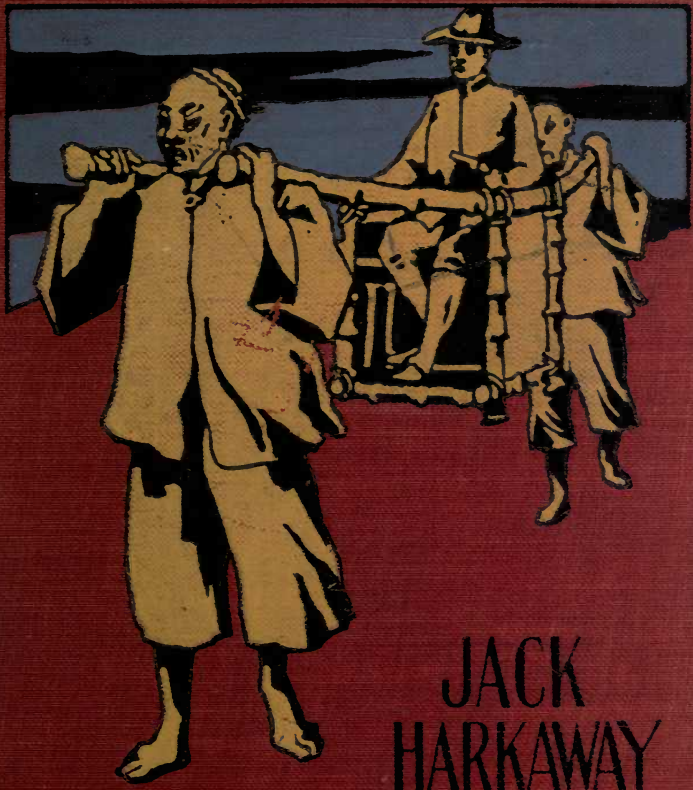

JACK HARKAWAY IN CHINA

BRACEBRIDGE HEMYNG

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"THE MYSTERIOUS BOTTLE—LITTLE EMILY'S GUESS."—ADV. IN CHINA—*Frontispiece.*

JACK HARKAWAY

AND HIS SON'S

ADVENTURES IN CHINA

BY

BRACEBRIDGE HEMYNG

COMPLETE

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JACK HARKAWAY AND HIS SON'S ADVENTURES IN CHINA.

CHAPTER I.

THE CHINESE PIRATE JUNK.

"Now, boy," said Hunston to young Jack, when once they were fairly on deck, "your father saved my life off Cuba; I have saved yours."

Young Jack smiled bitterly.

Hunston had saved his life at last, it is true, but it was to his treachery that they owed their disastrous defeat and the terrible massacre of the boat's crew.

"You see, boy," continued Hunston, in the same contemptuous tone, "we are equal now, so look to yourselves."

Young Jack made no reply.

He simply acknowledged the speech by a haughty inclination of the head, and Hunston walked off to get his hurts, which were few and trifling, attended to.

Presently several of the crew came and helped young Jack to take his companion, poor Harry Girdwood, below, where the wounded pirates were being cared for.

The unfortunate orphan boy had got some ugly cuts in the skirmish, and only great care, combined with skilful treatment, could possibly bring him through.

They had a doctor on board, who was an American, and a man of some knowledge and experience.

So there was a fair chance for everybody.

The doctor looked hard at the two boys when they were brought down to the cockpit, and it was evident that their presence there excited his curiosity.

"Do you belong to this ship?" he asked, as he set methodically to work to see to Harry Girdwood's wounds.

"The pirate?" asked young Jack, in surprise.

"Yes."

"Not exactly, doctor," he replied. "Do we look like it?"

The doctor frowned.

"Don't let your tongue run away with your discretion, my young friend," he said; "if you don't care to be taken for one of the crew, keep your sentiments to yourself."

Young Jack bit his lip.

"The horrid old vagabond," he said to himself; "he ought to be ashamed to be seen here. I suppose his job is to murder the prisoners by slow torture, when the Chinese and the Lascars can't invent anything sufficiently horrible.

And he turned on his heel, and strode haughtily up the cabin.

Turning round, he saw the doctor was looking steadfastly at him.

And then he beckoned him to approach.

Jack felt half inclined to take no notice of it, but there was a commanding look about the American doctor which the boy instinctively felt bound to obey.

"Come here."

Jack marched up with a sort of defiant air.

"Well, sir?"

"A word to the wise, my lad," said the doctor, in a low but impressive voice.

"You can not improve your position here by any brag or bold bearing; indeed, it is very likely to put an end to your captivity in a very summary manner, so unless you wish to walk the plank speedily, or have your head battered in, keep as civil a tongue in your head as possible."

Young Jack hung his head abashed at this.

"Do you hear?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then pay attention," said the doctor, "and learn that what I tell you is for your own good, and not for the sake of saying any thing sharp or disagreeable."

Young Jack did not know what reply to make to this strange speech.

So he simply nodded his head and walked up the cabin.

"He's a strange man," thought young Jack.

"Jack." called Harry Girdwood, faintly.

"Yes."

"Come to him at once," said the doctor, peremptorily. "Hold his hand. He's faint. Stand quite still."

And then, while young Jack stood holding the poor sufferer's hand, the doctor finished dressing his wounds, handling him all the while as tenderly as a fond mother might.

Harry Girdwood strove might and main to stifle his groans, but do what he would, a murmur of anguish escaped him from time to time.

"Keep up awhile, my poor boy," said the doctor, encouragingly. "You'll be easy presently. I shall get over it as quickly as possible."

The patient gave him a grateful look.

"Thanks, doctor."

"Hush, don't fatigue yourself with speaking."

Young Jack was getting more and more puzzled now.

Was the doctor really a humane man, and yet the associate of thieves and murderers of the lowest and vilest possible description?

No.

So young Jack Harkaway sagely came to this conclusion—

"He wants to lead us into a frank avowal of our feelings," he said to himself, "in order to betray us, but I must put poor Harry on his guard."

By this time, Harry Girdwood's wounds being dressed, he was allowed to rest, and then, being thoroughly exhausted, he sank back on his pillow into a gentle slumber.

As soon as he had watched his companion so far cared for, young Jack made for the companion ladder, and was just running up to see what was going forward on deck, when the doctor stopped him.

"Where are you going?"

"On deck."

"What for?"

"To look about."

"Are you mad?"

"I think not."

"Do you know what you are likely to meet with?"

"Where?"

"On deck."

"No."

"Death."

"Death!"

"Yes, young gentleman, death. That makes you start. But nothing is more likely. The men you are among now are the vilest and most unscruplous you will find. One man walked the plank but yesterday."

"Was he a Frenchman?" asked young Jack, quickly.

"Yes."

"I thought so, and called Monsieur Potiron?"

"Yes," replied the doctor, in evident surprise. "Then you know——"

"I know all about him. We picked him up."

"You?"

"Yes—our ship."

"Good Heaven! you don't say so."

"Yes sir."

"Well, well, I am glad he is saved, at all events. Poor Potiron."

"You knew him well."

"Yes."

"Was he a prisoner on board this ship?"

"Yes."

"Then I am glad his story was so far true, at all events."

"Was it doubted?"

"In some measure, by our officers, for he couldn't help pulling the long bow at times."

The doctor smiled.

"I know."

"He tried it on here then," said young Jack.

"Of course, it was in the fellow's blood. He could no more help bragging and exaggerating than a crow could help cawing. But he was not to say a coward, after all."

"Indeed."

"No. When his time came, and he was driven over the ship's side into the water, he showed a bold front."

"You will excuse a question, doctor?" said Jack.

"Certainly—but I don't promise in advance to answer it."

"Of course."

"Go on."

"How came you amongst these men—doctor to a pirate ship?"

"Can't you guess?"

"Why, no."

"Well, you might, my young friend, and yet be less quick-

witted than I perceive you to be. How came you and your unfortunate companion here?"

"We were surprised by treachery and made prisoners."

"And so was I."

"Indeed, doctor; I thought that they always put their prisoners to death."

"Such is the case," returned the doctor, "in most instances; but not always immediately—or you would not be here."

"There is a reason for my escape which I will explain to you later on."

"And for mine too; I was seized amidst a scene of such slaughter and such horrible carnage as I never yet witnessed before—as, please God, I hope never to witness again.

"I was dragged on board the junk, and fell across a whole mob of wounded, writhing about the deck.

"Our ship had been fought gallantly, and the slaughter of the pirates before we were beaten was something most frightful.

"One poor wretch was writhing on deck at my feet, and crying aloud with the agony of his wounds.

"With me it is naturally a double instinct to succour the the wounded: firstly, as a Christian, and secondly, as a medical man. So I looked to him—dressed and comforted his hurts——"

"I see."

"Then told them my profession, and I was saved, while many a poor prisoner was plundered and thrown to the sharks."

"And how long have you been a prisoner here, doctor?" asked young Jack.

"Nearly a year."

"So long?"

"Alas! yes."

"Can't you escape?"

"I would risk my life to, if there were half a chance."

Just then Harry Girdwood moved and groaned, and the doctor motioned young Jack to silence.

"Our talking disturbs him," he said in a whisper; "we the must be careful, for unless he gets perfect quiet for the present, I will not answer for the poor boy's life."

CHAPTER II.

LIFE ON THE PIRATE JUNK.

PRESENTLY the doctor dozed beside his patient.

His hands had been full of work, and he was overcome by fatigue.

Young Jack sat by watching him, when a great scuffling and noise on deck attracted his attention,

"I wonder what's going on there?" thought he.

The noise continued, and young Jack felt half inclined to go up on deck and see for himself.

Harry Girdwood, meanwhile, slept peacefully on. The doctor slept.

Young Jack arose to stretch his legs and every time that he moved up the cabin, he drew nearer to the companion ladder; and presently, he mounted a step.

Then Jack forgot all about the doctor's warning, and he stepped on to the deck.

A great deal of bustle and confusion was going forward there.

Some of the crew were busily engaged in swabbing the deck, to remove the unpleasant remains of the late fray.

By the traces of blood about he could see, plainly enough, that the battle had been fierce and fatal to the pirates, who had almost been deprived of the pleasure of a retaliation.

So thoroughly were they taken by surprise, that the American ship under Captain Disher's management, had given them the hottest work that they had ever known.

The wounded were still being helped away.

The slain outright were dragged off without the faintest show of ceremony, and swung over into the sea.

It was, indeed, thanks to this and similar noises, that young Jack contrived, for the present, to pass unobserved.

The boy looked about him in every direction, but there were no signs of the vessel which he had unfortunately quitted on that forlorn hope.

And what for?

Glory!

Alack; he had had his belly-full of glory by this time.

He was no coward—far from it—yet he had learnt to feel

sorry that he had ever quitted his mother's side upon that unlucky day.

He thought of her pale face and anxious looks, and he recalled her fond injunctions that he would keep out of danger.

He reviewed his own conduct in creeping off into the thick of the fight, and he felt inclined to take an exceedingly harsh view of it.

Was it true bravery after all? he asked himself, that had prompted him.

Was not his bravery rather foolhardiness?

Yes; decidedly yes," was his bitter reply to this mental questioning.

Moving about along the deck, he came presently across a telescope, and raising it to his eye, he quickly adjusted the focus, and swept the horizon.

Nothing in sight.

Yet, stay.

There appeared one sail, many, many miles distant.

So far, indeed, that it appeared but the very tiniest speck.

And this, he felt sure, must be the ship which his father and mother were in.

He fixed it through the glass, and gazed long and steadfastly through it.

And as he looked, the speck grew smaller and smaller, until it faded utterly out of view.

It was gone.

And with its final disappearance, his heart sank low indeed; and the poor boy heaved a piteous sigh of despair, as he let the glass slowly down,

* * * * * *

A hand was placed upon his shoulder.

"Well?"

He started.

Then he turned his head, and found himself close to an Englishman who was quite familiar to him.

"Well, Master Jack Harkaway," said the man, "so you are here in the toils after all."

Young Jack recognised him then.

"Emmerson!"

"You know me?"

"Yes."

"Sharp boy," said Emmerson, coolly, for it was indeed he. "Don't look so scared. Are you frightened?"

Jack answered quickly.

"Frightened! What of? You? No—not quite."

Protean Bob laughed satirically at this.

"Bravo, Jack. You haven't lost the family brag, I perceive."

Jack reddened to the roots of his hair.

"Brag should be *your* name," he said.

"Cheeky enough," said Emmerson, turning away. "I'm afraid, my fair youth, your're short-lived—too smart to live long."

So saying, he walked up the deck, leaving young Jack to his own reflections.

The presence of Robert Emmerson was the most puzzling thing that had happened to him.

What could it mean?

It was difficult to hazard even a guess; he was anxious to find out how Emmerson got on board the pirate ship.

But a still greater surprise was in store for young Jack before he quitted the deck.

His attention was called to a dispute that was going on aft, so he went off at a run to see what the matter was.

It looked as though a fight was going on upon deck.

"I'm in it!" cried young Jack, in something like glee.

He could never keep clear of any thing of this sort.

He shared his father's fondness for excitement, and so strong was the instinct within him that he never thought how foolish it was to flourish about the deck of the pirate ship while the wounded from the late action were scarcely yet cared for, but burst into the thick of the *mêlée*.

Wonders upon wonders here awaited him.

A huge fellow was knocking the seamen about like skittles.

A mammoth man, brawny and bearded.

A man that young Jack knew by sight almost as well as his own father.

Who, asks the reader, could he meet now?

Who but Toro?

The hot-tempered Italian was quarrellng with the Lascars, or the Celestials, as the Chinese call themselves.

On the present occasion, a slight dispute had arisen between them upon the question of precedence.

High words were exchanged between them.

From high words to blows is but a slight step amongst such lawless ruffians as these, so that when young Jack arrived upon the scene, they were in the middle of a most undignified scramble.

Toro's huge bulk, however, served him quite grandly at this precise amusement.

He had only to lay against them.

As well might they oppose the march of a young elephant.

But the most alarming phase in the whole affair was the incessant din which the combatants kept up.

Just imagine bad language being bellowed at each other by a dozen half-drunken men in four different tongues—to wit, Italian, Chinese, Spanish, and worse than all, Dutch.

All talking at once.

All yelling at the top of their voices.

When young Jack looked at Toro, he began to feel very much puzzled.

He had seen Toro there, stretched lifeless upon the ground, and, to all appearances, dead!

He did not know how Toro had been rescued by his comrades, and snatched from the grave at the very last moment.

The whole scene was so novel, and presented such a complete change from what he had been going through until the last few hours of his life, that he began to ask himself if he were not in a dream.

He had read the legend of the "Phantom Ship," and he had a momentary fancy flash through his mind that he was, perhaps, rightly mourned as dead by his parents—that, in spite of the real look of every thing around him, he was out of the world, in the land of spirits, and there renewing some of the more startling scenes of his earthly career.

By what process of reasoning young Jack contrived to liken himself to the supernatural Captain Vanderdecken, we are not in a position to state.

All we can say is that, whatever wild flights his fancy may have taken, he was brought rudely back to earth by being roughly collared by Toro himself.

The giant had just caught sight of him, and was filled with amazement on recognising him.

But recovering quickly from his surprise, he rushed at him, and grabbed him sharply by the shoulder.

"Boy!"

"Well," said young Jack, looking up at him saucily, "what is it?"

Toro was staggered.

"It is young Jack Harkaway," he exclaimed.

"Rather!" returned young Jack, nodding.

"Why, where in the fiend's name did you spring from?"

"From below," replied young Jack.

"The devil!" ejaculated the ex-brigand.

"Well, no," retorted our youthful hero, with his accustomed readiness; "not from there, although from below."

"Why, what——"

"From the cockpit, I mean," explained young Jack.

"But how came you there?"

"Prisoner."

"Then you must have been on board that American ship that has just——"

"Given this ship a licking and got clear off. Yes, Signor Toro, I was."

"And your father?"

"Yes, he, too."

"And——"

"Mr. Harvey? Yes, all of us, including Mr. Jefferson."

"Hah!"

"Your worst enemy."

"No," ejaculated Toro, sharply, "Jefferson is a brave man. He fought fairly, and he won the victory. He fully merited it. Defeat, boy, is bitter, but even Toro can learn a lesson occasionally, and I have lately learned to know that it is an honour to oppose such a man as Jefferson, even if beaten."

Young Jack was astonished at this.

He regretted his taunting words then.

Of all the people in the world, he had certainly not expected any thing like a frank or generous admission on the part of Toro.

"Nobly said, Signor Toro," said young Jack, "and believe it or not, as you may, I am really glad to see you here, although I am quite astonished how you can have got here."

"Tell me how you came to be made prisoner. I was on deck about here the whole time, but I saw no prisoners made."

"None?"

"No."

"Did you not see the fight between the boats?"

"No."

"Well, Signor Toro," said young Jack, "a fight did take place between some of the boats. The one I commanded engaged two of the pirates' boats, and we were fast giving them pepper, when a third boat in our rear brought deserters from our own ship."

"Deserters?"

"Yes."

"So you have some traitor Americans, as well as——"

"There are good and bad everywhere, Signor Toro," continued Jack. "The boat was rowed by one deserter. The only other person in the boat was a prisoner, aided by the deserter to escape."

"I see," said Toro; "so you had a prisoner?"

"Yes; a prisoner whose life had been saved by my father off Cuba. Guess who that prisoner was."

"I can not."

"Why it was——"

"Me," said a voice at young Jack's elbow.

"Hunston!" exclaimed Toro, in greater amazement than ever; "is it possible, or do my eyes deceive me?"

"Not at all, old comrade," returned Hunston; "here I am—Hunston himself in the flesh."

CHAPTER III.

THE ONE-LEGGED MANDARIN AND THE MAMMOTH PIGTAIL.

"A KNOWLEDGE of their language is very useful," said Isaac Mole to Dick Harvey.

"And do you speak it, Mr. Mole?" asked Harvey.

"Not to say fluently," replied Mr. Mole, modestly.

"I had no idea, Mr. Mole, you were such a linguist," said Harvey. "So you speak Chinese?"

"You know, Richard, dialect is my strong point. You may not now remember that my knowledge of the American dialect was of considerable service to us when we landed in Boston."

Dick was ready to burst at this.

"Quite right, Mr. Mole," he said. "I remember now."

"Now it is not vanity on my part," said Mr. Mole, in a bland, winning manner, "but I know my powers, and I can

imitate the Chinese dialect and intonation so nearly that they would never take me for a foreigner—if—if—if——"

"If you only wore a pigtail," suggested Dick.

"Yes."

"Why not wear one, then?" asked Harvey, with great gravity.

Mr. Mole looked very straight at him.

But Dick never blenched.

He smelt fun ahead.

"So you really think it desirable, Harvey?" continued Mr. Mole.

"Of course."

"Why?"

"Why, the natives here are notorious thieves and rogues; rob you they will if you are a foreigner, and if they have only half a chance, so you decidedly gain a point by looking like one of themselves."

"I see."

"So that in their dress, and profiting by your——"

"Imitative powers, which I possess so——"

"Like a monkey."

"What?"

"I say almost like the monkeys do."

"I object to your similes, Richard; I don't like your disrespectful way of coupling my name with that of a monkey."

"No offence, sir."

"I dare say, but——"

"Come, come, Mr. Mole, don't be so thin-skinned; I took you for a man of too much mind——"

"Quite right."

"And really, if you analyse it, I think you will admit it is a compliment."

"Ahem!"

* * * * * *

Mr. Mole used to air his Chinese upon the native coolies on the plantation, and the men, cunning enough in their way, soon learned that the best way to propitiate their chief was to pretend to understand all he said or wished to say in their own tongue.

The honest truth is, that Mr. Mole did not know much about it.

"Chin-chin," and a few phrases of "pigeon-English," had to serve for a whole vocabulary.

Mr. Mole, however, in deference to Harvey's opinion of the "proper thing to do," had his head shaved over his manly brow, and made desperate efforts to grow a pigtail.

Alas! his efforts were not seconded by nature.

All he could do, the pigtail would not be coaxed into growing a respectable length.

"No matter, my dear sir," said Dick. "What is art for?"

"Can't say," responded Mr. Mole. "What do you say?"

"To replace nature under certain conditions."

Mr. Mole rubbed his nose and pondered deeply.

He had, if the honest truth be told, taken something stronger than tea that day, and although not by any means mentally obfuscated, he felt that he was not as clear as he should wish to be as to Harvey's meaning.

He felt that he had been indulging a little, and he exaggerated in his fears the effect it had taken upon him.

"Isaac Mole," he said to himself, "you must pull yourself together, or else you will have Mrs. M. about your ears. She's a good creature, but so precious strait-laced upon the question of a glass of grog more or less that let her half suspect the least thing, and she'll look as black as—as black as—pah! Ha! that's a joke. Mustn't joke about Chloe, by jingo!"

And doubts came over him.

Had he understood Harvey aright?

Now, during this long soliloquy Dick stood looking at the tutor, asking himself whether the old gentleman smelt a rat.

"I must be wary," thought the artful Dick, "and not spoil sport by being over eager."

Then, on looking again at Mr. Mole, he changed his mind.

"He's tight."

But he was wrong.

Isaac Mole was not in that condition so vulgarly yet tersely described.

"My dear Harvey," said the tutor, "I am waiting for the last ten minutes to hear you finish your eloquent reasoning."

"Which?"

"What you began."

"Oh! I see."

"All about ature and nart—I mean nature and art. Richard, Richard," added Mr. Mole, with a half tipsy and reproving smile. "I fear you must have been indulging a bit freely to-day."

"What?"

"Dick, you're not quite clear there," said Mr. Mole, tapping his forehead significantly.

"Come, come, I say, Mr. Mole," exclaimed Harvey, indignantly.

"You know it's true."

"I know nothing of the kind. The proof is I was urging you, as soberly and as reasonably as a reasoning man can, to replace nature's deficiencies by a work of art."

Mole smiled.

"Ha! now we're getting back to it. Explain yourself."

"You have no pigtail. Have an artificial one made for you."

Mr. Mole stared.

"Do you mean it?"

"Yes."

"Truly?"

"Why not?"

Mr. Mole reflected for a little time.

"Why, just listen, sir," said Dick. "You admit that the object is to pass yourself off as a native Chinese?"

"Yes."

"For the purpose of defeating their cheating, avaricous ways?"

"Yes, yes."

"Well, then, every means is fair, and worth trying, I take it."

"Perhaps you're right, Harvey," said Mr. Mole.

"Perhaps. Why, I am sure," exclaimed Dick, with an air of perfect enthusiasm. "Now I'll tell you what, Mr. Mole."

"Why?"

"I'll be bound that you can find artificial pigtails ready made here."

Mr. Mole looked very dubious at this.

"Think so?"

"I feel sure so. There is in fact, I should say, a large trade done in them here. It is a natural consequence. Witness the enormous trade done in chignons in England."

This argument appeared conclusive.

"To be sure."

"Well, I'll go and try to find one," said Dick.

"Do you think it advisable? Well, perhaps—but don't get a very long one."

"Why not?"

"As I'm not used to it."

"If I wore one at all myself," said Dick, "I should wear it down to the ground."

"You would?" exclaimed Mr. Mole. "And why?"

"Because these savages call all of the short-haired people barbarians."

"I know."

"And they measure their respect for a man by the length of his pigtail."

Mr. Mole burst out laughing at this idea. It tickled him uncommonly.

He fairly roared, and Dick had some trouble to keep his own countenance.

"When you have quite done, sir," he said, trying to look severe.

"Oh, don't, don't, Harvey!" cried the tutor, while the tears ran down his cheeks; "I can't stand that."

"Mr. Mole, you always seem to treat lightly any information I have gleaned and wish to impart."

"No, no."

"I say you do."

"Come, come, Harvey—no offence is meant—only——"

"I know what it is; you can never forget that you were the tutor, I the scholar, and you feel ashamed of gleaning any information from me."

Mr. Mole was touched at this.

"My dear Harvey," he said, "I know we are never too old to learn."

"Then you may gain knowledge, even at your advanced age."

Mr. Mole looked severe, now in his turn.

"Don't be personal, Harvey."

"I won't. But laugh as you may, I don't see that there is so much to laugh at in the measuring of a man's intelligence by the length of his pigtail."

"Why, Harvey?"

"Well, do you remember what it says in the Bible about Samson?"

"Well, no, I don't—not at this precise moment."

"It says that his strength lay in his hair."

"So it does!"

And leaving Mr. Mole sharply, on this effect, it served as a clinching argument.

Dick went after the pigtail.

Need we say that he had not far to go?

Of course not.

He had had it carefully stored up for some time past, ready for the moment that he should have prepared Mr. Mole for it by subtle reasoning.

Dick called a meeting of his party generally, and all attended, with the exception of the Harkaways—Jack and Emily.

The bereaved parents of poor young Jack had no heart for fun.

You must not suppose from this that the others had forgotton our daring young hero.

No, they had never ceased to mourn his loss.

But to Harvey fun came as naturally as his food, and the rest of the party shared his predilection in this particular.

"I have persuaded old Mole to wear the pigtail," said Dick, when all were assembled, "and here it is."

"Isn't it a beauty?" exclaimed Jefferson.

"A real gem!" cried the rest in a chorus.

"Rather large, isn't it, Mr. Harvey?" said Pike.

"A whacker."

"He'll never wear that."

"It may put him on his guard, and spoil the joke altogether," suggested Magog Brand.

"Never fear."

"He must be very groggy if he puts that on," said Nabley.

"Not very," replied Dick; "I have carefully prepared the way."

"I'll bet a sovereign you never get him to wear it."

"Done."

"You take me?"

"Yes, it is a bet."

"I want to win a little money," said Jefferson. "I have you for ten dollars."

"Done again!"

So the gambling fit beginning, went all round, and Dick made bets with each.

"Now for it," said he, "but you mustn't breathe a word that might spoil sport."

"No, no!"

"Of course not."

"I shall be only too glad to lose my bet," said Jefferson; "the fun will be cheap at the price."

"Well, then," said Dick, "I'll not only make him wear it, but I'll bring him before you as a real 'Heathen Chinee!'"

* * * * * *

Dick returned to Mole with the pigtail.

"It is rather an unusual size, Harvey," began the tutor.

"Not at all," replied Dick, coolly.

"They never wear them so large as this one, though."

"Not the coolies, nor the common Chinese. But the mandarins and the regular celestial swells do; longer, in fact."

"Come, I say."

"It's a fact, sir, only I thought you wouldn't care for a longer one until you got better used to it."

"I should think not," ejaculated Mole.

"Come, sir, try it on."

Mole paused.

He did not really quite relish the idea.

"I don't positively think, Harvey, that I can bring myself to put that monstrous thing on. Why, it's like the great sea serpent that superstitious mariners talk of."

Harvey frowned, and looked sulky at this.

"Well, good-morning, Mr. Mole," he said, moving towards the door.

"Are you going?"

"Yes."

"Really, I'm sorry to give you so much trouble."

"Oh, don't mention it," said Dick, with affected coldness, "only you won't catch me wasting my time in a hurry again; good-morning."

"Stop a minute, my dear Harvey. You really are so very hasty."

"Well."

He paused suddenly at the door without turning round.

"You are not joking?"

Dick was fit to split, but he managed to preserve an immobile and severe expression.

"Mr. Mole, there are seasons for every thing. You appear to look upon me as a species of baboon."

"Harvey!"

"So you do. Do you think I waste all my time in idle levity, sir? How long have I been pelting all over the place to find you that, and now you—pah! I am disgusted."

And he moved on.

"Stop, stop!"

"Well, sir?"

"I'll put it on, Harvey, if you assure me on your honour——"

Dick frowned.

"Such a speech, Mr. Mole, I wouldn't have tolerated from any one but an old and valued friend. It implies a doubt of my veracity."

"Dear, dear me!" exclaimed Mr. Mole, in sore distress at wounding Dick's feelings. "I'll put it on then."

"Not to please me."

"Then I will to please myself; only stay a moment."

And so, by degrees, Dick was even persuaded into fitting it on, so good-natured and easily mollified did he appear.

"Doesn't it hang down a very long way?" asked Mr. Mole, nervously.

"Not very."

"I think I'd like it coiled up at first."

"Very well."

So Dick coiled it up, and finished Mr. Mole's toilette *à la Chinoise* with the grace and dexterity of a barber of Pekin.

Mr. Mole surveyed himself in the glass.

"Well, really, Harvey, I think your judgment is correct after all," he said, graciously.

"I thought so."

"Quite."

"You prefer to have it coiled up, I suppose?"

"Well, eh; now that I am getting a bit used to it, suppose you let it down again."

"Very well," answered Dick, quite delighted with his success, "since you wish it, sir, as the ghost says to Hamlet—'I will a tale unfold.'"

"Don't joke, Harvey."

"Certainly not."

"Which is best?" demanded Mr. Mole, after a lengthy study of his personal appearance in the glass.

"Well, my candid opinion is that way," answered Dick,

"You think so?"

"I'm sure so."

"I hardly know," said Mr. Mole, hesitatingly.

"I'm so positive," said Dick, "that I'll undertake to pass you before all our friends as a native mandarin."

Mr. Mole took alarm at this.

He smelt mischief in the suggestion.

"Nonsense!"

"I'll wager you ten pounds that they won't recognise you," persisted Dick.

"Ten pounds?"

"Yes."

"Stake your money."

Dick did so.

"Now you must keep your countenance, and not make any sign that would betray you."

"Trust me."

* * * * * *

Mandarin Mole, gorgeously arrayed in a purple silk sac-tunic, and brown satin trousers, worn low so as to conceal his wooden leg, and with his long pigtail dangling, passed out, accompanied by Harvey.

In an adjoining room all the party arose.

"His excellency the Mandarin Chung Ike Moley," said Harvey, with the air of a grand chamberlain.

The whole party bowed with every appearance of great respect.

Mandarin Mole passed on, accompanied by his escort, bowing condescendingly.

And so they passed out of the room.

* * * * * *

"What do you think of that, Mole?"

"A perfect success!" ejaculated Mole.

"I should think so."

"They were all quite deceived."

"That they were."

Mandarin Mole chuckled to himself.

"I cannot refrain, my dear Harvey," said the new mandarin bubbling with laughter, "from a vulgar idiom, although I don't usually indulge myself in such things."

"Fire away, sir," said Dick, "and ease yourself for once."

"I mean to say, Harvey, that in the Cockney slang, we had them alive."

"Had 'em, sir," said Dick, getting yet more slangy—"had 'em on toast."

CHAPTER IV.

A LESSON IN REAL CHINESE.

MONDAY entered.

"Well, Monday?" said Harvey. "What now?"

"Hyar's a Chinee swell, sar, dat want to see Massa Mole."

Harvey tipped Monday the wink on the sly, that is, unseen by Mandarin Mole.

"Mr. Mole is not here at present, Monday."

"Sare?"

"But he will be here shortly."

"Shall I ax the Chinee swell to walk in, sare?"

"Yes."

With that Monday disappeared.

"Now, Mr. Mole," said Harvey, with a great show of anxiety; "this is the time to distinguish yourself."

"How?"

"By letting him see you are up to every thing."

"But do you know who it is?" demanded Mr. Mole nervously.

"No."

"I can guess."

"Who is it then?"

"A sort of shipping agent who is to arrange about chartering a vessel for me."

"What's his name?"

"Biga-Eng-Ming-Ming."

"Is he a merchant?"

"He' a kind of shipbroker. He has been recommended to me by some friends here, and is a most reliable person."

Without any more ado, therefore, the shipbroker was admitted.

Biga-Eng-Ming-Ming was a remarkable-looking person.

He wore a very broad-brimmed hat which shaded his face, but did not quite conceal an ugly scar across his forehead.

He had no pigtail, but wore his hair, which was coarse as horsehair, and jet black, very short.

He had no eyebrows, nor, indeed, any hair upon his face at all; but his skin was so dark that he looked almost like a mulatto.

This was the chief characteristic that Dick Harvey noticed.

"He is certainly a rum one," said he to himself.

"Is his excellency present?" demanded the visitor in English, but with a very strong accent, after a pause.

Harvey looked.

There was a tone in the voice of Biga-Eng-Ming-Ming that rang in his ears.

Was it a familiar tone to him?

Query.

Dick was a rare fellow for fancying that he traced likenesses between folks.

This fancy had often led him into small scrapes, so that, being aware of his weakness, he was in a measure prepared to combat it, and to persuade himself that it was nothing but fancy.

"His excellency Mr. Mole sent for me," said Biga-Eng; "may his servant ask the motive?"

"Certainly," replied Mr. Mole, cheerfully.

"You speak English, too?" said Biga-Eng-Ming-Ming, turning to Mandarin Mole in unfeigned surprise.

"Oh, yes."

"I, too, have been much with Englishmen."

"Much with Englishmen, have you, indeed?" said Harvey, looking steadfastly at Biga-Eng.

"Yes."

"Been in England?"

"Yes," replied the shipbroker, who looked extremely confused, and at last fiercely laid his hand upon a short curved sword he wore.

"Hallo, Master Chinaman!" exclaimed Dick Harvey, noticing the threatening motion of the Celestial towards his sword, "what do you mean by that?"

"Excellency——" he stammered.

"Do you mean to threaten me?" asked Dick, half drawing a revolver from his pocket.

"Certainly not, excellency, but some years ago I received such treatment from a party of your countrymen, that I am almost mad when I think about it."

"Oh indeed! Pray what did they do?"

"Pardon, it is a long story, and it will not make you proud of your countrymen, so let us proceed to business. You sent for me."

"Yes."

"For——"

"For the purpose of getting rates quoted," said Harvey, "and learning the dates of the different ships engaged in this trade—that is all."

"Good, sir. I can give them to you when you please."

"Now, then."

Biga-Eng-Ming-Ming referred to a small pocket-book he carried before he made answer—

"There is the 'Maria Theresa' on the twenty-third."

"The twenty-third. That will about suit," said Mr. Mole.

"On the twenty-fourth we have another departure."

"The name of the vessel, if you please."

"The 'Franz Josef.'"

"Austrian?"

"Yes."

"Both?"

"Yes."

"Now," said Dick, who had a double motive for his next proposition, "suppose you and Mr. Biga-Eng-Ming-Ming arrange about the rates."

"Freight?"

"Yes."

"Very good."

"Make your prices in his language," said Dick to Mr. Mole.

"What for?" asked the latter, nervously.

"He'll be more at home, of course, and it will be just the same to you."

"Why, of course—very nearly the same thing, that is."

"So I said."

Then Dick pulled the Chinese aside a few paces, and said to him, in a low voice—

"Will you talk to him in your own language?"

"Why?"

"To please him."

"Do I not speak English well enough for you?"

"Oh, yes."

"And does not his excellency understand me thoroughly?"

"Yes."

"Then why change our language at all?"

"There is nothing very serious in it, my good sir," replied Harvey. "But Mandarin Mole is a great linguist in our country. He talks every tongue, and he told me on the quiet, that is, between ourselves, just now, that *he did not believe*

you were a Chinaman." Biga-Eng-Ming-Ming gave the speaker a curious glance.

He felt uncomfortable apparently.

Dick watched him.

Not a look of his, not the faintest change in his expression escaped Harvey.

For the latter's suspicions were roused.

"I'll wager any thing," said he to himself, "that they are both humbugs—he as great as Mole and Mole as great as he. Hang me if I don't try them!"

So turning again to the shipbroker, he addressed him in the following extraordinary idiom—

"Chin Chin."

"Chin Chin," responded Biga-Eng, promptly.

"Exactly," said Dick, "Chin Chin talkee talkee, pongo wong, cow cross, cum roce pork."

"Oh, yes."

"Do you think so, Mr. Mole?" asked Dick.

The tutor was a bit puzzled, but he made a wild hit at it.

"Very much, indeed."

"I thought so," said Dick, rather gravely.

Then he went on staring hard at Biga-Eng-Ming-Ming, who was fast waxing very unhappy.

"Chin Chin, youra braceofor alumb ugsum ustown? Eh?"

"Decidedly," said Mr. Mole, eagerly.

"Quite right."

"I thought so," said Dick, looking more serious than ever.

"I had no idea you spoke the language, Harvey," said Mr. Mole.

"I thought not."

"Most fluent," said Biga-Eng, politely.

"You flatter," said Harvey, diffidently.

"Oh, no."

"Well," said Dick, "I have only to add that Chin Chin talkee talkee bird's-nest or finerat cum pickleggwalk ickeraboo an chapell blanche orfulduf fers bo thovu."

"Oh, precisely," said Mole, "just my opinion. Eh, sir?"

"Decidedly," responded Biga-Eng.

"I felt sure that you would agree with me," said Dick.

"Quite right."

"Great fluency," said Biga-Eng to Mole.

"Wonderful," responded Mr. Mole.

Dick enjoyed it mightily, as you may suppose.

"The thundering old humbugs!" he said to himself. "I'll lead them a precious dance yet."

The sham Chinese shipbroker now began fidgeting about. Evidently he wanted to be off.

But Dick would not let him go just yet.

"Chin Chin," said he.

"Chin Chin," replied Biga-Eng-Ming-Ming.

"Pikey wike oky in long acre chung drury lane and bumfit co perriwig in baggynails," said Dick, addressing Mr. Mole with great apparent earnestness; "to which I may add, keri ki ko thum an there ugo cherribobin an berrymee dasently."

"Well," said Mr. Mole, "no one could deny the truth of that."

"No one," said the shipbroker, thus appealed to.

"Well, Harvey, we are quite agreed," said the tutor, "so that settles it."

"Just so."

"I will send you the table of the rates," said Biga-Eng-Ming-Ming.

"Very good."

"As soon as possible," said Harvey.

And then the shipbroker made a low salaam, and took his leave.

Upon this Harvey followed him out, and watched discreetly where he went to.

CHAPTER V.

WHO LAUGHS LAST?

WHO could be happier?
Who more than satisfied than the three of them?
Each fancied that he had hoodwinked the other two.

* * * * * *

"I've humbugged Master Dick Harvey most completely this time," said Isaac Mole. "He won't try it on again with me in a hurry. I got out of it with even more than my accustomed skill and readiness. But really, I should

never have imagined that he was so very proficient in the Chinese language. He took me completely by surprise."

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"I've rather worried the two of them this time," said Dick Harvey to himself; "but old Mole ought to have a severe lesson for his lying and brag. He's not had it half taken out of him as yet. I must manage something yet to worry him.

"And as for that other scamp—for I feel sure he is a scamp—I should like to show him up. I'm positive he is a thorough impostor. I must give it to him. But the first step is to find out who he is, now that I know where he lives. I feel as though I had known him wonderfully well some time or another. But when? That's the question."

* * * * * *

Biga-Eng hurried home, and once safely indoors, he dropped into a cushion on the ground and gave vent to his feelings, which had considerably changed since leaving Harvey and Mole.

"Harvey!" he ejaculated, "and old Mole. Of all the bad luck in the world, nothing could be so bad as this; why I shouldn't wonder Jack Harkaway is with them.

"If they are all here, it will soon be the end of me. They never let a poor devil have a chance with their precious virtue, but so far I have the advantage of them. I know of their presence, but they will never dream who Biga-Eng-Ming-Ming can be."

But presently a smile crossed his evil face.

He thought of a scheme for making a good bag of money in a single stroke and taking a "rise out of old Ikey Mole," as he expressed it, all under one.

"The twenty-third," he said to himself. "Well, I can't be too early with my warning to them. I must send them a letter now, and then make sure of old Mole, the silly old pump!"

And then the shipbroker sat himself down, and addressed a letter to one Chung Ali, now the commander of the "Flowery Land," a heavy war-junk, cruising about the China Seas, and said to be as suspicious a craft as any afloat.

Later on, you will see the results brought about by this letter.

CHAPTER VI.

DANGER!

To return to young Jack.

On board the "Flowery Land," all went on quietly enough for the present.

The reaction after the fatal fight with the American ship under Captain Clemmans ensured this.

Young Jack managed to take advantage of a short conversation between Toro and some of the Lascar seamen—preparatory to a renewal of their scramble, be it remarked—to steal off and make for the cabin again.

Harry Girdwood still slept on.

The doctor, however, had just woke up.

"Well, young gentleman," said he, gruffly, "so you have thought fit to disobey orders?"

"Orders, doctor?" said young Jack, in surprise.

"Did I not say——"

"Yes, yes, doctor," returned young Jack, interrupting him; "you were good enough to give me advice. Had you given me an order, I should not have thought of disobeying you."

The doctor smiled.

"You're as artful as you are plucky, my lad," he said; "only there is no merit, bear in mind, in risking one's life needlessly."

"I'm not ungrateful for your kindness, doctor," Jack said, "but really I could not control my curiosity, and so I—I——"

"And so you chose to thrust your head into the lion's mouth?"

"Not quite that, doctor," said young Jack. "I only went about to take observations."

"With what result?"

"I did not learn a great deal," said young Jack.

"I though not."

"I only recognised amongst the crew an old enemy."

"Indeed."

"Yes. A man I felt sure was dead long ago. I left him covered with wounds, and with scarcely a breath of life in him a few weeks since near New York."

At the mention of New York a smile of mingled pleasure and pain flitted over the doctor's face.

"Do you know New York, doctor?" asked Jack.

"Do I know New York?" iterated the doctor. "Why, I was born there, I have lived there two-thirds of my life—do I know New York? Well, no. I did know it but I question if I shall ever know it again; ever say 'How are you?' to any of my many friends there."

And his voice grew more and more sad as he concluded with a deep-drawn sigh.

Young Jack was touched.

He thought that he would cheer the doctor up.

"You don't like your quarters here, doctor?"

"No."

"Why haven't you tried to escape, then?"

The doctor shook his head gravely, as he answered—

"No chance of that, you will see by and bye. They watch me for the same reason that they saved my life, when they murdered all the poor crew and passengers on board our ship."

"Why?"

"Because, as a doctor, I am useful to them."

"I see."

"They watch me night and day. That little Frenchman——"

"Hypolite Potiron," said young Jack.

"Yes."

"What of him?"

"He spoilt my chance, if ever I had one."

"How?"

"By his clumsy attempt to poison or drug the whole ship's company."

"Why was he spared, then?" asked young Jack.

"Because, as a cook, he was a desirable acquisition to the crew of this slaughter house. But he was too precipitate; he soon grew impatient of his bondage, and he was clumsy in his attempts to get free of it. He dosed them so awkwardly that it was discovered at once, or nearly so."

"And how was it discovered, doctor?"

"By them all growing bad of the same complaint at once. A little more patience, and the vessel would have been in our hands—drifted, in spite of them, in the hands of the authorities."

"I see."

"And so there would have been an end to these wretches, whose sole delight, apparently, is bloodshed—useless brutality—slaughter."

Just then, Harry Girdwood began to talk in his sleep and to grow restless.

The doctor, with his finger on his lip, motioned Jack to silence.

"He is feverish to-night, but unless I am deceived, he will be better by the morning."

