THE UNION JACK

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A COMPLETE BOOK.

FRIENDSHIP or FORTUNE

Newton laid the corner of the box bare, and the next moment he had dragged it out of the sand.

PUBLISHED EVERY FRIDAY. No. 219.

FRIENDSHIP OR FORTUNE.

By LIEUT. LEFÈVRE.

CHAPTER 1.

BECALMED—GREY—THE LAST DROP—BIG TOM SETTLES WITH BENTON—GREY DOUBTS HIMSELF.

The sun rose higher and higher in the copper sky, and the sea threw back the brightness till the glare blinded the eyes. Beneath the schooner lay her image reflected in the glassy water, even to the last rope. On the deck the pitch bubbled and oozed out from the seams, and the smell of the boiling tar was overpowering. Forward, under the straggling shadow of the foremast, lay Big Tom the Fijian. Even he, who was of the tribe Na Ivilankata—who were supposed to be impervious to the effects of fire—seemed overcome, and, suffering severely from the heat that had laid his messmates low. He had not the strength or inclination even to extract music from his ever-faithful companion the Jews'-harp, which he wore slung about his neck.

The rest of the crew lay aft, panting for breath and cursing the relentless sun, which baked the blood in their bodies and brought strange visions—dancing visions, spotted with blood—before their eyes.

Charles Grey came up on the deck, holding on by the polished brass rail that scorched and seared into his flesh. He was little more than twenty, though his sufferings made him look a hundred. The flesh was gone from his bones, and the skin hung like loose and shrivelled parchment to his face. He tottered as he walked, and as he approached the men lying aft they left off cursing the sun to hurl their imprecations at him.

"Fools! is it my fault?" he asked contemptuously. "Do you think that I do not suffer too?"

"Ay, I have got!" growled one of the men. "Fetch out the store that ye have hidden away below, or ——" And he lifted himself on his elbow and glared at the young man.

"I have hidden away nothing. There is only a little water left, scarcely a pint, and that is wanted for one whose needs are greater than ours!" replied Grey, in a gentler tone of voice.

"What is the use of water to a dying man? Why doesn't he die? We are tired of his shouts and howls, and the sooner they are ended the better we shall like it!"

The speaker scrambled to his feet. He was a tall, gaunt man, and his clothes that once fitted him hung on his back in folds and creases.

"What shall it be, mates?" he said, looking down at the other ten. "Shall the last drop of water go down the throat of a man who will be dead in a few hours, or shall we divide it between us? We want it more than he does, for he is mad, and doesn't suffer now."

Several of the men growled their approval, and, following the example of their leader, they struggled to their feet.

"What are you going to do?" asked Grey calmly, though his twitching lips betrayed his inward emotion.

"Take what is our own!" replied the man defiantly. "When we signed on for this ship, the captain agreed to give us food and drink, and now it is refused us!"

"Because there is none."

"That is a lie! You said that there was a pint of water."

"What is that among eleven?"

"It will cool our mouths for a few moments, and that is all we want. But come, mates, who's following me to the cabin?"

Four of those who had risen took a step forward, but hung back the next moment, irresolute as Grey planted himself in their way.

"Not a step further shall you go!" he said, and as he spoke they saw that the barrel of a revolver gleamed like a streak of fire in his hand.

"Curse you!" shouted Benton, the tall sailor. "You sha'n't frighten us with that. Do you think that life is so pleasant that we are afraid of risking it?"

He stooped suddenly as he spoke, and made a rush at Grey, who, unprepared, was thrown violently to his back, and the next instant the revolver was whirling through the air and fell with a splash into the sea, breaking up the reflected image of the schooner into a thousand pieces.

"Lay there, and may the sun shrivel your carcase!" said Benton, kicking the prostrate man with his heavy sea-boots.

The blow fell on Grey's temple, and for him the sun-scorched scene faded away into darkness. The five then went below, and presently, from below deck, there rose the sound of voices in anger, then the sound of blows—curses, more blows, and groans.

Those who were left on deck took no notice. They felt no interest in the fact that just beneath them five of their shipmates were shedding each other's blood and fighting over that one precious drop of water. One of them reached out his hand and dragged Grey into the shadow cast by the sail, under which they lay. Up to now they had liked him. It was only when the calm fell, and the water began to run short, that he had made himself hateful to them, by the niggardly way in which he had served out the scanty store. It was the only fault they had to find with him. They knew that he had apportioned out the same quantity—or even less—to himself as he had to them; but to the captain, who lay raving in delirium, he had given a treble share, and that increased their hatred of his injustice. Still, it was a pity to let him lay there in the burning sun. If he died, Benton would rule them all, and they had still enough sense left to see that Grey was easier to bear with than the second mate.

One of them fastened an old shirt to a strand of rope and cast it over the side. Then, drawing up the saturated rag, he placed it on Grey's temples.

From the forecastle came the sound of dismal yells and curses. They had forgotten Benton.

In next Friday's "UNION JACK." "THE DAGGER OF DUNLOF"

Presently a slight shiver passed over the attenuated frame of the mate of the "Amaranth," and he opened his eyes. Big Tom was bending over him, watching him anxiously. Big Tom was a grateful animal, and he could not forget that Grey had once saved him from a shark in Kingston Harbour.

"Better now?" he asked, as he laid the freshly-wetted rag on Grey's throbbing head.

"Yes, better now. What has happened? What are you laughing at?"

"Didn't mean to laugh, sir! I was thinking that it was funny that they should go to steal the captain's drink, and then kill each other about it!"

"The captain's drink? Ah! I remember. Tom, for mercy's sake, help me up! I must go, or they will do harm!"

"I think it is done already, sir!" said Tom.

He helped Grey up, and the two struggled below.

The first thing that they saw was one of the men leaning against the door of the captain's cabin. He was groaning terribly, and had his hands pressed to his side, and through his fingers they could see the thick blood slowly oozing.

Grey threw open the door and reeled in, nearly stumbling over two bodies that lay on the floor. A third figure was crouching in a corner, and his face was covered with blood.

In the centre of the cabin stood Benton. He had a jar in his hand, from which he was trying to extract the cork; but as Grey and Tom entered he put down the jar, and, seizing a blood-stained knife that lay upon the table, he turned on them savagely.

"You villain!" gasped Grey. "What have you done?"

The man stood staring at him stupidly for a moment; then, uttering a shout of rage, he rushed forward with the knife upraised in his hand to strike.

But Tom had divined his murderous intention, and as Benton sprang forward a heavy stone jar went whizzing through the air, and, striking him full on the temple, sent him to the deck.

Grey staggered forward, stepping over the body of Benton, and made for an alcove that was screened off from the rest of the room by a thin net curtain. He dragged the curtain aside with feverish haste, and then stood still, while a sob of relief rose in his throat and nearly choked him.

Behind the curtain was a bunk, on which lay the wasted form of a man. His eyes were closed, and his chest was rising and falling with regular respiration. He was asleep—peacefully and calmly—in spite of the terrible noise that had been going on around him.

James Vernon, the captain of the "Amaranth," who lay there wasted by fever, was still a young man, having yet to see his twenty-fifth year. In health, he had been an athlete—tall, and firmly knit. Even now, disfigured by disease as he was, his face had not been robbed of all its beauty, and the mouth that had been distorted by pain still showed the kindly curves beneath the fair moustache.

Grey stood looking at him for a few moments in silence, while Tom remained in the centre of the cabin, making a melancholy attempt at a tune on his beloved Jews'-harp.

Then suddenly Grey stooped and drew out from beneath the bunk a heavy wooden box bound with iron. He only pulled it out a few inches, for it was heavy, and his strength was gone. For a moment he glanced at it lovingly, and then pushed it back with his foot.

"If Vernon dies," he thought, "it will be all mine—all. It would make a rich man of me!" For one instant the thought brought a burning flush to his cheek, then he shuddered. "No, old friend," he muttered, "I would not wish you harm for all the gold in Christendom. May I be forgiven the thought. Is this my gratitude to you—you who have been my friend and protector—to think of the gain to me that your death would mean?"

He bent his head in shame for a moment, and when he looked up again the eyes of the man in the bunk were open and fixed on him.

"Charlie, old chum!" They were the first rational words that Vernon had spoken for more than a week, and at the sound of the familiar voice Grey dropped on his knees and took Vernon's hand in his.

"I have been awfully queer, haven't I?" Vernon continued, as he gazed at his thin, wasted hands. "And I mustn't shout now, Charlie, for I am not out of the wood, and I don't think that I ever shall be. There is no motion on the ship?"

"We are still becalmed!" said Grey with a groan.

"It was yesterday—no, the day before that the calm fell?"

"This is the ninth day of the calm!" said Grey in a low, husky voice. "You have been very ill, Vernon, and for you there has been no reckoning of the days."

"The ninth day!" muttered Vernon. "Is it possible? And the poor fellows, how have they borne up against it?"

Grey shuddered, and drew the curtains behind him closer together.

"They are—are all right!" he said with an effort.

"It is a mercy to think that there were plenty of provisions and water—especially water. Why don't you speak, Charlie? There is plenty of water?"

"Yes—yes, plenty of water!" replied Grey.

He did not tell how on the second day of the calm they had made the terrible discovery that the intense heat in the hold had caused the casks containing the precious liquid to shrink and warp, and that by far the greater part of their not too plentiful supply had leaked away into the bilge.

"Give me a drink, old fellow?" said Vernon.

Grey went out into the cabin and took the jar, for the contents of which Benton, lying there insensible, had done murder. He prized out the cork and poured some of the water into a mug, then carefully recorked the rest, pretending not to see the yearning glance that Tom cast towards it.

The poor fellow sighed as he saw the cork replaced, and struck a more than usually melancholy note on his weird instrument.

Vernon tried to raise himself up to drink, but he had not the strength.

"I sha'n't last much longer!" he said, with a groan at his own helplessness. "And then, when I am gone, it will be all yours—all our joint earnings and savings. The schooner will be——"

"Don't talk like that!" said Grey, with a sharp note of pain in his voice, for it seemed horrible to him to hear his friend repeating aloud the very thoughts that had entered his own brain a few minutes before. "You will get well again—you must get well again. And as for the money, I want none of it!"

"I know that you would sooner see it all go to the bottom of the sea rather than it should come between our friendship!" said Vernon, gazing at the younger man affectionately.

"Ten thousand times rather!" echoed Grey. And at that moment he honestly meant what he said.

CHAPTER 2.

THE RAIN-STORM—THE "AMARANTH" SPRINGS A LEAK—TO THE BOATS—GREY'S CHOICE.

It was towards sunset that Grey came on deck again, and saw a sight that brought the blood coursing to his cheeks. Far away to the eastward a misty haze had risen in the sky—none but the practised eye of the sailor would have noticed it: but already the eyes of all on deck were fixed on it with eager longing and anticipation. Half an hour passed by, and the purple haze had resolved into a cloud no bigger than a man's hand. Still not a breath of air stirred in the cordage, or rippled the oily sea; the silence and stillness seemed even more oppressive than before.

Grey looked aloft, and saw that for the safety of the ship it would be well to furl the topsail. It was on his lips to order the men to lay aloft for the duty, but he stopped and gazed in pity on their weakened frames. He climbed into the rigging himself, followed the next instant by Big Tom, who divined his intention, and together the two took in the sail, and made all snug and trim. When they descended to the deck again, the light of the sun had grown feeble, and there was a strange rustling sound in the air like the rustling of the wind among the trees.

The tiny cloud had grown until it overshadowed all the sky with a dense black pall; then the sun went down in a mass of lurid flame, and in an instant the sea was swallowed up by the darkness.

"Tom, take the helm," said Grey, in the lowest of whispers; but the sound of his voice seemed to echo and re-echo throughout the entire ship, and a strange fear came into the hearts of the men.

Big Tom groped his way aft through the darkness.

Pat—pat—pat—pat!

What was that? It sounded like small stones being flung to the deck. Great hot drops of rain were falling. Water at last: and the poor fellows flung themselves back downwards on to the deck, and lay with their parched mouths open eager for the heaven-sent supply of water to quench their raging thirst.

Faster and faster fell the rain; the decks were running with water as though they had shipped a heavy sea, but the water was not salt. It fell, too, with a hissing, seething sound into the silent sea, and broke the placid oily surface into tiny flakes of foam. Still not a breath of wind stirred, though the rain had cooled the air perceptibly, and the men arose from the flooded deck invigorated and refreshed. They were but six, with the exception of Grey and Big Tom, the other five, two were dead, two were dying, and Benton had recovered from the blow he had received, was lying hand and foot in the forecastle, from which there presently came the sound of frantic curses and shouts for water, when the wretch was sufficiently recovered to recognise the sound of the falling rain.

feelings. "It was my fault more than yours. You did not know what you were doing, and I should have looked after the box better!"

So the days passed on, and Vernon's strength returned to him slowly but surely. Still they lingered on the island, for the boat was still in a too dangerous state for them to venture to sea in her. But the inactivity could not last for much longer, for as day followed day they began to notice that their store of provisions sensibly decreased. Water they had in plenty, for they had long ago thrown away the rain-water and had refilled their barrels from the fresh, cool spring, but the island could afford them no food, so barren and sterile was it, and they had scarcely enough left to last them another week or so. So they set to work with a will on the boat, Grey harder than any, for in hard work he tried to forget the sense of guilt that weighed on his spirits and crushed all the old life and gaiety out of him. Little by little the work progressed, but the men were not clever carpenters, and their tools were of the fewest and most primitive description. Then it was found necessary to reduce the daily supply of food, and the men, who had been cheerful enough at first, now began to get morose and surly. The songs with which they had beguiled their working hours away were no more heard, but they worked on steadily, though without pleasure or pride in the work that they were doing. Grey they began to look upon with suspicion and dislike. He had never been the same since Big Tom's death. Why had he evinced such deadly fear when the body was washed up at his feet? Then, again, how was it that the knife that the dead man had held in his hand was Grey's property? For Newton had remembered it some time afterwards, when Tom's knife was found among the rubbish in the bottom of the boat.

Grey saw their distrust of him, and his heart was filled with hatred towards them. Since the night that he had buried the box in the sand beneath the ivi tree he had been a changed man. Not once had a smile been seen to cross his lips. A deep gloom was at his heart, and it was reflected in his face. The men avoided him whenever it was possible, and when circumstances did bring them together they were careful never to address a word to him. None spoke to him but Vernon. The captain of the ill-fated "Amaranth" attributed the change in his friend to the recent loss they had both sustained; and he inwardly wondered that Grey should take the loss of the money so to heart, while he who had lost twice the sum had never for a moment allowed the blow to prostrate him.

"Show me the place where poor Tom ended his life," said Vernon to Newton one evening when the day's work was ended.

Newton rose to comply, but as he did so Grey also sprang to his feet, his eyes blazing with excitement.

"You shall not go there!" he shouted hoarsely, planting his body in their path.

"But why not?" asked Vernon, much surprised.

