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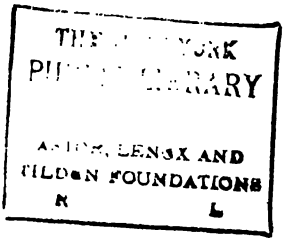
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HE STOOD THERE FULLY EXPOSED, WAVING HIS FLAG OF TRUCE.

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BRETHREN OF THE COAST

A TALE OF

THE WEST INDIES

BY

KIRK MUNROE

AUTHOR OF "THE WHITE CONQUERORS," "AT WAR WITH PONTIAC," "THROUGH SWAMP AND GLADE," "IN PIRATE WATERS," "MIDSHIPMAN STUART" ETC.

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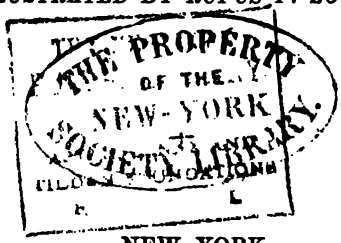

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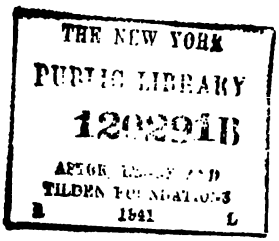
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BRETHREN OF THE COAST

CHAPTER I

PRINCE THEO

"SEÑOR DANBRISA, with a million of joys I announce a son! Also that the Señora is resting comfortably."

"Now Heaven be praised! And with God's help I will make a man of him."

"He has eyes of blue."

"To remind him always that he is an American!" cried the delighted father. "And his name shall be Theophilus William, which was that of his grandfather, as true a Yankee as ever trod free soil. Lesbia, for this news thou shalt have thy freedom within an hour; for none but a free woman may nurse my boy."

The woman drew herself up to her full stature, and into her eyes flashed a light that could never shine from those of a slave.

"Such a gift is beyond thanks, my master; but with my life will I serve thee and him."

"No longer thy master, Lesbia, but thy friend. Now tell me if I may see him?"

"My friend, I will fetch him that thy eyes may look into his," answered the black woman, with the graciousness of one who confers a royal favor. Then she turned, and, with head proudly uplifted, looking neither to right nor left, she entered the house with the air of a princess.

It had been a trying day for Daniel Breeze, the American proprietor of one of the largest sugar estates in Cuba. For some time he had entertained suspicions against his steward, a young Spaniard who had come to him within a year highly recommended. He was a powerfully built young fellow, nearly as tall as Daniel Breeze himself, and was noted for the amount of work he could extract from those under him. The proprietor had, however, been given cause to suspect his honesty, and, after weeks of watching, had proved him to be a thief. So Señor Danbrisa, as he was universally called, had gone forth that morning to charge the unfaithful steward with his crime and give him his dismissal. He had discovered the man in the very act of beating one of the female field hands to compel her to work after she had pleaded a sickness that rendered further effort impossible. Daniel Breeze, having established a rule that no slave on the estate should be punished without the case being first brought before him, was made so angry by this

sight that he struck the steward a stinging blow across the face with his riding whip, at the same time sternly commanding him to retire at once to his own quarters. Uttering a scream of fury, the Spaniard whipped out a knife, and sprang at his employer with deadly intent. But Daniel Breeze was as quick as he, and ere the knife could reach its mark the man was abruptly halted by the muzzle of a pistol levelled at his head.

"Drop that knife, you scoundrel!" thundered the big American.

The man sullenly did as directed.

"Now, about face. March!"

This order was also obeyed, and the proprietor, following on horseback, drove the culprit to the office of the estate, where he was confronted by proofs of his guilt. Then he was marched to the Embarcadero, where a brig belonging to La Brisa was loading sugar for England. Here Daniel Breeze bade her commander place the man in irons, from which he was not to be released until the vessel was well out at sea, and transport him to Liverpool, where he might be turned loose. To the prisoner he said:—

"I send you into exile, Manuel Lopez, rather than to the chain gang, for the sake of your friends; but if ever you return to this country and I learn of it, I shall show you no more mercy than you extended to the poor wretch whom you were beating awhile ago."

Having thus meted out a punishment much lighter than the stern Spanish law would have inflicted, the proprietor spent the remainder of that day in riding over his vast estate, straightening its tangled affairs, and undoing so far as lay in his power the wrong perpetrated by his unjust steward. Towards evening he was summoned home in hot haste by a messenger bringing news that his wife was alarmingly ill.

Daniel Breeze was devotedly attached to the beautiful Cuban girl whom he had met and married some five years earlier in New York, where she had accompanied her father into political exile. Don Emico del Solio had been one of the wealthiest of Cuban planters, and a political power on the island. Incurring the displeasure of Charles IV., King of Spain, he was forced to fly for his life to the United States, where he maintained himself and his devoted daughter by teaching the Spanish language. In this time of his adversity Daniel Breeze, a young business man of New York, interested in the Cuban trade, became his stanch friend, and finally married his daughter Dorotea on the day that she was seventeen.

Soon afterward, by another turn of fortune's wheel, Don Emico was recalled from exile and restored to his former station; but he lived less than a year. By his death Daniel Breeze became master of the splendid estate, which was rechristened "La Brisa" in his honor.

Here he and his beautiful Cuban wife made their home, and here had been born to them three children, all girls, who, according to the terms of the marriage contract, were being brought up in the faith of their mother. By the same terms any sons were to be educated as the father should decide. Devoted to his wife, and dearly loving his three little daughters, Daniel Breeze still longed above all things for a son, and now that one had been given him his joy knew no bounds.

At Lesbia's announcement all the weariness and vexations of the day were forgotten, and, filled with a great happiness, the proprietor entered the house and went directly to the room set apart for his own use. Here his first act was to make out the magic paper that should translate a human being from slavery to freedom. It began: —

"Know all men by these presents, that I, Daniel Breeze, in token of gratitude to Almighty God, and in honor of my son, Theophilus William, born this day, do hereby manumit from bondage, and give unconditional freedom to the woman Lesbia, etc."

When this paper was finished to his satisfaction, he called in witnesses and signed it in their presence. Then he ordered the entire household to assemble in the great inner court, and sent for his daughters, Nueva Centuria, because she had been born in 1801, Mariquita, and baby Tertia. These came, each with her nurse, and all in charge of a governess. Finally

Lesbia appeared wearing, as always, a snow-white turban and dressed for the occasion with all the splendor of an African princess. She proudly bore in her arms a pillow on which rested the infant in whose honor all these preparations had been made.

At his entrance Daniel Breeze rose, and handing the signed paper to the nurse said: —

"Lesbia, for the past half hour you have been a free woman, as free as I or the child in your arms, and here is the confirmatory deed which no man can dispute. May you be as happy and prosperous in your freedom as you have been faithful and diligent during your years of servitude. And now let me look at my son."

For a full minute the proud father gazed into the wide-open blue eyes of the babe for whose coming he had prayed. The little girls were next allowed to see him, and then Daniel Breeze, bearing the tiny morsel of humanity in his own arms, though closely followed by the anxious Lesbia, stepped to the open court where for a moment he displayed the young master of La Brisa to its assembled servants. That night there was rejoicing all over the vast estate; and on it the remainder of the week was given over to the festivities befitting a most important holiday.

The youngster thus welcomed into a kindly world, throve and grew apace into a sturdy child, who never

heard a harsh word, whose every wish was gratified as soon as expressed, who found his kingdom at his feet, and in consequence ruled it with a princely arrogance. Whatever he desired, he screamed for and obtained; whatever he disliked, he put from him with imperious gesture, and it troubled him no more. His wishes formed the law of La Brisa, and none of its inhabitants ever hesitated in obeying his slightest behest.

For six years Prince Theo thus reigned in the land, and then came the day when he must leave his realm with its devoted subjects for a venture into the great unknown world.

Never for a moment had Daniel Breeze swerved from his avowed purpose of having his boy educated as an American and given the advantages of a New England up-bringing. None knew better than he the wickedness and cruelty of allowing a child to grow up in an atmosphere of unrestrained selfishness, such as surrounded Theo in his home. Thus he was determined that as soon as the boy was old enough to be taken from his mother his life should undergo a radical change. From the first the Señora Danbrisa had known that when her boy became six years of age he was to be taken from her, and consigned to the care of his American relatives. This was part of the compact made long ago with her husband; and though her heart broke at thought of the terrible parting, she forced herself to regard it

as inevitable. To her three daughters the prospect of their brother's departure was not wholly tinged with sadness. They could even imagine that, freed from the exactions of the young tyrant, they might lead happier lives than at present.

Daniel Breeze, while resolved to do his duty by his son, was yet unable to conceive of life at La Brisa without him as being bearable; while poor Lesbia, whose whole heart was so bound up in the child that she had no thought save for him, absolutely refused to discuss his going, since it had been decided that she was to be left behind. As for Theo himself, he was too young to realize the great change about to take place in his life, and was only vaguely pleased at the idea of going somewhere with papa on a big ship.

As the proprietor of La Brisa found it necessary to pay a business visit to the United States at least once a year, he had decided to take his little son with him on one of these trips; and at length the fateful date of departure arrived. A brig, the very one in which Manuel Lopez had been carried to England, was ready to sail for New York. So with a heavy heart Daniel Breeze took his son in his arms and stepped into a boat that waited for them at the Embarcadero. All La Brisa was gathered with tears and smiles, cheers and prayers, to witness the departure. Only two persons were absent, the boy's mother, who lay sobbing herself sick in her

own chamber, and his nurse, who was nowhere to be found. As the boat put off little Theo called for her, but none replied; and for the first time in his life he knew what it was to have an ungratified wish.

CHAPTER II

FIRST APPEARANCE OF LATROBE

THE world was in a tumult. France, single-handed, but led by the great Napoleon, was warring against combined Europe. While armies fought on land, fleets battled at sea; and single ships, flying adverse flags, rushed at each other on sight, like wild beasts thirsting for blood. Even in the Western hemisphere the Spanish-American colonies, inspired by the successful rebellion of the United States, had taken advantage of the universal disturbance to proclaim their independence, and were fighting for liberty. Having no navies, these were sending forth scores of privateers to prey on Spanish commerce. In all the world of turmoil only the United States remained neutral, and her ships alone might sail the ocean in peace.

Thus Daniel Breeze felt safe in intrusting his own life and that of his son, which he regarded as far more valuable, to the stanch brig *Siren* which, though she belonged to La Brisa, was American built, commanded by Yankee officers, and sailed under the American flag.

Before a light but favoring wind she stood out

to sea, and was headed southward and [illegible] intention of making the Windward Passage. [illegible] the gathering dusk shrouded his view Daniel remained on deck with his boy in his arms, watching the beautiful home he loved so well; but when even the land could no longer be distinguished, he turned away with a deep-drawn sigh, and taking the child below gave him his supper. Then he essayed the more difficult task of putting the boy to bed, a proceeding against which Prince Theo entered a vigorous protest. He screamed and kicked, called for his mamma and for Lesbia, and utterly refused to be comforted by any of his father's persuasive arts. At the end of half an hour the situation remained unchanged, except that Theo, still stubbornly defiant, was nearly exhausted by the prolonged struggle, while his father was in despair. The latter was contemplating a retreat, in hopes that the child if left alone might sob himself to sleep, and fervently wishing he had brought along a nurse, when the stateroom door was gently opened and a pleasant-faced young negro, clad in white linen, appeared on the scene.

"Pardon, Señor," he said, "but hearing the cries of the muchachito I ventured to come with an offer of assistance. I have had much experience with *los niños*, and—"

"Who the devil are you?" interrupted Daniel Breeze, crossly.

"I am Latrobe, assistant to the ship's steward," was the reply, "and having had so much to do with children thought perhaps I might be of assistance. There, little one! There, Sugar Sweet! Don't cry any more."

Even as he spoke the new-comer turned his attention to the child, who had ceased his sobbing to gaze wonderingly at him, and began deftly to unrobe the little form. To the amazement of Daniel Breeze his self-willed son offered no resistance, but remained passive in the hands of his self-appointed nurse, and only an occasional gasping sob served to recall the recent storm.

"Well, that beats me!" muttered the discomfited but greatly relieved parent. Then he added aloud: —

"As you seem to understand this business, Latrobe, I will leave him with you; but you must stay by him until he sleeps. In fact, you would better remain here until my return, and if you will look out for him all the way to New York, I'll see that you are well paid for your trouble. Good night, son."

With this the proprietor of La Brisa retired to the deck, which he paced reflectively for an hour or so, at the same time soothing his perturbed feelings with the smoke of an excellent cigar.

When he returned to his stateroom he found it in perfect order, the child sleeping peacefully, and

Latrobe sitting by his side. Upon the entrance of the white man, the negro rose, bowed respectfully, and slipped quietly away.

"I declare, that fellow is a treasure," said Daniel Breeze to himself. "I wonder if it wouldn't be a good scheme to buy him and let him accompany Theo to his new home? There will be time enough, though, to consider that before the end of the voyage."

The next morning, before he was up, Latrobe entered the room and carried Theo away for his bath; nor did the father again see his son until breakfast time, when he reappeared neatly dressed, radiantly happy, and full of recently acquired information concerning the new life upon which he had entered. It was already driving the old one from his memory, and he no longer exhibited signs of homesickness. During that day Latrobe was always on hand when the child needed him, and was at the same time so unobtrusive that his presence was hardly noticed.

Once, Daniel Breeze, still considering his half-formed plan, asked him concerning his master.

"I have none, Señor, since I am free," was the reply.

"Ah! and with papers to prove it?"

"Certainly, Señor."

"In that case would you consider a proposition to enter my service, or rather that of my son, and at-

tend him during an absence from home that may extend over several years?"

"I would consider it, Señor."

Then, at an imperious call from Theo, the man darted away, and the subject was dropped.

Later in the day, when the brig lay almost becalmed a few leagues off the lofty headland of Cape Cruz, her captain and Daniel Breeze paced the deck together, speculating as to the length of the voyage before them.

"Well," said the latter, finally, "it will be a much pleasanter voyage than I expected, thanks to your man Latrobe. He seems remarkably clever for one in his position, and I have never known my little chap take such a fancy to a stranger as he does to him."

"Who do you mean?" asked the captain.

"Why, your assistant steward, of course, who has so successfully assumed the office of nurse to my boy. Look at them now, as happy together as two kittens."

"Assistant steward," repeated the captain, "we don't carry any such person aboard this vessel. You ought to know that, Mr. Breeze. As for the fellow you speak of, I never saw him until after you came aboard and thought, of course, he was one of your servants. Isn't he?"

"No, I never set eyes on him until we were well out at sea, when he appeared at my stateroom

door and offered to help me with Theo. I must say, though, whoever he is, he makes a capital nurse."

"So it appears," replied the captain; "but for all that his record must be looked up. He is probably a runaway from some plantation, who stowed himself aboard in hopes of getting passage to the States. In that case I'll have to put him in irons and bring him back, for it would never do to have the *Siren* gain the reputation of harboring runaway niggers. Hi there! you black fellow. Come here, I want to speak with you."

Ere this order could be obeyed, the first mate of the brig appeared on the scene, touched his cap out of deference to the owner, and said to the captain:—

"Excuse me, sir, for interrupting, but a schooner has just put out from land and is heading this way. As she seems to be sweeping, I thought I'd best report her."

"Sweeping, is she? Then you are quite right in reporting her, Mr. Tewksbury; for any vessel that can afford to use sweeps must be uncommon strong-handed as well as uncommon anxious to get along. I pray to God she may not prove one of the bloody pirates we've been hearing so much about lately. Bend on your stun-sails and head off shore; we'll give her a wide berth as long as we can."

"Pirates!" exclaimed Daniel Breeze, as the mate turned to obey this order; "you don't mean to say, captain, that there are pirates in these waters."

"Not that I know of, sir, from having seen 'em

or even by direct report; but there have been ugly rumors floating round lately concerning some of those South American privateers that were fitted out to prey on Spanish commerce and calling themselves 'Brethren of the Coast.' It has been said as how some of them, not finding Spaniards as plenty as they'd hoped, have took to regular pirating and are chasing every merchantman they sight without regard to flags. I was intending to speak to you about it before we got to New York, and ask you for an armament as well as for a few more hands."

"I wish with all my heart you had done so before we left La Brisa."

"I would, sir, if I'd had any definite information, though I didn't suppose you could supply us with guns short of New York."

"No more I could, but I would have left my boy at home in safety instead of risking his life among pirates. However, they may not prove as bad as you think."

"I hope not, sir, for they are almost certain to overtake us if that is their object, and with our dago crew we'd have no chance of standing 'em off."

"What weapons have you?"

"A couple of fowling-pieces, as many pistols, and half a dozen old boarding pikes that I picked up for a song at a condemned store's sale in New York."

Under a cloud of light canvas the brig was perceptibly moving through the water, though not a

breath of air was to be felt. At the same time the suspicious schooner was so rapidly overhauling her that there was no doubt of her being propelled by some other force than the fitful breeze.

All at once there came from her a sharp report, a jet of white smoke, and a cannon-ball flew over the brig to plump into the water fifty yards beyond.

"That settles her character," remarked Daniel Breeze, grimly; "keep moving, captain, till the last moment; I'll be with you again directly."

Thus saying, the heavy-hearted parent went below in search of his idolized son who, with Latrobe, had disappeared from the deck some minutes earlier. He found them in the stateroom, where the negro was giving the child his supper.

"Do you know the way into the hold, boy?" demanded Daniel Breeze.

"Si, Señor, I do."

"Then carry this child there at once to the safest hiding-place you can find. Do not on any account let him come on deck, until all trouble is over. Here, take this, and keep it for him in case I should never demand it of you again."

With this the man took from about his body a broad money belt, heavy with gold, and handed it to the negro. Then he snatched up his boy, pressed him to his heart, kissed him half a dozen times, and abruptly left the room to regain the deck and there await manfully whatever Fate might hold in store.

CHAPTER III

CAPTURED BY PIRATES

On regaining the deck Daniel Breeze could see that the distance between the two vessels had been materially lessened.

"Yes, sir," said the brig's captain, noting the direction of his employer's glance. "They are coming upon us hand over fist, and they can play with us like a cat with a mouse."

"We can still make a fight for our lives," replied Daniel Breeze, displaying a brace of pistols that he had brought up from below.

"Of course, sir, we can always do that; but the crew won't fight. Their looks show how they feel about it."

Besides the proprietor of La Brisa there were but two white men aboard the brig, its captain and first mate. The second mate was a Spaniard, the cook was a negro, and the seven men composing the crew were Cubans. These were now grouped forward, leaning on the rail and watching the schooner in sullen silence. The second mate occupied a position in the waist, about midway between the crew and the three white men who were gathered aft. The

cook stood just outside his galley, trembling with fright, his face the color of ashes. The schooner was now near enough to show that her deck was crowded with men.

"Run up the American flag," commanded Daniel Breeze. "If they fail to respect that, then God help us!"

A minute later the stars and stripes fluttered from the main peak, but its appearance was only greeted by yells of derision from the schooner and another shot. With its roar came a crash and a rending of wood aloft, while the brig's foretopmast, severed at the cap, pitched forward. As it fell in a tangle of sails and rigging, several heavy blocks dropped to the deck, and one of these, striking the negro cook fairly between the shoulders, instantly killed him.

"Stand by to clear wreckage!" shouted the captain with a sailor's instinct, springing forward as he spoke, and followed closely by the first mate. In another moment the treacherous crew, starting aft as though to obey the order, and hoping to propitiate the pirates by their cowardly act, had fallen upon the two unsuspecting men with their knives.

Daniel Breeze saw the second mate raise his arm to strike the captain, and as the blow descended the man also fell, shot through the head. Dropping another of the scoundrels with his remaining bullet, the big American leaped into the fray, hurling his empty pistols into their faces as he went. Then

he seized a handspike and fell upon them with an irresistible fury that would have driven every last one of the wretches into the sea, had he not been suddenly deprived of his strength by a cowardly blow from behind. The man left at the wheel had whipped out his knife, deserted his post, and run forward in time to save his comrades from the righteous wrath of the terrible Yankee.

As the latter staggered and fell, those who were left of the crew turned with yells of triumph upon the wounded and helpless Americans, but before they could complete their bloody work the deck of the unfortunate brig was swept by a volley of musketry from the approaching schooner. So deadly was its effect that not a man was left standing; and when, a few minutes later, the pirates swarmed aboard, they were opposed only by dead, dying, or wounded men. For a moment even they stood aghast at the awful scene, then their leader, a swarthy fellow with neatly trimmed mustache and a pointed beard, who would have been handsome but for the evil expression of his face, cried out: —

"Overboard with them all! We can't be bothered with wounded prisoners any more than by dead men."

As the pirate leader spoke he stooped to examine the body of the nearest white man. It was that of the brig's captain, who was unmistakably dead.

The first mate was still alive and groaning, but the man only gave him a contemptuous kick as he passed. In another moment the poor fellow had been tossed into the sea. Daniel Breeze had fallen face downward, and the Spaniard turned him over to gain a look at his features. As he did so he sprang to his feet, uttered a savage exclamation, and into his face flashed the expression of concentrated cruelty that had already won for him the name of Diablito (Little Devil).

"Lash this man to a mast," he said to his followers, "and leave him there. I wish to speak with him when he recovers his senses."

While his men were carrying out his orders, the leader entered the cabin with cocked pistols in his hands and satisfied himself by thorough examination that it was empty. Returning to the deck, he ordered both vessels to be anchored until a breeze should spring up, and set all hands to work clearing away the tangled wreckage of the brig's foretopmast. When this was done the pirate crew returned to their schooner for supper, after which half a dozen of the most reliable were selected to keep watch on the brig. The others indulged in a carouse to celebrate what they were pleased to term "their victory," and a certain amount of liquor was even smuggled to the steady ones aboard the prize. As a consequence, before the night had passed, every pirate on board both vessels was so overcome with

drowsiness that only their leader, wrapped in a cloak and pacing the after deck of the brig, remained awake.

There were, however, other wakeful souls on board the blood-stained brig. One of them was her lawful owner, Daniel Breeze, who had struggled back to a semi-consciousness only to find himself helplessly bound, tortured by pain, burning with fever, and suffering the torments of an unquenchable thirst. He tried to call out and beg for water, but could only make a low moaning, not to be heard above the stertorous breathing of the sleeping men about him. As he slowly recalled recent events, he realized that the brig must have fallen into the hands of pirates, and he groaned aloud at thought of the fate awaiting his idolized boy.

This sound attracted the attention of a white-clad figure, who, after a cautious survey of the situation from the forecastle hatch, had just ventured out on deck. He stopped and listened.

"God have mercy," muttered Daniel Breeze, and in another moment the white-clad figure was kneeling by his side, whispering words of comfort.

"Water!" gasped the sufferer; and Latrobe brought it.

"Is my boy safe?" whispered Daniel Breeze, after drinking eagerly of the life-giving fluid, and after Latrobe had loosened the cruel bonds that he dared not sever entirely.

"Si, Señor, safe and sleeping."

"Thank God! But what will become of him in the hands of these scoundrels? They must surely discover him."

"Without doubt, Señor."

"And murder him?"

"I think not, Señor. I believe they will hold him and you for ransom."

"If they only would, I would pledge La Brisa to save his life. But, Latrobe, in any case, you will stand by him to the end?"

"To the end, Señor, will I serve him."

"And teach him always that he is an American as well as a gentleman?"

"He shall not be allowed to forget."

"Latrobe, can I not see him once more? Can't you bring him to me?"

"It may be, Señor, I will try."

"God bless you!"

The negro slipped away and without making a sound reëntered the forecastle, from which there was communication with the hold. The latter place was full of vile odors, and, after the cool air of the deck, its stagnant heat was suffocating.

Little Theo had protested with all his strength against being brought into this place of black terrors, and Latrobe had experienced the greatest difficulty in keeping him quiet, but the child had finally fallen into a heavy slumber. Now realizing for the

first time how noxious was the air of the place, Latrobe was alarmed, though not surprised, to find the boy lying in a stupor from which it was impossible to rouse him.

Taking the slight form in his arms, the negro regained the deck with all speed, and slipping unnoticed into the galley, strove, with the aid of cool water and fresh air, to arouse his little charge. Ere he so far succeeded that the child opened his eyes, a faint light in the east announced the coming of day, and at the same time the sleepers lying about the deck began to stir. The child was still too dazed to comprehend what was said to him, and with a heavy heart, but in pursuance of a plan he had already considered, Latrobe lighted a fire in the galley stove. Then he began to prepare a pot of coffee. The fragrance of this soon attracted attention from the men, and they crowded clamorously about the galley door. Latrobe had made a bountiful supply, and now he gave each a tin cupful, hot and strong. He also gave them bread in abundance.

Although they regarded him curiously, they said nothing, but took what he gave them and retired, without having noticed the child who lay in a corner. With a sigh of relief at their departure Latrobe bent over the boy, who was now wide awake, and persuaded him to swallow a few sips of coffee. While he was thus engaged he was startled by a

harsh voice demanding in Spanish to know who he was and what he was doing.

Springing to his feet, Latrobe confronted the pirate leader, who, coming forward to examine his prisoner, had been attracted to the galley.

"I am Americano, Señor, and spik not ze Spanish," replied the negro, knowing by instinct that this was the pirate chief.

"Le diable!" growled the other, and then in English, even more imperfect than that of Latrobe, he repeated his questions.

"I am ze cooka of ze brig," answered the negro, forcing a smile, "and I mek ze cafe for ze man. Will ze Señor not drink of ze cafe?"

The Spaniard accepted the proffered cup, but as he sipped it his glance fell on the little Theo, who in turn stared at him with unabashed gaze.

"Whose child is that?" asked Diablito.

"It is one of a passenger," answered Latrobe, evasively.

"Is it not the child of the Señor Danbrisa?"

"It may be, God knows. I am but ze cook."

With a quick movement the pirate seized Theo by an arm, dragged him from the galley, and set him in front of Daniel Breeze, who still leaned against the mast to which he was bound.

"Papa!" cried the boy, struggling to twist himself from Diablito's grasp.

"O God!" groaned the wounded man. "Manuel

Lopez, for his life and my own I will deed you La Brisa."

"Oh ho! so you recognize me, Señor Danbrisa," sneered the Spaniard. "Then you doubtless remember that with a whip you once struck me in the face. Then you transported me in this very vessel to a distant land. Now, as you see, I am returned. Now I am master of the ship and of every life it holds, including yours and that of your son. Now I grasp the whip, and it is your turn to feel the sting of its lash."

CHAPTER IV

DIABLITO'S REVENGE

WHATEVER hopes of escape or of being held for ransom had passed through the mind of Daniel Breeze during the past hour, were instantly dispelled when he recognized in the pirate chief the faithless steward whom he had once exiled from Cuba. He knew the man's innate cruelty too well to hope for mercy, and also that his thirst for vengeance would demand a deep draught now that it was within reach. Therefore the helplessly wounded American remained silent, paying slight heed to the words of his tormentor, but gazing fondly at the face of his child.

"I discovered you when first I came on board this vile brig," continued Manuel Lopez. "Of course I could have had you tossed overboard with the rest, but I preferred to wait until, with renewed consciousness, you could share my pleasure in the renewal of our acquaintance. In the meantime, I have spent a delightful night of anticipation, and behold the reward of my forbearance is doubled by the discovery of this brat who proves to be of your spawn; doubtless, also, he is the most highly prized of all, as, if I remember rightly, the others were girls. Now I am

only considering whether I shall wring his neck, cut his pretty throat, or toss him to the sharks that are waiting hungrily alongside for just such a tender morsel."

As he uttered these words, Diablito swung the child toward the ship's sail as though to put his last threat into execution, and the action drew from Daniel Breeze an involuntary cry.

"Ah! that fetches you, does it? I thought I could manage to break your haughty silence. But I was not going to drown him, for I have decided to let him live. In order," he added slowly and after a considerable pause, "to bring him up to my own trade. Yes, he shall be taught the art of piracy in every branch, until his name is synonymous with all that is generally considered infamous; until he has learned to despise and hate the breed from which he is sprung; until he has covered his father's memory with dishonor; and until finally he shall dangle from a yard-arm, detested by all the world. How does the picture — ah! you wolf's whelp!"

This exclamation was of mingled rage and pain, for the child, giving over his fruitless struggles to escape, had suddenly buried his sharp little teeth in the man's hand until they drew blood. The latter flung the boy from him like a venomous serpent, and Theo, though falling heavily, ran to the sanctuary of the galley.

Wiping the blood from his hand, Manuel Lopez

continued: "Rest assured, Señor, that he will pay dearly for this, and that kicks, blows, and curses shall be his in generous measure. With your boy's future thus pleasantly outlined, we will now attend to your own case. To begin with, and to return insult for insult, you having once struck me in the face, I now spit in yours."

With this the man deliberately suited his action to his word. After a moment's pause to gloat over this indignity, he said:—

"To end with, you having consigned me to exile, I shall now do the same for you, only making sure that you shall be sent to a place from which you will never return. Adios, Danbrisa."

As he uttered this mocking farewell, Diablito drew a pistol from his sash, deliberately cocked it, slowly raised it, and pointed it at his victim's head. For half a minute he held it thus, with his finger on the trigger, then he lowered it. Twice was this operation repeated in a space of three minutes, during which time the American gazed unflinchingly, and without the quiver of a muscle, into the face of his tormentor.

Then came a sharp report; the brave head drooped slowly forward, and the dauntless spirit of Daniel Breeze winged its upward flight.

Until the very last, Latrobe, watching the scene from the galley, and knowing that the pirate leader had recognized the brig's owner, had not believed he

would kill him. He had been furious at the man's harsh treatment of Theo, and had with difficulty restrained himself from flying to the child's rescue. Upon the little one's escape he had soothed and petted him, all the while noting closely the movements of Diablito, though unable to hear what he said.

When the latter drew a pistol, and Latrobe saw that the life of his patron was endangered, he made a frantic attempt to save it by running to the crew and bidding them stay their leader's hand. Forgetting his assumed ignorance of Spanish, he appealed to them in that tongue.

"Interfere, my friends, and stop him. The prisoner is the Señor Danbrisa, the wealthiest man in Cuba, and his life is worth the ransom of a king. If he is killed, you will lose a million of pesos."

Aroused to sudden action by these words, the men made a rush toward the scene of tragedy, but reached it too late. Startled by their clamor, Diablito wheeled fiercely upon them.

"What is the meaning of this?" he cried. "How dare you offer interference between me and my prisoner?"

"He was our prisoner as well," replied one of the bolder spirits, taking upon himself the office of spokesman, "and he was worth a king's ransom. He was the Señor Danbrisa."

"I know that, you fool. And it is because he was

DIABLITO *DREW A PISTOL AND POINTED IT AT HIS VICTIM'S HEAD*

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the Señor Danbrisa, who had wronged me and mine more than any other in all the world, that I have sent him from it. But you shall not suffer by loss of his ransom. Of this brig and her cargo I will take no share. It is all yours to divide. If it is not enough, you shall have more until you are satisfied."

"But," persisted the spokesman, "is not the child whom we saw here his son, and may not a ransom — ?"

"No!" thundered Manuel Lopez. "He is my nephew, the son of my only sister and her English husband. He was born at La Brisa, where I was manager of the estate, and soon afterward both his parents died of the fever. The child thus fell to my care, but having neither experience nor facilities, I allowed him to enter the nursery of Danbrisa. The Señor having no son, but desiring one, wished to adopt my nephew, but I would not consent. To carry out his design he accused me of theft and caused me to be transported to a distant land. From that time the boy was brought up as his own, and it was to obtain revenge on one so powerful that I joined the Brethren of the Coast.

"Now my vengeance is complete, and I have regained my nephew, who was doubtless being taken to the country of los gringos to be turned into a loathsome Yankee. From that fate he is saved, and hereafter he shall be as my own son. His name is Danbrisa Lopez.

"I have thus explained, that you and all men may understand the situation. Now for me the subject is closed, and I desire to hear of it no more. So, overboard with this carrion, up anchor, and let us away to the Devil's Den (La Caverna de Diablo), where you can examine your prize in safety and at leisure."

Thus it happened that Daniel Breeze found a sepulchre in the blue Caribbean waters, while his little son, hardly conscious of his great loss, sailed away in the pirate schooner *La Vengenza* for his new home behind the rocky headland of Cape Cruz. Latrobe was also transferred to the schooner, Diablito telling him that being in need of a cook, he would allow him to live in that capacity so long as he behaved himself and made no attempt to escape. The negro was also informed that for the present he would be expected to care for Diablito's nephew, the little Danbrisa Lopez.

"You will make him forget as quickly as possible his former life," concluded the Spaniard, "and teach him to regard me as his father."

"I will make him believe what is possible, Señor," replied Latrobe. "But what can a poor black man do? I am but the cook."

Behind Cape Cruz is a salt-water lagoon bordered on its seaward side by a great mangrove swamp, the home of millions of hideous blue land-crabs, and well-nigh impassable to human beings. On the

other side, the land is high, rocky, and covered with a dense tropical growth. In the cliffs are caves capable of hiding thousands of men or many shiploads of merchandise. Close at hand, in a depression between the hills, a fine spring of sweet water bursts from the ground, and pours a crystal stream into the sea. While the lagoon is large enough to accommodate a fleet, it is so landlocked that its surface is rarely ruffled by a breath of wind, while any ship lying behind its mangrove screen is completely hidden from outside observation.

Here, then, had nature formed a typical piratical rendezvous, within striking distance of well-travelled waters, and capable of easy defence; but only recently had it been appropriated by the reckless followers of Diablito. For several years Manuel Lopez had served in subordinate positions on regularly commissioned privateers, as well as in craft that openly displayed the black flag of piracy. From the first, he had shown qualities of daring, shrewdness, and the merciless cruelty that had won for him his name. He was also an efficient commander, and when he finally took up the trade of piracy on his own account, he found no difficulty in attracting recruits to his sable standard.

Although at the time of capturing the *Siren* he had maintained a separate command but a few months, he was already an important figure in the rapidly spreading band of freebooters styling themselves

"Brethren of the Coast," who were taking advantage of the universal state of war to prey upon the world's commerce. The entire Spanish Main, including the coasts of Mexico, Central and South America, was infested by these piratical brethren, and now they were spreading among the West Indian Islands. Especially did they resort to Cuba and Santo Domingo, on both of which they found willing confederates in the inhabitants.

Of all these outposts of lawlessness none was more infamous than the chosen haunt of Diablito, to which little Prince Theo of La Brisa was now being taken for an education in the career of a pirate.

CHAPTER V

IN "LA CAVERNA DE DIABLO"

ALTHOUGH but recently selected as a rendezvous, the Devil's Den had already assumed the air of a brisk settlement. Several houses and a number of palm-thatched huts stood in the vicinity of the spring, and about these swarmed women and children, dogs, goats, pigs, and fowls. A battery had been placed so as to command the entrance to the lagoon, and signal stations were located on the neighboring hills. Merchandise in great variety had begun to accumulate in one of the caverns set apart for it, and friendly communication had been established with the scanty population of the adjacent country, who willingly acted as agents for the distribution of the pirates' ill-gotten goods. They also brought information concerning the movements of vessels bound to and from near-by ports, for which they received liberal payment.

The return of *La Vengenza* and her prize having been announced by signal, the entire population of the Devil's Den was gathered on the lagoon beach, full of curiosity to learn what had taken place. Accompanying Manuel Lopez in the first boat were

the only prisoners of the recent affair, and these were at once conducted to the principal building of the settlement, which the pirate chief made his headquarters when ashore. Here Latrobe was placed in charge of the culinary department, while Theo's piratical education was immediately begun.

It happened that several of the resident children, filled with curiosity concerning the new boy who had been brought to dwell with them, followed him up to the great house. Even after he had disappeared within its sacred precincts, to which none of them was ever admitted, they lingered in the vicinity, hoping for another sight of him. When, a little later, he reappeared on the veranda, homesick for La Brisa and gazing scornfully at his new surroundings through tear-dimmed eyes, these approached as near as they dared and examined him curiously. At first Theo was too much occupied with his own unhappy thoughts to take notice of them, and even when they began to comment disparagingly upon his personal appearance, he pretended not to hear them. At the same time he was listening, as was shown by the angry flush gradually overspreading his face. Finally, when one of them declared that the stranger was not a boy at all, but a girl, as was shown by his yellow curls, and the others, with jeering laughter, shouted out the opprobrious epithet "*niñita pequeña*," the young American's limit of endurance was reached. The

blue eyes blazed with wrath; and, snatching up a stick that lay at hand, he rushed so furiously upon his tormentors that they fled before him with screams of terror.

One, the largest and until now an acknowledged leader among the infant pirates, tripped and fell as he ran, whereupon Theo attacked him with all the ferocity of a young tiger. He beat him with his stick until the victim's howls brought his mother to the rescue. She snatched him to a place of safety, and would in turn have chastised the aggressor had not Manuel Lopez appeared on the scene at that moment, and sternly bade her stay her hand. He had been an interested and highly amused spectator of the entire episode, and now he said to the woman: —

"Whoever dares strike this child must reckon with me, since he is my adopted son and will some day be chief of this community. Therefore beware, you and all others, that he is not crossed in whatever he wills to do. If any have complaints against him, they must bring them to me. Come, Danbrisa, thou hast borne thyself like a true member of the Brotherhood, and hereafter the little dogs will no more dare bark at thee."

Diablito then led the child, flushed with his victory, back to the house, where he regaled him with sweetmeats and praised extravagantly the spirit he had shown.

