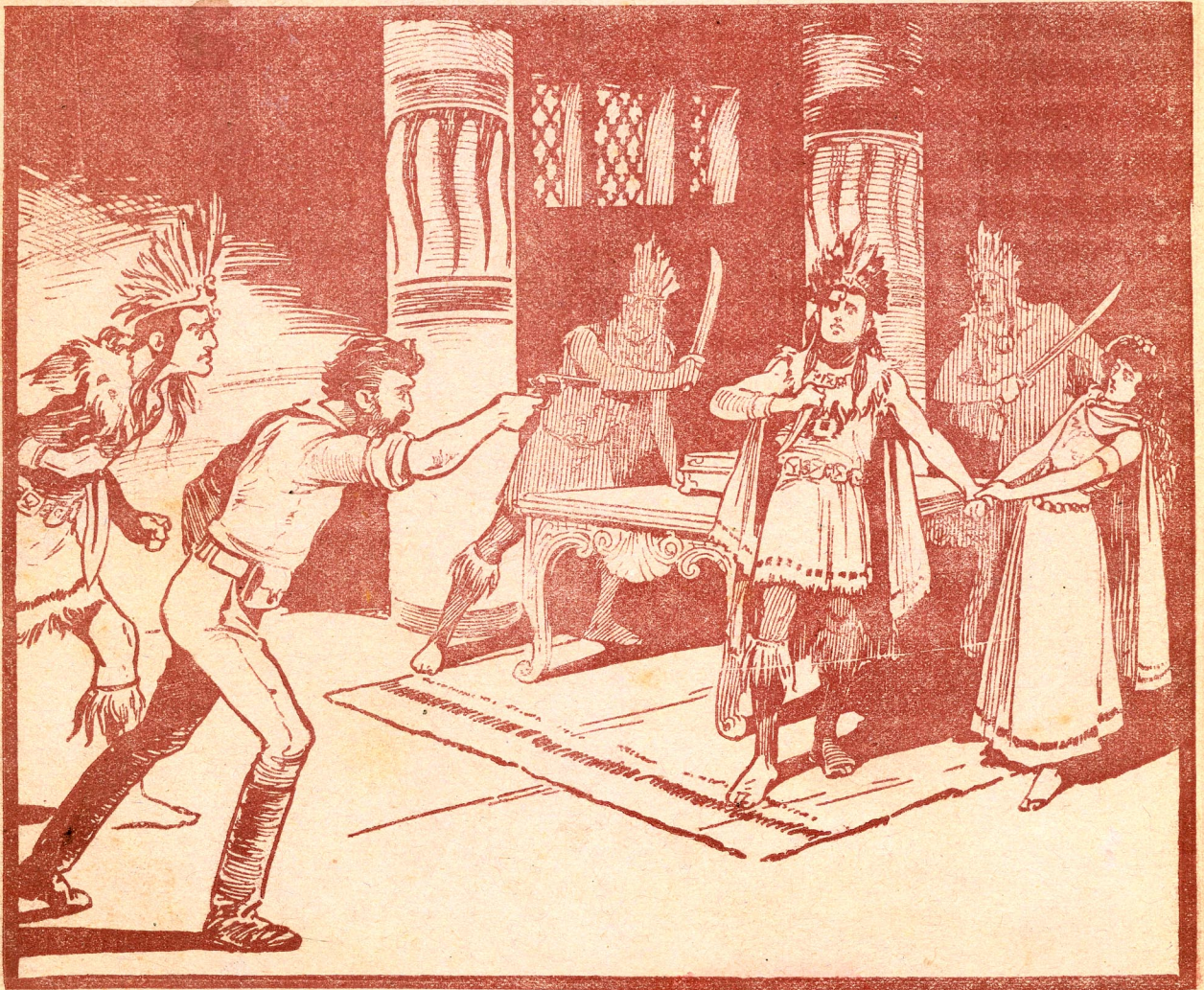


A LONG, COMPLETE STORY.

The Union Jack

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DON MANUEL'S DIAMOND



In their midst stood Prince Arvalas, with one hand grasping Bernica, and the other clutching a curiously-shaped knife.

PUBLISHED EVERY FRIDAY.

No. 183.

A KLONDYKE STORY NEXT FRIDAY.

DON MANUEL'S DIAMOND;

Or, THE JEWEL-WORSHIPPERS OF THE ORINOCO.

By SINGLETON POUND.

CHAPTER I.

NIGHT IN GEORGETOWN—SAVED FROM THE CANAL—THE ATTEMPTED MURDER—THE MERCHANT'S DEATH—THE WILL—THE DECLARATION OF FELIX BROODE—THE GREAT DIAMOND.

It was night in Georgetown, the capital of British Guiana. The moon and stars were hidden by masses of dark clouds which filled the sky. The air was sultry. A few drops of rain fell with heavy and threatening monotony. A storm of no ordinary magnitude was close at hand.

The hour was so late that the streets of the town were very silent and almost deserted. But at least two men were abroad.

Through a broad street which was lined with orange-trees, and through which a deep canal flowed, Claude Derwent was hastening. He was familiar with his surroundings, and was too much occupied with his thoughts to pay much heed to anything. When, however, a flash of lightning cleft the darkness, he did not fail to see a man suddenly step out of the shadow of the trees, and attempt to throw himself into the dark waters of the canal. The Englishman seized the would-be suicide with a firm yet kindly hand, and restrained him. The darkness was in a second again too great to permit of a single object being distinctly observed; but Claude felt that the man he held was thin, and dressed in rags, and he guessed the truth at once. The unfortunate man, whoever and whatever he was, wished to kill himself because he was poor and starving. Claude had no time to spare, but he drew the man away from the water, and thrust several pieces of gold into his hands. He was then compelled to leave him, and go on at even greater speed than before.

Not a word had been uttered, and the whole episode had been a matter of seconds; yet its ultimate effects were destined to be far-reaching and tremendous.

Claude rapidly traversed the streets until he gained a house of fairly large dimensions, although of only one storey, which stood alone, and about five hundred yards distant from the nearest other habitation.

He entered the house by a side-door, the key of which he carried. At first all seemed silent; but as he was refastening the door, he heard a sound as of a stifled yet audible cry for help.

He promptly ran along a long corridor and into a bedroom, which was buried in almost pitch darkness. He heard a hoarse exclamation of fury and fear, and realised that a man had darted past him and leaped through the open window, which was almost level with the ground. He followed, but the blackness of the night baffled him, and he was speedily forced to abandon the pursuit as hopeless.

He returned to the room and kindled a light. A young man—a somewhat stolid-faced but honest-looking English servant—was lying upon the floor, and a broken and extinguished lamp lay beside him.

Upon the bed, which stood in a corner of the room, lay an old man, whose hair and beard were white, and whose features

were of a pronounced Spanish type. He was much wasted, and manifestly had not long to live; but his look had yet some trace, however faint, of one who had travelled far and dared much.

Claude Derwent approached and bent over him. "Are you hurt, Don Manuel Garcias?" he questioned gently. "Who was the coward who attacked you? Why did he do it? He shall be hanged when caught!"

The Spaniard looked up with a curious smile. "Did you see the man, Claude?" he asked. "No; and I am sorry I could not catch him. But he shall be run down yet. What was the reason for his attempted crime?"

"Did you see the man, Mark Ringwood?" asked Don Manuel, either not hearing or ignoring the question.

"Worse luck, no, master," answered the fellow, who had now risen, and stood rubbing his head. "I was sitting alone watching you as you slept, and all was quiet, when the window was thrown open suddenly, and a man jumped into the room. I got up sharp, but not sharp enough, for the lamp was knocked over and me stunned before I could see the villain's face. I don't remember what happened after, until I heard Mr. Claude run in. Here's the thing that knocked me down."

He picked up a small but heavy bar of iron lying on the floor. He evidently feared that he might be suspected of some complicity in the dastardly outrage; but neither his master nor Derwent suspected him for a second—they knew him too well.

"Did you see nothing yourself, Don Manuel?" asked Claude again.

"Ask me nothing!" rejoined the Spaniard gravely. "All happened swiftly, and I cannot be sure. Besides, as you say, if the wretch is caught he will be hanged; and I, who am dying,



He dashed aside the hands of those who would have held him, and dived into the river.

will have no hand in sending a fellow-creature to his last account. Ah, do you not hear the servants coming? They have been alarmed. Not a word of what has happened to them—not a word! I command it!"

Claude Derwent entertained no manner of doubt that the don knew more of his assailant than he chose to own; but the command for silence was so imperious that he could not disobey it, albeit his wonder and dissatisfaction were great.

Three men and two women now appeared at the chamber door. They had all been alarmed by the disturbance, and had dressed themselves incompletely and hurriedly.

"It was nothing, my children," said Don Manuel Garcias in answer to their eager inquiries—"an accident, a spilled lamp, no more! Away with you to bed!"

They were not used to questioning his behests, and all save one at once went away.

He who remained was a man of twenty-five, tall and powerful. At first glance his face seemed to be handsome and high faultless, but closer examination showed that his expression was dark and sullen, and that his gaze was not steadfast. He had apparently dressed so hurriedly that he had not found time to don coat and waistcoat; at any rate, he was without those garments. His name was Felix Broode.

Claude Derwent stood by his side for a minute. He was two years the younger; but his frank and fearless air and resolute face made him look the best man.

The two had for five years been the assistants of Garcias, who had been half an explorer and half a trader in out-of-the-way places. They were not akin to their employer, and, as far as they knew, they had no relatives in the world. They had never been very good friends, although there had been no serious breach between them as yet. At first the old man had liked them both equally; but latterly he had been dissatisfied with Broode's conduct—with a growing fondness for wild ways, and a neglect of work. He had in the earlier days made a will leaving the two young fellows his joint heirs; but there was now good reason to believe that he had altered his testamentary dispositions, although neither Claude nor Broode had been directly told anything of the matter.

Broode now made as if to approach the bed, but the dying man raised himself, and fixed a piercing gaze upon him. He stood for a second as though transfixed and spellbound. His face became livid, and his jaw dropped. Suddenly he turned, and without a word quitted the room.

A short time afterwards a priest knocked at the door of the house, and was admitted by Claude Derwent, who conducted him to Don Manuel, and left the two together.

He found Felix Broode, now fully dressed, pacing up and down an outer room.

"Where were you to-night, Derwent?" he asked.

"Don Manuel sent me to ask Padre Pablo to come here as soon as he could."

There was a pause.

"I made an ass of myself just now!" resumed Broode at length. "But, 'pon my word I couldn't help it. It simply horrified me to think of an attack upon the poor old don!"

"Who said anything to you about an attack?" questioned Claude in a sharp tone.

Broode turned pale.

"I—I guessed it," he said unsteadily. "The don's manner did not strike me as being that of a man who had only suffered disturbance from an accident, and the smashed lamp and Ringwood's look seemed to tell another story to me, at least."

"That is enough!" said Claude coldly. "You had better not say any more unless you want to say too much!"

"Do you mean to accuse me of—"

"I accuse you of nothing! Don Manuel has forbidden me to touch upon a certain subject. But if my head is full of suspicions and doubts, it is your own fault."

"Yes!" said Felix Broode harshly. "I've been a fool to talk at all. But you need not suspect me. I swear you have no cause to do so!"

He said no more. Padre Pablo had noiselessly entered the room. The dawn was breaking, and the grey light in which he stood imparted a solemn aspect to him. He raised his hand.

"My sons," he said, "the good Don Manuel Garcias has gone to his rest!"

"Peace to his soul!" said Claude Derwent, and his face was full of grief. But Felix Broode said nothing, and his face was as hard as stone.

The don had died of fever; but his end had been hastened by the dastardly attempt upon his life. Claude Derwent knew this much, but kept his own counsel. He was sure of nothing yet, and did not wish to act rashly.

Don Manuel was buried, and then his will was read. It was a very short and simple document. The Don left all his possessions to Claude Derwent, and made no mention whatever of Felix Broode.

Claude's fortune did not at first seem a large one, consisting, as it did, of two hundred pounds in gold, a rack of firearms, the

house, and a heap of massive old furniture. But the lawyer, who read the will—a dried-up little Scot, with twinkling eyes—had a word to say.

"Bide a wee, laddie!" he advised. "The wull says everything, an' I mind something fine in a place the don and I kened of. Bide a wee, an' if I dinna show ye something braver than bawbees, ca' Tum Macdonald an auld fu'."

"Whatever there may be," returned Claude decidedly, "Felix Broode must have a share! He served Don Manuel as well as I, and should not go unrewarded."

"I thank you, Derwent," said Broode; "but I cannot accept anything from you—at least, nothing that belonged to the don."

Macdonald, Claude, and Broode were assembled in Don Manuel's one-time private sanctum. The last-named was possessed of an excitement he could scarcely restrain.

"Listen to me, Mr. Macdonald, and you, Derwent," he went on, in a thick yet rapid voice; "you are men of the world, and will hear reason. I know you are thinking hard things of me; but I swear Don Manuel had no reason to cut me off as he did, and I swear that I never meditated, much less attempted, the least harm against him!"

He held out his hand with a gesture of appeal. Neither of his companions could refuse to take it; their kindness of heart forced them to do so, if their reason did not.

"If I have wronged you, Broode, I am sorry for it!" said Claude.

"You have wronged me," returned the other; "but let us forget the miserable business."

Macdonald now approached a heavy cabinet, black with age, opened a drawer, and, touching a spring, revealed a secret cavity. From this he extracted a silver box, and from the box he lifted a diamond, red as flame, beautifully cut, and of extraordinary size.

"There, laddies!" exclaimed Macdonald. "There's mony a mon in Hatton Garden who would gi' a heap o' bawbees for this jewel! Ah, there's not a few who wouldna' bide at thousands o' golden pouns! But I ken some folk who would gi' more—ay, their very souls!"

"Who?" demanded Broode.

His voice was strident, and the light of greed flamed in his eyes.

"The jewel-worshippers of the Orinoco!" returned Macdonald.

And his face became grave.

CHAPTER II.

A PAIR OF ROGUES—"I HATE HIM!"—SOMETHING ABOUT THE JEWEL-WORSHIPPERS—NANO THE SEEKER—THE COMPACT—TO BE LURED TO DANGER.

"The Don is dead, and has left you nothing," said Randal Mostyn coolly. "Then may I ask, in the name of wonder, how are you going to pay what you owe me?"

There was no immediate reply.

"Am I to conclude that a man whom I have called a friend is going to turn out a common cheat?"

"Look you here!" retorted Felix Broode, his grating voice full of fury; "if you are not a fool, and do not wish to drive me too far, you'll be careful how you talk! If you don't look out, you may find yourself paid, not in gold, but in lead!"