Grey hung his head, and made no reply. Now that the excitement of the moment had passed away, he cursed his folly for having betrayed himself.

Newton and Vernon went to the spot, followed by Grey, who felt that he could not let them go there alone. They stood beneath the ivi tree, while Newton went down on his knees to search for the dark stain of blood that he knew was on the sand.

"Come away!" urged Grey. "It is horrible this craving after loathsome relics! Why do you want to see the poor fellow's blood-marks?"

"I do not!" said Vernon. "Tell me"—and he suddenly turned on Grey—"you who knew Tom better than any of us—do you not know, can you not guess at, the reason that prompted him to take his life?"

"I? I? How should I know?" cried Grey, startled.

"You were kind to him, and he was fond of you. That is why I thought that he might have confided in you."

Newton could not find what he was searching for, so he rose to his feet and walked towards them. As he did so, his foot caught against something, and he uttered a cry of pain, for he had no boots on.

Something hard, buried a few inches under the sand, was the cause; and in a moment he was down on his knees shovelling the sand away with his fingers.

"What are you doing?" shouted Grey, springing forward.

But it was too late, for already Newton had laid the corner of the box bare, and the next moment he had dragged it completely out, and it lay in the sand at their feet.

With a shrill cry of surprise Vernon tottered forward and flung himself down on his knees beside the box.

"How, in the name of all that is wonderful, did this come here?" he cried.

Grey staggered to the ivi tree, and leaned against it for support. Twice he essayed to speak, but each time the words refused to form themselves.

"I see it—I see it all now!" cried Vernon, turning to Grey. "Charlie, old fellow! Come, be yourself! All the mystery is cleared up, and we have our savings back again!"

"I don't understand!" gasped Grey.

"It was Tom who stole the box and hid it here. He was led away, perhaps, by the thought of the treasure that it contained; but when the deed was done he felt remorse for it, and so killed himself!"

"That's about it, sir!" said Newton. "It was Tom who helped Mr. Grey in with the box, and he seemingly knew all about it."

"Yes, that was it—that must have been it!" said Grey. And his voice sounded so sharp and hard that it startled even himself. In his heart he was thinking how evil a part he had played in the little tragedy. He who had robbed Big Tom of his life, was now stealing from him his reputation.

"The box has never been opened," said Vernon, "for I have the key here!"

He put his hand to his throat and pulled up the cord from which the key was suspended, and he fitted the key in the lock, but it would not turn—in spite of all his efforts it would not turn either way. He took the key out and looked at it, and then, with a face as white as death, he turned to Grey.

"This is not the key! It is the same size, and looks the same, but it is not. Someone has changed it for this!"

"But who? Who?" shouted Grey. "You do not accuse me?"

"You? Why should I accuse you?" said Vernon sharply. And as he spoke, the words of the old French proverb recurred to him—"He who excuses, accuses!"

But the key was changed beyond all doubt, and that which Vernon held in his hand was useless so far as the box was concerned.

"Go and bring a hammer and an iron bar, but do not tell the others; there is no necessity for them to know!" said Vernon to Newton.

The man hurried off, leaving the two friends alone.

"Why do you say—why do you suggest that I should accuse you of taking the key, Charlie? Do you not know that I would trust you as I would myself?"

"Then why do you look at me in that cursedly suspicious manner? Why do you turn to me when you think that the box has been tampered with?"

"Not to accuse you, but to ask your help and advice," said Vernon quietly.

"It is a lie! You suspect me of dishonesty. You have always mistrusted me. After all the weary, stifling days that I nursed you while you lay ill on the "Amaranth," what were the first words that you said to me—'If I die, then all the treasure will be yours.' Do you not think that if I had valued the treasure more than I did your life that I would not have found some easy means of encompassing your death? No, you grudge me the paltry share that in a moment of generosity foreign to you you promised me. But I do not want the share; I will never touch it. There is a curse on that gold, Harry Vernon; and one day the curse will come home to you as it has to me!"

Vernon listened to the unjust words with a blanched face. What was this terrible change that had come over free, frank-hearted Charlie Grey?

"You are excited, and you hardly know what you are saying," he said quietly. "In a little while, when you come to your senses, Charlie, you will be sorry, and then you will ask my forgiveness. Ay, and you shall have it then. If what you say is true—if this gold is accursed, and it comes between our friendship—I would wish that it had never been discovered lying here beneath the sand. Rather than that it should come between us, I will have it thrown into the sea. I——"

"You need say no more. Do you think that I am likely to believe that you value me more than you do that——"

Vernon rose to his feet.

"Believe it or not—but it is true. I value your friendship more than I value that gold; and I would keep it rather than the other!"

"Tell me no more lies, for I will not believe them. When you thought the gold was gone, you turned on me with suspicion. Is that your boasted friendship for me?"

"You are mad and unjust. You do not know what you are saying!"

Grey took a step forward, and seized Vernon by the wrist.

"Do you know," he snarled, "that I hate you—hate you—and I could kill you, you pitiful cur?"

Vernon did not move, but stood rooted to the ground with horror. Never in all his life had he seen such fiendish hatred depicted on a human creature's face as he saw then upon the face of his bosom friend.

"Grey—Charles Grey, what are you saying?" he gasped.

The next moment he received a blow in the mouth from Grey's fist, and he staggered back and stumbled to his knees

beside the box just as Newton returned with the tools for which he had been sent.

Vernon slowly rose, but did not turn his face once in the direction of the man who had so insulted him. He wiped the blood furtively from his mouth, lest Newton should see it and wonder at its presence.

"Break it open!" he said, in a low, strained voice.

The man went down on his knees, and fitted the end of the cold chisel that he had brought into the aperture between the lid and the lock. A couple of smart blows with the heavy hammer were enough to snap the lock.

"Open it!" said Vernon.

Both he and Grey drew nearer to look, though they knew well enough what they should see—a canvas covering, and beneath it a solid heap of guttering dust. Yes, the canvas was there, and Newton, looking inquiringly up at Vernon, dragged it aside.

Why was it that Vernon sprang forward with an inarticulate cry of surprise and horror?—the box contained no gold, only pile upon pile of large round stones, the same that had been used to ballast the schooner on her return voyage.

Grey rushed forward and snatched one of the stones up, then while he held it high above his head he gave utterance to yell upon yell of wild laughter, that went echoing away among the tall trees.

Newton sprang to his feet with a shout. "Mind, the man is mad!" And, with quick grasp, he dragged Vernon aside just as Grey hurled the heavy stone at his head.

The stone whizzed harmlessly passed, and buried itself among the vine leaves. Then with a cry, in which rage, terror, and defiance seemed strangely mingled, Grey sprang by them and dashed into the gloom of the trees.

CHAPTER 6.

THE DEPARTURE — A TERRIBLE FINDING — SAUNDERS—A STORY OF HORROR.

Grey was no more seen that night; and when the morning came, and the boat was launched in readiness for their departure, the others would have put off without him had it not been for Vernon, who insisted that a search should be made.

At last the missing man was found on the shore at the further side of the island. He was lying within a few feet of the water, and his clothes were saturated. At first they thought he was dead, that he had cast himself into the sea and been drowned, and that the waves had returned him to land once more, for his face was ghastly, and his long hair was dripping with sea water.

But life was not extinct, and they picked him up and carried him to the boat, and then pushed off from the shore.

What had happened to Grey they could not guess. That he had been in the water they could see, and he also appeared to have sustained a severe blow on the head. An hour after they had left the island behind them he opened his eyes, and looked about him in wonder. He did not seem to realise where he was, nor recognise the men, or even Vernon. Something had snapped the chain of memory and the past, and all that was of the past was blotted out from his mind.

He lay still in the bottom of the boat gazing intently at the men as they attended to the sail. Their actions seemed to amuse him, for more than once a faint smile curved his lips. Twice Vernon called to him by name, but he took no notice. He seemed to have forgotten his very name. When they offered him food he nodded his head, and eat the provisions that were given to him greedily.

So for several hours they sailed on, Vernon steering their course in the direction of Levuka, the nearest port where they could hope to find a vessel to carry them back to Australia or America. It little mattered which to Vernon now that the money was gone.

Towards noon they sighted another small island, of much the same description as the one from which they had set sail. They were passing to windward of it, when Newton suddenly called Vernon's attention to the fact that smoke was rising above the trees towards the centre of the island.

"Natives," said Vernon, "and it is as well that we are at a safe distance."

He took up his glass, which Grey had thoughtfully placed in the boat when they put off from the "Amaranth," and scrutinised the island; then he uttered an exclamation of surprise, and handed the glass to Newton.

"Tell me what you make of that boat hauled up on to the foreshore? Is it a native canoe or——"

"No!" cried Newton excitedly, "it's the other boat from the 'Amaranth,' the one Saunders and Cummings took in Benton, who had been left on the 'Amaranth.'"

Now that they were sure that their missing comrades were on the island the course of the boat was changed, and she was headed straight for the spot where the other boat was hauled up on the shore.

Benton discharged his weapon. With a loud scream Grey tottered a few steps forward, then fell to the ground.

Still, although they were rapidly nearing the island, there was no sign of any living being, and except for the smoke which continued to ascend, it would appear as if the island was deserted.

They shouted, but no notice was taken of their cries, so they desisted; and, bending to their oars, they ran the boat well up on to the shore and sprang out. The first object that attracted their attention was the boat, which seemed to have been subjected to a good deal of rough usage. Her sides were blistered and cracked, and here and there the gunwale was smashed in as though with a heavy blow from a large stone. Newton was the first to reach the boat, and as he looked in he started back with a shout of horror. The others came crowding up to see what it was.

In the bottom of the boat, in a crouching attitude, was the body of a man, who, judging from the awful condition he was in, must have been dead for a long time. His attitude was that of a man who had crouched to avoid a blow. His hands and arms were raised to shield his face, and his skull was smashed open, so that his features were unrecognisable. It was a gruesome and ghastly spectacle, and Vernon when he saw it, turned sick at heart.

"Murder!" muttered Newton, and at the sound of the terrible word the others looked at each other in awe.

"It is well, before we proceed further, to be sure that we are in a condition to meet an attack," said Vernon. He took a revolver out of his belt, and examined it to make sure that it was in order, while Newton did the same. The others were

box could not remain where it was; it was too near the sea, and he would have to seize an opportunity when the rest were asleep to carry it further inland and re-bury it.

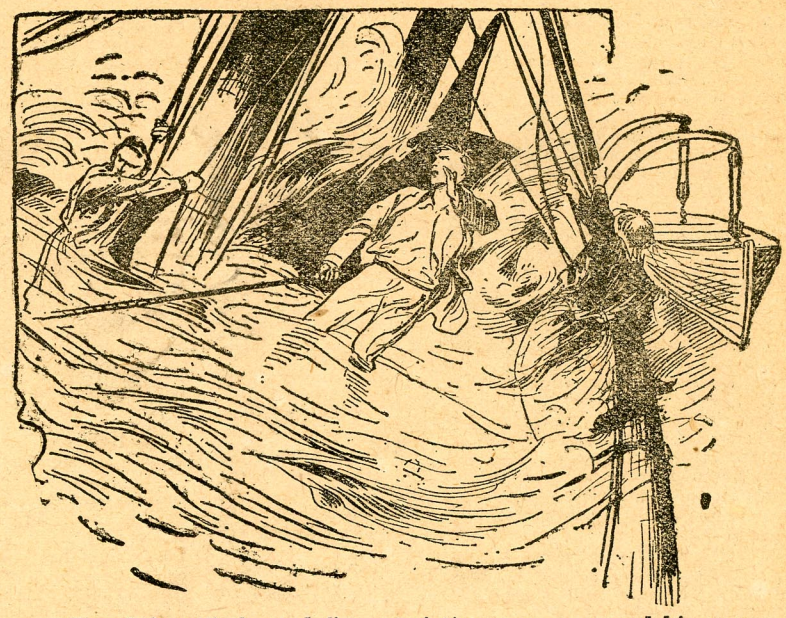
Seeing that Grey was preoccupied with his thoughts, Big Tom took over the superintendence of affairs. The provisions were carried further inland, and the boat was hauled up high and dry; and they then examined her to find out the extent of the damage that she had suffered.

According to Tom's notion, they were on one of the Lau Islands—those that formed the eastern group of the Fiji Islands.

There were many hundreds of them, many of them being too small and insignificant to be marked on the map. Some of the larger islands were inhabited by some of the fiercer tribes of Fiji islanders, who would have had small scruple in slaying the white men, and dragging their bodies off in triumph to the ovens, where they would be baked, and afterwards eaten, for cannibalism was still rife among the more savage tribes.

Fortunately, however, there was no sign of other inhabitants on this particular island.

The best part of the day had been consumed by the unloading operations, and now the men were gathered together under the ivi-tree, where they had lain Vernon earlier in the day. Vernon seemed to be somewhat easier. They had found an abundant spring of fresh water in the very centre of the island, and with the water from it, which was cool and refreshing, they continually bathed the sufferer's head.



"Stand firm!" shouted Grey, twisting a rope around his own body as he spoke.

So as night drew on Vernon began to show every sign of recovery, though he still remained unconscious of his surroundings. Grey had become strangely morose and irritable. He sat by Vernon's side, watching the slow recovery with lowering brows and a bitter frown on his face.

"He is getting well—he will live to claim his share of the treasure, his share which is the larger, and I—— Oh, ungrateful wretch that I am, but for him there would be no treasure to share! I was friendless, and he was my friend. I was hungry, and he fed me—and now—and now I would repay his kindness by robbing him of his all. And yet but for me the treasure would be—where everybody thinks it is—at the bottom of the sea. I saved it from the sinking ship at the risk of my life—surely I have a right to more than a paltry third share. If we were to share and share alike I would not hesitate; but he will take the lion's share, and I but a paltry third. There is ten thousand pounds' worth of dust in that box—man may do much with ten thousand—but perhaps he will not get well after all—perhaps he will die—— Oh, how I hate myself for my ingratitude; but the temptation is strong—terribly, awfully strong!"

He rose and walked away into the twilight, his face as pale as death, and his eyes shining brightly.

"He feels the loss of that there money more'n we thought he did," remarked Jackson, one of the seamen.

"Ay, it must be terrible hard to think that it's perhaps one's only chance in life that has slipped overboard in the night," said Newton.

"I don't think that it is for the money that he is so sad," said Big Tom, in his quaint, precise English, "it is to see the captain lying here so ill that makes him foolish with grief."

"Well, leave him alone. He has gone down to the sea. A man is always best left alone when he is upset in his mind.

CHAPTER 4.

THE TREASURE RE-BURIED—THE MURDER—THE LIE—A BURIAL AT SEA.

Grey had retraced his steps to the place where he had buried the box, and as soon as he had made sure that he had not been followed, he set to work throwing the sand that had covered it aside with his hands. Presently he had unearthed the box, and he stood looking at it for a few minutes as it lay in the moonlight.