From that hour Prince Theo ruled the children of the Devil's Den with the same imperious sway that he had exercised at La Brisa, and even their elders accorded to him the deference due to one under the especial protection of Diablito. As for the latter, his treatment of Theo varied according to his moods; generally indulgent to the child's whims, and abetting him in every form of self-assertion, he sometimes went to the opposite extreme, and beat him for the most trivial offences or even for no offence at all, but merely because he felt in the humor for so doing.

As a part of their training in this school of piracy, the children of the community were encouraged in their natural tendency to cruelty toward any helpless creatures so unfortunate as to fall within their power. Thus they were allowed without rebuke to pluck the feathers from trapped birds, to thrust thorns into their eyes and let them go thus blinded to flutter in helpless misery, or to practise any other mode of torture upon animals that suited them. Such things formed favorite amusements among the little savages who had become companions to Theo Breeze, and he, too young to realize their cruelty, did not hesitate to share them.

That is, he did so for a time, but finally there occurred an incident that changed the whole current of his feelings in such matters. *La Vengenza* brought in another prize, this time an English vessel, on board which was a dog of mongrel breed and no particular

value. Gaining the shore this poor brute was immediately set upon by the resident curs and very nearly killed, to the intense delight of the children who gleefully witnessed his battle for life. At length it was suggested that, being a gringo, the stranger dog ought to be hanged from a yard-arm as his late master had been, and the young wretches hailed the proposition with gladness. The other dogs were beaten off, a cord was procured and fastened about the neck of the gringo, a limb was selected to represent a yard-arm, and the poor, half-dead creature was strung up amid a shrill chorus of acclamations. With his struggles the cord broke, and he fell gasping to the ground. Before his tormentors could procure another cord, the dog, guided by instinct more wonderful than knowledge, dragged himself to the feet of our young American, and feebly wagging his tail gazed into Theo's face with pleading eyes.

In an instant the child's generous nature responded to this dumb appeal, and he flung his arms about the dog's neck with words of loving pity. The animal gratefully licked his preserver's face, and when the other children approached clamorous for their victim, Theo sprang at them with such an outburst of fury that they fled before him.

"It is my doggie," he screamed. "He kissed me because he loves me, and if you ever touch him again, I will kill you, I will kill you all, and throw you into the cave of bones!"

"But he is a gringo, and you helped hang him," suggested one of the fugitives, halting at a safe distance.

"Because I did not know how loving he was; but I will never help you any more to hang dogs, or hunt birds, or anything; and if you do it, I will kill you."

Thus was promised an era of peace for the birds and beasts of the Devil's Den; but unfortunately he who promised it was but a weakling in the hands of a higher power. This was no other than Diablito himself, who, unobserved by the children, sat at an open window close to where the described incidents were taking place. This shrewd leader, realizing that a boy is father of a man, and being desirous of training a band of young pirates according to his own ideas, watched and studied the children of his freebooting community whenever he could do so unnoticed. Of course he was particularly interested in the development of the boy whom he intended for their future leader, and rejoiced over every exhibition that he made of cruelty, pugnacity, or a domineering spirit.

In the present instance a smile of satisfaction had played across the leader's face as he listened to the plan for hanging the gringo cur. He was even more pleased when Theo, claiming the dog as his own, drove off its tormenters.

"The little devil!" muttered Manuel Lopez. "So he would kill them if they did what pleased

him not? He will make a leader to force obedience, and one whose fame for cruelty will spread farther even than that of Diablito. But what is this! The brat talking about loving, and forbidding the others to hurt animals! I must put an end to that nonsense in a hurry."

The whole expression of the man's face had changed, and was overspread by a blackness of evil passion that a demon might have envied. Emerging from the house, he seized Theo by an arm, and roughly jerked him back from the dog he had been protecting. At the same time he gave the animal a kick, and called out to the hesitating group of children: —

"Here, you, hang me this gringo cur at once. Such as he are not fit to live, and the sooner he dangles from a yard-arm, the better."

As they eagerly sprang to obey this order, Theo, his face white with fury, and struggling to escape, screamed at them to let his doggie alone. Then recalling a former scene of similar character, he attempted to achieve his own liberty by biting the man who held him. This time he failed in his effort, but gained instead a beating, so cruel as to frighten even the hardened little wretches who witnessed it. They finished their work with the unfortunate dog as quickly as possible, and then slunk away, fearful lest the wrath of Diablito might next be directed against them. At the same time, he,

satisfied that he had taught the son of Daniel Breeze a lesson not soon to be forgotten, let go of the child and strode into the house.

From the moment of the first blow Theo had not uttered so much as a whimper, and now left to himself he stood trembling, while all things swam before his eyes as in a mist. He was filled with a hatred against Manuel Lopez so intense that it seemed as though he should die of it. For a few moments the child stood dazed and motionless. Then he slowly groped his way, as though walking in darkness, to his one place of refuge, the hut of Latrobe, where, in the arms of that faithful comforter, he sobbed as though his heart would break.

CHAPTER VI

AN ATTEMPTED ESCAPE

FROM the day of their arrival at the Devil's Den, Latrobe had shown a wonderful degree of circumspection. He had done his best to render himself invaluable to his new master, always appearing cheerful and willing, devoting all the skill he possessed to the tasks assigned him, at the same time keeping himself out of the way and to himself as much as possible. While all this was done for the sake of Theo, whom he had promised Daniel Breeze to serve and care for as long as he was allowed, Latrobe was wise enough to affect an indifference to the boy in public and appear to care for him merely because ordered to do so. Neither did he force his presence upon the child, but always waited for the latter to come to him with his needs or troubles. With all this he never lost sight of his self-assumed responsibility. He had promised the dying father not to let his boy forget that he was by birth an American and a gentleman, both of which things the pirate leader desired banished from his mind as quickly as possible.

Thus, whenever they were alone, and especially

when Latrobe was putting the child to bed or sitting beside him until he fell asleep, he talked to him of La Brisa, of his father, mother, and sisters, of Lesbia, his dear nurse, and strove to keep the memory of these ever fresh in Theo's mind. He also described from his own slight knowledge, but with vivid imagination, the wonderful northern country from which Daniel Breeze had come, to which Theo belonged, and where he would sometime go, until, to the child, it was invested with all the alluring possibilities of fairyland or heaven, which to him were one and the same.

These secret conversations, which to our lad took the place of story books and nursery tales, were always carried on in English, a tongue that would otherwise have quickly become lost to the child. At first he spoke it much better than did his instructor, whose knowledge of the language was extremely limited; but after a while his accent became that of Latrobe, and he jumbled his words in the same queer way.

Although Manuel Lopez had ordered that the boy should always be addressed by the name he had given him, a custom that Latrobe was obliged to follow on most occasions, he never failed at these private interviews to call his young charge by his real name in full, which he pronounced Tay-o-feel-o Guil-ler-mo Danbrisa. This, he told the little fellow, was his American name; and thus it became

inseparably connected with Theo's confused ideas of the northern fairyland to which he would some day be taken.

For some weeks prior to the day of the cruel punishment inflicted to drive all ideas of love and pity from the boy's heart, Latrobe had been anxiously conscious that his influence over Theo was weakening. Manuel Lopez had treated the boy with unusual kindness; he was exhilarated by his acknowledged authority over the other children, and was fascinated by the pursuits into which they lured him. As a consequence, he found less occasion to avail himself of Latrobe's services than at first, and they saw little of each other except when he was put to bed. Even then he was generally too tired to care for the oft-repeated fairy tales of La Brisa and Los Americanos, which now only served to put him to sleep the more quickly.

So poor Latrobe was in despair, and on the memorable evening of the beating was unhappily trying to conceive of some new plan for winning back his young charge. Thus, while he was furious that any one should have dared abuse the child, he was pleased that the latter had been once more driven to him for consolation.

"Soh, Sugar Sweet! wha ze mat? who huttin mah boy? Tell Latrobe ze mat?" he murmured, holding the sobbing child in his arms, and striving to comfort him. After a while, little by little, he gained a

vague idea of what had taken place, and then his rage knew no bounds. Had Manuel Lopez been within reach at that moment, his life would certainly have been in danger. But a better plan even than the killing of Diablito gradually assumed form in Latrobe's mind. They would escape from the Devil's Den that very night, make their way to the nearest place where there were soldiers, and send them back to destroy all the pirates. The negro had vaguely considered this plan for a long time; but Theo had appeared so content with his new life, that the former had feared he would not consent to leave it, and knew that to carry the child away against his will would be impossible. He almost recoiled now from the danger of the attempt, as he realized its difficulties, but was determined to make it. Even should both of them be killed, it would be better than for the son of Daniel Breeze to grow up a pirate. Latrobe had already made cautious inquiries about the surrounding country, and had found that while range after range of savage mountains extended to the eastward where no man lived, the region lying north of the Devil's Den, though heavily wooded, was much more level and comparatively well inhabited. Also, in that direction, and only about thirty miles away, lay the seaport of Manzanillo, whence he could obtain transportation to any part of the island or even to the United States. So he had set his heart on reach-

ing Manzanillo, which he proposed to gain by boat. There were always plenty of these used for fishing or turtling drawn up on the beach of the lagoon, and he believed he could obtain possession of one without difficulty. He had, in fact, done so one night and fished from it for a couple of hours undetected.

Now, therefore, he told Theo that they would run away from the bad men, and return to his own dear home, but charged him to the utmost secrecy. Apparently comprehending the proposition, the child willingly agreed to it, and wished to set forth at once, but Latrobe persuaded him to wait, and even pretend to be asleep until it should be time for them to start. Then he left the boy lying quietly on his own humble pallet while he went to prepare supper in the great house.

"Where is Danbrisa?" demanded Manuel Lopez, as he caught sight of the black man.

"I found him sleeping in my hut, Señor, and, as he seemed to have been weeping, thought best not to disturb him," answered Latrobe, quietly.

"What was the cause of his weeping?"

"Who knows, Señor? A child weeps for many things so trifling that he forgets them after he has slept."

"I shall take pains that he does not forget this," muttered the pirate leader. Then aloud he added, "This time he may remain where he is, but it must

not happen again, for I do not choose that my son should sleep in, or even enter, the hovel of a negro."

"I will try that this shall be the last time, Señor."

By midnight Latrobe had selected his boat, and placed in it provisions, water, and several other things for their proposed voyage. With all thus prepared he returned to his hut, and without being detected bore the sleeping child to the water's edge, where he placed him on a rug in the bottom of the boat. Then he pushed off from shore and softly paddled out over the still waters of the black lagoon.

The night was without sound and very dark; but to one who had studied the way as carefully as Latrobe there was no difficulty in directing a course toward the outlet. One thing caused him anxiety, and that was the wonderful phosphorescence of the water, stirred into startling brightness by each dip of his paddle. Every drop falling on the surface was a living flame, and each ripple became a line of molten silver. As he neared the mouth of the outlet, and was hoping that these flashes of light might not be visible beyond a narrow circle, he was suddenly terrified by a hoarse hail from directly ahead.

"Who goes?"

Startled as Latrobe was by this intimation that the outlet was guarded, he still had sufficient presence of mind to reply, in the thick voice of another negro also held as a slave by the pirates: —

"It is only Domingo, Señor, trying to catch a few fish for his breakfast."

"Very good, Domingo, only carry on your fishing at some other point, for as sure as you come closer to this place by one boat's length a leaden bullet will make bait for fishes of your black carcass; go, then, and go quickly."

As this order from the still unseen guard was accompanied by the ominous click of a musket lock, Latrobe hurriedly obeyed, and paddled back to a safe distance. There he paused, bitterly chagrined at this failure of his plan at its very outset, and reflected as to what he should do.

It would be almost as dangerous to return as to go forward, since Domingo would certainly deny having been on the water that night, and he as the only other negro in the community would at once be suspected. Also, he must get Theo away from that dreadful place if possible. So he finally decided to land as near the mouth of the lagoon as he dared, take a circuit through the forest to the coast, and attempt to make his way on foot to Manzanillo.

In carrying out this plan he was forced to leave most of the things he had provided for the journey in the abandoned boat, for he knew he would be compelled to carry Theo nearly, if not quite, all the way. So he took only a bag of food that he slung over his back, and a cutlass that he strapped about his waist; then with the wondering child in his arms,

he plunged into the black depths of the forest. He had gone but a short distance before he discovered the folly of attempting to make headway before daylight, and halted to await its coming.

Even with it to make plain the way, his path was so beset with difficulties and his progress was so slow that when, after a whole day of painful toil, the fugitives reached the bank of a deep, rapidly flowing stream, Latrobe knew it to be the Rio Limones, and that they were not more than two leagues from their place of starting.

As the river might not be crossed without a boat, Latrobe followed along its bank in the hope of meeting some place of human habitation, and finally discovered a poor hut, evidently belonging to a fisherman. A man, its sole occupant, sat in the doorway smoking, and gave the fugitives a curt greeting after a furtive but searching examination through his half-closed eyelids.

"You have a boat, Señor?" began Latrobe.

"Si."

"Will you take us to Manzanillo?"

"If you can pay."

"I have money and will pay one doubloon."

"In advance?"

"If you so demand and will start at once."

So the bargain was concluded, one of Latrobe's gold pieces passed into the hands of the fisherman, and a few minutes later the three, embarked in a

A MAN SAT IN THE DOORWAY SMOKING.

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ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
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small yawl-rigged boat, were sailing toward the mouth of the river.

The wind was light, the motion of the boat soothing, and our wearied fugitives, one held in the other's arms, soon dropped asleep. When this happened, the course of the boat was changed, and an hour later she was halted by the patrol guarding the narrow waterway that led to the Devil's Den.

CHAPTER VII

BRANDED FOR LIFE

MUCH as Latrobe had discovered regarding Diablito's management of his freebooting community, many of its details were still hidden from him, as indeed they were from most of the residents in the Devil's Den. Thus he had not known of the night patrol recently established at the inlet, nor did he imagine how widely the pirate leader had extended his influence. The negro had thought himself almost overcautious in not disclosing to the fisherman the fact that he had just made an escape from the pirates, and would have done so without hesitation had the man asked questions or offered the slightest encouragement. That the latter had not shown curiosity was because of the swift-sailing boat sent out to warn the coast as soon as it was discovered that Theo and Latrobe were missing. It had not only touched at every settlement and offered a reward for their capture, but had even gone as far as Manzanillo, where Diablito's agent was warned of what had taken place. So, even had the fugitives succeeded in reaching that point, they would never have left it alive except as captives on their way back to the Devil's Den.

The fisherman knew who they were the moment he set eyes on them. In fact, he had just returned from searching for them, and regarded their coming to him as an especial favor of a kind Providence. He was wise enough to demand pay in advance for whatever service he should render; and later he believed himself equally wise in neglecting to report this fact. Thus, it was not discovered that Latrobe was possessed of money.

When the latter, awakened by the hail of the patrol, attempted to sit up, he found his arms firmly lashed to opposite sides of the boat so that he could not move. He was not, however, left in any doubt as to where he was or what had happened, for as the patrol boat ran alongside the situation was promptly explained.

"You are in luck, amigo," remarked one of the guards, as the fisherman told how, after he had searched in vain for the fugitives, they had come directly to him. "As for you, you black rascal," continued the guard, speaking to Latrobe, "you will be in luck if the chief is content with slicing off your ears and giving you a hundred lashes, instead of slitting your throat, for running off with his son. He is furious, I can tell you, as he has a right to be."

A little later, the beach from which the runaways had started on their unfortunate trip was reached, and Diablito was notified of the success of his plan.

By his order the fisherman was rewarded and sent on his way rejoicing. Latrobe, still bound, was thrown into a small cave that served the pirates as a dungeon, and poor, sleepy little Theo, only partially realizing what had happened, was carried away to his own bed.

Early the next morning several men busied themselves in erecting, on a level space near the spring, a strange-looking structure of two stout posts sunk in the ground and connected at the top by a wide board. This had been sawn in two, lengthwise, hinged at one end, and from the middle of each piece a semicircular space had been cut, so that when they were brought together a round hole, some six inches in diameter, was formed. The structure was, in fact, a rude pillory, and the entire community speculated as to its use. Especially did the children gather about it, filled with excitement and curiosity.

They had not long to wait, for hardly was it completed before Latrobe was led from his dungeon; and, with his arms still bound behind him, was fastened in it by the neck. About this time, too, a small fire was started close at hand, and into it one of the pirates thrust some strange-looking instruments, the like of which the children had never seen. When everything was thus ready, and the entire community had, by special order, been gathered about the pillory, Diablito appeared, leading

Theo by the hand. Taking a position in front of the unfortunate negro, he said : —

"You black scoundrel, you attempted to run away ; and worse than that, you tried to steal from me the adopted son whom I had publicly declared should some day become the leader of my people. For this crime you deserve death ; and you should die in some extremely interesting manner, but for the fact that I still have need of you as a cook. For that reason alone your life shall be prolonged until I can catch another to take your place. Also, that your usefulness as a cook may not be impaired, I shall refrain from putting out your eyes, and so making sure that you would not again run away. But that I dislike to have maimed people about me I would slice off your ears, and I cannot tear out your tongue because I wish you to answer when spoken to. Thus, you see, I have been put to some trouble to decide exactly how to deal with your case ; but I think I have at length hit upon a mode of punishment that will be satisfactorily painful, without rendering you unfit for duty. At the same time, it will effectually put an end to your attempts to escape from this place. Carcelero, you may proceed."

As Diablito gave this order, a man who had been bending over the fire took from it the curious-looking instruments, and stepped in front of the helpless prisoner. Lifting one of the irons, which was red

hot, he pressed it for an instant against Latrobe's forehead. The latter shrieked with pain, and there was a sickening odor of burning flesh. Twice more was the cruel operation repeated, and then the negro's forehead was branded forever with the shameful letters C. P. V. (*convicta por vida*).

"There!" exclaimed Diablito, with an air of satisfaction, when the infamous deed was completed, "you will think twice before again running away, now that you are branded as a life convict; for, as you doubtless know, every inhabitant of this island is ordered to kill on sight any such person found outside the penal settlements. Even in other countries, including the United States, such a brand is not only a disgrace that would cause all men to shun you, but it would render you liable to be arrested and returned to Cuba. So, my black friend, it is for your interest to remain quietly here during the remainder of your natural life. Sabe?"

As the suffering black, into whose very brain the terrible letters seemed to be seared, made no answer, the man continued: "For the present you will remain where you are; and, until you are released, I forbid any person — man, woman, or child — to offer you assistance. Now go," he added, addressing the assembled spectators. "The show is over."

As the crowd scattered, Diablito returned to his house, and Latrobe was left alone except for a few children, who remained to jeer at him and gloat

over his sufferings. These also amused themselves with reheating the branding-irons that had been left lying on the ground, and burning their fatal letters into the woodwork of the pillory. Choking with thirst and tantalized by sight of the spring close at hand, the wretched prisoner begged for water; but the little devils who alone heard his appeals only answered them with mocking laughter.

While this was going on Theo was nowhere to be seen; for, the moment he realized what was about to be done to his friend, he had broken loose from the hold of Manuel Lopez and ran beyond sight or hearing of the cruel punishment. After a while curiosity got the better of his horror, and he ventured back to where he could see the children engaged in their sport of petty torment. For a few minutes he watched them, his heart swelling with rage until it seemed like to burst. When, at length, he saw them bring water from the spring and hold it within a few inches of the prisoner's swollen lips, his rage could no longer be restrained. The biggest boy of all, who had already once suffered from Theo's wrath, was standing on tiptoe holding at arm's length the tantalizing cup, while the others, gathered close about him, were eagerly watching Latrobe's face, and mocking him with shrill cries. So intently were they engaged that none noticed the avenger creeping up behind them. As he passed the fire he snatched from it one of the branding-

irons, and springing forward thrust it with all his might against the back of the boy who held the cup.

As the venomous iron bit its way into his flesh, the startled lad dropped his gourd of water, and fled screaming with pain and terror. In another moment the others had also scattered and disappeared like a covey of frightened quail, leaving Theo, still brandishing his smoking iron, master of the situation. For a moment he gazed after the runaways in triumph and dared them to come back. Then he heard the piteous moan, "Water! for the love of God, water!" and realized that there was still much to be done. Picking up the gourd he refilled it at the spring, but was not tall enough to lift it to Latrobe's mouth. So he ran to the nearest hut and fetched a stool, standing on which he placed the gourd to his friend's eager lips. Next he procured a knife and severed the cords confining the prisoner's arms; and then, looking to see what else might be done, discovered that the halves of the board forming the pillory were only fastened by a wooden peg thrust through staples. Mounted on his stool and using the branding-iron as a hammer, Theo managed to drive this out; and Latrobe, lifting the upper half of the confining timber, was at length released from his place of torture. Then, taking his friend by the hand, the child led him away to his own hut and no one of the many who witnessed the act dared stop him or utter a protest. At the same time they imagined

with eager anticipation the vengeance of Diablito when he should discover what had been done.

But the pirate chief was already aware of what was taking place; for, unobserved, he had watched the scene from the beginning, and as the rescued man disappeared with his youthful deliverer, he made no move to stop him. Instead, he chuckled to himself and muttered: —

"The little devil! He fears nothing, not even me! What a leader of fighting men he will some day make!"

CHAPTER VIII

THE ADVENT OF A RIVAL

AFTER the unsuccessful attempt to escape and its cruel result, just recorded, Latrobe hopelessly accepted the situation. He had been made to realize how completely he was within the power of the pirates, and of what little use freedom would be, even could he gain it, now that he was branded with the infamous mark of a life convict. Thus he had nothing left to live for, except to watch over the little Theo and guard him as far as possible from unhappiness. To accomplish this end he resumed his former plan of attending diligently to his assigned duties, and at the same time shunning observation. This he carried to such an extent that, except to Theo, he rarely spoke to any person, and thus soon gained a reputation for moroseness that caused all men to avoid him.

About this time occurred an incident that exercised a powerful influence over the lives of both Theo and Latrobe. It was nothing more nor less than the marriage of Manuel Lopez to the daughter of another leader among the Brethren of the Coast, and the coming of his bride to the Devil's Den.

She was young and handsome with a wild dashing style of beauty, and it was quickly established that, on shore at least, her authority was supreme. From the first she showed a liking for Theo, petting him and having him constantly with her. She called him her little page, and devised beautiful costumes for him from the rich fabrics brought home by her husband. As Theo readily responded to the affection thus bestowed, the child and the woman became inseparable, and the former now found so little occasion to avail himself of Latrobe's services that often for days they did not exchange a word. The boy was indeed "Prince Theo" now, even more than he had been at La Brisa; for not only was he apparelled, fed, housed, and served like a prince, but throughout the community in which he dwelt his word was law and his slightest wish was, if possible, gratified as soon as expressed.

So affairs remained for the best part of a year, and, in the hot sunshine of cloudless prosperity, Theo grew so tyrannical that the entire settlement, except his adopted parents and the devoted Latrobe, hated him, while to its younger members he had become an object of genuine terror.

With the pinnacle of his glory thus reached, a second incident, or rather series of incidents, occurred that effected another change, and tumbled Prince Theo down among the hard realities of life with a bewildering suddenness. On a certain day, when

he was unusually domineering over some of his playmates, and was finding pleasure in causing them much unhappiness, a woman remarked within his hearing that his adopted mother would no longer care for him if it should happen that she had a son of her own, which was more than likely.

Filled with a vague uneasiness, Theo at once returned to the great house, determined to ask her whom he had learned to call his mamma, what the woman had meant. To his dismay he found in the house several other women whom he had never seen there before, and who told him that his adopted mother was too ill for him to be allowed in her presence. As nothing like this had ever happened before, the boy became furious, and was therefore treated to the further indignity of being put outside the house.

Diablito was away on a cruise, or as much as Theo still distrusted the man who had beaten him during the earlier days of their acquaintance, he would have gone to him to redress this outrage. As it was, he sought the long neglected Latrobe, but to his disgust, found even this friend too busy to listen to him just then. So the bewildered boy wandered moodily off into the forest, determined never to return to a place where every one was so hateful. The approach of darkness, however, caused him to waver in this decision, and, besides, he was hungry. Perhaps it would be wiser to go back just for the night, and to

secure something to eat. But he would not enter the great house so long as those horrid women were there — that was certain.

Thus thinking, the boy crept unobserved to Latrobe's hut, where he was pleased to find his friend at leisure to attend to his wants. The negro even seemed to be expecting him, for he had a nice supper ready and a hammock swung as though for a guest.

"You stay wiz me to-night, Sugar Sweet. 'Cause zey so biz in ze big house, I feared zey not meek you comf, you know. You got leetly buzzer, eh?"

"I hate a little brother! I won't have a little brother! There isn't any little brother!" exclaimed Theo, vehemently, between mouthfuls of the food he was greedily eating.

In spite of this declaration the little brother proved to be a fact, when, on the following morning, Theo was invited to visit his adopted mamma. Allowing his desire to hear her deny that absurd little brother story to overcome his pride, our lad consented to do so, and was conducted to where she lay, looking very pale, but smiling at sight of him. For a moment the happiness of once more being with her banished all other thoughts, and he sprang forward to fling his arms about her neck, but she warded him off, saying: —

"Be careful! Don't come too close, or you might hurt little brother. Look! Don't you want to see him?"

Then it was true after all. Yes, there lay the horrid thing itself. A lump of wax, with two black beads stuck in for eyes. As Theo stared, speechless with rage, the babe wrinkled up its apology for a face, and began to wail in a most disagreeable manner.

"There! There!" murmured the mother. "Did the bad boy frighten mamma's darling? But he shan't hurt my pet, and he shall go right away."

"I'm glad I frightened it. I won't go away! I shall hurt it!" screamed Theo, whereupon he was rudely pulled from the bed by a strong-armed nurse, and dragged without ceremony from the room.

From that moment the reign of Prince Theo was ended, and he was so filled with jealous rage against his rival that he could think of little else. Although he was still tolerated in the big house, being allowed to sleep and eat there, he was at all times and in all ways given to understand that his position was no longer what it had been. The Señora Lopez was so completely absorbed by her new possession that she found no time for anything else. Nor was she inclined to favor the openly avowed enemy of her own darling son, and the example thus set was promptly followed by all other members of the community. Although its children as yet hardly dared openly to defy Theo, they no longer obeyed his commands or followed his leadership; while their elders treated him with either a contemptuous indifference or an

assumed pity that was worse. Most galling of all were the praises of "little brother" dinned into his ears from all sides for the express purpose of arousing his wrath.

In this hour of trouble he had but one hope left, and, strangely enough, this lay with Manuel Lopez.

Heretofore the boy had rejoiced at Diablito's absence on the long cruises that occupied so much of his time; but now he longed for his return, feeling assured that he would restore all his old-time privileges. A woman might prefer a toothless, hairless, and altogether disgusting-looking baby, to a strong, handsome, well-grown boy like himself; but he was confident that a man would show better sense.

So Theo watched eagerly for the first glimpse of Diablito's home-returning vessel, and when it finally entered the lagoon, his heart beat high with hopeful excitement. He forced his way into the front rank of those assembled on the beach to welcome their chief, and stood where he was sure the latter must see him when he stepped ashore. He even shouted out a greeting as the boat touched the sands, but his voice was drowned in the cries by which those about him announced to the anxious parent that a son had arrived during his absence.

"Viva, muchachito!" they cried.

"Viva, niño pequeño!"

So elated was Manuel Lopez by this joyful news,

that, paying no heed to any person, he sped up the hillside to where his son awaited him.

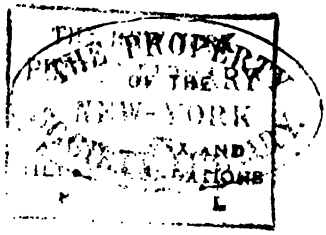
Theo, disappointed, but still hopeful, ran after him. "When he sees what an ugly little thing it is, he will not care for it," he said to himself. But never was a hope dashed to the ground more speedily than this one; for as our lad gained the main entrance to the great house, Manuel Lopez appeared from the inside, proudly bearing his infant son in his arms that he might display him to his followers.

"Out of my way, Danbrisa!" he cried, noticing Theo for the first time, "and make room for my son, who will some day be your master. Behold, my friends! Is he not splendid? See how he smiles on you, and he not yet a week old! Is it not marvellous? What a comrade he will make! What a leader of good fellows! To be the father of such a one is a joy greater than the capture of a thousand ships."

Thus was Theo's cup of misery filled to the brim, and in the exceeding bitterness of his heart he knew that but one thing remained to be done. He must kill that detestable "little brother," even as his pirate associates killed all who stood in their way. He had a small dagger, given him long ago by her who had been his adopted mamma, to wear with one of his page's costumes, and now it should be put to a good use.

That night Manuel Lopez was moved by a sudden

impulse to rise from the feast to which he had bidden his followers, and steal away for a look at his sleeping son. As he noiselessly entered the dimly lighted chamber, he saw that the nurse dozed in her chair. Then he caught a glimpse of something that flashed above the sleeping infant. In another instant he had flung Theo Breeze with a crash through a near-by window, as he would have flung any one, or anything, that threatened to harm his child.


PROPERTY
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CHAPTER IX

A YOUNG OUTCAST

FROM the hour of Theo's attempt to live up to his teachings and get rid of his rival by the simple process of killing him, our poor lad was outcast and miserable in the place where he had once reigned supreme. For days he was forced to remain in closest hiding to escape the wrath of Diablito, and during this time Latrobe was only able to visit him with food at night. When the pirate leader again went to sea, and the unhappy boy ventured to appear once more in the light of day, he found himself in the position of one who had forfeited all claim to human love, pity, or kind treatment. He was no longer allowed to enter the great house, and was driven away if he even appeared within sight of it. From the adults of the community he received only blows and harsh words, while with those nearer his own age, who were now became his chief tormentors, he was obliged to fight for very existence or fly for his life if they attacked him in overwhelming numbers. He became ill-kept and ragged, and but for Latrobe, who still remained faithful to him, he would have starved. As it was, food could only be smuggled to

him at irregular intervals, and often in insufficient quantities. To supply this deficiency he naturally became a fisherman and a hunter of small animals that might be used as food.

In this pursuit of a livelihood he learned from necessity, that most exacting of all teachers, the arts and secrets of woodcraft, as well as to unravel the simpler mysteries of the sea. Spending much of his time on or in the water, it grew to be almost a native element; and, with constant practice, he acquired the faculty of swimming beneath its surface for more than a minute at a time.

He learned to swim with such rapidity that he often succeeded in catching turtles or crayfish with his hands, at the bottom of the lagoon, and had no fear even of the great sharks that infested it. With constant out of door exercise his slender body grew hard and supple. As he was more often naked than clad, it was browned from head to foot by the hot tropic sun; while through the tan of his cheeks glowed the ruddy flush of health. He was a perfect young animal, but with a mind as untutored as that of the veriest savage. So shunned and despised was he, that he rarely spoke with anyone save Latrobe, whom he only met at night, and who, with his broken English, that grew more imperfect as time passed, could teach him but little out of his own ignorance. They still talked of La Brisa and its inmates; while the boy was fre-

quently reminded of his American name, Tay-o-feel-o Guil-lermo Danbrisa, but beyond this his mental education was at a standstill.

In the earlier days of his outcast life, before the boy had acquired the strength and self-reliance that afterwards came to him, he was frequently driven by his youthful tormentors to the one place of refuge where they dared not follow him. It was a vast and gloomy cavern, inaccessible by land, and only to be reached from the waters of the lagoon, which completely closed its mouth except at lowest stages of the tide, when for a short time a narrow opening was visible. For some distance inward from the entrance its floor sloped upward until it reached an elevation beyond the highest tides. Then it stretched back on a level into unexplored darkness. A peculiar feature of this cavern, was a vertical, well-like shaft, extending from its roof to the surface of the ground some fifty feet above, and admitting a limited amount of light. On the rocky floor directly beneath it, lay a number of bleached bones that gave to the place its ominous name "La Caverna de Hueso" (cave of bones).

From the time of their first occupation of the Devil's Den, it had been a custom of the pirates to spare such of their captives as could be made useful in building or rigging the craft they occasionally constructed. When these wretches had served the purpose for which they were wanted,

they invariably disappeared, though but few persons were allowed to know their fate. Only rumor connected these secret disappearances with the Cave of Bones; but it was sufficient to invest the place with terrors that none save only our outcast and hunted American lad dared face. He, having no superstitious fears, and finding in the cavern a place of refuge safe from intrusion, did not hesitate to make use of it. He neither knew nor cared where its bones had come from, and was only troubled by the swarms of great land crabs that shared it with him, noisily rattling their claws over its rocky floor.

In this gruesome place, then, Theo secreted such scanty treasure as he possessed, placing any that the crabs might fancy on ledges beyond their reach. Here he hid the canoe that he had stolen from the beach, his paddles, grains, turtle pegs, bow, and many other objects more or less useful that he had appropriated to his own use as he needed them, and here he passed much of his time.

In single combat with any of his youthful enemies Theo could hold his own; but when forced to flight by numbers, he invariably made for the lagoon, took a header into its waters, and swam beneath the surface to the mouth of the cavern, leaving his baffled pursuers mystified by his disappearance. On several occasions it happened that while they watched the water until satisfied that he was drowned, he had

terrified them by unaccountable reappearances, either close at hand, where the first notice of his presence would be a blood-curdling yell, or on some apparently inaccessible point of rock, from which he would taunt them with bitter words. As he was never seen to enter or leave the Cave of Bones his connection with it was not suspected; but it grew to be generally believed that he possessed the power of remaining under water as long as he chose. For this reason people began to call him "El Pescar" (the fish), and after a time this was the only name by which he was known.

In all the years of Theo's outcast life, Diablito, though rarely catching sight of him, had not forgotten his existence, but intended, as soon as the boy became big enough, to capture him and take him to sea as one of his piratical crew. This was what Latrobe dreaded more than anything, and never did he cease to watch for a chance of getting his young charge away from that hateful place, before it should be too late to save him. But for years no opportunity presented itself, and when the day of escape finally came, it was Theo instead of himself who planned it.

For a long time the pirates, having no use for captives, had not brought any home. Then Diablito determined to build a schooner according to his own ideas, and from several of his prizes reserved such of their crews as seemed likely to serve his purpose.

These he took to the Devil's Den and set to work on his new craft. Among them were Americans, Englishmen, and Spaniards, and, strongly guarded, they were made to toil like galley slaves. Some broke down and died under the hardships of unremitting toil accompanied by a scant allowance of poor food. Others were stricken by fatal fevers, and still others were killed while attempting to escape. Thus it happened that by the time the beautiful schooner which had already cost so many lives was completed, only a handful of the scores of men employed in her construction remained; of these two were English, and the rest were Americans.

With the schooner launched, rigged, her sails bent, and ready to start on a cruise, the pirates had no further use for captives who must be fed and guarded. So Diablito promised them their freedom in return for the services they had rendered; but added that they must submit to be blindfolded in order that they might not learn the trail into the mountains where they would be set at liberty.

To this the wretched captives, overjoyed at the thought of freedom even with a prospect of starving in the savage Cuban wilderness, readily consented. Thus it came to pass that, shortly before sunset of a certain day, their eyes were tightly bandaged and they were conducted into the forest. The path was rugged, and they frequently stumbled over its unseen

obstacles, but no one complained, for was it not leading them to freedom? They had no knowledge of the strength of their guard, and only knew that one man walked in advance while several others mingled with them.

The man who led the way was Diablito, and the captive immediately following was Thomas Pole, an Englishman who had been captain of the bark *Arab*.

Of a sudden the pirate leader stepped aside, while the man marching immediately behind Thomas Pole came to an abrupt halt, blocking the way of those who followed, and leaving the English captain to proceed alone. This he did for a few paces, and then, without warning, he stepped off into the air, and shot downward with dizzy velocity. He fell in silence, but the next man uttered a great cry as his footing seemed to slip from under him.

At this the others took alarm and were reluctant to proceed; but the pirates rushed them forward ere they had time to plan any form of resistance, and pushed them over the fatal brink. Most of them took the plunge with bound arms, but the last of all, a stalwart Yankee from Portsmouth, New Hampshire, named Alvord Spicer, managed, by a mighty effort, to burst his bonds, and with freed hands to tear the bandage from his eyes as he was thrust to the edge.

Like a flash he took in the situation. At his feet yawned a black hole, apparently the mouth of a

bottomless pit. It was not, however, a wide opening, and on its farther side were vines and trees whose roots grew down along its rocky face. The man hesitated for an instant, but, as those behind were about to push him over the brink, he launched himself forward with a mighty spring. It carried him clear across the opening, so that his hands clutched a tough root, and for a moment he hung suspended from it. Then, slipping swiftly down, he disappeared. As he did so, a volley of musketry from overhead severed the very root to which he had clung.

"It was a most amusing spectacle," remarked Diablito, as he and his fellows sauntered homeward; "but the next time we must manage it better."

CHAPTER X

IN THE CAVE OF BONES

THE building of the schooner, *La Bruja* (The Witch), as she was called, had greatly interested Theo, and though he had never dared approach her closely in the daytime, he had often watched the progress of the work from safe distances. Also he had frequently visited her at night, creeping cautiously over her growing frame, and studying the details of her construction with eager curiosity. When she was finally launched, and he saw how gracefully she rode the water, he longed to sail away in her, and seriously considered a plan for smuggling himself on board when it came time for her to depart.

The captives, forced to toil at her construction, caught occasional glimpses of the wild boy, as they called him; but learned nothing concerning him except that his name was "El Pescar." So they imagined him to be some half-witted unfortunate for whom the pirate community had no use. They did not, however, devote much thought to him, having troubles enough of their own to consider, without borrowing from others.