"You think so?" said young Jack, eagerly.

"Yes."

* * * * * *

Young Jack withdrew to the other end of the cabin, and sat down to reflect upon the doctor's words.

For Jack, be it understood, had made up his mind that he would by some means or other leave the dreadful pirate ship.

"If that clumsy little Frenchman so nearly accomplished it," he said to himself, "surely, with care, it could be brought off by the doctor."

And by degrees this became his one fixed idea.

He fixed that part in his head, and from that moment he set himself steadily and systematically to work to find out the best means to accomplish it.

"I must be more cautious than old Potiron," he said to himself. "I won't make a step unless I have the doctor's advice and consent. His coolness and and shrewdness, with a little dash of my desperation, would be sure to manage it. But I must not think of doing any thing for the present."

He could not conscientiously set to work actively in this matter until Harry Girdwood was able to accompany him.

Once let his young comrade be on the fair road to recovery, and something should be done.

So he resolved.

Now, therefore, he had a double motive for desiring his comrade's speedy restoration to health.

And so he watched anxiously every phase in Harry's iliness, and followed the good doctor's movements—aye, even the expression of his open countenance, with almost breathless interest.

The doctor saw this.

And seeing, he managed to profit by it.

He invited young Jack's attention—explained to him learnedly the nature of the evils he had to fight against in the treatment of his patient.

In this way he contrived to keep young Jack down in the cabin for the present, and out of harm's way.

CHAPTER VII.

A SPLIT IN THE CAMP.

MEANWHILE some other matters transpired on deck upon which young Jack Harkaway had by no means reckoned.

Toro was, from the first moment that he saw our young hero, all agog for settling him at once.

"Hang him up to the yardarm," suggested the amiable ex-brigand, "or drop him over the ship's side with a six-pound shot tied to his heels, and let us get rid of the vermin."

"Why be in such a hurry?" asked Hunston.

"Because I loathe the sight of his face and the sound of his voice."

"So do I."

"Then why not make an end of it at once?"

"Because we may make better use of him."

"Bah! These Harkaways have as many lives as a cat. They have the devil's luck and their own too. He'll bring some mischief to us unless we are careful."

"That's just what I say. Let us be careful."

"And begin by cutting the brat's throat."

"Not quite that."

"What then?"

"By squeezing particulars out of him about his father—about their ship—find out its destination, and watch for them?"

"What then?"

Hunston stared at him contemptuously.

"What then! Can you ask?"

"I do ask."

"Once found out, we could, perhaps, get the whole of them into our power; think of that."

Toro's eyes sparkled.

"That would be glorious!" he exclaimed.

"Of course."

"Suppose we have him up and make him tell at once?"

Hunston shook his head.

"No good."

"Why?"

"He wouldn't tell."

"How do you mean to get at it, then?"

"By slow degrees. The boy will let it fall if we only allow him to brag a bit. He can't help bragging; it's in the Harkaway blood, and then we shall know all we want to know."

"Toro frowned.

"I could name a way of getting to know what you want at once."

"Indeed."

"Yes."

"Out with it then," said Hunston, impatiently, "or I shall begin to think that you are tinged with the weakness of the Harkaways."

"What?"

"Brag."

Toro swore a fierce oath, and drew his knife as though he meant to carve up Hunston for his temerity without delay.

But Hunston feared him not

He only laughed derisively at him.

"Give me the boy for ten minutes," said Toro, finding his companion in crime was not frightened.

"What then?"

"I'll pledge my life that he'll make a clean breast of all he knows."

"Pah! or lose his own life, I suppose."

"No."

"I say yes."

"I swear he should tell all, and in less than ten minutes. Hunston, you even treat my suggestions with contempt."

"Not more than they merit," retorted the other.

Toro's eyes flashed lightning, and he bit his lip till the blood came.

Few men but Hunston would have said this much with impunity.

"Give the brat over to me," he said controlling his rage, "and you shall see."

"Hark you, Toro," said Hunston, deliberately, "to give

the boy over to your keeping would be about as sensible as to drop a jewel coffer into the sea, because I couldn't find out the secret to open it."

"I promise——"

"I tell you," returned Hunston, "that you know as little of that boy's temper as of your own. Why, he would never speak."

"Bah!"

"Never. You would tear him limb from limb. The cruellest tortures could not make him wag his obstinate tongue unless he chose. He has too much of his father in him. Once rouse their vanity in this particular, and he would die like a young martyr at the stake."

"Martyr! stuff! You're mad, Hunston!"

"And you, Toro, are a hot-headed fool!"

And so, with these mutual and frank expressions of displeasure, the companions in villany separated.

* * * * * *

"I must look after that Italian idiot," said Hunston to himself. "He'll spoil all else for the sake of killing the boy."

* * * * * *

"Vain ass!" muttered Toro, as he was left alone "Since he will not give his help or approval, it shall be done without him. I'll see the rest of them, and hear what they have to to say about it, for the life of that boy I will have."

He walked aft in high dudgeon, and ran across Robert Emmerson, who was engaged in earnest conversation with Von Koppenhaagen.

"Ah, Emmerson," said Toro, "did you know that we have bagged a prize?"

"Which?"

"Young Jack Harkaway, to be sure."

"Stale news," replied Emmerson; "I've seen him."

"Vat!" ejaculated Von Koppenhaagen, "young Jag Hargavay!—Ter tuyvel!"

Emmerson laughed at the Dutchman's vehement expression.

"Not quite the devil, Kop," said he. "Only one of his imps."

"His imbs! I know it vell. Dat ist zer goot!" cried the Dutchman. "He make us to danze in the der Bowery mit his shtink droo der hole in der wall."

"Perhaps it wasn't him," said Emmerson.

"Soh! ja wohl! vell, he make us to danze; ve shall make him to danze upon noding."

"May he die of the caper in his heel," said Emmerson, laughing.

"Ja, ja!" cried Von Koppenhaagen, "dat ist zo. Der caber in his heel is ver' fonny."

"I'll go bail," replied Emmerson, drily, "that the boy won't see the joke of it."

Toro looked on and smiled.

Emmerson and the Dutchman were apparently just in the humour to work with him and thwart Hunston.

"Now the next thing is to inform some of the crew. Once let them know that this boy's father led the attack on them—and this is sure, for Harkaway is the master spirit in every daring enterprise that takes place near him—and they won't stand any nonsense. I thirst to see his carcase dangling in the sun."

* * * * * *

He sought out for his present purpose an Armenian, called Kappa, who was a petty officer of the pirates, and just the man he wanted.

It needed very little to incite the crew against young Jack Harkaway.

The bare mention of the fact that his father was the prime mover in the attack upon them was quite sufficient.

They called a meeting upon deck at once, and a council was held as to the kind of death that our young hero was to suffer.

Thus the matter was taken completely out of the hands of Emmerson, Toro, and Von Koppenhaagen.

"We have decided, gentlemen," said the Armenian, who was as full of grace as a courtier, instead of being coarse and brutal, like the great majority of his comrades.

"What?" demanded Robert Emmerson.

"How the boy is to die."

"Might you not have consulted me?"

"Pardon me," returned this genteel pirate, suavely, "it is our prisoner."

"And ours too."

"Nay."

"Well, well," said Emmerson, "it is idle losing one's temper over a question of form. What do you propose doing with young Harkaway?"

"Hanging him up."

"Yes."

"But not as you proposed. We mean to suspend him to the yardarm by the ankles, and use him as a target."

Protean Bob smiled grimly at this.

"There is some fancy about that notion," said he, "and I am with you."

A party was sent in search of young Jack, and soon it transpired that the prisoner was in the cabin with the American doctor.

Six men, headed by the Armenian officer, Kappa, trotted off down the companion ladder, to find themselves face to face with young Harkaway himself.

"Come," said Kappa, clapping him on the shoulder.

"Where?" asked young Jack.

"On deck."

The boy felt just a little bit uncomfortable.

"What do you want with him?" demanded the doctor.

"Pardon me, medico," returned the ever polite pirate, "that is our business."

"In that case," said the American doctor, coolly, "the boy remains here."

"Who says so?"

"I."

"Are you sure, doctor," said the polite Armenian, "that you are in your full senses?"

"Quite."

"Bah!"

His politeness momentarily gave way to this slightly contemptuous expression, and he motioned to his men to bear young Jack off.

But this was not altogether easy to do.

Young Jack was slippery as an eel.

Down he wriggled on to the ground, toppled over two or three of the ruffians, and scrambling through the confused heap, he bounded over to the doctor's side.

"Come, doctor," said the Armenian, "don't you interfere. We wish to treat you with every respect, but if you do not stand aside, we shall have to be very rough with you."

"Begone!"

"Come, come."

They advanced menacingly.

"Hark you," said the doctor, "if you go now, at once, I

will say nothing of this outrage. Linger a moment longer, and I shall complain to the captain."

"What?" cried one of the Lascars, "does the old medico presume to threaten us?"

"Down with him!" cried the rest.

Now the polite Armenian tried to stay them. But in vain.

Knives were drawn, and ugly words were bandied, and the pirates moved to their destined victims.

"Back!" said the doctor, waving his hand.

And they instinctively stopped at the word.

"You see this little phial," said the doctor, calmly; "that contains what would end, not merely your wretched lives, but those of the whole ship. I have but to let it fall, and you are annihilated. In less than two minutes there would not remain a fragment of your miserable carcases or a plank of the ship."

The men shrank back aghast.

"Begone!"

It was a sight to see those bold bullies, with blanched cheeks and quaking limbs, retreat before the stern old American, and crawl up the ladder out of the way.

Young Jack turned to the old American and embraced him.

"Oh, sir," he cried, "how can I ever thank you enough? You have saved my life."

The old American patted his head kindly.

"I ask no more than to have saved you, my boy," he said, "I cannot tell you how much I am gratified. Do you want to gratify me now in return?"

"Tell me how I can, sir," he replied, eagerly.

"By heeding my counsels in future."

"I will."

The old doctor regarded the boy with a curious expression for a few moments.

He was studying his character in his face, and he soon made up his mind.

"Yes, yes," he said, "I'll trust you, Jack. If ever I knew a noble boy—well, well, I mustn't compliment you. I shall make you vain."

Two days elapsed without adventure.

Harry Girdwood mended rapidly.

In eight days, according to the worthy old doctor, he would be fit to get about.

This was grand news to both the boys.

Young Jack was full of fancies and wild schemes for escaping, and he felt that, backed by Harry Girdwood, he should be able to bring one of his daring and dangerous plans to a head.

On board the pirate ship Jack and his American friend lived quietly enough for a few days.

No other attempt was made by Toro or his vile associates to get possession of the boy, who from that time lived at peace in the surgeon's cabin.

One morning Jack and the doctor were startled from their sleep by the sound of a cannon being fired overhead.

The doctor went to inquire into the cause of it, and he discovered that they were signalling a small ship.

"Another victim," said the doctor, with a sigh; "more prey for these insatiable murderers. Brutal ruffians! When will these scenes of bloodshed and wholesale murder come to an end?"

The doctor and young Jack watched the strange ship with considerable eagerness, and they were filled with vain regrets when they saw it lured to its doom.

"It would be a Christian work to warn them," said the old doctor.

"It would indeed," replied young Jack, "but how?"

Plan after plan was thought of and dismissed, for the simple reason that it would be dangerous to them, and perhaps risk the safety of those whom they wished to preserve.

"I have a plan," said young Jack after a time.

"What is it?"

"We could write them a letter," he began.

"Of course," said the doctor, interrupting him with a sad smile, "we could write a letter, but the postage presents some difficulty."

"Don't be impatient, doctor; I'm coming to that."

"What would you do?"

"I have read of shipwrecked people telling the world of their troubles by means of a letter fastened in a bottle."

"They might not pick it up," said the doctor.

"True, sir, but on the other hand they might."

The doctor brooded long and earnestly over it.

"Perhaps it is worth a chance," he said.

And so they made up their minds to try it.

But just as they were making their preparations, young Jack

discovered that the strange ship had lowered a boat, and was going to send some men on board.

"Now they will discover all about it for themselves," said the doctor.

"Do you think so?" asked young Jack.

"They must be blind as bats not to discover all about it," said the doctor.

"Half a glance ought to tell them as plainly as we could."

"It ought to."

"At all events," said the American doctor, "we may have an opportunity of putting them upon their guard once they come on board. The only thing is to act with the greatest possible prudence, and then we may be of some good to them."

"You may count upon my caution, doctor," responded young Jack, earnestly.

"I do."

And the boy was fully resolved to take the old gentleman's advice before he made the least step in the matter.

* * * * * *

Not very long after this the boat from the strange ship pulled alongside the "Flowery Land," and the officer in command of the boat came on board.

Young Jack could not repress his curiosity.

At all hazards he determined to learn all he could.

He crept up the companion ladder on to the deck, and profited by the general attention of the pirate crew being engaged by the new-comer to get close up.

And then he perceived that the officer in question was dressed in the loose trousers and gaiters, such as are worn by the inhabitants of some of the Chinese islands, but his countenance was rather of the European cast than of the dull-faced, heavy-eyed Oriental.

"He looks almost like an Englishman," thought young Jack, in some surprise.

And this was in some measure confirmed the next moment by hearing the officer address them in his language.

"This is the 'Flowery Land,' I believe?" he said.

"Yes," replied one of the Lascar officers.

"And is commanded by Captain Lin-Van-San?"

"Yes."

"I have a letter for his excellency."

"We—" thought young Jack, "that's a rum go, calling a pirate his excellency. What next?"

The next surprised him even more.

"His excellency will grant you an audience, I dare say," said the Lascar lieutenant.

"That is my wish."

"Give me your letter——"

"I cannot do that; it is against orders. I had particular instructions to give it into the hands of his excellency the captain, and none else."

The Lascar lieutenant smiled.

"Very well, I will seek the captain and ascertain his pleasure."

Now the officer from the boat was in luck.

His excellency the Captain Lin-Van-San graciously deigned to put in an appearance.

The captain of the "Flowery Land" was a formidable-looking fellow.

He stood nearly six feet high, was broad-shouldered, in proportion, and was fierce in aspect.

He wore around his middle a broad sash of grey crape, in which were stuck enough knives and pistols to stock a small armourer's store.

The captain did not wear his hair in Chinese fashion, that is, shaved off the front of the head, and gathered into a long pigtail; he let his hair grow like the Europeans, and this with the Chinese is usually a sign of mourning.

The officer from the boat made a profound obeisance as the dread captain advanced.

"You bring me a letter," said he, in good English.

"Yes, your excellency," replied the strange officer.

"From whom?"

"A friend and humble servant of your excellency," was the reply.

"His name?"

"Biga-Eng-Ming-Ming. It is of high importance."

"Give it to me?"

The captain took the letter, and handed it to the Lascar officer who had been to announce the visit from the strange vessel.

"Read."

The officer bowed, opened the letter, and read aloud as follows—

"The 'Franz Josef' will leave upon the twenty-third, and the cargo will be rich. The 'Flowery Land' is too well known to venture about our latitudes, but let your other vessel be on the watch. The 'Flowery Land' is watched for. Be upon your guard; a British ship is on the look-out for you. Beware of her. The accursed British are a terror to the rovers of the sea. Avoid them as you would the plague. They have pushed the emperor to aid in the pursuit of the 'Flowery Land.' Need I say how important it is that you should be quick?

"Your devoted servant to command,

"BIGA-ENG-MING-MING."

The captain frowned.

"These British are very meddlesome."

"They are, sir."

"And is that all?"

"No, sir; there is yet a postcript at the end."

"Go on."

"The postscript says that besides carrying a regular captain, the 'Franz Josef' will bear the owner of the plantation of whom mention has been frequently made."

"I remember him well," said the captain; "he has a wooden leg."

Young Jack started.

He thought of his poor old tutor, Isaac Mole.

"Go on."

"It's more than likely, too, that two rich Americans will be of the party, and an Englishman so wealthy that he can pay a princely ransom."

"He should have given all their names," said the captain.

"One moment, captain," said the Lascar, "he does; here are names, but I can scarcely read them. The Americans are called Jep—Jep—no, not Jep, Jefferson—I see, and Magog Brand."

Young Jack could scarcely refrain from crying out aloud.

"The Englishmen are called Harvey and Jack Harkaway," pursued the lieutenant, "and both are desperate men, but rich, and the men are worth more than the whole cargo of the 'Franz Josef,' by reason of the ransom that they can be made to disgorge if they are handled judiciously. All this your excellency can get confirmed by either of my friends whom I am given to understand have found you by now, either Ostani or Toro."

"Good," said the captain, "call Toro."

And then the burly Italian came slouching along the deck to where the party stood around the commander of the pirates.

"Toro."

"Captain."

"Do you know these names? Tell him, Salvator, I can scarce pronounce those barbarous names."

"Harvey?"

"Yes."

"Harkaway?"

"Yes."

"Magog Brand?"

"Yes."

"Jefferson?"

"Yes."

And then the ex-brigand, with a fierce oath, ejaculated—

"Yes, indeed I do know them; and what of all these captain?"

"Our good friend writes us glorious news from Foo-Chow."

Toro's eyes glistened as he said—

"From Biga——"

"Biga-Eng-Ming-Ming. Yes, a grand prize is to fall into our hands shortly. He writes to let us know."

"Good, good," exclaimed Toro, rubbing his hands gleefully; "very good; and is this all that Biga-Eng, as you call him, says?"

"Yes."

"Where is his letter?"

"Here," returned the Lascar lieutenant.

He had put it down for a moment on a big sea-chest which stood beside him, and now it was gone.

In the general interest which the conversation had excited no one had observed a hand steal along the top of the chest and withdraw the letter.

Nor had they seen the stealer creep on hands and knees from his lurking place.

All that they knew now was that the letter was gone—overboard, they imagined.

So was the audacious young Jack.

But they did not know that.

Luckily for him he had gone as he came—unseen.

* * * * * *

"Doctor, doctor!" cried the boy, sliding down the companion ladder.

"What is it?" echoed the old American, looking up quite startled.

"See here."

And Jack handed him his booty.

"What's this?"

"A letter; this ship is the pirate's consort."

"Never!"

"It is indeed."

"And this letter——"

"Announces when their next victim will fall into their hands; but oh, doctor," added the boy, with a burst of feeling, "only fancy, my father, my uncle, and several of our friends will be on board."

The doctor started.

He eyed young Jack sharply.

He feared that he was going mad, that the exciting events had deranged his intellect.

"Read the letter, sir," cried young Jack Harkaway, "learn for yourself."

The doctor did so.

"You are right, my boy," he said, gravely; "this is sad news indeed."

CHAPTER VIII.

MANDARIN MOLE AT HOME.

MANDARIN MOLE appeared likely to fall into trouble.

The Chinese are notoriously superstitious, and their supernatural fancies take some few peculiar flights.

Their national weakness is a belief in Feng-shuy, who may be defined as their god of luck, and has also some control over the wind.

To propitiate this deity, the Chinese perpetrate all kinds of wild extravagances.

For instance, they will only build their houses facing certain directions; and if examined closely into, it will frequently be discovered that sanitary laws are mysteriously at work in their ostensible purpose of invoking the protecting aid of Feng-shuy.

It was in this way, however, that Mandarin Mole contrived most unluckily to get into trouble.

He built up a low house, or perhaps, more correctly speaking, a hut, upon his property, and whether, being on the hillside, he had in some strange way worked in opposition to the inexplicable and inscrutable laws of Feng-shuyism, it is not easy to say.

However, the day following the completion of this building, a very remarkable accident occurred.

Mr. Mole was seated at breakfast with Dick Harvey, Chloe, Jack Harkaway, and his wife and little Emily.

Mr. Mole was reading a native newspaper, or was pretending to read it, for he was a more arrant humbug than ever, and he used to get coached up in the meaning of the newspaper, and recite it off from memory, pretending all the while to decipher the Chinese characters as easily as English.

Monday burst into their presence, closely followed by his fellow darkey, Sunday.

"Oh, Massa Mole! Massa Mole!"

Mr. Mole looked up.

"Oh, brudder Mole!" ejaculated Sunday.

"What is it?"

"Oh, such a accident, brudder Mole," cried Sunday.

"An accident, Sunday? Surely——"

"Oh, dere is——"

"What?"

"You know dat new house?"

"The new house?"

"Yes."

"Oh, brudder Mole, brudder Mole!"

Mr. Mole began to grow impatient.

"What is it? Why can't you speak out?"

"Don't you get 'patient, brudder Mole," said Sunday.

"No, sar," said Monday; "you'll learn all 'bout it soon enough."

"What?"

"Too soon."

"I wish you would——"

"Oh, dat new house."

"What of it?"

"Smashed up," replied Monday, with great gravity.

Mandarin Mole sprang up in his chair, and stamped his wooden leg vehemently upon the ground.

"My new house smashed up?" ejaculated Mole.

"Yes, sar."

"Yes, brudder Mole."

"It is, sar," added Monday. "Smashed—broke up—chawed up, sar—pulverised—demolished!"

"Well," exclaimed Mr. Mole, staggered by the blow; "my newly-built house medolished—I mean domelished—tut, tut, confound it, I mean, demolished!"

"Got your tongue in a knot?" suggested Harvey chuckling.

"Don't joke, Harvey," said Mr. Mole, reprovingly. "It is no joking matter."

Harvey looked very serious at this.

"Right, sir," he said, "it is not. You should have taken more water with it."

"With what?"

"Your grog, sir."

Mr. Mole was utterly outraged at this.

Before the ladies, too.

Monstrous.

He mentally vowed to store up a heavy debt of vengeance against that scoundrel Dick Harvey.

It should be none the less certain or severe because he was forced to conceal his anger now.

None.

* * * * * *

"Why, brudder Mole," explained Sunday, "the fact is, dat Monday and me was walking ober dere to get to work, when we see a lot of dem fellars bolt away like scared venison."

"Deer," suggested Mandarin Mole.

"Well, deer; ain't deer and venison all the same?"

"Yes, but——"

"Don't interrupt, brudder Mole," said Sunday, loftily.

"Well?"

"Well, we see dem fellars flying off like flashes of greased lightning before we see nothink else, and den all of a suddink instead of the house we see nothink but a blank space standing up."

"Lor'!"

"Good gracious me!"

"Are you sure you are right?" said Mr. Mole.

"Certain."

"I can place implicit belief on them for one," said Harvey; "their keen sight is really marvellous."

"You think so, Harvey?" said Mandarin Mole.

"Decidedly. Who but they could have seen a blank space standing up?"

"Who indeed?" added Harkaway, slily.

Poor Jack!

Poor bereaved father.

It was the first word of light-heartedness that they had heard him utter since the fatal sea fight with the pirate junk.

"And the house?" asked Mr. Mole. "What has become of the house?"

"On de ground, brudder Mole," answered Sunday. "Eh, Monday?"

"Yes, all dat's left of it," returned Monday.

"But now tell me," said Mr. Jefferson. "Just a word, Monday."

"Yes, sar."

"Who did it?"

"Dem damn niggars, sar."

'The Chinese?"

"Yes."

"What can they have done it for?"

"Perhaps," said Magog Brand, "it is something connected with their religion or superstition."

Mr. Mole listened thoughtfully till now.

Then he spoke—

"I think not. It was built by native workmen."

"True."

"And if they had found any thing about the place which didn't agree with their faith——"

"Well, but it may have interfered with their notions of what was right for their Feng-shuy fancies."

"I shouldn't be at all surprised," said Magog Brand, "for they are a very wonderful people, and there is no getting to the bottom of their fancies."

The party then, in some considerable uneasiness, were led off by the two negroes to the scene of the outrage.

They were right.

The house, which had been built by Isaac Mole as a storehouse for the plantation, was utterly demolished.

There lay the house, which had taken weeks of patient labor to construct—a heap of ruins upon the ground.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CHINESE SENTRY THAT MOUNTED GUARD OVER THE RUINS.

THEY looked on aghast.

Utterly dismayed at the ruin before them.

What was to be done?

They held a general consultation.

"I think we ought to arm Sunday and Monday, and let them stand upon the watch," proposed Mr. Jefferson.

"Why?"

"They are sure to come back."

"Were they in numbers?"

"Dere was a big crowd of dem," replied Sunday.

"How many?"

"Can't say."

"How many should you say?" they asked, appealing to Monday.

"Thirty or forty," was Monday's reply, "or more."

"We must be careful," said Brand.

"There's not much danger," said Jefferson; "they soon clear off when they smell powder. It disagrees with them."

"I have seen the Chinese fight well enough at times," said Magog Brand.

"When they are a hundred to one, I suppose."

"Well, yes."

"As far as numbers go they would have it all upon their side," said Harkaway; "so let me recommend prudence."

"Quite right, Harkaway," said Mr. Mole, "although, to tell the truth, if I were to follow my own inclination, I should act very differently."

"And what would you do?"

"Why, mount guard," replied Mr. Mole, boldly.

"Alone?"

"Yes, alone!"

And he gave a regular swagger.

To see Mandarin Mole just then, one would have deemed him capable of challenging the whole province single-handed.

Dick eyed the old tutor slily.

"Mr. Mole is quite right," said he, "and my opinion is that we ought not to stand in his way."

"True, Harvey," said Mole; "I feel I could fight fifty of them single-handed."

"Surely, Harvey, you would never consent to it."

"Not if we had to deal with any ordinary man," said Dick, "but I happen to know Mr. Mole better than most of you."

"Yes, but consider, single-handed."

"No, no, Mr. Mole must not be allowed to do any thing so rash."

Mr. Mole felt that this was a safe opportunity for him to indulge in a little swagger and brag without running any risk.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I am not ungrateful for your affectionate regard and consideration. But there are moments when one's dignity and one's manhood revolt at coercion. I insist."

He regretted this speech very soon.

Although they had made such a show of opposing his rash resolution, they now one and all gave way, and turned to leave him then and there upon his solitary watch.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"Home."

"To leave you," added Harkaway, "since such is your wish."

"Decidedly."

"Come along, then," said little Mr. Brand, falling into the joke. "But stay, one word."

"What is it?"

"Had we not better take an affectionate farewell of Mr. Mole?"

"Farewell!" gasped Mr. Mole. "What for?"

"In case of accidents, Mr. Mole."

Mandarin Mole was seen to wince at the word.

"Accidents!" he exclaimed.

"Yes."

"But you don't think——"

"We don't anticipate any thing," said Dick Harvey; "but one can never tell, so good-bye, Mr. Mole; and may we meet again."

"Amen!" groaned Mr. Mole.

"And may no harm come to you—at any rate, let us pray you may not be mutilated like they do their prisoners generally."

Mr. Mole made a very wry face at this.

"Oh, they mutilate their prisoners, Harvey?" he said.

"Oh, yes," continued Dick, cheerfully; "they are the most inventive people on the face of the earth in the matter of tortures for their prisoners."

"Dear, dear!"

He made a hard struggle to keep up an appearance of calm.

But his years would show themselves in spite of him.

"Well, good-bye, Mr. Mole," said Harvey.

"One moment, Harvey," said Mandarin Mole. "Eh—ah—just—ah!"

"We shall be within gunshot."

"Oh!"

"And though you are likely to fall honourably——"

"Don't."

"We shall avenge you, never fear."

"A pretty lookout for me," groaned Mr. Mole.

"And we'll bear your mutilated remains back to Mrs. Mole, no matter what may occur."

"Don't talk nonsense, Harvey," said Mole.

"You'll find it no nonsense."

"But what do they do? I—I am anxious to learn all I can."

"Yes," said Dick to himself, "and to find an excuse to keep me here."

Then he gabbled off hurriedly some of the notorious tortures which the celestials have discovered.

He also added a fancy sketch or two of his own.

"Well," he said, "this is a favourite programme of theirs. They strip the prisoner stark naked, and tie him hands and feet, so that he is utterly helpless.

"Then they procure a springless cart, and carpet the bottom of it with jagged and rusty nails and bits of broken glass——"

"Ugh!" from Mole.

"And they lay their prisoner upon this to carry him over the worst roads they can find."

"Beasts!"

"Then they draw his finger nails——"

Mole with a groan dived his hands into his pockets.

"With a pair of pincers, and then——"

"Then," groaned Mole; "why, that would kill any one."

"Oh, no," said Harvey, coolly, "not any one that was hardy."

"Oh!"

"Then they tie the prisoner up by the ankles and give him the bastinado."

"What?"

"You don't know what the bastinado is?"

"Oh, yes."

"Well, it is nothing more nor less than playing the devil's tattoo upon the soles of your feet with bamboo canes, and by Jupiter, don't it make you dance!"

"The fiends!"

"Well, next——"

"Next?"

"Yes."

"Why, no man——"

"Oh, yes he could," retorted Dick, anticipating Mr. Mole's remark, "if, as I stated before, he had been brought up hardy."

"Hardy!" echoed the dismayed Mandarin Mole; "why, hang me, Harvey, if an iron statue could stand it."

"Well, next——"

"There, there," interrupted Mr. Mole, "I don't want to know any thing more about the horrors that these revolting wretches have invented."

"Oh, very well," said Dick, "then I'll go."

"Eh?—oh!—stop a minute."

"What for?"

"To keep me company."

"Well," said Dick, with an air of great candour, "I must say that that would give me great pleasure, only I have no wish to fall into the hands of the Chinese thieves."

"Nor I."

"Not that I so much mind their springless cart, their bastinado, or their nail drawing."

"Ugh!"

"I only think of the sequel."

"The sequel!" shrieked Mandarin Mole. "What sequel can there possibly be to such horrors?"

"The prison," replied Dick, solemnly.

"Prison?"

"Yes."

"You can't compare confinement in a prison to such horrors."

"Can't I?—no, I can't; you're right, Mr. Mole," said Dick, looking more and more alarmed as he spoke; "nothing can compare to the prison. Do you know they keep you awake until you die horribly of fatigue?"

"Oh!"

"Gaolers are placed over you night and day, who prod your ribs with cruel spikes every time that you close your eyes."

"What devils!"

"They are."

And then, having made poor Mandarin Mole about as uncomfortable as he could by this rather highly-coloured description of the manners and customs of the celestials, Dick Harvey made off.

"Good-bye. Remember we shall be within gunshot, and if they torture or kill you, we shall avenge you."

And off Harvey ran at a great rate to rejoin the rest of the party, who were far on their way back.

When he overtook the party, they were just discussing the prudence of leaving Mr. Mole there alone.

"It's all very well for a joke," said Mr. Jefferson, "but supposing that the thieves did come down from the hills and fall upon poor old Mole?—we shouldn't laugh then."

"No, indeed."

"What shall we do?"

"Fetch him away."

Dick burst into a loud fit of laughter.

"You don't know old Mole yet," he said; "there is no fear of his remaining long there alone."

"Think not?"

"It is sure."

"Still," said Jack Harkaway, "he might remain too long just by five minutes."

"Better call him back."

"No; wait awhile," said Dick, "here we are at home. I'll show you a way of frightening him back, and then he will explain to us how many Chinese he has killed. But wait here for a while."

So saying, he went in, and returned in the course of five minutes accompanied by a curious little Chinese soldier, carrying an old-fashioned musket and the scimitar-like side-arm.

He wore a helmet also, which was so put on that it almost concealed his head and face.

Harvey led his native trooper up to the assembled company, and then gave him the word of command in his own particular Chinese.

"Fy-chow!" cried Captain Dick, in those hoarse accents with which any one is familiar who has seen an English company put through its paces by a superior officer; "Keri-kiko-kum, slapbang penniwink!"

And then, turning towards the company, he added, gravely—

"Freely translated, gentlemen, that means present arms!"

The Chinese soldier faced round.

"Why, blow me!" exclaimed Mr. Nabley, in surprise, "look there. What is it?"

"It is Nero."

And so it was.

Nero, as large as life!

And a capital Chinese young Jack's monkey made, with perhaps this trifling ground of objection—

His pigtail had commenced growing rather lower down his back than did the real celestials.

"Now we are off to make an experiment," said Harvey, with his old mischievous laugh.

"Where to?" demanded Jefferson.

"To the plantation; to the ruins."

"What, to Mandarin Mole's post?"

"Yes."

"What is your trick?" said Harkaway. "Tell us all about it?"

"I am only going to march Nero up there, to see how far noble old Mole's pluck will hold out."

So the whole of the party, seeing that there was a chance of fun, followed Dick Harvey and monkey Nero Fy-Chow.

As soon as they got within a hundred yards or so of Mr. Mole, they discovered that that worthy gentleman had been trying to raise his courage for the solitary vigil by artificial means.

He had sat upon the ground to rest while he "refreshed" from a black bottle that stood beside him.

The bottle was labelled in conspicuous characters "Spring Water," but it smelt suspiciously of whisky. So did he!

It was evident that he had refreshed freely and frequently, for he had been completely overcome by it, and had sunk back asleep.

Not only did the worthy Mole sleep, he also snored most discordantly.

Nothing could be better for Harvey's scheme.

He brought Nero up, made him strike an awe-inspiring attitude over the recumbent Mole and then he, vulgarly speaking, kicked up a devil of a shindy.

First Harvey hullabalooed and then blazed away on a six-shooter revolver,

And just as he had let off his revolver, down dived Dick behind the ruins of the house.

Mole shrieked.

It was a drunken cry, but a cry it was.

"Murder, thieves, help! Oh, the devil!"

No response to this appeal appearing to be forthcoming, Mr. Mole scrambled up to his feet—well, no, his foot—and hurried away as fast as his legs—well, no, his leg—would carry him.

Nero managed to fire off his gun, loaded only with powder.

Mole heard the report, and tumbled flat on his face, but was soon again on his leg, stumping quickly away.

"Well, Nero," said Harvey, laughing heartily, "we've got the best of that anyhow. Now, Nero, I'll leave you on guard, and just go home to hear what old Mole has to say for himself. He's sure to tell lies by the bushel over this."

CHAPTER X.

NERO MOUNTS GUARD UP A TREE AND SCALPS A MARAUDER.

NERO, like a brave soldier, shouldered his musket and marched up and down.

There was a bit of a hop in his march, otherwise he would have looked like a highly-disciplined sentry.

This was until Dick Harvey was out of sight, for Nero was as artful as the father of evil himself.

Then he dropped his musket, and began to search about amongst the ruins of the demolished pagoda.

A woefully curious monkey was Nero.

His sharp eye had perceived something glistening in the rubbish of the ruins.

He prodded down with a stick that he found, poked and raked about until he fished up the object of his search.

It was a shiny leather case.

Nero tried to open it, for his natural intelligence told him it was to be opened, but he could not manage it, and so he suffed it into his pocket in apparent disgust.

Suddenly Nero pricked up his ears.

He heard footsteps.

He looked about him, and then seeing cause for alarm, scrambled up into a tree.

It wanted all his wonderful dexterity in climbing to make good his hold up there with his musket on his arm.

He had only just time to get fairly ensconced when a man appeared upon the top of the steep hill just close by the ruins of Mole's pagoda.

There was something very suspicious in the man's movements.

He looked carefuly about thim before venturing to descend the hill.

But apparently it never occurred to him to look into the tree where Nero the artful sat perched and grinning.

The new-comer was satisfied that the coast was clear.

So down he came.

He paused immediately beneath Nero's perch, and looked anxiously about him.

And then he began muttering to himself.

Now, his speech appeared to have a singularly exciting effect upon his monkeyship.

What could be the reason ?

Was it because the stranger, who was outwardly a thorough-paced celestial, spoke in English, that had an ultra-White-chapel ring in it ?

Perhaps.

Certain it is that it did excite Nero exceedingly.

" I'm cock sure," said this strange Chinese, " that I dropped it about here."

He raked about again.

" Blow it ! " exclaimed the disappointed searcher. " Hang it ! " —dash it ! "

Nero grinned and showed his teeth.

"Well," soliloquised the Chinese, ruefully, " this is a pretty go—jigger me if it ain't.

" Here I come, with a whole mob of these long-tailed prigs,

to knock down old Moley-poley's shop, to find the treasures he's got there, and devil a ha'porth can we drop on.

"All the good I do is to lose my case, with my letters and money in it. Damme, it's like the boy that found a marble and broke a window with it."

He stopped short.

His eye fell upon the black bottle that Mandarin Mole had been caressing.

"What's this? Spring water," said the stranger.

He picked it up.

He sniffed.

Then his eyes beamed, and his voice sounded ecstatic as he murmured—

"Whisky!"

He took a suck.

"Oh, num-num!" he exclaimed; "and Irish, too. Old Mole was a rum old fool, but he had always a very pretty taste in whisky!"

And so he showed his belief in Isaac Mole's taste, by sucking away at the whisky until he began to feel the potency of it about his head.

"I wonder if old Mole has been here," he said to himself, presently; "I should like to drop across him alone; I'd make him soapy, and nick his wooden member. What a lark! He! he! he!"

And the way he laughed told its own tale plainly.

Mole's whisky was very much overproof.

"I'd like to transmogrify him altogether," pursued this amiable person, who was amusing himself with picturing the discomfiture of the real provider of his feast; "I'd like, as the Cockney proverb says—or doesn't say—to catch a mole asleep, and shave his eyebrows! What sport!"

Suddenly his humour changed.

He went at once from gay to grave.

"What if they have got my case of letters—and the money! Oh, blow the tin!" he added. "But the letter! Oh, my! That would be too cruel! How it would spoil every thing, just as we have got such a delicious swindle on. Oh, if can't be!"

He got on to his feet, but to his surprise he found that he was not quite as steady as he could have wished.

"Dear me! I must have got cramped, sitting so long," he muttered.

Suddenly Nero swung round, and dropped from his perch.

Down he plumped, full in front of Biga-Eng-Ming-Ming —for that was the mysterious Celestial who spoke English of the Whitechapel idiom.

The latter gave a mighty start.

Nero recovered arms like a real military machine.

Then he presented his gun full at the intruder.

"What is it?" cried Biga-Eng-Ming-Ming. "Oh, sir, don't fire."

Nero remained impassive.

Immovable as a statue.

He was a wonderful animal, and did rare credit to Dick in having learnt so much in so little time.

"Chin-Chin!" said the half-inebriated Biga-Eng, ruefully. "I wish I only knew a little more of their blessed lingo: I might be able to gammon him, and smarm him over."

Nero advanced upon the terror-stricken Biga-Eng menacingly.

"Don't, handsome sir. Oh, great mandarin, don't hurt a poor little fellow."

And just then he caught sight of Nero's face.

This was enough for Biga-Eng.

His white face grew ghastly, his teeth chattered, and his knees knocked together.

"'Evins!" groaned the wretched man; "it's the old one been and disguised hisself and coming to fetch me for my sins— where's his fork?" Nero showed his teeth.

And truth to tell, he did look rather an alarming personage when his white teeth stood out against his hairy face

He was an artful monkey, too, and he saw his advantage.

He made another step forward.

Then down Biga prostrated himself in the dust.

Thereupon Nero brought down the butt-end of his gun an awful whack upon Biga-Eng's bigger end.

"Whoo!" yelled Biga; "somebody come and help me. Oh, the devil, the devil!"

And he had good cause to yell.

The effects of the blow were to colour the unfortunate man's damaged part like a harlequin's coat, and it effectually prevented him from enjoying himself sitting for a long while to come.

Nero belaboured the unhappy man until he was tired of the sport, and then he made a grab at his hair.

It came away in his paw.

Biga-Eng-Ming-Ming wore a wig.

At this, satisfied with his victory, Nero shouldered his musket and marched off homewards.

You could see by his strut that he was not a little pleased with his exploit.

Biga-Eng-Ming-Ming wailed and groaned—he groaned and wailed.

And when he could no longer repress his curiosity, he looked up.

There was the conquering hero marching off with his gun in one hand and the spoils of victory on the other.

"Oh, my, what a remarkably long pigtail he wears," said the suffering man to himself. "And how low down—but I've done him, and I could laugh if he hadn't given me 'bacca so awful, for I've diddled the devil himself—he thought he had scalped me, and blowed if it ain't a wig."

And so he crawled away with his hands behind him, groaning and yelling—

"Oh, how I suffer in this particular part."

CHAPTER XI.

BIGAMINI DROPS HIS MASK AND MOLE DROPS INTO HIM.

HARKAWAY and Jefferson met Mr. Mole on his return from the ruined pagoda

"Glad to see you alive, sir," said Harkaway; "did any one attack you?"

Mr. Mole nodded.

"Yes."

"Surely, you were not exposed to any danger, sir?" said Harkaway.

"Indeed I was," replied Mr. Mole. "But thanks to my good nerve and a strong arm, I have given them a lesson.

"Goodness gracious!" said Mr. Jefferson. "Did many attack you?"

"Yes."

"In force?"

"They were at least twenty," said Mr. Mole.

"Did many attack you at once?"

"Yes. I will not disguise from you that I was in some alarm. But the cowardly ruffians dare not come within reach after I had knocked three of them upon the head."

Harkaway and Jefferson said nothing.

Their looks expessed their profound admiration for Mandarin Mole.

"They all assailed me at once," pursued the unblushing Mole, with the air of a warrior. "But I fell upon them—hang it, sir, I smote 'em hip and thigh, and I scattered them like chaff before the wind."

"It sounds like a song."

"It does said Jefferson. "I should have been sorry to have been in your place, Mr. Mole."

And while Mr. Mole was giving a finishing touch to his highly-coloured narrative, Dick Harvey came in.

"Here's a letter for you, Mr. Mole," said he.

Mr. Mole took it and read it.

And then he handed it to Mr. Jefferson, saying that it was from the shipbroker, relating to the departure of the "Franz Josef."

Mr. Jefferson read it and handed it to Harkaway, who scanned it through, and then read it aloud to the company generally.

"HONOURED SIR,—The 'Franz Josef' sails on the twenty-third inst. By special arrangement, and special accommodation has been prepared on board for your friends who purpose going. The state cabins and berths have been refitted, and every requirement has been carefully anticipated.

"Your excellency's obedient servant to command—BIGA-ENG-MING-MING."

"Well," said Mr. Mole, "are you still of the same mind?"

"Yes."

"All?"

And so it went round, every one deciding upon leaving the place, save Isaac Mole and his Chloe.

It was poor Harkaway who had started this movement.

Since the untimely fate of young Jack, his mother was so saddened that nothing could rouse her from her settled melancholy.

Constant change of scene was, he thought, the only thing to chase dull thought.

And so it was determined that they should start for the voyage in the first ship—by the "Franz Josef."

At the same time it was understood that they were only going for the voyage.

They agreed with old Mole to return within a few months.

The only members of the party that were to remain behind were Daniel Pike and his comrade Nabley, the French cook, Hypolite Potiron, and Mr. and Mrs. Mole.

"By the way," said Dick Harvey, "I have got a bit of fun to relate to you."

"What of?"

"Mr. Mole."

"Me!" cried Mole.

"Yes, you and Nero."

"Nero and I went up to the ruins of the pagoda."

Mole started.

"Nero and you!" he ejaculated.

"Yes, what of that?"

