.

"Begob, I do, thim! It shtrikes me the shmoke has athraacted the attention of the crusher they mitioned a while ago, and they have thracked the rogues to the island."

"Listen!" whispered Jack. "They seem to have gone away."

"I wouldn't wondher in the laste, avick. There's some work goin' on they won't relish, I'm thinkin'. Wait awhile, and you'll see they'll want all their thricks to get out of the sailors' clutches!"

"Hark!" said Jack. "It is all silent. Shall we venture out?"

"By no manner or manes—at laste, not yit. The ground in front of the cave will be hot, and would burn the fate of us. Have patience awhile, till the fire has burned itself out, and thim, maybe, we won't be out in a jiffy!"

They yielded this point to Pat's superior wisdom, and occasionally started as they caught what they thought was the sound of a British cheer.

They got so impatient at last that they ventured near the opening of the cave; but had again to retreat, as their naked feet found the ground unbearable.

They walked to the shaft, and looked up into the remote darkness, wishing there was some way of climbing up, so as to come out on the top of the hill, whence they could see all that was going on.

This was impossible, so they had to exercise their patience and listen to the sounds of the fighting, evidently proceeding quite briskly without.

They could now plainly hear the voices of men shouting and hurraing, and after a little while plainly distinguished the voice of an officer giving orders.

"Let us go, boys," said Pat. "The fight is over, and they may be sheering off widout knowin' a thing in the wurld about us, and we shall be worse off than ivver."

"Come, then," said the lads, overjoyed at the prospect of getting out of the cave, and in a short time they managed to get clear of the hot ashes, and made their way into the open air.

Pat had his guns and pistols loaded. Harry carried the other gun, and Jack the sword.

Outside the cave still lay bundles of the fuel the miscreants had brought thither. This they cleared, and came in sight of the hut, now, alas! a heap of smoking ruins, which made them sad to see. Turning from this, and also from the gory spectacle that lay around the sapling, they made their way to the hill, mounted it, and looked out to sea.

There were two ships. One was a fine, stately vessel, with the Union Jack flying at her bows; the other was a low-built, sinister-looking craft, the masts of which had been blown away, and her hull seriously damaged by the shots from the cruiser.

As they looked, a boat was leaving the pirate's side, filled with men—no doubt prisoners, who had been left behind to guard the ship.

Our heroes shouted aloud, in order to attract the attention of the cruiser; but their voices did not seem to carry, the wind blowing to the shore.

"They cannot hear us!" cried Harry piteously. "Let us run down to the shore. There they will see us, and take us on board!"

"Come, thim!" cried Pat. And they turned to descend the hill, when they saw a party of men rushing towards them with drawn cutlasses.

Leading them was the man with the blue cap.

"The cave, the cave!" shouted Pat. And he turned and sped towards the opening in the ground, the stone of which was still displaced.

"If we couldn't climb up we can shlide down!" laughed Pat. And in a few seconds they were on their hands and knees before the hole, with the pirates coming quickly after.

"Ha, ha!" cried the leader in the blue cap, "another smoking-out job!"

"Smoke away!" shouted Pat derisively. And he disappeared within the orifice, Jack and Harry quickly following him.

They went on fearlessly, on hands and knees, for they now knew whither they were going, and in a few moments rose to their feet, and saw the light shining below them.

"Now, lads, quick!" cried Pat. The two boys gave themselves up to his keeping as before, and away they went downwards, through a choking smell of wood-smoke, and safely reached the bottom.

As their feet touched the ground, a cheery voice sang out:

"What cheer, me hearties! Who comes there?"

All three gave a loud shout of joy as they found themselves accosted by a stalwart man in the dress of a British sailor.

He had his musket slung across his arm, and was evidently on guard at the entrance of the cave.

At the sound of his hail, two or three others came running in,

and stared at the three half-naked figures. Among them was a young officer.

The latter looked at the new arrivals with a kind of dismay, and then asked them if they spoke English, to which question Pat answered readily:

"Begob, thin, we do that same. It 'ud puzzle us to sphake aught else."

Jack diverted the officer's attention at that moment by saying: "I expect there will be some more down here presently—and they are likely to come down in a much quicker way than we did."

"Aha?" said the officer. "And who may they be?"

"Some of the pirate gang."

This answer had scarcely been given, when there came a rushing, rearing noise from above, and in a few seconds, one breathless, battered wretch after another came down, rolling, clutching, bounding, and lay in a grotesque heap on the floor.

Had the circumstances been less tragic, all three would have laughed aloud at the bewildered and terror-stricken faces of the unhappy pirates, who lay groaning and squirming on the floor of the cave.

The officer and his crew were less reticent. They burst into a series of hearty guffaws, each more boisterous than the other, during which the victims on the ground looked at them in bewildered anguish.

They were quickly seized and secured, though there was little life left in them, the young officer exclaiming as each face was brought to the light: "One of the worst members of the gang. They gave me the slip on the shore, and I had to pursue them into the interior." Then, turning to the three, he said: "Which of you three was it that left his mark on the beauties yonder?"

He saw by the look on the lads' faces that it was Pat, and he cried out in a tone of genuine admiration:

"By George, man, it was well done! I should have liked to be in that job myself. But I seem to get out of all the fighting. I thought I was going to have a brush with these fellows"—pointing to the prisoners—"but fortune wouldn't favour me. She preferred breaking their necks down a stoke-hole!" And with a plaintive sigh the young officer—for he was quite boyish in appearance—gave the order to "March!"

