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AN OCEAN TRAGEDY;

Or, BRITONS ON THE SEA.

A Long Novel,
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this Number.



He dealt the traitor a blow that sent him spinning backward, and amid a great crashing of glass Dr. Moulton disappeared from view.

No. 286

An Ocean Tragedy.

By CHARLES HAMILTON,

Author of "Bold British Boys," &c., &c.

CHAPTER I.

The Dying Skipper—The Inca's Diamond—The Beginning of the End.

The captain of the "Caradoc" lay dying. While the ship, under easy sail, moved placidly upon the sunny waters of the Pacific, under a sky of cloudless blue, the sands of John Denham's life were running out.

He lay in his bunk in the after-cabin, his face as white as that of a corpse, his eyes glassy, his breath thick and laboured. Only a single sheet covered him, for the afternoon was hot. Outside the sheet his right arm was stretched, and in the trembling fingers was clasped a small circular box.

Small as this box was, it evidently contained some article upon which Captain Denham set a very high value, for he held it with a tenacious grip, and at times his eyes roved upon it with an expression of tingling avarice and regret, as though he could not endure the thought of parting from his treasure at the command of death.

"Mine no longer," he murmured once, in despair. "Mine for a month, and the curse is fulfilled! Well is it called the Diamond of Fate!"

There was only one attendant in the cabin—a little, olive-skinned half-breed, of South American race. This was Colorado, the captain's servant. He had, since joining the "Caradoc" at Rio Janeiro, proved so faithful a servant that he had been chosen to nurse the captain during his illness, and this office he had fulfilled completely to the satisfaction of the officers.

At all hours of the day and night the half-breed was ready to wait upon the captain, and he seemed almost to live without sleep and rest. Yet an acute observer would not have deemed the South American either gentle or unselfish. His narrow forehead, cunning black eyes, and thin lips, seemed to indicate a nature that was crafty, perhaps cruel and relentless.

The box which the captain held in his weakening grasp he had taken from a secret receptacle at the head of his bunk. At the first sight of it the eyes of Colorado began to glitter, and now he watched it with wolfish expression.

"Colorado," the captain said feebly—"Colorado, call Mr. Durnford and Mr. Linwood."

"The man he named were the first and second mates of the "Caradoc."

Colorado took a step towards the bunk, his black, glittering eyes fastened upon the box. A sudden, terrible expression had come upon his dusky face. The captain, whose eyes were dimmed by the approach of death, never noticed it.

Whatever were the intentions of the half-breed, he had no time to carry them into effect, for a moment after the captain spoke a young man entered the open door of the cabin, treading silently, and approached the captain.

"I that you, Linwood!" asked the skipper.

"Yes, captain. I came in to see if you were any better," replied Linwood, a stalwart young Britisher, just out of his teens.

"I was about to send for you, Linwood."

"Can I do anything for you, sir?"

"Call Mr. Durnford and Dr. Molton. I want them, as well as you."

"Colorado, go on deck, will you, and ask the gentlemen to step down."

The half-breed nodded, and went. When his back was turned to Fred Linwood's, a Spanish scowl wrinkled his brow. Probably he had desired to be left alone with the captain once more.

The chief mate and the doctor came down at once. The faces of both expressed the deepest concern, as did Fred Linwood's. The captain had been liked by all the crew of the "Caradoc," officers and men alike.

Colorado returned with the two, but Captain Denham motioned him to leave the cabin, which he did immediately, with expressionless face; but he did not go far. He entered the adjoining cabin, where, since the captain had been taken ill, he had been permitted to sleep; and, after ascertaining that he was not observed, he applied his ear to a gimlet-hole in the bulkhead separating the two rooms.

Unconscious of the eavesdropper's actions, Captain Denham made the communication to his officers which he had called them into the cabin to hear.



A bitter smile came upon Captain Denham's haggard features as he watched their faces. "That diamond," he said, "has cost more lives than you could count up in ten hours!"

"Linwood," he said, "take this box, and open it. The lid flies back when you press the spring."

The second mate did as directed. When the lid flew back, a simultaneous cry of astonishment broke from the three men.

Within the little ebony box, resting upon the black velvet padding, lay an enormous diamond. Even in the dim light of the shaded cabin it broke out in rays of white fire. Dazzled by the brilliancy of the gem, and by the immense sum which that single stone represented, the trio stared at it in fascinated admiration, without speaking, after the first amazed exclamation.

A bitter smile came upon Captain Denham's haggard features as he watched their faces.

"That diamond," he said, "has cost more lives than you could count up in ten hours."

"I know it," said Dr. Molton, still devouring the wonderful stone greedily with his eyes. "I have heard its history. It is the celebrated Diamond of Fate, is it not, sir?"

"It is. Intrinsically, it is worth fifty thousand pounds. But as a curiosity its value is a quarter of a million. The British Museum would give me that for it."

Linwood and Durnford looked at each other. Fred's eyes were full of amazement. But in those of the chief mate a new expression was forming—an expression which had never been there before, and which was not pleasant to see. As for the doctor, he was unable to take his eyes from the diamond.

"I am dying," resumed the captain. "I leave this precious stone in your charge. But that you may know what you undertake, you shall hear the history of the stone. Doctor, if you know it, relate it; I am too feeble to talk much."

"It is a tale which is not wholly authenticated, but which is probably true in all its details," said the doctor, without moving his gaze from the glittering stone embedded in the velvet lining of the ebony box. "The diamond was originally found, it is believed, in Brazil. At the time of the conquest of Peru by the Spaniards it belonged to the Inca. One of Pizarro's followers seized it, intending to carry it to Spain. He was murdered by a comrade, who embarked with the stone. He, in turn, was flung overboard by the captain of the caravel, who thus became possessed of the diamond. The captain was afterwards hanged for his crime in Seville; but all trace was lost of the diamond. Nearly a century later it was seen in Venice, owned by Prince Costerini. Stolen from him, it disappeared until, 1793, when its then possessor, being guillotined in Paris by the Revolutionists, it was declared to be the property of the French nation."

"And after?" asked Fred Linwood, deeply interested. "In the turmoil of the Revolution it disappeared again. In 1840 a German offered it to the British Museum for half a million. As he could not prove his ownership, that was refused, and the German was afterwards found stabbed to death, and the diamond missing. It was heard of next in New York, where a millionaire bought it at an immense price from an Italian. He was robbed of it, and nothing more is known. There was a rumour, though, that it was seen thirty years later in Brazil, by an explorer, in the possession of an Indian chief, a soldier of the Guaycurus."

"Perfectly correct," said the captain, in a low tone. "And two half-breeds stole it from the Guaycurus. One of them, not knowing its value, sold it to me in Rio Janeiro for four thousand dollars. He had previously knifed his comrade."

"A terrible history!" Fred Linwood remarked, with a slight shudder.

"It is called," continued Molton, "the Inca's Diamond, or sometimes the Diamond of Fate, on account of the number of fatalities it has caused. There is a legend that it brings ill-luck to whoever possesses it."

"Its history would seem to bear out the legend," observed Linwood.

"That is true. Its first known possessor, the Inca, was burned to death by the Spaniards. Since then, each of its successive owners has been robbed of it, and most of them have met violent deaths."

"I am the last victim, as yet," groaned the captain. "I left Rio a hearty, able-bodied man; now I am a wreck, and shall be dead within a few hours!"

"I hope not, captain," replied the doctor; but he spoke half heartedly. Had the Death Diamond already extended its malign influence over him?

"Now you know," the unfortunate skipper went on, "why I left Rio in such a hurry, with whatever crew I could pick up at a moment's notice. With the diamond in my possession I dared not linger. Had the authorities got wind of it I should never have left Brazil alive."

"And now, sir," said Linwood, "what is to be done with the diamond?"

"I leave it in the charge of you three. Each is equally responsible for it. You are to carry it to London, and there sell it in my name for whatever it will fetch."

"And what is to be done with the proceeds?"

"The sum shall be divided into quarters. Each of you shall take a quarter, and the fourth quarter shall be devoted to charity. Thus some good will be done to compensate for the ill that accursed stone has wrought."

"But you, sir—have you no relations?"

"Neither kith nor kin. Now, each of you swear to observe my wishes."

The three men swore. An observer might have noted that the doctor spoke reluctantly, and that the chief mate stumbled over the words. But Linwood took the oath with thorough sincerity, and never suspected that his companions were not equally in earnest. However, willingly or unwillingly, the oath was taken by all three.

"Keep the secret," the captain said finally. "If the crew once came to know of the diamond being on board, they would mutiny, and murder you and each other to obtain it. I have often been tempted to fling it into the sea, and so end for ever its accursed power. But I could not bear to part with it."

"I should think not!" exclaimed Dr. Molton. "It would have been a crime to destroy it."

He spoke almost passionately. The dying man looked at him with a strange, slow smile. He understood. The Death Diamond was doing its usual work. Dr. Molton had already fallen a victim to it. This was the beginning of the end.

Then over Denham's mind surged a great regret. Why had he preserved that fatal diamond to breed distrust and dissension among his crew? Why had he not flung it into the Pacific, and thus rendered it for ever innocuous? What would be the result of his flinging such an apple of discord among his men? Crime, cabals, perhaps murder! Who could tell!

"Linwood—Fred Linwood," the skipper exclaimed weakly. Instinctively he placed his trust in that sturdy, Irish, manly

nature—that typical British sailor, strong and brave as a lion, gentle as a girl, honest and frank as heaven's sunshine.

"Yes, sir. What do you want?" asked Fred, stepping towards the bunk.