Was it a fair exchange—honour, self-respect, friendship, all to be parted with in exchange for the contents of the box that lay at his feet. He stooped down and tried the lid. It was locked, and the key he knew hung from a chain around Vernon's neck.

Fool! why had he not possessed himself of the key? Well, it did not much matter. He knew what the box contained to the last ounce, and when the time came it would be easy enough to break it open.

He stooped, and with a great effort raised the box on to his shoulder, and then set off across the sand towards the centre of the island, but making a detour so that he should come some way at the back of the encampment.

At last he halted at a place that he thought would suit the purpose he had in mind. Here the ground was covered with a thick trailing vine, which almost hid the sandy soil beneath. At the foot of a giant ivi-tree he set down the box, and commenced to carefully lift the trailing vine aside, taking care to damage it no more than he possibly could.

In this manner he succeeded at last in laying about six square feet of ground bare. The soil was loose and sandy like all the rest on the island, and he had soon scooped out a hole with his hands large enough to take the box. At last it was buried for the second time, and the vine was drawn back to its old position so that it was impossible to see that it had ever been disturbed.

Then Grey took out his knife, and made a blaze on the trunk of the tree so that he should know it again when the time came for him to unearth the treasure.

"Master—sir, the——"

Grey sprang round and faced Big Tom, who had approached over the carpet of vine unheard.

"What do you mean by creeping on me and spying on my actions?" he demanded passionately, still clenching the knife tightly in his right hand.

Big Tom drew himself up. Although only a simple islander, he objected to the epithet of spy, and he would not submit to the insult meekly.

"If I knew that you were doing the thing of which you feel shame I would not have come into your presence!" he said proudly.

Grey's whole form quivered and trembled with rage.

"What do you mean, you cursed savage?" he shouted. "What is the thing that I have done for which I feel shame? Speak!—curse you! speak—and say what you mean and what you know?"

In his excitement he had raised the knife, but without any intention of striking the man before him. But Tom saw the glittering weapon, and he started back and raised his hand to protect his face. The movement was misunderstood by Grey, who thought that the man was going to strike him. His blood was boiling with passion, and he sprang forward, the knife-blade glittering in the cold moonlight. A heavy blow, a low cry, and Tom sank down at the feet of the madman, his red blood gushing out from a deep gash in the neck.

The sight of the blood seemed to clear away the mist from Grey's eyes. He sprang forward, and flung himself down by Tom's side.

"What have I done?" he groaned. "Oh, I am mad! Tom—Tom, was it I who struck you down, Tom, old friend, Tom, speak?"

"You were foolish with rage; you were not in your senses;

it was not your fault, master!" groaned Tom. "Give me the knife that struck me——" He held out his hand for it—the shaking hand that was soon to be cold and stiff in death.

"See," he said, "I will hold the knife in my hand, and when they find me they will say: 'See, Big Tom has taken his life.' And that will be best for you, so they will bury me in the sand, and that will be all."

Grey buried his face in his hands and sobbed silently.

"It was not to see the thing that you were doing that I came," said Tom, "it was to tell you that the captain was in his senses and asking for you."

Grey did not reply. He knew now that it was the sense of his own guilt that had made him suspicious of Tom.

"Let me call for help!" he said hoarsely.

But Tom shook his head.

"No man can bring me help. I shall die, and it will be well, for I will have the knife in my hand. And they will say Big Tom was foolish. It is a pity, for none know how to mend the boat so well as I."

His head sank back, and for a few minutes he uttered no sound.

Then he started up into a sitting posture, with his hand up as though to enjoin silence.

"Hush!" he whispered, "you will promise that this thing shall always be a secret between us? You will return to the camp by another path, and when they find me you shall not say 'It was I who did this thing!' Promise?—promise?"

"I will promise, but my punishment will be with me always!" said Grey, in a broken voice.

"Then it is well." Tom lay back and closed his eyes, and when Grey bent over him a moment later he saw that the poor fellow had ceased to breathe.

"The brand of Cain is on me!" he said hoarsely, as he rose to his feet and staggered away. "The blood of the innocent is on my hands. Oh, how shall I ever face my fellow-men again?"

He reeled away by the path that he had come until he reached the sea. Here he threw himself on the wet sand, and gave way to the passionate grief and remorse that racked his heart, and here, when the first flush of dawn tinged the sky, they found him.

"'Tis a queer place to sleep," said Newton, stooping and touching his shoulder. Grey raised his haggard face.

"Yes, but it was cool here on the wet sand, and my head burned with fever. I am better now, and I will come with you."

He rose, and, leaning heavily on Newton, allowed himself to be led towards the encampment under the tree.

"We sent Big Tom to look for you, but he did not come back. Did he find you down there by the sea?"

"No—I have not seen him!" said Grey, trembling with fear as the lie passed his lips.

"It is queer," muttered Newton. "We must go and look for him."

Vernon was lying with wide-open eyes as Grey was brought into the camp, and a slight flush of pleasure coloured his pale cheek for an instant at the sight of his friend.

"Charlie, thank Heaven that you are safe!" he said, lifting his hand with an effort.

Grey grasped the hand between his own burning palms.

"And—and——" Vernon stammered with nervousness, and looked at Grey with eager eyes. "The iron-bound box—where have you put it, Charlie?"

The box! A thrill of horror passed through Grey, for he remembered that the lifeless form of Big Tom was lying on the very spot where the box was buried. What could he say? The box and its contents had no temptation for him now. He would have given up the treasure readily enough, but how could he do so? To tell where it was hidden would expose him to the suspicion of having killed Tom. No, he could not tell Vernon now. Later on he would make a clean breast of it all.

"Why do you not speak?" said Vernon, with painful eagerness.

"Because I do not know what to say," said Grey, bending his head.

"Surely—surely you did not leave it behind?" cried Vernon.

"No, I risked my life for it at the last moment, and it was put into the boat; but during the night in your delirium you seized it and threw it into the sea."

Vernon sank back without a word, his face ghastly, and his lips twitching nervously. "I did that?" he muttered, after a pause. "Oh, why was it not my own miserable body that I threw overboard? Charlie, can you ever forgive me? Old chum, you are ruined, and it is through me!" He stretched out his hand appealingly, and Grey took it. He had never thought of the matter in that light.

But at that moment the embarrassed silence was broken by a loud shout that came from the neighbourhood of the bush at the back of the encampment. Grey started. He knew well enough what that shout meant—it meant that poor Tom's body had been discovered.

A few minutes later Newton came bursting through the bushes with a white-scared face.

"We've found him!" he gasped, flinging himself down on to the earth. "What was in his mind to make him do it, only he knows."

"What are you talking about?" said Vernon peevishly.

"Big Tom, we've found him dead—killed hisself! What they call susanside, mad I expect. Not mad from drink, but from the want of it."

Two of the men, Jackson and Andrews, now appeared, the fourth man, Williams, they had left behind to protect the corpse from the birds.

"Better come, sir, and see him afore he's moved," said Andrews. "There ain't a morsel of doubt about the way of it. He's still got the knife what he done it with clasped in his hand. Still it's better that you should see for yourself, sir."

Grey followed the men to the spot. In his eagerness to get out of their sight, he even went ahead of them, and they thought that it was strange that he should know the way so well.

The body still lay in just the position in which he had left it, with the sightless eyes turned up to the golden sky.

"Poor lad!" muttered Williams, who arose from beside the body as Grey came bursting through the trees. "You see, sir, he didn't even forget that their heathenish instrument of his'n at the very last!" and the man pointed to the fingers of Big Tom's right hand, which were closed around his ever faithful companion the Jews'-harp, while the left gripped the knife with which his blood had been spilled.

Grey hid his face in his hands.

"Why—why did he do this?"

"No one's properly responsible for their actions after such a spell of weather as we've gone through, sir!" said Andrews.

"Will you say the few words, sir, that is right and proper afore we put him in the earth?" suggested Newton.

"No—no, I cannot!" cried Grey, turning away. "Do not ask me, for pity's sake; do not ask me that!"

"I 'spose that he ain't well up in them serious sort of things!" whispered Jackson. Then he cleared his throat and stood up, while the others began to tear the creeping vine aside so that they could hollow out a grave.

Grey watched them for some moments; then on a sudden the thought struck him that they had selected the very place where he had buried the box. Even now he could see the square outline of the lid through the sand. In another moment it would be exposed, and then the secret would be his no longer.

"Stop!" he shouted authoritatively. "We will not bury him here. He was a sailor, and the sea should be his resting-place. Dry land is no grave fit for a sailor!"

The men liked the notion. It accorded with their own ideas. So without a murmur they raised the body, and started to carry it down to the sea. The moment that they had gone Grey flung himself down and heaped the sand back on to the box with nervous fingers. Then he rose and followed them, and stood watching from a distance while the others launched the boat, despite its leaky condition, and, rowing some little way off shore, committed the body to the deep. But there was a strong tide setting inshore, and the body of the dead sailor was not weighted.

Grey went down to the edge of the water to watch the men as they pulled back, but as he stood there a dark object was lifted on the crest of a wave and hurled on to the beach at his very feet. He stood staring at it for a moment with horrified, distended eyes, and then with a shrill yell he turned and dashed away inland, with his hands pressed before his eyes, as though to shut out the sight of the ghastly face of the man whom he had slain.

CHAPTER 5.

THE FINDING OF THE BOX—THE END OF FRIENDSHIP—THE WRONG KEY.

The news of the loss of fortune had had a curious effect on Vernon. One of the sweetest tempered of men, he became sour and morose. It was not for himself that he cared so much, for he reasoned that he was still young and able to work when health should be given back to him, but the thought that overwhelmed him the most was that it was owing to him that his friend Charlie Grey had lost his share.

"I'll try and make it up to you one day, old fellow!" he said weakly, while the tears ran from his eyes. "How you must hate me when you think that but for me you would have a share in that money to come to you. I will make it up to you, I swear I will. I will work day and night to earn that money back that you have lost!"

"Nonsense!" replied Grey almost roughly, to hide his real

But now the wind arose with a dull moaning sound at first, growing momentarily in intensity as it rushed down upon them. Along the western horizon stretched a long line of dazzling foam, visible even in the great darkness. It grew broader and broader, until it seemed to cover the whole surface of the sea.

"Stand firm!" shouted Grey, twisting a rope around his own body as he spoke. And even before the sound of his voice had died away they were in the midst of the boiling foam.

For one terrible moment the schooner careered over as the wind caught her, until her top hamper was buried in the raging sea; but the next she righted herself, straining and groaning in every timber, while the water poured from her deck in a vast sheet of phosphorescent foam.

They were safe but shaken. Gasping and drenched through and through, they watched the tornado that had passed them by rushing away to westward, while they lay rolling heavily in the comparatively calm water in its wake.

As soon as he felt assured of the safety of the schooner, Grey gave several orders with regard to the navigation, and then went below to assure the captain.

Vernon was lying with his eyes fixed on the door, and as Grey entered he uttered an ejaculation of relief.

"Is it all well?"

"All well!" responded Grey heartily. "And the calm is over. A fresh nor'-easter has sprung up in the wake of the tornado, and we shall soon be making up for lost time."

"The air is cooler, and I feel better. Do you know, old fellow, I think that I shall cheat Davy of his prey this time."

"Yes, of course you will. You will soon be yourself again," said Grey.

"And it gives you pleasure to think that?" said Vernon wistfully.

"Old man," said Grey hoarsely, "don't speak like that to me! Have I ever given you cause to doubt my affection and gratitude?"

"No, never; but a curious fancy, the result probably of my illness, came over me, and I thought that perhaps you would be glad if I was to die."

"It is unjust," said Grey passionately, "to allow these fancies to get the better of your senses! You know well enough that I would give my own life to serve you!"

"I believe you would—and I am ungrateful to doubt it for a moment."

Grey went back to his duty with his brain on fire, and his whole body quivering with a sense of injustice. For two years he and Vernon had been friends—more than friends—for they had faced destitution, poverty, hunger, and even death together.

Their first meeting had taken place in Sydney, and they had been insensibly attracted to each other. The rush for Californian gold was at its height, and Vernon, a man with some little capital, resolved on a bold stroke of business. He sunk part of his capital in the purchase of the schooner "Amaranth," and the rest in the purchase of stores, which he intended to carry to California to exchange with the starving diggers for their gold-dust.

He offered Grey the position of mate on the "Amaranth," and a third share in the profits of the venture, although Grey had no capital to invest. The offer was gratefully accepted. Vernon took command of his own boat, a crew was shipped, with Grey as mate, and Benton as second, and they set sail for the American shore.

Their enterprise was perfectly successful. Vernon could have sold his whole stock-in-trade within an hour of casting anchor, but he refused to deal with the middlemen, preferring to retail his goods direct to the diggers.

He did so, and the result was an immense profit on his outlay, Grey's third share of the profits alone amounting to nearly three thousand pounds. With their whole takings, which was entirely in dust, packed in a large wooden box bound with iron, they again set sail in the "Amaranth," intending to return to Sidney and repeat the voyage as soon as they could take in cargo again.

Their voyage out had been unattended by any drawbacks, but it was to be different on their return journey. From the start they had been attended by adverse winds, and when they had been many days out came the great calm that had lasted for nine sweltering days. On the second day of the calm Vernon was laid low with a fever, and had it not been for Grey's careful watching, it is doubtful if he would have ever recovered. Yet all the time that Grey sat by the bedside of his delirious friend, all the time that he was standing out against the crew so that the sick man could have the lion's share of the precious water, the same thought occurred to him again and again, although he strove to banish it from his brain: "If Vernon dies, it will be mine—all mine; not a paltry third—but all—all!"

As he went up on to deck a strange thought came to him. "Why had Vernon spoken in that way? Was it because there was some strange connecting link between their brains that transmitted an unspoken thought from the brain of one to that of the other——"

"Sir, hadn't we better sound the well?"

The suggestion came from Big Tom, and it was no sooner made than acted on. The rain had been falling steadily, and all the receptacles that had been placed on deck to catch the precious rain were filled to the brim. Now the rain had ceased, and the heavy cloud-bank had rolled on westward, allowing the stars to show their heads in the deep blue of the heavens.

"Keep her west—sou'-west, Tom—and for mercy's sake someone take some water to that howling brute in the fo'c's'le!"

The man who had been sounding the water in the well now came aft with a serious face.

"I make out a sight more water, sir, than there should be!" he said.

Grey hurried forward, and found, to his dismay, that the water had risen unquestionably, and was still rising. The "Amaranth" had sprung a leak.

An attempt was now made to discover the extent of the damage, but the ship's carpenter was lying with a knife wound in his breast, and when the men found the leak it was beyond their powers to repair it. A sail was rigged and passed under the keel, but in spite of all attempts to check the incoming flow of water, it gained steadily. All hands were told off to the pumps, but in vain did the poor fellows strive. The water gushed out as they sweated and strove; but for one inch that was drawn from the hold, two inches flowed in through the leak. It was the strength of puny man against the power of the illimitable ocean. And what was the result that could be expected?