The scene was a small back room in one of the most disreputable taverns in Georgetown. The speakers were a pair of the greatest rogues in British Guiana. One was a tall, big-boned, prominent-featured, heavily-bearded man of thirty, who was a comparative stranger to this particular part of the world, albeit other parts had reason to know him only too well as Randal Mostyn. The second was Felix Broode.

The two had been seated facing each other, with their elbows resting on a table which separated them. At his companion's throat Mostyn paled, and involuntarily pushed back his chair.

"Come, don't speak like that, Broode," he said. "I know you don't really mean anything, but such words don't sound well between friends."

"Whether I mean them or not depends on yourself," retorted Broode. "The case is simply this. I owe you a large sum of money, which I have lost to you over cards, on bets, and in various other ways. I promised to pay you when old Garcias shuffled off—"

"You told me you were his co-heir."

"So I was once. It isn't my fault that he changed his mind. I could not prevent him doing what he pleased. Anyway, he altered his will, and left me nothing. I at once came here to tell you that owing to this misfortune, I cannot pay you yet awhile, but will do so as soon as I can. Instead of seeing that I can't help myself, you begin to blackguard me, as though I were in fault!"

"So you are," answered Mostyn, recovering his nerve. "If

you had been careful, you would not have offended Don Manuel. But you had to act the fool; to do things you knew he violently disapproved of—to drink, game, bet, and to be so recklessly mad as not even to take pains to conceal your follies. You have thrown away half the old man's possessions, and given Claude Derwent all."

"Derwent offered to go shares with me after he heard the will read."

"Come, that is better! Why did you not tell me before? Of course you accepted?"

"No, I did not. I couldn't do it. I'll die before I accept a thing from Claude Derwent!"

"Why?"

"I hate him!"

Randal Mostyn whistled.

"What has he done to injure you?" he asked.

"Nothing intentionally, perhaps; but he's not my sort. He has thwarted me time after time, and he has got the Don's favours instead of me. There," he finished, his voice like a snarl, "I'm not going to go into particulars; but, as I say, I hate him with all my heart, and I hope that I shall some day have a chance to prove as much to him!"

"You have not told him how you hate him?"

"I am not such a fool. I have pretended to be his very good friend. I am going to deceive him until I get a chance to deliver a good blow!"

His tone was so full of dark and vindictive passion that even a man far from good might have shuddered at it. Mostyn, however, was not moved. He recognised that he would have to wait for his money, unless something unforeseen happened, and he straightway began to devise a scheme to effect his own wishes.

"Did Don Manuel leave much?" he inquired.

"In cash and goods, nothing wonderful; but he left a big diamond, which must be worth some thousands."

"A red stone?" demanded Mostyn, with sudden excitement.

"Yes. How did you guess?"

"Never, mind now. Do you know anything about the diamond?"

"Macdonald told a fool's yarn about it when he gave it up to Derwent. But I laughed at him. I never heard a man talk such moonshine as he did."

"You are free to think as you like; but just tell me what he did say."

"It will be waste of breath; but if you must know, I will tell you. Macdonald told Derwent and I that there exists, far up the Orinoco, a practically unknown country, inhabited by a strange race of Indians, who are jewel-worshippers. They treat precious stones as gods, and hold them sacred. With them, however, a stone is not valued so much because of its size and purity as because of the history and traditions attached to it; so that comparatively insignificant gems are rated higher than really magnificent ones. And the jewel-worshippers had for god, or idol, or whatever you like to call it, a red diamond, which had been in their tribe for ages, to which they ascribed all sorts of wonderful properties, and in the possession of which they believed their own good-fortune to be bound up."

"Well?" demanded Mostyn, as Broode paused.

"While the jewel-worshippers held this diamond they prospered, and suffered no great misfortune. But at last one of their own tribe stole and escaped with it. Then luck departed from the jewel-worshippers. Death and disease smote them sore, and they were worsted in battle. They believed that if they recovered their diamond they would recover their luck. So they sent men in every direction to find and regain the lost treasure at all costs."

"Is that all?"

"Is it not enough of that rubbish?" asked Broode, laughing scornfully. "If you want more, however, here it is. Macdonald says that the red diamond Derwent has now is the one I have told you about. He says that it drifted into the hands of Don Manuel Garcias in a roundabout way, and that the Don learned its history by accident, and was such a fool as to believe in it!"

"He was not such a fool as you are, Broode, because he happened to believe the truth."

Felix Broode was inclined to laugh again, but a glance at his companion's face made him change his mind. He saw that Mostyn was absolutely in earnest.

"Why are you so sure?"

"I have travelled a bit, and learned something. I can tell you that the jewel-worshippers are a real people, though I have never seen their country; and I can also tell you that there is at this very moment a man in Georgetown—a jewel-worshipper himself—who would give you practically any price for the diamond, if you could secure it for him."

"You swear you are speaking the truth?"

"I swear it on my soul!"

"Where is the man you speak of, then?"

"We passed him wandering through the streets as we came here. Will you wait if I go to seek him?"

"Yes."

Mostyn immediately left the inn. Broode sat thinking over a plan that had suddenly struck him. Mostyn returned in a few minutes with a tall, miserable-looking Indian, who was clad in rags.

"If this is a jewel-worshipper, his gods have done him no good," said Broode, sneering, when the door had been fastened.

"I have sought far for the sacred diamond," said the Indian, in good English. "I have sought in many towns, in many places. I am Nano the Seeker. I have not thought of myself, and I have suffered. But I have found nothing, and I have despaired. Had not the jewel-gods been good to me I had been a dead man now."

"What do you mean?" asked Broode.

"It matters not," rejoined Nano. "Why did the white man bring me here?"

"To tell you that we know where your red diamond is," answered Mostyn coolly.

Like a tiger Nano the Seeker sprang forward and seized the speaker's throat with both his hands.

"Give it to me!" he panted—"give it to me!"

He was half mad with excitement, and it was all that the two Englishmen could do to force him to release his grip and relapse into a sullen quietude.

"We will tell you where it is," said Mostyn. "But you must pay us for the knowledge. What do you offer?"

"I have nothing with me," rejoined Nano; "but if you will go with me to my own country, I will give you many larger stones in return for the red one. If you are true to me, I will be true to you. I swear it, by the sacred diamond! If I am your friend, my people will not harm you."

"That is enough," said Mostyn, who knew that Nano dared not break his oath. "Shall we tell him, Broode?"

"Not yet," answered Felix Broode. "Listen to me, Nano the Seeker! I hate a man, and would have him dead. Swear to me that you will slay him if he enters your country with my friend and I!"

The Indian hesitated.

"Swear!" cried the other, stamping his foot, "or I will tell you nothing!"

"If it must be, it must be," muttered Nano slowly. "I swear by the sacred diamond that the man shall die, or that I will forfeit my own life!"

"The man who has the diamond now is the man who must die!" Broode said. "You must swear not to seek to take the stone from him until he is in your own country."

Nano was unwilling to fetter himself further, but he was helpless. He swore in the same terms as before.

"Now who is the man who has the diamond?" he questioned hoarsely.

"The heir of Don Manuel Garcias," answered Broode.

The Indian's face lit up with joy.

"You have not done so badly, if your plan works," said Mostyn to his friend. "But how are you going to get Claude Derwent up the Orinoco?"

"I cannot tell yet," returned Felix Broode—and his look was as that of a fiend—"but I hate him too much to fail in my purpose. He must and shall be lured to danger!"

CHAPTER III.

CLAUDE HESITATES—MACDONALD'S COUNSEL—NANO RENDERS GOOD SERVICE, AND GETS HIS REWARD—OFF TO THE ORINOCO.

"I cannot deny that I am tempted to say yes, and go to your land of diamonds, Broode. Nano certainly speaks alluringly, and goes into so much detail, that one can't easily believe he is lying. Yet the thing sounds almost too queer to be anything but a bit of clever romancing."

"What thing?"

"Nano's tale of his native country."

The speakers were Claude Derwent and Felix Broode. They were in the dead Don's room, and the first-named was seated on the edge of a table, while the second occupied a large arm-chair. The evening was closing in, but the lamps had not been lit yet.

The two had been discussing a subject which had supreme interest for them both. For several days past Broode had been endeavouring to persuade Claude to go with him up the Orinoco. To effect his object, he had told some truths and a good number of lies.

"My dear fellow!" he exclaimed, "if you cannot believe in a tale because it sounds marvellous, you are not cut out for an adventurous life, and I pity you. But, upon my word, I fail to see the improbability of what I told you. I will go over it point by point, and you can repeat your objections, if you like."

First point, I saved the life of an Indian named Nano. Second point, Nano is grateful, tells me about his native country, which lies far up the Orinoco, and is filled with precious stones. Thirdly, Nano promises that if I and two friends will go with him to his country, he will help us to acquire fortunes. Fourthly, I suggest to you that you should join the expedition and bear part of its expenses."

"That sounds well enough," returned Claude; "and I confess that there is something about Nano I like, although I do not trust him altogether. But I can't understand why, if he is such a big man in his own country, he should be so poor and wretched here."

"He explains that reasonably. He was well off when he came down the Orinoco, but had bad luck, and has never been able to get enough money to carry him back. If we go, that will be his chance."

"Well, I will say no more now, but will think the whole matter over again, and let you know my decision."

"When?"

Before Claude could answer, Mr. Macdonald entered the room. He had overheard the last words, and frowned disapproval.

"You're talking about that daft plan again, laddie!" he exclaimed. "Ha' done wi' it! It's moonshine. I couldna baulk you o' a reasonable thing; but an' you go up the great river, you'll go to naught good, I rest assured."

"Thank you, Mr. Macdonald," said Claude good-humouredly. "I know you advise me for my own good, but I have not made up my mind yet."

He made it up that night, however. His decision was brought about by an unforeseen incident.

It happened that Broode and himself were strolling side by side down a dimly-lit street, when a stalwart ruffian, with a brutal face and a dress of rags, barred their way, and asked Claude for money. He spoke in bad English, and with such insolence that the young fellow flushed angrily, and gave a curt refusal.

The ruffian answered this by pulling out a knife, and making as if to use it. Before he could do anything of the sort, and before Claude could realise his danger, he was thrown violently to the ground by Nano, who had been standing near.

Claude had no wish to be troubled further with his assailant, and went on, leaving him raving and cursing in the dust. He motioned to the Indian to accompany him, but was silent for a while.

"I owe you something, Nano—perhaps, my life," he said at last. "What can I do to repay you?"

"Come with me to my country, white man!" rejoined the Indian, his eyes glowing with a strange light.

Claude looked at him, and gratitude conquered doubt and caution.

"Very well," he said; "I will go."

"You mean that?" exclaimed Broode.

"Yes; and I will not break my word."

He did not do so. Macdonald stormed and objected in vain. Claude was fixed in his resolution, and converted all his inheritance, except the diamond, into cash. He was not eager to dispose of the stone, and readily listened to Broode's suggestion that he should keep it as a sort of reserve capital.

The Don's heir was a stranger to Randal Mostyn, but accepted him as a member of the expedition on being assured that he had some knowledge of the country to be journeyed into.

Claude wished to leave the diamond in the hands of Macdonald; but the Scot declined to take charge of it, on the ground that he did not intend to remain long in Georgetown.

Preparations were completed, and, within a fortnight from the death of Don Manuel Garcias, Claude, Broode, Mostyn, and Nano were off to the Orinoco.

CHAPTER IV.

THROUGH THE UNKNOWN COUNTRY—THE STRUGGLE ON THE RIVER'S BRINK—THE MAN WHO ESCAPED—AMID A STORM OF MISSILES—PURSUED BY THE WAR-FLEET—DRIVEN ASHORE—WHITHER LED?

"And this is the famed Orinoco—the river of mystery?"

The speaker was Claude Derwent, who, with his three companions, was paddling swiftly over the sunlit waters in a large Indian canoe. The first part of their journey had been made by steamer, and had passed uneventfully; but the adventurers were now far up the mighty river, and were passing through a practically unknown country. According to Nano, the end of the journey would not be seen for at least a week, even if all went well.

The canoe was laden with very little baggage beyond the arms and ammunition of the voyagers. The Englishmen possessed rifles, revolvers, and hunting-knives, with a good supply of cartridges, powder, and shot; but Nano had nothing but a bow

and arrow and a spear, having refused the more serviceable weapons which Claude had offered him on the ground that he did not know how to use them.

Save for the occasional cry of an animal or a bird, all was as silent as death as mile after mile of distance was covered. Nothing except the canoe was visible upon the waters, and no living men could be seen upon the banks.

"What is that?" exclaimed Claude suddenly.

He pointed to the right bank of the river, from which the canoe was fully eight hundred yards distant. A sort of movement among the high grass and vegetation was observable, and all at once a band of men burst into view. These numbered seven, and all were Indians. Six were of a pitiless and fierce aspect, and wore a bright, not to say sanguinary, war-costume, and were thoroughly armed according to their own ideas. They pursued one who was dressed in a once rich but now torn and soiled costume, and was unarmed, and who, while young, was noble and bold in appearance. This youth was a swift runner, and would have outtraced his pursuers (who seemed anxious to capture him alive) had not an accident caused him to stumble and fall. He regained his feet almost at once, but the brief delay enabled his pursuers to overtake and surround him. He seemed to have no chance against the weapons levelled at his heart, yet he coolly and expertly thrust aside the threatening spears with his hands, and threw himself upon the tallest and most formidable of his assailants. The two wrestled together, and fell, locked in each other's arms.

Claude Derwent and his companions watched this affair for a few seconds, too astonished to act. Then the instinct of fair-play caused them to paddle rapidly toward the bank, resolved to interfere. They had not gone far, however, when the man who was fighting odds shook off his enemy and rose to his feet.

Nano uttered a quick exclamation.

"I know the man!" he said. "Use speed! We shall be well rewarded if we save him; he has power in this country, and will prove a friend worth having."

The Indian alluded to did not hear the words, but he saw the approaching canoe, and divined that it contained friends. He dashed aside the hands of those who would have held him, and dived into the river. Instantly the chief of his foes leaped to his feet and poised a spear, but ere he could send the weapon to its work of death a sharp report rang out, and he fell dead, a bullet from Claude Derwent's revolver in his heart.

The youth swam well, and the occupants of the canoe paddled toward him, despite the warlike demonstrations of his enemies, and dragged him out of the water. Then all paused, not afraid, but irresolute, for they knew that their next action might mean life or death.