"Nothing, only I didn't know," stammered Mole.

"I rigged Nero up as a Chinese soldier——"

"What?"

"And he looked the part to the life," continued Dick, as though he did not hear the interruption. "Well, there lay Mr. Mole asleep and snoring."

"No, no."

"Snoring."

"No, no, no," cried Mr. Mole, vehemently. "Asleep, I grant you, but I deny the snoring. Mrs. Mole will tell you that I never snore. Chloe, my love, tell them that I never snore. Tell the truth."

"Why, you snore like a old pig, Ikey," said Mrs. Mole. "I sometime punch you in de back, turn you ober, and den you not snore so much."

Whereupon there was a general roar of laughter.

"Well," resumed Dick.

"Don't trouble yourself to tell any more, Harvey," said the tutor; "we have had quite enough."

"Come, come, Mr. Mole," said Harvey, "I want them all to know about it and you too. Well, Nero and I marched up. Mr. Mole was snoring, as I said, and beside him lay a bottle."

"Spring water," ejaculated Mole.

"Marked so, but smelling uncommonly like whisky."

"A scandal!"

"Oh, Mr. Mole, Mr. Mole," said Harvey.

"So it is," persisted Mr. Mole. "Beside," he added appealing to the company, "if there was any truth in your wild story, where is Nero dressed up, eh? That's a poser for you, Master Harvey—eh, where's Nero?"

Dick heard a noise that induced him to step to the entrance.

"Where's Nero?" he echoed; "why, here."

And Nero, grinning and showing his teeth, marched triumphantly in shouldering his musket and bearing the spoils of victory.

"Hullo!" cried Harkaway; "he's found something."

"What's that?"

"It looks like Biga-Eng-Ming-Ming's hair," said Magog. "I always thought that he wore a wig. Well, Mr. Mole, what do you say now?"

"Why, where is Mr. Mole?"

He had disappeared.

The overpowering evidence had been too much even for him.

So he had retired until the affair blew over.

* * * * * *

The twenty-third arrived.

The "Franz Josef" had been fitted up grandly enough for royalty to travel in, and the Harkaway party embarked.

Nero was left behind, be it observed.

Since his adventure at the ruins of Mole's pagoda, Nero had been allowed to retain his native soldier's costume.

The consequence was that the leather case containing the letters and money of Biga-Eng-Ming-Ming was not discovered.

On the morning of the twenty-fifth, Mr. Mole came upon Nero squatting on the ground, and making another desperate attempt to open the leather case.

"What have you there, Nero?" demanded the tutor.

The intelligent monkey held up his treasure to Mr. Mole, and to his great delight, the latter opened it immediately.

"Why, what's this?" exclaimed Mr. Mole. "Money—bank notes—English, too. Why, Nero, where did you get this?"

He went on.

There were letters, so Mole opened one of them, eagerly glancing first at the outside address, which was--

"Biga-Eng-Ming-Ming,
"Hong Kong.

"To be forwarded."

But inside the letter, the first words dazed poor Isaac Mole, and set him all of a tremble.

"FRIEND BIGAMINI,—Your last letter has come safely to hand. But before I go on to speak of the chief subject of interest to us all, let me remind you that you have been guilty of imprudence in selecting a name so nearly like the one by which you were so long known, and by which I always feel to want to address you. You are surrounded by danger. You do not know how careful you should be when you have in your immediate neighbourhood such a mob of keensighted men as Harkaway—curse him!—Harvey, Jefferson, a new foe, and his friend the dwarf, Magog Brand, not to speak of the two English detectives, Pike and Nabley, who can read a face as plainly as a written volume! Beware of them! Your only bit of luck is having that drunken old donkey Mole there."—"What!" ejaculated Mole, firing up, "'that drunken old donkey Mole there.'"—"You have only to hang him out a drink as a bait, and you can hook him when you please!"

He dashed down the letter with a cry of indignation.

"The villain!" he ejaculated; "but let me finish it."

He resumed.

"If you can manage to get the Harkaways off, as you suppose, by the 'Franz Josef' on the twenty-third, it will indeed be glorious, for nothing can then save them from visiting our delightful floating country, the 'Flowery Land'—and in that case good-bye to all our old enemies at one fell swoop, and we shall reap the reward of industry, the fruits of our labours. We shall be rich for life, my Bigamini. Harkaway's brat is here on board, and has been permitted to live till now. In two days he is to be hanged!"

"Poor boy, poor boy," cried Mole.

The letter fell from his hand, and Nero eagerly snatched it up.

"Ah, Nero, Nero." said poor old Mole, "if you could only read, you would learn there that you were going to lose the best master you ever had, or ever could have, and I shall lose best the boy, my own dear young Jack."

And the old tutor, quite overcome by his feelings, fairly wept.

We can't say if monkeys ever indulge in tears, but one thing is certain.

Nero knew that poor old Mole was in grief, for he sidled up to him and fondled him just as a pet dog does when you are in trouble.

"Poor Nero," said Mr. Mole; "poor Nero, when did you get this? Why didn't you find it sooner? Nero, you are just two days too late."

Alack, he was!

The "Franz Josef" was two days on her journey.

Two days nearer its fate.

Mr. Mole jumped up.

What was to be done?

"It's no use sitting down to regret," said he, aloud; "I must do what I can to save them. Oh, what an ass I have been to fall into such a trap. What shall I do to help them?"

He looked out for the two detectives.

They were both out.

He scarcely expected them back that night.

Was there no one he could consult in the meanwhile?

No one.

"Oh, I shall die of impatience," groaned Mole, in anguish, "I know I shall. All, all gone—all at one fell swoop, and I shall be left a poor, miserable old wretch to end my days in solitude."

His grief was sincere, but still it was rather hard upon the faithful Chloe.

* * * * * *

"Sir!" said a servant, advancing to Mole.

"What now?"

"The broker Biga-Eng-Ming-Ming would see your excellency."

Mr. Mole started up.

"Biga-Eng?"

"Yes, sir."

"Show him in."

The servant bowed and left the apartment.

"Now," said Mr. Mole to himself, "now I shall have him. Now we will see how he will go on with that 'drunken old Mole,' as they call me. Well, I am a drunken old fool and a donkey, but please goodness he shall learn that Isaac Mole is not utterly despicable when he has a lucid interval."

He hastily concealed the pocket-book, gave a final glance at the letter to ascertain who was the writer, and discovering that it was Toro, he got Nero out of the way while the sham shipbroker Biga-Eng-Ming-Ming, was ushered into the room.

The traitor bowed.

Mole responded by a grave salute.

He had to exercise the greatest control over himself to prevent his feelings betraying him.

"Good health and happiness to your excellency," said the sham shipbroker. "You are looking in excellent health."

"I am, my friend," replied Mr. Mole. "Come and be seated."

Biga-Eng-Ming-Ming obeyed.

"To what am I indebted for the pleasure of this visit?" asked Mr. Mole.

"I have brought your excellency a little present," said his visitor, blandly.

"Ah, what?"

"A bottle."

"Of spirits," interrupted Mr. Mole, excitedly. "I thought so."

Biga-Eng smiled.

"Your excellency is fond of whisky?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Mole, with forced gaiety, "very. Some of my dear friends go so far as to say I am a drunken old rascal."

"Surely no one would take so great a liberty. Have you enemies, your excellency?"

"Some few only."

"Your excellency surprises me."

"Why, when I was in Italy, I knew a scoundrel, an Italian thief, called Toro—you look strange. Do you know the name?"

"No, your excellency," replied the visitor quickly. "Not I."

"I thought you might."

"Never was in Italy in all my life."

"Never?"

"Never."

"Could you swear that?"

"Yes."

"At the point of death?"

"Oh, certainly," replied the visitor, cheerfully, "certainly."

"That's right," said Isaac Mole, stumping across the room to a cabinet in which he kept some arms, "for you are near death now."

"What, sir?"

The visitor smiled.

He had not quite caught what Mr. Mole said.

Mr. Mole got from his cabinet a large horse-pistol, an ugly, old-fashioned weapon, with a barrel eighteen inches long, and walking to Biga-Eng's chair, he took the unsuspecting visitor by the throat, and thrust the pistol muzzle into his face.

"Now, Bigamini," said Isaac Mole, in a strangely calm voice, "you are at the point of death, so swear you never were in Italy in the whole course of your life."

It was indeed the villanous and hypocritical impostor Bigamini, the murderer, and the former associate of Italian brigands, who, after being cast adrift upon the ocean, was saved by a passing vessel, and now was a spy in the employment of the Chinese pirates.

The villain was unmasked.

His colour went, and his cheeks turned of the livid hue of the grave.

His jaw dropped and he was dumb-stricken.

"Swear!" said Isaac Mole, in the same cold and terrifying tones; "swear it, for I have promised myself that you shall die with a lie upon your lips."

Not a word.

Not a sound from that fear-stricken wretch.

"Do you hear?" said Mole, with subdued ferocity. "Swear!"

And he jobbed the pistol fairly into the impostor's mouth.

Bigamini only gave a hollow groan.

"Swear!" persisted Isaac Mole.

Bigamini then found his tongue.

"Concealment is useless," he said; "but if you kill me, your friends will all be sacrificed."

"Swear!" cried Mole, jobbing him again with the pistol.

"Spare me, and I can save them all."

"You prince of liars," said Isaac Mole. "You are trying it on again."

"I am not; my life is in your hands; is it likely I would trifle with you now?"

"How could you save them?"

"Easily."

"Explain," cried Mole, quickly, "or the pistol might go off, and your head with it."

"Let a steamer be dispatched after them," said Bigamini, hurriedly; "let me be kept in bondage until they are safe. If you can pay for it——"

"If," cried Mole, excitedly. "I—I'll pay thousands—any thing, every thing that I possess."

"Nothing is easier, then," said Bigamini.

"What shall I do? I will give my life to save my friends."

"Call your people."

Mole stepped up to a gong that stood in the room, and beat upon it with a large drumstick that was hung beside it.

Bigamini glanced eagerly about him.

"Now or never!" the spy muttered to himself.

He bounded from his seat, and snatching up a broad scimitar from the cabinet of arms, he made a dash at Mole.

"Ha!" cried Mole.

But before he could get out of reach, a deadly cut from the scimitar upon his leg sent him to the ground with a groan of agony.

"You've got it, old Mole, have you?" said Bigamini.

He raised his scimitar again to strike.

Just then something leaped upon his shoulders, and two sharp, claw-like hands caught in his hair.

The hands of something horrible and unnatural cut into his flesh, and he was blinded with his own blood.

He yelled with agony.

Down he rolled upon the floor, and then, catching a glimpse of his hitherto unseen enemy, he was filled with a nameless horror.

His assailant was the devilish-looking sentry from the ruins of the pagoda.

He scrambled up and fought desperately, and made for the door, but some one was near at hand.

So he fought up to the window, and somehow or other contrived to scramble out.

But his unearthly assailant had given him something to remember him by for many a long day to come.

For the brave Nero had not only taken out the traitor's hair by the handful, and this time it was not a wig, but he had also torn his face and blinded him in one eye for life.

* * * * * *

Daniel Pike burst into the room, followed closely by Nabley.

"Mr. Mole, Mr. Mole," cried the latter, "what is it?"

Poor old Mole was almost beyond speech.

But he pulled himself up, and with a groan, gasped—

"Bigamini—window—he escapes—shoot—kill—bring him back."

Pike heard the words, and his quick wit caught the meaning at once.

So, snatching up his rifle, he ran to the window.

"I can see a man flying up the hill."

"After him!" cried Nabley; "don't miss him."

"I won't."

Pike scrambled through the window, rifle in hand.

Then, when he saw that the fugitive had to make a long, straight run of it in the open, he dropped upon one knee, and resting his elbow upon the other, he took a long, steady aim.

"Hit him!"

He had.

The fugitive threw up his arms and fell forward upon his face.

"He's safe," said Daniel Pike, contentedly; "now for poor old Mole."

He ran back to the window and put his head in.

The place was full of people now.

Poor Chloe was supporting her husband's head in her lap, while the servants were gathered about looking on.

"Nabley," said Pike, anxiously, "how is he?"

"Bad."

"Is there danger?" he then asked, anxiously.

"I can't say, but the villain has nearly lopped off the other leg—if we save him, he will have to go through the world upon another wooden leg."

Just then poor Isaac Mole opened his eyes.

"Has Pike got him?" he faltered.

"Yes."

"That's brave," said the sufferer. "Save them and I can die happy. Bring him here."

Pike and one of the servants ran back and mounted the hill to the spot where his well-aimed shot had dropped the pirates' spy.

But he was gone.

Where it was impossible to say.

But Bigamini had got clear off, and the only sign of his passage was a tell-tale pool of blood upon the hillside where he fell.

This was indeed bad luck, and Daniel Pike returned quite crestfallen to the house.

CHAPTER XII.

HUNSTON'S MECHANICAL ARM—"FOES, BEWARE ME!"—THE LEGEND OF THE PIRATE TREASURE.

LET us board the "Flowery Land" once more.

Several details have to be related in connection with the pirate vessel, before we resume the adventures of the unfortunate Isaac Mole.

They had naturally a good deal of leisure time upon their hands now, and some of them put theirs to a very good advantage.

Robert Emmerson showed that, in addition to the various gifts of which we have seen he was possessed, he was a highly skilful mechanician, and he passed his hours in making a movable arm for Hunston.

The artificial limb was made of steel, and so cunningly wrought that there was not even any stiffness to betray it to those who might not happen to know of Hunston's loss.

The hand was a masterpiece, and jointed with a delicacy and finish that was perfectly marvellous.

When this clever piece of mechanism was complete, Emmerson showed that, joined to his skill in other branches of mechanical art, he was an admirable engraver.

Upon the smooth steel of the thicker part of the arm he engraved this legend—

"From Emmerson to Hunston.

"FOES, BEWARE ME!

'But woe to the wearer if raised against a friend.'"

Now, clever as was this mechanical limb, it yet concealed from the general eye a most important feature of its construction.

This feature was known only to Emmerson.

It was this—

One of the springs in the top joint was anointed with a subtle and insidious poison.

It was so arranged that in a given time the friction would inevitably cause the joint to wear away, and then it would need the care of the inventor himself.

He alone knew how to repair it in that part.

The bond of guilt existing between them gave Emmerson no guarantee of Hunston's good faith.

Now this would, he thought, make Hunston secure; for once let the spring wear through, it must corrode, and then woe be to the wearer of the arm!

During the progress of the work, Robert Emmerson had carefully kept the nature of it a secret.

The consequence was that when Hunston appeared on deck amongst his comrades, there was a general excitement.

They all pronounced it a marvellous work, and Emmerson was quite lionised for awhile.

"You see the legend it bears upon the arm, my friends and comrades all," said Hunston. "Let us hope it may be true. Let me echo the wish heartily, sincerely. 'Woe to the wearer if raised against a friend.'"

As they walked aft, Hunston asked Toro what was the day of the month.

"The twenty-third."

"Good."

"You know what occurs to-day," said Hunston.

"No," replied Emmerson. "What?"

"The 'Franz Josef' sails to-day."

"Of course," said Emmerson, his eyes flashing greedily; "I had forgotten for the moment."

"In a few days more we shall have them in our clutches."

"I hope so."

"It is sure."

"Remember the old adage," said Emmerson, smiling; "'there's many a slip 'twixt cup and lip.'"

Hunston laughed.

"I don't think there is much chance of mishap now."

"I hope not."

"I am sure not."

"Can you make sure of your agent, Big—Big—what's his name?"

"Bigamini."

"Ah, Bigamini; is he to be relied on?"

"Yes; he's the prince of spies."

"Glad to hear it," returned Emmerson, "for if all goes well, this should be a splended haul."

"Splendid!" echoed Hunston; "my dear Emmerson, it will make us rich for life."

Emmerson smiled in a strange manner.

"Do you doubt it?"

"Not I."

"Why do you laugh, then?"

"Partly at your enthusiasm, and partly at——"

"At what?"

"At my fancies."

His manner was slightly tinged with melancholy, and it excited Hunston's curiosity.

"What fancies?"

Emmerson looked very solid as he answered—

"I think that I shall not have long to enjoy whatever spoil we may make."

"Stuff!"

Emmerson smiled though sadly.

"You laugh at such fancies, Hunston," he said.

"I do."

"I don't wonder at it. Still I cannot shake it off. I am sure that I am not long-lived."

"Ah, you mustn't trouble yourself about that," said Hunston, heartily. "Robert Emmerson is worth forty dead men yet."

"At present, yes," said Emmerson.

And so the conversation was allowed to drop.

* * * * * *

It was midnight.

All was silent on board the "Flowery Land."

In the old doctor's cabin a solemn conference was going on between young Jack, Harry Girdwood, and the doctor.

They were debating still about the best means of warning their friends against the threatening danger into which they had been decoyed by the treachery of the pirates' spy, Bigamini.

And this was the only scheme that they could hit upon.

They got a dozen large bottles together, and in each they dropped a few small shot.

This was to be used as a steadier.

Then they inserted a small written note in each bottle and carefully sealed and corked it.

They next waxed each bottle and dipped it in tar.

This done, they drew a broad line of white, and another of red around the top of the bottle.

And when the first of these was completed, young Jack dropped it through the cabin window into the sea.

Then followed an anxious time for them all. Would it float? Would it attract the attention of a passing vessel?

Alas! it was doubtful.

"We must hope for the best," said the American doctor; "it is our only chance, and I have a presentiment that all our labour and all our perseverance cannot go unrewarded."

And so the good old gentleman comforted his two young companions.

The second night saw three more of their large signal bottles completed and launched.

Now, as it chanced to be fine and moonlight, they could plainly see their bottles dancing on the water.

"They are visible enough," said young Jack.

"Our only hope is therefore to send out enough of them and hope for the best," said Harry Girdwood.

"True," said the American doctor; "our hope must be in Heaven now."

And so nightly they pursued their self-set task, hoping that Providence would send the "Franz Josef" across their little floating beacon of warning.

"Doctor," said young Jack one night, "do you remember how you saved me?"

"When?"

"When they followed me down here and would have carried me up on deck."

"Yes."

"Do you remember what you then threatened them with?"

"Yes."

"Was there any truth in that?"

"In what?"

"That little phial that, if crushed, would send the whole ship and crew to the bottom?"

"Yes, undoubtedly, it is true."

"Then," said young Jack, thoughtfully, "we have always that one resource on hand."

The American doctor looked serious.

"We have; but still I should hesitate to use it."

"Even in a very extreme case?" asked young Jack.

"Yes."

"Then you just give it to me, doctor," said young Jack, boldly. "I shouldn't myself."

The doctor looked more serious than before.

"I dare say not, Jack," he said, quietly, "but it is better in my hands at present."

* * * * * *

Harry Girdwood was convalescent.

Still he was scarcely fit as yet for violent exercise.

By the good doctor's orders he reclined for several hours out of the twenty-four more than either he himself or young Jack did.

He shared all their counsels, and being compelled to rest so long bodily inactive, his mind was all the more pliant and industrious.

And one solitary thought ever occupied it.

Escape!

At a first glance you will naturally say that there was not much scope for invention, unless he started by some plan which was too full of risk and danger to be contemplated for an instant.

"Doctor," said Harry Girdwood, late one night, as they were about to commence their usual conference, "and you, Jack, I have got something to say to you both, something to propose."

"What is it?" said the doctor.

"I have a plan of escape to suggest."

"Is it practicable?"

"You shall hear and judge for yourself."

"Go on, Harry," said young Jack, who was all eagerness to hear it.

"In the first place, do you hear that creaking noise just overhead?"

"Yes."

"Do you know what it is?"

"It's the boat swinging there, and it creaks with rust as the ship moves, or as the wind blows."

"That's it, Jack," said Harry Girdwood, "and it was that noise that first gave me the idea as I lay groaning with pain. At first it was only a confused fancy, but by degrees I have got it into shape, and I think now that if you will help me, we can work the scheme pretty safely."

"Go on," said young Jack, with all the hot eagerness of youth.

"Proceed," said the old American, more gravely.

"I thought night and day how to lower that boat and ourselves with it. We must get a store of food together, saved out of our rations, to victual the boat, and we must get firearms. The next thing is to have the pulleys so well greased in advance that it will drop down into the water without any noise at all."

The doctor smiled.

"That is a difficult job," he said.

"Difficult," said Jack, with eagerness; "but not impossible."

"Perhaps!"

"And what about the watch?" asked the doctor.

"You must do that."

"How?"

"Why, you must have plenty of drugs that could send them to sleep for any length of time."

"I have," responded the doctor; "the only difficulty would be to——"

"To administer them," said young Jack.

"Yes."

"That shall be my job," said Harry; "the plan of the French cook was a good one—all that it wanted was care in its execution."

"True."

"To avoid rashness."

"True again."

"Well, I would get in the night at the water cask—tamper with it all."

"My dear boy," said the doctor, "that is a bold scheme—a very daring notion."

"It is, doctor; nothing but daring can save us. Would you not dare something to get out of this floating slaughter-house?"

"I would indeed," said the doctor, with a sigh.

"Then join us in our scheme," said young Jack; "I'm sure it sounds well, and with your help it could be done, I am sure."

The doctor made no reply.

He sat moodily for a long while, calculating the chances of this desperate business.

"Well, doctor?"

"Well, my dear boys, I shall join you," he said, "but only on one condition."

"Name it."

"That you will be guided by me and avoid rashness."

"I promise."

"And I too."

"Then, my boys, I am in the plan heart and soul, and if you only join the greatest caution to your natural tact and skill, something good will be sure to come of it."

Well, the conspirators passed each night maturing Harry Girdwood's plan of escape.

But upon the third day a misfortune happened to them.

One of the crew, a Lascar, named Spirillo, fell from the rigging to the deck, bruising himself rather seriously.

The man was carried by his comrades into the cabin, and the doctor had to attend upon him.

The injuries the man had received were of such a nature that they feared to move him.

The consequences were that Spirillo was obliged to spend two days and nights with them, which put an end effectually to their proceedings in the matter of the escape.

Now the doctor was by nature humane, and he was also exceedingly politic.

"It's an unfortunate job, Jack," said he to our young hero, "but we must make the best of it. We have a double motive in getting this Spirillo well as quickly as possible."

"Let me nurse him, then," said young Jack.

"You can if you like," said the good doctor, "only be careful."

"Trust me, sir."

"And attentive."

"I will."

And thus our hero, young Jack Harkaway, found himself installed in the office of chief attendant to the Lascar Spirillo one of the ferocious, bloodthirsty pirates who had so lately sought his life.

The Lascar received young Jack's attentions somewhat surlily at first, but the boy's winning manner soon told upon the rough Spirillo, and by degrees he quite warmed up to him.

Then it was that young Jack suddenly discovered that Spirillo was any thing but a brutal or ferocious man at the bottom, indeed, that he had, under the very roughest of exteriors, some really kind feelings and worthy attributes.

Young Jack made Spirillo grow quite confidential in the course of a day or so.

And by degrees he learnt all the Lascar's past history.

It was not without a certain interest.

But we have not space here to give it in his own words.

Briefly, then, Spirillo had fallen into his present way of life by pure accident.

Without being utterly bad, he was just careless enough of his reputation and morals generally to drift into any thing that turned up—whether smuggling, piracy, or even slave-catching.

He had originally been in the merchant service, and his vessel had been run down by a notorious pirate—one of a whole fleet—cruising about the Greek Archipelago.

Here he had spent many years of his life.

The Greek rover had spared his life on condition of his joining them.

Spirillo might have chosen the career had he had the choice left free to him.

With such an ugly alternative as losing his life, he did not hesitate half a second.

And so, behold Spirillo drop suddenly from being a bluff, honest tar, into a fullblown pirate; one of a most notorious gang, with a heavy price upon his head, and a rope halter waiting ready for him whenever he should be captured.

"And how came you to leave the Greeks?" asked young Jack.

"I had a quarrel with the captain," replied Spirillo; "it was about one of the prisoners taken. I knew that he was

a vicious fellow; he never forgave any one yet for so much as a thoughtless word—never forgot an injury, however slight or even unintentional. So I made my escape."

"Where?"

"Here."

"What, direct?"

"Almost."

"But did you know of these people when you lived cruising about in those latitudes?"

The Lascar pirate stared in a peculiar way at the questioner.

"You mustn't be too curious," he said.

"I don't mean to be indiscreet," said young Jack, hastily; "pray don't let me annoy you by my questions."

"You don't," responded Spirillo, quite melted by the eagerness of young Jack to make himself agreeable. "Ask all you wish; there is only that that I shall refuse to tell you—nothing more. Any thing about the old gang I'm free to speak about—any thing—it's only of these that I must, of course, keep silent."

"Then just one question, please," said young Jack; "could those Greeks make large fortunes out of their plunder?"

"Some of them."

"How, some?"

"The captain and some of the officers."

"I see."

"There is a treasure in the pirates' island of the Archipelago that would make the fortune combined of Rothschild, Oppenheim, Baring, Pereire, and a score more."

Jack smiled.

"It's a big one, then, Spirillo," he said.

"You are right, young fellow, it is. You have read the tales of the 'Thousand and One Nights,' I suppose?"

"Yes."

"And you remember the tale of 'Ali Baba'?"

"I do, indeed," said young Jack; "you would speak of the Forty Thieves' treasure?"

"Yes."

"Well, and is there such a fairy-like cove in your pirate island?"

"You may laugh, young fellow, but it is literally so. The wildest fancy can not exaggerate the fabulous wealth of the treasure."

"Whose treasure is it now?" asked Jack.

"One man's."

"One!"

"Yes, one—the captain's. This, the wealth of a kingdom, has been amassed by him in one generation. Daring, courage, and some skill, too, have made him, beyond all manner of doubt, the richest man upon the face of the earth!"

Jack stared.

The picture that Spirillo drew took his breath away.

There is something awe-inspiring in hearing of such fortunes.

"And what does this captain do now?" asked he; "does he still cruise about to plunder poor wretches who haven't a tithe of the riches which he himself possesses?"

Spirillo shook his head as he replied—

"Monastos is a great man now."

"Where?"

"Athens."

"What!" exclaimed young Jack, "has he ventured to trust himself there?"

"In Greece they are not particular. The government winks at many things, especially the origin of a man who can lend it a million at a day's notice."

"Wonderful!" exclaimed young Jack.

"Why, Captain Monastos is a power in the land," Spirillo went on to say. "A man of more importance than prime minister—aye, or even king. He is *fêted*, and courted, and fawned upon more than any man in Athens."

"And all this upon——"

"Plunder; don't pause—that's the word, but I'd dearly like to get at it."

"At what?"

"His treasure."

"Do you know where it is?"

"Yes; and I suppose that I am about the only living man who does."

"Indeed."

"Besides himself. The secret was shared by few, and of this few I was one. The others who were in the secret with me died off one by one by sickness in such a mysterious manner that I deemed it prudent to get out of the way in time."

"Why not go and secure it, Spirillo?" said young Jack. "Why stay here working for nothing with men you care

nothing for, and in a black, bad trade, when, by helping yourself to Captain Monastos's treasure, you will only be helping yourself to your own?"

Spirillo's eyes flashed as young Jack spoke, and he remained buried in thought for some little time.

"Shall I tell you the truth, young fellow?" he said presently.

"Yes."

"Well, the truth is this; I have thought of it. I do think of it. Not a day of my life but I think of it. But to get at it involves many difficulties."

"What are they?"

"I couldn't do it alone."

"Well?"

"I should have to trust my secret with others. I should want capital and a ship, and a daring, bold fellow or two with me!"

"And if you find all these, Spirillo?"

"Why, then, I'd think seriously about it."

"What would you say if I could show you how to get it all—money, men, a ship?"

"You?"

"Yes."

"Who are the people?"

"My father and his old friend Dick have all that is required for such an expedition."

"How should we get at them?"

"I must escape from here first," said young Jack, looking Spirillo straight in the eyes.

"Escape?" cried the Lascar, leaping up from his couch and grasping Jack fiercely by the wrist.

CHAPTER XIII.

YOUNG JACK'S NEW FRIEND—THE PLOT THICKENS—CAUGHT.

JACK quietly released himself from the Lascar's grasp, and repeated the words—

"We may escape."

"Humph! I will think of it when I am better. But not a word to anyone."

In a few days, Spirillo was cured.

He returned to the deck and his duties generally.

He came down as often as his duty would permit to see the doctor, and young Jack never failed to profit by these visits.

He had seen, with a shrewdness far beyond his years, the effect of his words upon Spirillo.

Spirillo would ask young Jack, every time that the subject was broached, if he was sure of his father, and if he could guarantee that his father would enter into so wild a scheme as the expedition after the pirate's treasure in the Greek Archipelago.

"I'm sure of him as I am of myself," replied young Jack. "Spirillo, you don't know my father—God bless him! Why, his gratitude to anybody who had shown me any kindness would guarantee his consent."

"Perhaps," said Spirillo dubiously.

"He would want the tale to be borne out by something in proof, that's all."

"That can be easily done."

"How?"

"Here is the plan of the place. You may take charge of it, young fellow."

So saying, he handed over a roll of paper to young Jack.

"Can I trust you, Spirillo?" he said.

Spirillo frowned.

"Have I not trusted you?" he said, pointing to the roll of paper.

"Of course. Forgive my words; only caution must be used. We are surrounded here by danger."

"True."

"I can tell you how we could escape."

"The deuce you can. How?"

"You see that boat that swings there, creaking in the rusty davits over your cabin?"

"Yes."

"If a reason could be found for lowering that boat and letting her be towed along astern, I could do the rest."

Spirillo's eyes brightened at these words.

"Is that all?"

"All."

"Then it is done," said the pirate.

* * * * * *

That night the boat was being towed along astern.

Young Jack ran down gleefully to carry the news to the doctor and Harry Girdwood.

The doctor was elated at this.

"Jack, my son," said he, "I believe now that we shall carry it through."

"Believe," cried young Jack; "it is a certainty."

"We must get the boat under the window here to-night," said Harry Girdwood, "and lower our provisions and arms into it."

"We can manage that."

"And then we have but to lower ourselves."

"And Spirillo," said the doctor.

"Of course. It would indeed be base ingratitude to play him false," said young Jack.

"How did Spirillo manage it?" asked Harry Girdwood.

"Under pretext of greasing the chains and davits," was the reply.

"The only thing remaining is to get Spirillo to learn our latitude very precisely, and get a chart, so that we may be able to steer to the nearest port when once we get clear, and not drift about hopelessly in mid ocean."

"We can manage that," said young Jack.

At a little after sundown young Jack went up on deck, in hopes of coming across his friend and accomplice, Spirillo, The latter was on the look-out for him.

At a single glance, young Jack perceived that there was something amiss, for Spirillo's look showed uneasiness.

He made a sign to young Jack, not to speak with him yet, until they were sure that they were not observed.

Then, having assured himself upon this point, he beckoned the boy aside.

"Jack," said the Lascar, in low, earnest tones, "I want to say a word to you that is very serious."

Jack stared.

"Serious?"

"Yes."

"Indeed?"

"Your life is in danger, a very great danger."

"How?"

"You have some bad enemies on board."

Young Jack smiled.

"That is no news," he said; "and I know to whom you allude."

"You do?"

"Yes."

"Then you know that there is a great danger."

"I do; the greatest, but I have baffled them before now in as great difficulties as this, and I have the greatest confidence yet."

Spirillo stared at young Jack, and smiled dubiously, as he said—

"You are a brave boy of England, and I hope your confidence in yourself may not be misplaced this time. The danger is great. Toro and his friend, your fellow countryman, hate you worse than poison, and you will have to die."

"I do not fear them."

"They mean it this time."

"They have often meant it," said young Jack, "but they couldn't manage it. Besides, now I know that the captain of the 'Flowery Land' means me to live."

"He does."

"What have I to fear, then, if the captain means it?"

"Every thing. They dare not oppose the captain, especialy as his purpose for keeping you alive is but to get a heavy ransom from your parents for you."

"Of course."

"Well, your two enemies mean you to die; they are opposed by all the crew as well as the captain. Therefore they have been conspiring to put an end to you on the quiet, so be upon your guard, lad."

"I will."

"They mean to get hold of you, and heave you overboard in the night, while the captain and the crew are all asleep."

Jack shivered.

"That's awkward," he said, "and when do they mean to carry out the amiable plot?"

"To-night, if they can."

"Very good; I must be on my guard. But how did you learn it?"

"By overhearing their schemes. They did not disguise their thoughts before me. They conversed very freely in English, never dreaming that I spoke your language."

"Good!"

"You have but to keep out of their way to-night. In the morning I will put the captain on his guard, and then woe betide them if they dare lift a hand against you."

Young Jack shook the pirate's hand warmly.

"You are a real friend, Spirillo," he said, earnestly, "and I hope to show my gratitude to you in some tangible form soon."

"Help me to get the treasure, my lad, and I shall have all the reward that I want."

"That you may count upon."

"Right, and now back to your cabin. Away with you. Good-night!"

"Good-night!"

The boy turned from his new-found friend, and made for the cabin stairs.

Just as he was upon the top step, a hand was placed upon his shoulder.

A cloth was thrown over his head, and he was lifted up in a pair of brawny arms and borne away.

In the toils!

The boy gasped.

The full sense of his danger flashed across him.

His hand had been resting upon his knife when he was caught up, and this proved of very material assistance to him in the dire extremity.

He jerked his arm free and lunged out with his knife at random.

He struck something, and the knife went in pretty deeply.

So deeply that his captor gave a cry of pain, and then, as young Jack wriggled with desperation, he dropped upon the deck.

To scramble up and make off was the work of a moment.

Two men rushed after him.

First was Hunston.

Next was Toro.

The latter, as he came on, was busily engaged in binding his right arm, which the boy's knife had gone right through.

Young Jack flew on like the wind, dodged round a heap of luggage piled up on the deck, and glided down the cabin stairs.

They were close upon him in an instant.

"I'm safe now," thought young Jack; "they will never dare to follow me here."

But barely had the thought flashed through his mind when he made an alarming discovery.

A discovery which chilled his very bood.

In the confusion of his flight he had not got into the right cabin.

In a berth at the further end of the cabin was a man stretched at full length upon his back, and tossing about restlessly.

The face and form were alike familiar.

A step nearer, and young Jack recognised in that man the notorious Robert Emmerson!

Robert Emmerson the murderer!

Poor Jack felt he was lost!

Here was his retreat cut off.

Emmerson here, his two bitterest enemies up the cabin stairs.

Perhaps they had passed the stairs and did not know that he was there.

Quick as thought, he crept up the steps.

But before he could put his head out of the hatchway, he heard Hunston's voice close by his ear—

"He is not far off."

Jack drew back.

Down he went again on tip-toe, and just as he got to the bottom, they were on the top peering down.

"He must have gone down there."

"Stop a bit," said Hunston. "You stay on guard here, Toro, while I get round. The brat is as slippery as an eel. We mustn't leave him half a chance."

The boy's heart sank.

He had but one faint hope.

This was that they would go further to resume their search, and that he could make a bolt for his own cabin.

The boy crept nearer yet to Emmerson's berth.

It was got up with a certain amount of elaboration and luxury for a cabin of a pirate ship, and the bed was hung with damask curtains, which now served young Jack as a hiding-place.

Now, as he stood here, his attention was gradually fixed by the disturbed appearance of the sleeping Emmerson.

The murderer's dreams were evidently of an unpleasant nature.

No wonder.

Man may occasionally elude the vigilance of the law for the crimes of which Emmerson was guilty, but there is a worse

punishment than the hand of man can inflict, which he could not escape.

The workings of a guilty conscience.

Robert Emmerson did not know what rest was.

Never a night passed in quiet rest.

Barely did he close his eyes ere the shadows of Nabley the elder and of Saul Garcia, the Jew miser, haunted his dreams.

Ghostly and forbidding they looked, and the words they whispered in his ears were always upon the same strain—warnings, dire forebodings!

Just at the moment that young Jack came down he was with his last victim, the wretched murdered old Jew.

Saul Garcia, robed as Emmerson had last seen him—his pallid face whiter even than his night clothes—with the blood fresh from his many wounds, and bedabbling his long, thin, grey hair!

The shade of his victim did not speak to him, but it placed its long, thin fingers upon his arm and they closed upon it!

Then while the miserable man was shrinking from the shade of Saul Garcia, he felt himself dragged from his bed through miles and miles of the ocean, emerging in a bright and sunny land.

In his dream the shade of Saul Garcia dragged him on across waving cornfields, until they came upon an English village.

It was a pretty, bright scene; there was the village green away to the left, the old-fashioned Norman church close to it, with its quaintly-built parsonage adjoining, and just a field off was a more modern brick building with a miniature belfry over it.

The bell was just tolling the boys out of school.

One of these young scholars caught Emmerson's attention at once.

He was a fair-haired boy, with blue eyes and a clear complexion.

A handsome, well-built boy, with an expression that was frank and manly.

There was something in that boy of all the others which greatly interested Emmerson.

It was himself in his boyhood.

And he followed the boy's path homewards.

His way lay across a large tract of green meadow land, beyond which he came to a lane cut between two hills.

As the fair-haired scholar passed through this ravine, a low whistle was heard that caused him to look up.

Then a man pushed his way through the bushes, and catching hold of an overhanging branch of a tree, he swung himself, with considerable agility, down into the lane right before the schoolboy.

The boy was a bit startled at first, but he soon recovered himself.

And then there took place between them an earnest conversation.

It was clear that the swarthy, gipsy-looking man was tempting the boy—that the boy was resisting the temptation.

The gipsy now brought out a big, old-fashioned silver watch as a bribe for the boy.

And the latter wavered.

Then Emmerson grew strangely excited as he watched the result.

Excited, too, in the eager hope that the boy would not yield.

Strange this!

Strange, for so utter a villain as Robert Emmerson to be now so troubled in his dream.

His dream still continued, and he saw that the boy's good nature conquered, and he went on his way.

And then Emmerson could not repress a cry of joy.

The gipsy fellow ran after the fair-haired boy, and caught him by the collar.

He took out an ugly-looking knife, and flourished it before the little fellow's eyes.

But the boy, too plucky for the gipsy, ducked under his legs and bolted off, while the gipsy toppled over and scrambled upon the ground.

Emmerson, in his dream, gave a joyous laugh.

And then the scene had faded away.

All was darkness!

CHAPTER XIV.

THE FATE OF ROBERT EMMERSON—YOUNG JACK AT BAY.

Emmerson, in his dreams, once more looked around him.

The shade of Saul Garcia was still before him.

The long, bony fingers still clutched his arm.

The Jew spake not, but waving his hand once more, silently invited Emmerson's attention again.

The scene was changed.

Before him now was a homely, pleasant interior, and there were two actors in this scene, both of whom caused every pulse in Emmerson's body to vibrate with strong emotions.

And why?

Because the most prominent figure of the two was the woman who had cared for him from his tenderest infancy —who had nurtured him with a fond affection that none but a mother could show.

Yes! it was the shadow of his mother.

The other figure was the fair-haired, blue-eyed boy who had just fled from the gipsy tempter.

And that bright little lad was—himself!

Emmerson gazed, awe-stricken, at these figures—so real, so life-like, which his conductor conjured up in dreamland.

And now Emmerson could see that the two were conversing, but he could not catch their words.

But their gestures were full of meaning.

He was describing to his mother the danger from which he had just escaped.

The mother showed her fears as he went on, and then she was full of gratitude for his safe delivery from peril.

He undressed himself, and prepared for bed, and then, before going to rest for the night, he knelt devoutly at his mother's knees, and they lifted their voices together in prayer.

The fair boy's bright face and his innocent eyes looked up to her, and she looked fondly down upon him.

It was an eloquent picture of filial affection and parental tenderness.

He thought he heard a stern voice speak.

"Do you recognise the group?"

Emmerson started, rudely aroused from contemplation of this touching picture, and there was the shade of Saul Garcia pointing solemnly to the scene.

Emmerson felt sensations which had been strangers to his breast for many and many a long year.

"Speak," said the shade of the Jew; "answer me."

"Alas!" responded Emmerson, "I do."

And with his answer came a deep-drawn sigh, telling of remorse that was more agony than any physical suffering could possibly be.

"You remember it?" said the shade of Saul Garcia, in the same sepulchral tones. "Now look again."

Emmerson involuntarily obeyed.

The scene was changed.

The actors were the same as before.

The bright-looking boy was in bed; his mother stood on the threshold—lamp in hand.

She bade her boy a fond and lingering good-night, and then withdrew, leaving the boy to his slumbers.

He was asleep almost immediately.

Then after a brief interval a light shone faintly in at the window.

A moment or so after, the window was forced noiselessly open, and a dark, swarthy face appeared.

It was the gipsy.

The ruffian who had met the boy in the lane, and tempting him in vain threatened his life.

Emmerson, in his spell-bound dream, watched in breathless expectation for the next incident in this dark scene.

The gipsy darkened the lantern awhile; then clambered into the room.

But as he walked, his footfalls were not heard; they made not the slightest noise.

He moved like a shadow.

His feet were provided with the soft list overshoes such as burglars are reputed to wear in their nefarious calling.

The intruder listened at the door.

Then he made himself secure against interruption by fastening the door on the inside.

This done, he stole back to the bed, and flashed the bull's-eye lantern in the sleeper's face until the glare aroused him.

As the boy opened his eyes, he was dazzled with the fierce blaze, and he failed to recognise the intruder until the gipsy spoke.

"Bob, you must come with me!"

The boy refused.

He was full of fears, but he stoutly refused to go with the gipsy.

Thereupon the latter seized him by the throat, and brandished the knife in his face, and it seemed as if murder was imminent.

Emmerson could look no more thus passively.

He made a rush to help the boy, but suddenly the shade of Saul Garcia seemed invested with a giant's strength, and he dragged him back with the greatest ease.

Emmerson fought desperately, but he fought in vain.

And in the middle of this horrible nightmare his struggles aroused him, and he awoke.

* * * * * *

"Where am I?" he murmured, confusedly. "What, a dream only? But, oh, how dreadful!"

He stretched out his hand for the light.

He raised it.

Something was beside him.

It was a boy kneeling at his bed.

It was young Jack.

The boy's fair face was turned upwards appealingly, and as Emmerson looked, the face so reminded him of the one he had just seen in his vision that he could scarce believe that he was awake.

"Will this never be over?" he muttered, passing his hand across his eyes; "shall I never wake?"

"Save me!" cried young Jack. "Save me!"

Emmerson stared half stupefied at him.

"Why, I know you—you are young Harkaway."

"Yes."

"How came you here? What do you want?"

The voices of Toro and Hunston were heard just then at the top of the steps.

"He must have gone down there."

"Never. It is Emmerson's berth; the boy's as sharp as a needle. He knows that as well as you do. He'd never venture down there."

"I don't care where he has ventured," said Toro. "Once let me put my hand upon him——"

Young Jack looked up imploringly at Emmerson.