When they had left the cave, Pat turned to his companions, and said in a tone of extreme significance:

"The chist, avicks!—the chist!"

"What about it?" asked Jack wonderingly.

"We must hide it, asthore. Sure if any of the ship's payple gets an eye on it, they'll be afther claiming it for the Quane, and Dickens a farden would we ivver get out of it!"

CHAPTER X.

THE REMOVAL OF THE IRON CHEST—JOYFUL NEWS—HOME AND HAPPINESS.

"Will they take us on board, do you think?" asked Jack.

"To be sure they will. Why wouldn't they? But they're not bound to take the chist aboard, and maybe axin' impident questions about it, and I'd rayther they didn't know a syllable of what's in it, d'ye see!"

"But," asked Harry, "how could we get it on board the ship without their knowing it?"

"Sorra wan o' me knows at this blessed moment. But if the worst comes to the worst, we can lave it behind us."

"Leave it behind us, Pat?" cried both boys together.

"Yis, asthores, rather than we would run the risk of losin' the whole lot. Once let us get to owld England again—I've a little owld shtockin' of me own, avicks, and I'd get a frind to loan me a vessel, and we'd come back here and carry off our prize. Let us hide ivvery mortal stiver, before any pryin' eyes 'ud be afther seein' it."

They hurried forward, hearing the shouts of the men in the distance, and rather wondering the officer had not invited them to accompany him, seeing what service they had rendered him.

"They'll soon be calling us to mind, bhoys," said Pat consolingly. "Yon officer is only a bit of a bhoy, and will be put right when he comes into contact wid his shuparior officer. Manewhile, we'll get the tools, and dig a grave for the money, and thin, if they want the chist, sure they're welkim to it."

Both lads laughed at this droll idea of their friend's, and, going to the ruins of the hut, they managed to recover the spade and shovel, which had not been injured by the fire.

They hurried back and got vigorously to work, and had just managed to make a hole large enough to cover the bags, and had closed the chest, when they heard the noise of men approaching, and a voice called to them from the entry of the cave to advance.

They obeyed, and found themselves in the presence of a stern-looking officer, who started when he saw the two lads, and eyed them curiously from head to foot.

"Who are you?" he asked, with an air of abrupt authority.

"Castaways from the barque 'Albatross,' of Shields, Captain John Hunter."

"How long have you been on the island?"

"Some months, as near as we can guess."

"Have you suffered anything from the pirates?"

"Only the loss of our hut and furniture."

"I am told you gave the pirates rather more than they bargained for. The debt is on their side, not on yours, I believe?" And the officer smiled grimly for the first time. Then, after another look at the boys, he added:

"Are you ready and willing to embark with us, for the nearest port, to be sent home to England as soon as practicable?"

"We are, sir."

"Good. It will be some little time before we are ready to start, so that if you have any arrangements to make you will have ample time."

Then, pointing to the interior of the cave, he asked:

"What place is that?"

"An inner cave, sir."

"Is this the place where the pirates fell through?" he asked, pointing to the shaft.

He asked this question of the young officer, who turned crimson with suppressed laughter, as he recalled the episode.

"Get a light," said the superior officer. "I will explore the cave."

The three looked at each other; but in a few minutes matches were procured, and they entered the cave after the others. There was abundant dry material about, and in a few minutes the cave was lighted up.

When the officer saw the extent of the place, he looked about him with silent astonishment. Then his eyes fell on the large iron chest, and he approached it, and regarded it curiously.

"Is that yours?" he asked, as he touched it with his foot.

"Yes, sir."

"What's in it?"

"Valuable, sir. Picked up on the island."

"Yes, yes. I suppose you will be taking them home as curios?"

"Indade, thin, sir," said Pat, seeing his opportunity. "It's that same we'd like to be doin' av it's plazin' to yer honour."

"Oh, to be sure. No objection at all. Mr. Rawlings, just see they take on board what they wish, in a reasonable way."

The young officer touched his cap, and gave the three an arch look, and then, satisfied with his visit, the superior officer gave a condescending nod, and left the cave followed by his men.

The young officer, whom he had called Rawlings, stepped back, and said very heartily:

"I say, you know, this is out-and-out surprising, isn't it?"

"What?" asked Jack, thinking he was making some reference to the chest.

"Why, that we should have picked up the skipper and the owner of the vessel you went down in."

"What?" cried Jack. "Did you really pick up my uncle and the captain?"

"Was it really your uncle? I congratulate you. Yes, we picked them both up, and took them into Santiago, where your uncle has an agent. I shouldn't wonder if he is not there now—your uncle, I mean, for he said there might have been an equally lucky chance for you. But, I say, you know, you'll want some togs, and some grub, won't you? You two kiddies are about my size, and old Billy the Bo'sen 'll be about your mark, Paddy. Good-bye for a little while. Soon hear from us again."

When he had gone, the three castaways looked at each other, and Pat and Harry clasped Jack's hand, and congratulated him on the good news they had just heard.

Jack thanked them, with tears in his eyes; and then to change the subject, cried out:

"And there, if we haven't had all our trouble for nothing!" And he pointed to the empty chest.

"Begob, thin, that's all right!" laughed Pat. "We'll just have thin dear little bags back agin in their nest before you'd say 'winkin'."

So they did. They set vigorously to work, replaced the bags, and closed the chest as it was originally.

They had scarcely finished, when footsteps were heard outside, and a rough voice hailed them.