"Let us get away from this place and these demons!" exclaimed Mostyn. "I understand their language; they are calling to some of their friends, who must be hidden among the trees. He turned to the Indian youth, who was kneeling at his side, quite calm, and doing his best to conceal the weariness and pain he was suffering. "Do not those men belong to the people or tribe of Na?"

The youth nodded darkly.

"Who are you? What did they chase you for?"

"I am Migor, the son of Das, who was once the chief of the people of Rami!" returned the youth proudly and sadly. "The dogs of Na, led by their chief, Varoco, attacked my father's camp in the night, like the snakes and cowards that they are, surprised his guards, and slew him and many of his people before they were fully awake. I awoke, and tried to fight, but had no chance against so many foes, and was taken prisoner. I was the only captive taken. Varoco and his men bore me off through the forest, and told me that they meant to slay me when they gained their own country. I should have been a dead man had I not broken my bonds and fled away at the sight of the river. But now I will die before I will be retaken. I owe my life to you," he added, speaking to Claude, "and I will repay you yet."

He looked like a king when he said it, and none of those who heard him dared to laugh.

"Are all your people slain, Migor?" questioned Nano.

"There are not many left, I fear," rejoined the youth sadly; "but some live yet—enough to avenge the blood of their brothers upon Varoco. If you will take me up the river for a mile or so, and then land me, I do not think I shall fail to find them."

"How long have you been a captive?" asked Mostyn, who was able to understand the Indian language, which Claude and Broode found next to unintelligible.

"Three days," returned Migor.

"Where do you hope to find your people?"

"Question him no more now!" interrupted Nano impatiently. "You are wasting precious time. We cannot safely linger here. Look at the people who are gathering on the banks. They are the warriors of the tribe of Na."

"And Varoco leads them," added Migor in a hissing tone.

Upon the banks of the river, in a long line which stretched

for more than a mile, were assembled five hundred fully armed Indian warriors, who presented an appearance at once barbaric and splendid in their gaily coloured garments, waving plumes, and flashing ornaments. Prominent among them was a man, still young, of great stature and breadth, and with a face which was dark and fierce, and yet wore the look of one used to command, and who was more richly apparelled than any of the others. And this man was Varoco, the chief of the tribe of Na.

Migor knew him, and stood up in the canoe, and laughed aloud in bold defiance.

"I am free, Varoco!" he cried. "You thought yourself very cunning, but I have given you the slip. I will not say farewell to you, for we shall meet again—spear to spear!"

"And you shall die!"

"One of us shall die, chief of the dogs of Na!" retorted Migor, his young voice ringing with bitter hate and pain. "But why not you, instead of me? You called me a boy, and struck me when I was in your power; but I have seen my father's blood spilled and my people sore hurt! I am stronger than I was, and do not fear you. Look to yourself, Varoco!"

He spoke as the canoe dashed up the river, and was answered by a storm of missiles—darts, spears, stones—from the long line of enemies upon the bank. He was grazed by more than one of these, but escaped unhurt, as did his new companions.

"Has Varoco any canoes?" asked Mostyn.

"I am not sure," returned Migor. "Yet I fear he has. I heard one of his men speak of a fleet waiting for him on the river. Now friends, you have been generous and kind to me, but I will not ask too much from you. Carry me back, and deliver me to Varoco, who will reward you well. If you carry me onward, the chief will follow, and slay us all."

Mostyn translated this speech for the benefit of Broode and Claude. The first-named bit his lips and looked black, but the second flushed and laughed half angrily and half impatiently.

"Tell him not to be a fool," he said to Mostyn. "Does he think we are such cowards as to turn upon him when he has trusted us? We are his friends now, and will prove it if it costs us our lives!"

"Do you think that best?" asked Felix Broode hesitatingly.

"Yes, I do," answered Claude sharply. "If we don't stand by a man who needs help, we shall be unworthy to find anything except the graves of curs!"

"Good—good!" muttered Nano, who understood English after a fashion. And he gave Claude a look of admiration, none the less real because it was forced. "We must be the friends of the chief so that he may be our friend. We have far to go before we can gain my country, and we shall need help if we have to go fast."

The canoe went flying up the river. While she was abreast with the line of warriors on the bank, she was in the midst of a very storm of missiles; but of all the weapons which flew through the air, a sharp dart alone did any mischief, and even this only pierced Nano's shoulder, and was contemptuously pulled out of his flesh and cast into the water by the Indian himself. Many arrows stuck in the woodwork of the craft, and a heavy spear crashed through her bows just above the water-line. But she sped on without pausing for a minute, and soon Varoco and his men were left far behind.

"But they will either follow or intercept us higher up the stream," said Mostyn, speaking as if he had no doubt on the subject. "What shall we do then, Derwent?"

Claude's one shot had been the sole offensive action of the adventurers as yet, because they had been thinking of getting away rather than of risking too much in an unnecessary struggle. But the answer to the question came promptly and boldly.

"If we are driven to it, we must fight. I have no wish to force on a quarrel and spill blood wantonly; but we are Englishmen, and cannot forget our honour! If I fight, are you all with me?"

"I am," said Nano.

And he translated the words to Migor, who nodded grimly. Mostyn and Broode hesitated.

"Do not be fools, white men!" warned Nano, laughing harshly. "If Varoco overtakes us, you must fight or die! The hands of all the men of Na will be against us, now that we

have aided the chief of Rami. They will have no pity on us, but will chase us far."

He ceased to paddle, and turned to look back.

"Behold!" he cried in a loud voice; "they are on our track even now. They are eager to slay us!"

His companions looked down the river, as he had done, and saw that a fleet of at least fifty large canoes was in their wake.

Varoco stood in the bows of the foremost canoe, waving his spear, and calling out in a voice hoarse with rage to his men to strain every nerve.

"I will not rest," Mostyn heard him say, "until I see Migor and the white men dead before my eyes!"

The war fleet—a grand yet awful sight—came on fast. The men of the tribe of Na were skilful and powerful in the use of their paddles, and were possessed of the utmost determination.

"We shall be overtaken soon!" Claude said in a low, firm voice, "and we are too outnumbered to make a good fight. What is our best plan?"

"We must run ashore, and seek refuge in the depths of the forest," answered Nano. "Migor says he can guide us to a place of safety. Ah! look to yourself, white man!"

Varoco, whose canoe was now frightfully near, had hurled



The stern looks of the young chief, and the knife so near to his breast, broke down his spirit.

his spear straight at Claude. The heavy shaft came through the air like a messenger of evil, and would have pierced the heart of its intended victim had not Migor sprang up, and, with a coolness and expertness equally wonderful, caught it in his hand. He waved it in mocking triumph above his head.

He could not understand Claude's grateful words, but he knew very well what the warm hand-clasp he received signified, and returned it with interest.

The bows of the canoe were headed direct towards the bank of the river. The Indians had next to nothing to save, and the Englishmen hastily secured their weapons, ammunition, and a few other portable articles. They recognised that most of their possessions, including their blankets and provisions, would have to be abandoned. But they did not complain; it was the fortune of war.

The canoe ran into a sort of natural harbour in the bank of the river. Her crew were compelled to spring out one by one. Migor was the last, and ere he could land Varoco's craft shot up, and the chief, with an exultant cry, shortened his spear to stab. His young foe, however, did not wait for his attack, but flung one of the paddles into his face with such violence that he fell back among his men, who were thrown into momentary confusion.

Migor lost no time in gaining firm earth. The remaining

canoes had not yet come up, and there was a chance of escape, even if only a most desperate one. The young chief assumed the leadership without question, and he and his companions ran on through the long grass and undergrowth, and plunged into a forest, the density of which made its glades dark, despite that the sun blazed in the sky.

The Englishmen were not such fools as to trouble their guide with questions at such a time; but their surroundings filled them with awe, and they asked each other by looks whether they were being led.

CHAPTER V.

THE DARK FOREST—SEPARATED—A MISSING FRIEND AND A TERRIBLE FEAR—THE CAVE OF A MILLION PITFALLS—MIGOR'S MEN—MARCHING OUT—VAROCO BLOCKS THE WAY—A GRIM FIGHT AND A SPLENDID RESULT—ON THE RIVER AGAIN.

Darker and darker grew the forest the more deeply it was penetrated. Soon it became difficult for the adventurers to save themselves from dashing against a tree-trunk or being tripped up by a low-lying branch or strong creeping-plant, and they were forced to proceed more slowly than they liked.

The gloom was so great, indeed, that, despite their slow rate of progress, the fugitives became separated when they had gained the heart of the forest. At first not one perceived what had happened, but went blindly on. But at last Nano realised the disaster, and called out. Mostyn's voice answered him from a long distance, and then he heard Claude and Migor; but no sound reached him from Broode. By constantly calling to each other, the four men at length succeeded in effecting a junction in a broad glade in the forest; but there was still no sign of Broode. His companions, reckless of danger to themselves, cried out loudly, but received no response. They were forced to ask themselves a terrible question—had Broode fallen into the hands of Varoco?

"I fear he has," said Migor sadly. "I looked back ere we ran into the forest, and saw our foes spring on land, and I heard them following us before we parted company. They were so close behind us that if the white man stumbled or halted for a minute, they must have seized him."

He spoke to Mostyn, who, though a scamp, was not a fiend, and who shuddered as he thought of his friend's probable fate.

"If Varoco has captured the white man, what will he do with him?"

"Kill him!" returned Migor shortly, "if he is not interfered with."

Mostyn translated what the young chief said to Claude, who set his teeth.

"We must save him, if we can, and we must at least make an attempt. We are not many, it is true, but we are not cowards. Come!"

He made as if to go back; but Migor, who understood his action, placed his hand upon his shoulder, and arrested him.

"The white man is brave, but mad!" he said to Nano. "What can four men hope to do against more than four hundred? We must not throw everything away by being rash. If we are patient, we may win yet. I told you that all my father's men were not slain, and I tell you now that I expect to find all of them who survive in a cave not far from where we stand, and in which the tribe of Rami has sought refuge when hard pressed before. Let us find my men, and then think of fighting Varoco. He will not be in too great a hurry to kill the white man, who may be rescued if we hasten."

Claude, when this advice had been interpreted to him by Nano, could not deny its wisdom. He consented to follow it.

Migor led the way. The forest was fairly full of light for a short distance, and then became darker than ever. Yet the Indian went on swiftly and unhesitatingly, like a man who knew the ground he was covering. His companions followed him, but none spoke. There was no time to waste on more words; action was demanded.

Suddenly Migor stopped.

"Be careful now, friends," he said. "A false step may mean death, but if you are cool no harm will happen. I am going to take you into the Cave of a Million Pitfalls."

"Go on, then," rejoined Mostyn coolly. "We are ready to follow where you lead."

Migor pressed through the dense brushwood into a space of open ground, at one end of which was the narrow mouth of a cave. This he and his companions entered. The light of day shone into it fitfully—bright at the opening, but exceedingly obscure further on. The adventurers saw that it was like a vast and lofty hall, with walls and a roof of many-coloured stones, which flashed with the scintillations of jewels, and with a floor which was rent into innumerable fissures and chasms,

divided the one from the other in some cases by a strip of rock scarcely broader than a man's hand, and several hundred feet in length.

Migor began to thread his way among the pitfalls confidently, and the others did not falter, although they all knew that a single slip would be destruction. The light gave great assistance at the outset, but as the opening was left further behind the gloom grew in intensity until it was nearly as black as night.

Suddenly Nano slipped, and cried out. Claude was near, and heard although he could not see him. He seized his arm, and dragged him back from the depths into which he had nearly fallen. The Indian pressed the hand of his rescuer. His gratitude was real enough, so far as it went, but he could not forget the great diamond of his people, nor the oath he had sworn to Felix Broode.

After this they went on in a line, each clasping the hand of another. It was like a chain, and Migor was at the head. No further mishap befell. They left the great cave, traversed a narrow, winding passage, and stood on the threshold of a smaller cave, in which a fire of wood burned, and a hundred men, with as many women and children, were congregated.

These people were Indians, and the men were dressed and armed in much the same fashion as those of Varoco. All wore a gloomy and sad but by no means cowardly or subdued expression.

At the appearance of Migor and his companions, several men rushed forward menacingly, and angry cries filled the cave; but the young chief stood his ground and laughed.

"Do you not know me, my people?" he cried.

"It is Migor!" came the answer, as in one voice, from the people. "We welcome you as from the dead, oh, son of Das, chief of the people of Rami!"

"I am a living man," returned Migor quietly; "but I have been a captive in the hands of Varoco, and should now be a dead man had not the white chiefs and our brother with them given me great aid. I am their friend, as you must be."

"We swear it!" returned a short, thick-set man, with a bull's neck and a massive face, which had power and undaunted courage in its every line, whose carriage was unflinching despite his grey hair.

"You live, Daro?" exclaimed Migor joyfully. "I thank our gods. Next to my father, you ranked the greatest warrior of our tribe. With you among his foes, Varoco will have to fight hard to hold his own."

"Many better men than I died in the night of murder!" said Daro sadly; "but I only fled when I could do nothing more. I collected the people who were left, and led them here. You know the cave of pitfalls is the favourite hiding-place of our people. We did not know whether you were alive or dead; but men have sought you ceaselessly, and have discovered nothing, so we feared the worst. Had you not returned, we should all have marched forth to-morrow. But now that you are come, what orders have you to give us, chief?"

"I have work for you to do!" answered Migor promptly.

"Are you all ready to obey me?"

"Yes, yes!"

"How many of you can march and fight?"

"Every man, chief," responded Daro—"and every woman, too, if there is need!"

"I need eighty men," said Migor; "the rest must remain in the cave to guard the women and the children."

He then rapidly told of his own captivity and escape, the friends he had met on the river, the flight through the forest, and the disappearance of Felix Broode. He announced that he intended to attempt the rescue of the Englishman, if he were alive, or to ascertain his fate if he were dead. He did not deny that his force would be much weaker than that of his enemy—that the odds, in fact, would be frightful—but he declared that this consideration should not hold him back.

"Will you follow me, my people?" he demanded at the end.

"To the death!" answered many voices.

"You talk like fools!" said Daro disdainfully, as he threw up and caught a heavy club. To speak of death is to hint at failure. We will follow the son of Das to victory over Varoco!"

"Daro has said!" cried the warriors of Rami. "To victory over Varoco! Lead on, chief!"

Migor turned with a smile of pride and power to the Englishmen and Nano.

"We will save your friend's life or avenge him!" he said. "You will come with my men and I?"

"Wherever you go," answered Mostyn.

Claude nodded.