"You will not let them harm me!" he urged. "You were young once yourself, and you'll let me hide here, I know."

Young Jack's stammering appeal touched Robert Emmerson, in his present state of mind, more than words far more eloquent could have done.

How could he forget the dream of his own youth, when he had only just seen himself back in his boyhood as plainly and as vividly as he now saw young Jack?

It all flashed through his mind in those few moments.

He was back in the past, and tracing his career from whence he had looked upon those two scenes of his boyhood until now.

Step by step he traced his fall and his progress in guilt up to this.

And all this panorama of a life flashed before his eyes in the space of a minute, and then he was recalled to himself by hearing footsteps on the companion ladder.

"Save me!" cried young Jack, despairingly.

He clambered upon Emmerson's bed, crawled over him, and crouched down behind him for protection.

He could not know what was passing in the guilty Emmerson's mind. He could not see the workings of that overcharged conscience.

What, then, could have induced him to seek refuge there? Instinct.

"You're safe here, my boy," said Emmerson, placing his hand kindly on Jack's head.

Hunston appeared on the steps.

He paused and turned to his companion.

"Keep a sharp lookout up there, Toro," said he; "don't let him slip."

"Trust me," replied the ex-brigand. "If he slips through my fingers, I'll forgive him."

Hunston advanced, and then young Jack began to tremble with apprehension.

He would have crouched down behind Emmerson, but the latter would not allow this.

"Stand up," he said; "there's no fear while you are with me."

Hunston heard the voice and ran down.

Just as he reached the foot of the ladder, he called out to Toro to follow him.

"Come on," he shouted; "I have him, Toro."

Toro replied with a chuckle, and ran down after his companion in crime.

"You young viper!" exclaimed Hunston, "let me crush you."

And he advanced a pace to drag young Jack out.

"Stand off," said Emmerson, springing up; "the boy is under my protection, and you must not harm him."

"Must not!" echoed Hunston, fiercely. "What does this mean?"

"Must not!" repeated Emmerson, with a kind of dogged determination.

"Oh!" cried Hunston, scornfully, "we will soon see this. Here, Toro!"

"Here," returned Toro, entering just then.

"Hark you, my friends," said Emmerson; I want this boy spared."

"You, Emmerson, want him spared—what for?"

"Why," said Toro, "he belongs to the crew that are our worst enemies. Harkaway and his set have ruined us, and shall we spare him now?"

"Yes."

"No, a thousand times no!" cried Toro.

"It's only to please me," persisted Emmerson, "and surely you cannot refuse me so small a matter as this boy's life. Besides, consider, the captain and crew wish him spared for the rich ransom they can get."

"Stuff!" cried Toro; "give us up the boy."

They looked threatening, but Emmerson was not to be daunted.

He had often shown courage in a bad cause; he was not to be cowed now that he was acting in a good one.

"I advise you both to keep back," cried Emmerson, "for I now tell you, rather than have this brave lad hurt, I would have both your lives."

"Your life then against ours," cried Hunston, fiercely.

As they advanced, Emmerson made one step back, and turning round, he made a grab at a pair of loaded pistols that hung over his bed, but before he could reach them, Hunston was upon him.

In his iron hand was fastened a long, ugly knife, and lifting this high above him, he brought it down with fearful force upon the stooping Emmerson.

The blow needed no repetition.

"Coward!" cried Emmerson, looking fixedly at Hunston, then he gave a dull, hollow groan, and rolled over.

Hunston started back aghast.

Toro was considerably startled at the deed.

Young Jack was ready to help himself by this time.

He had noticed Emmerson's effort to get at the pistols, and he caught them up in a moment.

"Stand off," he cried, presenting these; "here's one for each of you."

Emmerson was in a very bad way by now.

He supported himself upon one arm, and tried vainly to rise.

"You have done for me, Hunston," he said, faintly, "and with that arm too."

"What did you interfere for?" growled Hunston, in a surly tone. "You asked for it, and you got it. Let me look at your hurt."

"Keep back," replied Emmerson; "it is past your aid now."

Hunston would have helped him, but Emmerson shrank from him.

Young Jack saw the repugnance that he manifested, and he menaced the two ruffians with the pistols.

The positions were reversed now.

Emmerson had to be protected and young Jack was the protector.

"Hunston—villain!" gasped the wounded man. "I haven't now five minutes' life in me. Without me your iron arm is useless—worse than useless. Remember my words, and the legend on the arm."

And then, as though the effort to pronounce these words had been too much for him, he dropped back, faint and exhausted.

A change came over his face.

An ominous change.

The end was not far off now.

"I would have seen you safely through this, my boy," he gasped, faintly, "but you must see to yourself now; I am done for. Hunston," he added.

"Yes?"

"Beware of the steel arm! It has been my death, and may be yours."

And then, with these words upon his lips, he sank back.

Robert Emmerson was dead, killed by his false friend, the villain Hunston.

At first the two ruffians were startled at the suddenness of the catastrophe, but they were too much accustomed to look upon death to be very much upset by this murder.

They sprang forward to grab at young Jack, but the boy was not to be taken unawares.

He sent out his pistols again, and brought the ruffians to a stand.

CHAPTER XV.

DESPERATE DEEDS—ADRIFT—HOW THE AMERICAN DOCTOR COVERED THE RETREAT OF THE REAR GUARD.

"Go," said Jack, boldly, "or I'll bring the pair of you down. I never miss."

They did not like the look of the boy.

"If you don't go, I shall lose patience," he said; "I shall bring down one, for sure, and the other will be dealt with by your Chinese friends for murdering a comrade."

At this, Hunston backed up the ladder, closely followed by Toro.

Young Jack went up after them, and, driving the two ruffians before him, in this way he made for his own cabin.

The good old doctor and Harry Girdwood hastened to meet him.

"Oh, Jack, Jack," exclaimed Harry, where have you been?"

"We have been in a rare state of mind," said the doctor. "What has kept you?"

"More than there is time to explain, doctor," answered young Jack. "I have been attacked. One of them defended me against Toro and Hunston, and one has been murdered."

"Which one? Surely not Spirillo?"

"No; where is Spirillo? Have you seen him within the last half hour?"

"No. Why?"

"We must make our escape to-night."

"Why?"

"To-morrow may be too late."

The doctor was quite flushed at this.

"Pray explain yourself, Jack," he said. "Why must it be to-night?"

"The murder of Robert Emmerson by Hunston will probably bring about an investigation of the whole matter, and any moment might discover all our plans, our boat ready for starting, provisioned and armed, and then our lives wouldn't be worth a rap."

He then gave them a hurried account of all that he had gone though upon that eventful night.

Young Jack was right.

To-night or never.

The American doctor got together his medicines and every thing which had been left as his portion of the preparations.

Not a thing was forgotten by him.

Very few words were exchanged.

They had made a lowering apparatus by which they filled the boat with the various articles they had got ready for the expedition, and as this was dropped through the window with its small cargo, the doctor ticked off its contents against his written list of necessaries carefully compiled.

The moment approached when all would be completed.

"Jack."

"Sir."

"Spirillo."

"Good."

He moved towards the companion ladder.

"No rashness, and above all, don't venture on to the deck, only signal Spirillo and come back."

"Good."

"Harry."

"Sir."

"Are you ready?"

"Yes."

"Now then, take the rifles. Where is the small keg of powder?"

"Here."

"And the bullet mould?"

"Already in the boat."

"Good. Now then."

At this moment a low, soft whistle from above told him that Spirillo was there.

Harry Girdwood answered it.

Then he squeezed through the porthole and slipped into the boat.

In the space of a minute, he was joined by young Jack, who reached the boat in the same fashion.

Next came Spirillo, who glided as nimbly as only a monkey or a sailor can.

"Now, doctor," said Harry Girdwood, "make haste."

"All right.

The doctor gave a look round, as he spoke, and then he stepped over the ship's side and took hold of the rope.

"Good-bye to the pirate ship, 'Flowery Land;' farewell to the floating shambles," muttered the American.

"Not yet."

A dark form had risen from the planks, it seemed, and confronted the doctor at this moment.

The doctor was momentarily taken aback.

Only momentarily.

"What do you want?" he demanded coolly.

"You," was the reply. "You first, and them next."

"Oh! is that all?"

The man in response placed a metal whistle in his mouth.

But he did not blow.

Before he could get out a note the old American gave him a sudden drive, which sent him staggering back, and then whipping from his waistcoat pocket a tiny phial, he dashed it upon the deck close by the man, and slid down the rope into the boat.

They were ready.

Before the doctor could be seated, Spirillo had severed the rope with one vigorous cut.

The "Flowery Land" held on her course, while the boat drifted astern.

"Lower your oars," said Spirillo, eagerly, "and pull for your lives."

"There's no hurry," said the American, coolly.

"What?"

"They have got plenty to occupy them at present," said the doctor in explanation.

He was right.

"Look!"

They stared in utter amazement then in the direction of the "Flowery Land."

The whole end of the junk from whence they had made their escape was full of a dense white vapour, which utterly obscured every object on board!

"What is that?" demanded Jack, breathlessly.

"Only my way of covering the retreat of the rear guard," was the American's quiet rejoinder.

"Will it blow up?"

"No."

"But will it set the ship on fire?"

"No."

"What does it do, then?" demanded Spirillo.

"Blind the pirates for a time only."

"Then," said Harry Girdwood, "let us pull off as fast as we can—for when the smoke clears away——"

"We shall be out of range and out of sight too."

And he gave a quiet chuckle as he spoke.

They watched the huge hull of the pirate junk as it receded from sight, and by degrees nothing was visible but the dense cloud of white vapour, which seemed to rise slowly to the heavens without losing its density.

"Will it destroy them?" demanded young Jack in an awe-stricken whisper.

"No."

"What will be the effects of it?"

"Nothing very dreadful. They will doze off quietly, if they get a sniff of it, that's all."

"Stifled?"

"No; merely drugged."

"But when they wake up——"

"We shall be far out of harm's way, please goodness—and now," added the doctor, "lend me the lantern, Spirillo, and let me examine the chart, for, although we are well provisioned, I'd rather not make a mistake."

* * * * *

Morning dawned.

The "Flowery Land" had utterly disappeared.

They swept the horizon with their glasses, but not a sign, not a trace of the pirate junk could be seen.

And when this was known, Spirillo eyed the doctor suspiciously.

"I rather think, doctor," said he, "that you have disposed of them all."

"How?"

"Sent them to the bottom."

Young Jack and Harry Girdwood were silent.

But their looks showed that they shared Spirillo's belief.

"No, my friends," said the doctor. "They are safe enough for all that I have done to them."

"And now, gentlemen all," he went on airily, "now for our first picnic afloat; to breakfast."

"To breakfast," shouted the boys together.

And a hearty meal they made of it, for they ate as free men.

CHAPTER XVI.

ON BOARD THE "FRANZ JOSEF" THE TWO EMILYS—WHAT LITTLE EMILY DISCOVERED ON THE LOOKOUT.

The "Franz Josef" made good headway, and with favouring winds, scudded along in a way which slightly upset the plans of the traitor spy, Biga-Eng-Ming-Ming, otherwise Bigamini.

On board the "Franz Josef" were Jack Harkaway, Emily, Harvey and his wife, and the friends Jefferson and Magog Brand.

A goodly party.

Now Emily's health had been fast failing her during the last days of their residence on Mandarin Mole's property, and they all feared, more than they cared to acknowledge to each other, upon her behalf.

Judge then of the great pleasure when, after being about forty-eight hours at sea, they perceived a marked improvement in her.

Her cheek grew ruddy, and her eye regained its brightness, and her restoration to health was well-nigh complete.

The change appeared to be wrought by magic.

"How wonderfully the sea suits you, dear," said Hilda, repeatedly. "You look better and handsomer than ever now. Your dear cheeks are like damask, and your eyes——"

Emily interrupted her laughingly.

"If you were a man, Jack would be jealous," she cried. "You are so full of flattery, Hilda, dear."

"I speak literal truth," protested Hilda. "I don't know how far a flatterer would go."

"Nor I, if that is not flattery."

"The sea is your proper element, depend on it."

Emily looked very hard into her face.

"Shall I tell you a secret, dear?"

"If you think I can keep one."

"Well, I should be sorry to pledge my faith to that," returned Mrs. Harkaway, with a smile of mischief, "but I'll risk it. Do you know what is the chief cause of my improved health?"

"The sea air."

"No."

"The change."

"Guess again."

"I'm at a loss."

"Then I'll tell you. It is that hope is born again."

"Hope?"

"Yes."

"What do you mean?"

"Do you know, dear, what made me so ill? Do you know what crushed my spirit, my health, and almost broke my poor heart?"

Hilda knew well enough, but she sought to shirk the painful topic.

"You know well enough; you are a mother, and no one knows the cause so well as you. It was the loss of my dear boy, my darling Jack."

"Emily!"

"You know it," said Mrs. Harkaway; "none know it better than you, Hilda. I felt that my boy was in danger of immediate death. At one time I felt sure that all was over, and then melancholy settled upon me. I could not shake it off. I know that it would have ended by shaking me off instead," she added, with a faint smile.

"Then, dear, the inference from your fresh looks——"

Emily nodded, and laughed gleefully.

"You guess it, I can see," she said, with an air of conviction. "My Jack lives. My boy is saved."

The exalted manner, the visibly subdued excitement that seemed to foreshadow hysterics, frightened Hilda.

She began to fear that Emily's mind was going.

Hilda sat silent before her loved friend and companion for awhile.

Emily regarded her with a singular expression on her countenance before she spoke.

"You are worrying and puzzling your brains about me, dear," she said presently. "You can not understand whether I am sane or wandering."

"Emily!"

"Well, I must say——"

"Of course, that's frank of you. Well, you will have to enjoy a good laugh at me."

"Then the subject will have to be a merry one."

"It will," said Emily: "know then that I have been warned in a dream."

"A dream?"

"Yes."

A look of disappointment showed upon Hilda's countenance.

The confident manner of her friend had almost made her hopeful.

"I dreamt that he was saved, that he had been in deadly peril, but that it was past, and that we should soon have him with us again. You don't believe in dreams?"

"I confess——"

"No need to—I know you don't, nor I either, ordinarily, but this was an exceptional affair altogether. My dream was rather a vision, and I am sure was Heaven-sent. It was shared too by the two persons who loved Jack best in the world."

"Who are they?"

"I should say—perhaps his father and mother."

"No, by the two Emilys."

"What, my Emily?"

"Yes."

"She never told me."

"No, but she did me. Here was the place for the confidence she had to give, and she knew it. She dreamt that she saw Jack in great peril, and that at the most critical moment one of his worst enemies had his heart touched by a good spirit, and became his defender.

"She saw Jack in a boat, gliding with outstretched arms toward us. Beside him sat Harry Girdwood, and with them were two new-found friends. They were safe; she brought me her confidence, and when we compared notes, I found that our dreams had been identical in every particular and detail."

"It is a most remarkable coincidence."

"It is something more than that, dear; it is a warning—a Heaven-sent vision, I feel assured, and it will take much to destroy that conviction."

"Where is Emily?"

"I left her with her inseparable companion—the telescope."

"Where?"

"Perched up beside the captain."

"On the watch?"

"Yes."

Mrs. Harkaway laughed heartily at this.

"The minx! we have a wager on between us."

"About what?"

"Who shall discover him first. She means what Jack would call to steal a march on me. Let us go to her, and you shall see for yourself."

They went up on deck.

Here they were just in time to share in a great general excitement.

The excitement prevailing was occasioned by the lowering of a boat to fish up something floating at a distance, which little Emily had spied while on the lookout.

Jack Harkaway was in the boat, for he seized upon the least pretext for a change, and moreover, he was glad to gratify the girl's whim.

And as they rowed towards the white object bobbing up and down in the distance, the whole of the ship's crew and passengers mustered on the deck to speculate upon the nature of the floating object.

"It's a gull she has seen skimming the water," said Magog Brand.

"Likely enough," returned Jefferson, "but it's no particular harm, if it be nothing more interesting even."

* * * * * *

The boat still pulled nearer and nearer yet.

And now they were up with it.

One of the sailors bent over the boat's side, and grabbed at it, and as he pulled it in, there was a general exclamation of disappointment.

"It's only a floating bottle, after all!"

CHAPTER XVII.

A MESSAGE FROM THE DEEP—THE WARNING.

And so it was only a floating bottle, after all.

A bottle, corked most carefully and hermetically sealed.

Tarred, and painted white atop, with a red streak round it, and with a white collar round the neck of the bottle, which had evidently been placed there to attract the attention of any chance passer.

"What can it be?" said the coxswain of the boat.

"It's a rum un, whatever it is," said another.

"A bottle of grog," suggested one of the men.

Whereupon the rest smacked their lips in eager anticipation.

"It's a queer way of bottling grog," said a tar.

"Supposing a fellow prigged it, and wanted to hide it somewhere away," suggested one.

"A blessed odd place to hide it," interrupted another of the men. "Let's see what's inside."

The men laughed, and agreed to this, and they were about to knock the neck of the bottle off, when Harkaway took the bottle unceremoniously away from them.

"I'll take care of this," he said, "and we'll see what's inside it when we get back on deck."

They looked black at this.

But Jack Harkaway was one of that sort that men who know what discipline means do not feel inclined to quarrel with.

So back they rowed.

The whole company on board the "Franz Josef" were waiting to meet them, and foremost amongst the number were the two Emilys and Mrs. Harvey.

"What is it—what is it?" asked a score of eager voices.

"Only a bottle."

"Oh!" groaned the disappointed excitement-seekers.

Once fairly on deck, the company gathered around Jack Harkaway.

When the neck was knocked off, it was found that there was no liquor in it.

"And yet I can hear something rumbling about in it," said Magog Brand.

"I'll wager I guess what it is," said Jefferson.

"I'll wager you champagne all round you don't guess," said Harvey.

"Done."

"I'll bet that I guess it," said Harkaway, suddenly struck by a thought.

Wagers became the order of the hour.

Any thing for a little excitement.

While their sporting proclivities were being indulged in by the gentlemen, little Emily was seen busily engaged in writing on a leaf of her pocketbook which she proceeded to tear out.

"What is that, Em?" demanded her father.

"My guess, papa," replied his daughter, blushing a little.

"What?"

"Why, Emily, you are never going to bet!" said Jack Harkaway, pretending to look inexpressily shocked.

"How unladylike!" said Harvey.

"Dreadful!" said Jack Harkaway.

"No, no, uncle; I only want to guess, like all of you. Here's my guess—only, mind, it is not to be opened until the bottle has been broken."

The bottle was broken and a folded paper was discovered inside.

But the noise they had heard had been caused by some small shot which had evidently been placed in the bottle as ballast.

"A message from the sea."

"The last words of some poor shipwrecked people," suggested Magog Brand.

"Likely enough."

Little Emily stretched forward eagerly, and to the surprise of all snatched up the paper.

Then before they could discern her intention, she read it hurriedly through, and fell fainting on the deck.

"Look to her!" cried Harkaway, excitedly.

He picked up the paper, and while little Emily was carried away by her father, he read it aloud to the amazed bystanders.

"This is to warn the 'Franz Josef' that the notorious Chinese pirate junk, the 'Flowery Land,' is cruising about in these waters with the avowed object of capturing it. Their plains are all well laid, and they have precise information abou the 'Franz Josef,' sent them by the agent and spy of the pirates, who is called Big-Eng-Ming-Ming. Mr. Harkaway and friends of his are known to be on board the 'Franz Josef,' so that the pirates look forward to the certainty of making a very rich prize. This warning is sent forth by Jack Harkaway the younger and Harry Girdwood, both prisoners on board the 'Flowery Land,' but who fondly hope that their captivity draws to a close. Any body finding this is earnestly requested to forward it to Mr. Harkaway, who will handsomely reward the finder."

Harkaway and his friend Harvey were silent.

An awe-stricken silence had fallen upon them all.

* * * * * *

"Well, Hilda," said Mrs. Harkarkay, "what have you to say now to my vision?"

"Say—nothing," responded Hilda; "I am all amazement. Give me the note that my Emily wrote."

Harkaway had forgotten this for the moment.

He now opened it, and read there little Emily's guess at what the bottle would be found to contain.

It was simply these words—

"A message from Jack."

"Wonder upon wonder," ejaculated Harkaway, handing it to Hilda.

The latter actually trembled when she read the words. It looked like witchcraft.

"I shall look upon you as a sorceress in future, dear," she said, "and my Emily too."

"'Pon my life!" exclaimed Jefferson, "that's tall guessing. Why, she was the only one who shot the mark."

"The only one."

"Gentlemen," said Harkaway seriously, as he looked about him; "there is something more in this than mere guessing. The hand of Providence is clearly indicated here. Let us profit by the warning without delay."

"At once."

"At once!" echoed every voice about him.

"Let us have the captain here, too, and have a general conference."

This was done.

The captain came up, and the matter was gone into at length.

"Let us take opinions as we go on," said Harvey.

"By all means," said Jefferson, "and suppose we begin with the captain."

"Good."

"Now, sir."

The captain looked about him rather nervously before giving his answer.

"I think, gentlemen," he said, "that you will guess my answer. There can not be two opinions, I presume, on the matter. We must put back, without losing any time."

"But what about the writer of this letter?" exclaimed Jack Harkaway; "what about my boy, eh? Shall we go

back without making an effort in behalf of the brave lads that warn us of our peril?"

"What good could we do in opposing such a vessel as the 'Flowery Land?'" said the captain.

"We could at least try," said Harkaway.

"Yes," said the captain, "and swell the list of their victims, that's all, and perhaps cause your boy to be murdered under our very eyes; no, Mr. Harkaway, that would be idle folly. The only thing is to get back and seek the assistance of the British admiral. Then we shall be able to rescue the lads, and pay out these villanous sharks into the bargain. We shall be doing a wonderful service to the world at large by these means."

Harkaway made no immediate answer, but he looked as if he did not relish the idea of going back.

"Well, gentlemen," said the captain, "what do you all say?"

"I for one think you are right," said Jefferson.

"There can be no doubt of it," added the dwarf; "a moment's reflection will suffice to convince you of that."

"I must say I think so, too," said Harvey; "much as I am tempted, Jack, to say as you have said, I can't help seeing that it would be the height of folly to do it. We must get a ship that can cope with the pirates."

"Perhaps you are right. I have only one stipulation to make."

"Name it."

"That you get back with all dispatch, lose not a day, not an hour—nay, not a minute. My boy's life may actually depend upon an hour one way or the other."

They little thought what had already taken place, how Mandarin Mole had detected the villanous little spy Bigamini.

Still less did they anticipate that poor Isaac Mole had lost his other leg, and that, for the future, he would have to stump through the world on a pair of timber toes.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE RAFT AND ITS DEAD—AN EVIL OMEN.

YOUNG Jack's troubles were not over.

The pirate junk was out of sight.

Their provisions held out; but they had one severe difficulty to encounter.

Bad weather.

They were driven before the wind at a desperate rate for hours.

But they lived it down.

On the third day they came in sight of a sail.

This raised their hopes.

They hung out flags, and made every possible signal of distress.

But in vain.

They had the mortification of seeing the ship keep on her course without heeding them.

This can be easily understood.

Their tiny craft was invisible to the big ship, which they saw with comparative distinctness.

Had the people on the passing ship been on the lookout for them, a close scrutiny through a telescope might have revealed their mere speck of a boat, dancing about upon the waves.

But they were not.

And so they passed on never dreaming that four fellow-creatures were so near, comparatively, and in imminent peril.

"We shall never be seen," said young Jack, despondingly, "unless we are near enough to get run down."

The doctor was more philosophic, however.

He had one word of consolation for every grievance.

"Wait."

"That's all very well," said young Jack, impatiently, "but it is more easy to preach patience than exercise it. Our only chance is to be picked up by a passing vessel."

"True."

"We may go weeks again and not meet another."

"True again."

"Then can you wonder at my impatience?"

The doctor smiled.

"My dear boy," said he, "when you get my age, you will take matters more quietly."

Another day passed.

Towards sundown they fell in with an adventure. Spirillo was engaged in setting a sail that he had contrived when he spied something floating out to leeward.

"What is it?"

"It looks like a piece of a wreck."

"Anybody on it?"

"No. Yet stay—I think I see someone—give me the glass."

He looked long and earnestly.

"I think I can see a man making signals."

"Look."

"There, in that direction."

After a few moments, young Jack distinguished something very clearly.

"I am positive that I see a man on the raft," said he, "but he appears to be bowing to us."

"Or to someone else," added Spirillo.

"Let us pull toward it," cried Jack.

This was done.

The day was declining, and in the fading light it had appeared farther off than it was in reality, for in less than twenty minutes they were close enough to see what it was.

And a ghastly spectacle it proved to be.

A roughly-made raft, to which were lashed two half-naked forms.

One was fastened to the side of the raft, and his lashings had slipped with the motion of the waves, and his dead body, attached only by a leg, while the rest of the body was submerged, was towed along.

The other form was that of a tall gaunt man with sunken cheeks, hollow eyes, and a long grizzled beard, who sat huddled up in the centre of the raft bowing gravely to something in front of him.

They shouted to him as they approached, but he did not hear them apparently, for he went on bowing with the same gravity.

"Ship ahoy!" shouted Spirillo.

"Hillo—ho!" responded the man on the raft, in sepulchral tones, "bring the lights and pipe all hands for a dance."

They looked at each other gravely.

"An Englishman," said young Jack.

"Or an American," added the doctor.

"Mad?"

The doctor nodded.

"What shall we do?"

"Give him something to eat."

Harry Girdwood tossed him a piece of biscuit, and so true was his aim, that it fell at the man's feet.

He started, snatched it up, and devoured it eagerly.

And then, before he had swallowed the last morsel of it, he fell heavily forward on his face.

They pulled alongside, and the American doctor boarded the raft.

He knelt down beside the man, and found him utterly insensible.

"The shock has been too much for him in his weak state," he said.

He turned the man over and felt his body vainly for a pulse.

Then he looked up at his companions in the boat.

"Well, doctor, how is he?" asked young Jack anxiously.

"We came across him just in time to see him die."

"Die!"

"Yes, it is all over."

* * * * * *

Hunger and exposure had done their work thoroughly.

They looked about the raft and examined the bodies for any indication of their names or the name of the ship from which they had come to this piteous end.

But there was nothing to give them the least information.

The doctor got back to the boat and they pulled away slowly and sadly.

"See, see," exclaimed Harry Girdwood, a moment after.

"What now?"

"The raft has broken up."

And so it had strangely enough, just after the doctor had left it, and the two grim occupants of the raft slipped over and rolled to their last resting-place, the bed of the ocean.

"How horrible," said Harry Girdwood, with a shudder. "I hope that that may not be our fate after all our severe struggles."

"Amen," responded the doctor solemnly.

The twilight deepened and the sun set, tinging the whole span of the western horizon with a rich golden hue.

And as they strained their eyes to get the last glimpse of the fragments of the wrecked raft, it looked blood-red in the sunset.

And as it faded away from view, the sun sank below the horizon.

Darkness was on the face of the waters.

Then their hearts grew heavy, and they drifted away in a solemn silence.

And as they fell asleep, they all asked themselves these two questions—

"Shall we ever reach land?"

"Shall we be picked up by a passing ship?"

And filled with dire forebodings, they felt hope abandon them.

The solemnity of the position made them involuntarily superstitious.

In spite of themselves, they looked upon that fatal raft as an omen sent across their path.

The ill-fated Englishman on the raft had just come in sight of succour and had probably died ere he could realise the fact, since his mind was distraught.

Were they, too, destined to reach help when it would be too late?

They feared so.

And this it was that caused them to grow heart-sick.

But sleep came to help them.

Heavenly sleep, the panacea for all our ills.

It was Spirillo's watch that night, and a weary vigil it was for him.

"I made a mistake in joining them," said the Malay to himself. "I ought to have known when I was well off, and stayed on board the 'Flowery Land.'"

CHAPTER XIX.

SAVED—FATHER AND SON—HIGH JINKS ON BOARD THE "FRANZ JOSEF."

"Ship ahoy!"

Harry Girdwood awoke with a start.

"Where away?"

"Yonder."

He picked up his glass, and looked eagerly out.

Yes, sure enough there was a ship, and at no very great distance either.

"Shall we wake them up?"

"No; let us signal her first."

"You run up a flag," said Harry Girdwood, "while I fire off the rifle."

The rifle lay ready loaded to hand, so he lifted it, and blazed away into the sky.

At that young Jack and the doctor awoke with a start.

"Hullo!" cried the former, "what's the matter?"

"Ship ahoy!"

"So there is, and not far off. Dear me! and we were getting down in the mouth, too."

"Hurrah!" shouted young Jack, joyfully, "we are saved."

"I hope so; don't be too sanguine, lest our disappointment be proportionate."

"Wisely spoken, doctor," said Spirillo.

"It can't be the 'Flowery Land' again."

Spirillo had taken a long, steady look through his glass by now, and he soon put them right upon this point.

"It's no more like the 'Flowery Land' than it is like the raft we saw yesterday. Fire the rifle again."

In their eagerness, three of them blazed away now; and by the time that the echo of their own shouts died away, they saw a flash of light on board the ship, a puff of smoke, and then came the deep boom of the answering gun.

"They see us!"

"They signal us!"

"Hurrah!"

They lowered their oars, and pulled away for the ship with a hearty goodwill.

And presently they were so near that they could see them run their colours up to the mast-head.

"The Union Jack!" shouted Harry Girdwood.

"Let's give it three cheers."

"Hip, hip, hip, hoorah! hip, hip! Why, Spirillo, man alive, you don't seem pleased."

"I—oh, yes."

"Why, what a half-hearted way of showing your pleasure then."

"The English are notoriously hard on all pirates," said Spirillo coldly; "what guarantee have I that I am safe?"

"You!" exclaimed young Jack, "why, you're with us, aren't you? Well, that shows you are no pirate. Why, Spirillo, my good friend, the fact of your being with us would make you safe if you were known, which you are not. We shall give no explanation beyond the fact that we have escaped from the 'Flowery Land,' you with us."

"All right."

"Give me your hand."

"With all my heart," said Spirillo, reassured.

"See, see; they are lowering a boat."

This was true.

The ship had now lowered a boat, and it was speedily manned and pulling towards them.

They pulled sharply to meet them, and in the space of a few minutes the two boats were alongside of each other.

"What cheer, my mates?" cried one of the boat's crew; "lost your bearings and drifted away?"

"That's it."

"Is yours a trading ship, my friend?" asked the doctor.

"Yes, your honour, a tea ship," replied one of the sailors, heartily.

"A tea ship?"

"Yes."

"Whither bound?" demanded young Jack eagerly.

"Back to Chaney?"

"What is the name of your ship, my man?"

"The 'Franz Josef.'"

"The what?" almost shrieked young Jack.

The man confirmed his speech with a sort of mild oath, but his speech was drowned by the great din of voices from the ship itself.

And above them all was heard a clear, ringing, manly voice shouting out—

"Jack, Jack, my own boy Jack. Now Heaven be thanked!"

Jack gave a yell. It was his father!

They scrambled up the ship's side goodness knows how.

All we know is, that young Jack was foremost, and that in less time than it takes to write it, he was being strained to his father's heart, and their eyes were dim with tears of joy.

The two Emilys came running along the deck, and Hilda scudding after them, a good third in a hotly-contested race.

And then there was more hugging and kissing, and every body laughed and cried all at once.

And as for little Emily, her joy was so great that she quite forgot her lady-like reserve which she was now just beginning to think it proper to assume, and she hugged her young sweetheart before everybody with greater warmth than all the rest.

"Come, come, I say, Miss Emily," said Mr. Jefferson, winking at Harvey, "I think you ought to serve us alike all round."

Little Emily blushed purple and retreated behind her mamma.

"Now, Jack," said the elder Harkaway, "tell me who your friends are—or rather companions."

"Friends, father, friends," corrected young Jack.

"Well, friends."

"Doctor Stanley—our good friend—he saved Harry's life, and mine, too, for the matter of that, as much by his good counsels as anything else."

The speaker's father held out his hand to the American doctor.

"Sir," said he, "you have made yourself our friend for life—and me your eternal debtor. I hope that I may be in a position to requite your goodness."

"Mr. Harkaway," returned the doctor, smiling, "our dear young Jack has overrated my services very greatly. He must have kissed the blarney stone. I am in his debt, on the contrary—in his and that of our young friend and fellow adventurer, Harry Girdwood."

"Doctor!"

"It is so," affirmed the American. "To their energy and indomitable perseverance I owe my presence here—my escape from that floating slaughter house in which I was so long a prisoner."

"The doctor is too kind," said Harry Girdwood, "for without has cool head and his sage advice we should have been ruined and undone twenty times."

"And we must not forget our friend Spirillo."

"Glad to know you, friend Spirillo," said Harkaway, grasping his hand.

The Malay pirate was a bit abashed at this public recognition of his services.

"The lads did all," he said. "They planned it all. I owe them my escape. They owe me nothing."

"But without Spirillo we should never have got away."

"True," said Doctor Stanley. "It was he who provided the means."

"I am bowed down with the weight of the obligations I am under, my good friends, to you," said Jack Harkaway, senior. "May the friendship thus begun last till we have done with life."

"Hurrah!" shouted an enthusiastic tar. The cry was caught up by the whole of the assembled crew. And a joyous day it was on board the "Franz Josef."

In the midst of the excitement, the hand-shakings, kissing and hugging, and the questioning that was going on all round, young Jack did not particularly observe the jolly old salt who led the cheering.

His father led the sailor in question forward.

"An old friend of yours, my dear boy," he said.

The old sailor scraped a bow and pulled his forelock.

"Glad to see your honour back again among us," he said.

"What!" cried young Jack, "my old friend Ben Hawser? Precious glad to see you, Ben. Tip us your fin."

They shook hands with such evident enjoyment, that it made the whole of the bystanders feel a sensation of pleasure merely to look on.

"Damme!" cried Ben, "it makes my smeller tingle and the water pump into my lee-scuppers with joy to look at you again, Master Jack, and to think you are safe out of them sharks' clutches. Blow my pigtail, if I can hardly believe the evidence of my own blessed toplights; let's feel your flesh again."

And they shook hands with greater warmth than before.

"You ought to have been in that fight with the pirate," said young Jack.

"Well, I dunno," replied old Ben. "With such a wessel as it were according to all accounts, the odds was about the Lord High Admiral to a powder monkey agin you."

"Right."

"But I should vastly like to have about three of them pirates here just now—only three, and with nothing but a bo'sen's rattan in my paw—damme! I'd make small biscuit of 'em and look on it as dinner, in a manner of speaking!"

The first mate summoned all the crew, and Jack Harkaway, senior addressed them from the top of a barrel.

"I want to have some small recognition of my boy's return my men," he said, "and so I have asked the skipper's

permission to treat you to a double allowance of grog all round."

"Hoorah!"

"Three cheers!" cried Ben Hawser. "Take the time from me, and give it mouth—one, two, three—hip, hip, hoorah!"

A deafening cheer burst from the crew.

"I would also suggest," said Harkaway, "that we should have a dance."

"Bravo!"

"A dance! a dance!"

"But the serious question of the hour is, have we got a fiddler on board?"

"I should think so," returned Dan, an old sailor, with a look of something approaching scorn at the question arising. "Why, what do you call Ben Hawser?"

"Can Ben play?" said Harkaway, in surprise.

"Ben play!" echoed Dan. "Only like a gilded angel, that's all. Can't he, mates?"

"Aye, aye."

"Well, then," said Harvey, "here's the programme right off."

"First the grog," suggested Mr. Jefferson.

"Yes."

"Then clear the deck for a dance," added Magog Brand.

"Aye, aye."

"Call the grog."

"Here it comes."

"And now," said Jack Harkaway the elder, "as soon as Ben Hawser tunes up, I'll try if I can get my legs lissome enough to lead off the hornpipe."

This proposition was greeted with deafening cheers.

Harkaway led off the dance with a will, and every step that is known in association with the hornpipe he could do—aye, and do it to perfection too.

The tars were delighted.

And when Jack senior was tired, Jack junior had to start off, and he showed himself scarcely less agile than his father.

Then followed Harvey, and Magog Brand came next with Punch's break-down, which made the crew yell with gratification.

It was a grand festival for the crew.

And the reputation of the Harkaways—father and son—was from that day wondrously enhanced for the sailors.

They had looked upon them with considerable respect and admiration before; they now regarded them as men of the most exalted genius.

* * * * * *

While the festivities proceeded, Mr. Jefferson and Doctor Stanley stood aloof chatting about the details of the escape.

"It is a remarkable thing," said the doctor, "how apt we are to believe in what we most desire."

"We are."

"Do you know that no sooner did we get sight of a sail than young Jack set it down for the 'Franz Josef?'"

"Indeed. Well, we came across a bottle containing your message."

"You did?" cried the doctor.

"Yes."

"Now Heaven be thanked," exclaimed the other fervently. "Providence was with us."

"It was indeed," said Mr. Jefferson seriously; "it is little short of marvellous that we should have picked up one of those bottles after all."

* * * * * *

The crew of the "Franz Josef" did not forget that festival for many a long day.

CHAPTER XX.

MR MOLE DETERMINES TO ROUT OUT THE BRIGANDS.

THE "Franz Josef" was back again.

As soon as she was in port, they made their way to the British consul's house, and made an official report concerning the notorious pirate ship, the "Flowery Land."

The consequence was that an expedition was got up to go in pursuit.

Once their business settled there, they made their way up the country to Mr. Mole's property.

Judge then of their surprise and dismay when they discovered the calamity which had befallen the old tutor.

Poor Isaac Mole—ever seeking for glory, even in the midst of pain!

He was once more nursed by his faithful black partner, with all her old tenderness and affection, and thanks to a good constitution, no less than her unremitting attention, he was comparatively soon convalescent.

And so it fell out that when they arrived, he was walking about upon two wooden legs.

"Welcome all," said the old gentleman, with genuine joy. "My troubles are over now that I see you all here again; and believe me, I would have two more wooden legs, and go through even more suffering yet if it were necessary for the delight of having my own boy safe back with us—bless him!"

But the troubles and ugly adventures which they had gone through had this notable effect upon them.

They were tired of China.

"We will leave the Celestials to their own devices," said Harkaway, "as soon as Mr. Mole is fit to undertake the fatigues of a sea voyage."

Mr. Mole was not in a hurry to be gone.

Firstly, he could not be moved yet.

Secondly, he had a pet fancy in his head for routing out the gang with which Bigamini was in league.

Of the existence of such a gang they had ample proofs that Nabley and Daniel Pike had routed up.

CHAPTER XXI.

MOLE BAGS A BURGLAR—WHAT A NIGHT HE HAS OF IT—DISGRACEFUL ROBBERY OF THE WOODEN LEG.

ISAAC MOLE stumped his way through life cheerfully enough on his pair of timber toes.

The loss of his only remaining leg did not affect his spirits much.

The only visible effect it had upon him was to cause him to grow spiteful at times.

And then he would vow vengeance upon Bigamini.

"I'm not a vicious man," he would often say, "but that wretch has condemned me to such a life of torment with

my stilts, that if I wait till I'm a hundred, I'll have my vengeance upon him."

And when he had made this remark in the presence of either Nabley or Daniel Pike, the detectives would endeavour to put him off his favourite topic by assuring him that Bigamini was dead.

"I am sure that that last shot did for him," said Pike, "positive. The others carried him away in order that nothing might be discovered to compromise them."

"How compromise them?" Mr. Mole would ask.

"By letting their names be known."

This puzzled Mr. Mole until it was explained.

The two detectives, true to their old instincts, had ferreted out a number of particulars concerning Bigamini and his exploits.

Not only was that ruffian the spy of the pirates, but he was also connected with a villanous gang of thieves, who carried on their exploits in an underhand way, with a secret organisation that completely puzzled the native authorities.

They had their agents and spies everywhere, and indeed it was very soon evident that they must have them upon Mr. Mole's plantation.

The continual robberies which occurred soon convinced the detectives of this.

Nabley communicated his suspicions to Isaac Mole, and the latter was on the watch night and day from that moment.

By degrees, however, he got the better of this nervous feeling, and Mrs. Mole began to get a fair night's rest.

One night, however, just three weeks after the return of the Harkaway party, Isaac Mole started up in the middle of the night, and snatching up his revolver, hobbled off on his rounds.

His wife vainly endeavoured to dissuade him.

Now Mr. Mole would fain have aroused his friends generally, but the fact was that he had cried "wolf" so often, that they would not pay any heed to him now.

Chloe tried to coax him into going back to bed again, but tried in vain.

Down he hobbled into the grounds, nothing on but his dressing-gown.

Now he had not proceeded far when he saw in the dim night light a figure crouching by the back door of his house.

"Hallo!" thought Mole, "I've got him, have I?"

What could he be doing in this position?

"Evidently trying the locks," thought Mole.

So he had a capital notion.

"I'll just go back quietly," he said to himself, "and wait till John Chinaman opens the door and then meet him face to face inside with my little six-shooter—glorious lark!"

So full of glee was he at the notion that he could scarce refrain from chuckling aloud.

Back he crept around the house and into the room and straight up to the door, upon the outside of which the midnight burglar was operating.

Now what was his surprise when he got there to find that the thief had drilled a hole on each side of the door large enough to get his hands through?

And there were his two hands groping about for the fastenings.

Mr. Mole was seized with a brilliant idea.

So grand that he could scarce carry it into execution for laughing.

He looked about him for a rope, and having secured a good stout one he hastily made a running noose at each end of it.

This done, he slowly approached the two hands, held the pair of nooses over them, and then, with a sudden jerk, tightened them.

"Bagged!" he cried; "bagged, by the everlasting jingo!"

He dragged at the poor wretch's wrists with no gentle hand, and a groan of anguish came through the door.

"Now," said Mole, "I must administer toko."

Round the house he trotted, and reaching the exterior, found his prisoner writhing ineffectually to release himself from these novel stocks.

"I've been waiting for you a long while, my friend," said Mole; "and now, as I'm a sinner, I'll enjoy myself on your carcase."

He looked for a stick.

But there was nothing to hand.

Mole was up in arms, and he was not likely to be baulked of his revenge.

A happy thought.

He had two wooden legs; one would suffice for his present enjoyment.

So he hurriedly unscrewed it and prepared for the fray.

"This is most enjoyable," he said to himself.

So he turned up his sleeves.

Then he poised his wooden leg gracefully in his hand.

"One, two, three, and that's toko!"

Down it came a terrific bang on the poor wretch's back. The thief gave a yell.

"That's only to open the ball, my friend," said Mole, cheerfully; "we shall enjoy ourselves more presently."

Crack!

"Chin-chin," said Mole pleasantly, "how does that style suit you?"

Bang! Bang!

It was something to hear him yell.

Mole had never heard any music that pleased him half so much.