Before they could answer, a fat old fellow appeared at the opening of the cave, wiping his face with a red handkerchief, while the steam rose from his sunburnt forehead.

"Well I'm darned!" he cried, "if 'taint a nice jaunt up here in the sun all alonger you two swells. Ain't yer got ne'er a drop of some'at to drink—some'at cheerin' like to give a poor feller arter bringin' yer this yer 'eavy bundle?"

Pat laughingly explained they had nothing but water—a nice cool draught of river water, if he cared to partake of that.

"Garn!" he cried, in a tone and with a look of immeasurable disgust. "Who are yer gettin' at?" And throwing the

bundle on the ground, he walked away with an air of great disdain.

They opened the bundle, and found a complete rig-out for each. That intended for Pat had been evidently the property of a big man; while that for the two lads had formed part of the wardrobe of the young officer himself.

As they were sorting these out, they were startled by hearing a voice cry out from the opening:

"Forgot to tell ye. Boat's crew up yer to-morrow mornin' fust thing. Don't you forgit it, if so be as you don't want to be left behind."

Before they could thank him for his information, the old fellow was gone.

"What a surly old bear!" remarked Jack to the others.

Pat laughed, and said:

"'Tis only shkin-dape, avick! There's a-many like him. Chrusty and cross-grained outside, and thrue as goold at the core."

They tried the clothes on, and they fitted very well.

"Our time on the island grows short now," said Jack.

"Yes. To-morrow mornin', plaze the pigs, we'll set our feet on the deck of a British vessel, and see home and payple once more!"

At the first appearance of the dawn the three were up, and had run to the top of the hill to watch the approach of the ship's boat.

There was the beautiful vessel standing out on the bosom of the waters, and presently they saw the boat lowered, and fill with its crew.

As the cry to "give way" rang out over the sea, and the first splash of the oars was heard, the three friends turned to each other with a smile, and, clasping hands in token of their joy, descended swiftly to the cave.

There was little to take besides the chest, most of the other goods they had resolved to offer to the ship's people, who should take them to the vessel.

The difficulty was how to get the heavy chest down to the beach to meet the boat.

Pat's ingenuity, however, overcame all difficulties of the kind, and with the help of two rollers, which he got out of the ruins

of the hut, and a good deal of labour and perseverance, they managed the task at last, being materially assisted in the latter part of their course by some of the boat's crew.

The captain had kindly consented to convey them to Santiago, as the nearest port, and as the vessel set her sails, and turned her head from the island, the three friends clasped hands once more, and fervently congratulated each other on the fact that their troubles were over, and that they were on the way to a bright and happy life.

The voyage to Santiago was made without a mishap, and Jack had the happiness of presenting his two friends to his uncle, and of relating to him the wonderful story of their adventures.

He listened with rapt attention, and readily promised to do all he could to assist them to convey their treasure safely to England.

"Why, Jack lad, what's this?" he suddenly cried, after a scrutiny of the great iron chest. "See these initials, J. R. S.? Do you know that they stand for the name of your grandfather, on your mother's side, John Reginald Sinclair, who so mysteriously disappeared many years ago with all his worldly wealth stowed away in an iron chest? Jack, my boy, I congratulate you. The money in the chest is justly yours by right of inheritance."

"Are you sure it is the same, uncle?"

"There cannot be a doubt about it. The coincidence would be too extraordinary were it otherwise."

"Hurroo!" shouted Pat. "Now we'll be afther getting our money back to the ould cuntry widout any bother at all, at all!"

"Not our money, Pat, but Jack's," interposed Harry.

Jack Harley gazed at his chum reproachfully.

"Come, Harry," said he, "you don't think me as mean as that, I know. The money belongs to the three of us in equal parts, and, by Jove, Harry, won't we give everybody we know a glorious treat when we get back to old England." *

His passage home was a rapid and pleasant one, and many an evening they wiled away by telling over and over again the story of the iron chest.

THE END.

THE BLACK SEAL

OR THE QUEST OF "ZUB" THE DOG DETECTIVE

CHAPTER XXIV. (continued).

That mysterious individual had just swung within the barrack-gates, and with his usual stalwart stride, was making for the quarters bearing his name, No. 41.

"Oh!" exclaimed the adjutant, in a relieved tone, "so that's the fellow, is it? Mortimer he calls himself, eh? And a captain, too!"

"He is no officer of ours, thank goodness! He is a friend of Glyn's, and is about his quarters much oftener than I like. He seems a shady bird, and fights shy of all of us. I have never spoken to him. I fancy he is some shark preying upon Glyn. I should like to get rid of him."

"That you shall, and right away!" cried Fairfax. "Whoever he is, and whatever he calls himself, that is the man I want, for whose arrest I hold a warrant. Will you aid in its execution, Captain Crawford?"

"That will I, right gladly! How many men do you want? I shall accompany you myself," responded the adjutant.

"Post one or two sentries in rear of the quarters; I believe there is a secret exit by the back. Besides these, a file of men. Two strong fellows to accompany us will be sufficient, as I have instructed Scotland Yard to place a couple of men at my disposal. Send your orderly to order them in. He will find them just outside the barrack-gates. They will be in plain clothes, but will act upon my card. There it is. Let them circle round opposite sides of the parade, and meet at No. 41." responded Fairfax, giving his orders with military promptitude.

Five minutes later Jack Fairfax and Captain Crawford walked over to the quarters of Lieutenant Glyn, followed by two stalwart troopers, and found on either side of the door Inspector Fox and Sergeant Whipp, the two men from Scotland Yard.