Every man in the cave was eager to take part in the adventure, and it was only after much heated discussion had been terminated by Migor's stern command, that twenty men, who looked extremely dissatisfied, had been selected to guard the cave. Then Migor put himself at the head of the eighty who were to fight, and marched out of the inner cave and through the passage, with Claude, Mostyn, and Nano near him, and with his warriors at his heels.

Show "THE CYCLE" to your lady friends. It is just the paper to please them.
A Penny, every Friday.

When these came to the cave of pitfalls, the spectacle was a most curious and wonderful one. Innumerable torches, carried by the Indians, threw a lurid glare upon the lofty walls and roof, which cast back the fire in a million different coloured rays, which danced like living water upon the abyss-riven floor, the bright garments and waving plumes, the weapons of war, and the faces of many men, all set and determined.

When the band was more than half way across the perilous floor, the mouth of the cave was suddenly darkened by Varoco and all his warriors. The chief of the tribe of Na had tracked down the fugitives, and was assured that he now held them fast in his grasp.

Before he could make an offensive movement, however, Migor gave the order to charge. His men obeyed instantly, and rushed forward like a living torrent. Claude and Mostyn emptied their revolvers as they ran, and many spears whistled through the air. The two bodies met with a terrific shock, but Varoco's men were driven back from the beginning. They had the advantage of much superior numbers; but their foes were possessed of a consuming fury, and were determined to gain victory at any price.

The battle was a long one; but in the end Varoco was forced to fly, leaving half his men dead behind him. Ere he went, he made a desperate attempt to plunge a short, bronze sword into the heart of a bound captive, who had been abandoned by his terrified guards; but Claude Derwent and Nano drove him off, and, in another second, Felix Broode was a free man.

The evening was now closing in, and Migor, although much elated by his victory, did not think it well to pursue his broken enemies through the darkness. He decided to spend the night in the cave, and the Englishmen offered no opposition.

The next day the people of Rami marched through the forest, and re-entered the burnt village from which Varoco's night-attack had driven them. The work of re-construction was immediately commenced. Many more men flocked in as this proceeded, and in a very short time all trace of the work of destruction had vanished. Varoco did not again put in an appearance, and it was doubtful whether he intended to show his teeth again or not.

At last the three Englishmen and Nano told the young chief that they must continue their journey. Migor, who had learned of their destination, wished to accompany them with a body of fighting-men, to act as guards and helpers; but the diamond-worshipper refused to listen to the idea.

"My people will be friends to a few men, but they will not welcome a great number. I will not go on if you or one of your tribe goes, Migor."

The chief saw that he was in earnest, and gave way, albeit with bitter regret.

"But remember always," he said to the departing men, "that I owe you a great debt, and am your friend always. Look, I will give you proof. Take this necklet, and, if you should ever need aid, Migor and all his men will hasten to serve you, no matter how far-off you are."

He gave Claude a curiously entwined necklace of silver wire.

Migor gave the adventurers a better canoe than the one they had lost. They said farewell, and were once more upon the Orinoco—the river which became more full of mystery the longer they swept over it.

CHAPTER VI.

FOLLOWED BY VAROCO—THE LAND OF THE JEWEL-WORSHIPPERS—A STRANGE WELCOME—BROODE THROWS OFF THE MASK—CLAUDE A CAPTIVE—AWAITING DOOM.

After bidding farewell to Migor, as they thought, for ever, the four adventurers ran up the Orinoco for ten days. They made very good progress, and met with no exciting experience, although they knew, almost from the beginning of their renewed voyage, that a threatened danger hung on their rear, and might overtake and overwhelm them with disaster at any minute.

Varoco was pursuing them.

"We shall have trouble with the fellow!" exclaimed Broode angrily. "Hang Migor! I wish we had pitched him into the river before we mixed ourselves up in his concerns. Our championship of his cause has brought us nothing but trouble."

"That may be," returned Claude quietly; "but we could not have done otherwise. The chief threw himself upon our generosity, and we were bound to do what we could. We should have been cowards if we had held aloof, and, if we have nothing very substantial to show for what we did, it is our own fault. Migor would have given us anything we had asked him for."

"Possibly," returned Broode; "but we got nothing!"

Claude silently showed him the silver necklet.

"That geegaw is worth nothing!" he said contemptuously,

"and the chief would not know it if we were fools enough to send it back to him."

"You think he would not keep his word?"

"I am sure he would not. Ask Nano."

The Indian looked disturbed, but declined to say anything on the subject.

The adventurers at last became impatient for their journey to cease. On the tenth day, Mostyn asked Nano how much farther they had to go.

"When shall we see your country?" he questioned.

The Indian smiled in a strange way, and pointed to the right bank of the river.

"Do you see that land, white man?"

"Am I blessed with eyes?"

"Then take your answer. That is the country of my people, the land of the jewel-worshippers. We shall soon obtain all we came for."

He looked at Broode and Mostyn, and then at Claude in a sinister manner.

"White chief," he said to the last-named, "will you let me see the great diamond? It gladdens my eyes to see it."

This was not by any means the first time that such a request had been made. Ever since the departure from Georgetown, Nano had evinced a consuming interest in the stone, and had betrayed an extraordinary pleasure in handling it. Claude had been perplexed by this conduct; but had set it down to the score of intense curiosity and admiration. He did not, however, like the expression of mingled cunning and idolatry with which Nano regarded the red diamond now.

"Come!" he said, sharply at last, "give me the thing, Nano."

For a second he forgot the peculiar faith of the man and his people, and added: "One might think the stone was your god by the way you handle it. If you cannot be more sensible, I shall certainly not let you see it again."

Nano restored the diamond reluctantly, and Broode noted his look, and whispered to Mostyn:

"Derwent will be very lucky if he keeps his precious diamond long."

"There is murder in the Indian's heart!" rejoined the other.

Claude could not help noting a great change in his companions; but he could not guess the cause of this. Open-hearted and honourable himself, he had no thought of the baseness of which he was to be a victim.

Nano presently turned the head of the canoe toward the mouth of a broad stream which ran into the Orinoco. This stream ran for more than ten miles through lines of thickly-growing trees and past masses of brilliant flowers and vegetation, literally choked together. At last there was a sweeping bend, and Nano sprang up in the canoe, and pointed with his spear.

"Behold my home!" he exclaimed. "Behold the City of Jewels!"

Half a mile from the stream, and surrounded by groves of lofty palms, was a city built entirely of some substance akin to white marble, crowded with stately palaces and temples, and divided into regular sections by broad, paved streets. The style of architecture was of the finest, and the whole effect was magnificent and yet almost unreal. It was hard to comprehend that this city belonged, not to advanced, modern Europe, but to a buried, unknown, and more than half-barbaric band.

Before the Englishmen could find words to express their wonder and admiration a great crowd of men, women, and children came pouring from the city. The canoe had been seen to run up the stream, and many welcomes were shouted out to Nano, while countless wondering looks were cast upon the strangers.

Nano and the Englishmen sprang to land, and were at once surrounded and disarmed by a band of fully-armed warriors, whose leader was a young man with a fearless and somewhat stern, but not cruel face.

"Why do you surround me thus?" demanded Nano. "I have brought with me something which should procure me a royal welcome, and I am met like an offender. If you are acting on your own responsibility, you will be sorry for it soon, Orcar!"

"I am obeying the orders of King Natho," returned Orcar. "You have been absent from our country for a long time, Nano, and the King is angry with you. Who are these strangers whom you have brought back with you?"

He spoke in his own tongue, which, thanks to Nano, all the Englishmen by now fairly well.

"I have been absent to good purpose," rejoined Nano boldly, "as even our King shall soon acknowledge. As to the strangers, I will tell nothing to any man except Natho. Lead on, Orcar, or you may have to pay for your delay!"

His tone was half scornful and very confident. Orcar said no more, but gave the order to march. The people pressed close, however, and when the city was gained the streets were almost blocked by human beings; so that it speedily became difficult to effect the slowest passage. Orcar could have got on rapidly enough had he used force, but he did not care to do this. The people generally were not in a bad humour, but were

YOU WILL LAUGH if you read the "WONDER."

Id., every Saturday.



Orcar began to cautiously descend the ladder.

full of excitement and curiosity, and hardly realised what they were doing as they pushed against each other.

When the warriors and the men they guarded had gained the densest part of the crowd, Claude Derwent's eyes rested upon a girl dressed in white garments, and wearing ornaments of silver, whose face was the fairest and most beautiful he had ever seen. She smiled at Orcar, and was evidently a person of some importance in the City of Jewels, for the majority of her neighbours treated her with great respect. As the Englishman looked, however, a man of about thirty, splendidly attired, and armed, and with an evil face, forced his way to her side and spoke to her. She shrank from him, and he spoke again, loudly and angrily, and placed a rough hand upon her shoulder.

Claude could not hear what was said, but he understood the meaning of that action well enough, and, breaking through his guards, he sent the ruffian to the earth with one blow of his clenched fist.

In a minute, before the smitten one could recover his erect position, the men of Orcar closed around the girl and Claude, and hastened on.

"I thank you, friend," he said. "She whom you have aided is my sister, Bernica. But I fear you have done yourself no good. The man you struck down is Arvalas, the son of Natho the King."

Claude and his companions were led into a vast and lofty hall of a palace, and for the first time set eyes on the King of the City of Jewels. This potentate, who sat upon a rich throne upon a dais, was a short, thick-set man, with a brutal face, which ill-matched his grey hair, and was decked out in rich garments, which absolutely blazed with gold and silver ornaments and priceless jewels.

"Who do you bring here?" demanded Natho in a harsh voice.

And he fixed a forbidding gaze upon the captives.

The guards fell back a little, and Nano advanced several paces, and bowed almost to the earth. A great silence fell upon the people who crowded the hall.

"O King," came the firmly spoken answer, "I am Nano the Seeker; I am your slave. Long ago you sent me forth to perform a task, and said that if I returned without accomplishing this, my very head should pay the forfeit. O King, I remember your words."

"Then you know your fate," responded Natho cruelly. "You are a dead man, because you have failed."

"Not so, O King," said Nano triumphantly, "because I have not failed. I have found what I was sent to seek!"

"If you speak the truth," said the King slowly, "great shall be your reward; but if you lie, you shall die a death such as no other man ever suffered. I swear upon the red diamond, the most sacred stone, that if you prove your words I will grant you three requests, provided that you do not demand the life of one of my own blood."

At the words, Nano sprang to Claude's side, and with a rapid movement tore open his jacket, snatched the diamond from the inner pocket in which it had rested, pulled it from its box, and held it up in his right hand.

"Behold, O King!" he cried.

The diamond flashed forth a million rays. Every Indian in the hall, including the King, bowed. Natho took the diamond in his own hand.

"Now is the diamond-god recovered, and now will good-fortune return to us all!" he said. And he added to Nano: "Ask what you will."

Nano pointed to Mostyn and Broode.

"These men aided me in my task, and are my friends," he said. "Give them riches, and let them go home when they please, O King!"

"Be it so," said Natho.

Nano pointed to Claude, who would have made an attempt to recover his inheritance had not his guards held him fast.

"That man is my fate," said Nano, uttering the lie with a great effort. "He has done me much harm. Let me see his head fall within a month, O King!"

"Be it so," said Natho, speaking as if he were disposing of the life of a gnat.

Then Nano went nearer to the throne.

"Let me have wealth," he said, "and let me be a chief among the people, O King."

"Be it so," said Natho.

Orcar stood with a face of stone, and said not a word. The guards closed around Claude, who cried out to the men he had believed to be his friends:

"Are you Englishmen? Will you stand by and not move a hand to aid me? Are you not my friends?"

Mostyn made as to run to his side, but Broode dragged him back.

"You are a fool, Claude Derwent, if you cannot see the truth!" Felix Broode cried. "We hate you with all our souls, and wish for nothing else as we wish to see you dead. We knew what would be your fate here, and spared no pains to entice you on." The villain swept his hand across his face, and seemed to brush away a mask, for his features became distorted with hate and passion. "You have been lured to danger, and are no better than a dead man!"

Before Claude could answer he was hurried away, and consigned to a small, bare stone room, with a strong grating for window, and left alone, with some cold water and coarse food. The last face he saw was that of Orcar, and the face of Orcar was cold and set, and devoid of expression.

He spent the night in his prison in the strange City of Jewels, not sleeping much, but thinking, and awaiting doom.

CHAPTER VII.

A VISITOR FOR CLAUDE—A GREAT CHANGE IN NANO—AN UNHEEDED PRAYER—THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE SILVER NECKLET—THE PASSING DAYS—MOSTYN QUARRELS WITH BROODE—NOT ALL A VILLAIN—ORCAR'S NEWS.

Almost ere the dawn broke Claude Derwent had a visitor in his prison chamber. The door was opened and refastened, and Nano stood before him richly dressed, with a look of uneasiness and gloom upon his face, but also with an air of forced defiance.

Claude was unarmed, but not bound. He rose from the floor of stone upon which he had been lying, and stood erect and firm.

"Well, what do you come here for, traitor?" he asked in a cold voice.

NEXT WEEK, "LIFE FOR GOLD,"

The epithet stung Nano, who bit his lip until the blood came.

"Your doom is fixed, and nothing can avert it," said the Indian sullenly. "But I come to ask if anything can be done to make your last hours easier. Whatever you ask for—"

"I would only ask for my life, which, it seems, I cannot have," interrupted the other. "Why do you come here to trouble me? You have betrayed me—why I do not know—and soon you will have done your worst. Let me have some peace, and do not prove yourself a coward!"

"Listen to me," said Nano. "I neither love nor hate you. I love and hate no man. But I swore that the sacred diamond should be restored to my people, and I stopped at nothing to effect that end. Had I not sworn to rob you of your life, I should have failed in my task; so I swore I would do what I have done again, and yet I am sorry for it."

"You say you love and hate no man—"

"I was wrong. I love one man. When I was wretched and alone in Georgetown, one night I tried to throw myself into the waters; but a man, whose face I could not clearly see in the gloom, restrained me, and gave me gold, and hastened away. I promised myself that if I ever met him, I would serve him at all cost to myself. Somehow I have been mad enough to think that you"—he stopped dead, arrested by the expression of his listener's face, and then gave a cry of agonised horror—"you are the man, and I have given you to death!"

An awful silence reigned for a minute. The Englishman was pale but calm; the Indian was ghastly and trembling. Then Nano went unsteadily from the cell, and fastened the door behind him with shaking fingers.

Upon that day Nano appeared before King Natho, who sat in his hall, with his son Arvalas at his side.

"What seek you?" demanded Natho.

"I crave a favour of you, O King," returned Nano. "Take back the wealth and power you have given me, and let the white stranger, whom you have condemned at my desire, live."