"The Diamond of Fate—fling it into the sea!" panted the captain.

Linwood looked doubtfully down at the blazing gem in his hand. It seemed a sacrifice to destroy it.

"Do you mean that, sir?" he said slowly.

"Can it? Heaven knows I do. I was wrong—wicked—to keep it on board the 'Caradoc.' Fling it overboard!"

"As you will, sir. It is your property, to dispose of as you choose."

He made a step towards the porthole, regretful, but obedient. Only one step, for the heavy hand of Chief Mate Durnford was laid upon his shoulder with a grasp that pulled him up short. Fred looked inquiringly at Durnford, and was startled by the pale face and gleaming eyes of the mate.

"Stop!" Durnford said sharply. "The diamond shall not be destroyed!"

"You heard the captain's order," Linwood replied quietly.

"The captain is in no condition to give such an order. Doctor, do you think such an order should be obeyed, in Captain Denham's present state?"

"Decidedly not," Molton exclaimed quickly. "An absurd—I might say, a wicked—command such as that is evidence that Captain Denham is suffering mentally from the effects of his disease."

The dying seaman gave a deep groan.

"What have I done?" he murmured. "Gentlemen, I appeal to you to let Linwood destroy the Diamond of Fate. I tell you that if it remains on board the 'Caradoc' blood will follow—blood, murder, death, crime! Will you not listen to me?"

Durnford laughed in a constrained manner.

"While you are feverish, captain, it is our duty to look after your property for you," he replied. "When you're hearty again you shall dispose of the diamond in any way that pleases you."

"You know very well that I shall never be hearty again. But do as you will; I will say no more. Linwood, keep the diamond."

"Do you withdraw your order, captain?"

"Yes, I withdraw it. Carry out the instructions I previously gave you. And you, Linwood, keep charge of the stone."

"I will do so, sir."

"As chief officer of this craft—" commenced Durnford.

The captain interrupted him with a gesture. "I repeat, I leave the diamond in charge of Frederick Linwood, and in charge of him alone. Linwood, hear in mind my words. I trust you implicitly. You are to keep the stone always about your person. Give it up to no one, on any pretext whatsoever. And take care of your life!"

They were the last words of Captain Denham. The excitement of the altercation had given the finishing touch to the expiring man. His face became ghastly, his breathing laboured; a shudder shook his frame, and the death-rattle sounded in his throat. They rushed to him, forgetting even the diamond; but they could be of no assistance. In a few minutes it was over.

And Captain Denham lay dead in his bunk, the first victim on board the "Caradoc" of the Death Diamond. The first, but not the last!

CHAPTER 2

Durnford Attempts to Obtain Possession of the Fatal Gem—Linwood Stands his Ground.

The captain, with the hand of Death upon him, had foreseen that the Inca's diamond would be a source of disaster to the ship "Caradoc." But he probably never guessed how terrible would be the consequences of the Death Diamond being brought on board. A quarter of a million pounds! That sum might well turn the head of many an honest man.

Four men as yet knew the secret—the two mates, the doctor, and Colorado the half-breed. The knowledge of the latter was, of course, unknown to the trio whom the captain had taken into his confidence.

How long would it be before all the crew knew of the treasure? It was only too likely to become known soon. And if the secret came out, what would be the result? It was not a pleasant contingency to contemplate.

So thought Fred Linwood, as he went slowly up the companion-steps after the death scene in the skipper's cabin. No one knew better than he the nature of the crew. He had wondered why Captain Denham had quitted Rio so hurriedly that he had not had time to collect his crew, many of whom had gone up country on leave. The deficiency was made up with Brazilians and negroes; as rough a set of hands as ever walked a deck. He knew the skipper's reason now, but he condemned the folly of it. To place a quarter of a million amid an English crew would be reckless; but to entrust it to a gang of lawless dusky cutthroat rascals was sheer insanity.

Linwood glanced at the men on deck as he came up. There were fifteen or sixteen lounging about, doing nothing. Of the thirty odd men who manned the "Caradoc," sixteen were Brazilians and ten blacks. The rest—and the only serviceable portion of the crew—were British; they had not gone ashore at Rio, and so had not been left behind at the hurried departure of the "Caradoc" from the Brazilian port.

"God grant that those ruffians learn nothing of the fatal diamond!" Fred Linwood muttered, as he leaned against the taffrail, and idly ran his eye along the deck, blistering in the solar heat. "The 'Caradoc' will become a floating toll if they do!"

The chief mate, who had stayed below to speak with the doctor, now came up, and glanced round for Linwood. Seeing him at the taffrail, he walked towards him, with a half-uncertain, half-dogged look upon his bronzed face.

Durnford was a man of thirty, a good seaman, and, hitherto, upon good terms with the second mate. Since the captain's secret had been confided to them, however, some bar seemed to have arisen between them. Linwood could not help feeling that Durnford regarded the great diamond with covetous eyes. The chief mate guessed as much, and uncomfortably felt that he was lowered in the estimation of his subordinate. The materials not only for friction and dislike, but for a strong antipathy, were therefore at hand.

The first mate was somewhat ashamed of the errand which now brought him to Linwood; but that did not make him any the less determined.

"I wish to have a word with you, Linwood," he said; and then, with a nod towards the helmsman, he stepped to the starboard-side.

Fred followed him, guessing what was coming, and resolute not to give way in the slightest degree if the chief mate required anything of him which he felt it would be indiscreet to grant.

"The captain being deceased, Linwood, I take command of the 'Caradoc.' I, therefore, am the proper person to take charge of any articles of value left behind by our late skipper," said Durnford.

"You heard what Captain Denham said upon that point, Mr. Durnford."

"Captain Denham was suffering from a disease which unhinged his brain, as is proved by his order to you to destroy the diamond."

"On the contrary, the captain was in the full possession of his senses."

"Even granting that, he is dead now, and his authority falls to me. As commander of the craft we sail in, I order you to deliver up to me the diamond the captain handed you," said Durnford, his bushy brows contracting in an angry frown.

"I am sorry to hear you give such an order, sir, for in conscience I cannot obey you," Fred answered, still quietly. "Having regard to the orders given me by our late captain, I shall retain possession of the diamond until we reach England."

"What difference can it make, Linwood, which of us possesses the diamond, since it is the property of neither of us?"

"The captain entrusted it to me. But if there is no difference, as you suggest, why are you so anxious to obtain possession of it?"

The chief mate coloured. He did not answer the question; he would, in fact, have found it somewhat difficult to do so.

"Do you venture to defy your commanding officer?" he asked, in a low, tense voice, that told of the suppressed passion in his breast.

"In this case, as your orders are directly opposed to those of the captain, I must act according to my own sense of what is right, sir," without intending any disrespect to you," Fred answered firmly.

"Then what if I place you under arrest?" said Durnford sharply, and with a glitter in his eyes.

"I shall resist."

"You will resist? But I reckon your resistance won't count for much, if you are foul enough to do so."

"You forget. The crew will learn the cause of our quarrel."

"And then?"

"Then they will cut our throats, and seize the diamond!"

Durnford reflected for a moment; then, gritting his teeth, he turned away, without another word, and descended the companion.

Linwood, with a troubled look upon his handsome, frank face, remained alone, walking the deck in anxious thought. This difference with the chief mate annoyed and disquieted him. He had always liked Durnford, who was not by any means a bad fellow in the main. Was this wretched diamond to make enemies of them?

Durnford went to his cabin, which adjoined the captain's. Colorado, who had here overheard the conversation in the next cabin, had gone. But the doctor was there, waiting for his friend.

"Well?" said Molton anxiously, as Durnford entered.

"It's no go, Molton; he won't give it up."

The sleek, calm face of the doctor assumed a very different

expression to its usual one. He had always been regarded by the men of the "Caradoc" as a good-natured, easy-going man. But there are depths in every nature which only very unusual circumstances reveal. Had Dr. Molton never been assailed by a great temptation he would probably have gone to his grave unstained by crime. He had often been shocked to hear of crimes committed by men prompted by avarice or revenge. Now he himself was tempted. And he fell through a struggle!

A quartar of a million! The very thought burned like fire in his brain. What were fifty assassinations in comparison with wealth like that? The doctor, in imagination, had already become a pretty thorough villain. He had mapped out at least a dozen schemes for wresting the diamond from Linwood and securing it wholly to himself. And there were but one or two of these precious plans that did not include a murder or two.

The change in the doctor's face startled Durnford. Molton looked, for the moment, as forceful as any wild beast.

"Then he must be forced to give it up!" the doctor fairly bled.

The chief mate drew back. The manner of Molton gave him a glimpse of the pitfalls amongst which he was treading.

"I do not see how it is to be done," he said coldly.

"Then it's my business to show you. Mark this, Durnford; with such an immense sum at stake we cannot afford to stick at trifles. Lives have been lost for much smaller sums than a quarter of a million!"

Durnford shuddered.

CHAPTER 3.

The First Attack—Who was the Assailant?—A Fiendish Scheme—Durnford Proves himself True Blue.

The burial of the captain took place the same evening, the torrid climate rendering that necessary. The "Caradoc" was in the South Pacific Ocean, eastward of the Australian continent. It had been the intention of the captain, after leaving Rio, to call at New Zealand, and trade reasons had made him approach these islands by way of the Malay Archipelago. There still lay, therefore, about a thousand miles between the "Caradoc" and her destination of Auckland, in the North Island.