"Now, my dear friend," said Mr. Mole, pausing for a moment to take breath; "we have had the plain, straightforward hitting. I'm going in for a few fancy touches."

Saying which, he prodded his prisoner desperately in the ribs.

At each poke the thief gave a "Ugh!" that reminded Mole of the navvies at home, knocking in the paving stones in the London roads.

He writhed and yelled and shrieked.

And the more he cried, the more Mr. Mole laughed.

"Dear, dear," he cried, "what an evening I'm having, to be sure; and all to myself."

Whiz! Crack!

He played a little wildly now, and landed an awful blow on his prisoner's head.

"Dear, dear, that won't do," he said. "I shall knock him out of time and spoil it before I've had half my penn'orth out of him."

Crack!

"Mercy!"

"Hullo!" said Mole, starting, or rather hopping back in surprise, "English!"

Just then he heard the voices of Harkaway, Dick Harvey, and others calling him.

"Mr. Mole, Mr. Mole!"

"All right," shouted Mole, "here I am."

"Where?"

"Round here."

But finding that they did not arrive very quickly, he hopped after them.

"Why, what in the name of all that's wonderful, is the meaning of this?" said Jefferson.

"I've bagged a burglar," returned Mole.

"You have had the nightmare."

"Not I," answered Mole with a chuckle. "I thought I should surprise you; come with me."

He took Harvey by the arm for support.

Now just as they turned the corner, they perceived a number of dark forms stealing away across the plantation, and all that remained in evidence of Mr. Mole's prisoner, was the ends of the rope.

"Well," ejaculated Mr. Mole, "he has got away. But he had such a dose of my wooden leg that I don't think he could go far."

"Your leg?"

"Where is it?"

"Don't you see? He had made those holes to reach the iron bars on the inside, and there I caught him and held him too, and then I came round to give him a token of my gratitude, and having no stick handy, I unscrewed one of my legs, and I enjoyed myself; in fact, if I hadn't left to show you the way, I should probably be still at work on him."

They laughed at this.

"They have carried him off."

"Of course; I knew he couldn't walk; I spoilt him for that. But what startled me was that he called for mercy in English."

"English?"

"Yes."

"I shouldn't be surprised to find it Bigamini again."

"Well, I lost a leg when last I tackled the scoundrel Bigamini, and now I've lost one again."

And although they scoured the country round not a trace could they find of the thieves or of their booty—Mr. Mole's wooden leg!

CHAPTER XXII.

IN WHICH MR. MOLE PLEDGES HIMSELF TO TOTAL ABSTINENCE FROM ALCOHOLIC LIQUORS.

ISAAC MOLE soon had another leg made for him, and he stumped through his tea plantation, gloating over his late attack on the midnight burglar.

The weather was lovely.

The tea shrubs were rapidly approaching a state of perfection.

The worthy proprietor was, consequently, in a most glowing frame of mind. His pipe was in his mouth and his rum flask in his pocket.

He puffed away at the one, and every now and then had a suck at the other.

Up one path and down another he perambulated amongst the tea plants in a most nimble and (bearing in mind that he had a pair of wooden legs) wonderful manner.

"What a fortunate fellow I am!" he soliloquised, "to have dropped into this plantation. It will be a fortune to me if I look carefully after it, which I most decidedly intend to do. Oh yes! I'll look after it. It will be something to leave Mrs. Mole and the chicks—if we have any—when I depart this life."

This last idea proved somewhat mournful and affecting, and the tears came into the eyes of the ancient tutor.

He paused and took his twentieth pull at his rum flask.

The draught comforted him considerably.

"Delicious thing, rum!" he murmured, as he contemplated the flask affectionately; "very delicious, and suits my constitution so admirably—hic—so admirably!"

He stumped on a little further, and then stopped again.

"What a fine sight a rum plantation would be!" he exclaimed suddenly in a rapturous manner; "fancy rum bottles full of old Jamaica all ready corked and sealed growing in rows like these tea shrubs. Wouldn't it be glorious? Yes, it—hic—would be; he, he! decidedly—hic—glorious!"

Another suck at the rum flask, and another after that.

It might have been observed that the worthy Isaac gradually became more unsteady in his gait.

His wooden legs forgot themselves on several occasions, and seemed inclined to play strange tricks.

Wandering out of the path, and burying themselves every now and then deep in the mould, in an extremely inconvenient manner for their owner.

Had there been such a thing as a plug hole in the way, it is more than probable they would have immediately stuck in it.

Fortunately, however, for Mr. Mole's peace of mind, plug holes are scarce in China.

"After all," he exclaimed, as he extricated his wooden members from the soil for the fifth time, and nearly fell on his back in the effort, "wooden legs, however admirably constructed, are not to be compared with the natural limbs. Oh dear no!"

He stood looking down at the end of one stump, and continued meditatively—

"That round knob is all very well in its way, but it isn't a foot—no!—any more then a foot is a yard—hic!"

Mr. Mole's eyes were by this time decidedly rummy in their expression.

They rolled in his head, and had a vacant and dreamy aspect.

He tried to progress, but in vain.

His wooden legs grew more unruly than ever, making the worthy gentleman stagger in a most perilous manner from one side of the path to the other.

"Hallo! hallo! steady, Mole—hic—steady, old boy!" he hiccoughed.

But this friendly caution from himself was of little avail.

He staggered more than ever.

It was pretty evident the excellent man was getting what is commonly called very tight.

Not that he seemed to have the smallest suspicion of any such thing.

"Not so young as I used to be.

"Can't imagine—hic—what can have taken such—hic—singular effect upon me," he murmured.

He gave a lurch as he spoke, but recovered himself.

Only dropping his pipe, which shivered into atoms.

"I think I'll have—hic—snooze in the pavil——"

He attempted to take a step foward, but the attempt was perfectly futile.

He reeled, hiccoughed, and finally he and his rum bottle descended into one of the soft tea beds.

Having reached this stage, he became quite maudlin.

"I say, old Mole," he said, "I am afraid, old fellow, that you are getting tight."

Then he shouted—

"For he's a jolly good feller—hic!
And so say all—hic —us!"

Having accomplished this in a very disconnected and broken manner, he immediately fell asleep.

He had not slept long when, as chance would have it, young Jack Harkaway came up to the spot.

The pupil contemplated his venerable instructor, and at once comprehended the state of affairs.

"Tight again," he remarked briefly, as he shrugged his shoulders.

And then at once applied himself to the attempt to bring his erring master to his senses.

The means he used were all excellent in their way.

He pinched his nose till it was ruddier than the cherry.

He tickled his nostrils with a peculiar species of Chinese bramble supposed to be wonderfully efficacious in producing an irritating sensation.

He pulled his hair vigorously.

This not proving successful, he administered a few gentle kicks in the ribs.

After which he grasped his venerable tutor's wooden legs, and worked them energetically, as he would have done pump handles.

But neither pinching, tickling, pulling, nor pumping produced any effect whatever.

The great Isaac would not be aroused.

Finding it, therefore, a hopeless case, he hurried off to his father.

"Oh, dad!" he exclaimed, as he rushed into the room "such a lark."

"What lark?" inquired his parent.

"Here's old Mole lying drunk and incapable in his tea plantation."

"Do you call that a lark, sir?" asked his father, trying to look serious, but feeling at the same time rather inclined to smile.

"Well, perhaps not," admitted our hero.

"I should rather call it very disgraceful on Mr. Mole's part," continued Mr. Harkaway.

"So it is, certainly," admitted young Jack; "that's what I meant, and I thought we might have a lark with him, to teach him a lesson in future."

"No, no, my boy," said his father; "it's not good to make the great vice of drunkenness a theme for larks."

"Well, but what's to be done with him, dad?" asked Jack; "Ive tried to wake him up, but I can't."

"The best thing you can do is to go and fetch his wife."

Away ran Jack.

In an incredibly short space of time, Mrs. Mole might have been seen hurrying eagerly to the spot, her dark eyes flashing with indignation.

In her hand she held one of China's choicest, and in the present case most useful, productions—a bamboo cane.

"Me teach him somethink," she exclaimed angrily: "me let him know it not right to drink till him knock off him legs."

In a very short time she reached the spot where the unconscious Mole still slumbered profoundly, instinctively grasping his rum flask even in sleep.

"Oh, you bad man! you bad, wicked man!" she exclained at length, "dis de way you keep your word wid me, is it?"

No answer was returned.

"Didn't you promise me you not get druuk nebber no more, eh, sar? What you got to say for yourself, eh?"

The inebriate husband in reply uttered a snore that sounded like the passage of air through a choked gaspipe.

"Don't make dat dreffuI noise, but answer me what I ask you, sar!" exclaimed the indignant Chloe angrily, as she flourished the bamboo over her spouse.

The latter gave her no response, save that he made another "dreffuI noise" with his nasal apparatus.

This brought the anger of his better half to a climax.

And grasping the cane with determination, she brought it down upon her husband's body with the utmost intensity.

Whack, whack, whack! swish, swish, swish! it went on his ribs and in the adjoining localities, but the votary of the rum flask still slumbered and snored on.

"What am I to do wid him?" soliloquised his despairing wife. "He no mind my words; he no mind my cane· he no mind nothink. What must I do?"

"I know what," exclaimed a voice near at hand.

Looking up, she saw a party approaching.

This party consisted of young Jack, Mr. Harkaway, and Dick Harvey.

"If I were you, Mrs. Mole," said Harkaway, "I should get your husband home to bed as quickly as possible."

"Home to bed!" echoed Mrs. Mole, excitedly; "how me get him dere, when he can't walk on him wooden legs?"

"It is awkward certainly," Harkaway said.

"I know what we must do, dad," remarked young Jack, suddenly.

"What?" asked his father.

"We must water him," returned our hero in a very decided tone.

"Water him, Massa Jack?" echoed Mrs. Mole. "What you water him wid?"

"With a—with a garden engine," continued the youthful counsellor; "capital thing to bring people to their senses when they've had too much to drink."

"Am it though?"

"Oh, yes; the water penetrates the pores of the skin, mixes with the spirit and destroys its power, and the drinker comes to his senses."

"Oh, do try de water, Massa Jack, please."

Our hero wanted no persuasion.

He was quite ready to perform the diluting process.

Accordingly he hurried away to where a garden engine stood that was used in watering the tea shrubs.

With this useful and effective instrument he played upon the body of his unconscious tutor until every thread of his garments was thoroughly drenched.

Mole turned on his side and mumbled out—

"A little more rum, please."

Still he did not revive.

Under these circumstances no other alternative remained but to carry him home.

A kind of stretcher, formed of bamboo canes, was hastily put together, and on this the victim of intemperance was lifted and carried to his apartments.

It was not till breakfast time the next morning that Mr.

Isaac Mole hobbled somewhat sheepishly into the breakfast-room.

The party were all assembled there.

Mrs. Mole presided at the breakfast-table.

John Harkaway looked at his quondam tutor as he entered with becoming sternness.

Dick Harvey also threw a reproachful expression into his features.

Young Jack, not to be behindhand, knitted his brows and evinced as much quiet disgust as possible.

Chloe looked at her spouse with a kind of subdued ferocity that seemed to imply what she would have done if she could.

Mr. Isaac Mole had a sort of inward conviction that something was wrong.

He had, moreover, distressing sensations of nausea, and a splitting headache.

He approached the table and sank into a chair.

"Good-morning, my friends!" he murmured, as he passed his hands over his throbbing forehead.

"Good-morning, sir," returned Harkaway, senior, freezingly.

"Good-morning, sir," echoed the rest.

Then followed a dead silence, during which the victim of the rum flask looked wistfully at the tea-pot.

"I—a—think, my love," he said, at length, to his spouse, humbly, "I'll take a cup of tea, if you please. I don't feel very well this morning; it must be the weather."

Mrs. Mole looked any thing but pleased, but she poured him out a cup of tea.

"Ah!" he sighed, after taking a prolonged sip, "delicious beverage, tea! So invigorating, so refreshing."

"I should think you must find its invigorating properties particularly serviceable this morning, Mr. Mole," remarked John Harkaway, senior, sarcastically to him across the table.

"Well, ye-es, my dear John; perhaps I do," admitted the tutor; "my head is very heavy this morning."

"No wonder, either, after your proceedings of yesterday."

"My proceedings of yesterday!" echoed Isaac, obliviously. "Let me see; what did I do yesterday?"

"What did you do?" answered Harkaway. "Why, you drank yourself into a state of intoxication, and were found in a most disgraceful condition in your own plantation."

Mr. Mole turned up his eyes either with real or affected horror.

"My dear John, you don't mean to say this?" he exclaimed faintly. "You really don't mean to assert that I was—a—found in—a—a state of—a——"

The worthy man's voice died away and became inaudible.

"It's a melancholy fact," accredited Dick Harvey, with a solemn shake of his head.

"That it is," joined in young Jack, shrugging his shoulders in harmony with the rest; "I fired away at you with the garden engine for ever so long, and it didn't take any other effect on you than to make you call for more rum."

"You wicked, good-for-nothing, disobedient man!" joined in Chloe, "what tink become ob you—eh?"

Mr. Mole did not seem to have any very distinct ideas on the subject.

In fact his perceptive powers just then appeared to be in a fog.

He murmured something not very comprehensive, and passed his cup for more tea.

He could see from the manner of his friends that he had committed himself seriously in their estimation, and he felt very uncomfortable in consequence.

Harkaway spoke again.

"I think, Mr. Mole, at your time of life, it is your bounden duty to be more guarded in the quantities you drink."

"You are quite right, my dear John; quite right," admitted the guilty one; "my conduct is unpardonable, but I'll alter it; I will, indeed. The fact is, I suppose I'm not so strong as I was, and the spirit takes more effect upon me on that account."

"You ought nebber touch spirits no more!" exclaimed Mrs. Mole to her husband indignantly; "dey be no good to you."

"I think the same," joined in Harkaway, "and if you would be advised by me, you would become a total abstainer from this moment."

Mr. Mole became suddenly contemplative.

He seemed to be forming some grand resolution.

At length, his mind being fixed, he rose to his feet, or rather to his timber, and exclaimed, oratorically—

"Yes; I've decided! Isaac Mole, thou hast triumphed

over thy natural weakness; henceforth farewell to alcohol and welcome the pump!"

"Bravo! bravo!" murmured his listeners. Chloe seemed highly gratified.

"You nebber drink no more rum, Isaac?" she said to him appealingly as she grasped him by the hand.

"Never, my beloved; never, never, never!" returned the virtuously repentant husband, fervently. "From this moment, to the end of my existence, I shall devote myself to that cheering but harmless beverage, tea."

"Tea?" cried young Jack.

"Yes," said Mole; "nothing but what we can get from tea."

This laudable resolution was warmly applauded by Harkaway and the rest, and in the height of his praiseworthy determination, Mr. Mole produced paper, pens, and ink, and drew up a solemn protest of future sobriety and devotion to the tea shrub.

This he signed in the presence of witnesses who attested his signature.

No man in the world henceforth would be more temperate than Isaac Mole.

CHAPTER XXIII.

MR. MOLE BREAKS HIS PLEDGE, AND RECEIVES AN AWFUL VISITATION IN CONSEQUENCE.

For some time all went well.

At least, as well as could be expected.

The Harkaways were anxious to be off to Greece; but Spirillo had been attacked with a severe illness, and was unable to move.

Without him it would be useless to attempt to find the treasure.

However, he was well attended by the old American doctor, who promised that he should soon be well.

The worthy tutor adhered to his teetotal resolution with heroic firmness.

Occupied with his tea plantation, he seemed to have forgotten that such a thing as old Jamaica existed.

But this was not to last.

Isaac had been so long accustomed to his drops of rum that he began to feel the want of his usual stimulant.

He became rather low-spirited over his abstinence.

His limbs grew shaky.

As for his wooden legs, he couldn't manage them at all.

"This won't do," he said to himself one day as he sat alone. "I'm getting quite nervous and dyspeptic."

He got up, and having nothing else to fly to, he took a pull at a tea-pot which he always kept ready at hand.

"Very nice and refreshing, I daresay, for some people," he remarked with a vehement shudder; "but I really don't think Pekoe suits my constitution. I feel as wishy washy as a water-butt, and as shaky as an old woman.

"It's very awkward too," he continued; "I've taken the pledge. Signed and sealed in the presence of witnesses a vow of abstinence from all ardent spirits. Oh, dear! dear! it's very awkward, I must break my vow! No! rather will I die a martyr to pump water and tea leaves."

With a sigh of resignation the virtuous Isaac reseated himself, and filling his pipe, tried to banish his inward sensations by the soothing influence of tobacco.

Just at that moment a packet of letters arrived from England.

Amongst them a newspaper for Mr. Mole.

The desponding tutor received it with avidity, and eagerly tore it open.

He had not read far, when suddenly he uttered a vehement exclamation and stopped.

One announcement had caught his eye, and quite riveted his attention.

This was—

"Robur, spirit of tea."

The orbs of the worthy tutor dilated at this announcement.

And beginning to peruse the advertisement, he read—

"'Robur is a pure spirit free from essential oil.'

"That would do for me exactly, I think," he muttered, hopefully, and then went on—

"'Robur, though not intoxicating, possesses great stimulating powers.'

"That's the very thing."

In his excitement he started up, and seized his hat.

"I shan't be breaking my vow either," he soliloquised,

"I pledged myself to stick to tea, and robur is tea—the pure spirit of tea. What better cordial could I take?"

Away went Mr. Mole straight to one of the quays.

There he found an English vessel, and to his great joy, a quantity of robur amongst her cargo.

The delighted Isaac purchased a large quantity.

Having seen it safely deposited, he, as the evening drew on, made preparations for a little quiet festivity all to himself.

The scene of this harmless conviviality was to be a pavilion which Mr. Mole had built in his grounds, as a kind of private study.

Here then he conveyed a sufficient quantity of the spirit of tea, with hot water and sugar, pipes and tobacco, and having locked himself in proposed to enjoy himself.

Having uncorked a bottle, he mixed himself a glass of the spirit.

"I'll drink my own good health," he said with a complacent smile, as he raised the glass to his lips, and took a good swig.

"It's queer stuff to taste!" he murmured, making a wry face, "decidedly queer. It's very warming to the stomach, though."

And he began to persuade himself that robur was a very excellent beverage.

Anyhow, it warmed him, and its stimulating qualities began to tell upon him agreeably.

"I'm beginning to feel quite myself again," he said to himself, "quite; another glass or two, and Mole will be himself again."

Leaving the worthy to concoct his other glass, let us now adjourn to the outside of the pavilion, to a spot where young Jack Harkaway was quietly taking stock of the unconscious Mole.

Our hero had observed that his tutor on that particular evening had made several mysterious journeys to and fro from his house to the pavilion.

These facts were quite sufficient to arouse Master Jack's suspicions.

"Something's up, I know," he said to himself; "the question is—what?"

This he was not very long arriving at.

Under the influence of several glasses of the stimulant,

Mr. Mole began to talk to himself in a glowing and fervid strain.

Then growing more convivial, he became also poetical, and sang extempore—

> "Delectable Robur! Spirit of Tea!
> Oh, what a boon to weak mortals like me;
> I thought not long since with me 'twas all over,
> But I'm quite put to rights by this exquisite Robur!
> Beautiful Robur! exquisite Robur!
> I'm quite put to rights by this exquisite Robur."

Young Jack, never having heard of this delicious compound, was rather puzzled to know what its virtues consisted of.

But presently, when he observed his venerable tutor start up and plunge headlong into stumping the "sailors' hornpipe," whistling his own music, he began to suspect the truth.

"I see what it is," he said to himself; "it's some Chinese spirit he's got hold of, and as he's pledged himself not to drink rum, I suppose he's doing his best to get tight on this—what does he call it?—robur; yes, that's it."

Mr. Mole, having finished his hornpipe, sat down again and applied himself once more to his libations.

So diligently did he fill and refill, that in less than an hour he had reached the desired point.

He was once more completely intoxicated.

"Who cares for—hic—anybody?" he hiccoughed. "I don't; I don't care for Mrs. Mole, not I—hic! Bother Mrs. Mole! who's she, I should like—know? Ugly black—hic—woolly-haired female! I'll go to bed; no one can disturb me there."

As he spoke, he staggered to a couch, which he had fitted up in the pavilion, and fell asleep, singing in a very maudlin tone—

> "Beau'ful Robur! beau'ful Robur!
> Quite—hic—put—rights—beau'ful Robur."

Jack's determination was quickly formed.

"I'll cure you of this, Mr. Mole, if I can," he said to himself.

He at once went in search of Sunday and Monday.

He was not long in finding them.

"Come along with me," he said; "I'm going to play old Mole a trick, and I want you to help me."

"Golly, Massa Jack, we help you," they exclaimed eagerly; "what can we do?"

"Go first and get two sheets and two white nightcaps and some chalk, and meet me at the pavilion. I'll explain what you're to do then."

Away went the niggers to collect these necessaries, chuckling over the prospect of the forthcoming lark.

In the meantime, young Jack made a collection of such articles as he required for the carrying out of his project.

In a short time they met outside the pavilion.

Here our hero distinctly explained to his sable companions what he wished them to do.

The shades of evening had fallen.

A cool, gentle breeze, laden with fragrance, swept over the garden.

Not very far from the pavilion there was a large tank.

This tank supplied the water necessary for irrigating the tea shrubs, and was quite full.

A rather broad plank was placed, by Jack's direction, with one end resting on the ground and the other overhanging the edge of the tank, so that anyone walking up this plank, it would, when they reached the extremity, tilt over, and precipitate them into the water beneath.

"Golly! what dat for?" asked the darkies, with natural curiosity.

"That's the cold water bath into which Mr. Isaac Mole will be lured by the spectres of his deceased wives," replied young Jack, grinning.

Our hero then led the way to the pavilion.

"Now then, my boys," he said to his companions, "dress yourselves up in your sheets and nightcaps, chalk your faces, and make yourselves as ghastly as you possibly can."

"Cert'nly, Massa Jack. We make ourselves dreffal frights in 'bout two minutes," they replied.

Whilst Sunday and Monday were bringing themselves up to a proper state of ghastliness, our hero very quietly opened the window and clambered into the pavilion.

All within was perfectly dark.

Feeling his way to the table, Jack at length came upon the lamp.

This he kindled, but kept it turned low lest he should awaken the sleeper.

There lay Mr. Mole on his back, with his wooden legs sticking up in the air like a pair of sign-posts.

Having completed this brief examination, our hero proceeded to business.

First he grasped the nearest wooden leg, and pulled it from the perpendicular to a horizontal position.

He then with a small centre-bit, bored a large hole in the end of the wooden member till it was quite hollow.

This he filled tightly with gunpowder.

He then tied a squib close upon it.

These arrangements being completed, he opened the door and admitted Sunday and Monday, who looked hideously ghostly in their white sheets.

"What we do now?" they asked.

"Wait a moment, and I'll show you," answered their youthful director.

As he spoke, he emptied some yellowish powder in a long line on the floor, and then a similar stream of powder of a darkish green.

Into each of these he placed a piece of quick match.

"That's for the 'ghost effects,'" said our hero, with a smile.

The last operation our hero performed was to smear a quantity of phosphorus over the prominent parts of the darkies' features.

Then lowering the lamp, till the interior of the pavilion was in profound obscurity, he placed Sunday and Monday at the foot of the couch behind the curtains, and told them to wait there till he gave the signal.

He then crouched down himself out of sight, armed with his matches and every thing necessary, and waited.

After a time, Mr. Mole's timepiece struck eleven.

The effects of the robur were beginning to wear off.

Isaac Mole began to grow restless.

He left off snoring and took to grunting and groaning.

"Water—water!" he gasped.

Young Jack crept quietly to a sideboard, and possessing himself of the water jug, crept back, and gave his tutor a good drenching.

Mr. Mole almost shrieked at the cold water application.

"Who is it? What is it?" he called out; "is any body ill?"

Awfully deep groans answered him.

"Good gracious! what's the matter?—where am I?" he faltered, as he pulled himself up to a sitting posture, and looked out into the darkness.

Profound silence reigned around.

"Any body there?" Mr. Mole asked, tremulously.

"Oh, oh, oh!" answered an awfully deep voice.

"Oh, oh, oh!" echoed another voice of equal profundity.

The tutor began to feel his hair bristle slightly, as he cried—

"Oh, oh, oh!"

"Isaac Mole!—Isaac Mole!" continued the first voice.

"Isaac Mole!—Isaac Mole!" repeated the second.

"Who are you? What do you want? Isaac Mole's gone out," faintly gurgled the preceptor.

"We am de sperrits ob you unhappy wives."

"I've got no wife but one," cried the alarmed Mole; "I'll take my oath I haven't."

"Don't tell none ob you wicked lies, you base deceiver!" replied Sunday and Monday, imitating the feminine tone as closely as possible; "you know you got two oder wives."

"Where—where are they now?" groaned Mole nervously.

"Here we am," exclaimed two deeply solemn voices from the foot of the couch.

Isaac Mole heard the voices, and looked towards the spot whence they proceeded.

Gradually, as he looked, two white figures glided from behind the drapery and stood before the scared Isaac.

Their faces were of a ghastly grey hue, and their features shone with a blazing phosphoric light.

The jaws of the venerable Isaac began to chatter.

It must be his deceased wives come to pay him a visit.

"What do you want, my dear loves?" he asked, in trembling accents, every particular hair in his head standing bolt upright with horror.

"We here to warn you, Isaac Mole," replied the dear loves in awfully hollow tones.

"Warn me of what?" Isaac inquired, his teeth rattling together like a pair of castanets.

"Of your approaching doom."

"My approaching doom?" echoed Mole, in a tone of horrible incredulity.

"We tell you your doom fixed," replied Monday; "you come to jine us in de world ob sperrits."

"But, my dear loves, I don't wish to join you in the land of spirits."

At that moment the ghostly figures seemed as though they would have clutched poor Mole.

"Get out!" roared the bewildered Mole; "I'm not going with you. I'm in robust health, and intend to live fifty years longer. Go away, I command you, and don't annoy me any longer."

The spectres laughed mockingly.

"Ha, ha, ha! your hours am numbered, Isaac Mole; you have not twelve hours to live."

At this terrible announcement Mole sat upright in his bed.

"You pair of ugly frights, I don't believe you," he roared. "Why shouldn't I live?—what's the matter with me? I'm still young."

"You've destroyed your constitution wid rum!" answered the spectres. "You go off all ob a sudden wid spontaneous combustion. You go pop, and your ugly head go off."

"It shan't, I tell you," roared Mole, who was in a cold sweat with terror. "I've turned teetotaller. There isn't a drop of spirit in me."

"Ho! ho! ho!" laughed the spectres in a hollow, ironical tone; "you all spirit; see!"

As they spoke, one of the spectres glided to the foot of the couch and placed its ghastly finger on the tutor's wooden leg.

A slight fizz was heard.

And a bright shower of sparks poured out from the end of the wooden member.

Isaac Mole fell back aghast on the couch.

"Mercy on me!" he shrieked loudly; "murder! fire! Mur—ur—ur—der."

Then followed a tremendous bang.

The interior of the pavilion was lighted up with a bright, ghastly blue glare.

The tutor could see that his wooden leg was completely shattered.

"Oh, my poor leg. I'm a dead man," he groaned.

"Isaac Mole, Isaac Mole, follow us," cried the spectres.

"I—I can't;" he returned; "my leg's shivered into atoms. I can't walk without my leg."

"Then hop!" shouted the remorseless ghosts.

A bright green light now illumined the interior with ghastly distinctness.

"Are you coming?" demanded the spectres, imperatively. "If you don't we shall——"

They made a step forward, but Isaac Mole, in an agony of terror, sprang from the bed.

"I'll try," he exclaimed. "Which way am I to go?"

"Follow me," cried Monday, still imitating his late wife's voice, as he stalked away.

The hapless Mole caught up a broom that was near him, and placing the brush part under his arm for a crutch, hopped after the supposed spirit as well as he could, puffing and grunting in much perturbation of mind.

Monday, in his ghostly garb, let the way into the garden towards the tank.

The preceptor followed.

Hop, hop, hop, hop.

Up the plank Monday glided.

"I can't go up there," gasped Mr. Mole.

"You must. We, the departed spirits of your loving wives, command you. Come on."

The distracted Mole paused for a moment.

One of the spectres had sprung nimbly across the tank, and now beckoned him from the other side.

"Come on," he cried.

Young Jack, who had crept closely behind his tutor, now affixed a couple of squibs to his collar, and ignited them.

"Follow me," commanded the spirit.

At this moment, whizz went both the squibs.

With a yell of terror, Isaac Mole, with his broom and wooden leg, hopped up the plank.

Just as he reached the end, both the fireworks exploded with a loud bang.

Up went the plank, and head first into the tank plunged Mole, with a shriek and a splash, where he lay floundering and imbibing the liquid element, fully convinced his last hour was come.

"Hallo! hallo! What's the matter here?" cried young Jack, in a tone of surprise, as though he had just reached the spot.

"Who is it?" he asked, as he looked over the edge of the tank.

"Oh, my dear Jack, it's me. Save me, dear boy: I'm drowning," gasped the victim.

"What, Mr. Mole!" ejaculated our hero. "So it is, I declare. Here, Sunday—Monday, come and help my worthy tutor."

Sunday and Monday, who had in the meantime removed their ghostly garments, and wiped the chalk from their faces, came running up, and speedily extricated Mr. Mole from his unpleasant predicament.

"Oh, dear Mr. Mole, how dis happen to you, sar?" said Monday.

But Mr. Mole made no reply.

Then, after drying the worthy gentleman, they put him to bed.

He awoke next day, rather scared with the terrors of the preceding night, and declared he would never sleep in the haunted room again. But the lesson did him some good, inasmuch as he never from that moment tasted another drop of the delectable robur, the spirit of tea.

CHAPTER XXIV.

IN WHICH MR. MOLE RECEIVES AN INVITATION TO DINNER FROM TWO ILLUSTRIOUS CHINESE.

"Hi, Sunday! Monday!"

"What you want, Massa Jack?"

"I've just got a splendid idea."

"Hab you though? Keep it den, Massa Jack, you may want it some day."

"Yes, but this is first-rate, and will do for Mole."

"What is it?"

The eyes of the niggers glistened at the prospect.

"Am it as big a lark as de ghosts ob Massa Mole's wives, Massa Jack?" they asked.

"Quite as big," returned our hero with a grin. "I don't know whether it isn't bigger, if any thing, only it's of a different kind."

"Tell us what it is, please," entreated the darkies, eagerly.

"Well, this is it. You remember some time ago Mr. Mole painting both your faces on one side."

"Golly, yes; um remember dat, puffecly," responded the niggers, with a somewhat rueful grin; "um nebber forget it, um got de glue in um wool now; it nebber cum got out of dis child's hair."

"Well, then, Mr. Mole painted and put glue on your hair for his amusement."

"S'pose him did."

"And now I want you to paint yourselves for your own."

At this proposition Sunday scratched his woolly head, and looked inquiringly at his comrade.

Monday also looked in a similar manner at him, and performed a similar operation.

"Excuse me, Massa Jack," said the former; "dis child don't exactly see de 'musement ob painting him face."

"No more do I, neider," joined in Monday; "it took all de skin off him countin' house de last time um washed it off."

Young Jack laughed.

"You wouldn't have to use oil colour this time," he said; "it would come off easily enough."

"Well, but what de good ob it?" asked the darkies.

"As I told you, to play Mr. Mole a trick."

"What trick?"

"I want you to paint your faces, and put on the dresses of two of the native Chinese."

"Iss, Massa Jack."

"Then you'll come and present yourselves at the gate of Mr. Mole's domicile, and desire to see him."

"Iss; and what den?"

"You know what a conceited old fellow my tutor is."

"Dat berry true, Massa Jack; him don't tink small beer ob himself."

"Well, you'll give yourselves out to be two people of consequence—two mandarins."

"Ah, yes; two mannikins."

"No, no; mandarins."

"Beg him pardon, mandarins; and what we do den?"

"You'll make out that the fame of Mr. Isaac Mole has reached you, and that you have come to feast your eyes upon that wonderful individual."

"Yes, yes; we understand dat."

"Well, then, you know you can invite him to dinner."

"Where we get de dinner, Massa Jack?" inquired the the niggers in one breath.

"There'll be none, of course. Don't you see? You'll ask Mr. Mole to visit you at an imaginary place, to feast upon a phantom dinner."

"Ha, ha! golly, dat good!" grinned the darkies; "Massa Mole come find no house, no grub, no rum, no no-think."

"Exactly."

"But he not take us for Chinese," remarked Monday doubtfully.

"I shall disguise you." returned Jack.

"What we do for pigtails!" inquired Sunday.

"I'll manage all that," said our hero.

"But, Massa Jack," exclaimed Sunday, all of a sudden looking very blank, "dere one dreffful licker."

"What's that?"

"Why, we not able to speak a word Chinese."

"Never mind, use any crack-jaw words you think of just to start with. He'll never know the difference, and then he'll be very to find that you speak English."

"All right, Massa Jack," exclaimed Monday and Sunday.

It took all the rest of the day to get the native costumes and sundry necessary properties from Chang's stores.

Our hero having arranged these preliminary matters, he gave his sable pupils a good drilling.

Sunday and Monday proved apt scholars, and before they retired for the night, young Jack had taught them to perform their kotou* in a most perfect and natural manner.

* * * * * *

The worthy Isaac was shaving himself the next morning when his hopeful pupil entered the room in a well-assumed state of excitement.

"Oh, I'm so glad you're up," said the latter, eagerly, "for two Chinese gentlemen are awaiting to see you."

"Two Chinese gentlemen!" echoed Mr. Mole, opening his eyes widely.

"Yes; and they seem to me to be of high rank."

"High rank!" almost gasped Mr. Mole, becoming at once nervously evcited.

"Yes, and I fancy it's something particular, they seemed

* A Chinese mode of salutation, in which the visitor prostrates himself, and touches the ground with his forehead nine times.

so anxious to see you. I wouldn't disappoint them, sir. You'd better get dressed as quickly as possible."

"Yes, yes; I will," said Mr. Mole.

And then in his agitation he plunged into a series of the wildest extravagances.

He put on his trousers the wrong way, and tried to button his waistcoat up his back.

He combed his hair with the brush.

He brushed his hair with the comb.

His wooden legs also gave him a great deal of trouble, refusing obstinately to allow themselves to be screwed into their sockets.

At length, however, with Jack's assistance, his toilet was finished.

On entering, he perceived two splendid-looking Chinese.

Their complexions were of a hue something between yellow ochre and coffee grits.

They had closely-shaven heads, and magnificent pigtails.

Not the least suspicion of any trick crossed Mole's imagination. He bowed his head and placed his hands to his forehead in token of respect.

The strangers returned his salutation, and Monday exclaimed, in very queer Chinese—

"Hoon, tsing! tsing! (Are you well? Hail! hail!)"

"Delighted to see you, gentlemen," answered Mr. Mole. "Pray, may I request to know to what I am indebted for the honour of this visit?"

"We hear much talkee of you, Misser Mole," replied Sunday, condescendingly.

"Yes," joined in Monday, "dey say you very learned man—you got great lot of knowledge in your head."

The erudite Isaac, feeling intensely flattered, rose and bowed, till he almost dipped his nose in his tea cup.

"I trust, gentlemen," he replied, "I may say, without boasting, I do know a thing or two."

"A thing or two?" joined in young Jack. "He knows every thing there is to be known, gentlemen, and lots more besides."

"Yah! yah!" exclaimed the Chinese. "He look so, and dat is what bring me and my broder here."

"Oh, you are brothers then!" said Mr. Mole.

"Yah!" replied Sunday. "My name is Chow-chow."

"And mine, Chum-chum," joined in Monday.

"Very pretty names, too," remarked our hero to himself, with a quiet grin, "especially Chum-chum."

"Can I be of any service to you, gentlemen, in a scientific capacity?" inquired Mole.

"No, no, tankee, Misser Mole," replied Chow-chow; "my broder and myself not talkee much Inglese."

"Nor can I pretend to talkee much Chinese," returned Mr. Mole, imitating their broken English out of compliment.

A few more puffs of their pipes, and then the tutor said—

"I presume gentlemen, you had some motive in favouring me with this visit?"

"Oh, yah, yah!" returned the gentlemen; "we came here to invite you to dinner with us."

"To dinner!" echoed Mr. Mole, his countenance glowing with gratified surprise.

"Yes, Misser Mole; if you will favour us with the illumination of your presence."

The gratified Mole made instantly a willing offer of himself.

"You will come then?" they said.

"Undoubtedly," exclaimed Isaac, glowingly.

"So will I if you ask me," joined in young Jack.

"Ah, yes; so you shall," said the good-natured Chinese. "S'pose you Misser Mole's son, eh?"

"Oh, no," Jack replied; "I'm not a Mole, I'm a Harkaway."

"Oh, indeed; Hark'way."

"Of course you've heard of the Harkaways in the History of England, haven't you?"

"You mean Jack Harkaway, eh?"

"That's the ticket," returned our hero, briskly; "there's dad and me, old Jack and young Jack, two especial celebrities, of the reign of her gracious majesty Queen Victoria, of the Boys of England."

Messieurs Chow-chow and Chum-chum laughed heartily at our hero's free-and-easy manner, and insisted on his making one of the party.

"Mind you be sure come to dinner, Misser Young Jack Boy of England wid Misser Mole," they said.

"Make yourselves perfectly easy, gentlemen," Jack replied; "I'll be there."

"But where are we to come to?" asked Isaac Mole, "and at what hour?"

Chow-chow drew from his vest a crimson envelope about a foot long, and presented it with much form to Mole.

"You'll find directions as to time and place enclosed," he said.

No sooner were they gone than Mr. Mole, on the tiptoe of curiosity, tore open the crimson envelope.

Its contents, which were fortunately written in English, were as follows—

"Chow-chow and his brother Chum-chum to the Great Mole.

"Expected 25th day, 6 o'clock, at the Abode of Joy, in the Garden of Sweet perfumes. Drink wine—drink tea—rum if liked—smoke tobacco—eat every thing nice.

"CHOW-CHOW—CHUM-CHUM.
"(With compliments)."

Added in pencil—

"Misser Young Jack Harkaway expected very much."

Mole carefully perused this document.

"You see, my dear boy," he remarked grandly to Jack; "great men cannot be concealed."

Jack read the note through.

"No more can great boys; in fact, it seems to me the boys have the best of it, for I read here, Mr. Mole is only 'expected,' whilst 'Misser Young Jack Harkaway' is expected very much."

CHAPTER XXV.

IN WHICH AN EXTRAORDINARY MISTAKE OCCURS, WHICH INTRODUCES MR. MOLE AND OUR HERO INTO THE ELITE OF CHINESE SOCIETY.

"IT is very evident," remarked Mr. Mole, "that these gentlemen are persons of distinction. I suppose they are attached to the court of his Celestial Majesty?"

"They belong to the privy council," Jack informed him.

"Do they, though?"

"Yes," continued young Harkaway, "each one sits at the head of a board, and his word is law."

"Indeed," said Mole, with surprise.

"What a highly-connected set of people we've got amongst us all of a sudden."

"Rather," said young Jack.

"What costume ought I to wear at this dinner-party?" returned Mr. Mole.

Young Jack shut one eye, and appeared for a few moments be to buried in profound thought.

At length he said—

"Full military costume."

"Full military costume. Why so?" asked Mole. "Because, you see, I have nothing whatever in the shape of military attire."

"Oh, that needn't stand in the way," said his pupil; "I think I can get you any thing you require in the way of regimentals."

"But why should I wear regimentals?" asked the tutor. "I do not belong to the army."

"But I think I have heard you say you had relatives in the Volunteers?"

"Quite right, I have."

"Very well, then, that's quite sufficient to entitle you to a military uniform," said young Jack, positively.

"Do you think so?"

"Certainly."

The high-minded Mole was struck with the words of his youthful counsellor.

His personal vanity also was tickled, and he replied—

"Your remarks are very sensible, highly so; and far beyond your years."

I am inclined to think with you that a uniform would be perhaps the most suitable costume I could adopt."

"Very well then; I'll undertake to get you your outfit," continued his pupil.

"I'm very much obliged to you," returned Mole, "very much indeed."

"Don't mention it; it's always a pleasure to oblige a celebrated man like you."

"Noble boy," said Mole.

At about four o'clock Jack returned loaded with the necessary habiliments.

The eyes of the preceptor glistened as he looked at the gorgeous attire.

Certainly the coat was several sizes too large, having been made for a stout man.

Whilst the trousers were not long enough by many inches, the original wearer having been short.

A long sword dangled at his side, and a towering cocked hat with a white feather ornamented his head.

All being ready, the tutor, accompanied by his pupil, left the house.

At the gate, to his great astonishment, he found in attendance, the entire body of Chinese labourers.

Of these, some carried flags, some coloured lanterns.

Whilst by way of music, our hero had thoughtfully provided a gong, a bell, a drum, and a pair of cymbals.

Isaac Mole was electrified.

"This is extraordinary!" he ejaculated; "and you arranged all this, did you?"

"I did," replied young Jack modestly, "but it was quite necessary."

"I believe you're right, my dear boy, quite right."

"Suppose we start then?" suggested Jack to Mr. Mole.

"I'm quite ready," said Mole.

On each side of Mole, as a guard of honour, walked Sunday and Monday, who had resumed their proper appearance, and now accompanied the cortége.

In front waved the flags.

Behind dangled the lanterns.

"Now then," shouted young Jack, "play up, musicians, and forward to the 'Abode of Joy in the Garden of Sweet Perfumes.'"

The gong sounded, the bell rang, the cymbals clashed, the retainers shouted, and away went the procession.

Through the town and round the outskirts, collecting crowds of gazers as they passed along.

But alas, without arriving at their place of destination.

No one seemed to know any thing of the locality of the blissful spot.

In the meantime the hours flew by.

Mr. Mole had got awfully hungry.

"There must be some mistake," suggested Mr. Mole. "Are you sure you have the right address?" he asked of his pupil.

"Positive," answered the latter.

"Dessay we find it by and by, Massa Mole, if you hab patience," suggested Monday.

"But I'm starving," growled Mole.

Young Jack called out to the men with the lanterns—

"Light up, you buffers!"

It was now getting dusk, and in a few seconds the light of a score of coloured lanterns illuminated the road.

"It looks imposing, doesn't it?" exclaimed Jack. And then he shouted—

"Forward!"

Again they moved on, when suddenly there was a great commotion.

"What's the matter?" inquired Mr. Mole.

"I think we've got to the Garden of Sweet Perfumes at last," returned our hero.

"I'm inclined to think so myself," said the tutor; "and there's a lovely smell of cooking."

"Well, wedder it de 'bode ob joy or not, I tink it a good plan to stop here," Sunday suggested; "p'raps git some dinner here."

A crowd of domestics appeared, and a Chinese gentleman, richly dressed, and as round as a tub, came hurrying through the throng.