"Never!" said the King. "He must die, because I have sworn it!"

"And also," said Arvalas, "because he struck me. The stranger dog shall die, as also shall Bernica and her brother ere long. Who are they that they should dare to thwart me, who am a king's son?"

No man stood near the father and son save Nano, but Natho sank his voice.

"Beware, son, of letting your purpose become known. Ocar and Bernica have many friends, and were it known that you sought to do them ill, there might rise a storm which would consume us. If you must slay, strike swiftly and secretly. As for you, slave," he added in a louder tone to Nano, "begone! I will not heed you. I have sworn that the stranger shall die and he shall die!"

Nano said no more, but went away, his eyes blazing and his face livid.

That same night Claude awoke from a fitful sleep full of the idea that he was not alone in his prison. He sought as well as he could in the darkness, and was forced to conclude that he had been mistaken. But when the day dawned he discovered that Migor's silver necklet, which he had worn under his shirt-collar, and of which his enemies had possessed no knowledge, had disappeared. He had no doubt that the ornament had been stolen, but by whom or for what reason he could not guess.

This was the only incident which broke the monotony of his captivity for the next four days. His guards brought him



He seized him by the arm, and managed to save him.

food and drink, but said little to him, and refused to tell of anything going on outside, and no one he knew came near him. His thoughts were strangely mixed during this time. Sometimes he thought of the beautiful Bernica, and then of his own fate, which he began to regard as inevitable. He believed that Ocar had fallen away from him, and told himself again and again that he had not one friend in the City of Jewels.

He was, however, somewhat mistaken.

As the days passed, Randal Mostyn became more restless and dissatisfied in his own mind than ever. Natho had kept his promise, and had given himself and Broode a store of diamonds sufficient to make them both wealthy; but Mostyn had scarcely looked at his share of a treasure over which Broode was never tired of gloating. The pair were not allowed to go about freely, but they yet contrived to see and learn a good deal about the city. Broode made no comment on anything, but Mostyn made uncomplimentary opinions so freely that his companion trembled for the result.

A marked and, in his eyes, ugly change in Mostyn's manner, however, intimidated Broode, who dared not remonstrate until the fifth day of Claude Derwent's captivity. Then he burst out in irritable desperation.

"Why are you such a mad fool?" he demanded, when his companion and himself were alone in the small house which had been assigned to them as a lodging. "Can't you see that you are angering the people, who, if provoked far enough, will think nothing of killing us both?"

"I don't care what they do!" retorted Mostyn recklessly. "I would put up with anything if I could get rid of the feeling which has been bothering me lately."

"What do you mean?"

"Do you know that everyone in the city has been talking about Derwent having to die to-morrow?"

"Yes."

"It will be a murder!"

"The people do not see it in that light. They look upon it as a sacrifice to their diamond-god."

"It will be a foul murder!" reiterated Mostyn; "and if it is not stopped, I shall look upon myself as only fit for the gallows. I wish with all my soul that I had not helped to bring Derwent here; but I mean to do all I can to undo the mischief. Look here, Broode, if I strike a blow to prevent this crime, will you strike another?"

"No, I won't!" rejoined Broode. "I mean to see Derwent die! My new wealth would be nothing to me without that satisfaction. Are you going to turn against me?"

"You are a fiend, and I wash my hands of you!"

"Then, before Heaven, I'll denounce you to Natho!" exclaimed Broode.

He sprang to the door, but was instantly covered by a revolver, and staggered back.

"Where did you get that?" he asked hoarsely. "Natho took all our weapons from us."

"Yes; and I found 'em hidden in the palace, and took back what I wanted," said Mostyn. "I've got a hundred cartridges and your revolver and my own. If you had been a man, I would have given you yours; but now I mean to keep it. And I tell you plain that I am in no humour for trifling, and that if you or any other man tries to oppose me I'll put a bullet into you or him. I know that I am practically alone in a city of fiends, who will spill blood like water; but I mean to save Derwent, or else die with him!"

Blackguard and villain, as he had been, he looked a man when he said this. Felix Broode glared at, but dared not touch him. He swung out of the house, looking like a man who had fully made up his mind.

The evening was closing in, and the streets of the city were almost deserted.

As he strode on, however, Mostyn met a man who was stained with blood and dust, whose garments were in great disorder, and whose face wore a terrible expression. It was Orcar.

He would have passed by unheeding, but the Englishman caught him by the shoulder.

"What is the matter with you?" he demanded sharply.

"What are you doing?"

"I am seeking my sister!" answered Orcar in a hollow voice. "She has been carried off by Arvalas, the King's son!"

CHAPTER VIII.

ORCAR ASKS AID—THE STORM IN THE AIR—THE SEARCH IN THE NIGHT—THE DISCOVERY OF CLAUDE'S PRISON—THE RESCUE—TERRIBLE NEWS—HASTENING TO SAVE.

Side by side the Englishman and the Indian went on through the darkened streets. Mostyn's hand was placed gently on Orcar's shoulder, and his voice was strangely kind.

"Calm yourself, and tell me all as clearly and briefly as you can," he said. "There may be more hope than you think; but I cannot tell how to help you until I know everything."

"There is not much to tell," returned Orcar in a low voice.

"Bernica and I are the last of our house, and have lived alone with three or four servants for years. Arvalas has for a long time urged my sister to listen to his protestations of love, but she has refused. The King's son has been angered by this, and has sworn to break her to his will at all cost. He has troubled her greatly—you remember how your friend treated him for insulting her—but he has feared to make a serious move, because he knew that my sister and I had many friends in the city who would not tamely see us wronged. But to-night he seems to have plucked up spirit, for he entered my house at the head of a score of armed men, slew one of my servants, stunned me and left me, thinking I was dead, and carried off my sister, whither I do not know."

"What do you mean to do now?"

"To ask for the aid of my friends, and fight Arvalas and Natho."

"Has the King had a hand in the abduction?"

"Perhaps not; but he will not punish his son. He is a bad man, and a bad king. Once our city was well and justly ruled, and many of the people hate the tyrant who tramples on their rights."

"I would offer you my aid," said Mostyn, "were it not for one thing. You acknowledged your debt to Claude Derwent, and promised to serve him at any cost, and yet when he was seized you did not speak a word or move a hand on his behalf."

"I was and am his friend, though!" retorted Orcar flushing.

"Do you not see that if I had betrayed myself I should have been made captive also, while by seeming to be indifferent I was left unsuspected and free. I am the white chief's friend,

and have done more for him than you think. It was of no use trying to force his prison; but to-morrow he will be led through the streets to the temple, in which his enemies intend to slay him, and my friends and I have planned to attempt his rescue on the way."

"Good! There is my hand—I am your friend, Orcar. But you must assemble your friends at once, and stick at nothing to save your sister and the white chief."

"There is only one way to do that. I must openly declare against Natho."

"Do it, then," rejoined Mostyn coolly. "Do your best to overturn his throne. The best part of the people are tired of him, and if you do not destroy him, he will destroy you. Come, you will never have a better chance of striking a great blow, Orcar. Shall it be peace or war?"

"War!" said Orcar instantly.

He lost no time after that, but went to the house first of one friend and then of another. His call for aid was responded to readily, and he soon found himself at the head of forty determined men, while a score of messengers were scattered through the dark city to bid fresh adherents assemble at a specified place of rendezvous with all speed.

The die was cast. War had been declared against Natho. The fight was to be for a throne as well as for human lives.

Orcar was not disposed to wait idly, but began to march forward, in the hope of discovering his stolen sister's whereabouts. For hours he sought in vain; but he clung to hope. Himself and his men moved very softly and spoke in whispers, in order to decrease the risk of giving a premature alarm.

When the dawn began to break, the men were upon the outskirts of the city. As they halted, a man ran from one of the streets, and, at sight of them, turned to fly back. But Mostyn was too quick for him, and pursued and caught him. He was a young Indian, and wore the costume of Natho's palace servants.

"If you struggle or cry out, you are a dead man!" the Englishman hissed.

The youth stood motionless and dumb.

"You are a servant of the king," said Orcar, coming up.

"What is your name?"

"Illa."

"What are you doing abroad at such an hour?"

Illa was obstinately silent; but the weapons threateningly pointed at his breast unloosed his tongue.

"I have been doing the work of Arvalas the prince, and am now going back to the King's palace," he said sullenly. "Let me go, if you do not wish to be punished."

"I have seen you before, and I know where!" said Orcar grimly. "You are one of those who attacked my house and helped to carry off my sister. Where is Bernica?"

"I do not know."

"When I raise my right hand, said Orcar quietly to one of his men, "slay this fool. Now, Illa, where is Bernica?"

The stern look of the young chief, and the uplifted spear so close to his breast, broke down the spirit of Illa, who fell on his knees, and held out his hands in terror.

"I swear by the diamond-god that I know nothing of Bernica!" he said. "The prince dismissed all his men in the street, and forbade them, on pain of death, to follow him. He carried away the lady in his arms—whither I know not."

"You can tell us nothing, then?" demanded Mostyn, for Orcar could not trust himself to speak.

"Of the lady, no; but I can lead you to the prison of the white man whom Natho has doomed to die."

"You mean Claude Derwent?" asked Mostyn. "How do you know anything of him?"

"I have been one of his guards, and have taken food to him more than once. He is in a chamber in the King's palace. If you are his friends, and wish to free him, you could break his prison with my help; but not easily—not without peril."

"What does that matter?" asked Mostyn scornfully. He turned to Orcar, and said rapidly: "I believe that this man will serve us truly, out of fear, if for no other reason, and I believe that he speaks the truth. I think it will be well to free my friend before seeking further news of your sister, because once in the palace we may learn where she is, and might search all night through the empty streets and find nothing."

"That is true," said the chief gravely. "Illa, will it take us long to enter the prison of the white captive?"

"If you make the attempt," rejoined Illa, "you will either have freed him, or you will all be dead within an hour!"

"Lead the way, then!" commanded Orcar shortly; "and lead true! If you play any false tricks you are a dead man!"

Illa tried to force a smile to his lips; but he saw the grim faces of the men who surrounded him, and shivered. The threat launched against him was no idle one. Without a word he led the way through the streets of the city, which were deserted save for Orcar's band, and dark save for the faint light given by the moon and the stars.

Illa at length halted on the outskirts of a square, in the centre of which stood the palace of Natho. It was built entirely of the

marble-like stone conspicuous in the city. In the half darkness the lofty walls, massive towers, and slender turrets had a shadowy and unreal appearance, which was rather intensified than dispelled by the lights which still glimmered from several of the glassed windows.

"The great gates are fastened, and will not be opened until dawn," said Illa in a subdued tone; "but I know of an easier way of entrance, through which we can break. Natho thinks that no foe dare lift a hand against him, and keeps poor guard."

"Go on, then," returned Orcar in a low, intense tone; "but again—beware!"

Protected partly by the obscurity, partly by the softness of their movements, and partly by the poor watch maintained in the palace, the band swiftly and safely approached the great building, and halted before a small but strong wooden door. Carefully listening, they heard several men, whom they knew were Natho's guards, talking together carelessly, and thus learned that the occupants of the palace deemed all secure.

Orcar smiled grimly.

"Chief," whispered Illa, "if I knock and ask for admission, I shall be recognised, and the door will be opened for me. The fools within will not suspect me. If you keep in the background, and yet not far off, you can rush in at my heels."

"What is the need?" demanded Orcar almost roughly, "when I and my men can burst in the door without effort? Keep your tricks till there is need for them, Illa."

"Do as you like!" retorted Illa sulkily. "Act like a bold one, and play the fool! If you burst in the door you will fill the palace with confusion and alarm, and give the signal for the captive's death. Natho and his servants will slay him once they know that rescue is near."

"You are right, and I am a fool!" said Orcar, biting his lips. His mood was of the fiercest just then, and the thought of delay maddened him; but he knew that precipitancy would spell ruin. "Do what you like!"

Illa knocked upon the door in a peculiar way. The sounds of rattling arms and quickly moving men followed.

"Who is there?" came the question in a harsh voice.

"I, Illa, the servant of Natho."

"You are alone?"

Illa looked round swiftly. Orcar and his men had withdrawn into the shadows, but were not yet out of ear-shot. "I am alone," he said.

There was a fumbling of chains and bars, and the door was thrown open. Ten warriors, armed to the teeth, stood upon the threshold, and the torches which two of them carried cast a flaring light around. In a second, Orcar and his men thronged the doorway, and in another second a spear flew from the hand of one of the guards and transfixed Illa, who fell dead.

A fight began instantly, and the ten guards were soon mastered; but not before they raised a loud outcry. The palace was forced at a dear cost—the alarm was given. The great building appeared to suddenly awake from repose into quickest life. Loud voices sounded in anger and alarm, and hastening men and flashing lights became visible everywhere.

Orcar and his men were speedily faced by foes, who outnumbered them by at least four to one. But the young chief was not the man to be daunted, and, well aided by Randal Mostyn and the other men, forced his way into the palace literally at the spear's point. The men of Natho at first fought well, but neither the king nor his son appeared, and it was loudly declared that the last-named was not in the palace.

Mostyn maintained a position in the forefront of the fight, and his revolvers did good, albeit grim service for his side. When the opposing foemen were at length beaten, and broke to fly, he seized and held a man, whose garments proved him to be an inferior sort of chief. The fellow was strong, and struggled hard to get away; but the Englishman threw him to the ground, and, kneeling on his body, secured a tight grip on his throat.

"If you give me any more trouble I'll choke the life out of you!" Mostyn declared resolutely. "Do you know where the white captive is? Ah, I see by your face you do. Well, lead me to his prison if you wish to live!"

The man shook his head sullenly at first, but the grip upon his throat was tightened, and he soon gave in. Mostyn allowed him to rise to his feet, but stood at his side, revolver in hand.

An entire wing of the palace was now practically in the hands of Orcar, although the rest of the place remained in the possession of the king's men, from whom a renewed attack was to be expected at any second. Fortunately Orcar had not lost a man; and detaching ten men, in addition to Mostyn and the captive, to accompany him, he left the remainder in a large hall, under the command of the oldest and most experienced fighter among them.

The forced guide led the way direct to the door of Claude Derwent's cell, which was in the captured wing. The rescuers burst the door open, and dragged the astonished young fellow out before he could speak.

"Thank Heaven you're safe!" Mostyn said. "I've been a

villain, Derwent; but I'm sorry for it now. You'll shake hands?"

"Of course," returned Claude. "Why, I never expected to shake hands with a friend again. When I heard the commotion outside, I thought Natho's men were coming to take me to be killed. What ever brought you here?"