The burial service, held in the cool of the evening, was attended by the whole crew, and the captain's body was dropped into the water with a weight at the heels. Fred Linwood read the prayers, at Durnford's request. For some reason the chief mate shirked that task. He was, perhaps, conscience-stricken, reflecting upon the greed he had shown concerning the diamond when the breath was scarcely out of poor Denham's body.

When the unfortunate skipper had disappeared for ever, a deep sadness fell upon Linwood. The ebony box containing the diamond, in the breast-pocket of his jacket, felt like an intolerable load, a crushing burden.

"There will be mischief," he thought to himself. "How and when will it come—that is the question!"

He resolved to keep upon his guard. The character of the heterogeneous crew made it necessary for the officers to carry revolvers, and Linwood was glad of that now, for, in the present condition of things, a six-shooter might prove his best friend. Yet he could hardly make up his mind to suspect that Dr. Molton or Durnford would use violence to obtain possession of the diamond.

The first watch that night fell to Linwood; and at midnight, when it ended, he was relieved by Durnford, who was to take charge of the second watch, which came next. The chief mate nodded surlily in answer to Fred's friendly salutation, and Linwood went to the companion, while the men of his watch walked away to the forecabin.

There was usually a swing-lamp alight to illuminate the companion-stairs, but it was now extinguished—accidentally, as Linwood imagined. He thought, as he descended in the darkness, that he would step into the cuddy, and give the steward the word to relight the lamp. He was utterly unprepared for an attack, in spite of his recent resolution to keep on his guard.

He had gone down three steps, when something dimly gleaming passed before his eyes, and he felt a heavy blow upon his chest. A sharp pain in the side told him that he was wounded, and a dampness of his undershirt made him aware of a sudden flow of blood. He uttered a cry, and struck out wildly with both fists.

The assassin's hand had darted under the mate's jacket, towards the breast-pocket, when Linwood's fists smote him full in the throat, and he went tumbling headlong downstairs.

"Caradoc!" he jerked out. And Linwood heard the curse, though he did not recognise the voice.

Fred was about to spring down in pursuit of the scoundrel, when he recollected that, wounded as he was, he would be utterly at the mercy of the foe if he got so close quarters again, for his revolver was useless in the dark. So, instead, he turned and ran on deck.



"Madman! A quarter of a million!"
Durnford, with a curse, gripped the doctor by the collar, and forcibly ejected him from the cabin.

"What's the matter, Linwood?" cried Durnford, coming towards him, startled by the sight of the young seaman's face, ghastly white in the starlight.

"I have been attacked and stabbed," said Linwood faintly. And he reeled dizzily, and would have fallen to the deck had not the strong arm of the chief mate caught him.

"Bear up, Linwood. Heaven grant it's not fatal! Lads, lend a hand here, and call Dr. Molton. Danson, take a dozen hands and hunt up the scoundrel who's skulking down there."

Danson, the boatwain, and a couple of English seamen rushed down the companion in search of the stabber; the Brazilians hung back.

Linwood was laid upon a sheet of canvas, and Durnford quickly whipped off the jacket, vest, shirt, and undershirt, to expose the wound. He drew a deep breath of relief to see that it appeared superficial. The villain had aimed at the heart, but the darkness had baffled him; his blow had been delivered wildly, and, instead of piercing Fred's breast, had gone sideways, just scratching his ribs. The hilt had hit Linwood and raised a bruise, showing the force with which the would-be assassin struck.

"Two inches to the right and he would have had it in the heart!" Durnford muttered. "One inch to the left and it would have missed him altogether. He has had a close shave. But what dastard could have struck him?"

Durnford became pale. Who, indeed, had wielded the blade? Had not the doctor, only a few hours before, hinted that the diamond must be bought at the expense of Fred Linwood's life? Had Molton stabbed the second mate and stolen the diamond?

Fred had become unconscious, the rapid loss of blood, and the biting pain of the wound, depriving him of his senses. Durnford, with a half-guilty feeling, thrust his hand into Fred's pocket, and felt for the ebony box. It was still there. He felt an irresistible temptation to transfer it to his own pocket. His fingers closed on it.

"Is he badly hurt, sir?"
The words, spoken by a sailor, recalled Durnford to himself. He could not take the box now, in the midst of a crowd. He released it, only just in time to prevent the onlookers guessing what had been his intention.

"No, Marlow; I think his wound is but slight," he replied unsteadily. "But where is Dr. Molton? Why does he not come?"

"I am here," said the doctor's quiet voice. "What has happened? What is the matter with Linwood?"

"He has been stabbed by some unknown scoundrel!" said Durnford, fixing his eyes upon the face of Bertrand Molton.

The doctor gave a violent start.
"And the—the—" he exclaimed. The presence of the seamen prevented him from uttering the name of the fatal diamond.

"Attend to his wound!" Durnford said sharply, taking no notice of the implied question.

The doctor knelt beside the insensible man.
"A mere scratch," he said. Then a thought appeared to strike him, and he looked closer at the wound, his face growing very serious.

"Well!" asked Durnford, impatiently and uneasily.

"Linwood is a dead man!"
"What do you mean? He isn't dead yet, anyhow, and I'm positive his wound is not a serious one!"

"I mean that there is absolutely no chance whatever of his recovery," the doctor said, with tense calmness, and a strangely pale face.

"Nonsense! A wound like that wouldn't kill a rabbit—"
"It would if the dagger were poisoned!"

"Poisoned?" The word was uttered by every man on deck, in tones of intense horror.

"Poisoned," Dr. Molton said, with whitening lips. "Linwood is done for. It only remains for us to find and punish the assassin."

"Carry him to his bunk," said Durnford to the seamen.

This was done, and poor Linwood was put to bed. The doctor remained in the cabin to attend to him, and Durnford, upon whose drawn brow the beads of perspiration were gathering fast, stayed with him. The seamen went out to join in the hunt for the assassin, who was as yet undiscovered. Durnford knew that his first duty was to unearth the villain who had struck the second mate so treacherously. But he had weighty reasons for remaining with the doctor.

"Molton," he said, in a strained voice, "you have not told the truth; Linwood's wound is not fatal; the dagger was not poisoned."

Molton nodded. He regarded the chief mate as already his companion in crime. They had, without many words upon the subject, agreed to get the diamond from Fred by fair means or foul; and Molton, prepared to go any lengths himself, did not suspect that Durnford would hang back. His estimate of Durnford was, however, incorrect.

"And what did you mean by trying to deceive me, Molton?"

"I did not intend to deceive you. My words were intended for the crew, so that Linwood's death may pass without suspicion."

"Linwood's death!" repeated Durnford, in hoarse tones.

"Exactly. He is in our hands. So is the diamond. His wound is not poisoned, it is true, but I can easily make it so."

"Was it you who dealt the blow?"

"It? Do you accuse me of that?" cried the doctor. And his look was actually indignant, as if he had not just been planning Linwood's destruction himself, and by a more cowardly means than a dagger-thrust.

"Was it you, Molton? I do not accuse you; I only ask the question."

"No, it was not me!"

"I am glad of that. Now, you have just proposed to me a mean, despicable, cowardly crime!"

"Durnford, take care what you say!" cried Molton, turning white.

"If it is not that, what do you call it, then?"

"Did we not agree to obtain the Diamond of Fate by any means that we could devise?"

"Heaven forgive us, we did!" Durnford said, passing his hand across his brow.

"And now the chance is in our hands."

"I will never consent to murder!"

"You will not consent? Curse your chicken-hearted scruples!"

Heard the doctor, with a rattish blaze in his eyes.

"No; and not only will I not consent, but I will keep the oath I swore to the captain on his deathbed! Reflect, Molton; you swore too. I've been on the verge of crime, but, thank Heaven! I've time still to retreat! This night's work has opened my eyes. I've always been an honest man, never afraid to look anyone in the face. That accursed diamond shall not ruin me, here and hereafter!"

The chief mate spoke with deep earnestness. He fully meant every word he said. The sight of Linwood, laid low by a cowardly assassin in the dark, had wrought a complete change in his feelings. For he had reflected, with dismay and horror: "I might have done this deed; the guilt might have stained my soul! The assassin has only done what was as good as planned by the doctor and myself!"

The chief mate's change of mind, however natural and laudable, did not seem so to Dr. Molton. He was deeply exasperated by the secession of Durnford, attributing it solely to cowardice. Molton's scheme, fendish as it was, was

ingenious, and seemed assured of success. And it enraged him to see it foiled by Durnford's untimely scruples.

"What!" he said, almost stammering in his agitation. "The game is entirely in our hands, and you throw up your cards!"

"Take my advice, Molton, and do the same."

The doctor swore a fearful oath.

"Never!" he cried fiercely.

"Very well; but recollect, Molton, I shall help Linwood to defend the diamond. I am on his side now, against you!" said Durnford firmly.

"Think, man! A quarter of a million!"

"Leave the cabin!"

"Madman! A quarter of a million!"

Durnford, with a curse, gripped the doctor by the collar, and forcibly ejected him from the cabin. Breathing fury, the disappointed conspirator hurried away.

The chief mate, sad-faced, but immensely relieved at heart, returned to Linwood, to bind up his wound. To his surprise he found the young mate quite conscious, though white as a sheet.

"Thank you," Fred said weakly; "you have saved my life!"

"You heard, then?" asked the mate, dropping his eyes, not daring to look the wounded youth in the face.

"You are a noble fellow, Durnford!"

"Don't say that. It makes me sludder to think how near I have been to murder!" faltered the mate.

"Think of it no more. You have repeated in time. Mate, that doctor is a perfect demon!"

"Yes; he means mischief still, I'm sure of that. Linwood, if you'll trust me, I'm your friend. I swear I'll never think again of possessing more than my just share of the diamond's price!"