"Ah, my dear major-general, you come at last?" he exclaimed, eagerly.

Isaac Mole gazed hopelessly at the portly host, and ejaculated faintly—

"Major-general. What does he mean?"

"Why, he takes you for a major-general, of course," hastily whispered his pupil; "and no wonder, you look like one."

The Chinese gentleman went on very anxiously—

"Me 'fraid your excellency no come at all."

"The fact is, your eminence," replied our hero, "the governor lost his way, or we should have been here long ago."

"Ah, I see; but never mind, the dinner wait for you."

Isaac Mole was hoisted out in no time.

Young Jack sprang nimbly from his seat.

"I'll have my dinner if I can, anyhow," thought our hero; "I shall be ready for any thing after that."

"The major has come at last, my dear friend!" said the worthy host to those assembled; "let me have the honour to present to you his excellency the British governor, Major-General Brassknocker."

Mole was completely floored at the unexpected title he had received.

The great man dropped into the seat nearest at hand.

Unfortunately as he sat down, his wooden leg stuck up, and coming in contact with a tea tray which one of the servants was about to hand to him, it sent tray and tea cups flying in all directions.

The horror and confusion of the embarrassed tutor was indescribable.

At length, however, the excitement caused by the accident subsided.

The tea being finished, dinner began in earnest.

The young Chinese gentlemen seated near Mole and Jack became more and more friendly and convivial.

They pointed out to them several choice dishes of exquisite flavour.

"You must taste little of this," they said, helping their companions to some fresh luxuries.

"Upon my honour, I can't stand any more," protested Jack with a shudder; "I've had about three times as much as I ought."

"So have I," admitted Mr. Mole, pressing his hand upon his stomach. "I am sorry to be disobliging, but really I feel if I were to eat another mouthful, I should burst."

"Oh, no, no!" laughed the Chinese gentlemen, "no burst with dis meat. It too tender."

"Pray what do you call this?" inquired Mr. Mole with some curiosity.

"Dis? Puppy dog," returned the gentleman, smacking his lips enthusiastically.

"Puppy dog!" gasped the tutor, clapping both hands over his mouth and shuddering violently.

"Yes, indeed; it great luxury."

"And what's that?" asked Jack, pointing to a dish from which he had been eating.

"Dat is little pussy-cat, what you call—kitten."

Jack's stomach heaved convulsively at this statement.

"I say, old son," he murmured, "I'll take a little brandy, neat, if you please."

The cordial was poured out, and Mr. Mole joined his pupil in a "nip," after which they felt better.

"You eat extraordinary things in China," remarked our

hero; "we don't care about puppy-dogs or pussy-cats either in England."

"Oh, dey great favourite here, so also are de little rats and mouses."

"Rats and mouses!" echoed the preceptor and his pupil simultaneously; "you don't mean to say you eat any thing so horrible?"

"Oh, yes; certainly," replied their friends with much admiration; "you eat dem just now and say dey beautiful."

The eyes of Mr. Mole and young Jack Harkaway turned up in their heads, and they fell back helplessly in their seats.

"More brandy! quick!" gasped the former.

"Ditto! ditto!" echoed Jack.

Again the stimulant was administered, when suddenly the Tartar came out with a tremendous—

"Ho!"

This was immediately followed by a loud yell as a couple of well-kneaded bread bullets, propelled by Sunday and Monday, took effect on his right eye and his nose.

The missiles stung him awfully, and with a tremendous oath (in the Tartar language) he sprang to his feet.

"What dat you do—you Inglese—eh?" he demanded, looking fiercely at Jack.

"Are you addressing yourself to me?" inquired young Jack coolly, as he quietly untwisted the wire from the cork of the champagne bottle which he held between his knees.

"Yah! to you, sah!" returned the furious Tartar. "What de debbil you mean to shoot me in my eye—eh? Hoh!"

He stroked his chin and glared at our hero like a fiend.

"I didn't shoot you in your eye," Jack replied; "you're dreaming. Sit down and don't make a fool of yourself."

"I shall not sit down, sah! You shall ask my pardon! Hoh! hoh! yes, you shall!"

"I'll see you blowed first."

"You won't, eh?"

"I won't!"

"Hoh, hoh! then I shall——"

Here the fierce being made a desperate attempt to throw himself across the table and grasp his juvenile defier.

But, at that moment, Jack, who had unfastened the wire and given the bottle a good shake, removed his thumb from the cork.

A loud bang and a fizz was heard, and the irate Mongo-

lian started up, drenched with champagne, and with the cork half-way down his throat.

"I shall kill you!" he raved, as he drew his sword and sprang upon the table.

As the frantic Tartar leapt down upon Mole, the gallant Isaac, with great dexterity, hoisted his wooden leg in the air, so that the ferocious Mongol received the round knob exactly in the pit of his stomach.

"Hoh!" was the only remark he made, as he doubled up and fell with a crash to the ground, from whence he was quickly picked up and carried from the apartment.

Peace being restored, the worthy Mole began to get exceedingly jolly.

"You're—glor'us people!—hic—very glor'us!" he exclaimed. "China's great nation!—hic—very great!

"I respect you all!" he continued, "the puppy-dogs and pussy-cats excepted—not forgetting the rats and mouses—which, as a subject of Great Britain, I decidedly object to. Nevertheless, you're a great nation, and I respect you; I respect you all! I respect his celestial majesty the emperor—good luck to him, and may he never want a teapot.

"Three cheers for the emperor!"

"Hip—hip—hip—hurrah!"

The worthy Mole, having drunk a bumper of champagne in honour of his celestial majesty, found himself becoming more and more disposed to conviviality, and volunteered to sing a song.

"With your permission I will sing a few lines composed on the spot, expressly in honour of this memorable occasion."

A murmur of applause ran through the festive throng.

And Isaac Mole, clearing his throat, commenced—

"If you happy wish to be,
Go to China!
If you'd taste a cup of tea,
Go to China!
If a dinner you would eat,
I can promise you a treat,
If you go to China!
Puppy dogs, and kittens too,
Rats and mice a sav'ry stew,
Every day in China!
Jolly dogs are Chinamen,
No other nation feeds like them
Who live in China!

They beat all other countries hollow,
For strength of head, and length of swallow—
Go to China!
Then hurrah for China!
Three cheers for China!
If you want to get fat,
Hurry over to China.
Chorus—If you want to get fat,
Hurry over to China!"

This vocal effusion was received with deafening applause. Pipes, tea, and liqueurs, were again handed round.

Isaac Mole was in the seventh heaven of ecstasy.

"This is—hic—jolly, very jol—ly, my dear boy," he said to his pupil.

"Couldn't be jollier, I think."

"There's only one thing surprises me."

"What's that?"

"That we haven't seen any thing of the two gentlemen who invited us."

"It is rather strange, certainly."

At this moment the host drew near.

"I hope your excellency enjoy yourself," he said.

"Never better, my dear boy," returned the preceptor, familiarly; "but I miss two very particular members of your family."

The host looked at him in surprise.

"What two you miss?"

"Chow-chow, and Chum-chum."

The eyebrows of his entertainer went up with a jerk.

"I know nothing of Chow-chow and Chum-chum."

"Oh, gammon!" returned Mr. Mole, poking him sharply in the ribs; "that tale won't do. You're Chow-chow's uncle, you know you are."

"I?" ejaculated the master of the house.

"Yes, of course," insisted Mr. Mole; "you belong to the Hung-poo."

"What you mean?"

"I mean what I say."

"You're quite wrong."

"Of course he is," joined in Jack; "the idea of taking you for Chow-chow's uncle, when anyone can see you're Chum-chum's grandfather."

"I tell you," almost shrieked the host, "I know neither Chow-chow nor Chum-chum."

"Then who the deuce are you?"

"I am Commissioner Wang-ki."

"Oh," stammered Mole, "Commissioner Wang-ki, are you?"

The worthy Mole, who found considerable difficulty in keeping his perpendicular, was just about to depart, when suddenly a dispatch arrived from the emperor.

Commissioner Wang-ki came hurrying to him.

"His celestial majesty has heard that your excellency is here," he said, "and desires your immediate presence at his palace."

"Bother his celestial majesty," growled Mole; "I'm tired to death; I can't go to-night."

Commissioner Wang-ki looked aghast at this daring objection, then said—

"You must go."

Once more the gong sounded.

Mr. Mole was, however, unconscious of any thing; he had fallen fast asleep.

Young Jack, at first awake, gradually yielded to the motion of the palanquin, and in a very short time he was also wrapped in the arms of Morpheus.

Master and pupil slumbered together.

CHAPTER XXVI.

IN WHICH THE LITTLE MISTAKE IS DISCOVERED, AND LEADS TO AN AWFUL ROW—HOW IT ENDED.

THE repose of the sleepers was at length disturbed.

"Hoh!"

The occupants of the palanquin roused themselves and looked out.

Close alongside was the formidable Tartar, stroking his moustache and looking as black as a thundercloud.

"Dear me! is that you?" exclaimed Mr. Mole, confusedly.

"Yah! it is me. Hoh, hoh, yes."

"Ah! I remember you now," said the tutor.

"I remember you, too," returned the fierce individual, with a diabolical grin; "you poke me with your leg in my stomach—hoh, hoh! yes."

"And you did not seem to like it, but what do you want now, Mr. Hoh-hoh?"

"I want nothing, you boy," replied the Tartar, frowning darkly. "I am here to conduct you to his celestial majesty, the emperor."

This recalled the faculties of the somewhat bewildered Isaac.

"Oh, ah, true!" he murmured; "I was summoned by the emperor, so I was. Have we arrived at the Palace?"

"Yah? this is the palace. Hoh, hoh, yes."

"Stop that ho-hoing, then, and show us the way in," said young Jack.

"I shall announce you two Inglese first," said the Tartar official, with a scowl. "This way."

At the entrance of the palace stood several of the imperial body guard.

"Now, then," said the Tartar, abruptly, "how am I to announce you?"

"Tell his imperial effulgence that Mr. I——"

"You're forgetting you're a major-general," said Jack.

"Dear me! so I am," murmured Mr. Mole; "and I've forgotten my name."

"Was it Doormat?" suggested our hero.

"I—I think not."

"Doorscraper? Major-General Doorscraper sounds well."

"No, I don't think it was that."

"Doorknocker, then?"

"No."

"I've got it," exclaimed Jack; "it was Brassknocker."

"So it was," cried Mr. Mole.

At this juncture, the voice of the Tartar again became audible.

"What names?" he growled.

"Major-General Brasspopper——"

"No, Brassknocker," said young Jack.

"Ah, yes! Brasscopper."

"Knocker."

"Knocker. And who are you supposed to be?" asked Mr. Mole, of his pupil.

"Oh, I'm your private secretary, Mr. Jack Harkaway, junior."

"You will have the goodness to announce Major-General

Brassknocker and his private secretary, Mr. Jack Harkaway, junior."

"Hoh!" ejaculated the Tartar, as he stroked his chin and disappeared.

Presently he returned.

"Follow me," he said, abruptly.

"Now then, pull yourself together," counselled Jack to his tutor, as they went along, "and if you can, put a little steam into your wooden leg. But whatever you do, don't forget your kotow, when you go into the emperor's presence."

"Kotow!" echoed Mr. Mole. "What in the world's that?"

"It's a Chinese mode of salutation."

"Well, but what shall I have to do?"

"Only go down on your marrowbones, and touch the ground with your forehead nine times."

"It will be very awkward for me to kneel with my wooden leg, which has no joint," remarked the preceptor.

"Well, awkward or not, you must manage it somehow," said Jack. "But—hush! here we are."

The drapery was drawn aside, revealing an open door, through which a soft, clear, mellow light was visible.

The Tartar guide entered and exclaimed in sonorous accents—

"Major-General Grasshopper, and his private secretary, Mr. Jack Barkaway, junior."

Mr. Mole, making a strong effort to steady himself, stumped forward in as dignified a manner as possible, with his cocked hat under his arm, and his sword clanking at his side, followed by our hero.

His majesty was very short and very corpulent, and bore a striking resemblance to one of those china images, frequently seen in the windows of the London tea shops, nodding their heads to the customers.

Young Jack at once prostrated himself.

"Down with you," he whispered to his tutor.

The anxious Isaac contrived somehow to get on to one knee, when he commenced bumping his head on the floor in a most energetic and loyal manner.

It is probable he would have gone on at this exercise all night if young Jack had not checked him.

"Drop it! that'll do," he said to him in an undertone, "or you'll be knocking a hole in the floor."

His majesty waved his hand as a token that they should rise.

Our hero was on his legs in an instant.

"Whatever shall I do?" groaned the hapless Mole, the drops of perspiration trickling down his nose. "Help me up."

Jack grasped his hand, and gave him a vigorous hoist.

A sharp snap was heard.

"Good Heaven!" exclaimed Mr. Mole.

"What's the matter now?" inquired Jack.

"My leg, my leg!"

"Well, what of it?"

"It's snapped in half."

"Never mind, try and stand up! lean on me."

Mr. Mole having been hauled up to a perpendicular position, contrived to balance himself on his right leg, making use of his private secretary's shoulder to support him on the left.

His imperial majesty then spoke—

"I am glad to see you General—a—Starch——"

His majesty paused, having forgotten the name.

"Collar, your serene magnificence," answered the Tartar, "hoh, yes."

"General Starchcollar," repeated the emperor.

"Most gorgeous brother of the sun and moon," cried Mole, "I feel myself dazzled at the honour of being permitted to approach your magnificent presence."

The emperor glanced towards our hero.

"Who is that?" he inquired.

"That is my private secretary, your effulgence," replied the tutor, "Mr. Jack Harkaway, junior."

"Your royal highness has probably heard of me," said our hero, with much animation.

The emperor shook his head.

"No? That's strange." Jack continued. "I assure your majesty, my adventures round the world are causing a wonderful sensation everywhere."

"Hoh, hoh!" burst out the Tartar.

"Who said 'Hoh, hoh?'" inquired the potentate.

"I did, your fragrant mightiness," answered the Mongolian.

The emperor eyed the offender with a fearful squint, and exclaimed briefly, but imperatively—

"Get out!"

The Tartar made a profound obeisance, and took himself off.

"You spoke of your adventures," said the emperor.

"Yes, your celestial eminence," replied Jack, "published weekly at the office, 173, Fleet Street, London, E. C."

The potentate turned to his prime minister.

"Hoh," he said, "see that the 'Adventures of Jack Harkaway Round the World' are ordered immediately."

The emperor then spoke again to Mr. Mole.

"You are very thin, Major Cartstopper."

The major admitted the fact humbly.

"It is not good to be thin," the emperor continued; "you must get fat. Now approach."

"Don't leave me," whispered Mole to Jack, for he began to have some misgivings as to how the interview might terminate.

"Well, but his effulgence says we're to approach." Jack replied. "Come on."

"It's impossible; I can't."

"Oh, yes, you, can; try a hop."

"If I do, off will come my leg to a certainty."

The emperor yawned again.

All the mandarins followed the example of their august master.

"Appproach," repeated his celestial majesty.

"I should be most happy, your serene effulgence," returned Mr. Mole, pleadingly; "but I've met with a slight accident."

"What accident?" inquired the emperor.

"Compound fracture of the left pin, your magnificence," answered Jack.

The potentate reflected for a moment or so.

Then, taking two rings from his fingers, he sent them by one of the mandarins.

"Accept them as tokens of my friendly feeling towards the sovereign and country you represent. Now you can go."

Hurried footsteps were heard in the corridor at that moment.

The formidable Tartar once more entered hastily.

"Treason!" he shouted; "hoh! hoh!"

"Treason!" echoed his celestial majesty, turning slightly green.

"Yes, your mightiness."

"Approach," said his majesty.

The Mongolian hastily ascended the throne steps, and whispered to his august master.

The imperial brow lowered: the imperial eyes glanced suspiciously at the representative of the British constitution and his private secretary.

"I'm afraid we're bowled out, after all," whispered Jack to Mole.

"Goodness gracious, I hope not," exclaimed Mole.

"It's a case, I'm afraid," returned our hero; "we shall be impaled as safe as nails."

"Heaven forbid," groaned poor Isaac Mole.

To add to his apprehensions, the emperor at this moment uttered a loud exclamation.

"Impostors!" he shouted. "Who are you?"

"My name is Mole—Isaac Mole, instructor of youth, at your majesty's service," faltered Mole.

"And you tell me just now, you are Major-General Baccy-stopper!" then exclaimed the incensed potentate.

"It's all right, your high and mighty Cock-o'-Trumps," said our hero, in a soothing and confidential tone; "there's been a slight mistake, that's all."

"The general has just arrived. Bring him before me, instantly," cried the emperor.

Away hurried the Tartar.

In a few seconds, footsteps were again heard without.

A party of mandarins headed by Wang-ki, their late host, came hurrying into the chamber.

Amongst them was a stout, fierce-looking Englishman in uniform.

In an instant the dwelling of the serene sky was turned into a Babel of confusion.

Everyone spoke at once.

Nobody understood a word anyone had said.

At length the emperor shouted—

"Who are you?"

"I have the honour to be the English governor, Major-General Brassknocker. I had received an invitation to dinner with this honourable member of your majesty's government," the general continued, pointing to the commissioner, "but an accident on board my vessel prevented me from coming on shore till a late hour, and then I hastened to explain."

"But who, then, are these miserable impostors?" demanded the emperor, eyeing Mole and young Jack with indignant sternness.

"I assure your majesty——" began Mole, earnestly.

"How dare you assume a name that does not belong to you?" demanded the celestial monarch, fiercely.

"How dare you enter my house under false pretences, and eat my dinner, eh?" cried the indignant Wang-ki.

"You asked us to come in," returned the preceptor, "and we didn't like to make ourselves disagreeable."

"Certainly not," joined in our hero, making a desperate effort to set matters straight.

"You're a couple of swindlers," cried the real General Brassknocker.

"Swindlers," echoed everybody.

"And he poke me in the stomach with his leg!" shrieked the ferocious Tartar, savagely. "Hoh, hoh! yes."

Jack felt strongly inclined to give him one on the nose but prudence restrained him.

"Come, Jack," cried Mole, trying to put a bold face on the matter, "we had better say good-night to all."

And then he took a hop towards the door.

"Stop!" shouted his celestial majesty. There was no occasion to utter this mandate.

At the first hop, off dropped Mr. Mole's fractured limb, and down went Mr. Mole on the ground.

The hapless tutor was completely done.

"Seize them both, and lock them up," cried the emperor; "to-morrow they shall receive their deserved punishment. Away with them!"

This was a crisis.

Jack did not like the idea of deserting his tutor.

As these thoughts passed through his mind, several of the Chinese guard pounced upon the helpless Isaac, and hoisted him up very unceremoniously, and hurried him out.

"Save the pieces," he murmured, as he looked anxiously after the fragments of his wooden leg as he was borne away.

"I will," cried our hero, as he picked up the broken stump.

"Now then, you boy Inglese," exclaimed three of the soldiers; "you come wid us."

"Not if I know it," cried Jack, as he dashed in amongst them with his tutor's wooden leg.

In less time than it takes to write it, the imperial body-guard were ignominiously scattered.

The way of escape was open.

Out Jack rushed, brandishing his missile triumphantly.

In the corridor he encountered the formidable Tartar.

"Stop, you boy," he shouted.

"I shan't, ugly mug," bawled our hero, defiantly, as he pressed forward.

But the Mongolian drew his sword, and opposed his progress.

"You would escape," he cried, as he made a terrific slash with his weapon: "hoh, hoh, yes. Me not forgot the stiff leg in the stomach and de cork in my throat."

Jack nimbly eluded his blow, and crying out—

"Well, for a change, old fellow, take Mole's leg on your cranium."

And the Tartar received a hard whack from Mole's stump.

"Hoh!" he gurgled, and down he fell like a log.

Jack hurried on towards the entrance, where he saw soldiers waiting to intercept him.

He retraced his steps, and entering an apartment, found a window open.

Out of this he dropped into the garden.

No sooner had his feet touched the ground, than he was seized by two soldiers.

In vain he struggled, the odds were too great.

"Let me go, you coffee-coloured rascals," he cried passionately.

"No, no; we lock you up, you Inglese tief boy, and kill you to-morrow."

They commenced hurrying him along, when suddenly the sound of two well-known voices greeted his ears.

"Dere him are, dere, Massa Jack."

Looking up, to his great joy he beheld the burly forms of Sunday and Monday.

The faithful fellows, fearing some disaster, had lingered in the garden, and now came up just at the right moment.

It took just four blows from their brawny fists to send the imperial guard flying, and in less than two minutes our hero, with Sunday and Monday, were scudding along the road towards home.

* * * * * *

The next morning the hapless Isaac Mole was brought up before Commissioner Wang-ki, to be tried for his imposture of the previous day.

The trial was very brief, and the sentence that the tutor should stand in the pillory for six hours.

After which he was to receive fifty strokes of the bastinado.

The unfortunate Mole had endured one hour's purgatory with his head stuck in the distressing instrument of torture, and was looking forward in dire anticipation to the other infliction, when, to his unspeakable joy, he beheld approaching, his pupil, accompanied by Mr. Harkaway senior, Dick Harvey, and the red-headed Major-General Brassknocker.

Fortunately the general was known to Harkaway, and on matters being explained, and a slight tip of three hundred dollars being handed over to the Commissioner Wang-ki that incorruptible functionary consented to set his prisoner at liberty.

So ended this adventure, but so greatly did it impress Mr. Mole, that he never again sang a song in praise of China, and always shuddered when he spoke of a Chinese dinner-party.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A MYSTERIOUS OCCURRENCE DELAYS THE DEPARTURE OF JACK HARKAWAY AND HIS FRIENDS FOR THE TREASURE ISLAND IN THE GREEK ARCHIPELAGO.

THE suspicions entertained by Mr. Mole and Pike respecting Bigamini were perfectly correct.

He was in league with the Chinese pirates.

His relations with the captain and owner of the "Flowery Land" were especially intimate.

He pretended to be a ship-broker and had an office in Hong-Kong.

But he did not live there.

Oh, no! His domicile was a few miles out of the Chinese Treaty port.

We shall come to that presently.

Biga-end-ming-ming, as he was called in Hong-Kong, but Bigamini, as he really was, had two partners in his business.

One was a rascally, lying, boastful Englishman, who had been in more prisons than one.

His name was Dick Blowhard.

The other was a Dutchman, called Hans Schneider.

He had come from Holland to Sumatra, and, being kicked out of the Straits Settlements, had gone on to China.

Birds of a feather generally flock together.

Bigamini had been picked up by a ship, after being thrown over the vessel's side, in the Mediterranean Sea.

It was greater luck than he was entitled to.

The ship was going to China.

He served as a deck-hand, and worked his passage out.

In Hong-Kong he met with Dick Blowhard and Hans Schneider.

They entered into business together as receivers of the goods stolen by the junk pirates.

It was their business to pay a certain sum down, and to make as big a market as they could of the articles brought them.

The nefarious trade paid them very well.

Blowhard and Schneider lived over the office where they pretended to trade as ship-brokers, in Hong-Kong.

But, as we have said, Bigamini had a separate residence.

He was a rascal, a sneak, and a villain of the worst type.

At the same time he had a certain amount of cleverness about him.

Or shall we call it low cunning?

Since he had been in China, he had made money, in conjunction with his two partners.

The pirates with whom they were in connection, were glad enough to dispose of their plunder, when they came into port, for what they could get for it.

It had to be sold at a sacrifice.

Bigamini, Schneider, and Blowhard did a capital business.

Ever since he left Naples—we may say, long before—Bigamini had cherished a bitter hatred for Jack Harkaway.

Not only for him.

His enmity extended to young Jack and the family at large, as well as to their friends.

He had often met Hunston and the pirate captain.

They had entertained him right royally.

By their instructions he had worked hard to bring Harkaway and his friends into their toils.

For Mr. Mole he entertained the greatest contempt and hatred.

He knew that he had money, and wanted to get it, hence his attacks on his house.

Mr. Mole knew little of the people outside of his tea plantation.

As they were not the same race as himself, he rarely came in contact with his neighbours.

If he wanted any society, or the rest of the party for that matter, they went to the city.

But, strange to say, no less a distance than five miles from Mr. Mole's house, lived Bigamini, or Biga-end-ming-ming.

He had utilised his dishonest gains to buy a tea-garden, situated near a small lake.

The sheet of water was included in the purchase.

So was the house of the former proprietor.

The Chinese are very fond of building their houses on piles driven into the bed of a lake, or living in boathouses moored on a river.

This particular house that Bigamini bought with the tea-garden and lake was erected with considerable skill, a quarter of a mile from the shore of the lake.

It was a pretty-looking and commodious wooden (chiefly bamboo) structure.

The flooring was raised some height above the water level.

Of course it could only be reached by a boat.

This was kept close to the house, attached by a rope.

When Bigamini left the city, which was distant from the lake about six miles, he hired a man to drive him.

Having deposited him at the side of the lake, opposite the house, he drove away

The next day, if instructed to do so, he would call for him, and take him to Hong-Kong.

Sometimes Bigamini would stay in his lake house for two or three days at a time.

Schneider and Blowhard would manage the business in his absence.

There is an old saying that there is honesty among thieves.

They did not cheat one another.

The tea-garden was managed by a superintendent and about thirty Chinese, with their families.

These people lived in some huts, half-a-mile lower down the lake.

They were the servants of Bigamini, and obeyed his orders witnout a murmur.

When Bigamini had attempted to break into Mole's dwelling, and the detective, Pike, had shot him, he was slightly wounded.

These simple people, who were at his beck and call, had picked him up and carried him home.

He was not badly hurt.

Still the pain he suffered made him more vindictive than before.

He vowed to have a fearful revenge for that shot in the leg, which disabled him for at least a week.

It must not be supposed that such a man as Bigamini lived alone in his lake house.

Not at all.

Forgetting the wives he had left in Europe, he had lost no time in getting married again.

Singular as it may appear, he could not keep out of matrimony.

He ought to have had enough of it.

But Bigamini had not.

He tempted fortune again.

This time he married a young Chinese woman named Hysa.

As Chinese women go she was pretty, hard-working, meek-mannered, and obedient.

He made a perfect slave of her.

Taking her to his house on Lake Lonely, when he bought his property, he kept her shut up there.

Never did he allow her to go into the city.

Being an orphan, dependent on an uncle, who had died since her marriage, she had no friends.

She was literally alone in the world.

The poor thing was entirely at the mercy of Bigamini.

Little did the wretch show her.

In his former marriages, he had been dreadfully bullied and browbeaten by his wives.

With Hysa, all that was altered.

She did not dare to call her soul her own.

He could have his revenge on her sex now.

It was a splendid opportunity for the mean-minded little cur.

His contemptible nature would not allow him to neglect it.

He was continually abusing and ill-treating his wife.

She was familiar with blows and curses.

There was no chance of her escaping from her isolated prison.

A Chinaman, named Hi Li, in Bigamini's employ, lived in the house.

He had charge of the boat.

Without that she could not get from the lake house to the mainland.

Though an old man, Hi Li made a very good watchman, and gave Hysa no chance to get away.

If she could have fled, she would have done so.

Having explained Bigamini's position and mode of life, we will introduce our readers to his office in Hong-Kong.

It consisted of two rooms on the ground floor of a house in River Street.

He kept no clerk, as he kept no books, and either he or one of his partners, Schneider or Blowhard, were always sure to be in.

Besides, a clerk might have learnt secrets, and betrayed them.

It was easy also to receive and warehouse the stolen goods they received in a cellar they had below their offices, where they remained until they were sold at a profit.

The three partners were together one afternoon, when the weather was very warm.

The Dutchman, Schneider, had just come in from a journey.

Some wine, brandy, and iced water flanked a couple of boxes of cigars.

This fraudulent gang of so-called shipbrokers liked to live well.

"Now Hans," exclaimed Bigamini, impatiently, as he drained his glass, "your news?"

"Vel, I goming to it, "replied Schneider. "Gif a man's time to draw his breath, after he shall trink his goot liquor."

"Have you news from the 'Flowery Land?'" asked Blowhard, the third partner.

"Yah. I see a pirate some miles down the coast. They have captured a ship with silk laden. The bales will be brought on shore to-night."

"Good!" said Bigamini. "Did you arrange for their carriage to this office?"

"It is all settled. I be there mit a cart, and bring them meinself."

"And I will stay here all night to receive them, and put them down cellar," remarked Blowhard.

"Are there many bales?" inquired Bigamini.

"Two hundred and fifty. The price of silk has gone up. It is a lucky haul. The pirates cut the throats of the crew, and burnt the ship. Himmel! they know how to do pisness."

"To-morrow night," said Bigamini, "I want you to help me in a little enterprise."

"What is that?" asked Blowhard.

"I want to make another raid on Mole's house. You know that I failed the last time I tried it on."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Blowhard. "He nearly basted the life out of you."

"Yah!" grinned the Dutchman. "You was bash over the head till I thought you was dead."

"It was all that wooden leg," replied Bigamini.

"If we hadn't rescued you, by Jove! you would have been a candidate for a coffin."

"That's true, boys, and I'm thankful to you for it; but I'll have my just revenge."

"What will you do?" asked Blowhard.

"Old Mole's rich; I know him of old. He doesn't believe in Chinese banks, and keeps his money at home, hid away. I mean having that bullion."

"Anyt hing else?"

"In the elegant phraseology of the educated Yankees, you bet. You know, perhaps, that the Harkaway party are all at the plantation?"

"Yes," replied Schneider and Blowhard together.

"Well, I mean to steal one of the party, which, I have not made up my mind yet."

"What on earth for?"

"To hold him for ransom. Make money while you can, is my motto."

"I'm solid on that, too," remarked Blowhard.

"Your head was *schr* level," observed the Dutchman.

"Harkaway and his friend Harvey can afford to pay," continued Bigamini. "I shall take my prisoner to my lake house, and there keep him while negotiations are going on for his or her ransom."

"You say 'her.'"

"It may be one of the females. Harvey has a little girl called Emily. She's a nice little thing, and a kind of sweetheart of young Jack's."

"Ah, ver' goot!" said Hans, gruffly. "They would pay as moch for her as for a grown-up person."

"She'd be easy to carry and easy to mind," put in old Dick Blowhard.

"Just my idea, though I had not quite made up my mind about it."

"I would, then. You can't better that spec."

"Very well, the little girl Emily it shall be, and I'll have a thousand pounds for her redemption. That will be over three hundred apiece, boys. Are you on?"

"I was in it from the word 'go!'" cried Schneider. "Yah, we will wake up old Mole."

"I'm with you," said Blowhard. "The Harkaways are a hard lot to deal with, aren't they? I have heard of them, but never come in contact with any of the party."

"Oh! they're tough, but I've seen them cornered," answered Bigamini.

"They have baffled our friends the pirates. That is a feather in their cap, as the saying is."

"Never mind. We will baffle them, and double-discount them. I will strike, and they will not know where the blow comes from," said Bigamini, with a vicious gleam in his eyes.

He was terribly wicked.

In fact, there was no crime in the decalogue that this diminutive viper would hesitate to commit.

"How are you going to get the ransom money?" inquired Blowhard.

"When the kidnapping is done, and I've got old Mole's secret hoard, and given him a knock on the head for what the timber-toed old pig gave me, I'll consider that."

"You must write a letter, stating that the child will be given up if the sum of money required is put in a certain place at such and such a time," continued Blowhard.

"That will do," answered Bigamini, smiling. "I can count on you two to-morrow night?"

"Without fail," said Blowhard.

"I was your most obedient servant," remarked Schneider. "Where there was money to make, I was always on.

Mein Gott! I t'ink I never able to get enough of the ooftish *—nein.*"

He shook his head gravely, rattled some coins in his pocket, as if he liked the sound of them, took a drink, filled his large pipe, and began to smoke placidly.

"That being arranged," exclaimed Bigamini, "I shall walk home to my country house, and if my wife hasn't got my dinner ready when I arrive, I pity her."

He grated his teeth savagely together.

His small eyes emitted a spiteful glare.

"Well," said Dick Blowhard, "there is no more business to be done to-day, so I shall go to my diggings."

"I shtop here and shmoke mein pipe and have a trink or two, den I shuts up the schop and closes the show," remarked Hans.

They shook hands, and the three precious villains parted.

The road to Lake Lonely being a good one, it did not take our old acquaintance, Bigamini, more than an hour and a half to walk to his house.

As we have said, there was only the little village of bamboo huts, in which his people lived, within measurable distance of the lake and the plantation.

Bigamini was doing very well from a pecuniary point of view, yet he was not happy or contented.

It is a question whether any thing would have made a man with his temperament so.

He had no character, and loved things evil rather than things good.

Arriving at the edge of the lake opposite his house, which looked very picturesque, standing on piles driven into the water, he took a silver whistle from his pocket.

This he blew shrilly,

His man, Hi Li, was on the look-out for him.

Instantly a boat put off from the house, and the Chinaman pulled for the shore.

"Is there any news?" asked Bigamini, as the boat ran alongside the landing-place.

"Lo Mung camee, and is waiting for you," replied Hi Li.

"In that case he has got something to communicate."

Bigamini stepped into the boat.

Hi Li turned the bows round, and struck out for the house, which he was not long in reaching.

Lo Mung was a middle-aged Chinaman, in the pay of Bigamini.

But he was also a servant in Mr. Mole's house, helping in the cooking, and in various other ways.

Mole and his wife had every confidence in him.

Nevertheless, he was nothing else than a base, ungrateful spy, who betrayed the secrets of his master's house.

Through the cook, Lo Mung, Bigamini knew all that was going on at the professor's dwelling.

Arriving at the house, Bigamini got up the ladder which led to the balcony.

Hi Li moored the boat to a pile, and followed.

Seated on a bamboo chair in the balcony was an obese, bloated-looking Chinaman.

This was Lo Mung.

"Ha! muchee good-day," he exclaimed. "Vellee vell? Me allee samee. How you doee? Fine day? Sunshine makee feel thirst. Drinkee, drinkee."

He took up a cup of tea, which had been provided for him by Hysa.

She was in the kitchen, preparing her husband's dinner, which was nearly ready.

"What have you come to tell me?" inquired Bigamini.

"Mole, Harkaway, all go awayee in three days," was the answer of Lo Mung.

"Going away!" echoed Bigamini, in genuine surprise.

"Yes, Biga-end-ming-ming. They go because they think they get money in Europe."

"Is that all you have heard?"

"They bringee home from sea a Greek sailor man—Spirillo callee."

"Well?"

"He tellee them comee to this country. On an island, greatee treasure. Make all richee for lifers."

"That is the queerest start I ever heard of."

"They buyee a shipper for themselves. In three days they be off," added Lo Mung.

"Not if I know it they won't," said Bigamini, with a knowing grin.

"Very strong, clever man Harkaway."

"I'll put a stop to their little game."

"How you be a stopper?" asked Lo Mung, raising his soft, almond-shaped eyes.

"You will find out in time. Here are five English pounds for you."

He counted out the money.

Lo Mung snatched it up with eagerness.

"Serve me faithfully, as you have hitherto done," continued Bigamini, "and I will double it in a day or two."

"I always be your good servanter; be slavee for you."

"Betray me, play me false, give Harkaway and his party any idea of where I live, or what I am going to do, and you shall have your flesh sliced off your bones with razors."

"I would bitee out my tonguer firstee."

"You know I have influence with the commissioner of the district."

"I am a knower of that, Biga-end-ming-ming."

"Very well, be careful."

"What you wantee me to be a doer of?" inquired Lo Mung.

"To-morrow night, when all have gone to bed in Mole's house, leave the back door open."

"It shall be done, most honourable excellency."

"Where does Mole keep his money?" continued Bigamini.

"In an old wooden chest, in the back room, on the ground floor, which is on a level with the earthee," replied Lo Mung.

"Can you get the key?"

"He keepee that himselfers; always tie round his neckee with a stringer."

"Doesn't he generally go to bed more or less drunk?"

"Sometimes sleep on the floorer, on a mattee."

"Persuade him to drink to-morrow night. Put this in his grog; it will make him sleep."

He handed him a small phial, which contained a white fluid.

"Yes, most honourable," said Lo Mung.

"Get the key, and await my coming at the back door."

"Ha! you stealee monee. Good! That better than takee wooden leg. Me be an understander. Go now, or get into troublers for being outer too longee muchee."

Bigamini raised his hand.

"Stop!" he cried; "I haven't done yet."

"What more you sayee?"

"Where does the little girl Emily sleep? Harvey's daughter, you know."

"The one who playee, with young Master Jack Harkaway?"

"Exactly. That is the one I allude to."

"She havee littler roomer all to herselfers, at the bottom of the staircasers," Lo Mung answered.

"You must be ready to show it to me."

"She prettee child—no killee."

"Who said I was going to kill her, you fool?" exclaimed Bigamini. "I am only going to bring her here and ask money for her return to her mother and father."

"Ah! that allee rightee."

"You shall have some of the cash when I get it and when the party go, I will find work for you."

"I bow to your generosity, most honourable Biga-end-ming-ming," said Lo Mung. "But respectfully me tellee you one thing."

"Name it."

"Beware of the big monkee. He always about the house somewhere. That beaster is never a sleeper."

"Will he fight?" asked Bigamini.

"He scratchee and bitee like a Tartar, excellency."

"I'll carve him with my knife. Bah! I'm not afraid of apes. You can depart now. Don't forget my instructions."

"They are written on my heartee," replied Lo Mung.

He inclined his head, and walked down the steps.

Hi Li unfastened the beat as he stepped into it, and paddled him to the land.

Then Lo Mung went back as quickly as he could to Professor Mole's house, to attend to his duties.

Bigamini entered his own domicile, and walked into the kitchen.

Some fish, caught in the lake by Hi Li had been fried in oil.

Hysa was busily engaged in putting some plain boiled rice on a dish, round a fowl, which she had roasted.

"Isn't my dinner ready?" he demanded, with an oath. "You heard me come home."

"It will not be a minute," she replied. "I never know precisely when to expect you."

Hysa spoke very good English, for she had been a servant in the British Consul's establishment.

She was very well behaved, and always conducted herself becomingly.

"Don't answer me, or I'll drown you," he cried with a fierce look; "by heaven, I will! Make haste and serve the dinner. Get me a bottle of wine, and look sharp. What do I keep you for?"

The woman's eyes flashed.

There was a subdued fire in them, which indicated, if he could read their language aright, that she was growing tired of his brutality.

"I could get my living anywhere," she said.

"What, am I to be defied? Take care!"

"Let me go. I am sick of this life. Never can I please you or give satisfaction."

Bigamini walked up to her.

Raising his fist, he struck her a cowardly blow.

She fell to the floor, stunned and bleeding.

Taking no notice of her he placed the dinner, with his own hands, on the table, produced a bottle of wine from a cupboard, opened it, drank, and began to eat as if nothing had happened.

When he had gratified his appetite—he was a large, quick, gluttonous eater—he finished the bottle of wine.

Lighting some opium in a pipe, he threw himself on a pile of cushions in a corner.

He was soon in the land of dreams.

All this time his unfortunate wife had remained unconscious.

She now came to her senses, and, with a deep sigh, rose to her feet.

There was a mirror hanging on the wall.

By the light of the setting sun, she saw that her face was disfigured, and covered with blood.

She washed the stains away, and sat down at an open window, looking out moodily at the lake.

"Ah!" she muttered, "I cannot endure this life for ever. The end must come soon. I will ruin that man—yes, if I fall myself, I will drag him to the ground."

When it was dark, Hysa, her eyes red with weeping, retired to rest.

Bigamini remained on the cushions all night, under the influence of opium.

The next day the abject wretch awoke from his debauch, weak and trembling, all his nerves being shaken by the vile, soul-deadening drug.

He had recourse to strong tea and the brandy bottle as a means of steadying himself.

That day he remained at home.

In the evening, he was visited by his two partners, as had been agreed upon.

Schneider and Blowhard drank and talked with him until it was nearly midnight.

Then Hi Li rowed them to the shore, and they started to walk to Mr. Mole's house.

It was their settled determination to rob the professor of his hidden hoard.

Also they were to steal away little Emily, and hide her in the Lake House for the purpose of ransom.

It was a dangerous undertaking.

Their path bristled with perils.

If they were surprised, Harkaway and Harvey would show them no mercy.

The air was still as death.

No moon was visible, but, as usual, a galaxy of stars twinkled in the sky.

As the confederates went along, they arranged their plans.

Schneider and Blowhard were to stay outside Mr. Mole's house, while Bigamini went inside, and with the aid of Lo Mung, accomplished his purpose.

The little girl, Emily, was to be handed to Blowhard, and the money taken from the chest was to be given to Schneider.

They were to hasten to the house on Lake Lonely, and Bigamini was to bring up the rear.

In order to facilitate matters and render the child unconscious, Bigamini had provided himself with a handkerchief steeped in chloroform.

This would effectually prevent her from crying out and raising an alarm.

The house was reached in due time.

All was silent as the grave.

The inmates had retired to rest some time ago.

Schneider and Blowhard placed themselves against the wall so as to conceal themselves.

With a crafty tread, Bigamini approached the back door.

It was open.

"Are you there?" asked Bigamini, under his breath.

"Yes, excellency," replied Lo Mung. "I have been awaiting your coming for some timee."

"Is all quiet?"

"Everything. Mandarin Mole is asleep in the parlour, fullee of whisky."

"Are you sure he is tipsy?"

"Him sleepee like a toppee."

"Good. Where is the key of the chest in which the old man keeps his treasure?"

"Here, O sun and moon of my existence."

Saying this, Lo Mung handed him a key.

"Do I not serve you well, hope of my life?" he added.

"Yes; I will advance you. Before long you shall have land, and be your own master."

"Follow me, high and mighty. I showee you the chest."

Lo Mung led the way to a room in which a Chinese lantern was burning dimly.

In one corner was a large wooden chest, secured by a patent lock, which had been made in Europe.

There was enough light in the room into which he was introduced for the robber's purpose.

Mole was lying on his back, snoring heavily; a bottle was by his side, and there was also an empty glass.

"Me givee him the powder," said Lo Mung.

"He won't move till morning," replied Bigamini. "I've a good mind to take away the old rooster's wooden legs, but it would occupy too much time. Where is the key?"

"Me gottee it. Here it am."

"Hand it over."

The Chinaman gave Bigamini the key of the chest.

In less than a minute it was opened, and two large bags of gold extracted.

Carrying them to the back door, Bigamini coughed.

"Where are you, Dutchy?" he said.

"Here," replied Schneider.

He presented him with the gold, which the Dutchman, according to previous agreement, was to take to the Lake House.

Returning to the room, Bigamini relocked the chest and put the string which held the key round Mole's neck again.

The professor did not stir.

He was perfectly unconscious of all his surroundings.

"Now for the child," said Bigamini, in a hoarse whisper.

"This way, most magnificent," replied Lo Mung.