Within an hour of the finding of the leak the order went forth to lower the boats, and provision them. It was soon done, for now that the pumps were left unmanned the water was rising fast indeed, and the moments of the "Amaranth" were numbered.

In his weak and nervous condition the clang of the pumps had sounded like the knell of doom to Vernon as he lay alone in his bunk. He called, but no one answered, for all hands were busy trying to save the ship. He called again and again, and with a desperate effort he managed to sit up.

Still no answer. The silence was unbearable. Seizing the curtain to steady himself, he thrust one attenuated leg out on to the floor a moment to gain strength, and then the first leg was followed by the other. It was not till he stood there holding on by the swaying curtain that Vernon fully realised what a wreck he was. His brain was swimming, and he reeled and lurched to and fro, not daring to leave go his hold on the curtain; but presently the schooner, that was now settling fast, gave a violent lurch over to port. The gauzy fabric of the curtain ripped away in his hand as he followed the roll of the vessel.

Ten minutes later the boats were afloat and provisioned all in readiness, and Grey hurried down into Vernon's cabin, for the end of the "Amaranth" was drawing very near.

"Vernon, old fellow, the ship is——" An exclamation of horror burst from his lips, and he sprang forward to raise Vernon's inanimate body from the floor. As he did so, there came a warning shout from the deck. There was not a moment to spare, and Grey seized the unconscious body in his arms and carried it towards the door. But as he did so there flashed across him the memory of the iron-bound box. If he were to carry Vernon to the boats there would be no time to return for the treasure. He stood for a moment as though turned to stone. Which should be the sacrifice—friendship or fortune?

CHAPTER 3.

TOM APPEARS OPPORTUNELY—LEFT BEHIND—THE BOATS PART COMPANY—LAND—THE LOST BOX—ASSAILED BY TEMPTATION.

"Sir, there is not a moment! The schooner is settling fast, and the men are already in the boats!"

Grey turned with a relief that was almost painful in its intensity to Big Tom, who had swiftly entered the cabin.

"Take the captain!" he said hoarsely. And the big fellow took the wasted body up in his arms as though it were that of a child, and, thinking that Grey was following him, hurried up on to the deck.

Grey did follow, but he waited first of all to secure the box. It was so heavy that it taxed his strength to the utmost. Still, he did not leave it. Rather than leave the sinking ship without it, he would stay and share its fate. So, half carrying, half dragging it, he managed to reach the deck.

Big Tom had already placed the captain into one of the boats, and was waiting for Grey before pushing off.

"Help me with this!" shouted Grey. And Tom caught the box, and stowed it away in the stern.

The next moment they had pushed off, and were pulling away from the sinking ship as fast as they could, to avoid the danger

of being sucked down into the vortex that she would make when the sea claimed her.

They were scarcely a dozen yards from the "Amaranth," which had already sunk so low that her deck was nearly on a level with the surface of the sea, when, from the forecastle, there came the sound of dismal yells and curses.

The men looked at one another in dismay. They had forgotten Benton, who must have fallen asleep, and had just been awakening by the rising water.

The boat that contained Grey and Vernon was already fully weighted; the other, however, contained two men only.

"Pull back, my lads!" shouted Grey to them. "We cannot leave the man to drown!"

The men looked rebellious. They saw that every moment might be the last for the "Amaranth," and they recoiled from the dangerous task.

"Back! Do you hear me? Back, you cowards!" said Grey sternly.

At that moment a figure with bound wrists sprang out of the forecastle, and rushed, shouting and gesticulating, to the bulwarks.

With oaths and threats he called to them to rescue him; but, finding that the men were obdurate, Benton changed his tone.

"Pull back, and save me, you'll never regret it. I will make you rich for life! Come back; for mercy's sake, come back!"

Still the men wavered.

"Then, if you will not, we must!" said Grey; "although the risk for our heavily-laden boat is a thousand times greater than for yours!"

"A fortune for the man who saves me!" shouted Benton.

He rushed back to the forecastle, and reappeared in a moment or two, dragging a seaman's chest along the deck with his two bound hands.

"Who will come and share this with me?" he shouted desperately.

The men in the boat looked at each other. Benton had evidently become possessed of some secret treasure, the existence of which they had never dreamed of before. The chest that he had been so anxious to save might contain gold—or at any rate something of great value. It was a risk—a terrible risk—but might it not be worth the taking?

They were alongside the submerged vessel in a few moments, and were dragging Benton and his chest into their boat; but their delay and hesitation came near to costing them all dear, for hardly was Benton in the boat than the deck of the "Amaranth" burst with the pressure of the confined air beneath with an explosion like the report of a cannon. Then, while they strained to the oars and shot away from the dangerous vicinity, the schooner whirled round twice, as though in the grip of a whirlpool, and a moment later sank like a stone, leaving behind her a vortex, around which the water raced. They found the boat being drawn towards the deadly centre of the hole, and, maddened with terror, they struggled against the threatening doom, while the oars creaked and groaned with the strain that was brought to bear upon them.

As Grey had said, had it been the heavier boat, there would have been no hope; but as it was, the men just managed to get clear away by the skin of their teeth, and in a little while the hole filled up, and, save for a patch of snow-white foam, there was no sign left to show where the schooner had sunk.

The other boat, containing Grey and Vernon, with Big Tom and four of the seamen, had drawn ahead.

"Let them go!" growled Benton. "We want none of their company! There is food and drink with us, and that is the main thing!"

"Keep in our wake!" shouted Grey from the other boat.

The men looked uncertain how to act, and Benton noticed it.

"Look here, lads!" he said. "I promised you a fortune if you saved me, and I won't go back on my word. That chest contains enough to make us all rich for the rest of our lives, and we will share alike if you do as I tell you!"

"And what are we to do?"

"First shout 'Ay, ay!' to that cur, so that he will think that you are going to do as he orders!"

"Do you hear, there?" shouted Grey.

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"Good!" muttered Benton, as he saw Grey resume his seat. "Now cut this confounded cord that ties my hands up!"

He was obeyed, and the moment he was free he took possession of the tiller ropes.

"Keep in closer, or we shall get parted during the night!" shouted Grey presently.

"I think that boat has gone on a cruise of her own!" said Big Tom, as he peered through the darkness. "I don't see no sign of her nowhere!"

Grey stood up and looked through the gloom.

"You are right! They have relieved us of their company. Well, they can't come to much harm; they have food and water, and we ought to sight one of the Fiji group before many hours!"

Vernon's condition now attracted all Grey's attention, and in a short time he had ceased to remember the existence of the other boat and its occupants. The old delirium seized Vernon, and the sound of his shouts and maniacal outbursts of laughter went echoing out on the silent sea.

Grey and Tom held him down while the fits were strong upon him, and as he struggled with them to achieve his purpose of casting himself into the sea, he cursed them with words that were foreign to his tongue.

And so the night passed away, and the morning found Vernon in a deep sleep, and the two men exhausted from the effects of their night-long struggle. The men, who had been toiling all night at the oars, now hoisted the sail that the boat carried, for it was a glorious morning, with just enough wind coming down from the nor'-west to fill their sail and speed them on their course.

After the morning meal, of which they all stood sorely in need, Grey and Tom, with two of the others, lay down to snatch a few minutes' sleep, leaving the other two men to attend to the navigation of the boat, from which duty they would presently be relieved.

Grey had given them strict injunctions to awaken him if the other boat was sighted, or if there was any sign of land or a strange sail.

It was the cry of "land" that awoke him from the deep sleep into which he had fallen, and he sprang up to see that they were rapidly approaching a low-lying shore, which rose out of the sea just over their bows. While they were still some distance off, they could see that the land was a small island, not more than three miles from east to west, and barren save for a few trees that grew towards the centre. It was one of the many uninhabited islands that form the fringe of the Fiji group; and, inhospitable though the shore looked, Grey resolved to make for it with all despatch, for their boat was leaking badly, having received a good deal of rough treatment during their struggle with Vernon. Within an hour they were passing through a line of breakers and running straight for the low-lying, shelving, sandy shore.

The boat grounded, and the men sprang out into the water, which rose to their waists, and with their feet upon the solid coral reef they dragged the boat in shore. Grey had not moved. He sat with a frown of thought on his brow. The iron-bound box still lay where Tom had thrown it, and, acting as though unconsciously, Grey rose and removed his coat, throwing it over the box, so that it was hidden from sight.

They dragged the boat higher on to the sand, and then, under the supervision of Grey, they lifted Vernon out and carried him to the centre of the island, where they laid him under the shelter of the trees.

It took them some time to carry the captain this distance, for at each step they took they sank ankle-deep into the sand. And when they returned, it was to find Grey, whom they had left alone with the boat, seated on the shore some little distance off, looking hot and confused.

It was necessary now to unload the boat, so that she could be overturned, to facilitate the necessary repairs. Accordingly all six set to work, and soon the cases of tinned meats, the sack of flour, and the barrels of rain-water were lifted out and ranged along the sand in a row.

"I don't see that chest that you threw in to me at the last moment, sir," said Tom, looking at Grey inquiringly.

"What, is it not there?" said Grey, in a startled voice.

They hunted through the boat, but it was not to be found.

"Begging your pardon, sir, but it might have got pushed overboard when the cap'en was struggling so in the night!" said one of the men respectfully.

"I fear it must, Newton! It is a pity, for the case contained a great deal of money. In fact, all our fortune—Captain Vernon's and mine!"

The men uttered expressions of sympathy, but they inwardly marvelled at the resignation with which Grey bore the great loss.

"He is a plucked 'un, and no mistake—the mate!" whispered Newton to one of the others. "An ordinary bloke would be down on his luck terrible hard if such a thing had happened to him, and he—he don't seem to care the wag of a dog's tail!"

The loss of the iron-bound box did not affect Grey at all, for the very good reason that the box was not lost, but lying snugly buried in the sand not a dozen yards away.

He had buried the box, as a precaution, so he told himself, and to prevent the others from being seized with a temptation to help themselves to the treasure that it contained. He would tell Vernon what he had done the moment Vernon returned to consciousness; and when they reached Levuka, as soon they would do when the boat was seaworthy, he and Vernon could return and unearth their treasure in safety. But the

it doesn't remind me of my own parents, it will serve to remind me of one of the noblest women, and one of the best of mothers that I have ever met with. And it will help me to avoid the example, I hope, of one of the worst of sons."

"Yes, that son of good Mrs. Evans's must be a beauty, and no mistake. I wonder what part of the world he is knocking about in now?"

"I wonder!" said Harry sadly.

"Well, cheer up, cousin Hobbs—a poor young orphan, son of unfortunate but respectable parents, one time farmers of Merrow. There's one more question I've got to ask you—it's been worrying me ever since I read that account of your death. What was the name of that organist at St. Lazarus?"

"The organist of St. Lazarus!" repeated Harry, his mind flashing back to the scene he had witnessed in St. Lazarus on the night he had visited the mortuary. "Arthur Mayfield. Why?"

"Why! Did you notice the name of the gentleman that shot the sailor who got into your toggery?"

Harry seized the paper that had fallen from his hands, and turned again to the account of his death. He quickly ran over the article till he came to the name.

"Richard Mayfield!" he exclaimed. "I wonder if he's in any way related to the organist? And that reminds me I must pay him an early visit."

"For anything in particular?"

"To see if he can throw some light on the mystery that surrounds my life. He may be able to give me a clue to the lady who took so great an interest in poor Pierre Evison. But there's one visit I want to pay before that."

"What's that, my dear cousin from the country?" laughed Shaggy.

"I want to attend my own funeral!"

CHAPTER 28.

A REMARKABLE DISCOVERY—PIECE BY PIECE—A FRESH PROBLEM.

Of all the bewildering announcements made in the course of that bewildering night, this calm announcement on the part of Harry staggered Shaggy more completely than anything that had preceded it. He glanced at him to see if he were joking; but no, there was no vestige of humour in his face. It was perfectly serious.

"Go to your own funeral?" he at length repeated.

"Yes; surely a fellow's entitled to that privilege, Shaggy?"

The idea seemed to Shaggy so ludicrous that he broke into a laugh.

"I don't see why you shouldn't," he said. "And, by Jupiter, I don't see, either, why you should have all the fun to yourself. I'll go with yer!"

Shaggy said this because he was confident that Harry had some purpose in view beside that merely of curiosity in attending "his own funeral." What that purpose was he could not guess; but he knew that it could not possibly be without its danger; and he determined, therefore, to be by his friend's side this time, whatever happened.

"You will? The very thing I would have asked, Shaggy, only I didn't like to mention it. You've helped me enough already. By the by, that reminds me—have you got the pictures all right?"

"Ah! yes; I'd forgotten the pictures. The news you brought me has knocked everything else out o' my head."

Shaggy took a large chisel from a drawer, and, going on his hands and knees at that part of the room where his bed was, gently prized up one of the boards, and drew from it a wooden case.

"Here we are!" he cried triumphantly. "I was obliged to put it in a case, yer see, for the rats in these quarters love art so much that they would have swallowed up all the paint in those blessed pictures, and there wouldn't ha' been a morsel left of either Napoleon or Wellington. Ha! ha! only fancy, two of the greatest warriors the world has ever seen knocked out o' time by a few squeakers!"

As he spoke, Shaggy wrenched off the wooden case and revealed the two pictures which his foresight had so well protected.

A mist came over Harry's eyes as he gazed at them. The pictures brought vividly before his mind Pierre Evison, and the rooms where they had at one time lived so happily and quietly together.

"I suspect Pierre had some purpose in wishing me to keep these pictures. I believe that there is something hidden behind these two, in the same way that there was something hidden behind the other!"

"I've thought the same thing. Otherwise Mawker wouldn't have been so anxious to get hold of them."

Harry opened the back of the picture, and drew out innumerable layers of paper, on the first of which was the injunction he so well remembered—"Search and ye shall find."

Carefully separating these layers, he discovered banknotes amounting to one hundred pounds. Behind the other picture he found a further sum to the same amount, together with a piece of paper, on which was written:

"These notes are for Harry Evison, to be used in case of an emergency. In the centre picture he will find two certificates, which it has been necessary to carefully hide, and which I beg of him, for his own safety, to keep carefully hidden still."

"Two hundred pounds!" cried Harry. Thank Heaven he was not now destitute. He felt like a millionaire. He was exceedingly pleased at his discovery, not because he was fond of money, but because it might help him to carry out his purpose.

First of all, however, he must pay a debt of gratitude.

"One lot for you, and one for me!" he said pushing half of the notes towards the newsboy.

"Not if I know it!" said Shaggy, pushing them firmly back again. "They're yours, and no one has a right to take them from you. You've mistaken me for old Mawker, Harry!"

He spoke with an air of injured pride.

"Don't put it that way, Shaggy. As though it was possible to make a mistake between one of the best fellows that ever lived and one of the craftiest old rascals that ever crawled. No, no; I take you for my chum; and my chum is entitled to the half of everything that belongs to me—especially seeing that what belongs to me has come to me through his kindness and pluck. So put those notes in your pocket."