Linwood extended his hand from the bunk.

"I believe you," he said gladly. "Henceforth we are friends, united against the doctor—against the whole crew if need be!"

A grip of the hand sealed the compact.

CHAPTER 4.

Colorado Under Suspicion—A Bold Stroke.

No trace was found of the scoundrel who had stabbed Linwood. He had escaped without leaving a trail.

Linwood told all he knew. His assailant was one of the South Americans; the Spanish oath he had uttered proved that. But there were sixteen Brazilians, without counting Colorado, the half-breed, and it was impossible to fix the guilt upon anyone.

There was a circumstance attending the matter which, even more than the attempted murder itself, caused disquietude to Linwood, and to Durnford, when it was communicated to him. The assassin knew of the existence of the diamond. His hand had been gliding into Linwood's breast-pocket, when the fists of the young sailor hurled him off.

"How could anyone know I had placed it there, even if anyone knew of its existence?" Linwood said, much puzzled.

"Are you sure it was not Dr. Molton who attacked you?" asked Durnford.

"Positive! A South American, I'll swear!"

"An accomplice of the doctor's, do you think?"

"That is possible, for it accounts for his knowledge. But could someone have played the spy upon us when the skipper gave us the diamond?"

"I don't see how. The door was closed, and though the skylight was open it was darkened with an awning; and no one but Neptune could have peeped in at the porthole."

"Who was aft beside us in the cabin?"

"The cook and steward were in the cuddy. No one else, that I can think of."

"Wait a minute. What of Colorado, the half-breed?"

"We sent him out of the cabin, you remember."

"But he may have waited in yours, Durnford."

"Likely enough, as his sleeping-quarters were there during the captain's illness. I've sent him to the fore-cabin now, though."

"If he were in your cabin, do you think he could hear what passed in the captain's?"

"Hardly; the bulkhead's too thick. And if he could hear, even, I don't understand how he could see."

"A gimlet would pierce any bulkhead on board."

"By Jupiter! you're right, Linwood. Wait here; don't get up. I'll just go and have a look at the wall."

Linwood, who was still in his bunk, waited for ten minutes, when the chief mate returned, his eyes full of excitement.

"You look as though you had made a discovery, Durnford," the second mate remarked interestedly.

"So I have. There is really a gimlet-hole in the bulkhead between my cabin and the captain's. It was stuffed up with tallow, which made it rather difficult to detect."

"Then our suspicions must fall upon Colorado."

"Certainly; and, if we face fix upon the half-breed, there are a score of minor points of evidence against him. His looks are not prepossessing, and you recollect that it was long before his devotion to the captain convinced him of his faithfulness. If he knew the captain possessed the diamond, and desired to steal it, his devotion was only a plausible pretext for frequenting the cabin."

"Shall we arrest him, and put him in irons?"

"That wouldn't do, without any proof. But at least we know what enemy to keep an eye upon."

"Yet Colorado does not seem to have made any attempt to purloin the Diamond of Fate from the skipper."

"Captain Denham kept it in a secret place, and Colorado couldn't have had the least idea where it was."

"All, of course!" assented Linwood, with a nod.

"Well, I must go on deck now, Fred; but you shall not remain alone; that would be too imprudent. Which of the men would you prefer to keep you company?"

"Marlowe, the bosun's mate, if you don't want him. I've known him for years, and I know he's true blue."

Marlowe was sent down accordingly. At midday there was a knock at the door of Linwood's cabin.

"Open it, Marlowe," said the mate, turning over in his bunk.

The bosun's mate did so, and Colorado the half-breed entered, with an air of profound humility.

"Pardon me, senhor," he said, in his silky tones. "But I, Colorado, have a great favour to ask."

"What can I do for you?" asked Linwood, surveying the South American with a keen, suspicious glance.

"The senhor knows how faithfully I nursed the capiteno during his illness. May Colorado have the honour of attending Senhor Linwood?"

Had not Fred's suspicions of the half-breed been aroused, he would, it is likely, have assented, and installed Colorado in the cabin in the place of Marlowe, who was too useful a sailor not to be missed from the deck. If he had done so his life would not have been worth much. But he was upon his guard now, and Colorado found him so.

"Yes, Colorado, you nursed Captain Denham well, I admit. But he died, all the same, did he not?" said Fred ironically.

Colorado started violently, and his dusky face assumed a greyness of hue that was noticed both by Linwood and Marlowe. The unexpressed agitation of the half-breed awoke a hideous suspicion in Linwood's mind. The discourse of the captain had been strange, mysterious, puzzling the skill of Dr. Molton. Was it possible that Denham had not died a natural



At length an opening was formed large enough to admit the passage of a man, and a brawny negro sprang through, whirling his axe aloft. With a down stroke Fred fairly split his skull, and he dropped.

death? Could it be that Colorado had hurried the unfortunate seaman into eternity? If his conscience was wholly clear, why this terrified agitation at a half-jesting remark that Denham had died under his hands?

"This is a cruel jest, seahor," the half-breed said, in a shaky voice, while he endeavoured to stifle the emotion excited by Linwood's words.

"Jest, Colorado? I am not jesting! Is it not a fact that you devoted yourself to the captain, and that the captain died?"

"Of what do you accuse me, seahor the mate?" asked Colorado, rendering his voice firm by a very strong effort, but unable to force back the colour into his hollow cheeks.

"Accuse you? I accuse you of nothing. Do you expect me to accuse you of"—and Linwood looked at him fixedly—"of poisoning the captain?"

Colorado was prepared for it; but the mention of the word "poison" made him literally palpitate with terror. He could not conceal it; he turned and walked out of the cabin with falling steps.

"Great Davy Jones!" ejaculated Marlowe. "You don't think really that he poisoned the skipper, sir, do you?"

"It is a suspicion, Marlowe, that's all. I can trust you to keep silent about the matter, can't I, until Mr. Durnford and I have decided what to do about it?"

"Certainly, sir. But what if the hound tries it on agin, with someone else, sir?" said the seaman.

"He won't; he's too scared. But, in case he does, just tell the cook and the steward to see that he's not admitted to the cuddy again, Marlowe. And pass the word for Mr. Durnford; I want to speak to him."

Marlowe went out, and soon Durnford came down. Linwood told the chief mate briefly of Colorado's request, and his suspicions.

"It is only too probable that Colorado killed the captain," Durnford agreed. "But, in that case, he must have known about the Inca's diamond before the skipper showed it to us."

"What more likely? Danham bought it of a half-breed at Rio. Colorado may have known the half-breed, and what he possessed."

The chief mate remained a while in deep thought.

"This is serious business, Linwood," he said at length. "Colorado, if he is bent upon getting hold of the diamond, may now communicate his knowledge to the crew. If he does, there will be a revolt."

"What if we seize the traitor at once?"

"It may be the best plan," Durnford said thoughtfully.

"Yes, we can accuse him of murdering Captain Denham; that will be a pretext for clapping him in irons and isolating him."

"I'll get up, then; we must be ready for a tussle."

"Do you feel strong enough?"

"Yes; that wound was only a scratch, though I've lost a lot of blood, more than I can spare." And Fred got out of his bunk without assistance, and commenced dressing. "But, Durnford, do you think we can depend upon our English seamen if news of the diamond leaks out?"

"Certainly—at least, while the South Americans are against us, for, if there is a revolt, those villains will cut every English throat on board, if they can contrive it. I can see Colorado's game. If he had been installed in your cabin, he would have sent you after the skipper, and secured the South diamond. His only resource now is to raise the South Americans to revolt. Yes, Fred, we can trust our countrymen while we're in a minority, anyway."

The second mate was soon dressed, and armed with a pair of revolvers, loaded in every chamber.

"Let us nail the rascal at once!" he said. "Shall we pass the word to the English sailors, Durnford, to be ready for trouble?"

"Yes; I'll see to that. Tell Hanson to pipe all hands on deck," said Durnford, as they went up the companion-ladder.

The hoarse wain's whistle was soon heard. While the Brazilians and the negroes were coming on deck, Durnford hastily explained to the British portion of the crew, then on duty, his suspicions of Colorado, and his intention to put the half-breed into irons. The chief mate had brought up cutlasses from the cuddy, and he served one to each of the six English sailors.

The South Americans are likely to oppose the arrest of Colorado, my lads," he said. "I look to you British seamen to support my authority. I can say that I have strong presumptive evidence that Colorado poisoned Captain Denham, and I am almost certain that he was the man who stabbed Mr. Linwood so cowardly last night. If the Southerners make trouble, my lads, will you stand by me?"

"Ay, ay!" cried the Britishers unanimously.

There was no love lost between the Anglo-Saxons and the Latins on board the "Caradoc." And it was not likely, in any case, that British seamen would stand idly by and allow their chief officer to be defied by a gang of Brazilians, the scum of a South American seaport.

The Southerners who were not already on deck came up. They were startled to see the Britons with cutlasses buckled on, and the two mates with revolvers in their hands. Colorado turned white with fear. Dr. Molton leaned against the bulwark idly, taking note of all that passed. Deep, dark thoughts were burning in the brain of the doctor. He had not yet given up the struggle for the Diamond of Fate. The doctor had a card to play yet which Fred Linwood and Durnford did not reckon upon.

"Men," said Durnford, addressing the crew, "there is a man among you whom I have reason to suspect of poisoning Captain Denham."

There was a murmur among the South Americans. Colorado turned almost grey in hue, and beads of perspiration gathered upon his brow.

"Step forward, Colorado," continued Durnford sternly.