With Theo's first entrance into the Cave of Bones, he had, of course, discovered its well-like opening to the outer world and had determined to use it for his own purposes. It did not take him long to locate it on the surface, and soon afterward he possessed himself of a rope that would reach to the bottom of the cave. Tying knots in this at short distances, he made it fast to the cable-like roots of a rubber tree, that extended well down into the gloom of the opening. A little practice enabled him to clamber up and down this slender ladder with the agility of a young monkey, and by its aid he made those mysterious appearances that so puzzled his youthful enemies. He also used the orifice as a convenient passage to his cave for many things that it would have been difficult to convey by the water route without attracting attention. Thus he pitched into it such firewood as he needed, besides palmetto leaves and bundles of grass for bedding. These he had frequently to renew, not only because he preferred them fresh and sweet, but on account of the crabs, which delighted in dragging them to dark hiding-places and appropriating them to their own use. Fortunately they, like himself, were inclined to be nocturnal in their habits and generally committed their depredations at night when he was visiting Latrobe, rarely disturbing his daytime naps.

So wise had this twelve-year-old boy become in

all matters pertaining to his own safety and well-being that he never lighted a fire for his rude cookery where its reflection might be seen from the lagoon, or in the daytime, when its smoke might attract attention.

It so happened that, on the day when the pirates proposed to dispose of their captives by compelling them to leap down the rocky jaws of the bone cave, Theo had been busily renewing his supply of bedding. By hours of diligent toil he had collected and thrown down the shaft a quantity of material, including a number of elastic branches, with which he proposed to prepare an unusually comfortable sleeping-place. Before arranging it he was resting from his labors, and also impatiently awaiting the coming of darkness that he might light a fire. He was very hungry, and had caught a turtle from which he proposed to make not only a supper, but several subsequent meals.

At length the light filtering down through the orifice grew dim with the approach of night, and he began to prepare some of his turtle steaks for broiling. While thus engaged he was violently startled, as well as greatly frightened, by the sudden plunge of a human form down the shaft. The man thus precipitated into the cavern struck on the collected pile of bedding material, and rolled to one side, where he lay groaning.

Theo, who had leaped to his feet with a cry of

terror, started toward the recumbent figure, but ere he could reach it there came another rush, accompanied by a scream of agony, and a second human form was violently projected through the orifice. It came head foremost, and lay silently motionless where it struck. Then, in rapid succession came another and another, until seven were piled together in direst confusion. After these came an eighth, but of them all he alone seemed to have come of his own accord; for he slid down the knotted rope and alighted unharmed on his feet. At the moment of his appearance a roar of musketry sounded overhead and a shower of rock fragments rattled harmlessly down the shaft.

"The incarnate fiends!" exclaimed the latest comer, as he vainly strove to pierce the gloom and discover the nature of the pit into which he had fallen. "So this death trap is the place of freedom they promised us! Never mind, my friends, I'll make some of you pay dearly for your fun if ever I get out of this alive. And I will get out, too, since you have so kindly provided a ladder for climbing."

With this the man again caught hold of the rope by which he had descended, as if about to return by it to the surface; but at the first pull it gave way and fell in coils about him.

"Oh, God!" groaned the man. "That ends it, and here we must die like rats in a trap, supposing that any still have life to yield. Hello there, shipmates!

Is there a living soul in this place of death save myself?"

"Si, señor, one here is alive, and another I hear groan," replied Theo, who, seeing the man plainly, did not realize that he himself was still invisible.

"And who are you?"

"I Americano, name Tay-o-feel-o Guil-lermo Danbrisa," replied the boy.

"An American, eh? Well, you don't talk it. What are you doing here?"

"Here it is I live."

"Oh, you do! Then I suppose this was your ladder, and now that it has fetched away, probably here it is you will die along with the rest of us. Can you strike any sort of a glim, so that we can see what to do for my poor mates?"

"No entendez, señor."

"I mean, can you light a fire?"

"Si, I kin ze fiah mek."

So saying, Theo produced flint, steel, and tinder, with which he quickly started a blaze.

"Why, you are only a child!" exclaimed the man, as its light revealed the slender form. "I know; you are El Pescar, the wild boy."

"So I am called," replied our lad, quietly. "An' you are one of ze Americanos who mek *La Bruja?*"

"Yes," cried the other; "and bitterly have we been repaid for so doing! Oh, my poor mates! Here, son, lend a hand!"

As gently as possible the man and his young assistant disentangled the several parts of the human heap formed below the shaft opening, and laid each by himself on the floor. Two were dead, one with a broken neck, and one killed by the others falling on him. Both of these were Americans. The two Englishmen were alive, though one of them had a broken arm, and both were able to sit up. The other three men were unconscious, while all were bruised and cut.

Theo brought water from a pool in a remote corner of the cavern, and by its aid the unconscious men were restored to their senses. Then, at a suggestion from Alvord Spicer, who had caught sight of the turtle meat, the youthful host of the occasion began to broil some steaks, for which both he and his unexpected guests were ravenously hungry. His entire stock of provisions proving wofully insufficient to meet the demand, he suddenly darted away without a word of explanation and disappeared in the blackness.

An hour later he returned, and, dripping wet, had rejoined the despondent circle about the fire before they were aware of his presence. Nor had he come alone, for there was a man with him, at sight of whom Alvord Spicer sprang to his feet with a sharp challenge of, "Who's that?"

"A frien', señor; come to help you," was the answer in Latrobe's voice.

Then the negro explained how he had just finished preparing a feast ordered by Diablito to celebrate the completion of his schooner, when Theo appeared with a request for food to take to the recent captives who through an ordeal of death had regained their liberty and were hid in the Cave of Bones.

"Also ze chile tell me one plan," continued Latrobe, speaking so rapidly that his imperfect English was extremely hard to follow. "He say, here you will die. If ze ladrone [pirates] come, zey will kill you. If you fight, mebbe you die. Same time mebbe you go free. I will help you fight; ze boy will also fight for git away. I haf bring bread. I haf bring knife for fight. I haf bring boata for swim. *La Bruja* she sail in ze morning. Now her mans eat, drink, on ze lan'. If we take her and fight ze patterol, we mebbe git away all right. What you tink? You come, eh?"

"Of course we will," answered Alvord Spicer, who was willing to risk anything on a chance of escape.

"Yes, yes," cried the others, forgetful of their wounds and suffering, in the joy of renewed hope; "only show us the way out, and we will show you how we can fight."

For the dead nothing could be done, and they were left where they lay; but the living, several of whom tottered with weakness, followed their newfound allies to the mouth of the cave. Here they were discouraged to discover that they must not

only plunge into, but through, the black waters that completely filled it. Alvord Spicer, however, declared that he would go first, if Theo would show him the way. The boy's only answer was a header into the sea, and the big Yankee promptly followed in his phosphorescent wake. In another minute the latter returned, bringing with him the end of a rope.

"It's all right, mates!" he cried cheerily; "there's a boat out there, and here's a line leading to it. Let Eph Morris go first with his broken arm, and I'll go with him to help him aboard. Then I'll send back the line by the little chap, and we'll haul out any one else that needs help."

But none of the others seemed to need help, for all followed close after Eph Morris, and Latrobe brought up the rear. Fifteen minutes later they had climbed with the silence of shadows aboard the schooner *La Bruja*. Then, forgetful of weakness and suffering in their fierce desire for liberty, they prepared to run her from the harbor and, if necessary, purchase their freedom with their lives.

CHAPTER XI

A FIGHT FOR FREEDOM

FEELING secure in their guarded harbor, and desirous of participating in the festivities of the night, the crew assigned to *La Bruja* had landed in a body, leaving their vessel snugly anchored just off the beach. Thus, although the escaping captives had nerved themselves to fight for possession of the schooner, they boarded her without opposition.

Again did fortune favor them; for they found the vessel to be anchored by a hempen cable that could be cut, instead of by a chain which they could neither have got aboard nor cast loose without sounding an alarm.

Naturally, and without protest, Alvord Spicer, who had been first mate of the ship on which he and the other Americans were captured, assumed command. He issued his orders in whispers and caused the oars of the boat in which they had come to be muffled in the rowlocks. Then he, with four others, got in to tow *La Bruja* from the harbor. The man with a broken arm, being useless as a fighter, was left to steer the schooner. It had been

A BALL CRASHED THROUGH THE BULWARKS.

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Alvord Spicer's intention to leave Theo on board as well and take Latrobe in the boat; but at the last moment these two were not to be found. They had come from the cavern in Theo's canoe; but, after the unopposed capture of the schooner, had reëntered it and slipped away unnoticed.

"Never mind, mates," muttered Alvord Spicer, when this defection was discovered; "they've weakened and given up the job; but it isn't likely either of 'em would have been worth anything in a fight, so we are just as well off without them. Are you ready? Give way, then, and remember that the splash of an oar may cost us our lives."

At the beginning, *La Bruja* hung back as though loath to leave her birthplace. Then she reluctantly yielded to the steady pull and began to gather headway. At first the rowers tugged at their oars in silence, but with a strength born of desperation. After a while, however, as they approached the outlet, they began to converse in ordinary tones, and even forced an occasional laugh. They did this to mislead the patrol, which they now momentarily expected to encounter, and cause them to imagine that *La Bruja* was being towed to sea by her own crew.

To carry on this conversation with well-assumed cheerfulness was one of the hardest things they had undertaken. To remain silent and listen with straining ears for the approach of those whom they knew

they must encounter sooner or later, would have been much easier.

It so happened that the patrol boat was at the far end of the outlet, watching its seaward approach, and thus the fugitives were well within its narrow waters before they were discovered. Then came the hail, crisp and distinct: —

"Quien va?"

"Now, men," said Alvord Spicer, in a low but emphatic tone, "give way lively and go for 'em!"

As he spoke, he cast off the tow-line, and leaving *La Bruja* to drift, the boat sprang forward in the direction of the hail. Again it came from close at hand: —

"Quien va! Answer quick, or I fire."

"Amigos," replied Alvord Spicer, hoping thus to gain a few seconds. But his accent betrayed him, and a musket shot from the patrol sent its ominous warning far and wide through the stillness of the night.

"Way enough! Oars!" shouted the Yankee leader, and in another moment the two boats had crashed together.

Muskets, pistols, and cutlasses in the hands of seven strong men on one side, were opposed only by clubbed oars wielded by five fugitives weakened by wounds and suffering on the other. But the five fought with the energy of despair, and for a few moments the issue was at least doubtful. Then came disaster.

Alvord Spicer from his place in the stern had felled one of the pirates, and was about to repeat his crushing blow when the two boats surged apart. He could not stay his descending oar, which, with the very force he had imparted to it, overbalanced and plunged him into the sea. At the same time another of the Americans received a pistol ball in his body, and sank helpless to the bottom of the boat.

With yells of triumph the pirates attempted once more to close, that they might finish the three who remained. As they thus strove, and while their whole attention was turned in that direction, a black object, gliding like a swift-moving shadow, appeared on the opposite side of their boat. From it a crouching figure leaped among them, cutting and stabbing with such fury that in a twinkling the tide of battle was turned. Latrobe's hour of vengeance had come; and with each death-dealing blow of his terrible knife he uttered a shrill scream: —

"Uno por convicta!

"Uno por — por!

"Uno por vida!"

Thus for each letter branded in livid scars on his forehead he claimed a human life. He might have taken more, for so panic stricken were the pirates by this fierce assault that they seemed incapable of resistance; but, with the fall of his third victim the patrol boat was suddenly capsized by some

unseen force. There was a confused struggle in the water, and then Alvord Spicer swam to his own boat, while Latrobe clambered into the canoe that Theo held in anxious waiting. The first battle for liberty had been fought, and no one of the pirate patrol remained to tell its story.

Even the victors had no time to talk it over or to comment on Latrobe's opportune appearance and splendid work. They knew that the alarm must have reached those on shore, who would not tamely submit to the theft of their schooner. So they pulled back to *La Bruja* with all speed, guided by the shouts of the Englishman who had been left on board. Even as they again picked up her tow-line there came a roar from the heavy battery commanding the inlet, and a ball aimed by chance rushed perilously close above their heads.

The badly wounded man was hastily transferred to the schooner, Latrobe took his oar, and the tedious operation of towing was resumed. Alvord Spicer, with Theo to help him, remained on board the vessel to loosen sails and have them ready for hoisting with the first puff of a breeze that might be expected as soon as the coast was well cleared.

"That other schooner will be after us, sure," said the big Yankee, as he and his youthful assistant cast off the mainsail stops. "I shouldn't be surprised to see her any minute, for they'll put a crowd aboard and sweep her out in a hurry." As he spoke

the man peered anxiously astern. His reference was to *La Vengenza*, which had been anchored a short distance beyond the vessel they had stolen.

"No, Señor," laughed Theo, "not quickly will zey come." Then he explained how he and Latrobe had gone aboard *La Vengenza*, brought away her capstan bars, and so fouled her anchor chain with a toggle of rope that it would jam either way in the hawse. "Also," concluded the boy, "we did wiz knifes cut her ropes till we fraid some more to stay. No, she will not quickly come, *La Vengenza*."

"Good for you, boy!" cried Alvord Spicer. "You are a trump, and your black friend is another. In the hurry of getting off I never thought of those things myself, though I ought to. Ha! there goes a signal fire. It's a warning to the other Brethren to look out for us, I suppose. What say, son?"

"La canoa," repeated Thoe, who was plucking at the man's sleeve and trying to divert his attention to some floating object that only his keen eyes were able to detect.

"A canoe, is it? Where away? Yes, I think I see it. Ahoy, there in the boat. Come on board. Now, boy, let's run up these jibs and see if we can't give her steerage way."

By the time the head-sails were hoisted and sheeted home, the rest of the crew had gained the schooner's deck. They cast their boat adrift as being too heavy to tow, but got Theo's dugout on

board, so that they might not be absolutely without a small craft in case of emergency. Then they went to work with a will at the sails, hoisting, loosing, and sheeting home, until they had spread to the faint night air every inch of canvas the schooner possessed. Under it she drifted out to sea, but with so sluggish a movement that the fugitives heartily blessed the forethought of Latrobe in delaying their pursuers. As it was, they were uneasily conscious of being followed and watched by swiftly darting, shadowy forms, that the sharp-eyed Theo declared to be canoes, each holding a single occupant.

"Spies, watching our course," muttered Alvord Spicer; "but I will fool them yet." With this, as they were now well clear of the land, he headed the schooner to the northward as though for Manzanillo. He steered, while his exhausted mates attended to their hurts or rested after their exertions. Only Theo, who was a regular little night owl, and the Englishman, Thomas Pole, kept watch with him.

After running a couple of hours, during which time the breeze sensibly freshened, Alvord Spicer put the schooner about and headed her for the open waters of the Caribbean Sea.

"What's that for?" demanded Thomas Pole, when the slight confusion resulting from bracing the foreyards had subsided and the vessel had settled down to her new course.

"Because it seems to me best," was the reply.

"But I thought you were running for Manzanillo, and still think it the port we ought to make. It is the nearest place where we can find a British consul to whom to report and turn over this vessel."

"I don't want to report to any consul, nor turn over this schooner until she has carried us many a mile from the island of Cuba."

"How came you captain, anyway?" asked Thomas Pole, who felt that because he had formerly been a master, while Alvord Spicer had only been mate, he was entitled to command in the present instance.

"I made myself captain, and am backed up in my position by three American sailors," answered Alvord Spicer.

"I, too, Americano, Señor," broke in Theo, who had conceived a great liking for the big Yankee sailor.

"Four Americans," said Alvord Spicer.

"And Latrobe," persisted Theo.

"Five Americans. Have you any objections to make?"

For answer Thomas Pole only turned on his heel and walked away.

A few hours later, however, when sunrise disclosed a schooner that was immediately pronounced to be *La Vengenza* under a press of canvas, and standing across the course of the fugitives, the Englishman

remarked, "The British government will hold you responsible for this, Mr. Spicer."

"British government be hanged!" rejoined the Yankee, savagely; "and you will, too, if you don't jump forward and get to work. Ready about!"

CHAPTER XII

THE WORK OF A TRAITOR

In spite of Alvord Spicer's effort to throw the pirates off his track, Diablito seemed instinctively to have divined the true course of the fugitives, and had planned his own accordingly. So complete was his success that the first thing disclosed by the rising sun was *La Bruja* coming directly toward him. Promptly as she was put about she was still within range of his long twelve-pounder, and as she presented a fair broadside mark, a ball from it speedily crashed through her weather bulwarks, killed the wounded American, who lay on deck, and sent a shower of splinters flying in every direction.

Having no ammunition, the fugitives could not reply if they would, so they grimly awaited their fate, at the same time attending diligently to the trim of their sails. No one as yet knew *La Bruja's* speed, nor how it would compare with that of the older schooner, which up to this time had been considered the fastest thing of those waters.

The next shot tore a jagged hole in the new mainsail, and fell into the water some distance

ahead; but the third dropped astern. To be sure, it was so close as to drench the deck with its spray, but it gave proof that the fine lines of the newly built craft had not been designed in vain, and so filled the fugitives with hope that they raised a cheer.

Another shot fell short of its flying mark, and after that the pirates ceased firing in order to devote themselves strictly to the business of the chase. They wet down their sails, and employed every art known to seamanship for gaining speed, but all to no purpose. *La Bruja* fully justified her name, and proved herself a veritable witch at sailing. Before a steady breeze and under her immense spread of canvas, she developed such marvellous speed as made the swift *Vengenza* appear a sluggard by comparison. Her knife-like stem cut through the blue Caribbean waters with the sound of rending satin; while from her lean quarters streamed a long-drawn, eddying wake, that flashed in the sunlight like the tail of a comet.

"Oh, you beauty!" cried Alvord Spicer, as his practised eye measured the ever increasing space between pursued and pursuer. "I was made to sweat heart's blood in building you; but you are worth every drop of it."

So long as the wind held, the safety of the escaped prisoners was assured; and, losing interest in the pursuer, whom they no longer feared, they began to

attend to their own affairs. Their first duty was to consign to a sailor's grave the mangled remains of their shipmate, who had at least died in the freedom for which he had so bravely fought. A pool of blood marked the place where he had lain, and they attempted to wash it away, but it had already soaked so deep into the new wood of the deck that its stain was indelible.

While the others were thus engaged, Latrobe, who had naturally gravitated to the galley, prepared breakfast from such materials as were at hand. When he served it in the cabin, and those who had been willing to hail him as a comrade the night before, caught their first glimpse of his face by daylight, they looked at him askance. Every one of them knew the meaning of the terrible letters branded on his forehead, and they said to themselves: —

"No wonder he fought so well, — he had everything to gain, and nothing to lose."

They did not say this aloud; in fact, no one spoke to him, save only Alvord Spicer, who greeted him as cordially as ever, and commended his cooking. Also Theo, whom the big Yankee had seated at his right hand, was impelled by excitement and great joy to fling his arms about the black man's neck, at the same time exclaiming: —

"We Americanos now, Latrobe?"

"Yes, little boy, we are now Americans," replied

the negro in Spanish, but as sadly as one who had just been exiled forever from his native land.

Soon after breakfast was over, *La Vengenza* was lost to sight below the horizon, and the fugitives were at last free to lay a course in whatever direction they pleased.

"I hope, now that you have shown into what danger your pigheadedness can lead us, you will be willing to listen to the advice of more experienced persons," remarked Thomas Pole to the acting skipper.

"Meaning yourself?"

"I did not say so."

"Well, then, what do you advise?"

"I advise running for Jamaica, where at the port of Kingston we can place our case in the hands of honest British officials."

"How about placing it in the hands of honest American officials?"

"Where will you find them?" demanded Thomas Pole, with a sneer.

"In every foreign port, sir, where there is an American consul," thundered Alvord Spicer. "And in every port of the United States, to one of which I mean to carry this vessel."

"Then, as a British shipmaster, I demand that you first set me ashore in the nearest British port, which happens to be that of Kingston, Jamaica."

"That is too far out of our course; but I shall

take pleasure in setting you ashore on the first land we sight, which will probably be either the eastern point of Cuba or some portion of Santo Domingo."

"And so swindle me out of my share of prize money?" cried Thomas Pole, angrily. "No, sir, sooner than relinquish my rights in that respect I shall remain on board this schooner just as long as you do."

"Then you'll be apt to remain on board until she drops anchor off the city of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, U. S. A., to which place I propose to take her. It is a port where all are treated according to their deserts, without fear or favor, and where every soul aboard this schooner who has done his duty will receive his just share of whatever she may bring at public sale."

"You don't mean that you intend the life convict and the half-witted pirate spawn who hangs about his neck shall receive equal shares with us white men?" snarled the Englishman, finding thus a new source of grievance.

"No, sir, I do not. I mean that each of them shall receive a double share; since but for them, neither you nor I would be alive at this minute. Have you no spark of gratitude in your make-up that you can speak slightingly of those who have rendered us such notable service?"

"They but made use of us to aid their own escape."

"And if they did, have we not also made use of them? Could we have escaped without them? But that will do. We will no longer discuss the subject. You may go forward and stand by for orders."

"I am no foremast hand."

"By Heavens, sir, you are, and will be so long as I retain command of this schooner. So step lively, or I shall be compelled to regard your conduct as mutinous and treat you accordingly."

For a moment the man hesitated; then discretion got the better of his valor, and he walked away, muttering to himself as he went.

At this time the War of 1812 between the United States and England was still fresh in the public mind, and there was much bitterness of feeling between the people of the two countries. British sailors were especially sore after the rough handling given them by the American navy, and were ever ready to pick a quarrel with the hated Yankees. In the present instance this animosity had been buried beneath a common danger, but with a return of security it broke out afresh. Captain Thomas Pole also felt aggrieved that he had not been given command of the schooner, and as he walked forward he vowed vengeance against the Yankee who had humiliated him.

As he moved away, Latrobe, who had been waiting for a chance to speak, approached and announced

so short a supply of provisions on board that it would not last more than three days.

"That's bad," said Alvord Spicer, reflectively, "and we must see what can be done. But look here, my man, what is the meaning of that brand on your forehead? Are you an escaped convict?"

"Señor, I good man an' I free man. Diablito put him zis mark for kip me from run away."

"I can believe it of him," admitted Alvord Spicer. "But how about the boy, El Pescar? Is he the son of a pirate?"

"No, Señor," cried Latrobe, indignantly. "He Americano, name Tay-o-feel-o Guillermo Danbrisa." Then he related Theo's history from the date of his birth to the present time, and when he had finished, Alvord Spicer gave vent to a thoughtful whistle.

After dismissing the negro, the big Yankee called Theo to him and asked him many questions. As a result he became satisfied that Latrobe's story was true, and he determined that the wishes of Daniel Breeze in regard to the education of his son should be carried out.

"I owe you a big debt, young man," he said to Theo, "and I don't know how I can better repay it than by putting you in the way of getting just such a Yankee training as your father wished you to have. So I am going to carry you to Portsmouth, New Hampshire, where I was born, and turn you over to my old dad, the Reverend Enoch Spicer, who still

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lives there. He is a learned man, and on account of what you have done for me, will care for you as for his own. In the meantime we will look up your relatives, and let your folks at home know where you are."

"I Tay-o-feel-o Guillermo Danbrisa — I Americano," replied the boy, who had gained but a vague idea of the other's meaning.

"That's right," laughed Alvord Spicer, "and if I'm not mistaken we'll make a mighty good American of you, too."

By this time *La Bruja* had been put on her proper course and was headed toward the Windward Passage. As the day wore on, her skipper, mindful of his short supply of provisions, gradually edged her in toward the Cuban coast, where, as he hoped, he finally had the satisfaction of running down several small boats loaded with turtle. He would gladly have bought their cargoes, but having neither money nor goods to exchange, was compelled by necessity to confiscate them and wish the fishermen good luck in catching more.

On one of these occasions, when running out of a deep bay, the crew of *La Bruja* were startled to see a large ship standing across its mouth.

"A frigate!" cried Alvord Spicer, "and a Britisher by her bull-dog topsails. I only hope she will go on about her own business, leaving us to attend to ours."

Not caring to invite suspicion and the meddlesome investigation that would be certain to follow if he should turn back, he stood boldly on. The frigate also held her course without paying any attention to *La Bruja* until the skipper of the latter was heaving a great sigh of relief that the danger was past; then, all of a sudden, the frigate majestically rounded to, backed her maintopsail, and fired a shot across the schooner's bows.

"What in thunder!—" began Alvord Spicer, when a cry from one of his crew interrupted him, and he followed the man's horrified glance aloft. There, to his consternation, he saw, streaming brazenly out from *La Bruja*'s main peak, the ominous black flag of piracy.

CHAPTER XIII

"ADIOS, MY LITTLE ONE"

INSTANTLY realizing the consequences that might follow the display of that detested flag, Alvord Spicer gazed at it for a moment in consternation. Then he sprang to the signal halyards and tore it down. But he was too late; the mischief had been wrought, and already a boat filled with armed men was putting out from the frigate's side.

Glancing hurriedly about him, *La Bruja*'s skipper sought for a chance of escape, and had there been one, however desperate, he would have seized it. But there was none. Should he put back, run his vessel ashore, and take to the woods, he would only fall into the hands of the enraged fishermen whom he had just robbed, and who he strongly suspected were themselves little better than pirates. To leave the bay without receiving a broadside that would blow his little vessel out of the water, was impossible, since the frigate commanded the openings on both sides.

"Caught like rats in a trap," he muttered, "and by treachery black as night."

As he spoke, Alvord Spicer glanced at his shipmates, who were watching to see what he would do. Latrobe and Theo stood together near the galley, the former with one hand laid protectingly on the boy's shoulder. The Americans were grouped at the mainmast foot. Eph Morris was at the wheel, and near him Captain Thomas Pole leaned on the rail, regarding his baffled enemy with a significant smile.

"So it was you, was it?" cried Alvord Spicer, noting the man's triumphant expression. "Then, by —— ! you shall pay for the dastardly act."

With this, he snatched up a belaying pin, and sprang toward the grinning Englishman.

But the latter did not await his onset. He preferred taking his chances in the sea, and with a yell he leaped overboard. Regaining the surface, he struck out vigorously for the approaching boat. As he did so, the enraged skipper hurled the belaying pin after him so truly that it cut open the man's cheek, and would have brained him had its course been deflected a single inch.

Just then, a second shot from the frigate passed between *La Bruja's* masts, and, without waiting for orders, Eph Morris threw her into the wind.

Only pausing to pick up the bleeding and nearly exhausted swimmer, the boat dashed forward, and in another minute was alongside. An officer, followed by half a dozen sailors armed with cutlasses, clambered aboard.

"Do you surrender?" he cried, advancing with cocked pistol upon Alvord Spicer.

"By what authority and for what reason do you demand it?" inquired the big American.

"By the authority vested in the commander of his Majesty's frigate *Chloris* to apprehend pirates wherever found," was the stern reply.

"We are not pirates, but have just—"

"Then produce your papers."

"We have none, for the simple reason—"

"That is enough, sir. I can hold no argument with a shipmaster who fails to produce papers upon lawful request," interrupted the officer. "Whatever you have to say will be heard later on board the frigate. If I had my way, though, I would string you up first and investigate afterward, for I never laid eyes on a more piratical-looking gang of cut-throats. Quartermaster, take the wheel and lay us within hail of the *Chloris*."

While this order was being obeyed, and the alert British tars kept guard on deck, their officer made a hasty examination of *La Bruja's* cabin. During his short absence Alvord Spicer found opportunity of whispering to Theo, whom he beckoned to his side: —

"Whatever they may do to the rest of us, 'tis not likely they will hang one so young as you, and so, lad, you may some time escape. If ever you do, make your way to the United States, and always

remember the Reverend Enoch Spicer of Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Say it over to make sure."

"Revrind Innock Spicer, Portsmut, New Hamp," repeated the boy, wonderingly.

"That's right, always remember it; and when you find him, tell him—"

"Stop that talk!" cried the lieutenant, catching sight of these two as he regained the deck. "No communication between prisoners. Go forward, you pirate cub."

"He's no more a pirate than I am," began Alvord Spicer, fiercely; but the officer commanded silence, remarking at the same time that he did not suppose he was.

As *La Bruja* was hove to within a short cable's-length of the great ship, from which hundreds of eyes regarded her curiously, her skipper was ordered into the boat and taken, together with Thomas Pole and Eph Morris, whom the former had indicated, on board the frigate.

The British shipmaster was at once conducted to the cabin for examination; while the others were left on deck under separate guard. Then Eph Morris was sent for, and finally Alvord Spicer was conducted into the presence of the commander. As he entered the cabin he looked for those who had preceded him; but they were not to be seen.

"Well, sir, what have you to say for yourself?" demanded the frigate's captain, who was a young

lordling filled with the importance of his first command.

For answer Alvord Spicer, standing between two marines armed with loaded muskets, told in straightforward language, but as briefly as possible, of the events leading up to the present situation. As he concluded, the commander said : —

"That is a very ingenious story, sir ; but I do not believe one word of it, since two Englishmen, one of whom is a reputable shipmaster, have just related an entirely different tale. However, I will give you the benefit of a doubt, and, instead of hanging you at once, will allow your case to go before an admiralty court, which will doubtless sentence you to your just deserts. Take him away, corporal, and place him in solitary confinement."

This order was addressed to one of the marines who guarded the prisoner. When the latter had been removed, the young commander said to his first lieutenant, a grizzled old sea-dog who had been present during the several interviews : —

"Is it your opinion that we are justified in holding this schooner, Mr. Bumble ? "

"It certainly is, my lord. I never ran afoul of a clearer case of piracy," replied the man, who always sought to agree with his superior.

"And yet we did not detect him in any overt act."

"None at all, my lord."

"Except flying the black flag, robbing inoffensive fishermen, and above all attempting the life of a British shipmaster."

"Any one of which would be sufficient to hang him, my lord."

"Still, if I make the seizure, and this last fellow's improbable tale should prove true, I might get a terrible wigging from the Admiralty."

"A thing to be seriously considered, my lord."

"So I have half a mind to let him go."

"It would be a prudent thing to do."

"Though she is the first prize of this cruise.'

"The very first, my lord."

"And prizes nowadays are hard to come at."

"Never knew 'em so scarce, my lord."

"She would make a clever despatch boat."

"As fine as ever was launched, my lord."

"So I think we'll take her, after all."

"I doubt if you could make a wiser move, my lord."

Thus the fate of *La Bruja* was decided, and within an hour she had once more resumed her voyage to the northward, in company with the frigate *Chloris* and under a British flag. Of her former company only one now remained on board, and he was its youngest member, Theo Breeze. All the others, including Latrobe, had been transferred to the frigate, and their places had been taken by a prize crew commanded by a midshipman.

Poor Theo was broken-hearted at being thus separated from his friends. He had gone confidently forward to enter the boat with them, but one of his new masters had pulled him back and roughly ordered him to stand aside. So they went off without him, and his only farewell came in despairing accents from Latrobe, who did not realize that the boy was to be left behind until the boat was shoved off. Then with a breaking heart he called back in Spanish: —

"Adios, my little one. Remember always that, by birth, thou art an American and a gentleman."

"Shut up, you black pirate," growled the man who sat nearest, at the same time dealing Latrobe a cuff on the head.

Theo had been retained on *La Bruja* at the request of her new commander, who desired him for a cabin boy; and now ensued the saddest period of our lad's life. He was even more unhappy than when, driven from the great house of the Devil's Den, he had been compelled to shift for himself as the outcast of that piratical settlement. Then he at least had Latrobe for friend and comforter. Now every man's hand seemed raised against him. He had even lost his identity, and was known only as the "pirate cub." All day long it was, "Cub, do this, and be spry about it," or, "Cub, you little devil, come here and get the rope-ending you deserve." He was made to perform every menial

service, and missiles of all kinds were flung at his head for the fun of seeing him dodge.

Of course the poor child had no idea how to serve the meals of even such a rude civilization as was now introduced into *La Bruja's* cabin. He did not know the names of the dishes he was expected to hand and exhibited such awkward ignorance that the midshipman in command finally ordered him forward to become the slave and butt of the crew. By them he was teased, beaten, starved, and compelled to unceasing toil, until he grew thin and miserable, while his expression became that of a hunted animal.

The *Chloris* being under orders for Halifax, *La Bruja* also shaped a course for that far northern port, with instructions to keep the frigate in sight as long as possible. But the two vessels parted company on the very first night, and after that the schooner pursued her way alone.

As she slowly worked her way northward, the weather, which was that of early spring, grew ever more inclement and stormy, until poor Theo, clad only in thin cotton garments, felt that he must surely perish of the bitter cold.

What with storms and adverse winds, the voyage was so delayed that the supply of provisions taken on board from the frigate was finally exhausted, and the schooner was compelled to seek the nearest port for a renewal of her stores.

Thus it happened that one evening in April *La Bruja* dropped anchor in the harbor of Salem, Massachusetts; and, for the first time in his life, our young American gazed upon the land of his forefathers. At daylight of the following morning the schooner again sailed; but when her crew called their slave to fetch them their early coffee he failed to respond, nor could trace of him be found from one end of the ship to another.

CHAPTER XIV

FIRST TOUCH OF AMERICAN SOIL

WHEN *La Bruja* was forced into Salem harbor, Theo Breeze had reached such a point of misery that it seemed as though he would rather die than live. His body was bruised from head to foot, his wretchedly thin clothing was in rags, and he was almost perished with the unaccustomed cold of a northern spring. If he occasionally snatched a moment's warmth by crouching behind the galley stove, some one of his persecutors was sure to discover him and drag him out again to the bleak deck. He was always so hungry that he eagerly ate the scrapings of the pans and "kids" given him to clean. Altogether, a more unhappy lad than *La Bruja's* "cub" would have been hard to find.

He overheard the men talk of Halifax as being their destination, but had no more idea of the location of Halifax than of the north pole. It must be a weary way from his own beautiful home, since they had already sailed so long without reaching it, and it must lie in a region of bitter cold. It was also invested to him with all the terrors of death; for every member of the crew had found pleasure in

telling him that he would certainly be hanged as a pirate the moment their voyage was ended. Consequently Halifax was to poor Theo the place of all places to be most dreaded, and when *La Bruja* finally dropped anchor in Salem harbor, his heart sank as heavily as did the mass of iron plunging to the bottom, for he believed the fatal port had at length been reached.

So filled was he with despair that he would not even look at the town which was within plain view of the anchorage, but attended drearily to his hated tasks with downcast eyes. Only when he was scrubbing out some wooden kids that had held the crew's scanty dinner did he make a discovery that changed the whole tenor of his thoughts.

Several of his shipmates were leaning over the rail close at hand, commenting upon their surroundings. One of them said that this was the place in which was built the Yankee frigate *Essex*, that he had helped capture in the harbor of Valparaiso, and he believed most of her crew came from here as well.

Hearing this, and by listening eagerly to every subsequent word, Theo at length became convinced that he had not reached Halifax after all, but was in some port of that wonderful America toward which his highest hopes had been directed ever since he could remember anything. . Intensely excited, he dropped his work and climbed the rail for a look at the promised land, but was promptly cuffed down and

driven back to his task. His thoughts, however, could not be repressed, and they were in a tumult. He heard the men say that they would sail again with the next daylight, and instantly determined that by some means he would be left behind.

Not for nothing had our lad been outcast and forced to depend largely upon his own exertions for a living. He had at least learned self-reliance. Nor had the sufferings recently undergone destroyed one particle of his confidence in his own abilities. Only give him a chance and he would prove what he could do. Once let him set foot in America, the fairy land of Latrobe's tales, his father's land and consequently his own, the country of Alvord Spicer, where kindly people were to be found on all sides, and his path would be made easy. Perhaps the place to which he had come was Portsmouth itself; for, as he had just heard, a Yankee frigate had been built here, and had not Alvord Spicer told him of the building of Yankee frigates at Portsmouth? It might be that in the houses he could see on shore friends were even now awaiting him, and wondering why he did not come to them.

But he must not try to reach them before darkness should conceal his movements. He must even wait until the schooner was on the point of sailing; for if she once got to sea before he was missed, it was not likely that she would put back in search of one so insignificant as himself.

So absorbing were the boy's thoughts that he made more mistakes and received more blows than usual that evening. But he paid little heed to blows now, and only longed for the hour when he might put his plan into execution. He knew that his only chance of escape lay in swimming, for the boat sent after provisions had been hoisted on board again upon its return. His own canoe still lay on deck, and he longed to take it with him, but realized that to do so would be impossible. So he must swim; and, as he eyed the distance to be covered, he realized how difficult would be the task, though confident that he could accomplish it.

At length night came, and Theo, rolled in a piece of old canvas, lay on deck in the lee of the galley to shiver, and sleep if he could, until it should be time for his desperate venture. For hours he lay awake, and never had a night seemed so long. He was, however, sound asleep when one of the morning watch, just turned out, stumbled over him in the gloom, and swore at him for being in the way.

Thus rudely awakened, Theo listened for a moment, and then knew that his critical hour had come, for sails were hoisting and the anchor was being hove short. So with chattering teeth but tightly compressed lips, he stole swiftly to the rail, made a bit of line fast to the forechains, and slipped down into the blackness so softly that no sound marked his progress. The sudden chill of the water bit to

his very bones and cut his breath short with a gasp, but he would not go back now. He was American, and would rather die in American waters than be carried to the dreadful place called Halifax. So he pulled himself together and struck bravely out in the direction of a single twinkling light that indicated the blessed land.

How he reached it he never knew. It seemed as though he swam through that icy water for hours, and before he crawled limply out on a bit of sandy beach, he was numbed beyond all feeling. Several times his strength had given out, and he had sunk beneath the surface, but in each case the indomitable will of his Yankee ancestors had forced him to further effort, and finally he found himself in shoal water.