"Hallo! it's you two, is it?" remarked Jack, on coming up to his old associates in the case. "Now, Fox, we will trap the real criminal. Got your muzzle off, Whipp?"

Both men looked rather foolish; but it would be all the worse for the real criminal.

Jack Fairfax mounted the two or three steps leading to the door; then glanced back, to see that his forces were all in order, like a commander-in-chief ere opening battle.

Captain Crawford stood close behind. The two troopers supported their officer. After them came Fox and Whipp, representing the civil power. Pickets guarded the building in rear.

All was ready, the sword unsheathed, and Fairfax gave the signal to begin.

Lifting the knocker, Jack rapped loudly.

In answer to the summons the door was partly opened, and the head of the grizzled, surly soldier-servant was popped out.

"Not in," was the batman's gruff reply to Jack's inquiry for Captain Mortimer.

"You lie, you hound, as usual!" cried Fairfax imperiously. "I know he is inside. I demand admittance in the name of the law! See! I am supported by the military, as well as by the civil power. Resistance is worse than useless. Let me pass, I order you!"

The man started on noticing the force behind the authoritative speaker; then made an attempt to close the door.

Vain endeavour. Jack's foot crossed the threshold and held the door; his shoulder pressed against the portal, slowly driving it open, despite the struggles of its keeper. And to avoid being jammed against the wall the batman was forced to wriggle out, letting the door fall back wide.

Still the fellow endeavoured to bar the way, springing in front of the intruder, and throwing himself into a threatening attitude.

But now another appeared on the scene. The door of the sitting-room opened, and, attracted, alarmed by the disturbance, Captain Mortimer stepped into the hall.

OUR NEW SERIAL STARTS SHORTLY.

A glance showed the new-comer the position of affairs—that resistance was impossible, while he instinctively felt that chicanery would be vain. The game was up; his only resource lay in his heels.

"Hold the door but half a minute!" cried Mortimer to his servant; then swiftly fled along the passage towards the lumber-room at the end.

"Out of the way, you villain!" shouted Jack.

And with a sudden, dodging spring he landed beside the porter. A smart side-swoop sent the batman reeling against the wall, and Fairfax darted past in pursuit of the recreant fugitive.

Mortimer reached the cupboard door. He tore it open; but ere he could enter the dark little room the hand of the avenger was upon him.

Jack caught the man's flying clothing, seized a firmer grip of his body; then ensued a wild, furious wrestle.

The encounter was of short duration; the forces attacking were overwhelming.

Crawford laid an iron grasp upon the fugitive's other shoulder. Slipping round, the two troopers gripped the man in rear, and, fiercely fighting, struggling, and wrestling, biting and snapping like a wild animal, Mortimer was forced along the passage, drawn and driven into the sitting-room, thrust into a chair, and firmly held there by the two soldiers, while Fairfax and Crawford stood in front. Inspector Fox drew out his greasy note-book and stumpy pencil; and Sergeant Whipp gazed in wide-eyed wonderment on the scene, not quite seeing where he himself was to come in.

In the struggle the person and clothing of the prisoner had been violently disarranged; his dark hair was dishevelled, his jacket wrenched open and partly torn. And Crawford gazed in wonderment on this so-called "Captain Mortimer," the close friend of his brother-officer Lieutenant Glyn, wishing that Glyn himself might appear to explain matters.

Suddenly Fairfax stepped forward.

"Hold his hands down; grip him firmly!" he called to the willing troopers.

Then, grasping the black hair of the captive, he jerked it up, tearing away a closely fitting scalp-wig, disclosing a close-cropped head of fair hair.

Then, reaching a water-bottle, Jack made a sponge of his handkerchief, and rubbed it over the face of the prisoner, removing a dark powder by which the skin was covered, wiping out artfully drawn lines around the eyes, nose, and mouth, completely altering the expression of the features.

A black-haired, dark-complexioned, grim-visaged man had been forced into that chair; its occupant now bore light hair, and a much clearer, fairer complexion.

"Do you know him now?" grimly inquired the detective, stepping back.

"Why—why—why—the head is that of Edward Glyn!" gasped the astounded adjutant.

"And the body, too!" cried Jack. "We have cleared the head of the snake; now let us cast its skin!"

The clothing of the culprit was all artfully padded, giving him a much larger appearance, broader in the shoulders and bulkier in the body and limbs.

Drawing off the fellow's boots, Fairfax showed an ingenious arrangement inside by which the height of the wearer was increased quite two inches.

Captain Mortimer had been captured, a taller, broader man than Lieutenant Glyn, bigger and bulkier in every way, form, features, and complexion as different as night from day. Yet the various disguises removed revealed the presence of Lieutenant Glyn.

The captain was but the shell of the nut, the lieutenant the kernel. The two men were one and the same; different characters assumed for different occasions.

Yet still Fairfax looked dissatisfied, perplexed, and puzzled. He had not yet fully penetrated the veil.

"Crook his elbow; lift up his right hand!" suddenly shouted Jack to the soldier gripping that side.

Eagerly the detective examined the hand. At a glance, under ordinary scrutiny, indeed, it appeared perfect and complete—in no way scarred or deformed.

Not so. Gripping it firmly, Jack turned his attention mainly on the thumb.

Here was further artful concealment.

The thumb was covered to the first joint by a piece of thin, fine, elastic kid, like the point of a glove-finger. It was flesh-tinted, the exact colour of the hand, and so perfectly fitting that it was difficult to say where the artificial covering ended and the real skin began. On the point a finger-nail was painted in life-like fashion.