The half-breed did not stir. Durnford lifted his revolver; the barrel, shining in the afternoon sun, was aimed at the face of Colorado.

"Colorado, come forward, or I will shoot you dead where you stand!" said Durnford grimly.

CHAPTER 5.

Colorado Under Arrest—The Doctor's Tactics—Rough Usage.

Colorado cast an appealing look upon his comrades. If he expected them to stand by him in this moment of danger, he was disappointed. Scowls wrinkled the faces of the Brazilians, and the black countenances of the negroes were frowningly bent upon the English. The sympathy of the ruffianly portion of the crew was with Colorado. But that sympathy did not take an active form—not as yet, at all events. Later on, discontent might flame into revolt; but at present, the half-breed, though he had a great influence over the Southerners, could not reckon upon an outbreak.

Whether Colorado had or had not poisoned the skipper, his friends cared little. They had all disliked Captain Denham, who, kind and careful commander as he was, had been too severe upon laziness and incapacity to suit the taste of the South Americans, idle rascals all. And to those ruffians, a cowardly crime like that imputed to Colorado did not seem so ghastly as to an English mind.

There were, then, scowls and groans among the South Americans, but no show of a disposition to forcibly oppose the shackling of Colorado. The half-breed, after a long and anxious scanning of the swarthy faces round him, saw that he was left to fight his battles alone. With a slow and hesitating step, he came towards Durnford, in reluctant obedience to the chief mate's command.

"Colorado," said Durnford, "I have told you of what you are accused. You are to be put in irons, and kept so until we reach Auckland. Then I shall charge you before the proper tribunal, and you will have a fair trial. If proved innocent, I will fully compensate you for what you undergo. But, with a suspicion of using poison hanging over you, the safety of the ship's company demands that you be kept in custody."

The eyes of the half-breed emitted a sullen gleam. "I protest against this arrest," he said; "and I assert my innocence. If anyone poisoned the captain, it was probably yourself, to obtain possession of the—"

"Silence!" thundered Durnford. "Carpenter, iron him!"

"I say—" recommenced Colorado, determined, since this was his last chance, to inform the crew of the existence of a diamond worth a quarter of a million on board the "Caradoc."

Durnford was equally determined that he should reveal nothing. He thrust the muzzle of his revolver fairly into the face of Colorado.

"Another word," he said icily, "and I pull the trigger!"

Colorado quavered into scared silence, only seditious hate glowing in his black, sullen orbs. The carpenter prepared the manacles—old rusty ones, hunted out of some odd corner of the ship, for Captain Denham had had but little use for such articles. But now, when Durnford and Linwood were congratulating themselves upon the success of their bold stroke, came a new diversion in favour of the crushed half-breed. Dr. Bertrand Molton, with his cool manner and silky, dangerous smile, lounged forward from his place by the bulwark, and spoke.

"As a member of the ship's company," he said, "if not as an officer, I beg to protest against this arrest, dictated, not by justice but by a personal dislike and dread of the accused, and a desire to prevent him from informing his comrades of a great discovery he has made, relative to a treasure kept on board this vessel."

So spoke our Machiavelian doctor, in the calmest of tones, astonishing the crew of the "Caradoc" more than a thunder-bolt, dropping from the blue sky overhead, would have done. Upon the different actors and spectators of this strange

scene, the speech had various effects. Colorado flashed with hope. The English, he thinks, are divided among themselves; things may not, after all, turn out so black as they appear. The South Americans, surprised, felt themselves, as it were, strengthened by the support given to their comrade by an Englishman of station on board. The British seamen, who respected the doctor, not knowing his inner character, were rendered uneasy and undecided by his opposition of the chief mate—an opposition, they believed, entirely disinterested. As for the two mates, they were not long in penetrating the doctor's motives. Since alone he could do nothing, he had decided to make a bid for the support of the crew; at least, of the South Americans.

Silence, lasting several minutes, followed the doctor's cunning speech, and the men looked at one another. Then Linwood spoke in a low tone to the chief mate.

"It must all come out now, Durnford."

"Yes, I suppose so. Curse that traitor! I did not reckon upon this."

"He has resolved to cast in his lot with Colorado and the South Americans."

"I'll take the bull by the horns, Fred, and tell all about the diamond now. What do you think?"

"It's the only course now," Linwood assented. "If we don't, Molton will, that's a dead certainty."

"What Mr. Molton says regarding a treasure," said Durnford, addressing the crew generally, "needs some explanation, which I will give."

There was a movement of interest among British and Iberian both, while the doctor smiled cynically.

"There was in the possession of Captain Deuham," continued Durnford, "a diamond of great value—"

"The celebrated Diamond of Fate, worth a quarter of a million sterling!" the doctor interjected, intending to lose no points if he could help it.

There was a buzz of amazement from all hearers. The chief mate went on:

"This diamond was left in the charge of Mr. Linwood, to be disposed of in London according to the captain's directions. I have reason to believe that the attack made upon Mr. Linwood last night was the work of some man who knew that he carried the diamond, and wished to steal it."

"And you admit," questioned the doctor, "that you arrest Colorado because he knew of the Death Diamond being on board, and you wished to prevent him from disseminating his knowledge?" Durnford's brows contracted in anger.

"Not!" he said sharply. "And you, Dr. Molton, must have played the eavesdropper, to learn that I knew of Colorado's knowledge!"

"I happened to be near the skylight of Mr. Linwood's cabin, when you were conversing with him upon the matter, and so I chanced to hear."

"An honourable man would chance to hear nothing that was not intended for his ears!" Fred Linwood said hotly.

The doctor, unmoved, shrugged his shoulders.

"Is that your opinion?" he asked, with calm insolence.

"You may be correct Mr. Linwood; but your remarks seem to me to be just a trifle irrelevant."

The chief mate determined to end this scene without delay.

"Carpenter, clap on the irons!" he said brusquely.

The shackles clicked upon the limbe limbs of the half-breed, who shuddered at the contact.

"Mon of the 'Carador,'" said the doctor, "I have protested against this cruel and unjust proceeding of the chief mate, and I can do nothing more. Hal, mark me, if that innocent prisoner were my comrade, as he is yours, I would not permit him to be arrested; I would not allow him to be put in irons; I would not—"

"By the skies above us, Burtrand Molton," said Durnford, in a grinding voice, "if you utter one word more, I'll have you ironed too!"

"You will? Never while I carry a revolver, and can pull the trigger!" cried the plotter.

"Have a care, man. I command this vessel, and I have force to back my authority. I am not a man to be trifled with!"

"If you are resolved to manacle that man, after I have exposed your motives for doing so—"

"Hold your tongue, sir!"

"I refuse to be dictated to!"

"Recollect that I command here!"

"I do; I do; and, when it comes to deciding who killed Captain Deuham, and we ask who benefited by his death, we shall not forget that 'you command here!'" the doctor said, with a malignant smile.

Durnford fairly shook with rage. That the man who had tried to lead him into the foul paths of crime should now adopt the role of champion of the oppressed was exasperating enough; but when the same scoundrel made vile and reckless accusations against the man who had withstood his insidious temptations, the matter became no longer endurable. The

chief mate started forward, and laid his grasp upon the conspirator's shoulder.

"I order you," he said hoarsely, "to go to your cabin!"

"I refuse!" was the defiant reply.

"I give you one minute to go!" said the chief mate, breathing hard.

"One minute or one hour, it is all the same to me. I will not go!"

"Then I'll show you who's master!" shouted Durnford furiously, quite losing command of his temper.

His grip was upon the man who had goaded him. With blazing eyes, he dragged Molton to the skylight of his cabin, which was open on account of the heat. The doctor thrust his hand under his coat for a weapon, but he had no time to draw it. Durnford, exerting his strength, flung him upon the skylight, and through the crashing glass he went flying into the cabin below.

There was a murmur of disapproval. This violence of the chief mate's did not please even his own men. And the South Americans, looking upon the doctor as their champion, were irritated deeply by his unceremonious treatment. Yet it was certain that, since Molton had deliberately defied the authority of the chief officer, Durnford had no choice but to forcibly remove him from the deck.

Molton did not reappear. Half stunned, badly cut and bruised, all the combativeness was taken out of him for the present. He remained below, grinding his teeth and planning vengeance. Unopposed now, Durnford saw Colorado securely shackled and carried down to the cuddy. A search was then made among the half-breed's effects, and on his person, for poison. But Colorado was too cunning to allow any evidence of his crime to survive. Directly, on his interview with Linwood in the latter's cabin, he knew himself to be suspected of poisoning the captain, he resolved what to do. While Durnford and Linwood were consulting, the half-breed had carefully dropped into the Pacific everything that might have strengthened suspicion against him. So that the two mates, while holding him in custody, had to confess that this was done solely on suspicion—a suspicion, however, which was, to their minds, pretty nearly a certainty.

CHAPTER 6.

The Influence of the Inca's Diamond—The Release of Colorado The Doctor Becomes a Rebel Leader.

Night fell, and all remained quiet on board the "Carador." It was the calm that precedes the storm.

Excitement and repressed disquietude signified. In the fore-cabin the South Americans, inflamed by hearing of the treasure, were greedily discussing it. Constituting the immense majority of the ship's company, these twenty-six ruffians naturally said to themselves, and to each other, that the Diamond of Fate could be theirs for the trouble of taking it.

"What do you say, mates!" said Rio Sim, a brawny African. "S'pose we cut de throats of de English, and de diamond ours! Who says so?"

"The English señors bear revolver," said Black Manual, a Brazilian; "and all the seamen carry cutlasses now."