That first touch of American soil thrilled him like an electric shock and he essayed a shout of triumph, but could utter no sound. He could only drag himself weakly out on the wet beach and lie there in such a swoon of utter exhaustion that he seemed to be floating through thin air. It was a very pleasant sensation, and he was no longer cold nor tired, but only buoyantly content. From this beautiful dream he was rudely aroused and brought back to the wretchedness of his situation by a sound of gruff voices close at hand. Filled with the idea of flight, and believing his enemies to be in hot pursuit of him, the poor child staggered to his feet and moved away

with uncertain steps. Not far away was a light, perhaps the same that had guided him to the shore, and he made toward it. Thus he was led to a small house on the outskirts of the town; and no longer hearing the sound of voices that had so alarmed him, he sank wearily down on the steps of its front doorway. A chaise, with a blanketed horse that impatiently pawed the ground, stood near by. Theo could see these plainly in the gray dawn that was stealing over the world, and was vaguely curious regarding them, for he had only the dimmest recollection of horses at La Brisa, and had not seen one since.

As he sat thus, the door behind him suddenly opened, and a man, making a hasty exit, stumbled over the crouching boy. Only by a violent effort did he save himself from pitching headlong. As he recovered he turned and glared angrily at our lad, at the same time exclaiming: —

"What are you doing here, you vagabond, setting yourself as a stumbling-block in the way of honest folk? I've a mind to have you arrested and whipped. Begone instanter, or I shall be tempted to give you a taste of the gad myself."

So Theo, too frightened and bewildered to reply, by this, his first reception on American soil, did as he was ordered and moved slowly away up the street.

The doctor, — for such was the man who had just come from a weary battle with death in the little house, — still muttering to himself, entered his chaise

and drove in the same direction. It was now light enough for him to see Theo plainly, and, as he noted the boy's miserable appearance and uncertain steps, his heart misgave him for his harshness. For hours he had been fighting to save the puny life of a newborn baby boy, and yet here was one already past the ills of infancy, but evidently in sore straits, whom he was treating as too worthless for consideration. Surely if the one was worth saving, the other was at least deserving of human interest, and worn out as the doctor was with his night's work, he chided himself for his roughness. To make amends for it he reined in his horse as he came opposite to Theo and called him.

"Come here, boy," he said, "and tell me of yourself. Why are you out here on the street bareheaded and barefooted at this time of day? Bless me! the child is dripping wet, and well-nigh naked. Where is your home, boy? and who are your parents?"

"Revrind Innock Spicer, Portsmut, New Hamp," replied Theo, brightening visibly under the friendliness of the doctor's tone.

"Portsmouth, eh? Then I suppose you have run away, and have come to grief, as all boys should who desert their lawful homes. But I'll warrant you have long since repented of your folly and would gladly return, if only a way could be provided. Get in here, for I must be moving on, but have a desire to inquire further into your case."

Thus in another moment our homeless waif was curled at the doctor's feet on the bottom of the chaise, and was being borne rapidly away, while his new-found friend plied him with questions that remained unanswered.

"The child's mind seems unbalanced," said the doctor to himself, after a little, "and I shouldn't wonder if suffering were the cause, for he looks as though he had very nearly reached the limit of human endurance. What he evidently needs is rest, food, and warmth; and, thank God, I can provide him with all three."

CHAPTER XV

KINDLY HEARTS AND PITIFUL

Dr. Winthrop Conant, gruff and impulsive but so kindhearted that no one in trouble ever appealed to him in vain, was a physician of extensive practice, which from his own choice lay almost wholly among the poorer classes. From such patients he rarely collected a bill, largely for the reason that he never presented one.

"They will pay when they can," he was used to say, "and if they can't, what is the sense in worrying both them and myself?"

Of course such a man was imposed upon, and the doctor's wife declared that nine out of ten of the cases of alleged suffering relieved by her husband were too transparent to deceive any one else.

"Perhaps they do not wholly deceive even me, my dear," he would reply, "and perhaps I would rather be deceived in nine cases than risk missing the tenth."

The doctor shrewdly suspected that the case by which he had just been robbed of a night's rest was one of these charities that could well afford to pay its own way. Perhaps this suspicion accounted for

his petulance upon leaving the scene of his labors; but with the discovery of an undoubtedly genuine case of helpless distress, such as he had just taken into his chaise, all his vexations disappeared, and his heart again overflowed with kindly compassion.

The house to which he carried our waif from the sea was large, square, and substantial. It, together with a moderate income from invested property, enabled the doctor to indulge his charitable instincts with a clear conscience, and here he dwelt in great comfort with his wife and two servants, a man and a maid.

Leaving his horse in the stable, the doctor let himself and Theo into the house by a rear entrance, and so gained a capacious kitchen that was always kept warm, against his return from weary night visits like the one just ended. Here also was spread an ample lunch in case he should be hungry. Thus he was able to provide Theo at once with the food that he so evidently needed. Bread, butter, and jam, a bit of cold meat, and a glass of milk formed a more sumptuous repast than our homeless lad had enjoyed in many a long day.

"Hunger is one of the commonest penalties that runaways are called upon to pay," remarked the doctor, gravely, as he watched the boy's ravenous attack upon the food placed before him, "and you, my son, seem to have incurred it in full force. Also, as I have frequently noticed, hunger is an

extremely contagious affection, and so I believe I will take a bite myself."

Thus saying, the doctor drew up a chair, and seating himself opposite his guest, began to eat as though he, too, had just escaped from the inhospitality of *La Bruja*.

During the progress of this impromptu and candle-lighted feast, Dr. Conant kept up a running commentary upon his guest's personal appearance and probable antecedents, without either receiving or seeming to expect a reply.

"Hair long and decidedly unkempt," he said. "Eyes blue; face thin, as from hunger, but color healthy; skin tanned by long exposure; clothing inadequate, shockingly dilapidated, and soaked as though he had been in the water; feet bare and apparently unaccustomed to covering; with it all, expression of intelligence and good breeding; parents evidently of the better class; claims to be from Portsmouth and yet speaks with a foreign accent. One of the strangest cases I have ever met. Look here, my young friend, now that you have taken the edge off your prodigious appetite, suppose you tell me where you came from."

To this Theo knew not how to reply. If he admitted his escape from *La Bruja*, might it not happen that he would be forwarded to her destination, the dreaded Halifax? So he maintained a discreet silence and gave no answer.

"Either a fool or wiser than most boys of his age," commented the doctor. "Well, then, where do you wish to go?"

This was easy. "Revrind Innock Spicer, Portsmut, New Hamp," was the prompt response.

"Again that foreign accent. Are you an American?"

"Si, Señor, I Americano. Name Tay-o-feel-o Guillermo Danbrisa," replied the lad, earnestly.

"A Spaniard, by Jove!" exclaimed the doctor, with such energy as to greatly startle his young guest. "Now I wonder what Rebecca will say to that. But Spaniard, or American, or wild Indian, or whatever he is, I can't let him sit in these wet rags any longer, and perhaps after he is somewhat rested he will be more definitely communicative. Wait here a moment, boy."

Thus saying, Dr. Conant took the candle and went from the room. A minute later he reappeared dragging a rug, and also bringing a blanket and a pillow. Placing the rug and pillow on the floor close beside the stove, he made Theo strip off his rags, which were hung across the back of a chair to dry, and wrapping his guest's bruised little body in the blanket, he bade the boy lie there and sleep until he called him.

The doctor might have conducted his guest to one of the many vacant chambers upstairs, but he was a considerate man, who would not arouse his household

before the regular hour. Besides, he suspected that the boy would feel much more at ease and sleep better where he was. So he left him in the kitchen and retired to his own office, which was on the same floor. There he flung himself wearily into an easy-chair, determined to remain awake until the maid came down to start the kitchen fire, that he might warn her of the guest she would find sleeping beside the stove. As the doctor sat buried in profound thought, and vainly striving to unravel the mystery of this same guest, his tired eyes slowly closed, and then he too was fast asleep.

A little later he was awakened by a series of piercing screams, and as he started to his feet in dismay, the housemaid rushed past his open door and fled upstairs, screaming as she went. Hastening to the kitchen, Dr. Conant was greeted by a sight that caused him to laugh until tears ran down his cheeks. It was that of poor Theo, who, roused by the maid's cry of dismay upon discovering him, had sprung from his blanket in terror, forgetful of his condition or surroundings. He was still gazing wildly about him, trying to recall where he was, when the doctor appeared.

"Oh ho!" roared the latter, "here's a pretty kettle of fish! No wonder Betty was scared; and you look pretty badly frightened yourself. But pick up your rags and follow me, for I expect both of us had better fly from the wrath to come."

With this the doctor gathered up Theo's bedding and led the boy to his office, where with closed door he assisted him to resume his tattered clothing. While they were thus engaged, and the doctor was still chuckling over the recent episode, there came a decisive knock on the door and a stern "Winthrop!"

"Yes, my dear," he replied, hastily unlocking and opening the door to an indignant lady in a flannel wrapper.

"What does it all mean, Winthrop?" she demanded. "Betty comes screaming to my room and declares there is a naked man in the kitchen. What was it she saw?"

"I expect it must have been my young friend here," replied the doctor, meekly, stepping aside as he spoke, that his wife might obtain a view of Theo.

"Oh, Winthrop!" she cried, "what a horrid little scarecrow! Where did you get it? What is it? How could you let it so frighten poor Betty?"

"I found 'it,' as you are pleased to call my guest, seated on David Flye's front doorstep early this morning, and from its condition I should say it had just come out of the Atlantic Ocean. From the very limited conversation we have held, I rather judge it to be a Spaniard who—"

"A Spaniard! Then he must be a Papist!" cried Mrs. Conant, who, as a Puritan of the Puritans, held the Church of Rome in horror. "Winthrop, how dared you bring him to my house!"

"Having none of my own to which I might take him, and fearful of being indicted for manslaughter if I left him to perish, as he was in a fair way to do, I ventured to so far impose upon your philanthropy; but if you object —"

"If I object! Of course I object; and I wish you would take the horrid little creature away."

"Very well. Come, my young friend," replied the doctor, holding out a hand to Theo as he spoke.

"Of course I don't mean until after breakfast," explained Mrs. Conant, somewhat taken aback by her husband's prompt acquiescence with her wishes. "Besides, where will you take him?"

"I was thinking of sending him to Portsmouth, where he appears to have friends, and from which place he apparently ran away."

"Portsmouth? that is where the Pattons live, isn't it?" queried the lady. "I wonder if they know anything about him. But how can he be a Spaniard if he comes from Portsmouth? Are you a Spaniard, boy, or are you an American?"

"Si, Señora, I Americano. Name Tay-o-feel-o Guillermo Danbrisa," replied Theo.

"Mercy, yes! that settles it," cried Mrs. Conant. "He is Spanish beyond doubt, and I don't care whether you send him to Portsmouth or Halifax. Only I won't have him remain in this house one minute longer than is necessary."

With this the lady departed upstairs to chide

Betty for having been so frightened by a mere child, and send her down to prepare breakfast.

The doctor, in the meantime, wrote a note addressed to the Rev. Enoch Spicer, in which he set forth the circumstances of Theo's finding, and explained why the boy was sent to Portsmouth. He added that if the waif were not wanted there, he himself would undertake to find a home for him.

Having sealed this, he took Theo with him to the stable for a look at its live stock. Then the doctor was called to breakfast, while Theo was left in the kitchen to stare at Betty the maid, who in return regarded him with a haughty contempt expressed by sniffs. Finally the doctor came to lead the forlorn little chap away, and Mrs. Conant came with him for another look at the young Spaniard.

"But, Winthrop," she cried, "you can't let him go all the way to Portsmouth clad only in those rags. Why! the child will perish of the cold."

"I was wondering if I had not better loan him my top-coat," replied the doctor, gravely.

"Nonsense! wait a minute."

Going upstairs, Mrs. Conant procured a gray blanket shawl and a scarlet worsted tippet. The former she wound about the boy's body, fastening it under his arms, while the tippet she tied down over his head and ears.

"There," she said, "now you'll be as warm as a bug in a rug." Then moved by a sudden impulse,

or perhaps by the pathetic beauty of the child's face, she stooped and kissed him.

A little later he was again alone in the world, so far as friends were concerned, and occupying a box seat beside the driver of the post-coach that made a daily run between Boston, and Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

CHAPTER XVI

THE DRIFTING OF A WAIF

WHILE the stage ride taken by Theo Breeze that day was an affair of such novelty and so filled with curious interest as to be indelibly impressed on his mind for all after years, it was also marked by considerable unhappiness, much discomfort, and many disappointments.

April weather in New England is by no means the best sample of what the year has to offer in that rugged region, and although this was the last day of that fickle month, it fully sustained the reputation gained by its predecessors. Thus intervals of sunshine were alternated by frequent showers, while a gusty east wind blew in, salt and chill, from the Atlantic. It was for this reason that Theo and the driver had the box seat to themselves, all the other occupants of the coach preferring the shelter of its interior, which was thus so crowded that there was no more room even for a little boy.

Our lad did not mind the showers, for he was well used to being wet, but he found the cold hard

to bear, in spite of his blanket shawl and red tippet. These, in themselves, were causes of annoyance, as they caused him to be stared at, and drew forth many jeering remarks from idle spectators whenever the coach stopped. Even the driver, after many furtive glances at his small companion on the box seat, broke silence with the remark: —

"Wal, you be a rum-looking little cove, fer sartin."

Then he relapsed into silence, and as Theo knew not how to reply, he, too, continued to say nothing.

At first, while the stage was bumping and swaying over the cobble-paved streets of Salem, Theo clung to the iron railing of his seat in terror, expecting each moment to be flung down on the backs of the plunging horses; but after the town was left, the road became smoother, the pace more moderate, and he began to take an interest in his surroundings. He had been bewildered by the great number of people and the many houses of the town; but in the sparsely settled country he felt more at home. At the same time he was vastly disappointed, for in no respect did the sodden landscape resemble the fairyland of Latrobe's tales. Could it be that this was really America? Where, then, were its palaces and golden streets, its stately forests filled with singing birds, its vast lakes, and mighty rivers? The few farmhouses by the roadside did not at all realize his

conception of palaces, and as for stately forests, those he now saw could not compare with the woodlands of Cuba. He did not even see a single palm between Salem and Portsmouth, a mango, or any of the beautiful fruit-bearing trees so common to his native land. Even those he did see were bare of leaves; while of singing birds and flowers, there were none.

Yes, there was one flower. A basketful of that shyest and daintiest of New England blossoms, the trailing arbutus, was intrusted to the driver by a little girl at a farmhouse, to be taken to a friend in Newburyport. The former gave it to Theo to hold, and the boy thought he had never smelled nor seen anything so fragrantly beautiful — not even the orange blooms of his own home.

At Ipswich the stage stopped for dinner, and here our piratically educated lad excited so much merriment, not only by his unusual costume, but by his evident ignorance of Yankee table manners, that without having nearly satisfied his hunger, he fled from the dining room in bitter indignation and took refuge in the stable until it was time to start.

Here both horses and drivers were changed, and Theo found his new companion on the box seat much more sociably inclined than his predecessor, as well as more considerate of his comfort. He not only drew the boy into conversation, but protected his bare feet from the cold by wrapping them in a

horse blanket. He informed him that his own name was Zack Truitt, and asked his in return.

"Tay-o-feel-o Guillermo Danbrisa," was the glib reply.

"Hello! Spaniard, ain't ye?"

"No, Señor, I Americano. My home Isla de Cuba."

"Cuby, eh? Wal, I might ha guessed it, seeing as I've bin there myself. Made a v'y'ge one winter outer Portsmouth to Havana. That where you came from?"

"No, Señor. La Brisa."

"Never heerd of it, but I kalkilate it must be about the same as the rest of them foreign places, mighty good to get away from. So you're going to old man Spicer's, be ye? Ever meet up with his son, Al? Alvord Spicer is his full name."

"Si, si. El Señor Alford Spicer ma frien'. You know Alford Spicer?"

"Should say I did. Me an Al was brung up together. We sailed on our first v'y'ge in the same ship, the brig *Ezry C. Knowlton*. Wanter know if you're 'quainted with him. Where'd you meet him? and where did you last see him? His folks hain't heard nothing from him in so long, they're getting anxious."

With this Theo entered upon a long account of Alvord Spicer's recent adventures, and his own, talking so fast in broken English equally mixed with

Spanish that Zack Truitt found great difficulty in comprehending him. That he did, however, gain a certain amount of information from the story was shown by his finally exclaiming: —

"Well! well! Do tell! So Al got scooped by Cubian pirates, did he? Then him and you fought 'em, and whipped 'em, and come away. It's clear enough so fur, but I don't exactly understand what comes next. Nigh as I can make out, after getting clear of the pirates, you an' him met up with a Britisher, an Al went off somewheres with 'em, leaving you to come on here to his folks all by yourself. That don't seem wholly likely, though, for Al never did have no love for Britishers, nor ain't one to desert a shipmate in distress, especially a little chap like you be. Couldn't you tell that part over again, Bub? Say it kinder slow, and see if I can't get the rights of the yarn."

But both Theo's ideas and language were so hopelessly mixed, that, in spite of his efforts to render the situation clear, it only grew the more befogged. So Zack Truitt finally abandoned the idea of arriving at any better understanding of what had actually befallen his friend, but consoled himself by remarking: —

"It's evidently a mighty interesting yarn Al will have to spin when he gets home. I suppose that won't be long now either, seeing you left him on the way, and I know his old father'll be powerful glad

to hear he's a-coming. But here we be at Newburyport, and after that there'll be plenty of room for you inside, where you'll be a heap warmer and more comfortable than out here."

So in the gathering twilight our young traveller was transferred from his bleak outside perch to the more sheltered interior of the coach. There he slipped uncomfortably about on a smooth, leather-covered seat until, overcome by drowsiness, he finally rolled off and found a resting-place in the straw among the feet of the few remaining passengers. Here he slept soundly while the lumbering coach crossed the Merrimac River into New Hampshire, and made its slow way over the sandy roads that still form a feature of that part of the state. It was nine o'clock before it finally rolled into Portsmouth and began to deposit its passengers here and there until only Theo was left. At length it drew up with a rattle of wheels and a clatter of iron-shod hoofs before a small, weather-stained house sheltered by a huge elm. Here the driver blew his horn and called so loudly to arouse its inmates, that its front door was quickly flung open and some one appeared shading a flickering candle.

"Evening, Parson," called out Zack Truitt, and then with an apologetic tone, "'Scuse me, Miss Tabby; I didn't see it was you fust off. Here's a friend of Al's come to make you a visit. He's got a letter that I guess'll explain everything, an'

if it don't, Al will be along himself inside of a few days. Sorry not to stop longer, but I've got to hurry on, for the mail's late to-night anyway."

With this the driver cracked his whip, his tired horses, filled with renewed activity at the near prospect of their stable, sprang away, and our waif from Cuba was left standing bewildered and irresolute at the foot of the great elm.

The flickering light advanced toward him; and then, as its feeble rays indistinctly revealed his form, there came a shrill exclamation: —

"Goodness gracious! but it's a boy! If that ain't the beatingest! Whatever —"

At this moment a gust of wind extinguished the candle and the scene was shrouded in darkness. Just as this happened, another voice was heard from the open doorway.

"Tabitha! Tabitha Sherlock!" it called; "where are you? What has happened?"

"For the land's sake, Parson, I thought you was writing your sermon and couldn't be disturbed. It's only some trick of that good-for-nothing Zack Truitt. He's always up to them, but this one is a beater."

"I thought I heard him mention the name of my son Alvord. Did he not say that he had brought a friend of Alvord's?"

"Sakes, yes! He said something of that kind. S'pose he thought 'twas funny. There isn't no one out here, though, but a boy."

"A boy? Well, why don't you bring him in?"

"Bring a horrid, messing, traipsing boy into the house! Just after spring cleaning, too! Why, Parson —"

"Woman, hold thy peace, and do as I bid thee!" interrupted the unseen speaker, with an unaccustomed tone of authority. "Any person, no matter of what degree, claiming the hospitality of this house in the name of my son, is assured a hearty welcome. Bring him in at once."

Used as Miss Tabitha was to exercise unlimited control, not only over Parson Spicer's domestic affairs, but over the actions of the reverend gentleman himself, she realized that this was a crisis in which it was the part of wisdom to yield her own wishes to his. Accordingly she replied: —

"Oh, certainly, Parson, since you are so sot." And reaching out into the darkness, her hand encountered one end of Theo's worsted tippet.

"Come along, boy," she said, with a scornful accent on the final word, at the same time giving the tippet a jerk.

So our hero was ignominiously led into the house, and upon his entrance its door was closed behind him with a slam that expressed as plainly as words the feelings of its *de facto* mistress.

CHAPTER XVII

MISS TABBY TAKES CHARGE

"You may bring him into my study," said the parson, leading the way and throwing open the door of a lamp-lighted, book-lined room. A small fire burned on an open hearth, making the place cosily warm and cheerful. Here the three oddly assorted persons whom Fate had so strangely thrown together stood and gazed curiously at each other. For a few moments Theo was too blinded by the light to clearly distinguish anything. So he stood blinking and rubbing his eyes, while the others gazed speechless, one with indignation and one with pity, at their young guest.

Miss Tabitha uttered a kind of a snort as, with a comprehensive glance, she took in the details of the red tippet, the blanket shawl, the thin cotton trousers, soiled and ragged, and the boy's brown bare feet.

"You impudent little scarecrow!" she cried angrily. "How dare you enter a respectable house looking like that?"

"Tabitha!" said the parson, reprovingly. "It is not likely that the child is responsible for either the style or condition of his apparel. He has a fine face and honest blue eyes."

"Umph!" sniffed Miss Tabby. "And a shock of yellow hair that doesn't look as if it had ever been combed in all his life."

By this time Theo had blinked his eyes into serviceable condition, and was regarding the other occupants of the room with a grave curiosity fully equal to their own. The one at whom he looked first was a man, with snow-white hair framing a smooth-shaven face, every line of which expressed gentleness and patience. At the same time, there was a look of firmness about the mouth that betokened a strong will. The other, whom he already knew as "Miss Tabby," was a woman past middle age, with iron-gray hair drawn severely back from her harsh-featured face and twisted into a knob. She was spare of form, and her plain dress of blue homespun hung in angular folds. Both of them viewed the boy through steel-rimmed spectacles, the first he had ever seen; but while those of the minister seemed to beam, Miss Tabitha's glittered. A shadow flitted across Theo's face as his gaze met the hard flash of her spectacles; but it was succeeded by a smile as he turned to the minister, and said, inquiringly: —

"Revrind Innock Spicer, Portsmut, New Hamp?"

"Yes, my child," replied the old gentleman, "I am the Reverend Enoch Spicer, and this is Portsmouth. But who are you? where do you come from? and who sent you here?"

"I Americano. Name Tay-o-feel-o Guillermo Danbrisa. My home La Brisa, Isla de Cuba. Alford Spicer ma frien'. He say come Revrind Innock Spicer he fadder. So I come."

"For the land's sake!" ejaculated Miss Tabitha. "Not only a boy, but a furriner, and like as not a heathen. If I don't give that Zack Truitt a piece of my mind for this caper. Don't you think, Mr. Spicer, that the overseers ought to be notified at once, even late as it is. Seems as though they ought to take immediate action in so important a case. If you say so—"

"Woman," interrupted the minister, with a tone of startling energy, "hold thy peace. Go quickly and prepare food, the best the house may afford, for this our honored guest. Heard ye not from his own mouth that he is sent to us by my son? I were indeed an unworthy father did I not regard such a trust as sacred. Therefore speak to me no more of overseers; for here, and here only, shall the child find a home until such time as my son, who sent him, shall come to take him again. Go, I say, and prepare food, for surely the lad is a hungered."

For a moment Tabitha Sherlock stood irresolute, then without a word she swept from the room like an angry gust.

After she had gone, the old gentleman, with trembling hands, removed Theo's tippet and shawl, uttering an exclamation of dismay at the child's

wretchedly thin apparel thus disclosed. Then seating his guest in a big chair drawn close to the fire, he proceeded to read the letter which Theo had withdrawn from the place where it had been pinned by Mrs. Conant.

More mystified than ever by its contents, the minister was about to begin a series of questions, when Miss Tabitha returned and announced that food was ready in the kitchen.

"Bring it hither," commanded Mr. Spicer. "It is not fitting that our guest should break his first bread with us in a place where we ourselves do not condescend to eat, and the dining room is too cold."

Again Miss Tabitha hesitated, but again a glance at the determined old face compelled obedience. Thus Theo's meal was served within the sacred precincts of the study, where no one but the minister himself had ever before eaten, and he only upon rare occasions.

When Theo had appeased his hunger, the former said: —

"My child, I had thought to question you further concerning many things, but I perceive that you are too wearied for present conversation. Therefore, we will let explanations wait until morning. Only tell me if my son Alvord is alive and well."

Theo, having reassured the anxious parent upon this point, the latter uttered a hearty thanksgiving

to God for his infinite mercies. Then he instructed Miss Tabitha to conduct their guest to the best chamber, and there make him comfortable for the night.

At this, the New England housewife flew to arms, and, with all her submission vanished, declared that rather than put the dirty little foreign scarecrow in her best spare room, and allow him to sleep on her best feather bed, between her best linen sheets, she would lock herself into the best room, and defend it with her life.

"I'll make up the attic room if you like, Mr. Spicer," she said, "though goodness knows the stable loft would be too good for such as him. But into my best room he doesn't set foot so long as I live in this house and can draw breath to defend it. If you'd stop to think you'd remember what store your own lawful wife, who is now a heavenly angel, sot by that room, and how she wouldn't allow nobody to sleep in it short of an ordained minister."

"I don't know but what you are right, Tabitha," replied the old gentleman, regarding Theo doubtfully. "Possibly the small upper chamber will be a more fitting resting-place for our Heaven-sent guest. At the same time I would have you know that it grieves me to hear you speak of him in the terms you have just used. My boy, if you will follow this good woman, she will conduct you to a place of rest. May God keep you through the night and send you

refreshing slumbers. In the morning we will converse further, and I trust profitably, together."

So the boy was led away by the triumphant Miss Tabitha, while the old gentleman, left alone, sat for a long time by his study fire buried in thought, and utterly forgetful of his unfinished sermon.

Theo was not immediately conducted to the place of rest that his weariness demanded, for the reason that Miss Sherlock considered him unfit, in his present condition, to occupy even the attic chamber. To remedy this she conducted him to the kitchen, where she produced a tub, hot water, and soap, and gave him such a scrubbing as caused him to wonder if she were not trying to flay the skin from his body. Previous to the bath she snipped off his tangled mop of curls with a pair of sharply clicking shears, performing her task with a zeal that left nothing to be desired in the way of thoroughness and little in the way of hair. Then she robed him in one of her own nightgowns, and, for fear lest he should catch cold through the medium of his shaven head, covered it with one of her own nightcaps, which she tied firmly beneath his chin.

"There," she said, stepping away and standing with arms akimbo to observe the effect of her labors, "now you look more like a civilized being, and mightily like a nice little girl, which I wish to goodness you was, instead of the mischievous, rambumptious, good-for-nothing boy you be. What the

creeters was ever made for, the good Lord who designed 'em, only knows; unless it was to refine the natures of us poor wimmen by trials as by fire. Well, come along, Bub, — I came mighty near saying Sis, — and I'll put you where you'll keep outer mischief for a spell anyway."

After Miss Tabitha had deposited her unwelcome charge in the truckle-bed, which was the most important article of furniture contained in the attic chamber, and had been properly shocked at finding he did not know what she meant when she bade him say his prayers, she withdrew the candle and carefully locked his door on the outside. Then she returned to the kitchen, where her first act was to thrust Theo's tattered garments into the stove, close its door, and open wide its draughts.

"Goodness only knows what he'll do for clothes in the morning," she said, "but he shan't wear those rags again, whatever happens. I'm going to take that blanket shawl myself, so he won't have anything left except the red tippet, which ain't exactly what you could call a costume. However, I suppose the Lord will provide, and if he don't, mebbe I can baste a wide tuck into one of my red flannel skirts, and cover his nakedness with that till I get time to figger out something else. Or I might keep him in bed for a day or two. 'Twouldn't hurt him none. Oh! what a pest boys are, anyhow. If he was only a girl, now, she wouldn't be a mite of

trouble, and I declare, if I've got to have him on my hands, I believe I'll have Lyddy, too, as a sort of a balance. Mr. Spicer'll have to give in now, if I'm only steady enough sot. Gracious! who's that?"

This exclamation was drawn forth by a violent pounding on the outer kitchen door, which proved to be a neighbor who had run over to say that, from the smell of burning cloth, he feared the Parson's house must be on fire.

Miss Tabitha curtly dismissed this man with the assurance that she had thrown a handful of rags into the stove; but she was obliged to make similar explanations to several other well-intentioned neighbors who came during the next half-hour to warn the Parson against fire. When these visits finally ceased, it was so long past her usual bedtime that she was more irritated than ever against the boy who had been the innocent cause of so much annoyance.

In the meantime, Mr. Spicer was also much exercised over the situation. His salary was small; it was now many months since Alvord had sent him any money, and the expense of maintaining a hungry, clothes-wearing boy would bear heavily upon him. Still, by relinquishing a few luxuries in the way of books and outside charities, he believed he could do it. "At any rate," he said in conclusion, "since my son who loves me and understands the situation has seen fit to burden me with this respon-

sibility, for his sake, and with God's aid, will I cheerfully accept it."

As for the boy's name, Mr. Spicer decided that it must be Theophilus William; but whether the surname was Breeze or Blow he could not tell. So he concluded to submit the question to such of his neighbors as were supposed to be versed in foreign tongues. This he afterward did, with the result that while he himself favored Theophilus Breeze, most of his advisers insisted upon William Blow; and so in the good town of Portsmouth our hero became generally known as "Billy Blow."

CHAPTER XVIII

"A FIGHTING, FOREIGN HEATHENER"

"FOR the land's sake! what's a happening?" cried Miss Tabitha Sherlock, in alarm, as she sprang from her bed the following morning to cautiously peer from her curtained and shuttered window. Having been kept up beyond her usual hour for retiring the night before, and lying long awake with busy thoughts, she had, for the first time in her memory, overslept herself by more than an hour. Now she was roused from an improbable dream of riots, mobs, and burning houses, by a clamor of shrill voices mingled with crashing sounds, and a clatter as of pebbles flung against the closed blinds of her window.

Peering fearfully out through a chink, she beheld a sight that instantly turned her alarm into wrath not unmingled with curiosity; for a crowd of yelling townsboys were gathered in the street before the house, energetically bombarding it with whatever came to hand. While furious at this outrageous proceeding, Miss Tabitha could not imagine its object, until she noticed that a shower of return missiles of the strangest character were being hurled

against the enemy, apparently from the window over her head. In one of them she noted with horror the fluttering leaves of a book, and suddenly she realized the astonishing truth. In some mysterious way the boys of the town had discovered the young stranger who had been left at the minister's door the previous evening, and now they were bombarding him in his citadel while he was resolutely defending himself. Or had he been the aggressor? That was more than likely, since he was a heathen foreigner. At any rate, it was evident that a battle royal was in progress, and instant interference was demanded to avert serious consequences.

As these thoughts flashed through Miss Tabitha's mind, she hastily donned a petticoat and a flannel wrapper. Then thrusting her feet into a pair of slippers and replacing her nightcap by a small red shawl, she flew upstairs, and into the attic chamber where she had left Theo, as she supposed, beyond the possibility of mischief. As she entered the room, she was just in time to see that piratically educated youth hurl a pot of jam from the open window; and that the shot was effective was announced by a crash and a yell from below.

The next moment Theo's cry of triumph was choked in the utterance by a fierce attack in the rear. He was jerked backwards, thrust into a closet, and its door was locked behind him almost before he knew what was happening. Having thus

disposed of one belligerent, Miss Tabby sped downstairs, seized a broom, and let herself softly out by a back door. So masterly was her execution of this flank movement, that before the enemy had an inkling of her presence she was upon them, whacking right and left, and putting them to headlong flight.

As they sped in terror beyond her reach she noted with grim satisfaction that one of them, whom she recognized as Deacon Patton's son Rawl, was smeared from head to foot with a dark crimson substance that gave him a most sanguinary appearance.

"Thet young rascal upstairs treated 'em to one dose anyway!" she exclaimed, under her breath, "and I don't care if it was a pot of my best red currant."

Reëntering the house panting and flushed from her exertions, the minister's housekeeper encountered the minister himself just issuing from the study where he had passed the night. He was calmly smiling and evidently oblivious of the recent turmoil.

"Good morning, Miss Tabitha," he said politely, "I trust—"

"Your habit of trusting is going to lead you into trouble, if you don't have a care," interrupted the wrathful woman with an unwonted brusqueness, as she darted past him and sped back to her own room.

"Whatever can have happened?" soliloquized the

Parson, gazing in mild dismay after the retreating form. "I don't know when I have seen Tabitha in such a perturbed state of mind."

What had happened was, that Zack Truitt, while taking his ease in Rockingham Tavern the evening before, had related such strange tales of the young passenger whom he had just set down at Parson Spicer's door, as to excite the liveliest curiosity in several boys who happened to be among his auditors. Each of them resolved to seize the very earliest opportunity for catching a glimpse of the "Cubian" lad who had fought pirates "'long with Al Spicer," according to the stage-driver's account. So, shortly after sunrise they gathered in front of the minister's house, where they were quickly made aware that their mission was not in vain.

Theo, having always been accustomed to wake with the birds, found no reason for changing this habit in his new place of abode. Neither had he been taught that it was not exactly the thing to lean from an upper window of a town house in his night robe. Thus sunrise found him in that very position, gazing with eager interest at his novel surroundings, and it was while he was so engaged that he was discovered by the investigating committee of townsboys. For a minute they regarded him in silence, since the frilled cap on his head led to the suspicion that the form might be that of Miss Tabby herself. As it became certain that such was not the

case, and it was equally obvious that the person viewing the scenery was not Mr. Spicer, they realized that he must be the very boy they had come to investigate, the young pirate fighter from Cuba. And yet who ever heard of a boy that amounted to anything wearing a nightcap?

"Perhaps it's the regular thing in Cuby," suggested one, in a whisper.

"Then the Cubians must be a set of sissies," remarked another, contemptuously. "The idea of Al Spicer making friends with a fellow that wears a nightcap! Wonder if his hair is done up in curl papers? Hi, Sissy, up in the window, what's your name?"

"Tay-o-feel-o—" began the stranger, promptly, regarding the new-comers with interest, but his further utterance was cut short by a yell of derision.

"Tay O'Feelo! What a name!"

"Looks like green tay, don't he?"

"If he's a fighter, he must be gunpowder tay," cried Rawl Patton. "Let's try him."

With this the speaker flung a chunk of hard clay so accurately that if Theo had not dodged it would have hit him in the face, and instantly the fight was on; for at this business our young pirate was in his element.

He replied to the first shot with a bootjack that had somehow found its way to the attic room and lay on the floor beside him. Then, looking about for

further ammunition, he discovered a closet in which he found a number of old books, a quantity of empty jam-pots, and some that were full. These last were only sealed with writing-paper neatly pasted over their mouths. In another minute the air in front of the minister's house was filled with a fluttering stream of Fox's Martyrs, Baxter's Saint's Rest, Plutarch's Lives, and empty jam-pots, making their way against return volleys of chunks, sticks, and pebbles. Theo's last shot was his best, as was testified by Rawl Patton's appearance when Miss Tabitha caught sight of that rapidly retreating youth.

When Mr. Spicer sat down to his belated breakfast that morning, he gazed about him inquiringly.

"Where is our young guest?" he asked.

"Locked up in the attic closet," answered Miss Tabby, curtly.

"Locked into a closet!" repeated the minister, setting down his untasted coffee. "May I inquire why?"

"For acting like the young heathen he is and flinging things out of his window at a parcel of outrageous boys who seemed to have some spite against him, and with good reason too, I've no doubt."

"Did they also fling things?" inquired Mr. Spicer.

"I should say they did."

"Then perhaps our lad only acted in self-defence, though of course in any case his conduct was repre-

hensible and must be investigated. But I cannot allow him to be starved, and so request that you will fetch him down to his breakfast."

"He can't come as he is, for he hasn't a thing to wear."

"Nothing to wear!"

"Nothing except a red worsted tippet."

"Where are the clothes he had on last night?"

"If you call those rags clothes, I burned them."

Without another word, but with a faint flush in his cheeks, the minister rose from the table and left the room.

"Now what *is* he up to?" soliloquized Miss Tabby.

For nearly half an hour she sat in grim silence awaiting developments. Then the minister returned, leading their young guest by the hand, and Miss Tabitha opened her eyes wide with amazement at his appearance. He was clad in a pair of buff nankeen trousers that fitted him tightly and only came to his bare ankles. These were buttoned to a linen waist that had once been white but was now yellowed by age in creases. It had a broad collar that was turned over a blue cloth jacket. The latter was ornamented by tarnished brass buttons and had sleeves much too short for its present wearer. This suit was one that had belonged to Alvord Spicer's boyhood, and had been treasured by his mother until she died: since then it had been preserved with equal care by the minister, together

with a few other precious relics of his married life. The boy who now wore it was barefooted, but an attempt had evidently been made to brush his hair, and his face shone from a recent ablution.

"I find," said Mr. Spicer, gravely, as he placed Theo at the table, "that the other lads began the aggressive measures of which you informed me. Being thus wantonly attacked, this youth, who, I fear, has been taught to meet violence with violence, only lived up to his teaching in resisting with what means he could command. I have, however, shown him the error of such a course, and feel convinced that in the future he will pursue the one I have pointed out, instead."

"Humph!" sniffed Miss Tabby, evidently mistrustful of this conclusion. She looked volumes more, but wisely held her peace until she found opportunity for a private conversation with her employer; then she said: —

"I suppose you have made up your mind, Mr. Spicer, to keep this boy?"

"Certainly, I shall keep him and care for him, at least until the coming of my son Alvord, who commended him to me."