Still Shaggy refused.

"Well, will you take care of them for me, then? You've been such a good bank up to now that I hope you won't mind being one again!"

In this way Shaggy was prevailed upon to accept one half of the notes, but he determined to use them only in the interest of his friend.

"And now for my secret," said Shaggy, when this argument was settled. "Taking care of these pictures has led to a discovery which may be of some importance. You remember when you first came to these rooms, and found a rat gnawing at a letter it had dragged from poor granny's pocket?"

"Yes, quite well; because it contained the name of 'Angela,' and the name which I afterwards found was really my own surname—'Temple.'"

"So as to refresh your memory, here is a copy of the torn letter."

Shaggy handed to Harry as he spoke a copy of the mutilated letter:

"that I will bring the
into your custody
Her name is Angela Lam-
keep her first name, but
the second, so as to hide
should the father ever think of
her in London.
bring the sum agreed upon
ice. Other conditions can be
CIVAL TEMPLE."

"I suppose you wonder what I am driving at?" went on Shaggy. "I'll tell you. When I was looking up a hiding-place for your pictures, I found a scrap of paper with some writing on that seemed familiar to me. This led me to search further, and I found other scraps. I joined them, bit by bit, to the torn letter you rescued from the rats. A few scraps were missing, but these I was able to fill in myself. When complete, they made something like sense of that Chinese puzzle you've got in your hand."

Harry listened eagerly to Shaggy's story. When he had finished, Shaggy went to a small desk, which he kept locked up in a cupboard in the room, and drew from it a sheet of paper, on which had been neatly gummed together the scraps of writing he had found under the floor, joined to the portion which Harry had rescued from the rats.

This he handed to Harry. When completed, they made the following letter:

"Dear Madam,—

"Just a line to say / that I will bring the
child and give it / into your custody
to-morrow evening. / Her name is Angela Lam-
aret. You may / keep her first name, but
you must change / the second, so as to hide
her identity, / should the father ever think of
searching for / her in London.
"I will also / bring the sum agreed upon
for this serv / ice. Other conditions can be
discussed.
"Yours truly,
"PER / CIVAL TEMPLE."

Where the line is drawn shows the two portions of the letter—the portion found by Harry and the portion found by Shaggy.

"It's clear enough now, isn't it?" said Shaggy, with a grin.

"Yes, Shaggy. I must say you're the most ingenious fellow I ever met. The letter is clear enough—thanks to you; but we're not so very much wiser as to whom it refers. The lips that could have told us—your granny's—are unfortunately closed for ever!"

"Steady—steady, Harry! There are three other persons who might throw some light on the mystery."

"Who are they? I'm anxious to know."

"First of all there's the lady who visited granny on the afternoon she met with her accident—the one whose card I've kept—Pauline Anconia."

"Yes, possibly. But who the dickens is Pauline Anconia, and where the dickens is she to be found?"

Shaggy thrust his hand through his stubborn thatch as Harry spoke, until each particular hair stood on end. The questions Harry had put had often occurred to him, without finding an answer. He rubbed away at his hair furiously, as though vexed with it at not furnishing him with a clue to the problem.

"That's tickler number one, Shaggy. Trot out tickler number two, and let's see if that goes one better. Who's the next person can throw light on that letter?"

"The man who wrote it, of course—Percival Temple!"

"Good again, Shaggy; but allow me to repeat my previous questions slightly altered. Who the dickens is Percival Temple; and where the dickens is he to be found?"

Again Shaggy's fingers went through his wiry locks; again he looked puzzled.

"Isn't he a relative of yours?" he at length blurted out.

"He may be a relative of mine, Shaggy—a distinguished relative—but I haven't the honour of his acquaintance; and I'm equally ignorant of his whereabouts. Get on to tickler number three!"

"What do you say to Angela Mawker?"

"But that letter refers to Angela Lamaret—not Angela Mawker," said Harry, with lips that suddenly whitened "You recollect the name of Lamaret?"

"Yes; the name of the man who killed Pierre Evison!"

"The same!" said Harry huskily. "It is quite clear that the Angela referred to in this letter is somehow related to the murderer of poor Pierre. Heaven grant that our Angela—the Angela we know—is in no way related to that monster!"

Shaggy was as greatly moved as Harry. He put a trembling hand upon his shoulder, and said, in a voice that had grown as husky as Harry's:

"Heaven grant so too, Harry; but—but—what if they are one and the same? What if Angela Mawker is Angela Lamaret, and—and—the daughter of the man who killed your father—Pierre Evison, I mean?"

The two looked at each other with wild, questioning eyes. There was a deep silence in the room; only an occasional sound travelled upward through the windows from the almost deserted streets.

Harry did not answer the question Shaggy had put to him; but, as though his legs had suddenly become powerless to sustain him, he sank into a chair.

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

THE POACHER AT HOME.

A great deal of sympathy is accorded to the poacher. He is often looked upon as a victim of circumstances, a hard-working labourer, driven by the tears of his starving family to help himself to an occasional pheasant. As a matter of fact, he is a most ordinary thief; it is useless to offer him work, and his methods are of the slinking, work-by-night order. When poaching is unprofitable, owing to the close season, he generally goes on the tramp, supporting himself by begging, and occasional chicken-thefts.

When autumn comes round he engages himself as a farm-hand, or labourer, in order to have some "visible means of support."

If his particular line is hare-poaching, he generally works together with two or three friends. They take a farm-cart, and one or two trusty "lurchers."

"A lurcher" is a cross between a pointer, or setter, and a greyhound, and combines the cunning of the setting-dog with the fleetness of the hound.

The gang sets out early in the morning, and drives slowly through secluded lanes. As soon as a likely place is "spotted," one man stops in the cart, while the rest search for the "runs"—passages through the hedges which are used by hares—and stop them with nets. A larger net is set in front of the gate.

The cunning lurcher then slips along the side of the hedge, and, beginning at the other end of the field, drives the hares towards the gate. One or two will make for their favourite runs, and become hopelessly entangled in the run-nets. The rest dash for the gate, one after another, and plunge headlong into the gate-net, where their necks are swiftly broken by the watchful poachers. If the man in the cart sees danger, he whistles. In a few seconds the nets are taken up, the dogs called to heel, and the gang drives rapidly off. Ten minutes will often suffice to strip a field of hares.

If this plan is resorted to at night, the run-nets are dispensed with, for every poacher knows that hares prefer the gate to the runs after sunset.

If a hare is seen in the daytime, a fast lurcher is sent after it, and it does not take him long to run the hare down, and bring it to his master. If a keeper should turn up while the dog is hunting, a chorus of yells and whistles are directed at it.

"The dog is always getting them into trouble," they plaintively whine; "he will go after hares!"

They apologise profusely, hand the hare to the keeper, and, if he is a young hand, he may be deceived; if not, he is generally set upon and disabled, unless he can summon assistance.

A hare-poacher who prefers working alone manufactures a number of wire nooses, tied to stakes with string. These he sets near the hare-runs, but never in them. Only a bungler will set a snare in a run, for an old poacher knows that a hare pauses on nearing a hedge, looks through, and then makes a spring. As she springs the noose tightens round her neck. The great drawback to hare-poaching is the loud scream which a hare makes when it runs into a net or a snare. Every keeper knows well what that sound means, and very often it is the cause of a general apprehension of the whole poaching gang. A hare, therefore, must be despatched as soon as it is caught.

The hares are disposed of to "higglers"—men who act as receivers to the poachers—and who, in turn, sell them to game-dealers.

The price of a poached hare runs from two shillings to half-a-crown, and few dealers care to make inquiries when such low prices are asked.

Pheasant-poaching is carried out in quite a different way.

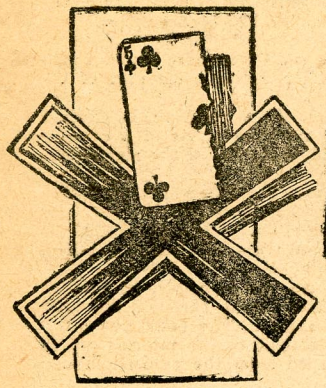
The pheasant-poacher possesses a gun which unscrews into segments like a fishing-rod, and he carries it under his coat. He chooses a wild, stormy night, when the sound of a gunshot cannot be heard far, and creeps into the coverts. The pheasants roost about twenty feet from the ground, they can be plainly seen against the sky, and he creeps under one of the sleeping birds and brings it down. He must tread in absolute silence; a slight noise, the breaking of a twig, and the cock pheasants would begin their sonorous clucking call; and as every cock in the woods would pass on the call, the keeper in his cottage would know what was wrong, and would start for the intruder. Strangely enough, a gunshot does not set them calling.

A poached pheasant is bought for a shilling or eighteenpence, and a clever poacher will take twenty or thirty in a night.

A gang of pheasant-poachers often make terrific inroads on a large preserve. Each man chooses his bird, and at a previously-arranged signal all fire as nearly together as possible. A pause is made, and every poacher listens for the warning of the watcher. If no alarm is given, each picks up his bird, re-loads, and goes in search of another.

In sandy districts, where light soil abounds, rabbits form a profitable quarry. Rabbits, when not taken in snares, or driven

YOU CAN BEGIN THIS TO-DAY.



THE SIGN OF THE SCARLET CROSS

By CLAUD HEATHCOTE,

Author of "Four British Boys," "Val the Boy Acrobat," "Roy Royal of St. Miriam's," "The Red Light," "Dick Danvers," &c.

READ THIS FIRST.

The story opens on Harry's fifteenth birthday.

Harry and Pierre Evison, whose son Harry thinks he is, are about to have tea, when Harry's great chum, Shaggy, a newsboy, enters, and tells them that a body has been dragged from the Thames at Limehouse, and that on the breast of the dead man is a strange tattoo—a scarlet cross, and half of the five of clubs.

On hearing this, Pierre Evison turns deadly pale.

Harry asks Shaggy to tea. The newsboy tells his chum that he has a few papers to sell first, and goes out.

He does not return, and Harry sets out in search of him.

In the street he meets Paul Lamaret, who asks if he knows where Pierre Evison lives. Harry directs him to their home, and goes on his way.

A few moments later, Paul Lamaret enters. "Pierre Evison, otherwise Pierre Gourbet, I salute you!" he says. And tells him that he has come to take his life because he has not killed one Horace Temple as he promised to do. The pair fight with rapiers, and Pierre is mortally wounded. The murderer escapes. Harry, meanwhile, goes to where Shaggy lives. He is out. Harry is about to leave, when he sees a rat gnawing a paper. He takes it from the animal, and discovers it to be a letter half eaten away. He puts it into his pocket and goes home. He discovers Pierre dying, and is told by him that he is not his son; that his family name is Temple; and that he must beware of the Lamarets, all of whom are marked on the breast with the scarlet cross and the half of the five of clubs. Then he falls back dead.

Mawker, a craftly old lodger in the house and the father of a fair girl, Angela, enters the dead man's room at night-time for the purpose of searching for a note Harry, whom he has drugged, has in his pocket. While engaged in this search, he hears some one enter the room. It is in perfect darkness, so Mawker cannot see the man's face. But when the latter leaves the room, Mawker finds that a dagger has been plunged into the bed where Harry had been lying.

Through the craftiness of Mawker, Harry is next day arrested on a charge of theft. But he escapes from the policeman, for the purpose of placing some mementoes on the breast of Pierre. To accomplish this, he is compelled to visit the mortuary at midnight, and while discharging this sacred duty, a lady (whose face he cannot see) enters and places a bunch of flowers on the shroud. Harry afterwards overhears a conversation between this mysterious lady and the organist of the church. Then, having fulfilled his duty, he voluntarily gives himself up to the police.

He is tried, and sentenced to be sent to a reformatory for a year. He escapes in company with a lad called Probyn. They are heard by Merrick, the reformatory bully, who arouses the officials. Probyn stays behind.

Harry decides to tramp to London. He changes clothes with a young sailor he meets. The police-patrol chases him, supposing him to be a sailor. He takes refuge in a cottage.

CHAPTER 26.

ON TRAMP ONCE MORE—THE LIGHTS OF LONDON.

Harry enjoyed one of the most refreshing nights' sleep he had ever enjoyed in his life in the missing boy's bed. He was thoroughly tired out for one thing, and three nights had elapsed since he had slept in a proper bed.

As he dressed himself he wondered how the other youth, Bob Ayres, was faring in his reformatory clothes.

"If he hasn't been captured, he's up to some deep game or other, I know."

Then by rapid transition his mind flitted back to the reformatory.

How was Sidney Probyn faring? Had the part he had played in assisting Harry to escape been discovered? And Merrick, who had so meanly tried to prevent that escape, had he received his flogging, and was he still enjoying the solitude of the punishment cell?

Would they ever meet again, and would the interrupted fight be once more continued, and fought out to its bitter end? Harry had no particular desire ever to meet Merrick again, not because he feared him, but because he felt that he had enough work cut out for him in the future without having obstacles of this kind in his pathway.

Though he had no desire to meet Merrick, he had, on the other hand, the strongest possible desire to meet Probyn—the meek and gentle lad whose cause he had championed.

"He's the right sort. How fond he seemed to be of that sister of his! Let's see, what did he call her? Peggy—yes, that was the name."

Then from Peggy, Harry's mind flitted on to Angela. How was she faring with her scoundrel of a father?

The world went by the rule of contrary—that was quite evident. There was Angela, all purity and truth, with a father, all cunning and villainy. And in that house, on the other hand, was a mother, all love and kindness, with a base and cowardly son. Yes, it was a topsy-turvy world!

These thoughts travelled swiftly through Harry's brain as he again arrayed himself in the clothes of the widow's son.

When he descended he found that a substantial breakfast of eggs and bacon had been provided for him, to which he did ample justice.

The meal concluded, he prepared to start on his journey.

"Take this," she said, pressing half-a-crown into his hand. "You may want some little thing on the road. Now, don't refuse." Harry was about to decline it. "If you do, you will offend me. You can return it, you know, if you ever become rich."

So Harry reluctantly accepted the widow's mite. She then pressed a kiss on his forehead, as though she were kissing her own boy.

"God be with you!" she said, and hastily went back into the cottage to hide her emotion.

Harry, scarcely less moved, started once more on his journey.

The morning opened brightly, and before Harry had gone far he began to feel very warm. He felt also extremely happy. Life had somehow put on a brighter garment than it had worn for days past—as bright as the sunshine which was sending down its hot rays on him, and colouring with deeper, richer tints the verdure of field and hedgerow.

All this difference in his outlook on the world had been effected by a good night's rest and a good meal. He had no wish to reach London till night, so he loitered by the way.

Thanks to the clothes he was now wearing, he attracted no more notice from anyone on the road than that ordinarily bestowed on a pedestrian; and doubtless the happier frame of mind in which he found himself was induced by this sense of security.

He paused at a tavern to eat a meagre meal of bread-and-cheese; then went to a village green near by where a cricket match was in progress.