"What of dat? We're more than three to one agin dem, and we all hab our knives."

"We must get out Colorado first, camaradas," said another.

"And the doctor," said Black Manual; "he should be our leader; he has a pistol, and I've seen him shoot too."

"But he's an Englishman," someone objected.

"What matter! When we're masters of the ship, couldn't we throw him overboard like the rest?"

"Let one of us go to him and see what he says."

"Black Manual's the man; he knows English best."

The black-browed Brazilian accordingly took his way to Molton's quarters.

It will be seen that Durnford and Linwood had not been mistaken in thinking that news of the diamond would be like a firebrand on board. The rumour was so immense that the seamen were perfectly on fire with cupidity.

If the British seamen did not become infected, it is because they were British seamen. It is not national partiality which causes us to say this. That the average sailor of British race is a frank, honest, simple-hearted man, is a fact too well-known to be disputed. Brave, calm-headed men, accustomed to respect their officers, and to detect a thief above all other rogues, the Britishers were not likely to yield to temptation.

With the thieving, dissolute, cowardly, and ferocious scum of Rio Janeiro it was a different matter. They had no scruples, and they had no restraint but fear.

But, even if the Britons had allowed avarice to overcome their honesty, common prudence would have prevented them from joining the South Americans in an attempt to seize the Inca's diamond. For if a revolt had been successful, it is quite certain that the treacherous Southerners would have turned upon the English and massacred them, for the sake of

keeping the diamond wholly for themselves. Therefore, the honesty of the Britons was strengthened, if that were needed, by the knowledge that their lives were at stake; that they must stand or fall with their officers.

The mates, giving up all hope of preserving the peace when the secret was betrayed by the doctor, took the decisive step of separating the Britons from the South Americans. Durnford and Linwood took the captain's cabin, giving the two they had previously occupied to the six seamen. For, if the latter had gone in the fore-cabin to sleep, they would never have awakened in this world. What puzzled the two officers was what to do with the doctor.

"If he really means to place himself at the head of the South Americans, we ought to disarm him," Linwood said. "Why not make him a prisoner while we have the power, Durnford?"

"Our men do not know him as we know him, and we shall alienate them by that. They don't approve of the rough lesson I gave him to-day."

"At any rate, it would do no harm to take his revolver away."

"Depend upon it, he has another hidden away somewhere."

"What are we to do, then? Merely await developments?"

"There is nothing to be done, except to make all speed to port, and there get rid of these confounded ruffians, whom the skipper must have been mad to take on board."

If the mates had known what was taking place in the doctor's cabin, it is possible that they would not have been content to "await developments." The doctor was sitting at his table examining the charges of his six-shooter, as if he expected to be using it soon, when a tap came at his door. He lifted the revolver, and, placing his finger on the trigger, said: "Come in."

Black Manual the Brazilian entered. The doctor was not surprised. After his manifestation on deck that afternoon, he had fully expected to be approached by some messenger from the fore-cabin. Manual started as he saw the pistol, and took a step back. The doctor returned the weapon to his pocket, and pointed to a chair.

"You are welcome, my friend," he said. "Pray sit down. I think I can guess the purport of your visit."

"Since you take the part of our comrade Colorado, senhor, we thought—"

"That I would join you in an attempt to release him?"

"Si, senhor. And the Brazilian's eyes glistened.

"You are right. But how many men are on your side?"

"All the crew, excepting the Englishmen."

"You are, in all, twenty-six men," the doctor observed, with a calculating air.

"With Colorado, twenty-seven. With you also, twenty-eight."

"Exactly a score more than the British can muster, officers and men," said Dr. Molton thoughtfully. "We ought to have no difficulty in having our own way. There is something else you would say. What is it?"

The Brazilian hesitated. Should he ask the doctor to participate in a plan of robbery? Molton saw his difficulty, and hastened to remove it.

"You would say," he observed, "that a diamond worth a quarter of a million ought not to be left to those two officers?"

The seaman nodded eagerly.

"Come to the point, then, my man. Are you and your comrades game for a revolt to get rid of the officers and seize the Diamond of Fate?"

"We have determined upon it, senhor."

"On one condition I will join you. I must be your leader."

"To that we are all willing to agree, senhor."

A brave, brainy man was just what the rascals needed to lead them. When he had served their turn he could easily be flung to the sharks. That the South Americans, if successful, would treat him like this, Dr. Molton knew. But he depended upon his courage and his skill with firearms, of which they possessed none, to preserve his life.

"Besides," he cold-bloodedly reflected, "a number of these cutthroats are pretty certain to be wiped out by Durnford's party, so I shall have only a small gang to deal with, if we come to blows."

Black Manual watched the doctor's face keenly. He was very anxious to enlist this valuable auxiliary upon his side in the coming conflict.

"Are you agreeable, senhor? You shall be our captain, and give the orders."

"It is agreed." And Molton rose.

"Let us release Colorado the first, senhor."

"As you will."

The half-breed was in the cuddy. The carpenter was keeping guard over him. The doctor and Manual passed out of the cabin, and Molton led the way to Colorado's place of duress. The carpenter looked up and nodded to the doctor. Colorado's dusky face grew hopeful at sight of Black Manual. The doctor's answer to the carpenter's friendly and respectful nod was sudden and surprising. He levelled his revolver at the man's head.

"Don't be alarmed, Floyd," he said. "I mean you no harm. But I am come to release Colorado, and if you resist, or raise an alarm, I shall have no alternative but to put a bullet through your heart. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly, sir. But have you joined these foreign cutthroats, then?" asked Floyd.

"I have; and, if you take my advice, you'll do likewise."

"Thanky, sir; but I sticks to my duty."

"Well, be quick, and liberate Colorado."

The carpenter could do nothing but obey. Reluctantly, then, he obeyed. Black Manual nudged the doctor.

"There would be one less against us, if—" He tapped his poniard to complete his sentence.

The doctor had involved himself in a network of intrigue and crime. He was prepared to wade knee-deep in blood to obtain the Diamond of Fate wholly for himself; but he had not yet sunk to so foul a depth of villainy that he could coldly stand by and see a defenceless man murdered. He shook his head angrily in reply to the suggestion of the savage Brazilian.

In a few minutes the half-breed was free. He shook his liberated limbs with a joyous satisfaction.

"Buenos, senhor," said he; "I shall not forget this."

The doctor held out his hand.

"Colorado, you are a man of determination, of sense. Join me against the English, against everybody."

The quick-witted half-breed comprehended. The alliance was first against the English, afterwards against the South Americans. The fatal diamond's price could not be shared among so many. They clasped hands. The thick-skulled Manual saw not the inner meaning of the precious pair.

"Floyd," Molton said to the carpenter, "I am going to the fore-cabin with my comrades here. Tell Durnford and Linwood that we give them until to-morrow morning to yield the command of the ship, and to bring the great diamond to us: if it is not placed in these hands of mine before eight-bells in the forenoon-watch, we'll come and take it by force!"

The confederates left the cuddy, sneaking forward without the officers observing them in the dark. A few minutes more, and the two mates knew all—that the majority of the crew were in revolt, and that Dr. Molton was at the head of the insurrection.

CHAPTER 7.

The Outbreak—Shot and Steel—The Doctor's Disappointment.

Linwood felt now that if he was to preserve the unlucky diamond, he would have to fight for it. There was but one way of averting a conflict, and to that Durnford would not agree for a moment. The method was to throw the diamond into the Pacific.

"With the stone irrevocably lost, the crew would not revolt," he said to the chief mate.

"You're welcome to make ducks and drakes of your own money, Linwood, but not of mine. A quarter of the diamond's price belongs to me, and a quarter to charity. You have no right to dispose of that."

"But human lives are of more account than money."

"Not the lives of these Brazilian scum. And our men do not lack courage. I have promised them five thousand pounds each, out of the price of the diamond, if we bring it safe to England. They would fight a legion of devils rather than lose such a reward."

"I suppose you're right. It certainly seems wrong to waste so large a sum. We will fight for the stone. But poor Captain Denham was right, Durnford; there is a curse upon the stone; it has brought misfortune to the "Caradoc."

Morning dawn found the British party quite prepared for an attack. The two mates had strengthened the defences of the afterpart of the ship, until it resembled a fortress. The cuddy windows, looking out upon the main-deck, were barred and boarded over, and the portholes of the cabins were closed. If driven from the poop, the English had a retreat open to the cuddy, where they could, they believed, hold out against any numbers.

The South Americans came out of the fore-cabin at the beginning of the forenoon watch; but the regular watches, of course, had to be abandoned now. It was fortunate for both parties that the weather was calm and mild, with no sign of a storm. With the crew in their present state, the "Caradoc" would assuredly have gone down with all hands, had a sudden squall overtaken her.

During the night, Durnford had had most of the sails taken in, in case of accidents, and the "Caradoc" was now merely crawling through the water. The course, too, had been changed a little, and the ship was now bearing towards the coast of Australia. If worsted in the fight, the mates had taken the desperate resolve to run the ship upon the reefs, and thus turn the tables upon the enemy.

When the South Americans appeared on deck, they saw the Britons upon the poop, every man with a cutlass buckled to his



The South Americans unsheathed their knives. The English seamen drew their cutlasses at the same moment. "Attack!" cried the doctor.

side, and the two officers with six-shooters in addition. Dr. Motton ran his eye over the opposite party, and then scanned the sea. It would never do to commence a mutiny with a vessel at hand capable of rendering assistance to the officers. But the expanse of blue water was quite free from sails. Far away could be seen a few white specks; but, if they were vessels, they were too distant to interfere in any way with the doings on board the "Caradoc."