Grasping the thing, Fairfax screwed it round like the capsule of a bottle, and drew it off, disclosing the real member.

At the end some tiny fragments of black sealing-wax adhered to it. A clearly defined cicatrice—the mark of an old wound—ran across the ball. Here was the die of the weird Black Seal!

"My last, my strongest proof!" muttered the detective as he dropped the hand.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE PRISONER AT THE BAR.

A cab was called for the removal of the now passive prisoner to the police-station. Recognising that the end was come, Glyn made no further resistance, but sat with bowed head, his eyes fixed on the ground, either lost in thought or ashamed to look honourable men in the face. Already the criminal showed his guilt; his crimes crushed him.

The adjutant insisted on accompanying his disgraced brother-officer to the station, not as a friend and supporter, but from anxiety to save in some way the honour of the regiment.

Inspector Fox, having finished his note-taking, was proud to take nominal possession of the prisoner. If he had been on the wrong scent at first, at least he would be in at the death, and might yet secure some glory, possibly promotion, by the affair.

These three, with Fairfax, got into the cab. Sergeant Whipp, his wits still wool-gathering, mounted the box beside the driver, and quietly enough the cab drove off, exciting no attention whatever in the busy streets.

The cab drew up at the door of Bow Street Police Station, and its five passengers entered that gloomy building.

Jack Fairfax entered the charge, and handed over his prisoner to the officer on duty.

A magistrate was sitting at the time. It was decided to place the accused before him as soon as possible, and, after a brief interval, Lieutenant Edward Glyn entered the felon's deck.

"H'm!" muttered the magistrate, with a pucker of lips and brow, as he glanced over the charge-sheet; "a serious matter. Murder—no less! A cause célèbre, too!"

"Who is in charge of this case?" he inquired aloud.

"I am, sir, for the present, until the Crown authorities take it up," responded Fairfax, stepping forward. "I accuse that man in the dock of the murder of Viola Norris, last month. He bears on his person absolute, indelible proof of his guilt! I can also produce a witness who saw the crime—a poor boy whose evidence the accused endeavoured to suppress by most cruelly and brutally depriving the lad of his tongue. But I have taught him to speak with his fingers. Besides these, I have other proofs. Further, there will be other penal offences charged to the accused, but—"

"That will do for the present," interrupted the magistrate. "I only require enough now to justify a remand. The case is adjourned till eleven o'clock to-morrow morning."

"Have you anything to say before you are removed?" he inquired of the accused. "If you take my advice you will reserve your defence, if you have any. The adjournment is as much on your account as on that of the prosecution; you had better consult with your solicitor."

All through the prisoner had remained with bowed head, his eyes steadily fixed on the ground, seeming to feel his degraded position acutely; and now, without raising his head, he muttered hoarsely:

"I will do so, sir. I will say nothing now. Can I have bail, so that I may take measures for my defence?"

"Certainly not!" was the prompt reply. "There is no bail for such a charge as this. You will be detained in custody, but every facility will be afforded you in preparing your defence."

"Then I can have writing materials, sir?"

"Most certainly. You have only to ask for them. Further, you may be visited by any authorised person you may desire to see."

At a signal from the magistrate a court warder tapped the prisoner on the shoulder and motioned him to descend from the dock. Proceedings were over for that day; the prologue of the tragedy was finished.

On setting foot in the open court, the unhappy man was caught by the coat-sleeve by the warder—a sinister reminder that he was no longer a free man—and conducted from the hall. But on his passage down he was joined by Captain Crawford, who fell in on the other side.

The prisoner was only accused; he might yet prove his innocence. And as considerable latitude is always allowed to those under remand, the guiding warder made no attempt to prevent an interview, or even to overhear what passed between them, staring straight ahead, and stalking on like an automaton, perfectly satisfied so long as he retained his sleeve-grip.

Pressing close to the side of his disgraced subordinate, the adjutant, with his mouth close to the ear of the other, deftly, and quite unobservedly, slipped a tiny revolver into the coat-pocket of the prisoner, whispering:

"It is loaded in all five chambers. You know what to do with it. Have regard for the honour of the regiment, if not for your own!"

(To be continued in next week's number.)

BUFFALO BILL'S DUEL.

(STORIES TOLD IN HIS OWN WORDS.)

I earned the title of Buffalo Bill by killing buffaloes on the plains. The Kansas Pacific Railroad was being built through the heart of the buffalo country in 1867. Some 1,500 hands were employed at that end of the route. The Indians were constantly on the warpath, and fresh meat was difficult to obtain. Hunters were engaged to kill buffaloes for the firm who had the contract for boarding the employees of the road. I had some little reputation as a good shot, especially at live rattle, so I was engaged at a salary of 500 dollars per month to kill buffaloes. Twelve of these huge animals were required each day. Nothing but the hams and humps was eaten. I knew the work would be very dangerous, because the Indians were riding all over the country, indulging in their favourite sport of killing a white man when they caught one alone on the prairie. But I agreed to furnish the meat, Indians or no Indians.

I knew I would often be five or ten miles from the road, and was liable to attack by the redskins. My success as a meat provider was so great that the road hands began to call me Buffalo Bill, and the name has remained with me. Many stirring adventures occurred to me during the seventeen months I hunted buffaloes for the Kansas Pacific road. I killed 4,280 buffaloes, beside some Indians. My favourite hunting horse was Brigham, who was trained to dash into a herd of wild buffaloes, and chase them until I had slain almost as many as I desired for the day.