He stayed here watching the game for a short time, then pushed on again through Esher and Kingston.

On to the great metropolis! Its lights had been already lit. The glow of them was reflected far and wide in the heavens. On—on!

Wouldn't Shaggy be astonished? And how Harry longed to see him.

It was getting late when he at last reached St. Giles's, and mounted the stairs to Shaggy's room.

He was brought to a sudden standstill as he reached the door, for he heard the poignant sound of sobbing within.

CHAPTER 27.

SHAGGY'S PICTURE-GALLERY IN MOURNING—THE PARAGRAPH IN THE NEWSPAPERS — AN AMAZING PROPOSAL.

Harry opened the door. The newsboy was stretched upon a bed in the corner of the room sobbing convulsively. So deep was his grief that he had not heard the door open and Harry enter.

From Shaggy, Harry's gaze went round the room. He was astounded at the change that had taken place in the newsboy's "picture-gallery." This, it will be remembered, consisted entirely of a thrilling collection of pictorial posters made by Shaggy in the course of his professional career.

Around these had been placed a deep black border. What did it mean? Was Shaggy still lamenting the death of his grandmother?

"Shaggy!"

At the sound of his name, Shaggy sprang up from the bed on which he had been lying prostrate, and glared wildly at Harry. A couple of minutes must have passed before he spoke, and then he gasped in a hollow, sepulchral voice:

"Harry."

"Yes; I thought I should astonish you. But what have you been doing to your pictures?"

For answer, Shaggy threw his arms wildly round his friend and burst into tears.

"I—I—thought you was dead, Harry."

"Thought I was dead? What a strange notion! No, I'm a long way from that. I'm about as much alive as ever I was; but I've had some queer adventures within this last day or two, and if you'll give up staring at me in that fashion I'll tell you all about them."

"I can't help staring at you, Harry—blow me, if I can! I've heard on people dying and coming to life again; but I thought as it was all gammon. Yet there you are—a dead 'un, looking straight at me."

Harry began to fear that Shaggy's reason was affected.

"What are you talking about, Shaggy?"

"Your name's Harry Evison, ain't it?"

"That's the name I'm known by. What about it?"

"Harry Evison, sentenced to a reformatory at Stentham for taking notes supposed to have been the property of an innercent old party known as Isaac Mawker?"

"Yes; but allow me to add—from which reformatory the said Harry Evison, through the assistance of a friend in need, Sidney Probyn, made his escape a couple of nights ago."

"I know—I know!" cried Shaggy, with increased excitement, his eyes still fixed on Harry. "What—what—happened after that?"

"You know!" answered Harry, beginning to wonder in his turn. "How the dickens did you get hold of that piece of information?"

"In the newspapers."

"In the newspapers!" echoed Harry, in alarm.

"Yes, the newspapers were full of it this morning."

"What!" cried Harry, sinking into a chair by the table. "Quick! Let me see it."

Shaggy drew out a paper from a pile in the corner, and, handing it to Harry, pointed to a special piece of news headed with large type.

"THE HAND OF FATE! TRAGIC ENDING TO A BOY-CRIMINAL'S CAREER."

Then followed, in smaller type:

"A month or two back the country was startled from one end to another by a tragedy which occurred, under extraordinary circumstances, in a house situated in a thoroughfare leading from Charing Cross Road.

"A duel took place with rapiers between two men, in which one of the combatants, known as Pierre Evison, was run through the body, and died shortly after from the effects of the wound. On his body was found a strange tattoo—a scarlet cross, and other minute punctures representing a torn card, believed to be the five of clubs. This tragedy—now known as the Scarlet Cross Tragedy—was rendered more startling from the fact that a man's body had been found in the Thames at Limehouse the day previous, with an identical tattoo on the left breast just above the region of the heart.

"Now comes a remarkable sequel to these tragedies. Pierre Evison, it will be remembered, had an only son—a lad of fifteen or sixteen, known as Harry Evison. This lad was arrested, within a day or so of his father's death, for theft—stealing some banknotes from an old gentleman of the name of Mawker, living in the same house.

"For this crime young Evison was sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment in a reformatory. The night before last he made his escape, with the assistance of a fellow-culprit, from the punishment-cell in which he had been confined.

"After thus eluding his gaolers, he seems to have made his way, shielded by darkness, on to the Portsmouth Road, where it is believed that he found shelter during some part of the night in a farmhouse barn.

"Then, towards the early hours of the morning, he effected an entrance through a window into the house of a country gentleman, Mr. Richard Mayfield, J.P., one of the magistrates for the county of Hampshire.

"He audaciously entered the very room in which the magistrate was sleeping, and endeavoured to carry off some jewellery from a jewel-case on the dressing-table. While he was in the act of doing so, Mr. Mayfield woke up, and seized a pistol, which he always keeps beneath his pillow.

"He challenged the thief. Receiving no reply, he fired at random. The charge unfortunately went through the lad's forehead, and killed him on the spot. The body was afterwards identified by the superintendent of the reformatory as that of the youth who had escaped from the punishment-cell on the previous night."

"Merciful heavens!"

The paper dropped from Harry's hands, he staggered to his feet, and regarded Shaggy with horror-stricken eyes.

"Well, what's the meaning of it?" cried Shaggy. "Are you really dead, or are you alive?"

"Heaven only knows! I begin to suspect my own identity. But it's clear enough—terribly clear—how it all happened. I changed clothes with a sailor-boy on the night of my escape. It is he who has been shot, and been mistaken for me. He was the same height and figure as myself; he had a couple of black eyes the same as I had; the pistol-shot in the forehead would further disfigure the face. What followed is as clear as daylight. Having on my reformatory clothes, the only conclusion which the superintendent of the schools could come to was that the youth who had been shot was none other than the one who had escaped the night before. Do you understand?"

"Yes, I begin to understand. Thank Heaven, it wasn't you, Harry! I haven't got much pity for that other fellow. If he was a thief—one of them that sneaks into a man's house when he's asleep—he deserved all he got. What was his name?"

"Bob Ayres." Then Harry told Shaggy all that had happened to him since he went to the reformatory.

When he had concluded, Shaggy showed his joy at his friend's escape in the method usual to him when speech failed him.

He danced the double-shuffle; but suddenly he brought the dance to an abrupt conclusion, at the very moment that his right leg was thrown up in the air with the object of bringing it down with an emphatic bang on the floor.

Instead of carrying out this intention, Shaggy's face lengthened, and he brought it down so gently that Harry feared he had in some way injured it.

"Got a puncture, Shaggy?" he inquired.

"No, I'm all right; but it's just come to me—you! How do you stand? You're dead, ain't you?"

"Supposed to be."

"Well, how are you going to get over it? Directly it's known that it's not you who are dead but someone else, you'll be collared and taken back to the reformatory."

"Of course," said Harry, smiling. "But I'm not coming to life again, Shaggy—except for this occasion only. I'm going to remain dead. Don't you see how it will answer my plans?

"It will prevent my being 'collared,' as you put it, and taken back to the reformatory," Harry went on, answering his own question. "In the next place, it will throw Paul Lamaret off the scent. If he fancies that I'm dead he won't trouble any more about me, and I may find an opportunity, when he's thus off his guard, of paying off an old score, or (what is still better) of tracing out my real father, Horace Temple, without any interference from him.

"Splendid!" cried Shaggy, resuming his double-shuffle. "Nothing could be better. But you'll have to alter your get-up a bit. You're too much like yourself at present to be anybody different. What name shall you go under?"

"There's no need to alter my first name, only my second. Supposing I take your name, Shaggy?"

"My name!"

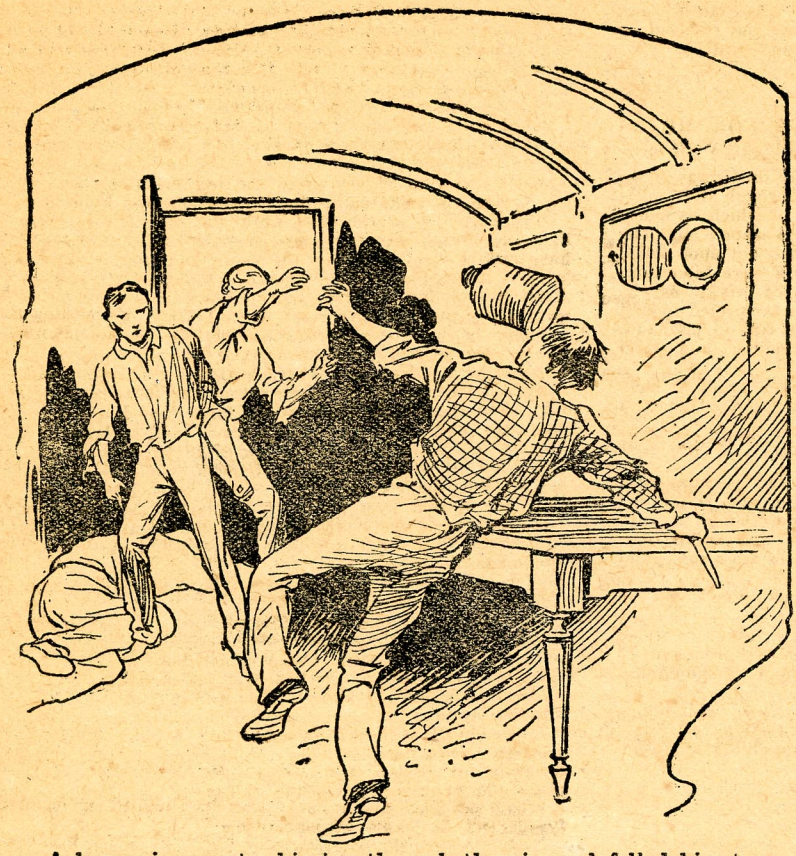
"Not Shaggy. That's your own special copyright; but your second name Hobbs. What do you say to Harry Hobbs—a cousin of yours from the country?"

"Good! What sort of a cousin?"

"Oh, an orphan, of course. It would be dangerous to have parents. A cousin from the country, and—an orphan. You won't forget?"

"No, I won't forget. Which part of the country shall it be—Whitechapel?"

"Whitechapel!" laughed Harry. "No, that would be too rural. Let me see—oh, yes, I know. Let it be Merrow. If



A heavy jar went whizzing through the air, and felled him to the ground.

armed only with their knives, which at close quarters with an enemy would prove dangerous enough.

Then, followed by Grey, who seemed loath to let them leave his sight for a moment, they started inland towards the spot where the smoke was ascending.

Hardly had they entered the shadow of the trees, when a feeble voice was heard crying to them, and a moment later from among the dense undergrowth of trailing vine a form was seen crawling towards them. The form was that of a man, but so horribly emaciated from starvation, and so terribly disfigured from wounds which seemed to cover his whole body, that the men stood still in horror and amazement, unable to utter a sound.

Painfully and slowly the wretched creature dragged himself towards them. Then, with a shout of horror, they recognised him.

"Saunders! Saunders!" cried Newton, rushing towards their unfortunate [illegible]. "What has happened? Tell us for——"

Saunders tried to speak, but his voice would not come. Only a low, hoarse [illegible] and broke from his dry lips, and he pointed to his mouth, beseeching them in dumb show to give him food.

They had none with them, but Andrews ran back to the boat, and returned in a few minutes with a small quantity of food and a flask containing spirit.

A small drop from the flask revived the man sufficiently to allow him to eat a few mouthfuls, and the effect of the food upon him was almost magical. He rose to a sitting posture, and raised his bony hands to his forehead as though trying to recollect what had happened.

"Are you better now, my poor fellow?" said Vernon kindly.

"Y—y-es," the answer came in a low tone.

"What has happened? Can you tell us? Have you been ill-used by natives?"

Saunders shook his head. "Not natives!—no natives here."

"Then where does that smoke come from that we saw above the trees?"

Saunders flung himself to the ground in a state of the most abject and pitiable terror, and it was long before they could reassure him. But at last speech returned to him sufficiently to enable him to tell them in broken language what had transpired after their boat had parted company with the other on the night of the loss of the "Amaranth."

Benton, whom they had rescued from the sinking ship, made them many and extravagant promises of reward if they would listen to him and manage to lose the other boat in the night. He had brought a seaman's chest with him from the "Amaranth," which he opened, to show them that it contained a large quantity of gold-dust.

He boasted that he had stolen it, but he did not say from whom; and he promised that in return for their services to him he would share it with them when they arrived on land. They were guided by him in the hope of receiving the promised reward, and they gave the other boat the slip in the darkness. Benton then took command of the boat, and after two days of wandering on the sea they sighted this island, where they proceeded to land.

For some days they lived here peacefully enough, and then, as Benton made no offer, Cummings suggested that the time had arrived for him to share the gold with them as he had promised.

Benton's answer was a jeering refusal, and he added that he wondered that Cummings had been foolish enough to believe that he would share with them.

Enraged at the other's double-dealing, Cummings struck Benton a blow with his fist. A fight then ensued between the two men, during which Cummings was severely ill-treated. He then took to his heels, and Benton, seizing a big stone, gave chase.

Saunders followed, for he saw that bloodshed between the two men might ensue unless a stop was put to the fight. The others outstripped him, however, and Cummings, reaching the boat, that was beached, sprang into it. What happened then Saunders did not see, but when he reached the boat it was to find Cummings crouching in her, with his skull smashed in by the heavy stone with which Benton had armed himself.

Horrified at the deed, Saunders turned on Benton and told him that as soon as they reached port he would inform against him. Benton's reply was to spring on Saunders and strike him to the ground with the stone that he still retained in his hand.

When Saunders recovered consciousness it was night, and Benton had gone back to the camp they had made in the centre of the island.

Weak from loss of blood, and craving food and drink, Saunders resolved to find Benton, and try and make peace with him for the present, though he still secretly intended to carry out his threat of handing the miscreant over to justice when they should reach civilised parts. With this idea in his mind he made his way towards the camp. Benton was warming his supper of tinned meat over the fire, and when he heard Saunders approaching over the trailing vines he snatched a revolver from his belt and, wheeling round, suddenly fired at Saunders.

The bullet struck Saunders in the shoulder, and he turned and fled, followed by several more shots from Benton's revolver. Knowing now that Benton meant to kill him, he hid himself in the bush for two days, until, driven nearly frantic by hunger, he made an attempt to steal on Benton while he slept. But, unfortunately, Benton was on the alert, and Saunders had again to take to the bush for concealment, while Benton searched for him with his revolver in his hand ready to fire on him on sight.

Another day passed, and Saunders grew too weak to make another attempt. He gnawed the bark of trees, and ate the thick, juicy leaves of the vine, and on this diet he managed to sustain life, although presently he became so weak that he could not rise, and had to crawl on all-fours. Day after day these two played their horrible game of hide-and-seek, and eventually, weakened and half dead as he was, Saunders must have become a prey to the wretch when fortune sent Vernon and the others to his aid.

Benton would long ago have taken the boat and departed from the island had it not been for this dread of leaving Saunders alive to tell his tale if chance should send a white man that way.