Mostyn explained hurriedly.

"You have gained something by coming here!" Claude exclaimed. "An hour ago one of my guards was mocking me, and told me that Arvalas had stolen Bernica—and he told where he had taken her to."

"Where?" asked Orcar, his voice shaking with excitement.

"To the Place of the Jewels."

"It is a place of death!" said Orcar paling. "None who are taken there escape alive. Yet there may be hope. Bernica has not been in the villain's power for long, and if we use speed we may save her. Let us away from this place!"

All that has been set down had happened in a matter of minutes, and so great was the confusion in the palace that Orcar was enabled to withdraw his men without experiencing hindrance.

The day had not yet dawned, but was not afar off. The chief and his band hurried through the city with extraordinary speed, despite the crowds of men and women who were now flocking from the houses. On the way, Orcar was met by many of the messengers he had sent out, and these informed him that his friends were rising in response to his call, and that he was likely to have half the people on his side in any battle that might be fought.

CHAPTER IX.

TO THE PLACE OF JEWELS—PERILS ON EVERY HAND—THE RESCUE OF BERNICA AND THE END OF ARVALAS—THE FIGHT IN THE CITY—THE ARRIVAL OF VAROCO AND MIGOR—THE FATE OF FELIX BROODE—THE VICTORY—CONCLUSION.

It was quite apparent to Orcar that he would have to fight and win at least one great battle soon, if himself and his friends were not to fall victims to the tyranny and hate of Natho. But he was not inclined to strike a blow in the vital struggle until he had saved his sister from the power of the villain prince, or, if she were dead, until he had avenged her.

Many of the people fell back willingly to allow him to go by; but others threw themselves in his way, and attempted to bar his advance. These were driven back and scattered, with hurt and loss to themselves, but without disaster to the chief and his band.

"What is the Place of Jewels?" Claude asked Mostyn as they hurried on side by side. "Do you know?"

"Not exactly," answered Mostyn. "The people do not talk about it much, and I have not heard all I wanted to. As far as I can make out, the Place of Jewels is a sort of temple under the earth, in which are stored all the jewel-gods of the city. The people are only allowed to visit it very rarely, and there is some law to the effect that if they handle any of the jewels they shall not return to the upper world again."

"Are they killed?"

"Some are, and some are left to serve as slaves in the temple. Arvalas has intended no good to Bernica by taking her to the palace. She will be completely in his power down there."

"Until we arrive!" quietly added Orcar, who had overheard the last words. "We must bring my sister away from the Place of Jewels, if she is alive; and if she is dead I will have the head of every man answerable for her death!"

"Do you believe in the diamond-gods?" asked Claude.

"I did so once; but I do not now," answered Orcar. "There are many jewels in the city, but not one that has not been obtained by a crime, if not at the cost of blood. The religion is a cruel one, for men and women—yes, and little children—have been sacrificed to the shining stones. Many of the people have wished to put an end to the false faith, but Natho and his creatures have upheld it. If Natho falls, the jewel-worship will die with him."

There was silence for a time after this. At last a halt was made before a large square structure, which had only one door, but this was of immense strength. The door was closed, and a hundred warriors were assembled before it. The news of Orcar's purpose had spread far, and the adherents of Natho were not disposed to stand tamely by while he did as he pleased.

Felix Broode was with these men. The villain meant to fight against his own countrymen, and to stand or fall with Natho. He was, however, armed after the fashion of the Indians only, and was not skilled in the use of his new weapons. A spear he cast at Claude flew wide, and the young fellow replied with a revolver shot, which pierced Broode's shoulder. The villain fell cursing, his allies were swept away, and the great door was battered in.

Orcar and his men poured into the building, which consisted of a single vast apartment, in the centre of which was a shaft and a flight of stone steps leading downward. There were no visible contents nor occupants.

Leaving thirty of his men to guard the shaft, Orcar ordered the others to follow him, and hurried down the stairs, with the two Englishmen at his side and the other men at his heels. All were soon in a long subterranean corridor, which was faintly illuminated by lamps, which hung on the stone walls at irregular intervals. At the end of this corridor was a second shaft, which was enveloped in profound darkness. Without hesitation Orcar dropped over the edge, and, swinging by his hands, felt about with his feet until these touched an invisible ladder; then he went down hand over hand. The rest followed instantly. All were fearless, although they were in a darkness as deep as that of the grave.

The ladder was of wood, and was not too strong. A rung upon which Claude stepped gave way, and he would have fallen had not Mostyn, who was immediately underneath, and who could hear, if he could not see, caught and held him until he recovered a firm foot and hand hold.

"Thank you!" Claude whispered. "I owe you my life!"

"Let it wipe out the black score against us. Derwent," returned the other quickly. "Forget what has passed, and let us begin again as true friends."

"With all my heart!"

"Silence now," said Orcar in a very low tone. "We shall touch firm earth soon, and are near the Place of Jewels. Do you all make sure that your weapons are ready. If Bernica is alive, the thieves will fight to keep her!"

No audible answer was given; but as each man stepped from the ladder he clasped the young chief's hand significantly. All was still dark; but Orcar led the way without hesitation, with Claude grasping his sleeve, Mostyn grasping Claude, an Indian grasping Mostyn, and so on with all the men. They had to march for nearly half an hour through the passages without seeing a ray of light; but finally the leader said softly:

"We are near the Place of Jewels. Be ready, all!"

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when a scream rang out and broke the silence in a startling manner. Again it sounded, and again. The rescuers broke into a run, and turned a sharp corner, and the Englishmen saw a sight such as they had never seen before.

They saw a subterranean hall, five hundred feet square, built of white stone, illuminated by a hundred lamps, and literally filled with jewels—diamonds, sapphires, rubies, emeralds, beryls, zircons, and many more—which cast forth a million rays of scintillating fire, and in the centre of the hall, resting upon a table of solid, beaten gold, was the red diamond—the chief of all, though not the most precious.

And in this place of inestimable wealth and most misguided adoration were assembled two score men and women, all richly and fantastically dressed, the priests and servants of the jewel-gods.

And in their midst stood the villain Prince Arvalas, with one arm thrown round Bernica and the other hand grasping a curiously shaped knife. And the prince's face was full of evil passion, and he was bent upon slaying the girl, who fought bravely for her life, and called for aid to the fierce jewel-worshippers, who looked on, but who were deaf to the prayer.

"You have scorned my love and profaned the sacred jewels, proud Bernica!" cried Arvalas. "You shall be the bride of death. Who can save you now?"

For answer Claude Derwent ran across the hall, snatched the girl free, and sent her enemy to the ground with a true English blow. He was on his feet again in a minute, however. He saw at once that he had not many foes to reckon with, and he was like a tiger in his unwillingness not to abandon his prey.

"These villains have profaned the Place of Jewels!" he cried. "Death must be their portion. Slay them, servants of the jewel-gods! If they live to escape—"

While shrieking out his words he had leaped forward, and Claude Derwent, still supporting Bernica with one arm, took swift and steady aim, and sent a revolver-bullet through his heart.

The priests and servants were appalled when they saw him fall in his tracks, but they sought to obey his last commands by blocking up the way of egress. Orcar and his men, however, were not disposed to remain long where they were, and cut their way out with a grim determination there was no resisting. The revolvers of the Englishmen were well used, and priest after priest made a savage attack, only to go down for ever; and amid all the carnage Claude held Bernica, and averted all peril from her.

Back through the passages fled the rescuing band, and up the ladder and the stairs, hotly pursued but never caught. At the summit of the shaft they were met with great news.

The city had risen, and by far the best men had declared against Natho, and new combatants had appeared upon the

scene. Migor had thrown himself suddenly into the city at the head of two hundred warriors, and Varoco had followed him close with an even greater force. The first chief had declared against Natho, the second for him, and a great battle was raging in the city.

Orcar promptly sent Bernica to a place of safety under a strong escort, and then dashed out into the streets at the head of his men. Combatants were everywhere, and blood ran thick. It was a long time before the young chief and the Englishmen gained the side of Migor, whose lofty plumes were conspicuous in the forefront of the battle. At last, however, they did so, and warmly grasped his hands.

"You are welcome indeed, Migor!" exclaimed Claude. "But what brought you here in such good time?"

Migor showed him the silver necklet.

"Nano brought this to me," he said, "and told me that you were in dire peril in the City of Jewels; so I gathered my men together, and came here with all speed. Varoco met and tried to stop me on the way, but I broke through his men. He followed me close, however."

"Where is Nano?"

"He was the first man to fall when Natho's men attacked me."

Then Claude knew that Nano the Seeker had kept his vow, and paid his debt. He had stolen the silver necklet that he might save the life of the man whom he had betrayed.

Fierce and long was the battle in the City of Jewels. Well did Orcar's men fight, and Natho's men did not abandon an inch of ground that was unstained with blood. Fierce and long was the battle, while the sun rose and shone in splendour, and sank in a red blaze. But Natho did not show himself, and at last a cry went up that he had died in his palace like a coward who dared not fight for his throne and his life—by his own hand. His men already knew of the death of Arvalas, and now threw down their arms and cried for quarter.

But one man at least uttered no such cry. Felix Broode refused to yield, and was driven to bay, and stood with his back against one of the houses. Claude Derwent called upon him to surrender, and promised him his life.

"I will not accept it at your hands!" retorted Broode, full of mad desperation. "You foiled me when I tried to kill Don Manuel Garcias—for I did try to kill him—and you foiled me again after I had lured you to what I thought your certain death. You have had all the luck, but you shall not foil me now! I've lost the game, but I'm not afraid to pay the stake!"

With these words, he thrust the spear he held into his heart, and fell back dead beside the dead body of Varoco, who had been slain in the same place.

It was a month afterwards, and Claude Derwent and Randal Mostyn stood upon the loftiest tower of the palace of Orcar the King, and looked upon the city, which presented a scene of prosperity and peace.

"So you are going home after Bernica becomes your wife, Claude?" Mostyn said, half sadly. "Well, I am sorry; but I don't wonder at your decision. You like the old country best?"

"Yes. Orcar has given me enough jewels to realise a fortune, and Bernica has given me—herself. I like this place, but I like Old England better, and Bernica is willing to go wherever I do. Are you sure you prefer to stay here, Mostyn?"

"I am certain. Orcar is the King now, you know. He has put an end to the jewel-worship, and is going to do his best to make his people contented and prosperous. He has asked me to stop to help him, and I have consented. I want to begin a new life, and might as well do it in a new country. Before he went home, Migor promised to come back to see me, and you must try to do the same."

"I will," said Claude earnestly. "And, however far apart we are, Mostyn, I'll not forget you, but will remember you as one of my best friends!"

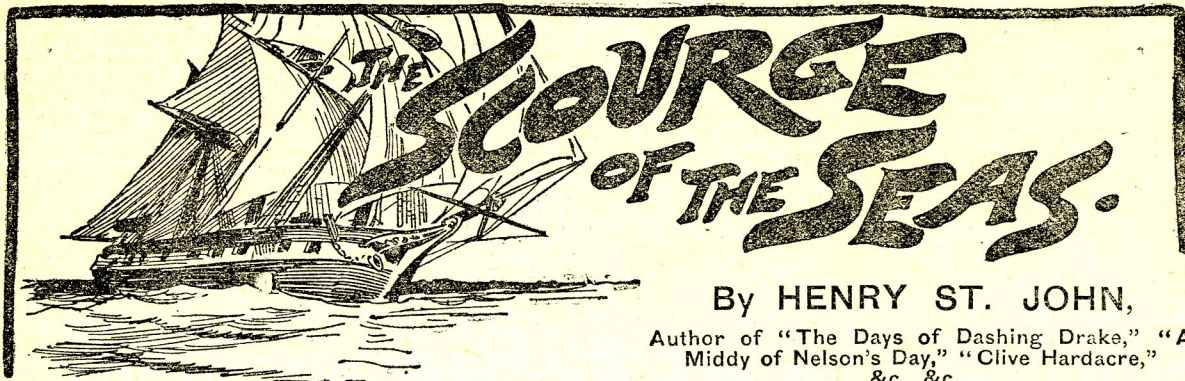
"Thank you," said Randal Mostyn in a low tone.

And the two clasped hands.

THE END.

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Author of "The Days of Dashing Drake," "A Middy of Nelson's Day," "Clive Hardacre," &c., &c.

By reading this introduction anyone can commence the story now.

The hero, Frank Farleigh, is a fisher lad, who believes himself to be the son of an old fisherman, by name Ben Farleigh. This belief, however, is dispelled when old Ben on his deathbed informs him that he is not his son in reality, but the son of a man whose name the old man, in the agonies of death, cannot remember. On the death of Ben, Frank is driven from his old home by a nephew of the old fisherman's, Simeon Clyne by name, a greedy, avaricious villain.

Frank finds himself one stormy night in the seaport town of Brightling. He seeks shelter under one of the walls on the harbour, and while there he overhears a conversation that takes place on the deck of a vessel beneath him. The speakers are two men, one of whom is bound, and evidently in the other's power. The bound man refuses to accede to the other's wish, and in a fit of anger the other flings him, bound and helpless, into the sea. Frank, an expert swimmer, dives to the rescue, and succeeds in rescuing the drowning man, who turns out to be Captain Wilfred Curzon, of the frigate "Fearless." Captain Curzon promises to take Frank under his protection, and places him on the quarter-deck of his ship. He then asks Frank never to refer to the circumstance that has brought them together.

The following morning, Frank, with an old sailor, by name Bill Woshem, goes for a row in the harbour. They sight a schooner lying at anchor, which calls up Woshem's admiration. They approach it, and to their surprise see Captain Curzon on the deck. He tells them to come on board, which they do, and scarcely have they done so, when they are surrounded by a crowd of foreign-looking sailors, who bind them prisoners, while Curzon looks smilingly on.

The schooner is the "Vulture," a magnificent vessel, with cabins fitted up in the most expensive and luxurious style. They are locked in a cabin, where they are presently visited by Curzon, accompanied, greatly to Frank's surprise, by Simeon Clyne.

They soon realise the truth that the "Vulture" is a pirate, known as the "Scourge of the Seas." They put to sea, and meet with many adventures, culminating in a storm, which disables the pirate. Clyne tries to murder Frank, but is prevented by a small negro named Quacko. The "Vulture" is chased by a French man-o'-war, but manages to escape into the shelter of a strange, fortified island, which is the headquarters of the pirate band.

Frank and Bill are taken as prisoners to the pirates' stronghold. Curzon tells Frank that they are father and son. Frank will not believe it, though Curzon's statement is corroborated by Clyne. Bill Woshem, when appealed to by Frank, is obliged to confess that he has detected a startling likeness between the captain of the pirate and Frank.