"And supposing, just for the sake of supposing, that your son shouldn't ever come?"

"Then I should continue to regard the boy as a precious legacy and should care for him until he was able to care for himself."

"In that case," said Miss Tabitha, decisively, "I must ask you to look about for another housekeeper, seeing as I didn't never bargain when I came here to take care of children, let alone boys, and especially a young fighting foreign heathener like him."

CHAPTER XIX

SAD RESULT OF GOING TO SCHOOL

As would be said in our days, Miss Tabby had gone on a strike, and though her place might have been supplied by an equally competent person, such a possibility never occurred to the old gentleman, who now regarded her with a mild surprise.

"Why, Miss Tabitha —" he began; but she interrupted him with: —

"There's no use argying the matter, Parson. If you've made up your mind, why, so have I. There's only one condition on which I'll stay an hour longer in this house along with that young reprobate who sets there in Al Spicer's clothes, looking's though butter wouldn't melt in his mouth."

"May I inquire what that is?"

"You don't need to, for I'm going to tell you of my own accord. If I can have my niece Lyddy Dove come to live with me, I'll try and stay on; but if I can't, I must see if I can't make a home for her somewheres else."

Heretofore this question of Lydia Dove, who, an orphan, was Miss Tabitha's only living relative, had been a serious point of difference between the

minister and his housekeeper. She had always desired to have the little girl with her; while he, with an instinctive dread of children about the house, had firmly refused to allow her to do so.

"Do you imagine that doubling an evil will cure it?" he asked.

"Certainly not, Parson. I ain't such a fool as that, but in this case the evil would be halved instead of doubled. As I look at it, the influence of a nice, quiet little girl would do more than all your preaching, powerful as it is, to convert this young foreigner from his heathen ways. Besides, he's going to make a lot of extra work at which she can help me. Any one that's had 'em both will tell you that while boys is nothing but torments in a house, a handy girl will more'n earn her board every day in the year."

"But as I understand it, your niece is only a child, little more than an infant in fact," objected the minister, still feebly striving to maintain his position.

"She's most rising of eleven," retorted Miss Tabby, with spirit, "and uncommon smart of her age like all of her folks, if I do say it as shouldn't. Yes, sir, she's old enough to prove a help in any family you choose to put her. But if you think you can manage this boy, and get along better without me, why I'll —"

"But I don't, my dear Miss Tabitha," broke in

the minister, aghast at the prospect. "I assure you, I have not the slightest idea that I could manage better, or indeed at all, without your efficient aid. So if you insist —"

"It is a pleasure," interrupted the triumphant Miss Tabby, "to deal with a man of sense, seeing as so few of 'em has any, and I'll continue to do the best I can, sir, not only for you, but with this cross you are called upon to bear." Here the speaker cast a significant glance at Theo, who had been all this time industriously eating his breakfast.

So it was settled that Lydia Dove was to enter the minister's household, and, though she could not be expected for a week or more, her aunt began immediately to plan for her coming.

In the meantime, after family prayers, at which Theo wondered greatly, and a long interview during which Mr. Spicer gained but a confused idea of the boy's previous life, or how he had reached Portsmouth, the minister decided to introduce him at once to the scene of his future activities. For this purpose the two set forth, the Parson with his beaver hat and silver-headed cane, leading by the hand the bareheaded and barefooted young stranger. Of course the latter attracted an immense amount of curious attention, not only by his unique appearance, but because his story, with ever increasing exaggerations, had already spread like wildfire through the quiet town. Thus he was variously known as the son of

a pirate chief, as a young savage belonging to a cannibal tribe, as a son of Alvord Spicer, and as the hero of untold adventures. The minister bowed and smiled in reply to the many greetings he received from acquaintances, and to a few who stopped to speak with him, he introduced Theo as "Master Theophilus Blow-Breeze, from the island of Cuba, a young friend of my son Alvord." Some of these asked Theo questions, while patting him on the head, but he was too bewildered to make reply, save by an occasional "Si, Señor," or "Gracias, Señora." Nor did he seem to appreciate the many points of interest, including public buildings and the residences of prominent citizens to which the minister strove to attract his attention. His mind was in a whirl, and new impressions were crowding into it so thickly as to form a confused jumble.

When they reached the principal business street of the town, Mr. Spicer turned into the shop of a hatter, where, after much deliberation and discussion with the proprietor, he purchased for his young companion a beaver hat, that was a smaller counterpart of the one worn by himself. It was low-crowned, and so vastly unbecoming that the sober face of the boy, seen beneath its broad, curly brim, appeared that of an insufferable little prig. While Theo had felt uncomfortable before in his tight-fitting garments, his discomfort was sadly increased by that heavy beaver, the very first head covering he had

ever worn. It was as nothing, however, to what immediately followed; for the very next place they entered was the shop of a bootmaker. At a remote period of his life Theo had worn tiny *botas* of soft leather; but for years his feet had been as innocent of covering as his head. Thus he had grown to consider this condition so natural that he had no idea of the fate in store for him when he entered that awful doorway.

The minister, on the other hand, had felt ill at at ease in leading an unshod boy about the streets; for although most American boys of that day went barefooted in the summer time, it was always in the country, while in cities only such as could not afford shoes were seen without them. At that time also, machine-made boots were unknown, and but few of those turned out by hand were kept in stock. Mr. Spicer's choice, therefore, was limited, and when poor Theo left the shop, he wore a pair of heavy, square-toed shoes much too large for him, and fastened with shiny steel buckles.

As ready-made hosiery was unprocurable, all such articles being knitted by hand at home, his patron was unable to procure any socks for him just then. So quite a space of bare ankle was left exposed, between the tops of his clumsy shoes and the bottom of his close-fitting yellow trousers.

Having thus arrayed his young charge to the best of his ability, the minister led him, walking awk-

wardly, and with great discomfort, toward the "academy" of Master Lemuel Biggs, where he had decided to enter the lad as a pupil. As the day was already half spent, he only proposed to introduce him at present and allow him to begin his scholastic career on the morrow.

He tried to explain this to Theo as they walked, but the lad, never having heard of an academy, was unable to form a conception of what was before him. When, therefore, he found himself inside the schoolhouse, confronted by the concentrated gaze of some fifty boys and girls, all of whom neglected everything else to stare at him, he remained standing, just within the doorway, utterly bewildered, while Mr. Spicer stepped forward to shake hands with the master.

For a moment the scholars stared in amazed silence at the queerly clad boy, who had not even manners enough to remove his hat. Then a little girl giggled, and, as though the sound were a signal, the entire school, forgetful of discipline, and careless of consequences, broke into a roar of uncontrollable laughter.

For an instant Theo stood his ground, though his face blazed with anger and he longed to attack the entire assemblage single handed. Then, with a sudden, overwhelming sense of helplessness, he turned, and darted from the open door. Both the minister and the schoolmaster ran after him, calling loudly

for him to stop, and in another minute the entire school had poured tumultuously into the street, wild with delight at the spectacle of this extraordinary chase. Sadly impeded by his clumsy shoes, the fugitive paused long enough to tear them from his feet and fling them as far as possible, then he resumed his terrified flight with the speed of a hunted deer.

Mr. Spicer, already breathless, stopped to pick up the discarded shoes, and the mob of yelling children, headed by their schoolmaster, swept past him. Following anxiously after, with such speed as his age would permit, the minister next discovered and reclaimed from a gutter, where Theo had flung it, the recently purchased beaver that had pressed so heavily on the boy's unaccustomed brow.

In the meantime the chase, though lost to Mr. Spicer's view, was maintained with unflagging zeal and ever increasing uproar. Yells of "stop thief!" were heard on all sides. Shopkeepers and housewives rushed to doors and windows. Pedestrians attempted to head off the fugitive by jumping in front of him with wildly waving arms, while women, sweeping off their front steps, flew at him with brandished brooms. But he dodged them all, and finally reached the water front, where a score of vessels lay moored to the wharves. Heretofore he had fled blindly, and with but slight hope of ultimate escape. Now, at the familiar sight of ships he gained a new courage.

His pursuers had been distanced and were out of sight as he darted aboard the nearest vessel with the intention of concealing himself in her lowest depths. To his disappointment, her crew were discharging a cargo of sugar, with every hatch cover off, so that her hold was flooded with light. It was evident that he could not hide there, and as he glanced hurriedly about for some other place, the mob of his pursuers, that now seemed to include half the town, came howling around a corner. The foremost uttered yells of triumph as they caught sight of him and rushed forward to capture him.

With an impulse born of despair the hunted lad sprang into the main rigging and ran rapidly aloft. At the topsail yard he paused to look down. The deck of the ship was crowded with people, all gazing up at him, shouting and gesticulating. The crew had ceased their labors, and already two of them were in the rigging, one on either side, climbing toward him.

What had he done that he should be so hunted? He could not remember, for his brain was in a whirl of excitement, but it must be something dreadful. At any rate he must not be caught if he could help it; and as he could not go down, he must continue his upward course. Perhaps he might reach a place big enough for a boy, but to which no man would dare trust himself.

So the fugitive ran nimbly upward, past topgal-

lant sail and royal, until only a slender pole bare of rigging remained above him. Swarming up this, he sat triumphantly on the main truck, a flat circular bit of wood capping the mast, from which he could look over the roofs of the town and far out across its shining harbor. He must be safe there, for surely no man would dare ascend that slender spar.

Even as Theo comforted himself with this thought, the mast began to shake; and, glancing straight down, he was dismayed to see an active young sailor almost within touching distance. Terrified out of his senses, the poor lad drew up his feet and then stood erect on his lofty pedestal, while the crowd below held its breath. For half a minute the boy balanced himself. Then he sprang outward from the dizzy height and shot straight down nearly a hundred feet, with the speed of an arrow.

CHAPTER XX

THEO SHOCKS THE CONGREGATION

An involuntary cry of horror broke from the up-gazing crowd as they witnessed Theo's terrible leap. Then they rushed for the outer side of the ship to note where he struck the water. They had good cause to be alarmed, since a leap from such a height would probably have killed any one of them; but with our young pirate it was different. He had frequently sprung into the water, near his cave at Cape Cruz, from rocky points lifted thirty, forty, and even fifty feet above it. Thus, while this leap was twice as high as any he had hitherto undertaken, he knew just how to hold himself, and shot downward with rigid body, feet close together, and arms pressed tightly against his sides. Only just as he struck did his body seem to lose something of its rigidity and to swerve slightly from a perfect perpendicular.

There was a gasp of relief from the spectators as, after a few seconds of almost intolerable suspense, the boy reappeared on the surface; but it was succeeded by a groan of dismay when, with a few feeble struggles, he again sank from their sight.

"Bring a boat!" yelled some.

"Throw a line!" shouted others.

"Fetch a life preserver, quick!"

Before any of these things could be done an active lad, apparently but little older than Theo himself, had torn off jacket and shoes, leaped to the rail, and taken a header at the very spot where the other had just disappeared. He was Rawl Patton, generally acknowledged to be the best swimmer of his age in Portsmouth, and the very lad who had been smeared with currant jam by Theo that morning. Now he had gone to the rescue of his recent adversary, and just in time, too; for when he reappeared on the surface, shouting for help, he brought with him an unconscious form.

By this time several small boats were pulling rapidly toward the scene, and before Rawl Patton's strength was exhausted both he and his helpless burden were dragged into one of them, amid wild cheering from the spectators.

A few minutes later a carriage dashed up to Parson Spicer's house, and that gentleman, agitated to a degree hitherto unknown, began to shout for Miss Tabitha, even as he alighted from it. His movements were so embarrassed by a beaver hat and a pair of shoes, which he carefully treasured, that as he reached the door, two other men, bearing between them the slight form of Theo Breeze, were close at his heels. At the same time a crowd of

WHEN HE APPEARED ON THE SURFACE HE BROUGHT WITH HIM AN UNCONSCIOUS FORM.

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townspeople, who had been outstripped by the carriage, appeared around a corner, running toward the house.

"For the land's sake!" exclaimed Miss Tabitha, as she flung open the door and was confronted by this startling sight, "whatever under the canopy — !"

"It is only our poor lad, who has been overboard in the sea and needs a little of your kindly care," exclaimed Mr. Spicer, with an effort at calmness.

"Been in the water, has he? Of course, I might have known he would, seeing he's a boy. And needs nursing, does he? Needs a switching, more like; and he'll get it, too, before I'm done with him if he keeps up these capers. But fetch him upstairs, and I'll do what one poor woman can. Land o' goodness! He ain't dead, is he?" she added in alarm, as she caught sight of the boy's white face and closed eyes.

Within half an hour Theo, restored to consciousness, and again robed in one of Miss Tabitha's nightgowns, was lying peacefully between the sheets of the attic bed. The outside crowd had been dispersed, and the kindly hearted housekeeper found time to ask questions.

"How did he get into the water? Jumped from the top of a mast? What did he do that for? Is the child crazy? How'd you ever let him get to such a place, Mr. Spicer? I declare, I thought you had more sense! But I might have known, seeing

as you are a man. Chased there, was he? and by a mob — whatever had the creature done? Committed robbery, or murder, or what? Nothing at all! It was all a mistake? Then I must say the people of this town are even greater idiots than I gave 'em credit for being. I only wish I'd been there with a broom. I'd taught 'em to make the mistake of minding their own business instead of chasing a friendless stranger to his death. I'd shown 'em that there was one person in Portsmouth to stand up for an innocent child, even if there wasn't a man in the place dared do it. You did your best? Oh, yes, I don't doubt that, Mr. Spicer, and I see you did manage to save his hat and shoes, even while others were seeking his life. But it makes my blood run hot and cold to think what that poor child must have suffered before he took that awful leap straight to death, as it were, seeing as how he couldn't swim a stroke. And Rawl Patton saved him, did he? Bless the boy! I'll make him a cake for that and he shall eat every mite of it if he wants to, even if it kills him."

True to her word, sour-faced but tender-hearted Miss Tabby, after tiptoeing upstairs for a look at Theo, whom she found quietly sleeping, immediately set to work on one of her famous fruit cakes. It was composed of the richest materials procurable, and late that afternoon, when Rawl Patton came to inquire after the boy whom he had rescued, she

presented it to him as a reward of merit and a token of her highest esteem. She also allowed him to visit Theo in his attic room, where, with a rare wisdom, she left the two to cement a friendship after the manner of masculine youth.

Nor was Rawl the only visitor of that afternoon; for even while she worked over her cake, Miss Tabitha was called upon to entertain a number of ladies, who insisted upon coming right into the kitchen for a good talk concerning the exciting events of the day. When, with many exclamations of incredulous amazement, these had gained all the information regarding the mysterious young stranger that their hostess possessed, including the fact that he had not a rag to his back, their pity both for the boy and Miss Tabitha herself found voluble expression. Several of them proffered articles of clothing that their own boys had outgrown or cast aside, while others agreed to knit socks, and all were liberal with advice as to how a boy should be brought up. "'Tain't the same as if he was a girl," said one, "for they are easy compared with boys, though, goodness knows, even a girl can prove a trial at times."

"I'm going to have both," admitted Miss Tabitha; "for my sister's only child, Lyddy Dove, who is an orphan, is coming to live with me."

At this there was a renewed chorus of exclamations, and Mrs. Deacon Patton declared that how Miss Tabby, without any experience with children,

could undertake to bring up a ready-made family of boys and girls, was more than she could understand.

"I've seen enough of how others does it to steer clear of their mistakes," replied Miss Tabitha, bridling. "As for Lyddy Dove, she won't be anything but a comfort, seeing as she comes of a family trained in the ways of righteousness for generations."

"Maybe so," said Mrs. Patton, doubtfully. "Sometimes I've took notice, though, that the most trained is also the most troublesome."

"Well, I'll resk Lyddy," retorted Miss Tabitha, decidedly.

All the following day Theo was kept in bed while a wardrobe of odds and ends was being collected for him, since his blue jacket and yellow nankeen trousers had come to such grief during his recent escapade as to be no longer serviceable.

It happened that the first day on which he again made an appearance in the outer world was Sunday, and with it came another series of novel experiences. To begin with, he was once more made to wear those hated shoes, this time with the addition of a pair of gray yarn socks, and the equally detested beaver hat. Then he was taken to church, which he imagined to be another school, and regarded with apprehension. Having marched up the broad aisle in Miss Tabitha's wake, with his hat on his head to the scandal of the congregation, and had it snatched off by that lady as they entered the minister's

pew, our lad sat for a moment gazing about him in perplexed silence. Then his eye lighted upon a friend in a pew across the way, and he horrified the assembled worshippers by calling out cheerfully: —

"Hi, Rawl! How you do?" much to that young man's confusion.

"Sh!" breathed the scandalized Miss Tabby, at the same time clutching the culprit's arm. "Don't you know you mustn't talk in church?" she whispered.

"One man talking," replied the unabashed Theo aloud, at the same time pointing to Mr. Spicer, who was just beginning to read from the Bible.

"Sh!" was Miss Tabby's only answer.

During the long prayer, Theo again disgraced himself by laughing aloud, because Rawl Patton winked at him from under the arm on which his head was bowed. After that, lulled by the sermon, he went to sleep, and slipped with a crash to the floor. To complete Miss Tabitha's mortification he walked out of the sacred edifice, at the conclusion of the service, in his stocking feet, carrying in his hands the intolerable shoes that he had kicked off some time earlier. For these manifold offences he was given a long lecture, allowed only bread and water for dinner, and confined to his room for the remainder of the day, at all of which he wondered, without comprehending why. Upon the whole, he was very glad when Sunday was over, and hoped another would not come for a year.

Relieved as Theo was to have done with Sunday, he looked forward to Monday with dread; for, on that morning he was to begin school, going this time under the guidance of Rawl Patton. The latter was proud to act as chaperon to one who had already created such a sensation; but was too wise to appear in the vicinity of the school building, where he knew all the scholars would be awaiting them, until the very last moment. As the two strolled leisurely along, plying each other with questions, Rawl suddenly exclaimed: —

"Oh! I say, you mustn't speak out in school the way you did in church yesterday. If you do, old Biggs will give you a merry caning."

"What it is, this caning?" asked Theo.

"Why, a licking, a thrashing, a beating."

"If the man Bigg beat me, I would kill him," remarked Theo, quietly.

Before Rawl could remonstrate against this startling proposition, the Academy bell began the slow tolling of its last three strokes, and to avoid being late they were forced to run. In another moment, Theo Breeze stood once more within the dread precincts from which on a previous occasion he had fled as for his life.

CHAPTER XXI

A SCHOOLMASTER PUT TO FLIGHT

ALTHOUGH Theo was still densely ignorant of the ways of civilization, recent experience had taught him that he need not wear that horrid head covering, called a hat, when under a roof. So upon entering the schoolroom for the second time, he promptly removed it. Noticing this, the master remarked: —

"I see you've learned manners, William Blow, and trust that hereafter you will behave as becomes a young gentleman. At any rate, it will behoove you to do so, since the discipline of this academy is very strict, and I never allow my pupils to become spoiled for lack of the wholesome pickle of the rod. Now you may sit with Rawl Patton, until after prayers, when I will examine into your mental capacity."

As the two boys walked down the aisle toward Rawl's desk, which, as he was an advanced pupil, was in the rearmost row, a loutish lad stuck out his foot so that Theo stumbled over it and very nearly measured his length on the floor. Recovering himself, he turned wrathfully, and would have

sprung upon the offender had not Rawl caught him by the arm and pulled him away. "Not now," he whispered; "wait till recess."

After morning prayers, which convinced poor, perplexed Theo that church and school were one and the same, he was called to the master's desk for examination, in order that his standing in the school might be at once decided.

"Read me that page," commanded Mr. Biggs, handing his new pupil an open book. Until coming to Portsmouth, Theo had never so much as seen a book, much less handled one. So it is not surprising that, taking the volume, and regarding it with interest, he also held it upside down. Believing this to be done on purpose, Mr. Biggs struck the boy's wrists smartly with his switch, at the same time exclaiming: —

"Don't attempt to be funny with me, sir."

So amazed was Theo that he uttered a little cry and dropped the book to the floor.

"Pick it up, sir," commanded the master, and the boy obeyed.

"Now find page twenty-three."

Theo only stared uncomprehendingly.

"Is the lad an idiot, or only pig-headed?" queried Mr. Biggs, as he took the book, found the required page, and bade his pupil read its printed words.

Of course the latter could not read, nor could he answer a single one of the questions with

which the master sought to gauge his mental capacity. He did not even know the first letter of the alphabet. As a result he was made to sit at the extreme end of the lowest form in school, the one occupied by the youngest and most backward children. Here he was given a slate with the letters A B C printed on it and told to copy them, at the same time saying them over to himself until he had learned them.

All this proved deeply interesting to the other scholars, several of whom smiled and assumed superior airs as Theo's ignorance was disclosed; but others, and among them Rawl Patton, were moved to a sincere pity by the lad's mortifying position. Among those who sneered was the boy who had attempted to trip Theo a short time before. His name was Beltshazzar Luke, and he was of so mean a nature as to be bitterly jealous of the sensational interest aroused by the new-comer. Thus feeling, he rejoiced at the latter's present mortification, and was determined to annoy him in every way possible.

Thus it happened that while poor Theo was puzzling over the mysterious characters on his slate, saying over and over to himself "Abeecy, abeecy," and wondering what it meant, something suddenly stung him on the cheek. Glancing quickly up, he detected a knowing smile on several faces, but could not discover what had struck him, nor whence it came. As he again bent over his tiresome "Ab-

eecy" a pellet of shot struck his slate. Now he knew what to look for, and also the direction from which he was being attacked; but for half a minute he gave no sign. Then suddenly facing about, he caught "Belt" Luke in the very act of discharging another pellet at him from a blow-gun. Like a flash Theo's slate went hurtling through the air toward the disturber of his peace. It barely missed the lad's head, and, striking a corner of the desk behind him, smashed into a dozen pieces.

Unfortunately the master turned from a blackboard, at which he had been engaged, just in time to witness this act. In another minute he was upon our lad, administering to him as severe a thrashing as he had ever seen fit to inflict upon a pupil.

"There! you young scoundrel!" he exclaimed, when, exhausted by his efforts, he allowed the boy to drop back into his seat. "Let that be a lesson to you against any further hurling of missiles in this schoolroom, and, for the future, see that you behave yourself."

During this terrible ordeal Theo had not uttered a sound, but now he sat livid and gasping. Once before in his life he had had a similar beating at the hands of Diablito, and he had never forgotten nor forgiven it. Then he had been a child too weak to defend himself, but now he felt that he was almost a man, and he well knew from years of piratical training what men did under such circumstances.

At recess time he was not allowed to go out with the other children, but was kept in to study those hateful letters which he vowed he would never learn, nor even look at, if he could help it. When school was dismissed at noon, our lad fulfilled the first duty he had planned for himself by seeking out "Belt" Luke, and attacking him with such fury that inside of a minute he had the young bully thoroughly whipped and begging for mercy.

Then the other boys, with Rawl Patton at their head, separated the combatants, and the latter walked home with the victor, praising his pluck, and striving by every means to sooth his outraged feelings. But Theo was not to be placated nor turned from his thoughts of vengeance, and he received all of Rawl's well-meant efforts at consolation in silence. This same moody silence lasted through dinner-time, to the dismay of Miss Tabitha, who was alone in the house, Mr. Spicer having been called out of town to conduct a funeral.

Shortly after the unsociable meal was ended, Rawl Patton's whistle sounded in the street; and while Miss Tabby was looking at him from a front window, Theo ran out of a back door. As he passed through the kitchen he snatched something from a table, and slipped it into the bosom of his shirt. Then he joined his friend. All the way to school he maintained the same ominous silence. Rawl vainly sought to break it by talking freely of the

morning's incident, and telling his companion that he must not mind a little thing like a school thrashing, which, he explained, was something given to all boys with greater or less frequency. "The fellow who doesn't get thrashed once in a while is either a sneak or a sissy," he said in conclusion, "and I wouldn't like to think you were either."

Then Theo halted on the academy steps, and broke his long silence, saying: —

"For the thrashing I care not; it is the insult. But the man Bigg, I will kill him."

With this significant utterance our young pirate entered the schoolroom, walked calmly to his seat among the little children, took up the tiresome slate that had been substituted for the one he had smashed, and began muttering under his breath, "Abeecy, abeecy," until at length the meaningless words got somehow changed into "A beast, a beast," which is what he was thinking.

For a moment after being left alone Rawl Patton stood irresolute. He had never been a sneak nor a tattle-tale, and he could not bear the thought of doing anything that would place him in that category. But somehow this case seemed different from any he had ever experienced, and more serious. Finally he made up his mind, entered the schoolroom, and walking directly to the desk of the master, said: —

"Mr. Biggs, Billy Blow says he will kill you."

"Nonsense," retorted the master, sharply. "Merely a childish threat, though if he repeats it, I shall have to give him another thrashing. Go to your seat, sir."

Rawl obeyed and took his seat, but from it he watched Theo, who with white face and drawn features was apparently absorbed in study.

About the middle of the afternoon, when the master was again at the blackboard, explaining a problem to a class drawn up before his desk, Rawl Patton suddenly uttered a cry that startled every occupant of the room. At the sound, Mr. Biggs whirled about in time to see creeping toward him a lithe young figure, clutching a knife. Just then it sprang forward, while the terrified schoolmaster leaped nimbly to one side and ran for his life. Twice he circled his own desk with Theo in hot pursuit. Then he darted through the doorway and into the street, only a few paces in advance of the lad who was threatening his life. After them poured the entire school, screaming with terror.

Fortunately there were men on the street cool-headed and prompt to act in an emergency. Two of these, roused by the master's yells of "Murder! Help! Save me!" closed in on Theo from behind, snatched away the knife that he had taken from Miss Tabby's kitchen, and held him in their powerful grasp almost before he realized their presence. Finding himself thus helpless, with his cherished vengeance still unsatisfied, the boy, from whom no

amount of suffering could draw a tear, began to weep as though heart-broken.

"Who is he? What does it all mean?" asked the bewildered men. Rawl Patton explained that this was the Cuban boy who lived at Parson Spicer's house, who had leaped from a ship's masthead a few days before, and who now wanted to kill the schoolmaster on account of a thrashing received that morning.

"I see," said one of the men. "His brain is affected, and no wonder, after jumping from the *Hero's* main masthead. Well, Parson'll have to lock him up till he gets right again, that's all; for it evidently isn't safe to let him run at large. Only hope he won't have to go to the 'sylum."

So it happened that, a few minutes later, Miss Tabitha Sherlock was again summoned to the door to meet her young charge, this time in deepest disgrace and heading a larger throng of townsfolk than he had yet gathered.

Again was the unhappy lad locked into the attic chamber, from which everything breakable or throwable had previously been removed, and placed on a meagre diet of bread and water. Here both the minister and Miss Tabby labored to soften his heart and bring him to a realizing sense of his wickedness; but neither of them could extract from him a single word. He would not speak, and he would not eat, but only stared in stony, stubborn silence.

A prayer-meeting was called in his behalf, and consultations were held on all sides. The whole town discussed and advised concerning him, but without reaching any definite conclusion as to what ought to be done. This state of affairs lasted all day Tuesday without a change, then amid all the excitement and worry Lydia Dove arrived, though she was not expected until at least two days later.

CHAPTER XXII

THE COMING OF LYDIA DOVE

THE two days just past had been the most unhappy of Theo's life. In all the acts regarded by the good people of that New England town as evidences of either hopeless depravity or an unbalanced mind, he had only lived up to the teachings of his past, and now he was in despair over a situation that he could not comprehend. He seemed to be without friends, and was without hope. As he sat in the locked room that had become his prison, he longed to be back among the pirates of the Devil's Den. There he had at least been free to lead his own life with practically no interference; while here everything that he did got him into trouble, and he suffered persecution from all sides. There Latrobe had loved and cared for him; here every one seemed to hate him and wish him out of the way. How gladly would he rid them of his presence if he could only make an escape, but that appeared impossible. He could die, though, and thus relieve both himself and others from further trouble. So he deliberately refused to eat, and set out to starve himself.

In the meantime the kindly heart of the minister ached for the boy whom he could not comprehend any more than the latter could understand him.

Miss Tabitha, on the other hand, felt very bitter toward the lad. In her estimation all boys were monuments of depravity; but this one was by far the worst she had ever known. To think that he had actually attempted murder, and with her kitchen knife — after what she had done for him, too. Such wickedness and such ingratitude were beyond forgiveness. She was in favor of sending him either to prison or an asylum; but to neither of these propositions would Mr. Spicer listen for a moment.

"As I have already said, the child has doubtless been taught to return violence with violence," he argued, "and in giving him a thrashing without explanation, Master Biggs placed himself decidedly in the wrong, as I have told him. So whatever happens, our guest shall not be further punished."

"Then," said Miss Tabby, grimly, "he will probably kill us all in our beds. I shall write at once to Lyddy not to come, as I could not think of allowing her to associate with a murderer, who is also a heathen and a foreigner. Neither will I remain in the house with him and without her. So, Mr. Spicer, you had best look about at once for another to take charge of your house."

Thus matters stood at the close of the second day

of Theo's imprisonment, which seemed destined to last for the remainder of his life. The minister sat sorrowfully in his study, striving in vain to decide what was best to be done. Miss Tabby was in the kitchen angrily preparing a scanty supper, and Theo knelt at his attic window, measuring with his eye, for the hundredth time, the distance to the nearest limb of the great elm.

All at once his attention was attracted by the rattle of approaching wheels, and looking in that direction, he saw a two-horsed stage wagon advancing in a cloud of dust and at unheard-of speed. To his unbounded amazement it was driven by a girl who seemed to be its sole occupant. His only thought was that the horses were running away, and that the girl was vainly striving to control them. Upon the impulse of the moment he uttered a loud cry, and the girl, glancing up, caught sight of him.

Setting her brake with the skill of a practised driver, and tugging with all her slender strength at the reins, she succeeded in bringing her not unwilling team to a standstill just in front of the big elm. Then she called out to Theo: —

"Little boy, is this the house of the Reverend Mr. Spicer, where Miss Tabitha Sherlock lives?"

"Si, Señorita," answered our lad, greatly wondering.

"See what?" asked the girl, quickly, at the same time glancing back over the way she had come.

"Oh! the man running? I don't mind him, and he can have his old stage now; for I am sure this must be Mr. Spicer's house."

So saying, the girl dropped the reins, stepped on a wheel, and sprang lightly to the ground. She was evidently a very self-possessed young woman, and her freckled face, with its pert, little, turned-up nose, was lighted by a pair of mischievous eyes, expressive at once of self-will and unbounded vivacity. She wore a short dress of figured gingham, beneath which showed the ruffles of a pair of pantalets, heavy shoes, a little cape over her shoulders, and her laughing face peeped charmingly from the depths of a preposterous bonnet. Its broad ribbon strings were tied in a bow beneath her chin, her hair was done in two braids, and on her hands she wore mitts. As she turned toward the house, Miss Tabitha, attracted by the noise, appeared at its front door.

"How d'ye do, Aunt Tabby!" cried the new arrival, cheerily.

"For the land's sake! If it ain't Lyddy Dove!" exclaimed the astonished woman, running out, gathering the girl in her arms, and bestowing upon her half a dozen kisses in rapid succession. "How on earth did you ever get here? I warn't looking for you for a couple of days yet — why, I writ you only yesterday not to come at all, on account of something dreadful that's happened."

"Oh, yes, I know," replied the girl, lightly, as she

escaped from her aunt's embrace, and smoothed out her rumpled dress: "your boy tried to kill his schoolteacher. The driver told me all about it, but I don't mind. Of course you couldn't expect anything else of a pirate boy. And he is a real truly pirate, isn't he?" she asked anxiously.

"Sakes, yes! He acts like one," replied the bewildered Miss Tabby.

"I'm so glad!" exclaimed the girl, with sparkling eyes. "What fun we'll have! And oh! Aunt Tabby, this man wants a dollar for bringing me. I told him you'd pay him."

Here she pointed to the stage-driver, who had just arrived upon the scene, hot, dusty, and panting after a long chase.

"Yes'm," he said, "and it's a wonder it ain't a hundred for damages, seeing as this young lady run away with the team while I was carrying a trunk inter the widder Brown's house, and I thought nothing else but she'd smash up the hull rig."

"He stopped to talk, and I was in a hurry," explained Lydia.

"I'm surprised at you, Liddy Dove," said Miss Tabitha, reprovingly.

"Well, you needn't be, Aunt Tabby, for I've driven horses ever since I was a little girl," answered Miss Eleven-year-old.

"I'll pay you the dollar to-morrow," said Miss Tabitha to the driver, ignoring this remark. "And

now, Lyddy, come right into the house. But, child, where are your things?"

"Oh, yes, I forgot!" exclaimed Lydia, running back to the stage, from which she returned with a volume of "Robinson Crusoe" that she had won as a prize in school, and regarded as her most precious treasure.

"But your trunk or bag, or whatever you have brought, where is it?" insisted her aunt.

"I didn't bring any," replied the young traveller. "You see, when your letter came, the stage was just ready to start, and I was so glad to get away from that old place, that I didn't wait for anything. I just borrowed Miss Atwater's second best bonnet to travel in, because I only had a sunbonnet, you know. But I left word for my things to be sent, and even if they never come, I don't care, for I need everything new, anyhow. But, Aunt Tabby, isn't supper ready? I'm as hungry as the Disciples when they ate raw corn on the Sabbath."

Completely staggered by the calm self-possession of the child, Miss Tabitha answered never a word, but taking her by the hand led her into the house and up to her own room. There she bade her wash her face and hands, tidy her hair, and rest until she called her down to supper. Then leaving her she went up to the attic room, where, without a word to Theo, she got a pot of jam from its closet. So preoccupied were her thoughts that, on leaving the

room, she neglected to lock its door, of which fact Theo became instantly aware.

The boy's heart beat high with hope as he realized that a slender chance of escape was thus opened to him. Listening until Miss Tabitha's footsteps died away, he slipped from the room and began cautiously to descend the stairs.

He had barely reached the bottom of the first flight when a door in front of him was suddenly flung open, and the very girl whom he had seen driving the stage stepped out.

"Oh!" she cried, with a gasp of surprise. "Are you the pirate boy? I was just going to find you. Tell me, did you really come from Cuba?"

"Si, Señorita," answered the bewildered lad.

"That's what you said before when I asked you a question, and I don't think it's polite to say 'see' when you ought to answer 'yes' or 'no.' But come in here where it is lighter, for I want to see how you look."

With this Lydia took Theo by the hand, and led him into Miss Tabitha's room, where she gazed at him with eager curiosity.

"Seems to me you look just like any other boy, and not at all like a pirate," she finally remarked in a disappointed tone. "Did you really try to kill the school teacher? and what made you? Don't you know it is awfully wicked to kill people even if you are a pirate?"

"But the man Bigg, he beat me," began Theo, eagerly; and then to this girl who, although a stranger, already exercised a magnetic influence over him, the poor boy, longing for human sympathy and justification, poured forth his whole heart. In his broken English, which Lydia seemed perfectly to understand, he told of his sorrows, of the cruel injustice that had met him on all sides, and of his determination to either run away or starve himself to death. He managed to impress his hearer with such a realizing sense of his forlorn condition that her eyes filled with tears, and, impulsively flinging her arms about his neck, she kissed him, saying at the same time: —

"Never mind, boy, I will love you and take care of you, so that you shan't be abused any more, even if you are a pirate. And I will read to you out of my 'Robinson Crusoe,' so that you can see how much harder times he had even than you, and how splendidly he came out of them. I hope then you'll change your mind about running away, for —"

Here the little girl was interrupted by her aunt's voice calling: "Lyddy! Lyddy Dove! Supper's ready."

"Come, boy," commanded Lydia, holding out her hand. "I shan't go down without you, and you are not to be locked up any longer."

A minute later, the two children entered the dining room, hand in hand, to the amazement and in-

dignation of Miss Tabitha, who, as she caught sight of them, cried out: "Lyddy Dove, what are you doing? I never heard of such forwardness. Aren't you ashamed of yourself, miss? I shall pack you right back to Deerfield in the morning. Let go that boy's hand instantly."

But the gentle, white-haired minister, who had followed closely behind the culprits, silenced his irate housekeeper by saying: "Hold thy peace, woman, nor dare interfere in this matter. What we now behold is a direct ordering of the Lord, and where all others have failed this child hath gained a victory."

CHAPTER XXIII

UTILIZING A PIRATICAL EDUCATION

WITH the coming of Lydia Dove a greater happiness than Theo had ever before known entered into his life. She was so cheery, wise, and self-reliant. She took up his cause with such enthusiasm, and understood him so readily, that, in spite of her youth, and the fact that she was of the weaker sex, he willingly accepted her guidance in all things, and quickly became her devoted slave. On the very first evening of their acquaintance she opened his eyes to the value of books by reading to him from her "Robinson Crusoe," and thereby so exciting his interest that he longed to be able to read for himself.

"That's easy enough," said Lydia, when he expressed this desire. Then, in a single lesson she cleared away the mystery of "Abeecy," and caused him to understand the relation of letters to words. She also explained the connection between printed words and the objects for which they stood, by means of the crude illustrations in her book. It was such an agreeable novelty to Lydia to find herself in the position of teacher, and Theo was so eager to be

taught, that within a week after the arrival of the former, our pirate lad was able to read easy sentences, and had even gained a certain familiarity with arithmetical figures, as represented by eggs.

During this happy week nothing was said about school. Miss Tabitha found it necessary to provide her niece with an outfit of clothing before allowing her to go, while Mr. Spicer realized that Theo had much to learn of the ways of civilization prior to entering upon its active duties as represented by school life. Also, Mr. Biggs was reluctant to receive again into his academy the boy who had put him to ignominious flight with a drawn knife. So, for the present, Theo and Lydia played, studied, and cultivated each other's acquaintance at home.