Vernon knew well enough that it was his gold that Benton had stolen. Benton had taken advantage of his illness and Grey's absence to take the key that he wore around his neck and open the iron-bound box to remove the gold and substitute the stones, so that unless the box was opened the difference in

the contents would be unnoticed. By this time Vernon had heard, too, of Benton's crime on board the "Amaranth," and so, with Saunders's terrible story in his ears, he resolved to settle accounts with the miscreant at once and for all.

CHAPTER 7.

AT BAY—BENTON'S LAST SHOT—VERNON HEARS THE TRUTH—THE SAILOR'S GRAVE—LEVUKA.

Saunders's pitifully weak voice had hardly died away when there came the sound of someone crashing through the underbush; then a volley of oaths, at the sound of which Saunders crouched trembling and cowering behind Vernon; and the next instant the bush parted, and Benton burst out upon them.

He looked wild and dishevelled; his eyes were bloodshot, and his face was inflamed from the effects of drink. At the sight of the party he started back, for he had expected to find no one but his victim—Saunders. He had a rifle in his hand, and instinctively he raised it to his shoulder, and stood glowering on them like a wild beast at bay.

For one moment no word passed between them. Then Vernon, with his revolver covering the murderer, advanced a step.

"Put down your rifle, for resistance is useless, Benton!" he said calmly.

"Not I! No, curse me if I do!" shouted Benton, with savage fury. "Another step nearer, captain, and you drop! Yes, I'll waste my powder and shot on you, though it ain't you as I want to settle accounts with. It's that skulking cur behind you! Come out, Charles Grey, if you are a man, and fight it out with me!"

"It is you and I, not Grey, who have accounts to settle! Put down your arms, you murderer and thief!"

As he spoke Vernon advanced another step, and the others closed in around the desperate man, who glared from one to another of them as though deliberating whom he should fire upon.

Still they cautiously drew nearer and nearer, while both Vernon and Newton kept him covered with their pistols.

Newton, less calm than his leader, was trembling all over; not with fear, but with excitement.

"You are mad to defy us!" said Vernon. "Can you not see that your game is up, and——"

His last words were drowned by the report of Newton's revolver. Unconsciously his finger had pressed too hardly on the trigger, and the bullet sped out and embedded itself in Benton's thigh.

"With a yell of rage and pain the desperado dropped to his knees, and as the others rushed forward to secure him he discharged his weapon—not at Newton, as might have been expected, but at Grey, who had been standing in the background, totally unconscious of what was passing.

With a loud scream Grey flung up his hands, and while a great rush of blood spouted from his breast, he tottered a couple of steps forward, then swung round on his heel, and fell face forward to the ground.

Meanwhile Benton was struggling like a tiger in the grasp of Vernon and the others. It took them long to secure him, for the man was more like an enraged demon than a human being; and at last it was necessary for Vernon to give him a blow on the head with the butt-end of his revolver, which deprived him of sense and the power of resistance.

The moment that Benton fell inert to the ground, Vernon left the others to deal with him, and sprang to the side of his wounded friend.

"Charlie!" he cried, flinging himself down on his knees beside the inanimate body. "My old chum, for mercy's sake——"

In that moment Vernon's generous heart forgave the wrong that the other had done him. He only remembered that the wounded man was his friend, who had nursed him through his terrible illness, and who had even denied himself the necessities of life for his sake.

With a low moan Grey twisted himself around, and lay looking up into Vernon's pitying face.

"Vernon, is that you? What are we doing here? What has happened? I am scorching—my breast is on fire! Oh, have pity on me, and help me! I know I don't deserve your help or pity, for I meant to rob you—yes, rob you of the money that we kept in the iron-bound box! And then Big Tom came, and I was mad, and killed him! I don't know why, for I liked him, and he was fond of me! Water! In the name of mercy, give me a drink!"

"You are raving, Charlie! You don't know what you say, old friend!" said Vernon, as he raised Grey's head and poured the few drops of water that they still had down the sufferer's throat.

The blood was pouring from the wound in a never-ceasing stream, and the coarse grass was dyed a deep red-brown. In vain Vernon tried to stanch the flow.

"No, it is no use. Let it be, Vernon. It would not help me to stop it; and it is easier so. Vernon, I deserve to die! Vernon, I am a murderer! And it is the old eternal justice—an eye for an eye, you know!"

"Charlie, you are raving!" repeated Vernon.

"No, I am in my senses now. I have been mad! I think that it was those nine days on the 'Amaranth' that turned my head! Vernon, I swear to you that I never meant to rob you until they carried you away and left me alone with the box. It was a sudden maddening temptation, and I seized the box and buried it in the sand while the others were away; but it was not safe in the place where I buried it, so when night came I went down to the shore and dug it up, and carried it to the place where Newton found it. It was I who placed it there, not Tom; he had no hand in it, poor fellow! I had hardly put it out of sight when he suddenly appeared. I thought he had been spying on me, for my own guilty conscience made me suspect others. I had my knife in my hand, and in a sudden fury I struck at him. I did not mean to kill him. I swear that I forgot that the knife was in my hand! And then he dropped, and I knew that I was a murderer! He made me give him the knife then to hold in his hand, so that when they found him dead they would think that he had taken his own life! He who loved life so dearly—but he loved me better, Vernon—and I killed him!"

Grey had spoken in a steady voice, though the agony that he was suffering brought the perspiration out on to his forehead in great drops that ran down his face and mingled with the blood on his breast.

A silence that lasted a few minutes. Then Grey spoke again, and his voice was perceptibly weaker.

"And now you know why I am glad to die! How could I go on living with the memory of that deed ever before me? I am a murderer, Vernon! Can you still hold me, and know that? Can you still touch me? I have taken another's life!"

"Charlie, you did not know! You were not in your senses! It was for my sake that you deprived yourself of water during those terrible days on the 'Amaranth.' I know it, because the others have told me. They told me how little they had had; but you had less, for you gave half your share to me! And do you think that I can forget that, and turn away from you now?"

"Then," Grey's voice quivered with eagerness, which was even stronger than the death agony—"then you forgive?"

"I have nothing to forgive. But if I have, I do forgive most freely," said Vernon, deeply moved.

"Thank—thank you, old——"

Grey made a desperate effort, and held out his hand to Vernon, but before the latter could touch it it fell heavily by his side. From the wounded chest there burst forth a torrent of blood. Then a shudder seemed to pass over Grey's body, a brief struggle, as though he was fighting off the grim reaper, and then from his lips there burst a cry. "My heart—that cold hand on my heart——" And while the echo of his voice was still in the air he fell back into Vernon's arms—dead.

* * * * * * *

By the still smouldering fire which Benton had made they found the chest containing the missing gold, and they dragged it down to the boat, where already Vernon had carried his dead friend. Saunders, still unable to walk upright, was carried to the boat, and also the wretch who had reduced him to so pitiful a condition.

Then they pushed off from the shore; and when they were out on deep water the sail was furled and the boat drifted idly while the body of Charles Grey was committed to the deep.

Three days later they arrived at Levuka, but Benton was not with them. On returning to consciousness, and finding himself bound hand and foot, he had struggled with almost superhuman strength for freedom, so as to imperil the safety of the boat. So horrible were the curses that he uttered that Vernon bade them bind his mouth. This caused him to redouble his efforts to get free; but suddenly they ceased, and he lay quietly in the bottom of the boat. At first they thought he was feigning, but when an hour passed and he did not move they became alarmed and removed the gag. Then they found that he had long since ceased to breathe—he had broken a blood-vessel in his frenzied efforts, and had died from internal bleeding.

Before they arrived at Levuka, Vernon divided the gold-dust into six equal shares—to each of the five men who were with him he gave one part, and retained the sixth for himself; and it was with part of this share that he raised a cross in the cemetery at Levuka to the memory of the man who was strong enough to give his life for another, but yet, who succumbed to the temptation of a handful of shining gold!

THE END.

into bags by ferrets, are caught wholesale in large nets. A gang of rabbit-poachers will choose a warm, dry night, when the bunnies feed well away from their burrows in the hedge-banks. A large net, something after the fashion of a loose tennis-net, is set up between the rabbits and their holes. A couple of men take charge of the net, and the rest make a circuit, and drive the feeding rabbits towards their burrows. As they rush towards the hedge the net intercepts them, and they are disentangled and killed by the watchers. Forty or fifty are often taken on a favourable night.

Rabbits are generally taken in larger numbers than pheasants or hares, but they are not so lucrative to the poacher, eightpence being the average price for a poached rabbit.

The most ingenious devices are often arranged for the disposal of poached game. A short time ago a landowner discovered that his stock of winged and ground game was growing beautifully less. He cautioned his keepers, every effort was made to capture the offenders, but the game continued to diminish. The outlets of the village were watched, but no game ever passed them. At length the members of the gang quarrelled, and one of them "split." It appeared that the takings were put in a large hamper, and deposited in a secluded spot by the side of the railway.

The guard of one of the trains was in league with the gang, and as his train approached the spot every day he hooked the hamper with a long salmon-gaff, hauled it into the van, and, after selling the contents in a neighbouring town, divided the proceeds with the poachers.

In Yorkshire and Scotland the grouse are both shot and netted. Over the moors a keeper can be seen miles away, and the poacher can openly shoot and trap.

All grouse sold in London on the morning of August 12th are poached, for no grouse could reach the metropolis before the evening.

AN ECHO FROM THE PAST.

It was Christmas Eve; out in the streets the fallen snow lay like a pall upon the ground, hiding for a time the streets of the city paved with gold. The few people still out in the cold air were all bent upon [illegible] object—the reaching of home—meaning for some the sumptuous mansion, for others the dingy room—but still their home.

It was to one of these latter that a tall, famished-looking man hastened. It was a long way, and the snow oozed into his worn-out boots, chilling the little blood still left in his veins. With many a curse he tramped on, gazing longingly at a potato-stall as he passed; but his hands in his pockets told him it was no good.

At last, after passing through many a dingy street, he stopped before a dirty-looking house, and rapped sharply against the fastened door. A shuffling of feet announced the approach of the inmate, the door was opened, and the man stumbled up the flight of stairs before him.

At a door on the second landing he stopped, and for a moment a faint smile flickered across his face, to be instantly driven away by thoughts of his penniless condition. Knocking softly at the door he entered.

It was a low-pitched room, devoid of light or fire and, as far as could be seen, of food. Sitting over the empty grate was a woman, holding in her arms a fair-haired little girl of perhaps six years of age. As the man entered she carefully put the child down, and hastened to meet her husband.

"Any news, Jim?" she asked, trying to make her voice sound cheerful; but it was a poor attempt, for her voice ended in almost a sob, and the child fell into a fit of coughing.

"No, dear," he answered, in a husky voice; "none, though Heaven knows I've tried! I've had no luck. No one seems to want help—no one seems to have pity, no one. So we are left alone to starve."

"But, Jim! this is Christmas Eve, and there is nothing in the house, not even a crust, and little Dot's cough is so bad that—that sometimes I think she will die. Perhaps it would be better so."

"Do you remember," she continued, "how this very evening last year you returned with plenty of gold, gold which would now perhaps save our child?"

At the mention of Christmas Eve twelve months back the man started visibly, and grew even paler than before.

"Don't speak to me of that night!" he growled; "it reminds me of—of our present state." He glanced fearfully round, and his hands wandered to his throat as if he could not breathe.

"It is strange that to-night," he muttered, "I should feel this awful haunting fear which even on the day when I—I did it I did not feel! To-night I am penniless, and to-morrow is Christmas. A day of joy for others, for me a day of haunting fears and starvation." Here he ended, and his face almost lost its lines of care and poverty as he glanced across to his child, now sleeping, ignorant of its trials to come.

And as it slept the man prayed that it might die, and spend its Christmas in the heavens, far away from this world of crime and misery.

"I—I think I'll try and sleep," he said, turning to his wife, "and to-morrow perhaps I shall be able to beg help from those who have once known want, and who, in their prosperity, forget not the terrors and misery of the poor."

"Good-night, Jim!" his wife said as cheerfully as possible, "and may you dream of the happy time twelve months ago."

Again the man shuddered, and covered his eyes with his hands as if to shut out some terrible nightmare. With an unsteady step he passed into the next room and locked the door. Fearfully he gazed into the darkness before him, and almost shrieked at a mouse making for its hole.

With trembling fingers he brought a stump of candle from his pocket, all the time glancing fearfully around. This he lit, and by its light passed over to the solitary chair in the room. Dragging it to the side of the dirty bed, he flung himself into it; but for only a moment did he sit there. With a cry of terror he sprang to his feet and glanced wildly behind him. But nothing was there—nothing. Trembling, he placed the chair firmly against the wall, and his trembling hands felt the wall as if to convince himself there was nothing behind him.

Now and again he muttered to himself, and lashed out wildly with his arm. The light of madness gleamed from his starting eyes. Hunger and remorse had turned him mad—remorse for some ne'er forgotten crime.

"There's blood upon my hands!" he shrieked—"blood. It's warm, and drips, drips on to the gold; but I must have it—the gold—gold! How easy it was, as he sat there counting his clerks' money! And he was old—he could not fight—and so I killed him—and his blood spurted over me! I shall be hanged! Take away that rope—it's not me, not me!"

Half choked in his frenzy the wretched man gasped for breath, and at last fell into a troubled sleep.

On, on he slept, the hours flew apace, and the early morning sky was tinged a blood-red. The neighbouring church clock struck seven.

The murderer started up, foam on his lips, madness in his eyes, and counted the dull, heavy beats of the bell.

"One—two—three—four—five—six—seven—eight—no! only seven! I've still another hour to live—then they'll fetch me—tie a rope round my neck—and murder me! Murder, did I say?—yes, murder. I didn't do it! I am innocent! What about the knife?—what knife?—I have no knife!—no knife!"

On, on he rambled, talking of his boyhood, of his courtship, of his marriage.

Again the church-bell tolled; this time eight beats were heard. The murderer was now sleeping, and the bell woke him not. At last a noise in the next room caused him to start up and glare fearfully round.

"What's that noise?" he screamed, as footsteps approached the door.

"They've come to fetch me; but they sha'n't have me—no! Where's the knife—stained with his blood—where's the knife?"

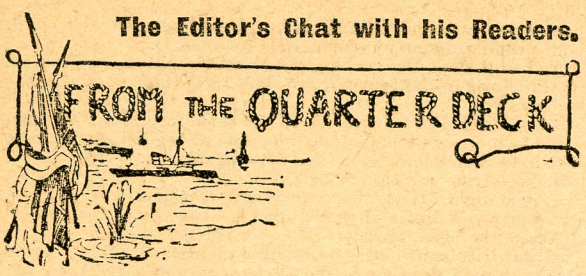
Just then a knock came at the door, and two plaintive voices called: "A merry Christmas, father!"