Andries, the governor of the island, conspires with Clyne against Curzon's life. Quacko overhears the plot, and reveals it to Curzon, who takes precautions.

At the moment of the attempted murder Andries and Clyne, with their followers, are surrounded by Curzon's men, under the leadership of Garcia, Curzon's lieutenant. Andries is killed on the spot, and Clyne, with the rest, are led out to execution.

It is Clyne's turn to die; but Curzon secretly gives orders that he is not to be hit, as he has further use for him.

Bill and Frank escape, and drop into the sea, making for a vessel some distance away. They find it to be the "Zélé," a French vessel, and are taken aboard, but held prisoners of war. The captain questions Frank about the pirate's stronghold.

THE TORNADO—IN THE GRASP OF THE WHIRLPOOL.

Yes, Captain Courvoisier had made up his mind. He could

not afford to risk his ship and his men on a venture that was doomed to failure. He would give up, for the present at any rate, the idea of attacking the pirates; he would content himself with carrying the news of their existence home, and he would leave it for the Government to decide what course they would adopt.

He communicated these thoughts to Lieutenant Durand, who applauded their wisdom.

"Then, mon capitaine, we need lay here no longer to be laughed at by those rock-protected rascals. The wind serves, and, unless I mistake, there are signs of rough weather ahead, and we shall be safer if we put some leagues between us and these rocks before the weather breaks."

"Bien! Then," said the captain, "signal our intentions to Captain Michelin on the 'Lièvre.' You will then take the deck, Monsieur Durand, and see the anchors weighed. Bon soir, mon ami! I shall now turn in. Our course, remember, is to the south-west."

Captain Courvoisier arose and bowed politely to Frank, expressing his thanks in his own tongue for the information that Frank had afforded him. He then left the room, no doubt with the intention of carrying out his plan of turning in for what remained of the night.

"You shall remain here, monsieur," said Lieutenant Durand, "and the steward shall procure for you a repast. After which you have ze liberty of retiring to your cabin. Monsieur will excuse my absence, but I have my duties, which shall require my attention. Monsieur, I have ze honour to wish you good-night!"

The worthy lieutenant held out his hand, which Frank grasped cordially.

The repast of which M. Durand had spoken was presently served, and Frank awoke to the knowledge that he was desperately hungry, as was but natural, for many hours had passed since he had broken his fast, and he did ample justice to the first meal that he took as a prisoner on board the "Zélé."

Then he found his way back to the little cabin which had been allotted to his use. Here on his knees he poured out his gratitude for his deliverance, and never did a more earnest thanksgiving ascend to the high heavens than his that night from the little cabin of the "Zélé."

The song and rhythmical tramp of the sailors from the deck above, as they marched around the capstan, sounded the sweetest music in his ears, and then he fell into a deep sleep, from which he was to be awakened later by the shrill scream of the wind, the howling of the storm, and the hiss of the wind-whipped waves, that flung the "Zélé" hither and thither as though the great vessel was but a cork—a mere plaything in their mighty grasp.

So deep had been Frank's sleep that the storm had broken long before he properly awoke. When at last he did arise, he found that the operation of dressing himself was beset with almost insurmountable difficulties.

The heaving and struggling of the storm-beset vessel prevented him from keeping his feet for more than an instant together; but he managed by holding on to a stanchion in the wall to keep his equilibrium while he dressed himself as well as he was able.

The hour of dawn had long passed, yet still the heavens were not illuminated by a ray of light. It was as dark as the depths of the blackest night, except when the sea and sky were lighted up by the brilliant lightning, which played incessantly around the tall masts of the storm-tossed ship.

The air was laden with sound. It seemed as though Pandemonium itself had been let loose, and that the tortured spirits were filling the air with their wails and shrieks of agony.

DO YOU LIKE THIS SERIAL?

Frank gained the deck as a heavy sea struck the "Zélé," and forced her over so that her starboard ports were for a moment engulfed in the boiling sea. He would have fallen on the slippery, slanting deck, and have rolled to destruction, had not a strong arm seized him, and dragged him in safety to the base of the mainmast.

Frank looked up to thank his deliverer by a look, for speech was impossible, and when the next flash of lightning came he recognised Bill Woshem.

A hasty but warm grip of the hand was the only greeting that passed between them, and then they were both clinging to the protecting mast, as another gigantic sea swept across the deck in a sheet of dazzling foam.

For half an hour the "Zélé" struggled bravely on, groaning and creaking in every timber, shivering like a thing of life from stem to stern as each fresh sea thundered aboard her. She had not a stitch of canvas flying, but she staggered along under bare poles, one moment riding high on the crest of a mighty wave, and the next wallowing in the depths with a mountainous sea as high as her very mast-tops rushing down upon her and threatening to crush her under its gigantic weight.

But heavy and cumbersome as she was, she was a splendid and seaworthy craft, and instead of being crushed beneath the weight of water, she rose on each succeeding wave—flung up to the very heavens, so it seemed to the terrified mortals that crouched and clung to her deck.

Then came a sudden lull. The wind dropped almost to a whisper; the broken cordage that a moment before had been thrashing the air hung limp and lifeless from the masts. For a few moments there was a deathly silence—a silence more awful a thousand times than the loudest bellowing of the storm.

Suddenly the darkness was dispelled; a soft red light broke from the western sky.

The sailors raised themselves up, and looked wonderingly to the west.

There the sky had opened in a long vivid streak that stretched from north to south.

In a few minutes it had grown. The light, at first rosy, was now a brilliant, glaring red, that outlined the masts and spars of the vessel as though it was in flames.

The men watched with terror-stricken eyes as the strange, unearthly light mounted higher and higher in the skies.

"Ah!" shrieked one, and his voice resounded plainly all over the deck, "it is the end of all things! The very heavens are on fire!"

And he flung himself to the deck, where he grovelled in abject terror.

Frank felt Bill pass a stout cord round his waist and lash him to the mainmast, but at the moment he took no notice of it, so absorbed was he in the glorious spectacle.

Slowly but surely the light grew and increased. It had now reached to the sky above them, and it was spreading still. A more fearsome yet more glorious sight could never be seen. The sky and sea a vivid, glaring red that made the eyes of the watchers blink with its blinding intensity.

Then suddenly it faded to a dull red, the colour of blood, and as it did so the men on the "Zélé" became conscious of a strange rustling in the air—a moaning that gained in intensity with every moment. Louder and louder grew the hideous clamour, and still the ropes hung supinely from the masts, and the sea rolled in sullen unbroken billows beneath them.

Louder and louder, until the drums of the ears threatened to burst.

The light from the sky had gone—had vanished in one brief moment—and again they were plunged into unutterable darkness. Then it seemed that the waters beneath them were being sucked away, and the great ship sank lower and lower—down, down, until it seemed that she would lay at last upon the dry bed of the ocean.

In that moment of horror several of the crew of the "Zélé" became insane through fear, and, with shrieks that were lost amidst the awful uproar, they fled across the deck, and cast themselves into the blackness.

Though really it was but a few minutes, it seemed to the occupants of the "Zélé" that hours had passed, while they sank down, down, down!

Then the sensation, which was a horrible one, changed to one that was, if anything, worse—it was that of being whirled round and round with dizzying velocity.

They knew what had happened then, and then indeed they gave themselves up for lost. The ill-fated "Zélé" had drifted into a stupendous whirlpool.

Had it been daylight they might have almost forgotten their terror in wonder of the sight that they could have beheld. But in the darkness they clung to ring-bolts, masts, or, indeed, anything that offered them support, for the "Zélé," spinning round on what might be called the walls of the whirlpool, rode upon an even keel, hence her deck sloped from starboard to port at an angle of quite fifty degrees.

And still that deafening noise continued—a noise the like of which none had ever heard before. It was one prolonged roar, never varying, never ceasing—the roar of the tortured waters, as they swept round and round in that confined space.

Their senses reeled, the blood throbbled in their heads, so that even above the awful roar of the waters they could hear the throbbing of their hearts like the noise of blows from a heavy sledge-hammer.

Their senses left them, and those who had neglected to secure themselves with ropes relaxed their holds and slipped down the declined surface of the deck into the whirling waves.

THE FOUNDERING OF THE "ZELE"—FAREWELL— A BITTER DISAPPOINTMENT—AN UNFORE- SEEN DANGER.

At last the long delayed dawn broke. It appeared first as a dim patch of blue in the rift of the heavy, lowering clouds; but little by little the clouds receded as the sun gained the ascendancy, and towards noon the heavens were aglow with warm sunlight, and scarce a cloud remained to mar the intense blue.

The sea rolled in long, heavy, unbroken billows, the panting of its passion-torn breast.

But the "Zélé"—what of her? And the "Lièvre"—where had that gallant craft gone?

The former still floated upon the waters, but of the latter there was no vestige. And the "Zélé" was not destined to float much longer. She was a sheer hulk, battered out of all semblance to her former self; her fore and mizzen masts had been carried away, and her mainmast rose but a few feet from the deck, and then ended in sharp, jagged splinters. With rudder gone, bowsprit carried away, her stout sides lacerated, and her timbers riven apart, she was a sinking wreck; and still the poor remnant of her crew lay in a state of utter insensibility, bound by their own hands to the sinking ship.

They had escaped the whirlpool but to meet another fate, for the "Zélé" rode lower and lower in the water, and still not one of them showed signs of returning consciousness.

Presently she gave a violent lurch. She was going down. No, not yet, though the end was very near.

The sudden movement dislodged some of the wreckage of the maintop, and it fell with a crash to the deck, a sharp splinter glancing off, and burying its point into the calf of Bill Woshem's leg.

The sudden pain aroused the old sailor from his stupor, and he sprang to his feet. In a moment his practised eye discerned the danger that threatened them.

With hands which trembled with nervousness, he untied the lashings that had held Frank and himself in safety.

"Rouse up! Rouse up! Rouse up!"

He shouted at the fullest extent of his lung-power, but none moved.

He aroused Frank, by roughly shaking his shoulder, and then the two rushed hastily hither and thither about the deck, awakening the stupefied sailors with vigorous kicks and blows.

Of all the ship's company, scarcely a dozen remained. Among them were three officers, the captain, the first lieutenant, and a midshipman, the rest were common seamen.

"We must get a boat launched, sir," said Bill, addressing the captain, completely forgetting in the excitement of the moment that he spoke a foreign tongue, quite unintelligible to Captain Courvoisier.

But if Bill had spoken in the purest French the captain of the "Zélé" would not have understood him, for the thunder of the whirlpool had left them all, including Bill himself, as deaf as adders.

Luckily, however, no words were necessary. The men realised that their only hope of safety lay now with the boats. The captain's gig was gone, torn from its place; the pinnace was stove in, and utterly useless. Half a dozen of the men seized upon a small cutter and hastily launched it, then flung themselves into it, and pulled away from the sinking ship for dear life.

There were but the three officers, Bill and Frank, and little Quacko, who had emerged dripping with water from below.

Captain Courvoisier himself lent a hand in launching the only remaining boat, and when it fairly floated in the heavy sea, he stood aside, as a captain should, and waved his hand towards the boat, as a mute command for them to enter.

The midshipman, with Quacko on his heels, quickly obeyed; but Bill Woshem caught Lieutenant Durand by the sleeve. He had something to say, but speech he knew was useless. So he proceeded to make signs.

First he pointed to the deck, and then held up his two hands with his fingers extended. He meant to say that he did not think the "Zélé" would founder for ten minutes.

M. Durand nodded.

Then Bill opened his capacious jaws, and pointed towards them, also making motions as though drinking from a vessel.

He then pointed to the deck again, and beckoned to M. Durand.

The lieutenant understood Bill's motions easily. He knew that the old sailor meant to say that the "Zélé" would float for ten minutes longer, and that they might make a wise use of that time by going below, and trying to secure food and drink.

Accordingly he led the way below, Bill and Frank following him. The minutes passed slowly when they were gone, and every minute found the "Zélé" lying lower and lower in the water. Presently she gave a violent shiver, and began to heel slowly over to starboard. At the same moment a long, oily billow lifted her bows high into the air, as her stern disappeared beneath the water.

The lieutenant and the two others rushed up on deck drenched to the skin, for the interior of the vessel was full of water.

But their journey had not been a fruitless one. Durand dragged a large canvas bag along, which was too heavy for him to carry. Bill staggered along under the weight of a keg, of large proportions, while Frank bore another smaller keg and a bag which evidently contained biscuit.

But it seemed as though their quest would cost them their lives, for they had barely set foot on deck when the bows of the "Zélé" were reared right up to the sky. She was now more than half submerged, and her forepart rose from the water almost perpendicularly.

Durand, Frank, and Bill ran towards the side, while Captain Courvoisier leaped into the cutter, and, taking up the oars, drove the little craft, with a few powerful strokes, towards the lieutenant and the Englishmen.

The provisions were thrown on board first, then the three men hastily scrambled in, and not a moment too soon. Bill was the last to leave the sinking ship, and as he did so he perceptibly felt the deck glide away from beneath his feet.

"Give way!" he roared at the top of his voice.

Captain Courvoisier still grasped the oars, but whether he heard and understood what Bill said was doubtful. At any rate he realised the necessity of getting away from the vicinity of the foundering vessel.

With a manful stroke of the oars, he pulled the heavily-laden little boat away just as the battered stem of the "Zélé" went down with a rush into the hungry waters.

For a moment it seemed that the cutter and its occupants would be sucked back into the vortex, for it had already begun a retrograde movement; but Bill snatched up a pair of oars, and, flinging himself on to a seat, and bringing all his strength to bear, he helped Captain Courvoisier to clear the swirling miniature whirlpool that marked the spot where the "Zélé" had sunk.

The first stroke carried them clear of the vortex, the second far out of danger.

Then Captain Courvoisier flung down his oars and, rising, he raised his battered and stained cocked hat from his head.

It was his parting salute, his farewell to the brave old vessel that he loved. Then he seated himself again, and dropped his head forward on his breast in an attitude of great melancholy.

"I've seed 'em take on like that before!" muttered Bill. "It's hard, I know; but what's the use o' crying over spilled milk?"

Frank's face brightened. He had heard distinctly what Bill had said. His deafness, which he had at first thought incurable, was only temporary, and now he could hear as well as ever.

"No; there's no good in crying," he said.

Bill looked up. "Thank goodness!" he ejaculated, "that there's someone as can hear what I've got to say. Here have I been talkin' away, and not a soul any the wiser!" He was quite oblivious to the fact that he, too, had been as deaf as his comrades, and had only as recently recovered his hearing.