Nor did the imparting of instruction devolve entirely upon the latter; for, on the very first day, Theo guided her to the wharves in order to point out the ship from whose masthead he had leaped. As the inland-bred girl knew nothing of sea or ships, and as Theo knew more about them than he did about anything else, the one asked questions which the other promptly answered, until Lydia conceived a decided respect for the boy toward whom she had been inclined to assume airs of superiority when she found that he did not know how to read.

This was most fortunate for the continuance of their friendly relations, since no true friendship can

exist without equality. Even the cordial feelings entertained toward each other by Theo and Rawl Patton were based upon gratitude and patronage; nor was a real friendship developed between them until the former had been for some weeks reinstated in school. Then two incidents occurred that completely changed their relations.

By the boys of Master Biggs's academy the first of June was always hailed as opening day of the swimming season. No matter what the weather might be, every one who could swim, as well as many who had not yet learned, was bound to go into the water on that day. A short distance above the town a branch of the Piscataqua River known as Currier's Creek presented an ideal swimming place, smooth, free from obstructions, and having only a moderate tidal current. On one side was pasture land bordered by a thick pine woods, and on the other an island. Both offered clean sandy beaches, and here the academy boys were accustomed to inaugurate their season of water sports.

For days beforehand the first of June was eagerly anticipated, and its possibilities discussed by every boy in school, except Theo, who did not quite understand what the others were talking about. However, after school was dismissed on the eventful day, he accepted Rawl Patton's invitation to come along and take a lesson in swimming. "We'll soon teach you the trick, Billy Blow," said the latter, "so that the

next time you drop overboard from a masthead, you can paddle yourself ashore without help."

Theo only laughed, and the boys streamed away on a run for the appointed rendezvous. Most of them loosened their clothing as they went, for it was considered an honor to be first in the water, and so quickly were they overboard, after reaching the "swimming hole," that for some minutes Theo, undressing more slowly, was left standing alone on the bank.

"Come on, Billy Blow!" shouted one. "Don't be afraid. We won't let you drown."

"Yes," cried another; "come in. The water's fine, and as warm as anything."

"Wet your head first, and then duck right under. That's the way."

"Watch and see how I do it," said Rawl Patton, as he scrambled, all dripping, out on the bank and came to where Theo was standing with his clothing in a little heap beside him. "I'm going to dive from here and swim across to the other side. Shouldn't wonder but you'd be able to do the same before the summer's over, if you only try."

With this Rawl took a short run and sprang head-foremost into the placid waters. Almost at the same moment another white form flashed through the air, and made a clean-cut entrance close to where the other had disappeared. So engaged were the remaining boys with their noisy aquatics, that only

one or two noticed this, and they gave it no especial thought until Rawl had regained the surface and was swimming leisurely toward the opposite shore. Then one asked: —

"Where's the other fellow that dove same time as Rawl?"

"Didn't see any one. Who was it?"

"Don't know, but he hasn't come up."

"Oh, go way! You're trying to scare us."

"No, honest. Somebody went in. Where's Billy Blow?"

With the missing boy thus identified, several began to look for him, peering into the dark depths of the water as though hoping thus to discover its secrets. They shouted to Rawl, who was now well over toward the other side, but could not make him comprehend, though he was swimming on his back and facing them.

All at once a chorus of shrill cries reached him, and he saw his comrades pointing with eager gestures in the direction he was taking. Turning quickly, he encountered another sight so astounding that it nearly paralyzed him; for, calmly sitting on the beach he was approaching was the very boy he had left on the farther bank a minute before.

"Billy Blow!" he gasped, as his feet touched bottom and he stood staring. "How did you get here?"

"I come same way as you."

"But I didn't see you."

"No; you come top water; I come bottom water. You come slow; I come quick," replied Theo, smiling.

"You came under water all the way across the creek?"

Theo nodded his head.

"Well, that beats anything I ever heard of! I didn't know anybody who lived could swim under water like that. Why didn't you tell me you could swim?"

"Never did you ask," answered Theo, vastly enjoying the other's bewilderment.

After a bit, the two returned across the creek; the boy who was so at home in the water as to have gained the name of El Pescar from the pirates of Cape Cruz, gambolling like a young porpoise, now on the surface, and then far beneath it, while the other swam doggedly straight ahead.

Rawl felt hurt, and as though he had been defrauded of something that belonged to him. He had been the champion swimmer of the academy; but that honor had just been snatched from him by this new-comer. He was also forced to acknowledge with bitterness of heart, that as a swimmer he could never hope to equal the lad before whom he had thought to show off his superior skill. When they landed, and the other boys crowded about Theo with expressions of praise and astonishment, Rawl sullenly dressed and started alone for home.

This was the first incident that went to cementing a friendship between the lads. The second occurred after school on the following day.

Theo was kept behind the others for a few minutes to finish a lesson; but Lydia had promised to wait for him. When he finally appeared he found her, with flushed cheeks, angrily confronting a group of jeering children. Rawl Patton was nearest her, but turned away at sight of Theo.

"What is it, the matter?" inquired the latter, anxiously.

"They call me 'Speckle face,' and I hate it," cried the girl, with tears starting to her eyes. "If I were only a boy I would whip them till they cried."

"Never mind, I am one boy," said Theo, soothingly; and then, turning toward the teasing crowd, he proclaimed a thrashing for any boy who should dare repeat the disagreeable epithet.

"Speckle face!" shouted Rawl Patton, promptly.

Theo whirled upon him with white cheeks. "But you do not mean it," he said. "You would not make me fight with you."

"I do mean it," retorted Rawl, defiantly, still smarting with a recollection of the previous day. "And I will say it as often as I choose. Speckle face! Speckle face! Speckle—"

Here Theo flew at him, and then ensued a battle such as had not been witnessed on the academy

grounds in many a day. Rawl was undoubtedly the stronger, but Theo was possessed of greater endurance. Moreover, he had right on his side. For five minutes they fought, without any great show of skill but with the fury of two young game cocks, while their schoolmates breathlessly watched them. At the end of that time one of Theo's eyes was closed, and a crimson stream was trickling from a cut on his cheek; while Rawl's face was so smeared with blood from his nose as to be unrecognizable. As they drew apart for a momentary breathing-spell and stood glaring at each other, Lydia sprang between them.

"That will do, and you shall not fight any more!" she cried vehemently. "Theo, you are a brave, splendid boy, and for this I shall love you always; but he didn't mean it. He was trying to make the others stop when you came out. You are both my friends, and I love you both, and you must be friends with each other. So shake hands and make up, and let's go home."

For a moment the boys hesitated. Then Theo, with outstretched hand, took a forward step, and Rawl met him halfway.

This was the second incident by which Theo Breeze proved his equality with the best lad in Portsmouth, and won from him an enduring friendship.

CHAPTER XXIV

THEO BECOMES MYSTERIOUSLY AFFLUENT

So quickly did time fly with our lad after he became accustomed to his new environment, that a full year had passed long before he deemed such a thing possible. For him it had been a year of great events that crowded thick and fast upon each other. After the drawn battle described in the last chapter, the two contestants became firm friends, devoted to Lydia, who smiled impartially upon them both, and treated them as though they were her brothers.

Harum-scarum girl that she was, and always ready to join in their maddest pranks, she was at the same time possessed of a shrewd common sense that often saved them from disaster, as well as of a demure countenance that generally served to avert suspicion from herself. Although she sadly failed to fulfil her aunt's expectations in the way of general helpfulness about the house, Miss Tabitha, while grumbling at her increased burdens, could not but be proud of her clever niece. Especially was she pleased at the influence Lydia exerted over Theo.

"Just to think," she would say; "he was that wild and fierce that, but for her, he would have murdered us all in our beds long ago, to say nothing of what he might have done outside. Yes'm, we had to keep him locked up for fear of our lives. Then she come and took him in hand, and now there isn't a smarter or better-behaved boy in town, if I do say it. Of course," Miss Tabby would add, "the best of boys ain't nothing but trials when all's said and done; but thanks to Lyddy, this William Blow is turning out as likely as any I ever see."

While Miss Tabitha thus found cause to both censure and praise her niece, the latter had completely won the heart of the gentle old man who had dreaded her advent, but into whose lonely life she had come like a ray of sunlight streaming into a darkened room, and setting all its motes to dancing with happiness. He grew so fond of her that he was happiest when she was with him, and watched anxiously for her coming when she was absent; while she returned his affection with all the love of a child for a parent. She even invaded his study, and would sit there with her daily stint of patchwork, while he wrote at his sermons, until, at length, he became accustomed to consult her concerning them.

Theo was also dependent upon Lydia for advice and sympathy, though not to so great a degree as at first, for he found an ever increasing number of

outside interests into which she, as a girl, could not be expected to enter. In some of these he actually became a leader among his schoolfellows during that first year. To begin with, by whipping "Belt" Luke, and fighting a drawn battle with Rawl Patton, he had taught them a wholesome respect for his courage and physical strength. Then, too, none of them could swim with him, nor did any know such wonderful secrets of woodcraft. He could also run faster, jump farther, and climb with greater agility than any of them. These accomplishments went far toward offsetting his ignorance of marbles, tops, shinny, coasting, skating, and the etiquette of snowball fights, all of which he took up with avidity, each in its turn.

At the same time, so eager was our lad to learn the things that only books could teach, and so quick of understanding, that, by the end of the year, he had not only graduated from the infant class, but had reached a grade next to the highest in the school, the one occupied by Rawl and Lydia.

Master Biggs was as fond of him as though this phenomenal progress was due to his method of teaching, instead of having been made in spite of it. At the same time the master stood somewhat in awe of his unusual scholar, as was shown by the fact that since that first memorable thrashing he had not attempted to give Theo another.

From the foregoing record it might be supposed

that our young pirate had attained a position that left nothing to be desired, and that he should have been contentedly happy. But he was not, because of two things. One was his utter severance from his own family, and his inability to give any satisfactory account of them or of his home. His memories of these were so vague that, when he attempted to describe them, he invariably confused them with recollections of his subsequent life among the pirates of Cape Cruz. Thus he was in the position of one without country, home, or family, entirely dependent upon the charity of strangers.

As nothing had been heard from Alvord Spicer since Theo's arrival in Portsmouth, there were many persons who wondered that so poor a man as the minister should continue to support a boy who had no valid claim upon him. Some even said this to Theo himself and caused him much unhappiness thereby, for he now realized how illy provided with this world's goods his kind old protector was, and what a burden a healthy, hungry boy must be upon his slender resources.

The other reason for Theo's discontent with his situation was connected with this very poverty, since it compelled him always to appear shabbily dressed, generally in the cast-off garments of some among his more fortunate companions, or those of their elders inartistically cut down to fit his slender figure, and worn as long as Miss Tabitha's diligent

patching would hold them together. Neither, since he came to Portsmouth and learned the use of money, had our lad ever had a single penny of his own to spend. All of his schoolmates either had allowances, most of them, to be sure, very slender, or were able to perform certain tasks for which they received payment; but, as yet, Theo had not discovered any means of earning the money he so needed.

He longed to be able to make Lydia an occasional present, to procure for himself some clothing not originally made for some one else, to purchase the thousand and one treasures in shape of books, pocket-knives, pets, etc., that give boys such infinite pleasure at trifling cost, but all of which were denied to this heir of the greatest sugar estate in Cuba.

This poverty trouble was a serious one, and, though Theo never complained of it, not even to Lydia nor Rawl, it preyed upon him until he became subject to fits of gloom and unsociability that greatly puzzled his friends.

All at once, after he had spent something more than a year in Portsmouth, a wonderful change came over our lad. His despondency entirely disappeared and he became as light-hearted and happy as the day was long. It was also noticed that his personal appearance was gradually changing for the better. One by one his patched garments were re-

placed by others, new, whole, and of good material. A new cap and new shoes were added, and when Miss Tabitha questioned him about these things, the boy answered that they were given him by a person who had requested him not to tell where they came from — a reply that satisfied her for the time being.

This, however, was not the end of it; for Theo Breeze, with money to spend, could no more resist the generous impulse that bade him share it with his friends than a young cockerel can resist the impulse to crow. So he bestowed ribbons and books upon Lydia, a six-bladed penknife upon Rawl, and scattered cakes and sweets among his schoolmates with a lavish hand. All of these acts formed subjects for animated discussion in many quarters, though for a long time they failed to reach the ears of either Miss Tabitha or the unsuspecting minister.

Of course Theo could not emerge all at once from a position of direst poverty to that of the most affluent boy in school without exciting the liveliest curiosity regarding his source of income. Lydia and Rawl both questioned him, as did most of his schoolmates, and many of their elders, but to one and all he made the same reply, given with a fearlessness of gaze from his honest blue eyes that went far toward disarming suspicion. He would gladly tell them if he could where his money came from, but had promised the dear friend who so generously provided it,

not to do so, therefore he begged they would not question him further.

But the matter finally became too notorious to be thus quieted, and people began to say that the young pirate was only practising the trade to which he had been educated, and stealing the money with which he was now so well supplied.

The only cause for doubting this statement was that no one could be found who had lost anything in the way of money or other valuables. No houses were broken into, no stores robbed; nothing had been taken that any one could discover. It was all a mystery that some gave over trying to solve, satisfied that it would be unravelled in due course of time, but which others were more determined than ever to penetrate.

Among these latter was "Belt" Luke, who had hated Theo from the first, and was now so intensely jealous of him that nothing would have pleased him so much as to see our lad thrown into prison, disgraced forever. So he watched and listened and crawled and spied at all hours, like the reptile he was, until at length he believed he had discovered Theo's secret.

All this had been going on for a long time, and it was not until the middle of Theo's third summer in Portsmouth that matters reached a climax. Then he one day invited Lydia and Rawl to take a sail with him in his new boat. They accepted the invi-

tation, and during their absence, the news of Theo's latest acquisition reached the ears of Mr. Spicer and Miss Tabitha, who decided upon an immediate investigation. They met with no difficulty in tracing the boat to the man who previously owned it, and who acknowledged that he had sold it to Billy Blow for twenty-five dollars, cash down, that very day.

When the sailing party returned, they were met by a little group of persons, among whom were the minister and Miss Tabitha.

"Is this your boat, my son?" asked the former, gently.

"Yes, sir," answered Theo, promptly. "I bought her this morning. Isn't she a beauty?"

"But where did you procure so large a sum of money?"

"I can't tell you, sir, for the reason I have already given."

"I know," whispered "Belt" Luke in Miss Tabitha's ear. "He stole the money, and I can prove it, for I saw him take it."

CHAPTER XXV

HOW THE MONEY WAS OBTAINED

Of course Theo Breeze had not stolen the money of which he had become so mysteriously possessed, and of which all Portsmouth was talking, in spite of "Belt" Luke's assertion to the contrary.

When he had been an inmate of Parson Spicer's house about a year, and while he was feeling very despondent over his poverty, with his attendant shabbiness, a small shop for the sale of candies, cakes, and other things of a kindred nature was opened in the vicinity of Master Biggs's school. Although this in itself was in no way remarkable, the proprietor of the new establishment was sufficiently so to attract considerable attention, since she was a negress, who always wore a snow-white turban, shell-rimmed spectacles, and large golden hoops in her ears. That she was a native of some foreign country was evident from her imperfect use of English, and the strange confections, hitherto unknown in Portsmouth, with which she tempted customers.

As no one seemed to know her name or anything about her, Rawl Patton, who was first among the

boys to discover the new shop, dubbed her "Old Dinah," which name was promptly and generally accepted. That she was possessed of some means was proved by her paying her rent in advance, giving cash for whatever she purchased, and by the comfortable manner in which she furnished her modest establishment. Behind the shop were two living-rooms, and back of them was a tiny garden.

From the very first her business prospered, and by her reasonable prices, combined with liberal measure, "Old Dinah" quickly became a prime favorite with the pupils of Master Biggs's school. Only Theo kept away from the place that all the others found so fascinating, for the simple reason that he had no money to spend there, or elsewhere. So, though his companions often urged him to accompany them to Dinah's, he for a while steadily refused to do so. At the same time, his curiosity was so aroused by reports concerning her establishment that one evening, as he was on his way home after taking supper with Rawl Patton, he paused in passing it to gaze in at the tastefully arranged window. It was quite brightly illuminated by two reflecting lamps, and the light from these shone full on the boy's face.

He longed to be able to purchase some of those delicious-looking sweetmeats for Lydia; but, recalling his poverty, was turning away with a deep-

drawn sigh when he was startled by a voice close at hand. Speaking in Spanish, it asked : —

"Art not thou Theophilo Guillermo Danbrisa, and by birth a Cuban?"

"I am," replied Theo, turning quickly and confronting "Old Dinah," who stood in the open doorway gazing fixedly at him. "But how do you know anything about me?"

"Come inside," replied the woman, "and I will tell thee."

Theo hesitated for a moment, but his curiosity was so aroused, and it was so pleasant to hear again the tongue of his mother, that he finally did as requested, and entered the shop.

The woman, trembling as though with an ague, closed the door behind him, saying, "If any come to buy, the bell will give warning." Then she motioned him to pass to the inner room beyond the shop. It was neatly furnished as a sitting and dining room ; but ere Theo had time to look about him, "Old Dinah," placing her hands on his shoulders, and gazing earnestly into his face, startled him by inquiring : —

"Theophilo, dost thou remember La Brisa?"

"Certainly I do," answered the boy, wondering.

"And thy noble father, the Señor Danbrisa, who met his death at the hands of Diablito?"

"Never can I forget him. But how should you know of his death?"

"Dost thou remember thy beautiful mother, the Señora Dorotea, and thy sister Nueva, Mariquita, and the little Tertia?"

"Well do I remember them," replied Theo, his eyes filling with tears at the thought of his dear ones, "but —"

"Then dost thou not also remember Lesbia, thy nurse and second mother?"

Theo hesitated, and the woman, fixing upon him a gaze so intense that it seemed to penetrate his very soul, added, "The Lesbia who for six years nightly sang thee to sleep with this air."

Here she hummed the first bar of a plaintive Spanish cradle song.

"Yes! yes!" cried the boy, eagerly; "of course I remember the dear Lesbia whom I loved and for whom I cried long after I left her. But who are you? and how do you know of these things?"

"I know them," replied the woman, impressively, "because I am that same Lesbia." Here she snatched off the shell-rimmed spectacles that disguised her face, and instantly Theo knew that what she said was true.

As the woman saw the look of recognition flash into his face, she uttered a joyous cry, and folded him to her bosom as though he were still the child for whom she had cared long years before.

When both became a little calmer, Theo could no longer be restrained from asking questions and in-

sisting upon being answered. Thus he learned that Lesbia, heart-broken at losing him, and being a free woman, had left La Brisa about the same time that he did, determined to find him if she had to follow him around the world.

"And now that I have found thee, muchacho caro," she added, "I will never more leave thee until we can return together to La Brisa. I know it to have been thy father's dearest wish for thee to be taught the ways of his own people in this bleak country. Therefore is it good for thee to be here for a time. But finally we must return, that La Brisa may not always be without a master."

"Of course," said Theo. "But what I can't understand is, how you traced me to Portsmouth, and why you didn't let me know who you were when you first came."

"I traced thee, dear one, through Latrobe."

"Latrobe?"

"Yes. He is my brother. Didst thou not know? I found him in England, where he served aboard a warship. So, since he could not come himself, he confided to me the address that the Señor Alvord Spicer had given thee, and I came here, hoping thou also might have found thy way to this place. Oh, my dear one! when first I saw thee I could have screamed for joy, and would have embraced thee then as I do now, but that it was in the holy church where the good Padre, who also cares for thee, was

talking. Also I feared lest thou should recognize me, and, being unwarned, call me by name. In that case I should run the danger of being held as an escaped slave, seeing that I have not with me my paper of freedom. It is for that I am disguised, and also I will beg thee never to tell who I am, nor of the relations between us."

"Never fear," replied Theo, who, knowing nothing of the laws governing such cases, readily believed his nurse to be in danger. "I promise not to tell. But, Lesbia, where did you get the money with which to travel and to start in this business?"

"It is thy money, dear one, thy very own; for it was given to Latrobe by thy father to keep for thee. My brother, unable to come himself, gave it to me for thy use when I should find thee. Some of it have I expended in establishing this shop that I might have an excuse for remaining here, and near thee. But many persons buy of my wares and soon shall I be able to repay it. So, dear one, if thou hast need of money, help thyself from thy own. The till has a secret spring that I will show thee, and if it contains not enough, come to me for more."

"Lesbia, do you mean it?" cried Theo, who could not believe that his humiliating poverty was ended. "Do you really mean that I am to have money of my own to spend as I please?"

"I really mean it, Sugar Sweet," replied the woman, gazing fondly at the boy, and applying to

him the term of endearment she had used when he was an infant. "If thou would test its reality, go now and help thyself, for it is all truly thine. Only it will be well not to spend too freely, for fear of arousing unkind suspicion. Nor would I have it known that I am holding money in trust for thee, lest it be taken from me. Therefore, it will be better not to discover whence it comes, other than to say it is given thee by a friend."

"I promise not to tell. But don't you think, Lesbia, that I might have some new clothes? These are so shabby, and Mr. Spicer is too poor to buy me any."

"And why not? It is as a prince thou should be clad by right, and new clothing thou shalt have as quickly as it may be procured."

With this assurance, the first interview between Theo and his devoted nurse came to an end. Of course, many others followed, the lad going to Lesbia whenever he wanted money, and often when he did not, merely for the pleasure of talking with her about his own people. If she did not happen to be in the shop, he would call out to inform her of his presence, and if he desired money, would help himself from the till. He never took much, because his needs were few and simple; but if he had wanted all that Lesbia possessed, he could have had it. Thus it happened that "Belt" Luke, after a long-continued following of Theo's move-

ments, and much miserable spying, did, as he informed Miss Tabitha, see the lad go into "Old Dinah's" and take money from her till.

When this was reported to Mr. Spicer, he turned squarely upon Theo, and asked if it were true.

"Yes, sir," replied the boy, "I did take money from Old Dinah's till, but it was with her full permission."

"That is most remarkable," said the minister; "why should she permit you to do such an unheard-of thing?

"Will you come with me, sir, and ask her?"

"Certainly I will, since that is the very thing I was about to propose."

For more than an hour were the minister and Lesbia engaged in a conversation, which even Theo was not permitted to overhear. And when it was ended, tears stood in the eyes of the sympathetic old gentleman. To Theo he said: —

"Everything has been explained to my satisfaction, my dear boy, and you are at liberty to enjoy the provision made for you by your father. Only, that you may not contract habits of extravagance, I wish you would apply to me for whatever sums of money you may happen to want, and I will give you orders upon this good woman for them."

To this plan both Theo and Lesbia agreed, and thus were money matters adjusted between them. Outsiders were informed that Lesbia, being of

Spanish extraction, had taken such a liking to Theo, on account of his birth and ability to speak her native tongue, that she desired to assist him in obtaining the education for which he had been sent to Portsmouth.

These arrangements and explanations proved satisfactory to all concerned, except that Theo was still greatly puzzled to know how the old nurse had discovered first Latrobe, and then him, after all these years; and not until several more years were passed did he come to a solution of this mystery.

CHAPTER XXVI

REAPPEARANCE OF AN OLD FRIEND

No longer cramped and humiliated by poverty, no longer suspected of dishonorable acts, with the mystery of his home and family fairly cleared away, Theo Breeze, still generally known as "Billy Blow," became one of the happiest and most popular lads in all Portsmouth. Although still acknowledging Rawl Patton's leadership in many things, Theo, with Lydia's unfailing aid, pushed him so closely in their studies that they graduated at the same time from Master Biggs's "academy," and entered together the higher school in which pupils were fitted for college. Both boys looked forward to this as their ultimate goal. Though Mr. Spicer well knew that he alone could not support Theo through a college course, he confidently counted upon Lesbia's aid, which she cheerfully promised.

Miss Tabitha disapproved of college for any boys, except those of strong religious convictions who were destined for the ministry. She declared that, for all others, they were merely places for the waste of money, the cultivation of extravagance, and the encouragement of worldliness. Even Lydia was too

jealous of the proposed plan to be enthusiastic over it; since, in those days, no college admitted girl students, and when her boy comrades should go to one, she, who now so easily kept pace with them, would be forced to drop behind.

But college was such a remote contingency that its shadow could not materially dim the joys of the present. So, with our three friends, the time passed swiftly and happily until Rawl was almost nineteen, Theo past eighteen, as nearly as Lesbia could reckon, and Lydia sixteen years of age.

Outside of his friendships, Theo found his chiefest pleasure in his boat, in which, generally with Rawl for a companion, he had explored every nook and corner of Portsmouth harbor, and had even gone as far to sea as the Isles of Shoals. The trip that he most frequently made was across the river to Kittery Navy Yard, where he found pleasure in studying the construction of warships and acquiring all possible information regarding them. All his instincts were those of a sailor, and these, combined with his early training and present environment, made him long above all things to go to sea. Only to Rawl and Lydia, however, did he confide this desire, because both of them fully sympathized with him. Rawl would also like to go to sea, though of course it must be as a naval officer; while Lydia imagined that she should like, above all things, to sail away to one of the far islands of the Pacific, where she would devote

herself to missionary work among the simple-minded natives.

Mr. Spicer would not in any way encourage Theo's ambition to be a sailor. He could not even bear to talk of the sea which had robbed him of his own dearly loved son, from whom no word had been received since Theo came to Portsmouth. Even Lesbia could only tell that he had been separated from Latrobe immediately upon their arrival in England, where she believed he had been tried, condemned, and executed as a pirate.

So the old man, while sadly cherishing the memory of his son, had accepted Theo Breeze in his place, and was not willing for him to enter upon a career holding such terrible possibilities. Also Theo must be educated as one soon to assume the responsibilities of a great landed proprietor and the management of a vast estate.

Of course Mr. Spicer, upon hearing Lesbia's story, had written to the Señora Danbrisa in Cuba, but concluded that the address of his letter must have been defective, since no answer to it was ever received. A year later, he wrote to the American consul in Havana. To this letter, after another weary delay, nearly as long as the first, he received a brief reply, to the effect that but little information could be gained concerning the family of La Brisa, as their estate lay on the south side of the island, and remote from the capital. It was reported,

however, that the Señora Danbrisa had left Cuba, and taken her daughters abroad to be educated.

Upon this Mr. Spicer again wrote to the consul, begging him to obtain, if possible, the Señora's foreign address, and at any rate to inform him of her return, whenever that should take place. This communication was not answered, owing to the fact that, with a change of administration, there was a change of consuls, and in the resulting confusion the unimportant letter was mislaid.

Failing thus to communicate with Theo's family, the minister determined to carry out with Lesbia's aid the plan already formed for his education, put him through college, and then send him to Cuba to prove as best he might his claim to La Brisa. This plan held good until it was nearly time for the boys to go up to Cambridge for their entrance examinations, when certain events happened of such a nature as to entirely overthrow it.

The first was an offer to Rawl Patton of an appointment as midshipman in the navy, to take effect at once. This the boy was so wild to accept that he could neither talk nor think of anything else, and finally won a reluctant consent from his parents. After two weeks of excitement and preparation Rawl made a brief sensational appearance in uniform. Then he departed, leaving behind him two disconsolate young people, one of whom felt that his recent comrade had won the only prize in life worth having.

About this time Parson Spicer discovered that the sum of money still at Lesbia's disposal was entirely inadequate to carry Theo through even a single year of college life. The boy himself had drawn freely upon her resources, and she, knowing nothing of the expenses attending a college career, had only reserved one hundred dollars for that purpose. Now, with this exception, the sum that she had held in trust was exhausted, while her business was only sufficient to yield her a living.

At this discovery the good old minister was greatly distressed. Miss Tabitha sniffed, but said nothing, and Lydia secretly rejoiced. Even Theo himself did not feel nearly so badly as he would, had not Rawl also given up a college career.

With the overthrow of one plan another must be formed, and many were the discussions held concerning Theo's immediate future. None of them, however, resulted in anything definite, and finally the eve of graduation day at the High School was reached with nothing decided upon.

Just before sunset of that day Theo and Lydia were seated on the broad stone doorstep of the parsonage, talking of the morrow and watching for the return of Mr. Spicer, who had gone into town. At length they saw him in the distance, and Lydia ran to meet him.

Theo, thus left alone, sat thinking of his strange coming to that elm-shaded cottage, of the busy and

happy life he had led there, and wondering if he should ever love any other place so well. This reverie was interrupted by the clatter and rattle of the incoming stage, which, still driven by his friend Zack Truitt, was just entering the town. Theo was about to shout out a greeting to the driver, when, to his surprise, the stage stopped directly in front of him. As it did so, a broad-shouldered man, bronzed, bearded, and clad in a suit of blue cloth, sprang down from the box seat, while Zack Truitt called out: —

"That's him now."

As Theo, full of curiosity, rose to his feet, the stranger stepped quickly up to him, placed his hands on the lad's shoulders, and, gazing full into his face, exclaimed: —

"Can it be possible that this tall fellow is the young pirate of Cape Cruz who was called El Pescar?"

"Yes," cried Theo, with an instinctive flash of recognition, "and you are Alvord Spicer."

"Al's come!" shouted Zack Truitt, as his stage clattered down the street; and in another moment the aged minister was clasped in the arms of his stalwart, long-lost son, who was come to him again as from the dead.

For the immediate present that was enough, and, satisfied with being reunited after all the years of separation and silence, neither father nor son cared

to know more. It was not until after supper that they began to ask questions, and then it was learned that the letter announcing Alvord's expected arrival had come on the same stage with him, while several others, posted in far-distant ports, had never been received.

"Thus you perceive, my son, that we know almost nothing of what has happened to you since the day you left us eight years ago," remarked the minister, "and want to know everything from the beginning."

So the returned wanderer took up his narrative at the point of leaving home for a short voyage to Cuba. His hearers were thrilled as he described his capture by pirates, and subsequent slavery among them. They shuddered at his despairing leap into the Cave of Bones, and the old man pressed Theo's hand gratefully when the narrator came to the part played by El Pescar in saving him from that dreadful place.

At the point in his narrative descriptive of the treachery of Captain Thomas Pole, Lydia could not forbear expressing her feelings.

"The contemptible thing!" she exclaimed. "I only hope he got properly punished for his horridness."

"He was punished," replied Alvord Spicer, grimly, "though not until two years later. In the meantime, the *Chloris* received orders at Bermuda to proceed directly to England; so we were taken there

for trial. Upon arrival at Portsmouth, all of us, except Latrobe, were placed in one of the prison hulks anchored off shore; while he, poor fellow, was transferred to another ship, and I have not seen nor heard from him since. I only know that it was a new ship, just gone into commission and in need of a cook."

"Was it ordered to Halifax?" asked the Parson.

"I believe so," answered Alvord Spicer; "but why do you ask, father?"

"For no reason at all," replied the minister, evidently somewhat confused. "I only wondered. But go on with your narrative, my son, and excuse me for interrupting."

"It may be soon told," said the other. "We were tried for piracy, and convicted on the perjured testimony of Thomas Pole and Eph Morris; but when the latter found we were about to be hanged, he relented and confessed that his testimony was false. Thomas Pole was punished by having his master's license taken from him, so that he might never again command a British ship, while Morris was forced to enter the navy.

"We Americans, having been declared innocent, were simple minded enough to imagine that we might go free; but not at all. The British navy needed men, and so our sentence was commuted from hanging to five years of service on board English men-of-war. Moreover, we were separated and

drafted to different ships, so that I have seen none of my companions since."

Here the narrator was interrupted by visitors who had learned of his return and came to welcome him home. Old friends poured into the little house until it was crowded; and they remained so late that the conclusion of Alvord Spicer's story was put off until the morrow.

Only Theo whispered to him, as they bade each other good night, "Are you still in the navy?"

"Yes," was the reply, "but not in any foreign service, thank God."

CHAPTER XXVII

FROM THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY

On the following day our lad, whose early education had been that of a pirate, and who had reached Portsmouth six years before as ignorant of civilization as a young savage, was graduated from the fitting school, ready to enter college. Lydia was graduated at the same time, and both the good old minister and Miss Tabitha Sherlock were made proudly happy by the congratulations showered upon them on account of the children they had brought up. Nor was Alvord Spicer, for whom the occasion took on the form of an ovation from his fellow-townsfolk, less proud than his father of the boy now proving himself so worthy of all they had done for him.

But proudest of all was Lesbia, who, in her finest and whitest turban, occupied a back seat among the audience, and never took her eyes from her boy, save when forced to wipe away the tears of joy that dimmed her spectacles. Theo spied her from the platform, and, to crown her happiness, while the applause that greeted his oration was still at its height, he walked the whole length of the crowded

hall to kiss her, and thus publicly acknowledge his indebtedness to this his second mother.

As the festivities of the occasion lasted through the afternoon, it was not until after supper that the minister's household was once more assembled in his study, anxious to hear the conclusion of Alvord Spicer's narrative.

"Let me see, where did I leave off?" asked the sailor.

"You had just been assigned to duty on board an English warship," replied his father.

"Yes, so I had, though condemned to punishment would be a truer way of putting it; for, although rated as quartermaster, I was made to lead the life of a dog, and was continually taunted with my narrow escape from being hanged as a pirate. Our ship was ordered to the African coast, where I served for more than a year. Then my position became so intolerable that I determined to escape at the first opportunity, preferring to risk the penalty of desertion rather than bear longer the persecution to which I was subjected. As desertions on that coast are almost unknown on account of the manifold dangers of the interior, I was not closely watched, and one dark night, as our ship lay off the mouth of a river, I managed to slip overboard undetected. Swimming ashore, I pushed inland through the swamps with such speed as might be. At daylight I came on a camp of slave-hunters just

starting for the interior. They were glad of a white recruit, and I joined them without hesitation. About a hundred miles from the coast I was taken down with the African fever, and left at a native village to die. Nursed into convalescence by the negroes, I remained in that village, hospitably entertained by its chief, until it in turn was raided by the man-hunters, and all of its inhabitants who were not killed were borne off into slavery.

"Although fighting with my friends until further resistance was useless, I was fortunately unwounded, and made good my escape at the moment of surrender. Even then I could not desert the poor wretches who had so befriended me, and followed them to a point on the coast well south of where I had landed. There I discovered an extensive but perfectly hidden factory at the head of a salt-water lagoon, in which lay a schooner awaiting her human cargo. Stealing a canoe, I made my way out through the narrow channel connecting the lagoon with a river and finally gained the sea. Although nearly dead from starvation and exhaustion, I was so rejoiced to be once more on salt water that I allowed my little craft to drift out with the tide until the shore was no longer visible. Then I went to sleep.

"When I awoke, a boat containing men was alongside, and they carried me on board that most glorious of human creations, an American warship. While

there on other business, she had been instructed to keep a lookout for slavers, but had no knowledge of the place I had just come from nor of the existence of a factory on that part of the coast. In fact, it was by the merest accident that she happened where she was, in time to sight and pick me up as I went drifting past in my canoe.

"When my report was made to her commander, he asked if I would be willing to guide a boat expedition into the lagoon for the capture of the slaver. I replied that I would rather do that than anything else in the world, since it would give me a chance of repaying the kindness of those negroes who had cared for me in my time of greatest need.

"To make a long story short, I accompanied the boat party back to the lagoon, where we found the slaver already warned of our coming, and so prepared to give us a warm reception that they opened fire on us the moment we hove in sight. In spite of it we dashed forward, boarded, and engaged the schooner's crew on their own deck. In our final charge I fired my pistol at one who was aiming a rifle at me, and he fell; when all was over I went to look at him, and to my amazement found him to be my old enemy, Thomas Pole, who, debarred by his own act from honest seamanship, had turned slaver. What was still more astonishing was to discover in his schooner which we had just captured, our old friend—yours and mine, Theo—*La Bruja*. It seems that she had

been condemned as a prize, and sold in Halifax, where by some means Captain Pole obtained possession of her."

"And did you set the poor slaves free?" asked Lydia, breathlessly.

"Indeed we did, my dear, and a more grateful lot of human beings was never seen. Some of them even tried to kiss my feet, much to the amusement of the other Americans and my own embarrassment. As our losses in the fight included an officer killed and another wounded, and as the latter, with still another, was detached to carry the prize to the United States, the company of the quarterdeck was so reduced that I was offered a commission, subject to confirmation, as acting lieutenant, if I would enter the American service — an offer I promptly accepted. The ship to which I thus became attached had been but a few days on the coast, where she was engaged in surveying the mouths of the principal rivers. Twice before finishing that work we fell in with the British cruiser from which I had escaped, and the officers of the ships exchanged courtesies; but on these occasions I managed to keep out of the way and was not recognized."

"Could they have taken you if you had been?" asked Theo.

"No," answered Alvord Spicer, promptly, "they could not; but they might have attempted to do so, in which case we should have exchanged something

besides courtesies. But to wind up my long yarn, when we finally completed our survey of the west African coast, we sailed for the Indian Ocean and the Pacific to gain information concerning certain uncharted waters, as well as to show the American flag in a number of East Indian ports where it had rarely, if ever, been seen. This cruise occupied something over three years, and it was ended only two weeks ago at the Norfolk Navy Yard, where our ship went out of commission. I was ordered to report at Washington, where I had an extremely pleasant interview with the Secretary of the Navy. He was kind enough to say some complimentary things and to express the hope that I would continue in the service.

"Upon my saying that I would gladly do so, he handed me a commission signed by the President, as lieutenant, and said that if I could be ready to go to sea again within a month he would be pleased to give me command of a schooner now fitting out at Boston for foreign service. Of course I accepted the position, and so am now Captain Spicer of the good ship *La Bruja*."