"Have you come to a decision, gentlemen?" called out Motton to the two mates aft.

"We have," Durnford answered. "We defy you to take the diamond from us! And, if you incite those ruffians to mutiny, I'll see that both you and they are properly hanged at the first port!"

If you ever touch at a port again, Durnford, you're welcome to see us hanged."

"Do your worst, then, you scoundrel!"

The South Americans unsheathed their knives. The English seamen drew their cutlasses at the same moment.

"Attack!" cried the doctor.

With all his faults, he was no poltroon. He led the way, Colorado by his side—the latter less courageously. Following them, the savage-faced South Americans came, with set teeth and brandished knives. A pattering of feet along the deck, ringing pistol-shots—the combat had commenced.

As the mutineers rushed aft, Linwood fired, and Durnford a moment later. Two negroes fell, and rolled in convulsions on the deck. This did not deter the others, who, so swiftly did they advance, had now reached the poop.

The Britishers sprang forward to beat them back. Cutlasses clashed against long knives.

Linwood fired at the doctor and brought him to the deck. Durnford wasted a shot upon Colorado, who, cowardly retreating, dodged behind the mainmast and avoided the shot. The next moment the fallen doctor, lifting himself upon his elbow, aimed his pistol at the chief mate, and pulled the trigger. Durnford gave a terrible gasp, and fell upon his face. Then the doctor, with a hideous grin of exultation, sank back and fainted.

The cutlasses, meanwhile, though more formidable than

the knives, were too immensely outnumbered to have much chance of victory. Five of the enemy had been cut down, and one Briton had been stabbed in the throat by Rio Sim, when Linwood, seeing that the English would soon be surrounded and massacred, gave the word to retreat to the cabin. One of the seamen, who was wounded, went first; then Danson, the bosun, carried down Durnford, who had swooned from loss of blood. The others kept the foe at bay while this was done.

Fred Linwood was the last man to leave the deck, having covered the retreat of his comrades. He would have been overwhelmed as he stood alone, had he not, by a cunning expedient, diverted the attention of the South Americans. Taking the ebony box from his breast-pocket, he flung it among them, and there was instantly a struggle to seize it. Linwood, left unassailed, shot two of the mutineers dead, and then darted down the companion. Of the English party, only the dead seaman remained on deck.

The scramble for the ebony box was ended by Colorado, who, darting among the cursing Brazilians, snatched at and secured the prize. The ruffians encircled him, eager and ferocious.

"Give it to me!"

"Let us see it!"

"You half-breed dog, give it to us!"

Colorado grew pained. The knives of the Brazilians were at his throat. Every man was frantic to clutch the diamond. "Comrades, be calm," Colorado cried; "you cannot all hold it!"

"The cur wants to keep it himself! Strike him down!"

"Cut his heart out!"

A rush was made at Colorado. Terrified by the menacing aspect of his associates, the half-breed flung the box in their faces, with a savage curse. The struggle recommenced.

Colorado went to the doctor. The latter, whose wound, as it chanced, was not serious, was sitting up now, endeavouring to staunch the flow of blood.

"Have you got it?" he asked.

"Senhor Linwood flung it down. Those dogs are struggling for it!"

quidly the mate hastily extinguished the lamp, plunging the place into darkness. The South Americans, not daring to enter that gloomy den, where three desperate men waited for them, hidden in the shadows, collected at the foot of the mainmast. Then the reaction set in; their brief courage waned, and if Linwood had assumed the offensive then he would have found only the doctor resolute enough to resist.

But our hero was in no condition to pursue the retiring foe. Of his already small band three had fallen. He was left with no companions but Floyd and Marlowe. And the latter was wounded by a knife-cut.

The three men, after ascertaining that their fallen friends were indeed dead, retired to the captain's cabin, weak and exhausted. There a moderate draught of brandy each in some degree restored them.

"This is terrible, sir!" Marlowe said, in a low voice.

"How will it end?" said Floyd, sinking into a chair.

"As Heaven will!" Linwood replied steadily. "We have suffered, my men, but not so severely as our foes. But now let us get some sleep."

"They'll be on to us again, if we do."

"I will bolt the door, and one of us will keep watch until morning."

Thus, alternately sleeping and watching, the three men passed the remainder of that terrible night. The doctor passed it more comfortably. While his men lay about sleeping, or groaning with wounds, Molton slept peacefully in a bunk in the fore-cabin, as though his conscience were perfectly clear. While the hours glided by, the "Caradoc" kept on towards the coast. The helm was secured, but that was the only precaution the revolted crew had taken. No one paid the ship any attention. The doctor was no sailor, and all he could do was to optimistically trust that the fair weather would continue. Fortunately for both parties on board, it did continue.

At dawn, the doctor came out of the fore-cabin fresh and cheery. His wound was a little inflamed, but he forgot even pain in thinking of the Inca's Diamond, now so near his grasp. The South Americans, however, did not take matters so easily. No fewer than twelve of their number had fallen, even on the companion-stairs, and five on the main-deck. The Brazilians, and Colorado the half-breed, were the only followers who remained to the doctor. The curse of the Inca's Diamond was indeed making itself felt on board the "Caradoc."

"Shall we take in sail, senator?" Colorado asked, as soon as the doctor appeared. "We are close in to the coast."

"No." The doctor's eyes swept the line of reefs, over which the billows tumbled in white foam, and the deserted country beyond. "No, Colorado; I am going to run the 'Caradoc' ashore."

"The Brazilians cannot swim, senator."

"All the better. The diamond is for us, my man—for us only. When these dogs have served our turn, let them drown. Don't look so serious; it isn't so bad to drown these cut-throats as to stab Linwood in the dark. It was you, eh?"

The half-breed nodded.

"But the diamond is mine by right, senator. The man who stole it from the Guayourins was my brother."

"But he sold it to Captain Denham."

"He knew not its value, and was cheated."

"H'm! Is that why you poisoned the captain?"

"He kept it hidden. But I knew he would reveal it if he was dying. So I brought him to his death."

"For my benefit, in the end," Molton reflected; but he did not say so to the half-breed.

Steadily the ship drew nearer to the reefs. The doctor expected the mate and his men to rush up the hatchway directly the ship struck; so, without explaining his plans, he stationed the three Brazilians on the poop, to strike down the Englishmen as soon as they should appear, while he and Colorado guarded the main-deck. It appeared certain that the English, unless they chose to remain below to drown, must expose themselves to the weapons of the mutineers.

Crash!

A terrific shock, a shiver, and the "Caradoc's" bows plunged beneath the waves.

Fred Linwood was thrown upon the carpet by the shock when the "Caradoc" struck. In a moment he recovered himself, and gained his feet.

"Those fools have run us ashore!" he cried. "Follow me, my lads! The sea is our only chance!" And he rushed to the cabin-window, flung it open, and sprang into the blue waters below.

Floyd and Marlowe, however, had rushed out of the cabin instead of following him, their first instinct being to gain the deck. The shock had tumbled all the bodies off the companion-stairs, and Marlowe rushed up, while the carpenter hurried out upon the main-deck. The instant he appeared the doctor fired, and shot him through the heart. At the same moment, Marlowe, struck by the daggers of the Brazilians, rolled down the companion-ladder.

The doctor, clinging to a rope to keep his footing upon the reeling deck, waited for Linwood to appear, but waited in vain. The mate was swimming under the stern of the "Caradoc." Finding that Marlowe and Floyd had not followed him, he did not swim for the shore, not knowing that they were dead.

The ship was rapidly settling down. A gap three yards wide had been torn in her hull. The Brazilians, who had not at first comprehended their danger, were now frantic with terror. The reefs upon which the ship had struck were a quarter of a mile from the shore. The men who could not swim were doomed. The Brazilians, maddened by despair, rushed upon the doctor. He sprang into the sea, imitated by Colorado. Lower sank the wrecked vessel, and now the doctor felt a terrible fear that Linwood would sink with her, and with him the Diamond of Fate. He would have boarded again, to search for the second mate; but he dared not venture within reach of the Brazilian knives.

"Can it be lost?" he muttered desperately.

Colorado turned upon him like a panther.

"Curse you!" the half-breed cried. "I have trusted to your guidance, and you have let the diamond be lost!"

"Hands off, you fool and cut-throat, or—"

The half-breed, rendered almost insane by the certainty of the loss, attacked the doctor, more because he wished to vent his rage upon someone than for any other reason, for it was hardly just to attribute the failure wholly to Molton. The doctor, equally infuriated, was quite willing to meet him halfway. If his chagrin and fury had found no vent he would probably have lost his senses. He closed with the half-breed, and, being the stronger, speedily wrenched away his knife, and gripped him by the throat.

"You cur!" he hissed. "I always meant to kill you in the end. You, at least, have lost nothing by the loss of the diamond. Die!"

He forced the wretched half-breed's head under the water. Colorado struggled madly, but in vain. The cruel grip upon his throat never relaxed till he was perfectly still and inert. Then the dread slayer released him, and the dead body floated among the reefs.

A heavy, sweeping plunge, and the "Caradoc" disappeared for ever beneath the waves. In the swirling waters the Brazilians struggled for some moments, and then were drawn beneath the surface and helplessly drowned. When the sea became once more placid, two heads alone appeared above the water; two men, clinging to the rocks, had avoided being drawn into the vortex of the sinking ship—the doctor and Fred Linwood.

The doctor gave a perfect bowl of delight as he saw the mate. He swam towards him. Our hero drew his cutlase, treading water.