At the sound of the voices the man trembled, thinking the gaolers without; then, bearing towards the bed, he pulled from out of the mattress a brown-stained knife. With an exultant cry of mad frenzy "A life for a life!" he plunged the keen blade straight down to his heart, and fell dead before the eyes of his wife and little one.

Experiments seem to show that a large ocean steamer, going at nineteen knots an hour, will move over about two miles after its engines are stopped and reversed, and no authority gives less than a mile and a half as the required space to stop its progress. The violent collisions in some cases during fogs may thus be accounted for.

Sea-fogs occur whenever the water of the ocean is warmer than the air that is resting or moving on its surface. This is especially apt to be the case in the immediate vicinity of coasts, where a chill state of the atmosphere is very likely to be generated at night. The fog, in such situations, is a very unwelcome visitor, and the long list of accidents occurring to vessels in fogs sufficiently indicates the peril with which they are accompanied. Sea-fogs are probably at their worst on the Banks of Newfoundland, where they are mainly caused by the warm waters of the Gulf Stream. When a fog-bank is lying off the harbour of St. John's, it is not uncommon for the bowsprit of a ship to be seen emerging from it, while not a trace of the masts and hull is perceptible; and again, at times the topmasts will be in bright sunshine, while the crew cannot see from stem to stern on deck.

The Editor's Chat with his Readers.



The week before last I promised, at the request of a reader, to explain the meaning of the various marks found on the sleeves of sailors' tunics in the next number. Owing to pressure on my space, I was unable then to do so, but now I give them.

The first four are badges of rank. Number one is won by first-class petty officers, number two by second-class petty officers, number three by leading seamen. The fourth is a good-conduct stripe.

Figure five means that the wearer is a seaman gunner and torpedo-man; figure six, that he is a first-class seaman gunner; figure seven, first-class marksman; figure eight, gymnastic instructor.

Then come the badges of branch. Stokers' tunics bear number nine, signalmen's, number ten; artificers', number eleven; and those of men in the sick berth staff, number twelve.

The branch badges are sewn on the right arm, the rank badges on the left.

Officers in the Navy are distinguished by the gold stripes on their sleeves. A well-known authority says: "Rank is denoted by the number, and the branch by the nature of the stripes.

"The executive branch have plain gold stripes, the upper stripe having a curl.

"The civil branch have a distinguishing colour between gold stripes. Distinguishing colours are: For engineers, purple; medical officers, scarlet; naval instructors, light blue; and paymasters, white.

"In numbers, sub-lieutenants have one stripe; junior lieutenants, two; senior lieutenants, two stripes with a narrow one between them; commanders, three; captains, four; a rear-admiral, a broad stripe and one of the usual size; an admiral of the fleet, one broad stripe and four others."

A party of explorers in Western Australia are stated to have discovered a series of reefs, or what might more properly be described as a huge deposit or mountain of gold, bearing stone of unsurpassed richness, the extent of which has not been fully ascertained. A large quantity of the deposit has been submitted to the practical test of the crushing-mill, and has given the surprising result of twenty-seven ounces per ton.

Let me call your attention to the story I publish next Friday. It is by Mr. W. Shaw Rae, is entitled "The Dagger of Dunloe," and is a story about Sexton Blake, the great detective. Order your copy now.

By the by, "keep your eyes skinned" for the "Harmsworth Magazine," this firm's latest journal. Its first number makes its bow on the 12th of July, and is calculated to "lick creation." In it you will find all, and more, than you have been accustomed to get for sixpence, and for threepence only. Threepence a month is not likely to land any of you in the Bankruptcy Court, so make up your minds to buy it on the 12th, and every month after.

All the best authors and artists are working for it. Remember. "THE HARMSWORTH MAGAZINE," JULY 12th. THREEPENCE ONLY!

The line to which vessels, passed on a voyage between this country and America, belong can be told by the colour of their funnels. I append the distinctive colouring of the funnels of the ships belonging to the leading lines:

Allan—Red, with white band and black top.
Anchor—Black.
Cunard—Red, with black top.
Guion—Black, with broad red line and black top.
Inman—Black, with white band and black top.
National—White, with black top.
White Star—Cream colour, with black top.

The scale of pay in the Royal Marine Artillery is as follows, "M. R.":

Warrant officers, £107 4s. 4½d. to £113 6s. 0½d.; non-commissioned officers above the rank of corporal, £62 7s. 1d. to £101 2s. 8½d.; corporals and bombardiers, £45 12s. 6d. to £50 3s. 9d.; gunners, £26 4s. 8½d.

In the Royal Marine Light Infantry:

Warrant officers, £98 1s. 10½d. to £107 4s. 4½d.; non-commissioned officers above the rank of corporal, £47 2s. 11d. to £88 19s. 4½d.; corporals, £34 19s. 7d.; privates, £21 5s. 10d.

One penny per diem, beer money, in addition to above rates, when on shore is paid to gunners and privates.

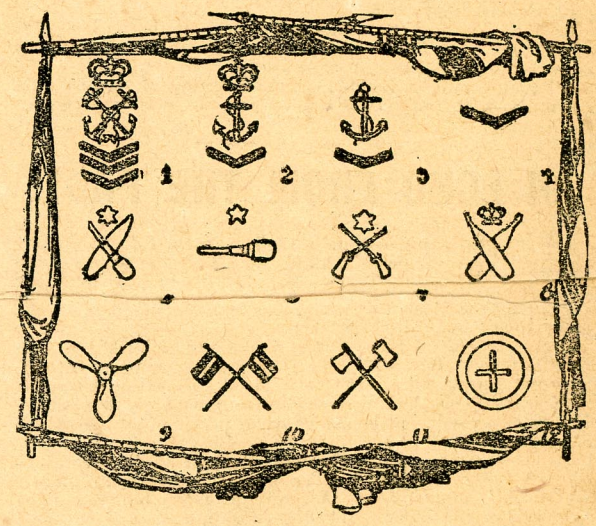
When not in quarters from £9 2s. 6d. to £38 10s. in addition, according to rank.

Good shooting prizes from 2s. 6d. to £3 17s. 6d. Signalling from 15s. to £2.

A large number of non-commissioned officers and men receive extra pay varying from 3d. to 3s. per diem; also good conduct pay to gunners and privates from 1d. to 5d. per diem. Gunnery pay to qualified men 1d. per diem, and prizes for good shooting are also awarded.

Small furloughs on full pay are granted to well-conducted men for the purpose of visiting their friends.

The training-school for the horses of the New York Fire Department at Harlem is a unique establishment. There the untrained horses are brought and trained to jump from their



stalls at the first sound of the alarm-gong, and rush out to their stations, where they stand ready for the lightning-like adjustment of the harness, and quivering with impatience for the great doors to be thrown back, that they may whirl the engine or hose-carriage out into the street.

It is astonishing to find how rapidly this training is accomplished. The average horse understands his new duties pretty thoroughly at the end of two days, and the least intelligent never takes longer than a week to learn them.

After thoroughly testing the new animal to find if his wind is in perfect condition, he is put in a stall, and at first led backwards and forwards to his station before the engine some dozen times or so, to accustom him to ducking his head to get under the collar and harness. Then he is left in his stall, and coaxed to come forward under the harness of his own accord by kind words and rewards of sugar and apples.

He is then taught to come forward at the clang of the gong, and after a little practice at that his education is complete, and he is transferred to one of the regular fire-engine stations.

The system of training is entirely that of kindness, and recourse to the whip is never necessary. The horses seem to like the work, and grow as enthusiastic over it as one of the old volunteer firemen. Of course, horses that do this kind of work have to be both strong and speedy. Sixty pounds is the average price paid for them, and they must be between sixteen and sixteen and a half hands high, weigh from 1,200lbs. to 1,450lbs., and be from four to six years old. Their usual length of active service is about five years.

Yours sincere friend,
The Editor

Printed and Published by the Proprietors at 24, Tudor Street, London, E.C.

2/6 GOLD WATCH FREE

These Watches are solid 14-carat gold, and our usual list price for them is £5 each; but to introduce our enormous catalogue we will send you this Watch free, if you take advantage of our marvellous offer. If you want one write to us without delay. With your letter send us 2s. 6d. P.O., for which we will send you a large presentation case containing six of our wonderful "Euro Silver" Tea-Spoons, which we guarantee to wear like solid real silver throughout. The Watch is sent free by registered post on your complying with our advertisement and with the marvellous offer which we will send, and it is warranted for five years. After you receive the beautiful Watch, we shall expect you to show it to your friends, and call their attention to this advertisement. Address:

WATCHMAKERS' ALLIANCE, LIMITED. 184, OXFORD ST., LONDON

(Money returned if not more than satisfied.)

TESTIMONIAL (One of Hundreds).—"I am very pleased with the Watch, which quite surpassed my expectation. It has been much admired, and has not varied a minute. The Spoons look worth three times the money you charge."—F. STINCHCOMBE, 2, Crosscombe Street, Coedpenmaen, Pontypridd.

1/- 1,000 GOLD WATCHES FREE!

To introduce our now celebrated Soap to 1,000 more readers of this paper, we have decided to give away 1,000 GOLD WATCHES ABSOLUTELY FREE OF COST. These Watches are REAL GOLD HALL-MARKED, and at retail would cost upwards of FIVE GUINEAS. If you want one write to us without delay. With your letter send us 1s. Postal Order, for which we will send you a tablet of Dr. Garland's Facial Soap and our Offer, on complying with which the Watch will be sent free by registered post. We have overwhelming testimony that our Facial Soap is the best ever offered to the British Public, and our idea for giving away the Watches is that you may talk about us among your friends, and recommend our Soap wherever possible.

"The Gold Watch arrived quite safe this morning. I am very pleased with it. Many thanks to you for sending it."—Miss H. HUNT, Potbridge, Odiham, Hants.

MAY, GARLAND & CO. (Dept. 79),
Cheltenham House, 69, Mortimer Street, London, W.

A WATCH FOR NOTHING

We are going to give away 1,000 Silver Watches to advertise our Catalogue and our Jewellery. This is no catch, but perfectly genuine. Read our conditions, and then go in and win.

C* *B* *Y'S C*C* *
T* * *L*S V*C* *O*
R* *N* *E*S C*C* *

The words, when filled in, represent the names of three largely advertised articles of food.

DIRECTIONS.

Fill in the missing letters to the above words, and send the answer to us. If correct, we undertake to send you a Solid Silver Watch, a good timekeeper, usually sold by us at £2 2s. Our conditions are that you send us a stamped addressed envelope for us to write and tell you if you are correct; and if you should win the Watch, you purchase one of our Real Silver Chains as per our offer, which we will send you. Write at once, as by delay you may lose the chance.

To convince you of our offer being genuine, we send herewith copies of a few Testimonials which we are daily receiving

The originals can be seen at our depot on application.

"West End, Henlton,
"October 15th, 1897.

"Gentlemen,—I received the Watch and Albert safely, and am exceedingly pleased with same. I have shown it to my friends, all of whom are astonished to find it such a genuine bargain. One of my friends wishes to know if he could obtain one in the same manner, or has the time expired? With sincere thanks, I remain, yours truly, MR. CROWS."

"10, Dean Street, Liskeard,
"November 1st, 1897.

"Dear Sir,—I received the Watch and Chain on Tuesday last, and I am very pleased with them. The Watch is keeping good time.—Yours truly, Miss R. SWEET."

"The Folly, 43, Thornton St., Hertford,
"November 1st, 1897.

"Dear Sir,—I received your Watch and Chain quite safe, and was very well pleased with them; and many thanks for your kindness for sending me one of your catalogues; and perhaps I will have the pleasure of giving you another order before long. I remain yours truly.—Miss E. GATES."

"New Brancepeth, Durham,
"November 2nd, 1897.

"Dear Sir,—Just a line to say that I received the Watch and Chain which you sent me, and was highly pleased with them. I have shown the Catalogue to many of my friends.—Yours respectfully,
"MISS ADAMSON."

P. GRAHAM & CO.

Wholesale & Retail Jewellers,
277, STRAND, LONDON, W.C.

FREE. FREE.

OUR

£21 BICYCLES £21

To every person taking advantage of this advertisement and the offer we will send. The Bicycle is packed in a wood crate, and is sent to your address **FREE** of any monetary charge, with one exception—that you pay carriage to Railway Company when you receive the Bicycle. We are giving these machines away as a startling advertisement, feeling assured that after you receive the Bicycle you will recommend us to all your friends as being a firm to be relied on for honest, straightforward dealings.

£21 BICYCLES £21

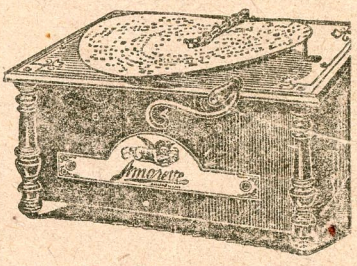
For **1s. 6d.** we will forward our Gent's Epingle-de-Cravate or Lady's Broché, together with our offer: and on your complying with offer the Bicycle is forwarded **Free of Charge**, as above stated. To save any disappointment, we will refund money in full to any person sending in after all the Bicycles have been Given Away.

Send Stamped addressed envelope, together with P.O. or Stamps for 1s. 6d.

THE ANGLO-AMERICAN AGENCY

(Dept. 33), 196, ST. VINCENT ST., GLASGOW.

PHENOMENAL SUCCESS.



Thousands Sold in a Few Months.

Size, 13in. by 13in. by 8in.

Weight, 12lb.

To any person who cuts out this advertisement and sends it to us at once, we hereby guarantee to send, carriage paid, for 20s. only, the

ROYAL AMORETTE

equal in every respect to the four-guinea organs advertised elsewhere. The **ROYAL AMORETTE** is in a handsome black and gold case, has 16 indestructible steel reeds, and will play not dozens, but hundreds of tunes. We sent one to the Editor of "Fashion Novelties" for his inspection, and he replied: "Herewith please find 20s. for the **ROYAL AMORETTE** you sent on approval. I shall purchase several for Christmas presents, and cannot understand how they can be made at the price. It is the best home musical instrument I have ever seen."

The advantage of the **ROYAL AMORETTE** is that it can be played by children of any age. It will play hymns, polkas, and all the popular tunes of the day. We will pay carriage throughout any portion of the British Islands, but for foreign countries postage for twelve pounds' weight must be sent.

The small picture above gives a very small notion of the instrument, which is large, handsome, and melodious. Do not confuse the Royal Amorette with any other advertised instrument. It is the only one of its kind in the world, and if you are disappointed with it we will cheerfully return the 20s. on receipt of the Royal Amorette, if returned at once.

The Royal Amorette, including 6 (six) metal tunes and packed in a strong wooden box will be sent only to the readers of the UNION JACK who, in addition to forwarding **20s.**, cut out this advertisement. Remit by Postal Order to

THE SAXON TRADING COMPANY
84, Oxford Street, London, W.

Just the thing for the long winter evenings for Dances or Parties. 6 extra Tunes, six for 4s. or 12 for 7s. 6d., Carriage Paid. New lists of tunes ready.

2/7/6