"*La Bruja!*" exclaimed Theo. "You don't mean our *La Bruja?*"

"I do, though," laughed Alvord Spicer; "only her name has been Anglicized, so that she is now known as the *Seawitch*."

"Where is she bound?"

"I have not been told. I only know that I am ordered to sail as soon as ready, but under sealed orders, not to be opened until we get to sea."

"Oh, if I were only going with you!"

"But I thought you were to enter college."

"No," said Theo, without a trace of regret in his tone, "there isn't money enough."

"No," echoed the minister, sadly, "I regret to say that we cannot afford to send him to college, after all."

"No," remarked Miss Tabitha; "a blessed poverty closes that pathway of evil."

"No," cried Lydia, "he isn't going to college, and I for one am glad. As long as they won't take me, I don't want them to have him."

After the others had gone to bed that night, Alvord Spicer and his father held an earnest consultation that resulted in the former writing a letter to go out by the morning's stage.

In spite of the indecision attending our lad's immediate future, the ensuing ten days were among the happiest he had ever known, for they were almost wholly spent in company with his old-time friend, who, on account of his many adventures and present position, had become the typical hero of a boyish imagination. They made frequent use of Theo's boat to carry them across to the Navy Yard, which, with Alvord Spicer to explain things, became a place of greater enchantment than ever. In these ten days the commander of the *Seawitch* managed to impart

an immense amount of practical knowledge of things nautical to his young friend, and seemed never to weary of answering the latter's eager questions.

"I declare!" he laughed, on one occasion, after he had tested Theo's knowledge by a series of adroit questions; "I verily believe you could pass a midshipman's examination to-day, as well as half the men who gain commissions."

"Do you really?" asked the lad, flushing with pleasure. "How I wish I might have the chance to try!"

The very next day the navy man, without a word of comment, handed Theo an open letter that read as follows: —

"LIEUTENANT ALVORD SPICER, *U.S.N.*, *Commanding U.S.S. Seawitch*, Portsmouth, N.H.

"*Dear Sir:* — In reply to your request of the 2d inst. would say that I am willing the young man in whose behalf it is made should accompany you on your forthcoming cruise as a volunteer, with the rating of acting midshipman; provided, as you suggest, that he does so without pay, and bears the expense of his own mess bills.

"Trusting that you will speedily get to sea, I have the honor to remain,

"Yours very truly,

"SMITH THOMPSON,

"*Secretary.*"

HE MADE FREQUENT USE OF THEO'S BOAT.

AND
FOUNDATIONS

"Who does he mean?" asked Theo, his face pale with the intensity of his hope.

"He means a certain Tay-o-feel-Guillermo Danbrisa," answered Alvord Spicer, smiling. "So, if you choose to accept the conditions named, and can be ready, we will start for Boston the day after to-morrow."

CHAPTER XXVIII

EXIT LESBIA — ENTER LATROBE

THEO BREEZE had taken his departure, sailing away in company with Captain Spicer on the Boston packet, and all Portsmouth missed him. In the elm-shaded parsonage there reigned a quiet unknown for years, and not now appreciated by any of its remaining inmates. The old minister seemed perplexed by it, and evidently felt that something pleasant had gone out of his life. His son had supplied him with money sufficient to remove all present fear of want; but he confessed that poverty, with a boy in the house, was preferable to all the luxuries of wealth without him.

Poor Lydia was disconsolate, and wandered about in a most melancholy frame of mind, bemoaning the hard fate that had made her a girl. Even Miss Tabitha, who had always declared boys to be among the great trials of life, was discovered up in the attic room that had been Theo's, sitting idly, with an old-fashioned, much battered, beaver hat in her hand, and something that glistened surprisingly like tears in her eyes.

To Lesbia the announcement of her boy's forthcoming departure came like a shock; but when he

promised to return very soon and take her with him to La Brisa, she recovered her cheerfulness, forced upon him the money she had reserved for his college expenses, and as the packet sailed away she bravely bade him good-by. Then she returned to her shop, disposed of its contents and good will at about one-tenth of their value; and the next morning she, too, had disappeared, though no one could tell how she had gone, or in what direction.

That same evening a neatly appointed travelling-carriage drew up in front of the parsonage, and a fine-looking, elderly gentleman, alighting from it, inquired for the Reverend Mr. Spicer. On being shown into the latter's study, he introduced himself as Judge Theophilus Breeze, of Boston. He also announced that he had come to Portsmouth in search of a person claiming to be his nephew, and a son of his only brother, the late Daniel Breeze of Cuba, whom he understood was an inmate of Mr. Spicer's house.

"How did you learn this?" asked the minister.

"Through a letter recently received from my sister-in-law, who is now in Spain with her daughters. She, it seems, was just in receipt of a communication from you, that had lain for some years in the American Consulate at Havana, and requests that her son may join her at the earliest possible moment. So, having business in these parts, I have come to see him, and propose to send

him across by the first ship sailing from Boston, if he indeed proves to be the missing lad whom we long ago gave up as dead."

"Supposing he should have difficulty in proving his identity?" suggested the minister.

"Of course that must be established beyond a doubt," replied the other, "since the interests at stake are so large that we cannot afford to take any chances. I understand there is a negro woman here, who claims to have been his nurse; and perhaps it would be best for me to interview her before seeing the boy himself. One cannot proceed too cautiously in such matters, you know."

"Of course not," agreed the minister, who was not wholly pleased by the attitude assumed by his visitor. "At the same time, a little less of caution and a little more speed might have served your purpose better in the present case, seeing that both the boy and his nurse have left Portsmouth."

"Left Portsmouth!" exclaimed the other. "When, and why did they leave? Where have they gone?"

"The lad left two days ago for Boston, to enter the naval service of the United States, and is assigned to the schooner *Seawitch* now in that port. Where the nurse has gone, I do not know."

"A most remarkable state of affairs," mused the visitor. "You are certain that the boy claiming to be my nephew is not in this town?"

"I am not accustomed to have my word doubted, sir," replied the minister, with dignity, "nor do I know of any boy who claims relationship with you, since I never heard of you until five minutes ago."

"Pardon me, sir, if I appeared to doubt your word," said the other. "I had no intention of so doing, and merely wished to be assured that the boy I am so anxious to discover had taken his departure. Can you tell me how long he will probably remain in Boston."

"I cannot," replied the minister, "though I fancy not more than a day or two."

"Thank you. Then I must return at once so as to see him before he leaves. Good evening."

"Good evening, sir," answered Mr. Spicer, formally, and the interview was ended.

Judge Breeze made all possible speed back to Boston, only to have the mortification of seeing the *Seawitch*, already beyond recall, sail out of the harbor. He had little difficulty in finding out from the commandant of the Navy Yard where she was bound; but the information thus obtained seemed greatly to disturb him, and he immediately sent off a letter to his sister-in-law, begging her to return to Cuba at once.

"I have every reason for believing," he wrote, "that an impostor claiming to be your long-lost son, is about to establish himself at La Brisa and strive to make good his claim to the estate. At any rate,

it is best that you should be there. I will meet you in Havana, from which place we will travel together. Shall look for you on the very first convoy sailing from Cadiz, after giving this letter time to arrive."

Having mailed this epistle, Judge Breeze began arranging his own affairs for a prolonged absence; and two months later found him embarked for Cuba.

In the meantime, our friends from Portsmouth made a slow and uneventful passage to Boston by sailing packet, and reached their destination late on the second day after starting. Going directly to the Navy Yard, they boarded the *Seawitch* as night was falling, and were warmly welcomed by Mr. Dennison, the junior lieutenant who had been left in temporary command.

"I am indeed glad to see you, sir!" he exclaimed, "for we have just completed our preparations. The last stores came on board this evening, and everything is ready for sailing at a moment's notice."

"Good," replied Captain Spicer. "In that case we can probably get away to-morrow. Now, how about supper? I hope you can give us one, for we are nearly famished."

"Supper is ready, sir, though I cannot guarantee its quality, as it is the first meal prepared by our new cook."

A little later, in the small but cheery cabin that recalled so many memories to Theo Breeze,

Captain Spicer remarked, "This is one of the very best meals I ever ate on shipboard, Mr. Dennison, and I congratulate you on your new cook. Where did you find him?"

"He is a negro, sir, who claims to have seen service in the British navy, and who came aboard today wishing to ship. As the cook we had was one of the greatest duffers I ever knew, and couldn't boil water without burning it, I told the fellow he might turn to and show what he was good for by getting up a supper, after which I would see about signing him."

"And now you can't be too quick about signing him, and so securing his services," laughed the captain. "We must certainly have the man who prepared this meal, even if we are obliged to carry him to sea in irons."

"Very good, sir. I will attend to it immediately."

The next morning Captain Spicer devoted to the inspection of his ship and crew, having announced that he would sail at noon. Theo, not yet assigned to duty, obtained permission to take a run into the city, which he was very desirous of visiting, since Portsmouth was, thus far, the largest town he had ever seen. He also had an outfit to purchase. So Midshipman Greene, a pleasant young fellow who had just been ordered from the receiving ship to the *Seawitch* for temporary duty, was detailed to

act as his guide, and the two lads set forth at sunrise.

They crossed the harbor by a clumsy old steam ferry-boat, which Theo, never having seen a steamboat of any kind, regarded as a most wonderful craft. Landing near Claghorne's shipyard, from which had been launched the world-renowned frigate *Constitution*, they threaded many devious ways to Washington Street, upon which trade was even then encroaching.

Here Theo was introduced to a tailor who always kept on hand a number of naval uniforms, for just such emergencies as the present. Selecting one that would need but slight alterations to fit him, our young officer, blushingly conscious of the dignity of this step, ordered it to be ready within two hours, when he would return to try it on.

After making several other purchases, all of which were to be sent to the tailor shop, the lads started to take in such of the sights as their time limit would permit. As they were returning from the State House through School Street, Midshipman Greene paused before a handsome residence, saying, "Here is where the jolliest girls I ever met in my life stay when they are in Boston. Hold on, a minute, till I see whether they are here now. If they are, we'll make a call, and I'll introduce you."

So the young men mounted the iron-railed steps, and Midshipman Greene thundered a summons on

the heavy brass knocker. The servant who appeared in answer, informed them that not only were no young ladies staying there at present, but that the Judge himself was out of town.

"Too bad," said Midshipman Greene, as he turned away, "but better luck next time. Come on, old man, what are you staring at?"

Theo's gaze was fixed on a painted portrait that hung in the hall, and was plainly visible through the open doorway. The face was so familiar as to be startling, and yet he could not recall where he had seen it or whose it was.

"Who lives in that house?" he asked as they walked away.

"Why, didn't I tell you? It belongs to Judge Theophilus Breeze, one of the biggest swells in Boston."

"Then," said Theo, "he must be my uncle; for the portrait I was looking at is that of my grandfather. We have one just like it at home."

"Have you any sisters?" asked Midshipman Greene, abruptly.

"Yes, three," replied Theo, whose memory had been greatly stimulated by his recent intercourse with Lesbia. "Their names are Nueva, Mariquita, and Tertia."

"The very girls I met, and was proposing to introduce you to!" cried the other. "By Jove! Billy Blow, you are a lucky dog."

By this it will be seen that Captain Spicer had, inadvertently, introduced his young friend by the name most commonly applied to him in Portsmouth.

At the tailor's Theo donned his new uniform, and then, feeling conscious that everybody must be looking at him, made his way back to the *Seawitch*, followed by a porter bearing his many parcels.

As, still guided by Midshipman Greene, he stepped toward the steerage hatch in search of his assigned quarters, he almost ran into a white-aproned individual, who dodged out of his way with a respectful salute.

A glance at the man caused Theo to pause and stare in blankest amazement, then he gasped out the single word, "Latrobe!"

CHAPTER XXIX

UNDER SEALED ORDERS

MIDSHIPMAN GREENE was decidedly shocked to see his brother officer so far forgetful of his dignity as to shake hands with the ship's cook and greet him like a dear friend, but Theo neither knew nor cared what any one thought just then. In his excitement and joy over this wonderful meeting he held the negro's hand and plied him with questions.

"Where did you come from, Latrobe? Where have you been all these years? How do you happen to be here? Have you seen Lesbia? Did you know me as quickly as I knew you?"

"Yes, sah, I knowed you. Same time, I don't reckin I would, 'ceptin Cap'n Spicer told me you was a-comin'. I declare, sah, it take mah bref away to see mah baby boy growed to be a fine young ossifer in a handsome uniform. It sho'ly a good sight for mah ole eyes."

As the faithful fellow spoke, his eyes filled with tears, and Theo felt prouder of his new uniform at that moment than at any time since he had put it on.

"But tell me about yourself, Latrobe," he insisted. "I didn't know whether you were alive or dead,

and only heard of you once long ago, through Lesbia."

"Yes, sah. Mah sister Lesby found me in Englan', an' I send you de money what your own farder give me to keep for you. I hoping you get it, sah."

"Yes, indeed, I did, and when I most needed it, too. Why, part of it bought this very uniform. And to think that I have only just left Lesbia in Portsmouth! Did you know she was there?"

"No, sah. I ain't know nuffin 'bout her. You see, I'se bin knocking all ober de worl', fust in one ship, den in anudder, till bimeby I get aboard a 'Merican brig and come to Boston. One day, looking 'roun', I see de ole *Bruja*, and when I hear Cap'n Spicer going hab her, I jes' nacherally come aboard looking fer a job. Dat's all dere is to it, sah, 'ceptin' I t'anking de good Lawd dat he 'lowin' me an' you to be sailing togedder once more, sah."

"And I thank him for that, too," agreed Theo. "But I say, Latrobe, how much you do look like Lesbia. If you only wore a white turban instead of that red kerchief tied round your head, and spectacles, and gold ear-rings, and a dress, I believe you could pass for her anywhere. You aren't so tall as she, but your voice is almost exactly the same as hers."

"Yes, sah, we allus said to favor each udder. An' now, sah, 'scuse me, but I must be getting dinnah, for it mighty near six bell."

Theo was bewildered by the crowding events of that day. He had already been greatly excited by learning from Midshipman Greene that his sisters had visited in Boston. At the same time the former could not tell him much about them. He could only say that they were beauties, awfully jolly girls, and had, he thought, been studying while living in the United States.

"But I say, Billy Blow!" he exclaimed. "If they are your sisters, how does it happen you didn't know they were here? And why isn't your name the same as theirs? They were always called the Misses Danbrisa, and I thought even that was queer when their uncle was Judge Breeze."

"The reason I don't know more about them," replied Theo, "is a long story, which I will tell you the first good chance we get. As for the name, mine is the same as theirs. That is, it is Theophilo Guillermo Danbrisa."

"Whew! what a mouthful!" ejaculated the other.

"Yes, isn't it? And I suppose that is the reason everybody in Portsmouth called me Billy Blow."

"It is a rum go, calling a fellow out of his real name like that," remarked Midshipman Greene, meditatively. "At the same time, it's often done. I once had a chum named Osbaldistone Hikenloop, who was never called anything but Jack Chicken-coop, so I suppose it's all right. Hello! we're about

to get off. Bos'n's piping for stations. See you later."

With this the young officer sprang away to his assigned place of duty on the forecastle.

Theo, not yet having anything to do, walked aft to watch the process of getting under way.

Sails were loosed and hoisted, the heavy anchor was torn from its grip of the bottom to the shrill music of a fife and a sturdy tramp of many feet around the capstan. Then slowly, as though loth to leave her comfortable berth, the *Seawitch* gathered headway and began to move down the harbor.

The hills constituting Boston's "Tri Mount" were at that time plainly distinguishable, — Copps Hill, dominated by Paul Revere's Old North Meeting House; Beacon Hill, crowned by the yellow dome of the State House; and Fort Hill, nearer the water, still showing a line of earthworks, and topped by a signal station from which the first news of incoming ships was reported.

Leaving these behind, the *Seawitch* glided swiftly down between the "Castle," as Fort Independence was more generally called, and Governor's Island, and out past the grinning cannon of Fort Warren. Then Boston Light, on Little Brewster Island, the first structure of its kind ever erected on the American coast, was left behind, and once more the little ship felt the heave of the open sea. Not until then did Captain Spicer assemble his officers and open the

sealed orders, heretofore only known to the Department and to the commandant of the Charlestown Navy Yard, under which he sailed.

There was a minute of expectant silence as the captain glanced rapidly over the written page. Then he said: —

"We are ordered to Key West, gentlemen, where we will report to Commodore David Porter, commanding the United States squadron now operating in the West Indies. I can foresee some lively work ahead of us, for I believe we are to take part in the only fighting now to be had. I of course refer to the crusade recently organized by our government against the widespread and formidable association of West Indian and Spanish-American pirates calling themselves "Brethren of the Coast." Mr. Dennison, you will pass outside Nantucket and lay a course for the Straits of Florida."

"Very good, sir."

A little later Theo found an opportunity to ask the captain if he thought they would visit Cuba.

"I have no doubt that much of our work will be done there," replied Alvord Spicer; "and it was with that expectation that I conceived the idea of bringing you on this cruise."

"I certainly am grateful to you, sir, for giving me the chance to fight pirates," said Theo. "Do you think there's any prospect of our meeting with Diablito?"

"I hope so, for I have a heavy score to settle with that individual."

"So have I," said our lad, as he recalled certain scenes of his childhood that were indelibly impressed on his memory. From that moment his chief desire was to encounter once more the man who had taken his father's life.

During the years that had elapsed since Theo Breeze last saw the stately palms and verdant hills of his native land, the Brethren of the Coast had so increased in numbers and were grown so bold that no merchant vessel sailing West Indian waters was safe from them unless protected by convoy. The Spanish government was too weak to control them, while local authorities, if not in actual collusion with the pirates, at least made only slight effort to suppress them. As American commerce suffered more than any other, and was in danger of being driven from that part of the ocean, the United States was at length forced to take the matter in hand, and make a determined effort to destroy these pests of the sea.

For this purpose a naval force consisting of the eighteen-gun sloop of war *Hornet*, the twelve-gun brigs *Enterprise* and *Spark*, the twelve-gun schooners *Porpoise*, *Shark*, and *Grampus*, and three gunboats, was in the year 1821 despatched to the West Indies. While this squadron did splendid work, capturing and destroying a number of pirate vessels, besides several

places of rendezvous, it was wholly inadequate for the service required. In the following year, therefore, it was strengthened by the frigates *Macedonian* and *Congress*, the corvette *John Adams*, the sloop of war *Peacock*, and the twelve-gun schooner *Alligator*, the whole being placed under command of Captain James Biddle. Although the frigates, sloops of war, and even the brigs, were entirely too heavy to follow the pirates into the shoal waters where they invariably took refuge when pursued, a number of brilliant captures were made during the year by the smaller craft of the squadron. Thus the *Shark* fought and took the infamous piratical schooner *Bandara D'Sangare* and five other buccaneering craft, and the *Grampus* captured the brigs *Pandrita* and *Palmira*, and a large schooner. The *Alligator* boldly attacked three pirate schooners, manned by three hundred cutthroats, that were discovered with five captured merchantmen in their possession. The Americans, forced by shoal water to make a boat assault, captured one of the pirate schooners, together with the five merchant vessels, killed a vast number of the buccaneers, and put the remainder to flight. At the same time they lost their own intrepid leader, Lieutenant William Howard Allen. Two nights later his plucky little schooner was driven by a heavy gale on the Florida reef, and lost; but her name and memory are perpetuated by the fine shaft of Alligator Light,

erected some years afterward near the scene of her wreck.

Captain Biddle, bluff sailor and hard fighter that he was, had no taste for diplomacy; and finding that most of his time must be spent in negotiating with crafty Spanish officials for permission to land on their coasts, and thus pursue the pirates to their hiding-places, he asked to be recalled from the uncongenial task.

Captain Biddle's request being granted, the next year saw the American forces commanded by Commodore David Porter, who, with the frigate *Essex*, had recently won world-wide fame in the Pacific. Profiting by the experience of his predecessors, Commodore Porter sent home the big, useless frigates, and supplied their places with eight small schooners, and eight twenty-oared barges. These last were appropriately named — *Mosquito*, *Midge*, *Gnat*, *Sandfly*, and *Gallinipper*. He also took with him a large storeship and a New York steam ferry-boat, the *Seagull*, to tow his barges, thus introducing the first steam-propelled vessel into the United States Navy. Of the old squadron he retained the *Peacock*, *John Adams*, *Hornet*, *Spark*, *Grampus*, and *Shark*. Thus was made up a fleet of twenty-one vessels, eminently suited to the work of driving from the sea forever the dreaded Brethren of the Coast.

Commodore Porter selected Key West, which he

called "Thompson's Island," after the then Secretary of the Navy, as his rendezvous, because of its location midway between Cuba and the most southerly point of United States mainland, and because of its fine harbor. Here, then, ten days after leaving Boston, the *Seawitch* reported for duty, and was ordered to sail the next morning for Havana.

CHAPTER XXX

IN A JOURNAL OF HAVANA

DURING the preceding six months the American mosquito fleet under Commodore Porter had done more toward the suppression of piracy than had been accomplished by the combined efforts of the United States, England, and Spain, in the past two years. His light-draught schooners and swift-rowing barges had penetrated scores of shoal-water lagoons, sounds, and bays, in which the pirates had hitherto been safe from attack. In these places they had destroyed innumerable vessels, killed or dispersed their cutthroat crews, recovered a vast amount of stolen property from caves and hidden storehouses, and left only smoking ruins behind them. Their daring crews never hesitated to fight against apparently overwhelming odds, or to follow their officers into any form of danger. They toiled like galley slaves, under burning suns, or while breathing the fever-laden night air of pestilent swamps, with unflagging cheerfulness. Day after day, and night after night, they suffered torments from the bites and stings of infinite myriads of insects, but never for a moment had they faltered or looked back from the task intrusted to them.

In the simple performance of duty they endured all the miseries and horrors of war, without any of its compensating glory or rewards. In addition to their other trials, yellow fever made its appearance among them, and, upon the arrival of the *Seawitch* at Key West, many, both of officers and crews, were in the newly established hospital.

In this emergency, Theo Breeze was ordered to the schooner *Greyhound*, which, in addition to its commander, Lieutenant Lawrence Kearney, carried a grave-faced young fellow, some twenty years of age, named David Glasgow Farragut. Thus it happened that, almost at the outset of his career, our lad found himself a watch officer, charged with heavy responsibilities; but, thanks to the careful training of Alvord Spicer, and the friendly aid of Midshipman Farragut, he was enabled to perform his new duties to the entire satisfaction of his superiors.

Latrobe was distressed at being thus separated from his young friend, and begged to be allowed to accompany him. As this request could not be granted, he was forced to be content with the knowledge that their parting was only temporary, and that Theo would rejoin the *Seawitch* as soon as the officer whose place he was filling should be again fit for duty.

There was so much to be accomplished that no vessel could be allowed to remain long at the rendezvous, and the *Greyhound* was no sooner ready for

sea than she was ordered to proceed to the southern coast of Cuba, in company with the schooner *Beagle*, and make a search for pirates from one end of the island to the other. At the same time the *Seawitch* was detailed for convoy duty between Havana and the Bahamas, beyond which the Brethren of the Coast never ventured.

As the *Greyhound* and *Beagle* were also to make Havana the starting-point of their cruise, the three schooners sailed in company at daylight. Until this time the vessel to which Theo was now attached had been considered extremely fast, and Midshipman Farragut informed his new comrade that they would undoubtedly reach their first port of destination some hours in advance of the others.

"You'll have to use something besides sails then," replied Theo.

"Oh, I guess not," laughed the other. "We know pretty well what the *Beagle* can do, and she is safe to lose one mile in every ten while sailing with us."

"I wasn't thinking of the *Beagle*," said Theo, dryly.

"Ah, you mean the *Seawitch!* Of course, I might have remembered that you would stand up for her. Well, she'll have a chance to show what she can do to-day. I must say, though, she doesn't seem to be in any particular hurry about getting started. What makes you think she is fast?"

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"I saw her built," replied our lad, "and I re—"

"You saw her built?" cried the other. "How can that be? I heard Captain Spicer say, at the Commodore's dinner last night, that she was originally a pirate, and that he had been compelled to work at her construction while a prisoner among the Brethren. I think he said it was Diablito's gang that built her, somewhere near Cape Cruz."

"That is all true enough, and I was living with that gang at the time. In fact, I was being brought up to the trade of piracy, and should probably be a full-fledged 'Brother' to-day if it had not been for Captain Spicer."

"You don't mean it!" cried Midshipman Farragut, staring at his fellow-officer in astonishment. "And I thought all the time that you were a green hand, just fresh from Yankeedom, who had probably never been away from home before. Won't we have yarns to spin, though! And won't Captain Kearney be interested? Do you suppose you could find that Cape Cruz den, now?"

"I don't know," replied Theo, doubtfully. "It is a long time since I was there, and besides, we left it in the night; but—oh, I say! what do you think of the *Seawitch* now?"

The two young men had been so engrossed in their conversation that for a few moments they had paid little attention to anything else. The commander of the schooner was taking her out himself;

and as they talked their eyes had been fixed on the *Beagle*, which had started ahead of them, but which they were slowly overtaking. At Theo's exclamation Farragut cast a glance astern.

"Whew!" he ejaculated; "your pirate craft certainly is moving."

At this moment Captain Kearney called out, "We mustn't let that fellow overtake us, Mr. Farragut, so I think you'd better bend on the main staysail."

"Ay, ay, sir!" replied the midshipman; and under his brisk orders the *Greyhound's* crew were speedily at work, showing to the breeze every stitch of light canvas their craft possessed. At this business Theo worked as hard as any one, though feeling certain that it was wasted effort.

Thus urged, the *Greyhound* seemed fairly to fly, and quickly passed the *Beagle*, which also was under everything she could carry. But it was all of no use; for the new-comer, under working sails only, and without touching sheet or brace, crept up inch by inch and foot by foot until she was fairly abreast of the struggling *Beagle*. Courteously running through the lee of the latter, the nimble schooner braced sharp on a wind and started after the *Greyhound*, evidently intending to gain a weather position if possible.

"Two can play at that game," muttered Captain Kearney. "Down with your helm, quartermaster, and luff her all she will bear."

"Ay, ay, sir!"

It was as pretty a luffing match as ever was seen; but the *Seawitch* heading a point closer than her rival, apparently into the very eyes of the wind, slowly but surely drew ahead, until the two schooners presented broadsides to each other with the newcomer a quarter of a mile to windward. Then sheets were almost imperceptibly slackened aboard the latter, her helm was eased a trifle, and she leaped forward like an arrow just released.

"She is worthy of her name," muttered Captain Kearney, deeply chagrined, but gazing after the marvellous craft with the honest admiration of a true sailor. "I didn't suppose anything that floated could outfoot and outpoint the old 'Hound' like that, and I would not have believed it possible had I not seen it done."

During the luffing match between these two the *Beagle* had gained a lead of a mile; but within half an hour this had been overcome, and an hour later the *Seawitch* was but a white speck on the southern horizon. Shortly before sunset of that same evening, as the two beaten schooners drew near the entrance to Havana harbor, they again sighted the nimble craft, this time coming toward them in company with half a dozen American and English merchantmen that had been waiting for armed convoy through the pirate-infested waters.

Both dipped their ensigns, and fired guns in salute

to their victorious rival — a courtesy that Alvord Spicer was prompt to return; and then they parted company, not to meet again for months.

From the *Greyhound's* deck Theo Breeze had watched that day's performance of the wonderful schooner that he loved as though she were his own, with pride and envy. He was proud of her performance, but longed to be aboard and share her victory.

"It is hard luck," he muttered, "to be transferred just at this time, and I don't see why Greene could not have been selected instead of me."

Theo found some compensation in boasting of the craft which he still claimed, to his present comrades, and in relating to them her history. This, of course, included much of his own, to which they listened with interest, and the very next day this conversation bore unexpected fruit.

As it was found necessary for the American schooners to remain for a short time in Havana harbor, Theo, anxious to visit the city, and Midshipman Farragut, eager to act as his guide, obtained shore leave and set forth to see the sights. While refreshing themselves in a café, Farragut, who had a working knowledge of Spanish, picked up a daily paper and glanced carelessly over its contents. All at once he exclaimed: —

"Hello, Billy Blow! I wonder if this won't interest you!"

Thus saying, he passed the paper to his companion, at the same time indicating a long legal advertisement that appeared on one of its pages.

With considerable difficulty — for he could speak Spanish much better than he could read it — Theo finally made out that the notice referred to his own home. It announced that unless Theophilo Guillermo Breeze, only son and heir of the late Daniel Breeze, should appear within one year from date of publication, to make good his claim against the estate known as La Brisa, situate, etc., etc., it would be sold by order of the administrator, the sale to be by public auction on the premises as per further announcement. This notice, which bore date of several months earlier, was signed "Theophilus Breeze, Administrator," and was followed by an attested copy of the decree under which he was empowered to act.

"I should say it did interest me!" cried Theo, "and I'll have to manage somehow to be on hand at the time of the sale, which I guess I can do, seeing that it won't be for some months yet."

"Seems to me you ought to do something about it at once," said Midshipman Farragut, reflectively.

"What, for instance?"

"Well, you might insert a notice in the same paper, warning the administrator, who, you say, is your uncle, that you are alive, and on deck."

"That's so, I guess I will," replied Theo, who still

had a few dollars of the money given him by Lesbia in his pocket.

So it happened that, when the administrator's notice next appeared, it was closely followed by another, stating that the above-mentioned heir of Daniel Breeze was not only alive, and in Cuba, but would be ready within six months to prove his identity and make good his claim to La Brisa, the sale of which in the meantime was hereby forbidden. This was signed "Theophilo Guillermo Breeze."

"You see," Theo explained to his friend, "I don't know how long it will take to fetch Lesbia, my old nurse, down here from Portsmouth, where she is now living, and she is my most important witness. In the meantime I must get to La Brisa, find out if my mother is still living there, and let her know of my existence. How lucky for me that I was transferred to the *Greyhound!*"

CHAPTER XXXI

"DONE AT LA BRISA"

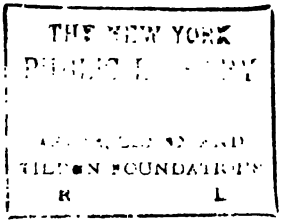
AFTER leaving Havana the American schooners sailed to the westward, and, rounding Cape San Antonio, began to work their way slowly along the southern coast of the great island. For six weeks they cruised among the myriad keys of the vast archipelago lying to the southward of Cuba, in and out the bewildering channels of the Jardines, and entirely around the Isle of Pines, without capturing a single pirate. The Brethren of the Coast were too alert, and their signal system was too complete, to permit them to fall into the hands of an enemy of whose coming they had already been warned from Havana. While the Americans found many places of rendezvous, which they destroyed, these were always deserted, and whatever plunder they had contained was too skilfully concealed to be found. They saw numerous signal smokes by day, and at night fires flashed their warnings from key to key or from headland to headland. They caught occasional glimpses of shadowy craft skimming along the coast, and invariably gave chase. If they overtook one, which was seldom, it always turned out

to be a vessel admirably suited to piratical operations, but manned by a crew of turtlers or fishermen, who vehemently protested that they were only following their legitimate business.

"It is like chasing a lot of will-o'-the-wisps through a swamp!" explained Midshipman Farragut, in disgust, after the *Greyhound* had pursued one swift-sailing schooner all through one blazing hot day, and finally cornered her, only to find that she was laden with a reeking mass of recently gathered sponge. This was black, slimy, and of such horrible odor that the Americans forbore to investigate the unsavory cargo. If they had, and if their search had been sufficiently thorough, they might have discovered the heavy guns and small arms that lay concealed beneath it, deep down in the hold. As it was, they got away from the vile-smelling craft as quickly as possible, and headed for a point on the mainland where, as they had been told, they might renew their supplies of fresh water, fruit, and vegetables.

Reaching the mouth of a small river, to which they had been directed, the *Greyhound* dropped anchor, and sent an armed boat to explore it. This boat, commanded by Midshipman Theophilus Breeze, had gone but a short distance up the river, when it came to a well-built stone pier jutting out from a group of stately cocoanut palms. The Americans caught glimpses of swarthy figures, dodging among the

FOR A FULL MINUTE THE YOUNG OFFICER STOOD MOTIONLESS.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trunks of these; but there was no response to their calls, nor, after landing, could they discover a human being.

Leaving two men to guard the boat, Theo bade the others follow him up a palm-shaded avenue that led back from the pier. It was sadly overgrown with weeds and a tangle of vines; but a narrow path had been kept open, and this they followed. It ended at a park-like space dotted with palms, the Corojo, the cocoanut, the stately Royal, and many others. Half hidden by these, and in the very centre of the park, could be seen the gray stone walls and red-tiled roofs of several buildings.

For a full minute the young officer stood motionless, gazing spellbound at the scene before him, and so overcome with emotion that he could not speak. Ever since landing he had been puzzled by the familiarity of his surroundings, and now he knew that he had come again to the place of his birth. There could be no doubt of it; for his own faint memories of La Brisa had been strengthened during the past few years by Lesbia's descriptions, and now he recognized familiar details on all sides. Roused by a movement among his men, who were impatient to push forward, Theo bade them follow him, and turning abruptly to one side, led them to a gigantic silk cotton tree, from under whose buttressed trunk gushed a superb spring of crystal

water, having a bed of sand white as driven snow. Giving orders that the casks should be brought to this place and filled, Theo left his men to wonder what had come over their young officer, and how he had known of this hidden spring.

Had he chosen, he could have told them that this "Ceiba Spring," as it was called, was the very first thing in life he could remember, for it had been Lesbia's favorite resort, and he had dabbled in its waters as a child. Now, as he hurried with eager steps along the well-remembered path leading from it to the house, he was filled with conflicting fears and hopes. Were his mother and sisters still living, and at La Brisa? or should he find strangers occupying the place that had been their home and his?

As he drew near the buildings, his pace slackened and he gazed at them with a sinking heart. No human being was to be seen, no sound broke the ominous silence; the grounds were unkempt and overgrown. In walking slowly around the main house he saw that it was indeed deserted. Its doors and the massive shutters of its windows were closed and barred. A rank and untrimmed growth of vines ran riot over its verandas, in which nesting birds fluttered with the fearlessness of undisturbed possession. There was nothing to tell if the dear ones whom he had so fondly hoped to meet were still living; and in the home-coming that he had

so often pictured, his only greeting was an impenetrable silence.

As he was about to turn away heavy-hearted, he was attracted by a paper tacked to a wall of the house, and on examination found it to be a printed copy of the very notice he had read in Havana.

Having satisfied himself that it was the same, Theo retraced his steps to the Ceiba Spring, and then, with water-barrels filled, took his boat back to the waiting schooner.

The young officer's report was heard with great interest by the commander of the *Greyhound*, who, when he understood that the former had indeed discovered his childhood's home, announced his intention of going ashore for a look at the place. "You may come with us, if you choose," he said to Midshipman Farragut — a permission of which the latter was only too glad to avail himself.

Before leaving the schooner Theo wrote on a large sheet of paper a copy of the notice he had caused to be published in Havana, dating it, adding, "Done at La Brisa," and signed his name in full. It was also signed: —

"LAWRENCE KEARNEY, U.S.N.
DAVID GLASGOW FARRAGUT, U.S.N. } *Witnesses.*"

This paper was taken ashore and fastened to the wall of the house beside the one already there. Then, under Theo's guidance, the officers visited

the quarters in which dwelt the employees of the estate, but found every house closed and deserted, though most of them bore signs of recent occupation. They afterward learned that, being mistaken for pirates, the entire community had fled in a panic upon their approach.

"A regular deserted village," remarked Lieutenant Kearney to Theo. "I wish we could leave you here in full possession, but I doubt if it would be advisable to do so under the circumstances, even if it were possible. As it is, the service could not spare you just now, and besides, you need much more information before taking active measures. This you might gain by remaining here; but it is more likely to be obtained in one of the larger cities, either Santiago or Havana, at both of which we shall touch before completing our cruise."

With this our lad was forced to be content; and a little later the *Greyhound* sailed away to rejoin her consort at an appointed place of meeting. From it they sailed together for Cape Cruz, where they hoped to surprise the infamous Diablito, who, more than any other, had made the Brethren of the Coast a terror of West Indian waters.

In planning the forthcoming attack upon the pirate rendezvous, Theo's intimate knowledge of the locality was invaluable. He was able, from memory, to make a rough sketch of the Devil's Den, showing the location of its houses and batteries, the lagoon,

and the channel leading to it. He told of the guard boat that patrolled this channel by night, and of the several lookouts who, from commanding eminences, kept watch of the sea by day. Above all, he described the only pathway through the mangrove swamp enclosing the lagoon, a path so narrow and tortuous that any person ignorantly attempting to follow it must of a certainty plunge, at one point or another, into the deadly morasses by which it was bordered. It was so narrow that it might only be passed by one person at a time, and could easily be defended were the alarm of an attack once given. At the same time, it led to a point directly behind the principal battery commanding the lagoon.

Possessed of this information, Lieutenants Kearney and Newton decided that the mangrove path must be utilized for the surprise of the battery; and a small party of marines, to be commanded by Midshipman Farragut, was detailed for this duty. They were, of course, to be guided by Theo Breeze, and as the path might only be traversed by daylight, they were to be set ashore during the night, to take advantage of earliest dawn.

Even the progress of the schooners was so timed that they should approach Cape Cruz under cover of darkness, in order that no intimation of their presence might be gained by the pirate lookouts. It was nearly two o'clock in the morning before they had drifted as close to the coast as was deemed pru-

dent, and come to anchor. No lights were allowed, the men were instructed to converse in whispers, and the anchors, attached to rope cables that would run out without noise, were got overboard so gently that the water was hardly rippled by their entrance.