During these same buffalo hunts, I got into a very tight place. The road had been pushed near the Saline river. I had a man, "Scotty," to go along in a light wagon to cut up the buffalo meat, and haul it to camp. One day I had killed fifteen buffaloes, and we started for home with a wagonload of fine meat. We were eight miles from camp when we suddenly came upon a party of thirty Indians, who rode out of the head of a ravine. It happened this day that I was on an excellent horse that belonged to the railroad company, and could easily have made my escape. But I had no idea of deserting Scotty, who was driving a pair of mules to the wagon. Of course Scotty and I had often planned how we would defend ourselves if suddenly attacked by Indians.

In a few minutes we unhitched the mules, and tied them and my horse to the rear of the wagon. We then threw the large buffalo hams on the ground, and built a breastwork around the wheels. We had an extra box of ammunition and four extra revolvers, the emergency battery we were forced always to carry along. Behind our hastily-built breastwork we were prepared to give a warm reception.

We didn't have long to wait. They rushed at us with all the noise and yelling enthusiasm of which the red man is capable. We opened such a lively fire that they stopped a direct attack, and began to circle around us. Then of a sudden they made a concentrated attack. It was no more successful than the first, but they killed both of the mules and the horse. They charged back and forth several times, and Scotty and I killed three within a few yards of our breastwork. It was a scorching hot place for a time. The three braves dead, and others wounded, dispirited the Indians as to direct attacks, and they adopted other tactics.

They got off at some distance behind little knolls, and tried long-range warfare. We were besieged, and our only chance for escape was a rescue from the railroad camp, where troops were stationed. We had been expecting, sooner or later, to be caught up by Indians in such a manner while buffalo hunting. I had an understanding with the officer who commanded the troops that whenever their pickets saw a smoke in the direction of our hunting grounds they were to know we were attacked by Indians.

Scotty and I kept very close in our breastwork, subject to a raking fire from the little army around us. We held a council of war, and concluded we could not fight our way out, but must get relief. Scotty kept up a diversion by concentrating his fire in a certain locality. In a few minutes I struck a match, and quicker than I can tell you reached over and set the grass on fire to the leeward of our fort. The red warriors began a war dance at what they considered a piece of folly.

None of them suspected that I had given a signal for aid. While the thick volumes of smoke rolled upward, and the flames spread rapidly over the prairie, the Indians made another attack, but were repulsed.

It began to look as if we were cut off, and would have to fight there for hours. Scotty was plucky, and we resolved to end our existence in making a gallant fight, rescue or no rescue. In an hour or so after the prairie was fired I heard the neighing of steeds, and soon saw a company of soldiers riding rapidly toward us. The Indians saw them, too, and began a hasty retreat down the canyons of the creek. We shouted to the advancing troops that we were alive, but our mules and horses were dead. Five dead Indians were discovered on the battlefield around our little breastwork. Scotty and I didn't do such a bad work after all. How many were wounded and carried off we had no means of ascertaining.

The circumstances of his duel with Yellow Hand, Mr. Cody tells as follows:

The Sioux War broke out in 1876. General Custer was slain on the 25th of June, when I was acting as scout for the 5th Cavalry, under General Merritt. We were on our way to Fort Laramie when the news reached us that Custer and his gallant troops had been massacred on the Little Big Horn. We started back to join General Crook in the Big Horn country, when we received word that eight hundred Cheyenne warriors had that day left the Red Cloud Agency to join Sitting Bull's forces. General Merritt resolved to intercept the Cheyennes. He selected five hundred men and horses, and pushed rapidly to War Bonnet Creek.

On July 17th, 1876, I discovered the Cheyennes. They did not see our troops. General Merritt, several aids and I went ahead, and saw the Indians advancing directly toward us. Suddenly twenty or thirty of them dashed off in a western direction. With our field-glasses we discovered two mounted soldiers, perhaps bringing despatches to us, riding rapidly forward on our trail. The Indians were endeavouring to intercept them. The general did not deem it wise to send soldiers to the aid of the couriers, because it would discover to the Indians that troops were in the vicinity waiting to attack them. I was commissioned to go back to the command, pick out fifteen scouts, and rescue the couriers.

Just as the Indians began to charge the two soldiers, I dashed with my scouts to intercept them. A sharp running fight took place, and we killed three of their number. The main body of Indians appeared in sight, and the skirmishers—the Indians we were chasing—took courage and charged us. A lively little fight occurred, and we checked their advance. We were, perhaps, half a mile from General Merritt, who kept an eye on our movements. A big chief, gorgeously attired with top plumes and Royal paraphernalia, rode out in front on a magnificent horse, and, in his own language, challenged me to mortal combat. He said:

"I know you, Pa-he-haska; if you want to fight, come ahead and fight me."

I accepted, and galloped forward to meet him. I advanced fifty yards, and he about the same distance. We were at full speed when we came within thirty yards of each other. I raised my rifle, and shot his horse dead in his tracks. At the same instant my horse stepped into a hole and fell. I was not injured by my horse's fall, and sprang upon my feet.

The Indian arose as quickly as I did, and faced me not twenty steps distant. We both raised our rifles, and fired at the same time. He missed me, and my bullet pierced his breast. In a second I was on him, and drove my knife to the hilt in his heart. Then I pulled off his war bonnet and scalped him in the most approved Indian style. The Indians, seeing their chief slain, charged upon me. Colonel Mason, with Company K, came to my assistance, and drove the enemy back. As the soldiers galloped up, I held up the scalp and the war bonnet, and shouted: "The first scalp for Custer!"