The two foes were about to close in mortal combat, when a hideous, blood-curdling shriek burst from the doctor. The water around him grew suddenly purple. With an expression of horror so frightful that it was never forgotten by Linwood, the miserable wretch disappeared beneath the surface.

A cold chill ran through the veins of Linwood. He knew what had happened. A shark had seized the doctor, attracted, doubtless, by the blood that flowed from his wound, reopened in the fierce struggle with Colorado.

A horrible doom; and it seemed only too likely that Fred would share it. He swam shoreward, laying about him with his cutlase, hoping to scare away the sea-monsters by the splashing. That swim was the most terrible experience of his adventurous life. Every instant he expected to feel the jaws shearing off his limbs. But at last his feet touched the sand, and he dragged himself ashore, more dead than alive, and fell senseless upon the rocks.

So ends the history of the Inca's Diamond. A few words more, and our task is done.

Linwood was found and cared for by a hospitable squatter. He arrived at Brisbane a couple of months after the wreck, and, keeping the diamond strictly secret, shipped for London.

In that city he disposed of the wonderful stone to a syndicate for £150,000; much less than poor Captain Denham's estimate, but still, an immense sum, his share making him rich for life. In spite of the doctor's villainy, he paid the rascal's share to Molton's relations; nor did he forget the widow of Dornford, or the families of the brave men who had died on board the "Caradoc" fighting for the right.

The capital that remained to him he invested in the shipping business. Fred now commands a new "Caradoc," his own property, so that the legend of the Diamond of Fate has been in his case falsified; misfortune enough it brought to others, but to him it opened the road to success.

THE END.

Don't miss the complete story in next Friday's UNION JACK (No. 287): "FOR BOER OR BRITON?" by Henry St. John. A rattling story of war and adventure in South Africa.

"Bind up this cut, and I'll soon have it away from them." Colorado obeyed. The doctor rose, and reloaded his revolver.

"Where are the enemy?" he asked.

"Gone below."

"Any killed?"

"Yes; a sailor. And the chief mate, I believe."

"(Good! Now for the Diamond of Fate! Use your knife, if necessary; don't be chicken-hearted!)"

Grasping his revolver, the doctor strode towards the Brailians, followed by the half-breed, knife in hand. A negro snatched the box from Rio Sim, to be laid low the next moment by a stab from Sim's knife. Dr. Molton thrust the muzzle of his six-shooter into the murderer's face.

"I am your captain," he said. "Give me the box!"

"I would!"

Without a word more the doctor fired, and Rio Sim dropped at his feet, with a skull shattered almost to pieces. Stooping, Molton took the ebony box from the nerveless fingers of the corpse. Then he looked carefully at the farocious faces that were glaring upon him from all sides.

"I am captain," he said coolly. "I've proved it to Rio Sim. Am I to prove it to you all in the same manner?"

"Let us see the diamond!"

The voices were subdued now. The South Americans had met their master, and they knew it.

"I've no objection to your seeing the diamond," replied Molton. "It is as much yours as mine. Behold!"

Holding his pistol in one hand, the ebony box in the other, the doctor pressed the spring. The lid shot back. But no gleam came from within.

Stupefaction was written upon the doctor's face. A howl of rage escaped him, echoed by the South Americans. The box was empty! The diamond was gone!

CHAPTER 8.

Durnford's Fate—The Night Attack—Fighting for Life—Driven Off—Run Ashore—The "Caradoc" on the Reef.

Fred Linwood, as soon as he ascertained that the South Americans were not pursuing him below, hastened to Durnford to examine the state of his injury. The boatwain had placed the chief-mate in the captain's bunk, and Linwood, as he saw the wounded man's ghastly face and dimmed eyes, felt that he was not long for this world. Durnford looked at him with a slight smile, that told Fred that he knew the worst.

"It's all up, Fred," said he faintly; "I've slipped my cable for good. The ball is in a vital place."

"Let me examine, Durnford. It may not be so bad as you think."

"You can if you like. But I know I'm done for."

A brief investigation convinced Fred that the chief mate was correct. The wound was fatal; the wonder was that Durnford was still breathing. The unfortunate officer read the verdict in his face.

"I knew it," he said. "Well, I am not afraid to die. It must have come sooner or later."

"I am more grieved than I can say, Durnford."

"I know you are, old fellow. But what troubles me most is that I go and leave you in this fix. But something seems to tell me that you'll get out of it all right. I wish now that I had let you sling the cursed diamond into the sea, when Captain Dentham wanted you to. But it's useless to think of that now."

"Would you wish, Durnford, that I should stop the strife now by destroying the cause of it?"

"A thousand times no! I have a wife in London. To her I charge you to pay my share of the treasure."

"I promise faithfully to do so, if I survive."

"I can trust you. Do you still carry the diamond about you?"

"Yes; last night I sewed it into the lining of my vest, so that it could not be lost. The ebony box I throw among the mutineers, to divert their attention while we descended to the cabin. They were too much for us on deck. They'll be chagrined, I imagine, when they open the box and find it empty."

Linwood remained with his friend to the last moment. It was not long. Durnford's eyes closed, and his breathing ceased. His death was painless, but fearfully sudden. Life fled in an instant. He expired murmuring a prayer.

Our hero, deeply saddened, covered the dead man's face and left the cabin. In the cuddy were the seamen, anxiously waiting to hear about Durnford's condition. The expression of Fred's face told them what had happened.

"He is gone, sir?" asked Danson, in a subdued voice.

"Yes," replied Linwood gravely—"yes; his wound was mortal!"

"It was Dr. Molton who shot him, sir."

"The scoundrel shall yet pay the penalty!" said Fred, his brows darkening.

"How is your own wound, sir?" asked Danson.

"Mine! I had forgotten that. It was a mere scratch."

"The doctor said it was pisoned, sir; that you couldn't recover."

"Yes, he meant to poison me, and let the crew believe I died of the wound, for the sake of robbing me of the diamond. It was Durnford who saved me from his villainy."

"I should never have thought it of Dr. Molton, sir," Danson remarked.

"We never know a man in his true colours until he's put to the test," the mate answered, as he turned away.

Soon afterwards the seamen in the cuddy heard a succession of splashes, and, looking from the cabin-windows, saw the bodies of the men slain in the fight float past. Of the South Americans, nine had been killed in battle, and two in the quarrel over the ebony box. Among the bodies thus unceremoniously disposed of, the seamen recognized their own dead comrade, whose body they had been compelled to leave on deck when they retreated below.

Some hours passed, and no fresh attack was made upon the Britons. During the period of inactivity, the body of Durnford was "buried" from the cabin-window, Linwood reading the prayers.

The second mate was somewhat surprised by the failure of the mutineers to follow up their first success, by an attack upon the cuddy. He came to the conclusion that either the doctor was dead, or that the ruffians had decided to wait for darkness before recommencing hostilities.

The increased speed of the vessel showed Linwood that more canvas had been shaken out by the men on deck, but the course of the vessel was not altered. The "Caradoc" still headed for the Australian coast, which could not now be far distant.

The reason for this was simple. Dr. Molton meant to wreck the "Caradoc," escape alone from the wreck, and reach some Australian town with a pitiful story, not saying anything about the fatal diamond. That he would keep secret until he reached London, where he could sell it.

The disappointment of finding the box empty had been bitter, but Dr. Molton did not suffer it to trouble him long. The diamond was still on board, and in Linwood's possession; he was no worse off than before.

Night descended upon the Pacific. Shadow enwrapped the tall ship, gliding stately through the placid water. It was then that there was stirring once more among the mutineers.

The doctor marshalled his men for the attack. He intended that one party should assail the English by way of the companion-stairs, and another should attack the cuddy front from the maindeck with axes. The darkness would at least partially protect them from the bullets of the defenders.

At eight-bells the South Americans set to work. The crash of axes upon the woodwork gave the alarm to Linwood, who was watching while the others slept. Quickly the half-dozen Britons were on the alert.

Down the companion-stairs came a gang of Brazilians. At the foot the Britons met them, with ready cutlasses. The clash of steel and fearful groans broke the night's calm silence. Cooped in that narrow space, the foemen fought like tigers in a cage, the scrambling struggle illuminated only by the oil-lamp of the cuddy.

Linwood had placed Danson and three seamen here, while he and a lloyd gave their attention to the party who were breaking in from the main-deck. As fast as the axes cut gashes in the woodwork, the two men thrust out their blades, or fired a shot through the apertures, and the demolition of the barrier was not effected without serious loss to the assailants.

At length an opening was formed large enough to admit the passage of a man, and a brawny negro sprang through, whirling his axe aloft. With a downstroke Fred fairly split his skull, and he dropped. But his comrades poured in, and Linwood and Floyd had their hands full to defend the opening. The odds against them were compelling a retreat, when the boatwain and Marlowe rushed to the mate's assistance, and drove back the influx of yelling ruffians.

The fight at the foot of the companion-stairs had ended. Seven South Americans had descended, and not one ever went up again. Their bodies choked the ladder, and prevented the descent of their friends. With them lay two English sailors, stabbed to death.

Four Englishmen remained now—only four. But, infuriated by battle, they fought like giants, and their cutlasses dripped with blood from point to bill. The mutineers, decimated and dismayed, slunk back at last, and the British, forgetting prudence, pursued them upon the open maindeck.

Then a sharp crack rang out. Danson gave a moan, and fell dead before he touched the deck. The doctor, in the rear of his men now, had seen his opportunity, and used his revolver, and the boatwain had paid for his imprudence with his life.

Back reeded Linwood and his two companions, and in the