No sooner was an anchorage effected than the landing party was ordered to enter its boats and get away. Each man was given a canteen of cold coffee, together with a ration of cooked food, and as they noiselessly entered the boats, the young officer who was to command the expedition received his final instructions. Then, with muffled oars, the two boats moved off; and Theo Breeze, trembling with responsibility, took a position in the bow of the one that bore him. From here he peered forward into the blackness, endeavoring to locate the place for landing.

It was hard to realize that he was deliberately going back into the Devil's Den, from which he had once so thankfully escaped, and incredible that he, now an officer in the United States Navy, was the one-time wretched little "Pescar" of that same dreadful place.

As Theo thought of these things he became suddenly aware that his boat was about to plunge in among the roots of the water-loving mangroves, and hurriedly passed the word of —

"Way enough! Back all!"

CHAPTER XXXII

AGAIN AT THE DEVIL'S DEN

ALTHOUGH the night was starlit, the blackness of the mangrove swamp presented only an unbroken wall, no detail of which could be distinguished. As the boats must return to the schooners under cover of darkness, and as there was no way of determining his present position before daylight, Midshipman Farragut ordered a landing to be made as best it might where they were. So the boats were forced as far as possible among the mangroves, and the marines, scrambling out on their arching roots, found precarious resting-places a few inches above the fathomless mud. Then the boats departed, to be in readiness to tow the schooners into the lagoon.

Of all the hardships encountered by American sailors during the four years required to suppress the Brethren of the Coast, none was greater than those endured by Midshipman Farragut's little party on this occasion. The night was sultry with stifling heat, not a breath of fresh air found its way through the dense forest, and sickening odors were exhaled from the great swamp. The arched roots on which

the men were perched were so smooth and slippery that only a tight grasp enabled them to maintain their positions. They were forbidden the solace of tobacco, nor were they allowed to talk aloud. Their only unrestricted privilege was that of listening to the weird sounds that came from every part of the watery woodland, — screams, choked gurglings, the clashing of great crab claws, hootings, unexplained snappings and cracklings from close at hand, and the bellowings of huge alligators startlingly like that of enraged bulls. Worst of all were the clouds of mosquitoes that enveloped them the moment they came within the evil influence of the swamp, and stung them until they were nearly crazed with the torment.

"And this," growled one of the men, "is glorious war, such as we read about."

"Silence!" commanded Midshipman Farragut, sternly.

Before dawn appeared every one was confident that it would never come, or if it did, that he would not be alive to greet it. At length, however, after what seemed an age of suffering and weary waiting, all became conscious that their immediate surroundings were dimly visible. At the same time the uncanny night sounds that had echoed from end to end of the great swamp abruptly ceased.

At these intimations of coming daylight, Theo began to remove his boots and outer garments.

"What are you going to do?" asked Midshipman Farragut.

"Swim out a bit to take an observation and get my bearings," was the answer.

"How about sharks and alligators?" inquired the other.

"I lived too long among both to be afraid of either," replied Theo, confidently. "So, with your permission — "

"It isn't necessary," interrupted the young leader of this forlorn expedition. "You are the official guide, and as such must use your own judgment. Only take care of yourself, and get us out of this horrible position as quickly as possible. I, for one, would rather fight pirates all day than spend another hour such as the last."

In another moment Theo had slipped noiselessly into the cool waters and was swimming rapidly out to sea. At a distance of a hundred yards he paused, raised his head, and gazed about him. He could dimly discern the two schooners, and see that they were already in motion toward the point he had indicated as marking the channel entrance. On the landward side, however, he could not, for a few minutes, discern any familiar feature. But the light was rapidly strengthening, a glow had come into the sky, and at length he spied that for which he was so anxiously searching. It was a dead tree, bleached white by storm and sun, standing at the water's

edge within two hundred feet of where Midshipman Farragut's slender command was so uncomfortably stranded.

Hastening back, Theo quickly had his comrades in motion, crawling slowly and awkwardly over the stout, interlacing roots, toward the mark he had discerned. By the time they reached it he had resumed his garments and overtaken them.

"What next?" asked Midshipman Farragut. "I don't see that this place looks any more inviting than the one we just left."

"See that line of reef jutting out into the water?" inquired Theo, pointing seaward.

"Yes."

"Well, it extends back through the swamp, and makes a foundation for the path we are to follow. This is the way."

Thus saying, the young guide stepped directly into the mud that rose to his ankles, and began to walk cautiously toward the heart of the swamp.

"Pass the word to follow close," he said, "and let each man step exactly in the footprints of his file leader.

"Bring up the rear, Sergeant," ordered Midshipman Farragut, as he sprang after Theo. So impetuous was he that he slipped with the first step, and measured his length in the soft mud. If assistance had not been promptly at hand, he would have sunk forever beneath its slime. As it was, he was quickly

dragged from his perilous position, and regained his footing, greatly mortified by his mishap and present ridiculous appearance. He and those who followed had, however, learned a lesson of caution that they did not forget, and after that no more missteps were made.

The narrow way, which was merely a sharp ridge of old coral covered deep with the slime and leaf mould of ages, was badly obstructed by thorny vines that depended from every tree, and tore impartially at clothing and skin as the invaders forced a passage through them. Often the road had to be hacked out with cutlasses, and this exertion combined with the intense heat completely prostrated one of the party, who had thereafter to be carried by two of his comrades.

All at once the forest stillness was rudely broken by a musket shot, quickly followed by others.

"It is the patrol!" cried Theo; "they have discovered and fired at the schooners. Now we've got to hurry, or the battery will open on them before we can reach it."

With all their impatience the marines could still make but slow progress, and ere they had cleared the forest another rattle of musketry from close at hand announced that the leading schooner was entering the lagoon.

By this time the land party had firm ground beneath their feet, and could see gleams of light ahead through the timber.

"Leave that man," ordered their mud-encrusted leader. "Look to your primings, and forward. Never mind thorns nor anything else now!"

With this, Midshipman Farragut sprang into the lead, and his men, spreading out, raced with him for the open. As they gained it they found themselves within fifty yards of, and directly behind, an extensive battery crowded with men. At the same moment a shrill scream announced that they were discovered. It was uttered by a woman, who, sword in hand, stood on the parapet directing the gunners.

"Halt!" commanded Midshipman Farragut. "Ready! Aim! Fire!"

A crashing volley, and then, through the smoke the Americans charged. But the pirates were too completely taken by surprise to make a stand; and as the marines, with exultant yells, entered the unprotected rear of the battery, its defenders poured pell-mell over the low parapet. Leaving dead and wounded behind them, they rushed madly for the beach, where several boats were in waiting. After them dashed the Americans; but the pirates had gained their boats and shoved off ere the latter arrived. So Farragut and his ragged command, having flung aside their empty muskets, could only stand and watch the fugitives pull furiously across the lagoon, toward the place where Theo said their settlement was located.

At the same time, the pirates were not to escape

scot-free; for the *Greyhound* was already within the lagoon, and, with a roar from her forward pivot gun, one of the boats was knocked to splinters. Then the attention of the schooners was attracted to a small battery located on the opposite shore, which just then opened fire on them. A couple of broadsides silenced it, and the schooners, coming to anchor, began preparations to force a landing with their boats.

"I think I can give you the range of the buildings over there," said Theo to Midshipman Farragut. "And with the guns of the battery we have just taken, we might furnish those fellows with something else to think about besides opposing a landing party."

"Good!" cried the future admiral; "that'll be the very thing. Back to the battery, men."

Five minutes later the heavy guns, that could have played havoc with the American schooners and probably destroyed them, were trained according to the directions of Theo Breeze, and the echoes of their deep-toned roar were bellowing among the Cuban hills. Ere these had died away, and while the battery was still enveloped in smoke, there came an answering crash from the *Greyhound;* one of the battery guns toppled from its carriage, and Midshipman Farragut's men were showered with earth from the parapet.

"The schooners are firing on us!" cried Theo, in dismay.

"Give me your handkerchief, quick!" shouted Farragut. "Mine is black with mud."

Then, snatching the proffered bit of linen, he sprang upon the parapet, and, regardless of the fact that the *Beagle* was liable to pour in a broadside at any moment, stood there fully exposed, waving his flag of truce. Instantly realizing their young leader's object, as well as the danger of his position, every American in the battery instantly clambered to the crest of the earthwork beside him. There they waved handkerchiefs or caps, and cheered until those on the schooners could no longer mistake them for other than what they were.

That they were recognized was shown by a boat that shot out from the *Greyhound*, and was pulled rapidly toward their side of the lagoon. In it was Lieutenant Kearney, who, as he leaped ashore, seized both of Farragut's hands, and with visible emotion exclaimed: —

"Thank God, my dear fellow, that you dared do what you did, and that we recognized you in time! You have done nobly and, by the capture of that battery, saved us from heavy loss."

"But, sir," said modest Farragut, "every bit of the credit is due to Billy Blow, without whom we should never in the world have found it." And then our lad came in for his share of praise and congratulation.

"Are there any killed or wounded?" asked Lieu-

tenant Kearney, anxiously, after Farragut had briefly outlined the morning's proceedings.

"Not of my men, sir," replied the disreputable-looking young officer, "but we dropped a number of the enemy, and I think one of them was a woman."

"A woman!"

"Yes, sir; at least, so it appeared."

"Where is she now?"

"In the battery, I believe, sir."

"Let us go at once and see."

"I am almost certain, sir," interjected Theo Breeze, as the three officers started up the slope, "that she was the wife of Diablito."

CHAPTER XXXIII

TOLD BY ALVORD SPICER

THE woman who lay dead just outside the battery with which she had expected to destroy the American schooners, was indeed the wife of the pirate chieftain. In his absence she had undertaken to defend the rendezvous; and but for Theo's intimate knowledge of the situation, she would doubtless have succeeded in driving off the invaders, since the battery was of great strength and admirably placed. Now, however, with its fall and her death, there was no further thought of resistance, and when the Americans landed on the opposite side of the lagoon they found the pirate settlement deserted.

It had greatly increased in size since Theo last saw it, and contained several large houses from fifty to one hundred feet in length. Some of these were already in flames from the fire of the battery, and the Americans destroyed all that remained. They also rendered useless a fleet of boats found on the beach; but to their disappointment no vessel was discovered in the harbor, Diablito, with a large portion of his fighting force, being absent on one of his cruises for plunder.

Theo led the way to the hidden caves, from which

immense quantities of goods, American, English, and Spanish, were removed to the schooners. He also paid a visit by water to the cave with a submerged entrance, that served him as a place of refuge from persecution when a friendless boy. A single glance about the interior that had once afforded him friendly shelter was sufficient; for the rocky floor was so strewn with human bones as to make it a veritable charnel-house. It was evident that the pirates had continued to use it as a place for the convenient disposal of their unfortunate prisoners, and our lad hastened from it in horror. In fact, the entire rendezvous revived such bitter memories that he had no desire to see more of it, and returning to the *Greyhound*, he remained on board until, with their work of destruction completed, the two schooners finally sailed away.

It was useless to await the return of Diablito with the hope of entrapping him; for, with their coming, alarm signals had notified all Brethren of the Coast, far and wide, of what was taking place. So the Americans repaired to Santiago, where Theo learned that his mother and sisters had left Cuba some years earlier, though where they had gone no one could tell him.

"It's tough luck, Billy Blow," said Midshipman Farragut, sympathetically, "but you are sure to gain information in Havana, now that you know what to ask for."

"Perhaps so," replied Theo, despondently, "though I haven't much hope. You see they have been gone such a long time. If I don't learn anything definite, though, I shall go to La Brisa and wait for something or somebody to turn up."

"How about the service? Are you sure you can get off?"

"Yes," replied Theo, "since I am neither commissioned nor even enlisted, but am merely a volunteer, paying my own shot. It was an arrangement that I didn't care much for at first, but now I am glad Captain Spicer fixed things that way."

"Well, I envy you," said Farragut, "even if you do have to fight for your rights. As for me," he continued somewhat bitterly, "I have neither parents nor estate. I haven't even a home that I can call my own, outside of any ward room to which I may be ordered. Some time, if I have luck, and outlive a lot of good fellows, I may hope to be a captain; but beyond that I have nothing in prospect. Yes, Billy Blow, you are a lucky chap, and I envy you."

"I can't see exactly where my good luck comes in," objected Theo. "I seem to have lost all the relatives I had in the world except an uncle whom I have never met and who will not accept me as a nephew without positive proof of my identity. I am heir to an estate, it is true, but even then I must fight for my rights with no money to back me up, and only a slim chance of winning. In such a con-

test the only person who could testify that I am really the son of Daniel Breeze is an old colored woman who used to be my nurse, but who now lives in Portsmouth, and even she lost track of me for a good many years, regarding which her evidence would have no value."

"How about that fellow Latrobe, of whom you have told me? Couldn't he fill up all the blanks in the nurse's testimony?"

"He might," admitted Theo, "and if both he and Lesbia could appear in court at the same time, my case might be proved. I'll try and arrange for that as soon as we reach Havana."

As the *Greyhound* cruised slowly, still keeping up a search for pirates, it was more than a month later before she touched at the Cuban capital. Here an accumulation of mail matter was sent off from the consul's office as soon as she made a mooring. In it was a letter for Theo from his dear friend, the Reverend Mr. Spicer, but, after reading a few lines of greeting from the writer and Lydia and Miss Tabitha, the young man's face became suddenly clouded. "I declare, it is too bad!" he exclaimed.

"What is?" asked Farragut, who, not having received any letters, was watching Theo read his.

"Why, this. Listen: 'Shortly after your departure we were surprised and puzzled by the mysterious disappearance of your old nurse Lesbia, who went away, leaving no trace, nor has she since been heard

from. About the same time I received a visit from a gentleman claiming to be your father's brother, and consequently your uncle. He seems to believe, or rather so he intimated, that there is some doubt concerning your identity. I only hope that these two events are not connected, but fear they may be, and think it will be well for you to consult with Alvord.' Isn't that a pretty state of affairs?" cried Theo, as he concluded the reading.

"It certainly makes the situation more interesting," replied Farragut, reflectively. "But it's a lucky thing the *Seawitch* happens to be in port; for you can at least follow the old gentleman's advice, and consult Captain Spicer without delay."

Theo had joyfully noted the fact that his old schooner was in Havana harbor, and would have applied for leave to visit her at once, had not the coming of the mail momentarily diverted his attention. Now he did so, and his request was readily granted.

A little later, therefore, a shore-going boat took him to the *Seawitch*, where he was warmly greeted by Captain Spicer, Midshipman Greene, and his other friends on board. Even while he was shaking hands with these, however, he glanced forward, as though anxious to see some one else. Finally he said: —

"I hope, sir, that Latrobe is still on board."

"I am sorry to say that he is not," replied Captain

Spicer, "nor do I know what has become of him. But it is a long story, and I will tell it to you in the cabin."

"With both my principal witnesses gone, my chances of La Brisa are growing beautifully less," reflected the young man, as he followed his superior below.

The latter first insisted upon hearing of all that had happened to him since their parting. This of course included the seeing and answering of the administrator's notice in the Havana journal, the discovery of La Brisa, and the destruction of the pirate nest at Cape Cruz, which last piece of news afforded Alvord Spicer intense satisfaction. He was also greatly interested in all that Theo had to tell of La Brisa, and when the latter concluded his narration, he said : —

"I also have information bearing upon the question of your Cuban property, that I am sure will prove of interest to you."

"Does it refer to Latrobe?" asked Theo.

"Not exactly," replied the other, "though in a measure it may. To begin with, your mother and sisters are not only alive and well, but are on the island."

"What!" gasped Theo, starting from his chair. "Do you really mean it, sir? How do you know? Have you seen them? Why were they not at La Brisa?"

"I really mean it," replied Alvord Spicer, smiling, "and I know because I have seen them, though not to speak with, nor was I aware at the time who they were. Perhaps I should say that I saw your mother and two sisters, the two youngest, I believe, the eldest being in Spain, where she has become a *condesa* by marriage. You did not find them at La Brisa because they had not yet arrived; but I imagine they are there by this time, in company with your uncle, Judge Breeze of Boston."

"How I wish I had stayed there!" exclaimed Theo.

"If you had," remarked Alvord Spicer, dryly, "you would doubtless have shared the fate of your father, long before the rest of your family arrived."

"What do you mean, sir?"

"Only that, ever since our escape from the Devil's Den, our friend Diablito has maintained secret agents at La Brisa, for the express purpose of killing you if you should ever dare show yourself in that neighborhood. Also, if you had failed to accompany the *Greyhound* to Cape Cruz, the Devil's Den, now destroyed, thanks to you, would probably still be a flourishing stronghold of the Brethren."

"That's so," admitted Theo. "At the same time I wish I might have been in actual possession when my administrator uncle appeared on the scene. But how did you find out about the secret agents? Have you seen Diablito himself?"

"I have," replied Alvord Spicer, gravely, "and am rejoiced to say that he no longer exists to terrorize these waters."

"Do you mean that he is dead?"

"I do."

"Did you kill him, sir?" asked Theo, impulsively, remembering his friend's expressed longing to meet and try conclusions with the pirate chief who had once held him as a slave.

"I regret to say that I did not, the honor going instead to our friend Latrobe. And that brings me to the story I promised to tell you."

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE PUNISHMENT OF DIABLITO

"FROM the day you left the *Seawitch*," continued Captain Spicer, "Latrobe was a changed man. All his old-time cheerfulness disappeared. He became moody and sullen, snapped at the men when they spoke to him or even went near his galley, until at length they left him severely alone. Worst of all, he neglected his duties, and was frequently found sitting with his face in his hands, apparently oblivious of everything, when he should have been preparing a meal. If it had not been for the memory of his splendid work when we were escaping from the Devil's Den, I should have given him a taste of the cat, but, recalling my obligations to him, I only gave him a good wigging instead. I doubt if he heard a word of it though; for, when I had finished, he asked if I thought you had gone to La Brisa.

"I replied that I shouldn't be at all surprised if you discovered the place during your cruise, whereupon he begged me to discharge him from the service as soon as we returned to Havana, that he might follow you.

"I told him of course that such a thing would be

impossible until his term of enlistment had expired, unless, indeed, he should happen to be so badly wounded or fall so ill as to be of no further use on board ship. I added, however, that, even if you did find La Brisa, you could not leave the *Greyhound* until her cruise was up, when you would undoubtedly return to this ship. At that he brightened up, and from that day we had no trouble with him so far as his work was concerned, though he was still savage with the men, and kept them at a distance from his galley. My private opinion is that he only shipped on board this craft to be near you, after learning that you were about to join her."

"I don't see how he could possibly have known," said Theo; "for I am certain he never went near Portsmouth, nor did I set eyes on him until I came aboard."

"Be that as it may," continued Captain Spicer, "his whole being is evidently bound up in you, and I am confident he would gladly serve you with his life."

"But what has all this to do with my mother and sisters?" demanded Theo, who felt that he had heard quite enough of Latrobe for the present.

"Nothing as yet, and perhaps nothing at all," responded the other; "only, in the regular order of narration, Latrobe came first, your family not appearing on the scene until some weeks later. In the meantime we made several convoy trips between

Havana and the Bahamas, either alone or in company with the *Ferret*, on which, by the way, is an old friend of yours from Portsmouth."

"Not Rawl Patton!" exclaimed Theo.

"That's the very chap, — Midshipman Rawl Patton."

"How I wish I could meet him."

"You are sure to, sooner or later. But, to get back to my story. About a month ago we and the *Ferret* were returning from one of our convoy trips, having with us an American brig that we had picked up off Double Headed Shot Keys, when, one day, we were startled by a sound of distant but evidently heavy firing. I signalled the *Ferret* to follow, and headed in that direction, but it was nearly two hours before we reached the scene of action, and made out what was going on. Then we discovered a large ship, flying Spanish colors, standing off a pirate schooner, but evidently on her last legs. Her rigging was badly shot away, two topmasts had gone by the board, and she was on fire.

"As we showed no colors and our ports were closed, the pirate chap paid no attention to us until we were within a mile of him, when he seemed to smell a rat; for, all of a sudden, he up stick and ran under everything he could spread. We set our ensign, signalled the *Ferret* to stand by the Spaniard, and put after him. As we passed the ship

that had so pluckily stood off the pirate, I saw that she was pretty well used up and must have surrendered within a few minutes more. The fire aboard her was also making rapid headway, but, as the *Ferret* was close at hand, we did not stop. I wished we could, for, as we swept under her quarter, I caught sight of three female figures leaning over the after rail, and stretching out their arms to us in a most imploring manner. I lifted my cap to them, pointed to the *Ferret*, and then turned away, that I might not be tempted beyond my strength to resist."

"Were they my mother and sisters?" asked Theo.

"That is exactly who they were, though I did not know it until half an hour later, when Latrobe told me."

"Latrobe? How on earth did he know?"

"I haven't an idea, and doubted the correctness of his information at the time, but he was afterwards proved to be right. I had gone forward to note the trim of the head sails, and was on my way aft, when he stopped me by saying: —

"'Cap'n Spicer, sah, you knowin' dat ar pirate schooner?'

"I replied, 'No, Latrobe, do you?'

"'Yes, sah,' he said, 'she *La Vengenza*.'

"'Diablito's own schooner!' I cried; 'are you sure of it, Latrobe?'

"'Yes, sah,' he answered, with one of the ugliest looks I ever saw on a human face. 'Dat ole Debble hese'f, and dis time we going catch him, sure.'

"'I hope you are right, Latrobe, and shall certainly use every effort to catch him,' I said, and was walking on, when he stopped me again, by saying, 'Scuse me, Marse Cap'n, but you know who dem lady, board de ship?'

"'No, Latrobe,' I responded; 'who were they?'

"'One ob dem Señora Danbrisa, and I specs de udder two am her gals, Tay-o-feel-o's sisters.'

"'Impossible!' I cried. 'How could you know them when you have never seen them?'

"'I know,' he replied positively; 'one time I see 'em and now I know.'

"I had to leave him then, and after that we had no chance for conversation, but he was proved to be right in both his statements."

"I don't understand it," said Theo.

"Neither do I," admitted Captain Spicer, "though at the time I had little opportunity to reflect upon what he had said. You remember how speedy *La Vengenza* was? Well, she gave us so long a chase that even the smoke from the burning ship was lost to view before we came to blows; and it was she that opened the fight. No sooner was it certain that the *Ferret* could not come to our assistance in case we were disabled, than the pirate coolly hove to and opened on us with a long eighteen. As we had

nothing heavier than twelves, we were forced to receive several shots before replying. Then we were so fortunate as to wing him, but his battery fire was still so much heavier than ours that our only chance was to board before he shot away our masts. So we raked him once and then ranged up on his weather beam, giving him a point-blank broadside as we closed. They outnumbered us three to one, and at the beginning put up a very pretty fight; but somehow it is always a spurt with such fellows, and they rarely show staying qualities. It was so in the present case; and five minutes after we gained their deck we had them on the run.

"Diablito himself fought like a tiger until he saw that his case was hopeless, then he suddenly made a dash for the cabin and disappeared. I had tried my best to get at him, for I was wild to settle old scores with the scoundrel, but there was always some one in the way who had to be reckoned with first. Even when he made his break I was busy with a couple of cutthroats who were trying their best to make an end of me. As soon as I could get clear of them I ran toward the cabin to see what Diablito was about, for I had a notion that he meant to blow up the ship. On reaching the companionway, I heard a muffled pistol shot from somewhere down below, and I found smoke drifting into the cabin. Guided by it, and by certain sounds, I ran through a passage, to where a door at one side opened into a small com-

partment that at first seemed absolutely dark. Some one was in there, though, for I heard in Spanish: —

"'That for Señor Danbrisa! that for my boy, and this for Latrobe! You remember Latrobe, eh? you old devil! you remember the brand on his forehead? Now are you also branded!'

"These words were hissed out in a tone of such concentrated fury as I had never imagined, and were accompanied by blows that drew forth groans. For a moment I could see nothing. Then I became aware of two human forms struggling at my feet, one on top of the other with uplifted arm.

"I tried to arrest the blow, for I wished to save Diablito until he could be hanged, but I was too late; and as it descended Latrobe sprang to his feet, leaving a dagger buried to the hilt in the heart of the pirate leader. As the negro staggered into the light I saw that he was blinded by a stream of blood pouring from his head. By this time Mr. Greene and several of our men were in the cabin, and I had one of the latter help Latrobe on deck. Then, procuring a light, I went back to look at Diablito. He was dead from half a dozen wounds, any one of which would have proved fatal. Evidently he had been stabbed first in the back, and had fallen, partially paralyzed. Then, as Latrobe sprang upon him, dealing fierce blows with his dagger, Diablito had fired in his face the shot intended for the open keg of powder, beside which

we found him. Latrobe's brand was two crossed slashes, one of which had destroyed both the pirate's eyes, while the other had cleft his face from forehead to chin. Strangest of all, the pistol shot fired by Diablito, while merely creasing Latrobe's forehead, had completely obliterated the infamous letters C. P. V., with which, as you and I alone know, he was once branded by the man he had just killed.

"When all was over, not more than half a dozen of the pirate crew were left alive, and we brought them to Havana to be hanged. On the way, I learned from him who had been second in command that the prime motive of Diablito's life had always seemed to be a hatred of your family. This had led him to murder your father and attempt to bring you up to his own infamous trade. To gratify it, he employed agents to kill you at La Brisa, and his principal object in attacking the great Spanish ship, with chances of success overwhelmingly against him, was to gain possession of your mother and sisters, whom he knew to be on board."

"But they were saved?" inquired Theo, anxiously.

"Yes, they were brought to Havana on the *Ferret*, their own ship having burned to the water's edge. Here they met your uncle; and after resting a few days, they started with him overland for La Brisa, where they doubtless are by this time."

"And where I must follow them with all speed!"

exclaimed Theo. "But what became of Latrobe? He did not accompany them to La Brisa, did he?"

"No," answered Captain Spicer; "when we finally returned to this place, he complained of so much trouble with his wound, that I allowed him to enter a hospital. Then we ran over to Key West, and on again reaching this port two days ago, found that he had left the hospital a few hours after entering it. Why he did so, and what has become of him, no one knows."

CHAPTER XXXV

LAST APPEARANCE OF LATROBE

THEO BREEZE had but slight recollection of his mother, since his childhood had been almost wholly intrusted to the care of Lesbia; nor had he any hope that she would recognize him. Of course his sisters would not; while he and his uncle had never met. He had, therefore, depended entirely for proofs of his identity upon the two persons most intimately connected with his career from its beginning, Lesbia and Latrobe, while each of these could only testify as to certain portions of his life. Their combined evidence would form a complete record, and it was for this he had hoped. Now, with both of them mysteriously disappeared and their whereabouts unknown, he felt that the chances of proving his identity and making good his claim to be the son and heir of Daniel Breeze were very slim.

With this Captain Spicer agreed, at the same time reminding him that he still had witnesses who could be called upon.

"I, for instance," he said, "can testify to your residence at the Devil's Den, your escape from there, and that I directed you to my father's house in

Portsmouth, where I afterward found you. Rawl Patton can testify as to the date of your arrival at Portsmouth. Mr. Greene can testify regarding your recognition of your grandfather's portrait in Boston, and either Kearney or Farragut could testify concerning your recently displayed knowledge of La Brisa."

"All that," replied Theo, "will of course be strong testimony so far as it goes, and I shall be very grateful for it, if I can ever get you all together; but—"

"Oh! I forgot," interrupted Captain Spicer. "As it is the Commodore's policy to follow one blow by another so quickly that the pirates may not have a chance to recover, this schooner and the *Ferret* are ordered to cruise over the ground lately covered by the *Greyhound* and *Beagle*. So if you care to come with us, I have no doubt I can now get you retransferred to this ship. The *Ferret* started this morning, and we are to sail to-morrow, meeting her at the Isle of Pines. Of course it will be necessary for us to touch at La Brisa, where we can leave you if you choose, or from which we can carry you away again if your welcome does not prove satisfactory."

"That will be the very thing, sir! And I don't know how to express my gratitude for all you are doing to help me."

"You once saved my life," remarked Alvord Spicer, quietly.

"While you, sir, not only rescued me from a

career of piracy, but put me in the way of all the good I have since gained," replied Theo, warmly. "And now — "

"Never mind going into further details," interrupted the other. "The obligations of friendship are not to be measured or weighed, described or limited. If it is settled that you will pilot us to La Brisa, let us set about making arrangements."

* * * * * *

Toward the close of a glorious tropical day, some weeks later, two persons sat on a rustic bench beside the Ceiba Spring at La Brisa, engaged in earnest conversation.

"I tell you, Dorotea, the person calling himself your son, and setting up a claim to this property, is a rank impostor!" exclaimed one of them, who was no other than the administrator of the estate, Judge Theophilus Breeze, of Boston. "His manner of answering my notice, both in Havana and here, while still remaining hidden, is evidence of it. Then the claim that his nurse Lesbia had been with him for years in Portsmouth, when we have discovered that she has been right here on the island all the time, is proof positive of his duplicity. No wonder that the woman passing herself off as the old nurse disappeared as soon as she found I was on her trail. So, my dear sister, it is useless to revive long-buried hopes; for it is practically certain that your boy

died at the same time with his noble father. Therefore take no further thought concerning this pretender, whose true character I will expose quickly enough if ever he dares come out of his hiding, and submit to the searching light of a legal examination."

"Lesbia did not exactly say that she had been on the island *all* the time," explained the Señora Danbrisa, in her delicious broken English. "Only that she had lived with her brother in Havana, and, hearing of our return, had come to offer her services. And oh, Theophilo! I so long to see this young man. If only I could once set eyes on him, I should instantly know whether or not he was my own baby boy, my little Prince Theo —"

"I beg pardon for intruding," interrupted a voice that startled both the lady and gentleman into gaining their feet with undignified haste. As they did so, they turned and confronted a handsome young fellow clad in uniform, who stood, cap in hand, but a few paces from them.

"I beg pardon, sir," he repeated, "for disturbing you, but my business being of importance, I took the liberty. Are you not Judge Theophilus Breeze, of Boston?"

"I am, sir. And may I ask who you are?" answered Judge Breeze, suspiciously.

"I am Theophilo Guillermo Danbrisa, son of the late Daniel Breeze of this place, and your nephew,"

replied the young man. Then he impulsively added, "Is not this lady my mother?"

"No, sir, she is not," thundered the Judge. "This lady is my sister-in-law, Mrs. Daniel Breeze, but she has no son. Dorotea, be calm, my dear. This is indeed the pretender come at last to brave us to our faces; but do not let him impose upon you. You do not recognize in him your long-lost little Theo, do you?"

The Señora Danbrisa was clinging to her brother's arm, trembling like an aspen, alternately flushing and paling, while devouring with her eyes the features of the young man.

"Do you recognize him, my dear?" repeated the Judge.

"No, no," cried the agitated woman, almost sobbing with the intensity of her emotion. "I do not. It cannot be. And yet he has dark hair, with eyes of blue."

"A not uncommon combination," remarked the Judge. "You see, young man," he continued, "she whom you have the presumption to claim as a mother fails to recognize you. Therefore, whatever evidence you can bring to support your claim must be flawless or your position is untenable from this moment. If you have any, I shall be pleased to examine it now and here. If you have none, I must regard you as a trespasser, and request your departure. What have you to say for yourself?"

"I have some friends within call," answered Theo, whose eyes had not been withdrawn from his mother's face. "They know much concerning my past life, and could, I think, convince you that I am what I claim to be, — the only son of Daniel Breeze and this lady."

"I shall be pleased to hear what they have to say," replied the Judge, stiffly. "My dear, if you will again be seated, we will dispose of this painful incident as quickly as possible."

As the Señora sank back on the rustic bench Theo disappeared, to return a moment later accompanied by three naval officers, in one of whom Judge Breeze was surprised to recognize a former acquaintance.

"Ah, Mr. Greene!" he exclaimed, "this is an unexpected pleasure; will you present your friends?"

Theo, thus ignored, stepped aside, while Midshipman Greene presented Captain Spicer and Mr. Rawl Patton. Then, turning to Theo, he added, "And this, Judge, is my very good friend, Mr. Theophilus Breeze, familiarly known as 'Billy Blow,' your own nephew."

"How do you know that, sir?" asked Judge Breeze, sharply.

"From what he has told me, and because he instantly recognized the portrait of his grandfather that hangs in the hall of your Boston house," was the reply.

"Flimsy evidence, sir, and unworthy of consider-

ation," remarked the Judge. "Have either of these other gentlemen any to offer that is more substantial?"

"I think I have, sir," replied Alvord Spicer, who thereupon told all that he knew of Theo's life from the time of their meeting at the Devil's Den to the present moment.

"An extremely interesting story, sir," commented the Judge when he had finished, "but sensational and sadly deficient. You admit that you lost sight for many years of the young pirate who accompanied your flight from the Devil's Den and only recently rediscovered him in Portsmouth. Could you take oath that the two were one and the same persons?"

"I could, sir, were it necessary to do so," replied Captain Spicer; "but it is not, since my friend here, Mr. Patton, whom I have known from childhood, is fully conversant with the claimant's life in Portsmouth, from the time of his arrival in that town until my own return to it."

"Indeed," remarked the Judge. Then, turning to Rawl, he added, "Perhaps, sir, you will favor us with your reminiscences."

So Midshipman Patton told his story, and strengthened it by that of his relative, Dr. Winthrop Conant of Salem, whom he had recently visited.

Upon the conclusion of Rawl's narrative, Judge Breeze acknowledged that the chain of evidence was

fairly complete from the Devil's Den to Portsmouth, and so on to the present moment. "But," he added, "it is still unconnected with either Daniel Breeze or this place. Therefore it is as worthless as though non-existent. Do you, sir, know anything of this young man's parentage, birth, or of his life prior to your meeting with him among the pirates of Cape Cruz?"

This question was addressed to Alvord Spicer, who answered: —

"Only what I have learned from a negro named Latrobe, who was with your brother when he died, who cared for Theo while they were together in the Devil's Den, and who has since proved himself a thoroughly reliable man."

"Where is this Latrobe now?"

"I regret to say, sir, that I do not know. He was, until recently, a member of my crew, among whom he obtained honor as the slayer of Diablito, but a few weeks ago he disappeared in Havana."

"His testimony might have value and it might not," said Judge Breeze, "but unless it bore directly upon the claimant's birth and parentage, I should incline to the latter opinion."

At this moment the Señora, who had hardly taken her eyes from Theo's face, started to her feet with an exclamation at sight of a colored woman wearing a snow-white turban, who came to announce that dinner would shortly be served.

"Lesbia! Lesbia! come quickly here," commanded the Señora in Spanish. "Look well at this young man. Dost thou recognize him? Is he my boy? my little Theophilo?"

Theo stared in undisguised amazement, while, for a moment, the woman stood like a statue regarding him. Then she uttered a great cry, and, moving forward, flung her arms about his neck.

"Yes, my mistress," she exclaimed, also speaking in Spanish. "He is our boy, our own strong, splendid, beautiful boy. All these years have I watched over him, and now is my task ended, for he is come once again to his own."

"Wait," commanded Judge Breeze, sharply, laying a detaining hand on the arm of the Señora, who also would have sprung forward to embrace her boy. "Did either of you gentlemen know this woman in Portsmouth?" he asked, turning to Captain Spicer and Rawl Patton.

"I did," answered the latter.

"Then it is only natural that she should now recognize this young man, having seen him so recently. But what I want to know is, why has she not been imposed upon as well as others? How can she establish a connection between the infant whom she nursed here at La Brisa and the young man who, claiming to have been that same infant, she discovered in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, a dozen years later? Can she or any one else

advance satisfactory proof that they are one and the same?"

"I can prove it, Señor," cried the black woman, turning upon the Judge with flashing eyes. "From the day of his birth until now I have watched over him. When first I gave him into his father's arms and gained my freedom by so doing, I promised to serve him with my life. At the death of Señor Danbrisa I was present, and he gave the child into my keeping. Then I again swore to serve him with my life and watch over him to the end. Together we dwelt in La Caverna de Diablo and together we escaped from its horrors. Then, for a short space was I separated from my boy; but in Portsmouth I found him again, nor have I lost sight of him since. When he sailed away for his own land I sailed with him, and when I knew for a certainty that he was about to come here to the place of his birth I came first that I might welcome him to his own. Yes, Señores, you have guessed rightly; for if I am Lesbia I am also Latrobe."

Thus saying, the woman, with a dramatic gesture, snatched from her head its snowy turban, and displayed the livid scars with which Latrobe had been indelibly branded at the hands of Diablito.

* * * * * *

There is but little more to tell. The proof of Theo's identity furnished by Lesbia and supplemented by the testimony of the several witnesses already examined,

was so flawless as to satisfy even Judge Breeze, who, the moment Theo was released from his mother's ecstatic embrace, grasped the young man's hand and shook it cordially, saying as he did so: —

"Theophilus William, I hereby publicly acknowledge you to be my nephew, and son of my brother Daniel. From the first I hoped and believed you would make good your claim; but, as administrator of my brother's estate, and a lawyer as well, I was bound to demand unimpeachable evidence before yielding to the dictates of my heart. Now, my dear boy, if, in the past, I have seemed harsh and disagreeable, it was only that our future relations might appear all the more amicable by contrast.

"My friends, who have contributed so materially to this happy settlement of what appeared a difficult situation, I invite you, in the name of Mrs. Daniel Breeze and in that of her son Theophilus, to dine with us this evening. There are some young ladies up at the house with whom I believe these young gentlemen are already acquainted, but who are not yet aware of the fact that they have a brother."

"And one who came mighty near becoming a Brother of the Coast as well," remarked Theo, as with one hand given to his mother, and the other to his devoted nurse, he turned toward the home that waited to welcome him.

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