He conducted him to the apartment in which little Emily was sleeping.

She looked the picture of innocence, as the Chinaman held a lantern over her head.

Bigamini took the chloroformed handkerchief from his pocket, and held it to her face.

She moved uneasily, but uttered no cry.

In two minutes she was completely under the influence of the soporific drug.

Bigamini could hear his heart beat.

It was an anxious time for the cowardly scoundrel.

But fortune favoured his disgraceful schemes, his star was in the ascendant.

Without interruption he carried the child to Schneider, wrapped only in a sheet.

The Dutchman immediately made off.

Bigamini spoke a few words to Lo Mung, who retired into the house, and bolted the door as if nothing had happened.

As the chief concoctor of this mischief was about to follow his companions, he met with a great surprise.

Something sprang on to his back, and two sinewy, bony arms were twined round his neck.

What was it?

He put up his hand to ascertain.

It came in contact with the furry skin of some animal.

In a moment he recollected Lo Mung's warning.

It must be young Jack Harkaway's monkey, which had been prowling about outside the house.

Nero's instincts told him there was something wrong.

He felt that he had come across an unauthorized person in the garden.

Perhaps he remembered and knew him again.

If he did not, Bigamini recollected the ape perfectly well, and shuddered at coming in contact with him.

The attack had taken him by surprise.

In vain he endeavoured to throw off the clinging embrace of the savage and powerful little beast.

Nero's grip became intensified.

He was slowly but surely throttling the hateful spy and kidnapper, all the while he kept on chattering in his ear, as if he was telling him, in monkey language, how glad he was to have got him in his power.

The veins on the wretched man's forehead became swollen like cords.

His eyes began to start from their sockets.

Great beads of perspiration dropped from his face, and blood trickled slowly from his nose.

He gasped for breath, for he was choking.

Lo Mung had retired within the house and knew nothing of what was going on.

It was useless to look for assistance from him.

To call out would have been to betray himself to Harkaway and his frends.

He felt for his knife, but he had dropped it.

His pistol was available, but he was afraid to use it, as a report would give the alarm.

Besides this, the bullet would probably go through the monkey's body and into his own.

Suddenly he noticed that he was standing close to a large palm tree.

Making a final effort, he staggered towards it.

With all his strength he backed on to the trunk, and got the monkey jammed against it.

The shock caused the brute to relax his hold.

Another jam made his ribs crack, and, with a shrill cry, Nero fell to the ground.

Bigamini was able to breathe again.

The monkey, lying on his side, began to chatter as loud as he could.

To stop his noise and avenge himself, Bigamini kicked him twice on the head.

This treatment stunned Nero, who became quiet.

Looking up, Bigimini saw a light moving in one of the rooms.

It vanished, and was then to be seen in another.

Some member of the household had been aroused, and was awakening the others.

"Time to be off," muttered Bigamini.

A cock began to crow.

It was heralding the dawn, which ushers in the day very early in those latitudes.

Giving the monkey a parting kick, in token of derision, the spy disappeared among the tall and graceful trees, with which Mr. Mole's house was surrounded.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF LITTLE EMILY CREATES A GREAT COMMOTION—THE MYSTERIOUS LETTER—MONDAY GOES ON THE WAR-PATH WITH YOUNG JACK.

WHEN Nero was jammed between the trunk of the tree and Bigamini's back, he uttered a peculiar cry, as we have said.

This was heard by young Jack Harkaway.

All the evening he had been strangely restless, and when he went to bed he was unable to sleep.

His mind reverted back to his timely escape from the clutches of Hunston and the pirates.

Though he was safe with his parents once more, he doubted the present and feared the future.

At any moment he knew that he might expect a blow in the dark, either from Hunston or one of his emissaries.

When he, through his open window, heard the monkey's cry, he sprang out of bed. It did not take him long to light a lamp and get his clothes on.

He was well aware that Nero would not cry out like that for nothing.

There was something wrong.

Of that young Jack was sure.

His father slept in an adjoining room, to which he quickly made his way.

In moments of danger, Jack always sought his father in preference to anyone else.

He could rely equally upon his judgment and valour.

Without waking his mother, the touched his father on the shoulder, and rousing him, made a sign.

Harkaway construed this correctly.

His son wanted to communicate something to him privately.

As rapidly as possible he slipped on his pants and a light coat, and followed Jack down the stairs.

"What is it?" he asked.

"I don't know, but there is something up, father. That's why I called you," answered Jack.

"Let me hear all about it."

"All I can tell you is, that I heard Nero give a strange cry, which monkeys only utter when hurt."

"Inside or out?"

"It seemed to come from the garden. Shall we go and see? I have a pistol."

"All right—forge ahead," said Harkaway.

Young Jack unbolted the back door, and they both passed out.

The sun was rising with unspeakable beauty, streaking the heavens with a roseate hue.

A perfume of many flowers assailed the nostrils, and the eye was gladdened by green leaves and verdure of various kinds.

The beauties of Nature had no charm, however, for young Jack on this particular occasion.

He had made a pet of Nero, and was greatly attached to him.

The monkey had rendered him good service in times gone by.

Some boys make pets of birds, some of dogs and ponies, but Jack's only favourite among the dumb creation was Nero.

He would sooner have been knocked about himself than that his monkey should suffer.

Looking around he speedily espied him.

As he lay under the palm tree, he looked exactly as if he were dead.

"Look, father!" cried Jack. "They have killed the poor brute."

"Who do you mean?" asked Harkaway.

"How can I tell? Some enemies, I suppose. We have enough of them, and to spare."

"I hope he is not dead. It appears to me he breathes."

"Will you look at him, dad? I'm not much of a doctor. By Jove! I knew he would not cry out for nothing. It's lucky I heard him, got up, and roused you."

"Yes. If he is injured, he might have died without help."

Saying this Harkaway advanced to the prostrate monkey.

He felt his bones all over his body.

Harkaway was surgeon enough to be able to tell that none were fractured.

Then he examined the head, and found that Nero was

bleeding from two wonnds—one above the mouth, the other under one of his ears.

"He's all right, as far as his bones and body are concerned," he said; "but he's got a couple of what the Yanks call 'sockdollagers' on the head."

"Is it serious?" inquired Jack.

"No; he's been floored and stunned. A drop of brandy will suit his complaint as well as any thing."

"Shall I get some?"

"Yes. I'll stand by."

Young Jack went into the house, got some brandy in a wine-glass, and handed it to his father.

The latter gently administerted the spirit, as a nurse or a doctor would medicine.

In a few minutes a decided improvement was noticeable.

Nero opened his eyes, and seeing his young master by his side, rose up, and began to chatter vehemently.

He pointed as sensibly as possible to the hurts on his face.

Then he capered among the trees, as if to indicate that his foe had gone that way.

"All right, old boy," exclaimed young Jack. "I understand what you want to tell us. Someone has been here. You drove him—or them—off."

"It's a pity the beggars can't talk," remarked Harkaway. "They are very human."

"So they are. I've seen lots of monkey-faced people. Perhaps they are some relation."

"He's got something more to tell us."

"How? what?" asked Jack.

"Don't you see he is at the back door? He wants to show us something, if he can't talk," replied Harkaway.

"By Jingo! that must be it. I never saw such a monkey."

"Nor anyone else. He's a living curiosity. Recollect what he did at the hotel in New York when it was on fire."

"Yes, and more recently, how he played at being a soldier and fired a blank cartridge at Mole. Ha, ha! that was a good joke."

Talking in this way they entered the house, preceded by Nero.

The monkey appeared especially anxious for them to follow him.

There could be no doubt from what ensued that Nero had witnessed all the villainy of Bigamini.

Nor, as will be seen, was he ignorant of the treachery of Lo Mung.

First, he took Jack and his father into the parlour where Mr. Mole had fallen asleep on the floor.

It was always too much exertion, now he had lost his legs, to go up stairs if he had had a drop too much.

Poor professor! He was not growing younger, and he had been in the wars.

Nero jumped on the money chest and touched the lock with his paw.

Then he looked up intelligently at his master.

"Father," said young Jack, "there's been a robbery here, or I'm mistaken."

"What makes you think so?" asked Harkaway.

"This is the chest Mole keeps his money in. You know he has a prejudice against banking it. Nero has some meaning in his head, or he would not sit there."

"Where is the key?"

"He carries it on a bit of string tied round his neck."

"Go and see if he has it there,"

Young Jack examined the tutor, who was blissfully unconscious of all around him.

He reclined on his back, and snored as if it were for a wager.

"Here's the key, father!" cried Jack.

"Mole's indulging in one of his 'usuals.' He thought we had all gone to bed and should not miss him. He's as drunk as a lord, but here's the key of the chest, so Nero is wrong for once."

"That proves nothing," Harkaway replied.

"Why not?"

"Bring me the key. Let us examine the chest."

"Oh! I see what you mean."

"If you don't, you are a baby. When were you born—yesterday, or the day before?"

Young Jack took the liberty of removing Mr. Mole's key and opened the chest.

Harkaway leant over his shoulder while he did so.

The lid was thrown up.

There was no money there.

"As I suspected," observed Harkaway, "the thief, who-

ever he is, has taken advantage of Mole's inebriety. He replaced the key after emptying the chest of its contents."

"That is plain enough," answered young Jack. "I did not tumble at first. I do now."

"But the door was locked. How did he get in? You undid the bolt. I saw you."

Young Jack looked at the window.

That was shut.

Only the ventilators admitted air.

He ran to every room on the ground floor.

It was the same in each one.

The front door was also securely fastened.

It did not seem as if there was a traitor in the house.

The thief must have come from outside, or how did the monkey get his injuries?

It was a mystery.

"Someone must have let the robber in, and then let him out," remarked Harkaway.

"We have Chinese servants, father," replied young Jack.

"Lo Mung, one man, two women," said Harkaway. "All the others who work for us live outside—come in the morning and go at night. Their cottages are half-a-mile off. Lo Mung was highly recommended, good character, and all that sort of thing."

"The Chinese are not trustworthy."

"That is true; false characters are easily obtained."

"I must confess that I am fairly puzzled," said young Jack.

Nero came up to him as he spoke, put his paw on his hand, and with a significant look walked towards the door.

"He is at it again. There is some idea in that noddle of his," exclaimed Harkaway.

"It's a case of following leader."

"Certainly. The sagacious animal wants to show us something more. Heaven grant it may be nothing very serious."

"How can it be?"

"I don't know. My heart misgives me."

Nervous and anxious, they went after the monkey.

The latter directed his steps to the room in which little Emily had been sleeping.

He proceeded on all-fours to the bed.

Snatching at the clothes, he showed them that it was empty.

Their consternation was extreme.

"The girl's gone!" cried Harkaway.

"Don't say that," exclaimed young Jack, turning hot and then cold.

Emily was his sweetheart.

He loved her as tenderly and fondly as she loved him.

These two seemed to be made to grow up affectionately together, and marry in due course.

If marriages are made in heaven, this was to be one of them.

"Search the house," continued Harkaway. "Don't wake anyone up yet, if you can help it. She may be with Harvey and Hilda."

Away went young Jack, his heart beating wildly.

He carefully examined every room in the house.

No trace of the missing girl was to be discovered.

Crestfallen and dejected, he came back and told his father so.

"This is a great blow to all of us," said Harkaway. "Especially will it be felt by Harvey and his wife."

"Who can have done such a dastardly thing as to steal an inoffensive child who has never done anyone any harm?"

"I am at a loss to imagine. It puzzles me. Hunston cannot be in Hong-Kong. We shall have to find out."

"What would people steal Emily for?"

"Money, I expect—a ransom, as it is called. It is a terrible mystery, and a great perplexity."

"We shall not be able to sail for the Island of Mystery now," continued young Jack.

"It is not likely, until we have recovered Emily. No—our stay here is prolonged indefinitely."

"When will our troubles be over?"

"Never, I am afraid; but we must face them bravely like men," replied Harkaway.

"That's right, father; nothing will daunt me."

"You're a chip of the old block, Jack."

"Thank you father. I feel complimented."

The monkey a third time came to young Jack.

He put his paw on his hand, looking in his face as before.

"Hullo?" said Harkaway, "more revelations. The Simian creature must be obeyed."

Young Jack patted Nero on the head, and again followed him, his father also accompanying.

This time the monkey led them to a small ante-room on the same floor

In this apartment Lo Mung slept, on a pile of matting.

He pretended to be asleep.

But the artful Mongolian was far from being in the land of dreams.

He had heard people moving about the house, and had not closed his eyes.

When the monkey entered the ante-room with Harkaway and young Jack, he simulated slumber.

Nero walked to the bed, touched Lo Mung on the arm, and regarded his master steadfastly.

"What does that mean?" asked Harkaway.

"Simply that this Chinese Johnny is in it," replied Jack.

"A spy! a traitor!"

"Exactly."

"In league with the robber and kidnapper!" continued Harkaway.

"What do you think? I'd stake my life on the acumen of Nero. He knows how many beans make five."

"I will tackle him in the morning," said Harkaway, "though I do not think we shall get much out of him."

"Wake him up now, and ask him questions," exclaimed young Jack. "Sleeping here, as he does, close to the passage, he ought to know a lot."

"Let him be."

"What are you going to do, father?"

"Wake Harvey and tell him of his loss. He must communicate the sad news to Hilda. They will feel as bad as your mother and I did when you were in the power of Hunston on board the pirate junk," answered Harkaway.

They walked away to the door.

Nero did not appear to like this, for he began to chatter noisily.

As they paid no attention to him, he stood on his hind legs and bent over Lo Mung.

With a sudden outburst of temper, he fell upon the Chinaman and bit his ear.

Lo Mung sprang up with an awful howl.

It was audible over the whole house.

"Takee the monkee! He killee me!" he yelled "Oh! Ah! Oh!"

Young Jack seized Nero by the neck, and pulled him off.

"My earer badlee chewee! I am a sufferer of painee!" continued Lo Mung.

In a few minutes everyone was aroused.

Magog, Brand, Pike and Jefferson, had gone on a three days' fishing excursion, and had taken Sunday with them.

But Harvey, Monday, Doctor Stanley and Jack's boy friend, rushed down stairs.

They eagerly inquired what was the matter.

In a few words Harkaway told them of what had happened.

Harvey's grief was excessive.

After a brief conversation, it was determined to examine Lo Mung.

Nothing less than a cannon-shot or an earthquake could have roused Mr. Mole until his usual time.

Lo Mung was made to stand up before Harkaway and Harvey.

Behind them stood young Jack and Monday.

"Now, Mr. John Chinaman," exclaimed Harkaway, "we want you to answer a few questions."

The man rubbed his eyes and yawned several times.

"Me vellee sleepee," he muttered. "Never me sleepee so soundee. Heapee big sleepee this nightee."

"Who was it you let into the house?" demanded Harkaway. "Speak out, you old humbug, or I'll leather you with a bamboo till you do."

"Never was a mover. Shuttee eye all timee."

"We know better. The money is gone from the chest, and the little girl has been stolen."

"That bad news. Wicked mans comee from citee."

"You let them in."

"No, no—that is a mistake," replied Lo Mung, shaking his head emphatically.

Harkaway had hastily seized a bamboo cane used as a walking-stick.

Telling Harvey and Monday to hold him, he lashed the fellow's back as hard as he could.

The Chinese from their youth are used to be being beaten.

Perhaps it has not so much effect on them as it otherwise would have, for this reason.

Lo Mung squirmed, twisted, groaned, and yelled.

But he did not betray his employer, Bigamini.

Fully a hundred blows did Harkaway bestow upon him before he desisted.

He was compelled to do so from sheer exhaustion.

"Won't you confess?" cried Harkaway.

"Me nothing to tellee. Sleepee all the timee," replied Lo Mung.

"I'll give you fifty taels if you will let me hear the truth."

"You payee me for beatee, or me go to Commissioner Judge and he finee you."

Harkaway bit his lip. He saw that the rascal was a match for him.

Though Lo Mung was his servant, he had no right to beat him.

By committing an assault he had exceeded his privilege, and rendered himself amenable to a fine.

To avoid this he had to bargain with him, and make him a present of a certain sum of money.

"Good," said the Chinaman, with a bland, child-like smile, forgetting his pain by counting his gain. "Now payee for monkee, ear chewee."

"What do you mean, you insolent scoundrel?" Jack demanded.

"That China law—payee for monkee."

"Do you think I'm made of money, and you have found a little gold-mine in me?"

"If not knuckle downee, alle samee as before, me go to Judge, and he givee you toko for yam."

"You are making a market of me, and I suppose it's no use for me to kick."

"Pay him and sack him," suggested young Jack.

Harkaway had to make another bargain, and part with more money.

It was necessary to gratify the rapacity of Lo Mung, or he would have set the ponderous machine of the law in motion.

"Now you can hook it as soon as you like," continued young Jack. "Make yourself scarce."

Lo Mung did not offer to move.

He looked contemptuously at young Jack, who was rapidly becoming enraged at his immobility.

"Pay no attention to boy talkee," cried Lo Mung. "Mandarin Mole my master boss."

"He'll soon start you."

"When he say go, me be a goer, not before."

Saying this, Lo Mung walked in a stately way towards the door.

Just as he reached the threshold, young Jack pursued him, and giving him what boys call a running kick on the lower part of his back, sent him sprawling into the passage on his hands and knees.

At any other time there would have been a laugh at this.

What had happened, however, made everyone grave and serious.

All the mirth and hilarity was taken out of them by the loss of little Emily.

Lo Mung did not think it prudent to take any notice of young Jack's conduct.

It would have been risky to provoke him further.

He slunk away to the servants' quarters, and refreshed himself with a cup of tea.

The day had dawned very miserably for Harkaway and his party.

Failing to get any information out of Lo Mung, young Jack and Monday searched the grounds.

Bigamini and his accomplices were far away by this time.

Nothing whatever rewarded them for their trouble.

It was extremely painful to witness the grief of Hilda when she came down, and the sad news was communicated to her.

In vain Emily endeavoured to comfort her.

She was like Rachel crying for her children, and refusing to listen to the voice of consolation.

The tables were changed now.

A short while ago it was Emily who was mourning the absence of her son.

Now, it was Hilda lamenting the loss of her daughter.

Mr. Mole was, it must be said to his credit, much more shocked at the disappearance of Emily than of his money.

He had more hidden away in another place, if he wanted it at any time.

The morning passed in anxious conversation as to what was to be done.

Pike was despatched to the police office in Hong-Kong, to give notice of the robbery and kidnapping.

At exactly twelve o'clock Harkaway, Harvey, and Mole, sat down to lunch.

Emily and Hilda could not eat any thing, they were so upset, while young Jack and Monday were in the grounds with the doctor.

To his great surprise, as he took his seat, Harkaway saw a letter on his plate.

It was directed, in an ordinary commercial hand, to "Mr. Harkaway, leader of the party staying at Mole's plantation."

"Hullo!" he cried, "a letter for me. How did it come here?"

That was a mystery.

Lo Mung was called.

Mole had not given him notice to leave, and he remained at his post.

He denied any knowledge of the letter, and declared that he had seen no one enter the house.

The other servants, on being interrogated, made replies to the same effect.

This caused the mystery to deepen.

Nothing remained to be done but to open the letter.

Harkaway was a little nervous.

Knowing what his enemies were capable of, he was half afraid there might be some explosive inside.

But he was soon reassured on that point.

The letter contained a single sheet of paper, on which was written—

"NOTICE.—If the sum of £1,000 in English gold, is forthcoming within three days, the girl will be brought back in the night.

"No watch must be kept. This will mean *death!*

"If any attempt to arrest, shoot, or otherwise injure the one who brings her, she will be killed by a confederate in the rear.

"The money must be put in a canvas bag and placed at the edge of the well in the front garden attached to Mr. Mole's house.

"By order of
"THE SYNDICATE.

"P. S.—If the money is not deposited as aforesaid, the girl will be poisoned."

Jack elevated his eyebrows and looked up.

"This is what I call a nice, pleasant letter," he exclaimed.

"What is it?" asked Harvey, breathlessly.

He fancied that it related to his daughter.

"The plot thickens. Shall I read it aloud?" replied Harkaway.

"Do so, please."

In a clear voice Jack read the document.

"Thank heaven, she lives. My little girl is in the land of the living!" cried Harvey.

"Who is at the bottom of this villainy?" ejaculated Mole. "It can't be Hunston."

"No," answered Jack. "He is at sea with the pirates, but he has friends with whom he communicates on shore. He may have instigated the outrage."

"I have not the money," remarked Harvey. "It is such a large sum, or I would pay as demanded, and get her back."

"We can raise the cash at the bank within the given time," replied Harkaway, "but a question arises."

"I know what you are going to say. Is it advisable? May we not be tricked?"

"Precisely. How can we trust to the good faith and honour of these thieves?"

"Emily is so dear to her mother that she will sell her jewels—do any thing, in fact, to recover her darling."

"Tell her we are going to pay, but, in reality, we will play the rascals a trick," said Harkaway.

"What is your suggestion?"

"Allow a day to pass to make the fellows who form this horrid syndicate believe we have been to the bank to get the coin."

"Yes. What next?" queried Harvey eagerly.

"Fill a bag with small stones, put it where he mentions, and lie in wait for him."

Harvey shook his head.

"That won't do, dear boy," he exclaimed. "We may capture or kill him, but it will seal the fate of little Emily."

"Perhaps you are right."

"I know I am. The letter contains a threat to that effect."

"We must raise the money somehow, and as soon as possible," cried Harkaway. "I will help you to the best of my ability."

"And I also, in spite of my recent loss," said Mole.

"How can I thank you?" exclaimed Harvey. "It is more than I have any right to expect."

"Not at all. You should command my last shilling if you wanted it," replied Harkaway.

"And I would actually pawn my wooden legs for you," said Mole, smiling.

Harvey was much affected at these proofs of their friendship.

Jack got up and shook him cordially by the hand.

"We'd do any thing for you, old chappie," he exclaimed. "Friendship with us is not a name; it's a solid fact."

"I'll go and tell Hilda. It will relieve her mind," said Harvey.

"Do so. Mole and I will drive into Hong-Kong this afternoon and get the money."

"Again and again I thank you."

"In a few days, when we have recovered little Emily, we shall be on board our ship on our way to the magic island."

"That is so."

"Hurrah for Greece, the treasure, and our new friend Spirillo."

"So say all of us," cried Mole.

Harvey went out of the room.

He was in such a hurry to see his wife and tell her of the good news, that he did not did not see a form in the passage.

It was Lo Mung.

He had been listening, and had heard everything that had been said in the luncheon-room.

Consequently he was well aware that Harkaway and Mole were going to Hong-Kong to raise a thousand pounds.

They would bring it home with them in the carriage.

This might be important news for his employer, Bigamini.

The spy determined to discharge himself, and go to the Lake House.

He had been threatened with instant dismissal, and might get it at any moment.

Why not be first in the field?

As Harvey left the room he stepped in.

"We do not want any thing," said Mole, when he saw him.

"Me wantee," was the reply.

"You can go. Don't interrupt me when I am talking to a gentleman."

"Me been beatee."

"You were paid for it," Harkaway exclaimed.

"Havee my earee chewee by monkee."

"More money!"

"Boy kickee. No payee for that."

"Look here! I've had enough of this system of extorting money. Get out!"

"If Mister Molee tellee me, allee rightee," said Lo Mung, with a cunning look.

"By all means. I don't need you," answered the professor, "there is something fishy about this business."

"Me not go fishee."

"I believe you are in it. Go. Cut! Clear out!"

"Givee wagee."

"You Johnnies are all on the make," cried Mole. "I never saw such a lot. What do you do with your money?"

"Smokee opium and gamble. Eatee bird-nest soup."

"Yes, and puppy dogs and rats. I know you. Be off. You can call for your wages in a week. I've got no money."

"Wantee now."

"I've been robbed. If you don't go, I'll kick you out!"

"Cantee vellee well. Gottee wooden leggee."

"You impudent scoundrel! If I could get at you, I'd—I'd pulverise you—reduce you to dust—squash you, as I would a mulberry, with my foot!"

"Payee up."

"Not I. Get it as you can."

"I'm a wonderer that you are not an ashamer. You bullee poor Chinaman."

"Get out, you yellow-skinned, almond-eyed, evil-smelling, thieving, lying skunk."

"Wooden leggee. He, he! walk on two sticks."

"Disciple of Confucius, begone, or beware of the consequence. I'm hot-tempered and valiant."

"Foolee when drinkee."

Lo Mung grinned as he said this.

Mr. Mole fell back in his chair, gasping, with a mixture of too much lunch, and indignation.

"Am I to stand this?" he asked.

"Certainly not, sir," replied Harkaway.

"Then eject summarily that impudent Celestial, or I shall draw on him whatever the consequences may be."

"Don't do that. Murder, you know——"

"Bosh! Is it a murder, to kill a wretch like that?" Mole interrupted.

"They would call it so in Hong-Kong."

"But the vile brute is not civilised—he's not worth his salt."

"They say they discovered the art of printing, and that of making gunpowder, thousands of years ago."

"I know they do, but don't you believe it," said Mole. "It's all a confounded lie."

"If so, they've degenerated," Harvey remarked.

"Very much so," replied Harkaway.

"Give him a send-off; be your own chucker-out, Harkaway; drive the bally rascal away, or I shall bore a hole through his infernal carcase, which is only fit for crows to feed on."

Lo Mung waved a fan he held in his hand.

The Chinese high and low are never without a fan.

"Fanqui!" he hissed.

This was a term of reproach.

It meant "Foreign devil."

"D'ye hear him?" shouted Mole.

"Hark at the hard words he's giving me. He's calling me a foreign devil!"

Unable to restrain himself, he threw a tumbler at him. It was full of claret.

Striking Lo Mung on the side of the face, it caused him to beat a precipitate retreat.

His movements were expedited considerably.

As he wiped the blood from a gash in his face, he swore a bitter oath in Chinese.

"Me be a revenger," he muttered. "Chinaman good man allee samee. Englishman foreign devil!"

Scarcely had he disappeared when young Jack and Monday walked into the room.

"Got any grub to spare governor?" asked young Jack.

"Heaps. Duck, fowl, and——"

"Don't!" interrupted young Jack. "I'm as hungry as a hunter. In fact, I could eat a horse and chase the rider.

"Where have you been?" enquired Harkaway.

"Out prospecting. Monday and I have found tracks, haven't we, old ivory?"

"Yes, sare. Um right enough," replied Monday.

"What do you mean by that?"

"We are going on the war-path, sare, to find little Emily," said Monday.

"It's true, dad," remarked young Jack. "We mean biz, and good biz, too."

"Really?"

"If you don't see us for forty-eight hours, don't fluster about us. We shall be all right."

"But——"

"Let me sit down and fill up the corners. You can talk, dear old guv, while we are eating."

"Go ahead."

"I intend to. See me wire in. It's no use going on the war-path with an empty stomach. Is it, Monday?"

"Dat are so, sare," replied the Prince of Limbi. "The greatest foe in all creation am de full belly. What you say, Mast' Jack?"

"No breakfast, no man; no dinner, no man," replied Harkaway.

"That's me. Yah, yah!" laughed Monday.

He and young Jack sat down to the table and helped themselves abundantly.

The way they ate was a caution to vegetarians.

Nothing seemed to come amiss, and they drank a bottle of claret between them.

"I'm going to fill a knapsack with food, and a keg with water," said young Jack. "That will do for us."

"Hold on! Where are you going?" inquired Harkaway.

"We don't know yet, but we've found tracks."

"I don't understand you."

"Monday has an eye like a hawk. There was a heavy dew last night, and we have discovered footsteps. That's tracks, isn't it?"

"Where do they lead to?"

"We are going to find out, if we can. Our purpose is to get back my sweetheart, little Emily."

"All right, my boy. I honour you for the noble sentiment, but we shall get her without your intervention."

"Have you had any news?"

"Read that precious epistle."

Young Jack took the letter which his father had found on his plate.

He read it carefully.

"Dad," he said, with a knowing look, "in my opinion, this is all kid. There is too much of the young goat about it."

"How so?"

"The syndicate, as they call themselves, will take your money, but they won't give us back little Emily."

"Why not?"

"They will keep on holding her to ransom, or send her to sea in the pirate junk."

"With Hunston?"

"His agent, Bigamini, is doing this, don't you fret. No fear about that, I'm sure."

Harkaway looked at Harvey and Mole.

"There is some sense in what he says," he remarked.

"I'm only a young one, but my head's level, dad. Let Monday and I go on the war-path."

"As you like, but I shall go to Hong-Kong presently and get the money."

"Do as you like, father; I want to go after Emily. You won't get her your way."

"I mean to try, anyhow."

"We will both try—I in my way, you in yours; and perhaps between us we shall pull it off," replied young Jack.

"Keep out of danger. You do not know how many foes you have to fight against," observed his father.

"We will be as prudent and careful as we can."

"Keep um eyes open," said Monday.

When lunch was finished, Harkaway and Harvey went to the city to get the money demanded in the mysterious letter.

This was written in a disguised hand by Bigamini himself.

Young Jack and Monday looked to their knives and pistols, and then made a start.

They had noticed footsteps in a certain part of the tea-garden, where, at that time, no one was employed.

Outside the garden was a track of sandy soil, on which grew some stunted trees.

Here they lost sight of the tracks.

But they saw something which arrested their attention.

Two Chinamen were sitting under one of these trees, engaged in conversation.

Occasionally they drank something out of a black bottle. It looked suspiciously like European wine.

In fact, a closer inspection showed a label on which was written "Sherry."

Monday was the first to discover these Mongolians.

"Look," he whispered, "two Johnnies. We listen, sare, and hear what um say."

"This is a good idea," replied young Jack.

"See um fat one? That look to me like Lo Mung, who I think very bad man."

"So do I. He's an artful customer. Yes, it is Lo. Creep up gently. Don't disturb them."

"Um not make little sound. Quiet as mouse. Hush!"

Jack and Monday went on their hands and knees, succeeding in getting behind the two Celestials without being perceived.

The disciples of Confucius were evidently very jolly.

They laughed and chatted together at their ease.

The sips they took from the bottle of sherry elevated their spirits and loosened their tongues.

Monday and young Jack listened attentively.

"You givee my master's letter?" asked one, who was no other than Hi Li.

Bigamini had sent him with the letter to Lo Mung, who was to put it where Harkaway would see it.

Accordingly he had placed it on his plate, where it was found.

"He findee it allee rightee," replied Lo Mung.

"Where you going to workee? You say you leavee Mandarin Mole for goodee."

"Me come to your master for a dayee or two; then I go to Hong-Kong, havee smokee opium joint, and drink Tangiers whisky for drunkee."

"Drinkee for drunkee, velle goodlers," remarked Hi Li, with an appreciative nod.

"You comee with me," exclaimed Lo Mung. "We both have what foreign devils call a highee spree time."

"In three days I readee. Waitee first to gettee money for little girl. My master boss payee extra for hold tongue, and watch Missy Hysa."

"Allee rightee ; we be going together. You got to make haste back now?"

"No. Master at home. He watch Missy Hysa and little girl, too. Me restee. Finish bottle."

"Not much left, but me got another in my pocketer."

"Ha, you clever fellow," cried Hi Li. "Me likee you vellee much for friendlers."

"We always were good friendlers," replied Lo Mung. "How your Missy Hysa go on now?"

"She cry all day, master beat her so. She try gettee away, and swear for revenge. Either she killee master, or he drownee her in the water."

They paused to empty the first bottle and begin on the second.

The effect of the wine upon them was to make them sleepy.

Lo Mung began to sing a verse of a Chinese song in a low and not unmusical voice.

For a brief space Hi Li accompanied him.

The effort, however, proved too much for them,and finishing the sherry, they vowed eternal friendship.

Then they leant back against the trunk of the tree and went to sleep.

Monday and young Jack retreated to a short distance.

They wanted to talk together and discuss what they had heard.

All the time, however, they kept their gaze fixed upon the two unconscious Chinamen.

"What do you think of that?" asked Jack.

"Lo Mung what I call him—big rascal thief," replied Monday, in an angry tone.

"The other is a friend of his, and the servant of the man who has stolen Emily."

"Certain sure ob that, sare."

"Well, all we have to do is to follow the villains, and we shall find out where my little sweetheart is, and who has got her."

"That de ticket for soup, boss!" cried Monday.

"How fortunate we followed the tracks and came upon these tippling Chinamen."

"I knew we should make a discovery. You and I de boys to do it, Mast' Jack."

"Yes," said our young hero. "I think we are about as clever as most people."

"What we do now?" asked Monday. "Got to wait till Johnnies wake up."

"That's a nuisance. I hate inaction, but it won't do to scare them. They must have no idea of our presence. Confound it! Perhaps it will be hours before they sleep off the effects of that sherry."

"Never mind. I got lily drop of brandy in a flask. You have water."

"And I've a bundle of cigarettes," put in Jack.

"That fine. We enjoy ourselves."

They did so, and, after smoking for a time, Monday, who was a man of resources, found a pack of cards in his pocket.

A game of euchre for a small stake helped to pass the time away.

The sun was declining in the west.

But the two Chinamen still slept.

CHAPTER XXIX.

LITTLE EMILY'S CAPTIVITY.

It was several hours after the arrival of little Emily at the Lake House before she recovered from the effects of the soporific drug which had been administered to her.

She was placed in bed with Hysa.

Bigamini admonished his wife to take care of her.

He and his partners in crime, Schneider and Blowhard, retired to an inner room, where they gambled with cards, and drank brandy until long after daybreak.

When they were tired out, they threw themselves on some mats, and snatched a few hours' feverish sleep.

About eight o'clock in the morning they woke up, partook of a light breakfast, and separated.

The Dutchman and the Englishman were rowed to the landing-stage by Hi Li.

They had to return to Hong-Kong to attend to some business.

The money they had robbed Mr. Mole of had been equally divided between them.

But they did not take away so much as they had expected.

They had been playing for high stakes at the game of poker,

Bigamini was an expert at this, and he also knew how to cheat. He had risen from the table a heavy winner.

It was generally the case when they gambled together.

His partners had their suspicions, but his sleight-of-hand was so clever, that they could not find him out.

If they had done so, blood would have most assuredly been shed.

These wretches would have drawn their pistols upon him, and he, of course, would have defended himself.

There was always a chance some day of this kind of thing occurring.

It very often happens that thieves fall out and kill one another.

When Schneider and Blowhard had departed, Bigamini went into one of the verandahs of his strangely built house.

Here was a chair, a fishing-rod, tackle, and an earthen ware jar filled with bait.

Angling was his favourite pastime, and the lake was full of various kinds of fine fish, weighing from an ounce to five and six pounds.

He liked to eat these lake fish, fresh out of the water, at any time of the day.

Many hours did he pass at his country house in angling for the finny prey.

He was particularly lucky this morning, for the fish bit freely, and he caught some fine specimens.

"Ha, ha!" he laughed. "I am doing well in this country, and have made a nice little pile of money, but I shall not stay here. This is not a country for a white man to live in. I want just enough money to support me comfortably, and I will seek a fresh land. I am tired of Hysa, and will marry again."

The rascal was a most determined bigamist, and did not seem to care how many women he betrayed.

He had had a good many wives already.

In fact, he was a sort of modern Bluebeard.

"If I get that money for the girl's ransom," he added, talking to himself, "it will stock me up. Why should Schneider and Blowhard have any of it? They might be killed easily."

His mind now turned upon murdering his confederates.

There was no crime too bad for him to commit.

He was roused from his evil meditations by the sound of little Emily's voice.

She had woke up, and was frightened at finding herself in a strange place with a Chinawoman she did not know.

"Where am I?" she demanded. "This is not my house."

"You are with friends who will not harm you," replied Hysa, kindly.

The latter felt sorry for the child.

She did not care to aid and abet her husband in his criminal practices.

"I want my mamma and papa. Let me go," continued Emily, "you have no right to keep me here."

"Soon you shall go homee, but not now. Waitee bitee."

Emily got up from the bed—she had not been undressed—and began to cry bitterly.

Giving her some tea and rice, Hysa endeavoured to console and soothe her.

She ate and drank, but her tears did not cease, nor did she stop her lamentations.

Bigamini put down his fishing-rod, and walked into the sleeping apartment.

"Stop that noise," he exclaimed, "or I'll make you."

The child looked curiously at him with her big eyes.

"Did you take me away from my home?" she asked.

"Yes, I did."

"What harm have I done you?"

"I want to make money, and I have told your father, if he will give me a certain sum, you shall be sent back."

"You are a bold, bad man," said Emily, bravely.

"Every body knows that—no one better than myself, little miss," replied Bigamini.

"When shall I go back?"

"To-morrow, perhaps. It all depends. I shall go to-night, and see if the cash is waiting for me. Stop crying."

"I can't help it," answered Emily. "Is it not dreadful to be taken away like this? What made me sleep so fast?"

"A drug I gave you."

"Oh, what a way my mother and father will be in. Do you think they will get the money?"

"They must, if they care about you."

"Our enemies are very cruel. Only a little while ago, young Jack Harkaway was taken from us. Something is always happening."

Bigamini sat down.

The child was standing before him with a tea-cup in her hand.

Hysa was behind her, with her face rigid.

It seemed as if she had made up her mind to protect little Emily to the extent of her power.

"Now, I want to talk seriously to you," exclaimed Bigamini.

He had a small bamboo cane in his hand.

This he swished through the air threateningly.

The girl winced, as if she were afraid he was going to beat her.

Instinctively she retreated a few paces towards Hysa.

Looking up in her face for protection, she took her hand.

There was a dangerous flash in Hysa's eyes.

"You shall not strike her!" said Hysa.

"Hold your tongue! Who's speaking to you?" cried Bigamini, angrily.

His small, fishy eyes turned green.

"I say you shall not!" was the firm reply.

"You can't stop me! Perhaps you will get a thrashing you won't like. It would not be the first time, you know. Be silent! I'm talking to the girl, not you."

Hysa made no answer; but she kept her gaze fixed on him.

"Do you know the meaning and virtue of an oath?" asked Bigamini, addressing the child.

"Of course I do," replied Emily, who was astonishingly clever and vivacious for her age.

"That is gratifying."

"You do not suppose for a moment that I have been brought up like a savage?"

"If you take an oath and break it, what then?"

"I shall have committed a very great sin, and acted very dishonourably. If I swear not to do a thing, I must keep my word, come what may, or I am disgraced in the sight of heaven and man."

Bigamini smiled.

"That is it, exactly. I see your are no fool!" he exclaimed. "You are a credit to your bringing up."

"I ought to be, considering that my parents have taken great pains with me," said Emily, proudly.

"Should I take you back to Mr. Mole's to-morrow, or the next day, or the day after that," continued Bigamini, "you

must swear to me, in the sight of Heaven, that you will not tell anyone where you have been or whom you have seen."

Emily looked at him with wide-open eyes and elevated eyebrows.

"Why," she rejoined, "that will be the very first thing I shall be asked by every body. They will want to catch and punish you."

"For that precise reason, you must swear not to tell."

"Oh! I can't do that. It is absurd to ask me."

"I shall whip you until you do."

"What! whip me? You dare not do it! My father and Jack Harkaway would kill you, if they knew it," said little Emily.

She spoke boldly, fearlessly, even defiantly.

Young as she was, she had seen strange sights, and been through many perils.

"If you are obstinate," Bigamini replied, "you will never see your friends again."

"What will you do?"

"Cut your throat, tie a stone round your neck, and throw you into the lake, as I would a dead dog."

Emily looked at him with ineffable scorn.

"Do you call yourself a man?" she asked.

"Most decidedly I do," said the wretch.

"I call you a detestable brute! You are worse than a Tartar, and not worthy the name of man."

"Will you swear?"

"No!"

Bigamini sprang to his feet, and Emily clung closer to Hysa.

The woman bent down and whispered in her ear.

"You had best do as he tells you," she murmured. "He will half kill you else: I know his temper."

"It is not right that I should do so," replied Emily.

"Save yourself."

Bigamini caught her by the arm, and wrenched her away from her protectress.

The cane was raised in the air.

In another moment it would have fallen upon her shoulders.

Hysa caught it in her hand.

"You shall not harm the child!" she cried.

With a curse, her husband gave her a blow on the side of the head.

Uttering a piercing shriek she sank on her knees, with bowed head, reeling from side to side.

Emily was terribly alarmed.

She had seen fighting between men, but she had never before beheld a man strike a woman.

To her young, delicate, and sensitive mind, it was inconceivably dreadful.

The next moment the cane fell on her back.

It seem to cut into her flesh like a knife.

"Oh, spare me!" she exclaimed. "I will swear. Spare me! Let me take the oath!"

He released her with a grim smile.

"I thought you would come to your senses," he said. "I have a peculiar way of persuading obstinate people, especially women and children."

Emily stopped her tears and choked back her sobs.

It was very hard for her to do so.

She had always been petted and spoiled. Never in her life had she even been so much as slapped by her mother, and it was seldom that she received a cross word.

"Repeat after me this," continued Bigamini: "I solemnly swear, before heaven, as I hope for happiness hereafter, that I will never reveal to anyone whatever, where I have been detained, and that my mouth shall be closed as to all that has taken, or will take place, since my abduction."

The girl repeated the formula in a clear voice.

"Is that binding on your conscience?" he asked.

"Nothing could be more so," she rejoined. "If I broke my oath, I should think my eternal salvation was in danger."

"Very good. Make your short stay here as comfortable as possible. I am not a hard man to deal with, far from it; but I will be obeyed in my own house."

He walked away, and, feeling tired with his night's dissipation, laid himself down again on the mats in the adjoining room.

"Oh! my head," gasped Hysa. "Givee water!"

Little Emily poured some from a pitcher into a cup, which Hysa drank eagerly.

She rose and staggered to a chair, with the child's help.

"Your husband is a brute to you," remarked Emily. "Why do you not leave him?"

"He watchee too muchee. Allee samee as sleepee with one eye open. Hi Li watchee too," answered Hysa.

"Who is he?"

"The servant-man who waitee on us and takee care of the boatee. He gone out now. We got two boatee; he havee one other at the steppees below."

"If your husband sleeps now, we might get away," suggested Emily, in whose breast a new hope dawned.

"Bigamini artful, we see presently. No hurree. He killee if catchee."

"Is that his name?" asked Emily, in deep suprise.

This was indeed a revelation to her.

She knew that her father and Harkaway thought Bigamini, after Hunston, the most despicable scoundrel in the world.

Lately she had heard a good deal about him.

"He born in Europe," said Hysa. "Long wayee off; across the big sea. English call himself, likee you, missee."

"He is an awful villain!" cried Emily. "However could you have married him?"

"Me not knowee; tellee he lovee. Woman's heart tender, foolish."

"He does not display any love or affection towards you. Do you mean that you are not aware that he is a murderer and a thief?"

"Livee here alonee; no friends. Not see what he do."

"Oh! do try to get away, and take me with you."

"Me tryee soon."