The chief killed was Yellow Hand, son of old Cut-nose. The latter offered me four mules to deliver up his son's scalp, war bonnet, and arms. I haven't complied with old Cut-nose's desire yet, and still keep the dead chieftain's war outfit.

LOOM ON THE NEXT PAGE

GREAT PICTURE PUZZLE COMPETITION.

(Conducted jointly by the FUNNY WONDER and "UNION JACK.")

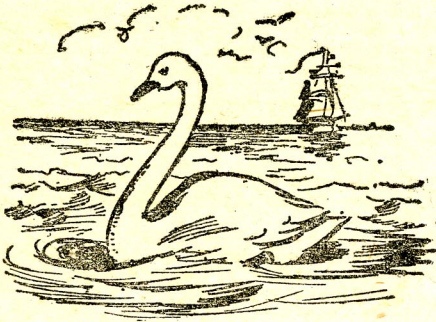
Over £50 in Prizes.

First Prize, **£1** a week for 4 months; Second Prize, **10s.** a week for 2 months; Fifteen Prizes of Ten Shillings each in Cash; and from 2,000 to 5,000 Jubilee Medals.

The medals will be given as consolation prizes, and also one medal will be awarded to the sender of every 25th letter opened, thus giving even those whose lists are incorrect a good chance of a prize.

The Pictures illustrate Sea-Coast Towns of England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland.

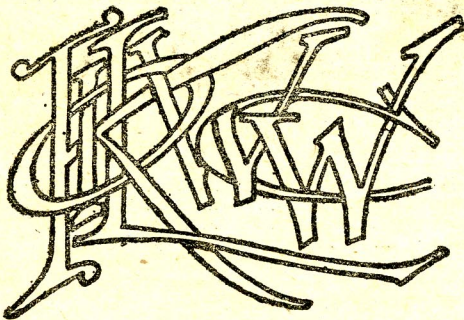
Write underneath each picture the town you think it represents, and save this page until all the sets of pictures have appeared. Get your brothers or parents or friends to help you. There are no restrictions.



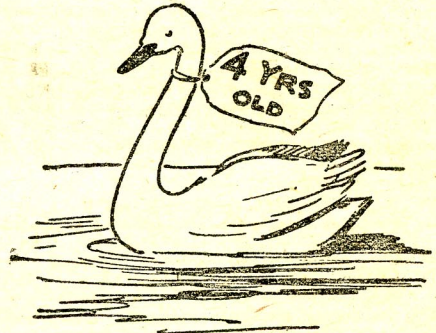
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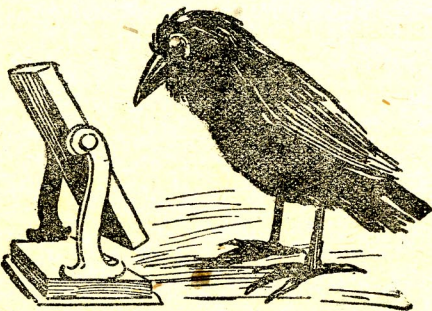
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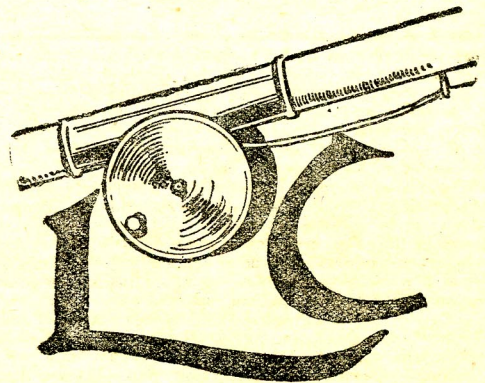
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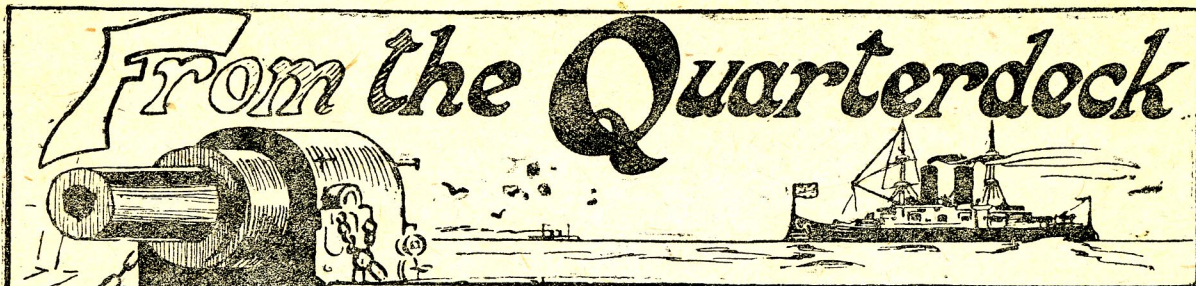


20.....

Four more sets, of six or eight pictures each, are to appear.

You must not send in until all the sets of pictures have appeared, when full instructions will be given.

For the next set of six pictures (Nos. 21 to 26), see the FUNNY WONDER, published to-morrow (July 24), or next week's UNION JACK, ready July 30.



By the
Skipper of
the
UNION JACK.