Lieutenant Durand rose and seated himself beside Captain Courvoisier, and uttered a few words of sympathy.

"Let us not mourn over what has gone, mon car-itaïne!" he said. "Let us rather on our knees thank the good God that He has spared our lives."

"You are right, Durand," said Courvoisier, taking off his hat, and sinking down on his knees in the little boat.

The others followed his example, while little Quacko looked at them out of eyes wide with astonishment.

Even then, while returning thanks for their deliverance, the thought came to them that perhaps they had been saved from one death only to meet one far more terrible—the death of slow starvation and thirst. As soon as it was over they rose, eager to discover what it was they had saved from the "Zélé."

Great disappointment was felt when the heavy sack rescued by the lieutenant was found to contain flour, and, moreover, from which had been in the greater part spoiled by its contact with salt water.

"Food is good," said Bill; "but one can live without it for a long time. It is drink that the shipwrecked mariner wants most, and if he has water in plenty his lot ain't such a hard one." He slapped the large keg which he had brought lovingly as he spoke.

"There's water enough here," he said, "to quench our thirst for a week or two, if we are careful."

Lieutenant Durand cast one look at the keg, then he rose with great agitation, and grasped Bill's arm.

"Ciel!" he exclaimed. "It is a mistake! Zat ees not water! zat ees eau de vie—brandy!"

Bill groaned, and struck his forehead with his clenched fist.

"Brandy!" he gasped. "That is worse than nothing. But are you sure—sure? There may be some mistake!"

Snatching up the midshipman's dirk, which lay on the seat beside him, he went eagerly to the keg and prized the bung out; then, inserting the blade of the dirk into the cask, he laid it on his tongue.

He uttered a cry of rage and horror as the ardent spirit burnt his tongue.

It was brandy—the fiery and maddening spirit that would intensify the agony of thirst a thousandfold, and not relieve it one jot.

A hasty and anxious inspection of the smaller keg was productive of some comfort, that contained water, and the bag a few pounds of biscuit. So it came to pass that Frank's had been the only contribution of any service.

"Our only chance of life is that we may sight some ship afore that gives out," said Bill, pointing to the little keg. "As for that"—pointing to the brandy—"overboard is the best place for it! I've seen thirsting men drink brandy afore. I've seen 'em drink sea-water—yes, lad, 'twas years ago, when I was no older than you, 'twas after the wreck o' the 'Gallant.' She struck on an unmarked reef in the Pacific. We was twelve of us in a boat, with no water, nothing but a little brandy. Me and two others was all that came out of that boat alive, for them as drank sea-water went mad and committed suicide, while them that drank the brandy committed murder as well. Overboard with—"

A hasty exclamation from M. Durand caused Bill to stop and look up.

The cutter, the existence of which they had quite forgotten, was coming swiftly towards them, and one man standing up in the stern-sheets was shouting to them.

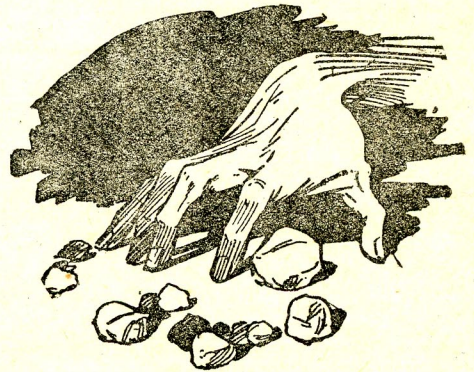
Bill could not understand what he said, but he could guess. The large keg of brandy was standing on one of the seats, and was clearly in sight. The men in the cutter were evidently demanding a share in the provisions which they imagined the others had saved.

Bill took off his coat and flung it over the little keg of water. "It ain't fair," he said. "We risked our lives for that drop o' water, and we'll risk our lives to keep it!"

(To be continued in next week's UNION JACK.)

LIFE FOR GOLD!

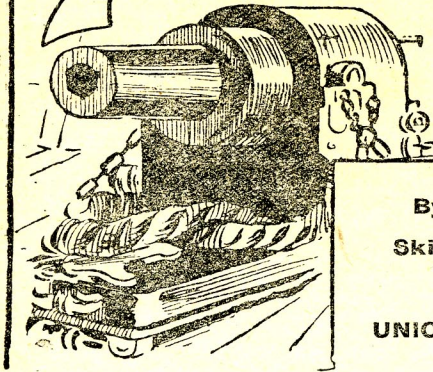
A Thrilling Klondyke Story.



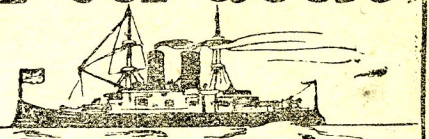
SEE NEXT FRIDAY'S

Union Jack, 1d.
2

From the Quarterdeck



By the
Skipper of
the
UNION JACK.



When will the public learn to fight shy of the many dubious advertisements inserted in various newspapers offering home employment for spare time? Although some few of these advertisements may be genuine, I have the best reason for knowing that the great majority are out and out swindles. A Coatbridge reader of the UNION JACK has written me, giving his experience with one such advertising firm, and requesting me to look into the matter. This is his story:

He saw an advertisement in a Glasgow paper offering spare time employment, whereby he would be able to make from 10s. 6d. to 25s. weekly; but each applicant for work had to enclose 1s. 2d. for a directory. Our reader nibbled at the bait, sent his 1s. 2d., and received in return a directory worth at most 2d., together with a letter stating that the firm would pay 2s. 8d. per thousand for addressed postal wrappers, the writer providing his own wrappers. Our reader computes the value of these at 1s. per thousand, and thus the handsome balance accruing to the addresser would be the noble sum of 1s. 8d. per thousand addresses. Well, our Coatbridge friend addressed a thousand of the wrappers, working ten hours thereon. The postage of the parcel to the Glasgow firm cost him 7d. He had thus laid out a total sum of 2s. 9d. to earn 2s. 8d. To make matters worse, the firm, in replying to him, made some deduction, on the ground that he had not kept the addresses in the same order as that in which they appeared in the directory. Altogether our correspondent is greatly dissatisfied, and with good cause. I should be glad to be able to help this reader by any means in my power, but the firm he refers to have been sufficiently wide awake to keep on the right side of the hedge. He has no remedy against them—no legal remedy—and I regret to say his only course is to pocket the injury, consign his 2d. directory to the fire, and resolve in future to have nothing more to do with advertisements offering home employment, wanting agents, and so on.

From the Neemuch station, in India, I have received the following very welcome letter from Bombardier F. H. Dalton, of the 36th Field Battery, Royal Artillery. It is the sort of letter that does an Editor's heart good.

"To the Editor of the UNION JACK.

"Dear Mr. Editor,—

"As a constant reader of the UNION JACK, I beg to inform you that the 'U. J.' has found a good name in the East I am a soldier, and I have been in India nearly seven years, and I have had every number sent out to me, from No. 1 up to the present date; and I find it a grand little article to pass a dull hour away, whether in the barrack-room, on the line of march, or in practice camp. I am always glad when the weekly mail arrives, and I think my comrades are, for when the letters and papers are distributed there is always about a dozen come to me with, 'After you with the UNION JACK.' And so it gets passed round the battery, and it is hard to tell how many do read it. However, it is returned to me about a week later rather the worse for wear; but it has a little more to do. I then take it to some of my little friends who live at the railway station, and I expect they pass it round from one to another; and I think I can say that the copies I receive do their fair share of work, and if every copy that was issued did the same, I am sure that the UNION JACK would be more popular than it is, and the reign of the 'penny horrible' would be very short. I am sorry that I am unable

to compete in the various prize competitions, but as I am so far away it is useless me trying for a prize, as my letters would be too late. I am hoping to arrive in England about February next, to join the Army Reserve, and when I arrive in dear old England I intend to do my utmost to further the sale of the 'U. J.'

"I wish you every success, and downfall to the 'penny bloods,' as we call them.

"Yours faithfully,

"FRANK H. DALTON."

And I wish every success to Bombardier Dalton, and all our other brave soldiers out in India, and downfall to their enemies!

Have you joined the League? If not, why not, sir? You can soon become a member, and have a member's privileges.

Fill in the coupon I give below. Put it into an envelope, together with another envelope, stamped and addressed to yourself, and the signatures of three new readers you have obtained, and I will enrol you, and send you the dainty little badge I give to all the members.

I,

of.....
hereby 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."

THE WINNER

of my Leaguers' special competition is Mr. T. H. Venn, Post Office, Bridgend, Glam., his card being far and away the neatest sent in. Ten shillings have been posted to him.

Consolation prizes go to Mr. S. A. Griffith, 132, Malmesbury Road, Bow, E.; Mr. W. D. Cersell, Trevvale House, Kingswood Road, Acton Green, Chiswick; Mr. V. Waltham, 53, Broxholme Lane, Doncaster; and Mr. T. E. Beveridge, 3, Blundell Street, Hull.

I daresay there are many stamp-collectors among the readers of the UNION JACK. Well, the Editor of the "Funny Wonder" has on hand a large quantity of foreign stamps sent in by competitors in the great Stamp-Collecting Competition. The money received for same is to be devoted to some deserving charity. This, therefore, is a good opportunity for young collectors to increase their collections, and do good at the same time. Here is a list of the packets the Editor of the "Funny Wonder" can supply:

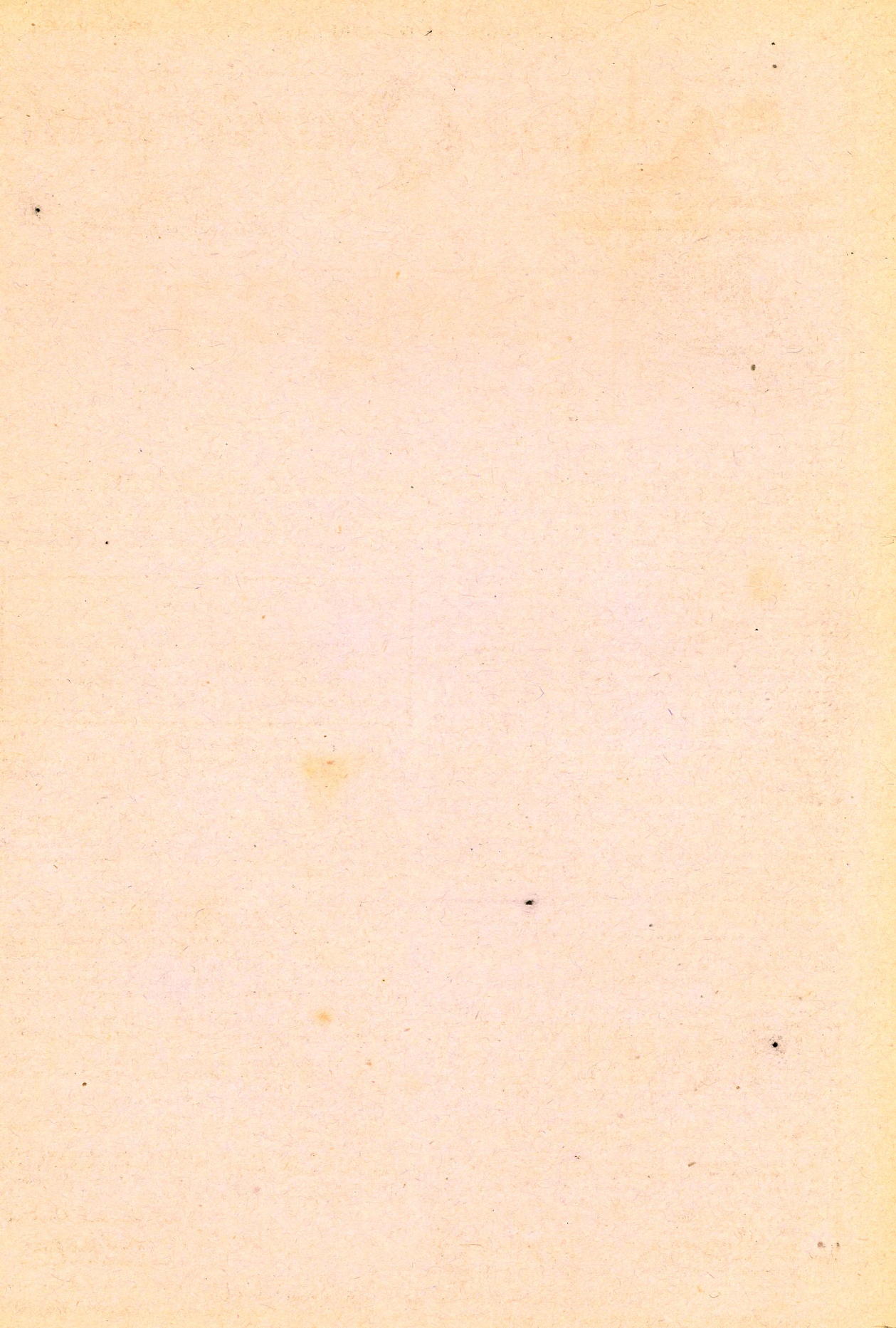
- A. Fifty foreign stamps, all different. Price, post free, 4d.
- B. Seventy-five foreign stamps, all different. Price, post free, 8d.
- C. One hundred stamps, all different. Price, post free, 1s.
- D. Five hundred stamps, British and foreign, taken as they come. Price, post free, 2s.

All orders for these packets must be accompanied by stamps or postal order for the amount mentioned, and addressed:

"Stamp Department, The 'Funny Wonder,' 123, Temple Chambers, London, E.C."

Union Jackites, who think of taking up the fascinating hobby of stamp-collecting, would find this an excellent opportunity for "making a start." The Editor of the "Wonder" will despatch all packets ordered per return of post.

*Yours sincerely,
The Skipper*





NOTICE.



THE BRITISH PUBLIC never read Advertisements unless there is something very ridiculous about them to attract attention. It is often a worrying problem to the compilers of Advertisements to find some New Scheme to ensnare the public, but upon this occasion the Printers have come to our rescue; and although this page of type was "set up" on the day after their annual "beano," they wish it to be distinctly understood that the mistakes were made intentionally, otherwise they fear people may draw wrong conclusions.

This is to call your attention to "PLUCK," a Paper published every Saturday, at the low price of One Halfpenny.

Next Saturday's issue contains a thrilling story, entitled

"THE MYSTERY OF A MILLION,"

18,000 words long; together with a splendid football competition; our "Orfis Boy's" column; a fine serial story; an interesting and instructive article on "Our Citizen Army;" some humorous pictures by the best comic artists; and many other new and original features.