Why should you not be the winner of £1 a week for four months, or of 10s. a week for two months, or of ten bright shillings, or at least of one of the thousands of Jubilee medals we are giving away to our readers? All these prizes are to be won by merely solving a few easy puzzle pictures. Again, too, anyone may help you. If you cannot find out the meaning of any of the pictures for yourself, ask a friend to assist you. For fuller particulars and some of the pictures turn to page 15.

Which of you readers is the smartest, eh?

Speaking of the competition, you must not send your lists in one by one. All must reach me together, or they will be disqualified.

Join the UNION JACK League. Every member can write the letters "U. J. L." after his or her name.

You are not asked to do much. Fill in the coupon given below, get your letter witnessed by three friends, pop it in an envelope, together with another envelope, stamped and addressed to yourself, and send it to me. In return I will enroll you, and send you a badge. Every fiftieth applicant is awarded a handsome prize.

UNION JACK LEAGUE.

I,

of.....

herby declare my wish to be enrolled as a member of the "Union Jack" League, and promise to do all in my power, by means of the "Union Jack" and otherwise, to exterminate the "penny dreadful."

Another of our new paper "The Rambler's" justly celebrated road-maps appears this week. This one shows you at a glance how to reach any part of the coast of Yorkshire. Every road over its beautiful seaside wolds or down to its splendid coast is carefully given.

"The Rambler" map does not worry you with a lot of unnecessary detail, such as little rivers, railway lines, and the like. These are of no use to the cyclist, who wants simply to know the roads, the towns, the distances, and the dangerous hills. All these he will find at once.

The form of the map—a simple double page in the centre of the paper—is most convenient. You can carry "The Rambler" rolled in your pocket, and pull it out in an instant to consult. No trouble of unfolding or pulling out of a case.

With each week's "Rambler," which comes out on Tuesday, price one penny, is given away free one of these capital little maps, which are quite as good as any of you could buy for twice the price of the paper and map. A new district is dealt with every week.

"Britons, Strike Home!" was the song, "Elsie." It was in the year 1805, when the alarm of a French invasion was general. George III. was walking on Windsor Terrace, when the band started "Rule, Britannia!" On hearing this air, the King stepped up to the bandmen, saying: "No, no! Let us have 'Britons, Strike Home!'"

Several readers have asked me how they can remove disfiguring tattoo-marks from their persons. The most reliable method I know is that recommended by the "Boys' Friend." Here it is:

First wash the tattooed part with soap and warm water; then take a bunch (consisting of from six to eight) of fine cambric-needles, tightly bound with silk thread, and dip these into a solution of glycerole of papoid. Drive the points of the needles into the tattooed parts with a sharp blow; thoroughly repeat over the entire stain.

If my readers find any difficulty in obtaining the glycerole of papoid, it can be purchased from Messrs. Hearson, Squire, and Francis, 38, Southwark Street, London, S.E.

I am sorry I cannot tell "A Leaguer" the value of his book, if any. If there is any respectable dealer in old books near where he lives, he had better take it to him.

"U.J. Reader" will find all he is desirous of knowing in a little pamphlet entitled "The Advantages of the Army," which is given free at any post-office.

Certainly it is quite possible to be suffocated by the perfume of certain flowers, "U. J. L."

A very popular young Parisian actress some little while ago accepted an immense floral tribute during the progress of the play. At night she placed the flowers in her room. She was found dead next morning, suffocated by the perfumes.

The flowers most dangerous to health and life are violets, hyacinths, lilies, and heliotrope. It is evident, too, that the deadly exhalations from large quantities of these particular flowers, if confined in a small room, would asphyxiate the strongest person in a few hours.

Here are the tables you want, "X Ray."

INDIA.		s.	d.
Anna	...	0	1½
Company's rupee	...	1	8½
Sicca rupee	...	2	0
Mohur	...	28	6

A lac is 100,000 rupees.

GERMANY.		s.	d.
1 mark (less one-sixteenth)	...	1	0
Prussian thaler	...	2	11½
Rix dollar	...	3	6
Austrian rix dollar	...	4	0
Gold ducat	...	9	5
205 marks	...	200	0

JUBILEE PRIZE COMPETITION RESULT.
ADVENTURE COMPETITION.

10s. 6d. has been sent to
Private A. Wright, 494 "A" Company,
R.M. Depôt, Walmer.

Consolation Prize:
Mr. J. W. Steed, 55A, Albert Road, Devonport.

FLAG COMPETITION.
10s. 6d. has been sent to
Mr. S. H. Philips, 93, Edinburgh Road,
Kensington, Liverpool.

A similar amount has been won by
Miss R. Langton, Malta.
(Please send full address.)

CRICKET COMPETITION.
The cricket-ball has been won by
Mr. K. Anstey, of Dublin.
On receipt of his full address I will forward it.

*Don't come from,
The Skipper*

1d.
—
2

THE BOYS' FRIEND.

1d.
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2

"THE BOYS' FRIEND" comes out every Wednesday, and consists of Eight large pages, splendidly illustrated, price 1d. In it at the present time are four of the most Thrilling Stories ever read by Boys—a grand, rollicking School Tale; a Story of Railway Life, with a Boy Hero; a Tale of Peril, Adventure, and Hidden Treasure; and a Serial Story of a Great War, entitled, "BRITAIN IN ARMS." Besides these splendid Tales each week, "THE BOYS' FRIEND" contains a brightly-written Short Story, and Articles on Pets, Trades for Boys, and everything likely to be useful to growing, manly Lads. Every week the Editor gives advice and information to his readers in "Your Editor's Den"—one of the most popular columns in any weekly paper.

THE BOYS' FRIEND.

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