Hysa went on tip-toe to the door of the next room, and looked at her husband.

He appeared to be sleeping placidly on the mats.

But she understood perfectly well that there was no dependence to be placed upon him.

While pretending to be asleep, he might be wide-awake, listening to all that was being said.

Emily, child-like, thought it would be very easy to get away, and was eager to make the attempt.

She had every confidence in the long-suffering Hysa, who, she saw, was not a partner in her miserable husband's crime.

Like many poor women who are wedded to bad men, she was a victim.

It did not occur to Emily that she might be miles away from Mr. Mole's plantation.

All she wanted was to get on the land again.

By persevering inquiry, she felt sure that she would be directed to her home.

Hysa could help her, and in the Chinawoman she placed her trust.

After waiting ten minutes, Hysa returned to Emily.

She put her finger to her lips to enjoin caution.

"Hush!" she whispered; "he is a sleeper. We tryee to run awayee."

"Have you anything to fight with, if he wakes up?" asked Emily.

"Nothing but knifee. He gottee pistolee."

"Oh, my dear friend, I hope sincerely I am not exposing you to any danger?"

"No matter. If I die, I be at peace. No happee here," sighed the poor woman.

"I hope it will be all right," continued Emily.

"Come. We tryee quick. Hi Li might be back."

Taking Emily's hand, Hysa led her to the verandah facing the shore.

Here a flight of steps descended to the water level.

A boat was moored to one of the rungs of the wooden ladder.

It was a terribly anxious moment.

Little Emily felt her heart beat wildly, and she paused pale as a lily.

They went down the steps, Hysa leading the way, Emily following close behind.

The sun was now high in the heavens; a gentle breeze was blowing, in which the palms on shore waved gracefully.

Emily thought how much, under different circumstancs, she would enjoy a row with young Jack on this beautiful lake, and how nice it would be to fish in it.

Hysa got into the boat, which was but a frail little cockleshell, capable of holding three persons.

A breath of wind would almost capsize it, and a strong gust would swamp it effectually.

Emily was about to imitate her new friend's example, when they were both startled by a gruff voice above them.

"Stop!"

They looked up.

It was no other than Bigamini, standing on the verandah.

In his hand he held a revolver, which was pointed at the boat.

Their hearts sank within them.

Emily was rooted to the ladder, and Hysa did not dare to move.

"Where are you going?" Bigamini asked.

Hysa was in such a low nervous condition at being discovered by her unscrupulous husband, that she did not dare to speak.

Plucking up courage, Emily bravely replied—

"We are going for a row. Is there any harm in that?"

"It is against orders. Come back, or I shoot you both. Did you think I was asleep? Ha, ha! How grossly you were deceived!"

"What shall we do?" asked Emily.

"We must return," replied Hysa.

Reluctantly Emily retraced her steps, and Hysa, trembling in every limb, followed her.

Bigamini waited until they were both in front of him.

"What do you take me for?" he demanded. "I heard all you said. You have been deceiving me, and you shall suffer for it."

"Be merciful," sobbed Hysa.

"Bah! You know me. Mercy in my heart, and for you!"

"Spare my life!" she pleaded.

"Mercy!" he repeated. "You might as well expect sparks from a snowball!"

Hysa sank on her knees.

She feared that he would strike her as usual, and she had not recovered from the last blow he gave her.

"My resources are unlimited!" exclaimed Bigamini. "I neglect no precaution."

"If we had got out of range of your pistol, and you had no boat to pursue us in, what would you have done?" asked Emily.

"You would have perished in my death-trap."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I will explain to both of you," answered Bigamini, with one of his grim, ogre-like smiles.

The words sent a thrill of horror through the frames of his listeners.

Was he a dynamite fiend?

There was some hidden meaning in the sepulchral phrase.

Leaning over the verandah, he took up a hook which was secured to a post; attached to this was a cord, which dropped down into the lake.

He held this tightly in his hand.

"Look," he continued, "at the landing-stage. It is built of wood. When you reach it, you go up six steps, and—and walk over it, between two sets of rails, for a dozen yards, when you get on to the earth. Do you follow me?"

"Yes," replied Emily.

Hysa listened and looked, but she did not speak.

"Pay attention," he went on. "Underneath the stage is a large square pit, dug in the earth, ten feet deep. The stage is composed of two sets of boards, so constructed as to meet in the middle and be held up by a bolt of iron."

"What good is that?"

"Mark me well. Watch! I pull this cord, which is attached to the iron bolt. As I do so, it draws it back; the boards, which are on hinges, fall on each side, revealing a chasm. Then anyone standing on them would be precipitated into the pit."

"How horrible!"

He proceeded, without paying any attention to her interruption.

"By a peculiar piece of mechanism of my own invention, the two boards rise up again, meet together, join, and the bolt shoots back, holding them up as before."

"Any one standing upon them would fall and be imprisoned in the pit?" said Emily.

"Precisely—that is my meaning," answered Bigamini. "I fix the hook here again to the post, and it is ready for another occasion."

"What becomes of the people who stand on that landing platform, and have incurred your displeasure?"

"They die."

"Then that is your death-trap?"

"Exactly. I will give you an example. See, a mandarin duck has come off the lake; he is standing on the landing-stage. Observe him?"

Emily did so, as well as Hysa.

All eyes were riveted on the beautiful, gaudy-plumaged bird.

All unconscious of its doom, it was pruning its wings in the glad sunshine.

Bigamini pulled the cord with a sharp jerk. There was a grating sound, as of a bolt shooting back.

In a second the platform seemed to fall to pieces, and disappear into the ground.

The duck, before it could raise its wings to fly, fell downward into the chasm.

Immediately, as if by clockwork, the two flap boards rose, joined together, and the bolt coming back into its place, riveted them.

All was as before.

"Oh," exclaimed Emily, "that is ingenious, but very dreadful. The duck, poor thing! cannot get out."

"No more could a man or a woman," replied Bigamini.

"Is there water inside?"

"A little—perhaps a couple of feet. No more. The bottom of the pit is nearly on a level with the water of the lake at this time of the year. When we have the rains and the floods, it is nearly full of water."

"Enough to drown anyone?"

"Yes—then, but not now."

"The duck will die of starvation," added Emily.

"Undoubtedly. I had half a mind to let you two go in the boat and get on the landing-stage. You would not have been there a second, before I should have pulled the cord."

"We should have fallen into your death-trap."

"Certainly; and stayed there. So can I cast anyone down. If my enemies come to attack me in my house upon the lake, they never go back to tell the tale."

"Have you ever thrown anyone down?" asked Emily.

"There are a few mouldering skeletons at the bottom I believe," rejoined Bigamini, with a hollow laugh.

"If we had got as far as that, would you have pulled the cord?" asked Emily, with childish curiosity.

"Of course I should. You don't suppose for a moment I should have allowed you to escape?"

"What a bad man you must be."

"You're a saucy little miss, but I don't like you any the worse for it. Go inside. You too, Hysa! Quick! Move yourself, or I'll know the reason why!"

Hysa got up, shivering.

"Let your poor wife alone," said Emily. "You're a man, and you ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"What's that?"

"Why, you know, to feel a sense of degradation."

"Can't understand that. I'm master, and I mean to be. A woman lorded over me once, and I resolved no other should do it. Go in, Hysa. You will find some fish I caught. Cook them in oil, and look sharp, or I pity you."

Hysa obeyed him, only too glad to get away.

She was afraid to utter a word.

The wretch had conquered her, and she did not dare to call her soul her own.

Emily went after her kind protectress, who was so willing, but unable to save her.

The attempt at escape had been a complete failure.

When Bigamini was alone, he sat down in a bamboo chair and lighted a cigar.

"Hi Li is a long time," he muttered. "Perhaps he is being dodged by Harkaway, or some of his party. I must keep a sharp lookout."

A dark frown crossed his face.

If Harkaway found out where he was, his life would not be worth five minutes' purchase.

In half-an-hour's time Emily made her appearance on the verandah.

"Mr. Bigamini," she said, "your lunch is ready. The fish look very nice, and your dear wife has taken great pains with them, which, I must confess, is more than you deserve."

"You are considered rather cheeky, aren't you?" he replied.

"Oh, dear no! Everyone regards me as a model of propriety."

"You're a nice little thing, anyhow, and I shouldn't like to hurt you. I hope your friends will pay up."

"They will be sure to raise the money between them," said Emily; "and when you get it, you ought to turn honest and treat your wife better."

"I'm tired of her."

"Why? She's very amiable."

"She's a worm!" said Bigamini, contemptuously.

"Worms will turn, you know," Emily exclaimed. "That's a proverb. Take care she doesn't."

"If she had your pluck, I should like her better."

"Treat her kindly, and if ever you fall into my father's hands, or Jack Harkaway's I will ask them to let you off easily."

"Will you?" cried Bigamini. "That's a bargain. Don't you forget it, my little lassie. I'll let her off and give her a show. We will lunch together, and have a nice bottle of claret."

He got up and walked into the room, which served as kitchen and dining-room.

"Give her a kiss," said Emily. "Mind, you've got to do what I tell you, or I won't take your part when you need it, and you never know when you will."

"That's a true remark," replied Bigamini. "It's a topsy-turvy world, and well I know it."

"Kiss her," continued Emily, in an imperative manner; "she's your wife. I've heard father say that if a man ever does a wrong to a woman, it is sure to come home to him sooner or later."

"You've got an extraordinary influence over me, you young puss," Bigamini observed.

"I am inclined to think you want civilizing," she answered.

Bigamini drew his wife towards him, and imprinted a kiss upon her lips, which astonished her beyond measure, as she had expected to be badly treated for trying to escape with his prisoner.

A magic influence had Emily over everybody she came in contact with.

She was like a little fairy, and no one could help loving her, or resist the ineffable charm of her manner.

They lunched together, and afterwards passed a pleasant afternoon, Bigamini teaching Emily to catch the lake fish, baiting her hook for her, and paying her every attention.

They had tea, and Emily sang some old English songs that her mother had taught her.

As the sun was declining, Bigamini sent them both indoors, and sat in his chair on the verandah facing the landing-stage.

Emily had pleased and amused him, but she had not tamed him, or removed his vicious instincts.

"No sleep for me," he exclaimed; "there is something wrong. Hi Li would never be so long, if something was not up. I will watch, if I sit up all night. Yes, I must keep a lonely vigil, for Hi Li is a faithful servant, and would not deceive me."

He lighted a cigar, and looked over the surface of the lake.

It was smooth as glass.

Not a breath of air stirred the circumambient atmosphere.

A star appeared in the sky.

It was followed by others at intervals.

Night had fallen, but Hi Li did not make his appearance.

Bigamini began to be sorely troubled in his mind.

He kept his eyes fixed on the landing-stage, and every now and then touched the hook which held the cord attached to the bolt, that controlled what he called his death-trap.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE DEATH-TRAP.

NIGHT had fallen before Hi Li and his friend, Lo Mung, arose from their sleep.

Young Jack and Monday were becoming impatient.

It looked as if the heathen Chinese were going to sleep all night.

Had they done so, however, they would have watched and waited.

The information they had already gained from the two yellow-skinned, almond-eyed barbarians was too important for them to give up the chase.

Jack felt sure that he was on the track of his little sweetheart, to rescue whom he would have laid down his life.

Monday was the first to perceive the Chinamen moving.

"See, Mast' Jack," he whispered, "the beggars are on the move."

"So they are—at last, thank goodness. I was getting jolly tired of this," replied Jack, in a low tone.

"Now the fun begins. We track um for sure."

"Don't attempt to injure them, unless they attack us," said Jack, warningly.

"No," answered Monday. "Find out lilly girl first; kill thief after; that um dodge."

"Exactly. We must consider ourselves spies—cautious, crafty, cunning spies."

"That um so. Hush! they're getting up."

Jack and Monday became silent.

First, Lo Mung rose. He was followed by Hi Li. Both yawned and stretched themselves."

"Sleepee long, sleepee late," observed Lo Mung.

"Bad job. Me gettee stick," Hi Li remarked, with a mournful look.

"What for stick hittee you?"

"My boss get in rage at me not being at the house. He have to watchee the girl and the wife, too."

"It was the foreign devil's wine makee sleepee. Not like tea," said Lo Mung.

"Too heavee for eyelidders. Makee head an acher," replied Hi Li, pressing his brow.

"You givee letter to me allee rightee," continued Lo Mung. "Sayee we walkee miles, because someone was a follower."

"Vellee good. Me do that, and Biga-ing-ming-ming say nothing."

The idea suggested by his companion seemed to cheer Hi Li considerably.

He had been beaten on several occasions by his violent-tempered master, and did not want a repetition of the process.

Bigamini knew the anatomy of a human being, and was able to pick out the soft places in a man's body, as well as any cow-hiding slave-driver, when larruping a nigger, as it was termed in the Southern States.

They walked on in blissful ignorance that they were being tracked.

Had they been aware that Monday and young Jack were at their heels that starry night, they would not have been so much at their ease.

They chatted pleasantly about the good time they were going to have together in Hong-Kong.

The nice toothsome dishes that they would eat, such as rat and dog, prepared *à la Chinoise*, made their mouths water.

And the opium they would smoke, and the whiskee, brandee, gin, of the foreign devils, as they called it, caused them to think of Paradise.

Their pursuers lagged behind, but kept them well in view.

All their anxiety was to find out their lair.

There was little doubt in Jack's mind that Bigamini was the abductor of Emily.

The Celestials, when talking, had alluded to him by name.

If he could discover the hiding-place of the loathsome

wretch who had caused them so much trouble, all would be well.

A rescue would be speedily effected, and the bold abductor properly punished.

After walking a few miles the two Chinamen came to the margin of the lake.

They found the boat where Hi Li had left it in the morning, when he had started for Mole's plantation with Bigamini's letter about the girl's ransom.

There was no moon, but the twinkling stars were reflected in the bosom of the lake.

It was easy for anyone in the house to see anybody on the landing-stage, or near the edge of the sheet of water.

If it were unusually dark, the inventive genius of Bigamini had provided a safeguard.

He had a large lamp, with a powerful reflector, which threw a glare on the shore to whatever part it was directed.

This he called his patent double-action search light.

He kept a cap over the disc of the lamp when he did not want to use it.

This could be taken off instantly, and the light applied in case of an alarm.

In addition to this he had his rifle gallery, in which six loaded rifles always rested on supports, and faced the land.

To storm Bigamini's castle was not such an easy thing as it looked.

Being built out on the lake was a great point in its favour.

During the evening he had been sitting in the verandah, watching the shore, as he smoked cigars and drank claret.

He was puzzled at his servant Hi Li's prolonged absence.

There was a chance of his being captured and taken before a native judge, who had power to put him to the torture.

Under pressure of pain he would probably confess all.

If that happened, it would not be long before a raid was made upon Bigamini's dwelling.

Ill at ease, he kept his restless eyes fixed upon the shore.

He had the search light by his side, but there was no occasion to use it that night.

Objects were perfectly visible on land.

He saw Hi Li and Lo Mung when they reached the platform.

The latter sought the rope by which the boat was moored, and began to untie it.

All Chinamen are very much alike, with their loose dress and their inevitable pigtails.

Bigamini thought it was his man Hi Li, but who had he with him?

It did not occur to him that Lo Mung had accompanied him from Mr. Mole's, because he did not know that he had left that gentleman's service.

Though he could see the forms of the two men, he was unable to discern their faces.

The starlight was not strong enough to enable him to do this.

An uneasy feeling stole over his mind.

He was determined to satisfy himself as to the identity of these nocturnal visitors.

If they were foes, his place was in the rifle gallery, where he could kill them and sink them before they had gone many yards in a boat.

Removing the cap, he turned the double-action search light full upon them.

A brief examination showed him who the strangers were.

The light was shut off quickly; the Chinese got into the boat and rowed to the house.

Hysa had gone to sleep, with Emily by her side.

The boat ran alongside the piles on which the house was built, and Bigamini was about to question the Chinamen as they came up the steps, when his quick eye detected the presence of some other people on the shore.

They were young Jack and Monday, who had watched the boat depart, and walked on to the platform to get a better look of the house.

"Spied upon and tracked," he muttered. "They are followed and the empty-headed fools did not know it."

For a moment he turned the search light on again.

Then all was darkness.

"By heaven," he cried, "it is young Harkaway and that cursed black, Monday. A lucky discovery."

With a nervous eagerness he pulled the cord.

The death-trap opened suddenly.

Taken unawares, young Jack and the faithful Monday were precipitated into the chasm.

They uttered wild cries of alarm and despair.

The next moment the hidden mechanism caused the boards to resume their former position.

Young Jack and his companion were caught in the death-trap, and buried alive.

Their fate was as certain as it was secret.

Even Lo Mung and Hi Li were ignorant of what had happened.

Bigamini did not think it advisable or necessary to enlighten them.

They came in, made their explanations and excuses, and there was an end of the matter.

Giving the Chinamen some supper, Bigamini told them to keep watch and watch until day dawned, when they were to awake him.

He then threw himself on the mats in the ante-room, and almost immediately fell into a sound slumber.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE RANSOM—RESTORATION OF EMILY—DIVIDING THE SPOIL—POISON IN THE GLASS.

THE dawn of day was ushered in at a very early hour. Hi Li, who was on the watch, roused his master.

"Sayee, boss! Timee wakee!" he exclaimed, shaking him by the shoulder.

Bigamini sprang to his feet.

He glared savagely at the Chinaman and grasped his pistol.

"Fight me! Will you?" he screamed.

"It am your servanter, allee rightee," replied Hi Li.

"Oh, yes! I forgot. Get the boat and row me to the shore."

He had been having bad dreams, the last of which was the worst.

It was his idea that he was in the condemned cell awaiting death.

The hand of the executioner was upon him, to pinion his arms ere he was dragged to the scaffold.

Drinking some cold tea, he got into the boat.

The shore was speedily reached.

"You need not wait for me," he said. "I will whistle for you when I return."

"How longee that be?" asked Hi Li.

"Two hours. Not more."

Hi Li shot the boat into the lake and went back into the house.

When he got up the step-ladder and stood on the landing-stage, Bigamini listened.

He heard the sound of voices emanating from below.

Kneeling down, he put his ears against the boards and listened.

Monday was speaking.

"This am um mighty bad fix, Mast' Jack," he exclaimed.

"It is so," replied young Jack.

"How de debble we going to get out ob it I dunno."

"Nor I either. It is a clever device. That fellow Bigamini is as cunning as his master."

"Who's that, sare?"

"Satan, the Prince of Darkness; Beelzebub, the author of all evil."

"You're right, sare; he's got us. I'm up to my knees in water, and the little water snakes is playing with me. I can't reach anywhere near the top; the walls of the pit is smooth. Wouldn't care if I could lie down and take um rest."

"I'm afraid we sha'n't rest till we die."

"Nebber say die."

"That's right—we won't. Never despair. Nil desperandum. I wonder how the trick was worked?"

"It am like the harlequin in a London pantomime, sare," replied Monday.

"So it is. The boards gave way, down we went; boards went up, as if by magic again, and here we are."

"That is the situation," said Monday. "Cuss it! What we do?"

Young Jack made no answer.

Silence reigned in the damp, pestilential vault.

Rising, Bigamini continued his journey, perfectly satisfied that his enemies were effectually trapped.

"What price young Harkaway now?" he said to himself.

"He was always too cock-a-hoop! "He's got his comb cut. Serve him right. Hunston will be glad to hear of this, and ought to pay me well."

Chuckling at his success, he pursued his walk, highly delighted

It was his intention to visit Mr. Mole's plantation at this

early hour, to see if the money had been deposited in the place indicated in his letter.

If he got the cash demanded, he intended to return Emily to her friends, according to promise.

She could possibly be of no use to him in any way, and strange to say, the rascal had taken a liking to her.

It was rarely that he loved anyone, or anything, except, his own base, selfish body.

But little Emily, by her looks, her manner, her boldness, had conquered Bigamini.

Ruthless as he was, he felt that it would go against the grain with him to kill her.

It is said that the greatest villains are not all bad—they have a soft spot in their hearts somewhere.

The night was cool, and Bigamini walked quickly.

In a short time he came to Mr. Mole's tea-garden, and advanced with caution to the old well.

His right hand held a pistol.

If anyone confronted him, he intended to shoot.

But there was no sign of a person of any kind, English or Chinese, being about.

The tea shrubs were so small, that they afforded no shelter, and trees were conspicuous by their absence.

When he reached the well, he was delighted to see a large canvas bag on the wall. Eagerly he clutched it.

It was very heavy.

"Gold! gold!" he muttered. "All for me, or I'll know the reason why. Gold—beautiful gold!"

He retreated, going backwards, with his face to the wall, until he had got to a safe distance.

Then he hastened homeward.

Arriving at the lake, he whistled.

Hi Li was waiting for his master, and at once put off in the boat.

In a few minutes he touched the landing-stage, Bigamini got into the small craft, and was conveyed to the Lake House.

He went into his private room and put the bag on a table.

It did not take him long to untie the string and turn out the contents.

The gold, for such it was, consisted entirely of sovereigns minted in London for the Bank of England.

He counted them into little piles of twenty-five each.

His eyes feasted on them until he positively gloated over the spoil.

"No time to be lost. The girl shall go home at once, as the ransom is paid," he said.

Proceeding to Hysa's room, he awoke her.

"Whatee wantee? No hurtee!" she cried.

Often had the brute struck her in her sleep.

She was always afraid of him, day and night, when in his drunken moods.

"Wake the child! Dress her quick! She is to go with me," he said.

You meanee no harmee?"

"Fool! The money has been paid."

He returned to his room, ate some biscuits made of rice, and drank some wine.

In a short time Hysa led Emily forward.

"She is readee," exclaimed Hysa. "Good-bye."

Emily held up her face for a kiss.

This she received, with every demonstration of affection from the kind-hearted Chinawoman.

"You have been very good to me. I like you," said Emily.

"And I! What do you think of me?" inquired Bigamini.

"Don't ask," replied Emily, candidly.

"I am going to take you back to your friends. They have paid for you."

"How much?"

"That is none of your business, miss, but I do not mind telling you. The sum is a thousand pounds."

"What a lot of money!" laughed Emily. "I did not think I was worth it."

"Your father evidently thinks so."

"Yes, and dear good old Jack Harkaway, too, and Mr. Mole, and young Jack, and all the rest of the party."

"You have a capital opinion of yourself."

"And of them, too, heaven bless them! Come along, Mr. Biga-ing-ming-ming, as you call yourself."

"It seems you are in a hurry."

"Certainly I am, to get away from this place. Treat your wife better, or you will never prosper."

Bigamini bit his lip.

"Remember your oath!" he exclaimed.

"I am not likely to forget it," Emily answered.

Putting his whistle to his lips, he blew it.

In a moment Hi Li was by his side.

"What is it, master?" he asked.

"You know where you took the letter to-day," continued Bigamini.

"To Mister Mole's plantation."

"Conduct this young lady safely to within a short distance of it. Let her see the house, and then run all the way back here."

"Me be a runner."

"Off you go. Mind you are not followed. Be speedy, and I will reward you well."

Yes, excellency. It shall be donee according to your wishes," answered Hi Li.

He bowed ceremoniously.

"Farewell, little one," added Bigamini. "Will you not shake hands with me before you go?"

Emily shook her head.

"I fear there is blood upon your hand," she said.

Bigamini started.

"What makes you think so?" he asked.

"I dreamed that you were killing somebody,"

"It is foolish fancy."

"Good-bye."

She gave her hand willingly to Hi Li, and tripped away with him, her face wreathed with smiles.

She was going home to these who loved her.

But she would not touch Bigamini.

He returned angrily to his room, to gloat over his gold.

"Even the children shrink from me," he murmured. "Why?"

He might have spared himself the trouble of asking the question.

It was instinct.

The good and pure avoid the bad and wicked.

It was with the utmost anxiety that Bigamini watched the departure, and awaited the return of Hi Li.

Two hours elapsed.

He sat brooding over some brandy and water, smoking for two hours.

Then he heard the sound of oars in the water, and knew that his servant had come back.

"Well," he ejaculated, as Hi Li, after mooring the boat, ascended the steps leading to the verandah.

"It is all wellee," replied Hi Li. "Little missee see housee and door open, she runnee in."

"Did anyone observe you?"

"No, most honourable."

"That will do. Get into your straw and sleep. I shall sit up, for I expect my friends from the city early."

Hi Li retired, with his accustomed low obeisance, to the room in which he slept.

His bed consisted simply of a quantity of rice straw, and he had shared the shakedown with Lo Mung.

Bigamini was anticipating a visit from Blowhard and Schneider.

They would be anxious to know if he had got the money, and want their share.

A division of the spoils would take place.

He was tired of his partners, and a murderous idea had come into his brain.

Going to a cupboard, he took out of it a bottle labelled "Laudanum."

There was a flagon of wine on the table, from which he had been drinking.

It was about two-thirds full.

Into this he poured enough of the deadly, poisonous laudanum to kill half-a-dozen men.

A glass of that poisoned wine would send anyone who drank it into a sleep from which he would never awaken.

He would soon visit the night's Plutonian shore, where lost departed spirits await their doom.

It was about seven o'clock in the morning, when Bigamini was roused by the sound of a whistle.

Looking across the lake, he saw Schneider and Blowhard approaching the landing-stage.

Instantly getting into the boat, he rowed to the shore, greeted them warmly, his face wreathed with Judas-like smiles, and conveyed them to the house.

Hysa was ready with tea and rice cakes, of which tney partook.

They were then conducted to their host's private room, where the gold received from Harkaway and Harvey for the restoration of little Emily was piled on the table.

"There you are, gentlemen," exclaimed Bigamini. "My plan has worked well, and succeeded admirably."

"How did you get the money?" asked Blowhard.

"I wrote for it, and it was deposited in a certain place."

"And the girl——"

"Has been sent back. I had no further use for her."

"It does my eyes goot," said the Dutchman, "to see so much golt."

"Let's divvy up," cried Blowhard, "and have a rest and a smoke. We were up early, and have walked all the way from the city."

"With all my heart," Bigamini replied.

The gold was divided into three portions.

That is to say, each one received three hundred and thirty-three pounds, there being one odd sovereign left over, which Bigamini appropriated.

Schneider and Blowhard then disposed themselves on mats, and began to smoke.

This soon inclined them to drink.

They asked for wine.

Bigamini at once went to the cupboard, took from it the poisoned bottle, and placed it before them with some large glasses.

"Help yourselves," he said, and went on smoking. They did so.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE OATH—A THOUGHT READER.

WHEN Harkaway and Harvey had raised the money in Hong-Kong for the ransom of little Emily, they placed it on the edge of the old well and returned to the house.

After dinner the time hung heavily on their hands, and the evening passed slowly, as no one was much in the mood for talking.

Harvey and Hilda were alarmed and nervous on account of their daughter, while Harkaway and Emily began to grow anxious, because young Jack and Monday had not come back.

At length they went to bed.

Harvey could not sleep.

When he had tossed about restlessly until day dawn, he got up, and went down-stairs.

To his great delight, he had scarcely opened the back door, before he saw his child running towards him.

She had just been left by the Chinaman to whom Bigamini had entrusted her.

"Here she is! Emily's come back!" he shouted, loud enough to rouse everyone in the house.

He caught her in his arms and kissed her tenderly.

In less than a minute Hilda had descended, and taking her from him, embraced her lovingly.

They went into the drawing-room, followed by Harkaway and Professor Mole.

"So far, so good," exclaimed Mole, "the girl's come back, but where is the boy?"

"That is the question that perplexes me," replied Harkaway.

"What did he say when he departed with that sable specimen of humanity, Monday?"

"Simply that they had discovered tracks and were going to follow them up, with a view to recovering Emily. I tried to dissuade them, but they would have their own way."

"Obstinate as mules. I know them."

"We must put them on one side for a time," continued Harkaway, "and hear what Emily has to tell us."

"Yes," answered Harvey, "I am extremely anxious to know who carried her off."

"Exactly. The Hong-Kong police will have something to say in that matter."

"Yes; and we may, perhaps, get our money back," said Harvey.

He took Emily up, and put her on his knee.

She looked up laughingly into his face, seeming delighted to be at home once more.

So, in truth, she was.

During the whole time she had been with Bigamini and Hysa, she was in dread.

"Who took you away, and where have you been?" asked Harvey.

Little Emily shook her head.

Full well she recollected the solemn oath that the crafty Bigamini had made her swear.

"I am very sorry," she replied, "but I can not tell you any-thing."

They all regarded her with astonishment.

Had she taken leave of her senses?

"What do you mean?" demanded Harvey.

"Just what I say, papa dear. My lips are sealed. I am pledged to secrecy."

"By whom?"

"I must not tell," she persisted.

"Was it—" began Hilda.

"No, no! That won't do, mamma. You may fish but you won't catch anything. I have taken an awfully solemn and binding oath not to reveal name or place. Surely you would not wish me to be so wicked as to break it."

"You were forced to take it, I suppose?" asked Harvey.

"I was to be beaten if I did not: one stroke on the shoulders with a bamboo I did get. It was enough for me," replied Emily, with a shudder.

"Poor child! This treatment amounts to coercion. What do you think, Jack?" asked Harvey.

"Decidedly," answered Harkaway.

"Then the oath is not binding on her, because she did not swear willingly."

"That is my opinion."

"And mine also," put in Mole. "As a man of letters, my voice should have some weight."

"You hear, Emmy," exclaimed Harvey. "We all agree that you may conscientionsly break your oath."

"Nothing will persuade me to do so," replied the little maiden, pursing up her lips.

"Is it anyone we know, or have cause to be afraid of—Hunston, for instance?"

Emily looked archly at her father.

Her face assumed a comical expression, which made everybody laugh.

"Do you think it is going to rain to-day, papa?" she queried.

"Don't be rude, Emily," said Hilda, reprovingly.

"I did not intend to be," replied the child.

"Tell me who has kept you away from us, and taken the thousand pounds?"

"Mamma, do I look best in pink, or white or blue?"

"Naughty girl! I shall put you to bed," exclaimed Hilda, growing angry.

Emily yawned.

"That is exactly where I want to go. Every thing is all

right. Let us get on board our ship as soon as possible, and go to Greece after the treasure."

"We cannot, my dear," replied Harkaway.

"How so?"

"Another misfortune has happened, of which you know nothing."

"There seems to be no end to our calamities and annoyances. What is it now?"

"My son Jack and our faithful Monday are missing."

"Since when?" asked Emily.

"Yesterday afternoon. They would start after you, having found some tracks, which made them believe they had obtained a clue to your whereabouts."

"I saw nothing of either of them."

"Do you think they have been made prisoners?" inquired Harkaway.

"Not by the people I was with, or I should have heard and seen something of them," Emily rejoined.

Although Emily knew of the death-trap, which Bigamini had described to her when, with Hysa, she had attempted to escape in the canoe, she was ignorant of its having been used lately.

"Come, come," cried Harvey, impatiently; "who are these people you have been with? Where do they live? How are we to get at them?"

"I cannot tell you. For my soul's sake, I dare not."

"That is fanatical nonsense. I am very much annoyed. Take the child away," Harvey added.

"Do not be cross with me," pleaded Emily. "I am not to blame, father."

"You are defiant. I feel sure that young Jack and Monday have fallen into the hands of the people who have detained you, and you will not guide us to the scoundrel's haunt."

"My oath prevents me."

Emily spoke decidedly.

She had been well brought up if not strictly, and was of a pious disposition.

Seeing that her religion would not allow her to make any revelation respecting her captor, Hilda led her from the room.

Emily accompanied mother and child upstairs, but though they plied her with questions, they could extract nothing from her.

The three men were left together.

"The child has been artfully made to swear to divulge nothing," remarked Mr. Mole, "and I can see you will get nothing out of her."

"It is very annoying," replied Harvey. "She cannot have been very far off—certainly not so far as Hong-Kong. It is not more than six hours since we put the bag of gold on the edge of the old well, and Emmy has been back nearly an hour."

"I should particularly like to know in which direction to look for the hiding-place of the villains," said Harkaway.

"As for me, I am just dying to get at it. I would attack them singlehanded if you two failed to support me," cried Mole.

He had not neglected to take an early morning dram, and felt valiant.

"Suppose you go one way and I the other, sir, to scour the country."

"A very good idea, but I think I would rather go with you."

"For protection?"

"Oh, dear no! I would protect you. The fact is, I'm genial. I like company, and I like to have some one to talk to."

A servant now announced that breakfast was ready.

They all adjourned to the dining-room, where, a gong being sounded, they were joined by the ladies.

Hilda announced that little Emily was sleeping soundly.

"Poor dear," she said, "I fear she is quite exhausted. She has had her trials."

"It is a pity she will not speak," said Harvey.

"I honour and respect her for her truthfulness."

"If she would reveal what she knows, we could bag our enemy and recover our money."

"Nothing will induce her to open her lips."

"Well, all I can say is that it is a mistaken idea. An oath forced from anyone is not binding."

"She is too young to understand legal quibbles," remarked Hilda. "All she depends on is her conscience. She has sworn to keep a promise."

"Say no more about it," replied Harvey.

"That man, Lo Mung, has discharged himself," said Emily —"at least, the other servants say he is nowhere to be found."

"The Chinese are very independent," answered Harkaway. "You must not speak to them."

At this moment a female servant entered the room, and gave a card to Mr. Mole. He read it attentively.

It was written in English, and in a tolerable round hand.

"Curious," exclaimed Mole. "The famous thought-reader of Pekin, now in Hong-Kong, named Tien Sin, has favored me with a visit."

"Has thought-reading penetrated into this benighted country?" asked Harkaway.

"My dear boy, they always were ahead of us in all the sciences! They invented the art of printing; they discovered the way to make gunpowder long befoe Roger Bacon did; in short, they were up to concert-pitch, and had a search light thousands of years before we did."

"Are you going to have your thoughts read, sir?"

"I think I will. I'll try the fellow."

"Perhaps he is an impostor, and you will pay your money for nothing."

"I'll chance that. Read his card, and tell me what your opinion of it is," replied Mole.

Harkaway took the card, the contents of which ran as follows—

"Tien Sin, the great Thought-Reader Extraordinary of Pekin, now residing for a brief space in the Treaty Port of Hong-Kong, sends his greeting to the distinguished and most honourable English mandarin, Mole.

"Tien Sin is thought-reader by appointment to the Emperor of China, King of the Sun, Moon, and Stars, Master of the White Elephant, and Ornament of the Universe.

"Also to all the high mandarins, merchants, and the public generally.

"Thoughts of persons read, minds laid bare, and and secrets found out.

"Hidden things discovered by the heaven-born gift of the well-known and fully appreciated Tien Sin.

"Tien Sin, Searcher of Hearts, Reader of Thoughts.

"Fee, a hundered taels."

"There may be something in it," observed Harvey. "Let him have a go at you, sir."

"He shall," answered Mole.

"It can't hurt you. If the man, Tien Sin, tells the truth about you, we will put him in contact with my little Emily."

"What for?"

"To find out where she has been. If he can read thoughts, it will not be a difficult or impossible task."

"Well thought of," replied Mole. "Harvey, you are a genius."

"I never thought so, sir," answered Harvey, modestly.

"Didn't I train you? Have I not made Harkaway what he is? I was your schoolmaster."

"I hope we are a credit to you."

"Sometimes, not always. Yet I am proud of you."

"Why should there not be a thought-reader in China?" asked Harkaway. "I am inclined to believe in him."

"And I too," said Harvey.

"That settles it. Carpet him. Bring him in, Mongolia, or whatever your Celestial name is!" cried Mole. "Let us see Tien Sin."

The servant departed.

They had all finished breakfast; the fragrant tea had been drunk; the boiled chickens, poached eggs, and fried fish, had vanished.

Presently a tall, thin man, with a cadaverous countenance, but having a somewhat spiritual air about him, entered.

He made a profound obeisance to the company.

"Which is the celebrated Mandarin Mole of whom I have heard so much in Hong-Kong?" he asked.

"I am that humble individual," the professor replied.

He rose from his chair and grasped the thought-reader from Pekin by the hand.

"I likee Englishman," said Tien Sin. "I was brought uppee in a merchant's office in Canton. All English vellee good."

"Tea trade?" enquired Mole.

"No, silk, very large business. Ten years ago I began to read thoughts. Go to Pekin make high big namee. What you want to know?"

"Tell me where I put my cigar-case last night, for I'm blowed if I can remember," replied Mole.

"You sittee in this room?"

"Yes. It was here that I was sitting."

"Givee your hand, so," said Tien Sin.

He took the professor by the hand and began to lead him round the room.

At length he stopped near an easy bamboo-chair.

"There," he exclaimed, pointing underneath it.

Mr. Mole stooped down, looked, and saw his missing cigar-case.

He must have dropped it there in the evening when he was smoking, before going to bed.

"Wonderful!" he cried. "This is really extraordinary."

"Oh! that is nothing," replied Tien Sin.

"Now inform, if you can, what I am thinking about," said the professor.

"You thinkee of drinkee," was the calm answer.

Every body in the room burst out laughing at this.

"What kind of drink?" continued Mole.

"Rummee and water; vellee little water."

"Marvellous," said Mole. "That was one thing I had in my mind. Since I was in the United States, I like a rum-cocktail after breakfast."

"How was he to know that, sir?" asked Harvey.

"No, no. I don't say he did. Now, Mr. Tien Sin, what else am I thinking of?"

The thought-reader tapped his forehead.

He still retained his hold of the professor's hand.

It appeared to be necessary to keep the touch with the person he was *en rapport* with.

Unless he did so, he could not read his thoughts.

"Your mind is set on going a voyage," said Tien Sin, after a lengthened pause.

"By heaven! you are right," cried Mole.

"You seekee a big treasure."

"Yes, yes."

"It is hidden on an island."

"If you can tell that, you can divine any thing."

"Me knowee all. Me readee."

Harvey came forward.

"That is quite enough for me," he exclaimed. "Tien Sin is evidently a remarkable person."

"A man in a hundred thousand—in a million," said Harkaway.

"Let us take him up stairs to little Emily," continued Harvey. "We can possibly extract her secrets from her."

"Come," said Harkaway. "Lose no time. While she sleeps will be a good opportunity."

"You wantee more?" asked Tien Sin.

"Yes. You shall be paid for your services," replied Harvey.

They all accompanied him to the bedroom where Emily was lying asleep.

Her fair hair was hanging over the pillow, and one hand was stretched on the quilt.

She looked the picture of innocence in sweet repose.

"What shall I ask the child?" Tien Sin enquired.

"Where she has been lately. Whom she has seen within the last forty-eight hours," replied Harvey.

"The mind is dead in sleepee."

"Must I wake her up?"

"Me no read thoughts unless people are wide awakee. No think in sleepee. Only dreamee."

Harvey touched Emily on the arm.

She awoke with a start.

"Father!" she ejaculated.

"Yes, my love. It is I," replied Harvey.

"Do you want to speak to me? Oh! I am so tired."

"We thought you were not well, so we have brought the doctor."

"Let me go to sleep," said Emily, drowsily.

"Give me your hand. Feelee pulsee," exclaimed Tien Sin.

She stretched out her hand drowsily.

For fully five minutes Tien Sin held it and looked her steadily in the face.

He was reading her thoughts.

"You have been on the water, my child," he said.

"How do you know that?" asked Emily.

"There was a house built on piles in a lake. It comes back to you. I feel you shiver. The memory makes you afraid."

"What are you talking about?"

"Come! What is the man's name—the man with whom you were? Speak!"

Tien Sin waved his hands over her face.

She appeared to fall into a mesmeric trance.

In modern phrase she was hypnotised.

Her face became contracted, and she was evidently struggling against the power he had established over her.

But she was powerless to resist his influence.

He had turned her thoughts into the channel he required.

For ten minutes he continued to hold her hand and watch her countenance narrowly.

Suddenly he exclaimed—

"Know you one callee Biga-ing-ming-ming?"

"He means Bigamini, "said Harkaway.

"I have suspected him all along; although, not being certain, I did not like to say so," remarked Mole.

"Your sagacity is wonderful, sir."

"I flatter myself that I am no fool, and can see as far through a brick wall as any body. Bigamini is the man who is playing us tricks."

"We all know that now. Tell us something we don't know."

"You may deride me; but was I not right when I said down stairs that it was Bigamini?"

"The thought-reader has said it, not you."

"Oh! Harkaway, what a wretched treacherous memory you have got. Everyone heard me. I appeal to Harvey," said the professor, with an aggrieved air.

"This is the first I have heard of it," replied Harvey.

"Heaven help us! How the world is given to lying," continued Mole, holding up his hands.

"Let the man go on. Don't interrupt, please. We are in the middle of a séance!" cried Harkaway.

Tien Sin began to speak again.

"The house is built on piles in the lake, about three miles from here, in an easterly direction," he exclaimed.

"What is its name?"

"Lake Lonely."

"I have seen it, and noted the strange-looking house on the wooden piles, a quarter of a mile off a shore, but I never had the least idea who lived there," said Harvey.

"I have not been in that direction."

"It is news to me," observed Harkaway.

"Fancy Bigamini having a house so near us!"

"By Jove! I did not know that we were living so close to a hornet's nest."

It fully accounts for his attacks on us."

"Attacks," said Harkaway, "which shall be returned with the interest they deserve. Now, Tien Sin, try and find out if she has seen or heard any thing of a white young man and a black man, who went out together in that direction."

"Her mind is a blank on that subject She no tellee what not knowee," replied the thought-reader.

"Who else lives in this Lake House?"

"A woman, wife of Biga-ing-ming-ming, and two men, who are the servants."

"That is enough."

The party, with the exception of Hilda, who remained with her child, descended to the lower apartment.

They had no reason whatever to doubt the genuineness of the information Tien Sin had extracted from Emily.

It had the ring of truth and probability about it.

He was handsomely rewarded for his skill and trouble, receiving more than he had asked.

"Can I offer you a cup of tea," inquired Mole, "and a little bird's-nest soup?"

Tien Sin did not refuse this offer, and sat down at the table.

"What am I thinking of now?" asked Mole, jocularly.

"How clever I am to be a reader of thought," was the quick reply.

"So I was. Mentally I was admiring his talent, or, I should rather call it, his guilt. What else is in my mind?"

"You not likee to hearee," said Tien Sin.

"I'll bet he can't tell. This is a puzzler."

"Vellee wellee. Me speak. You go and hide in garden with rum bottle and smoke, because afraid to go fightee Bigamini. That what you think do presently."

"Me afraid to fight?"

"Yes. You be a hider. No fightee."

"You impudent old impostor!" shouted Mole indignantly. "You contemptible humbug! You rank fraud!"

"Askee for truthers," said Tien Sin. "Me tellee no lie."

"Get out of my house!"

Tien Sin coolly finished his bird's-nest soup.

This delicacy is made from edible, gelatinous seaweed, picked up by gulls and dried in holes in the rocks, where they build their nests.

"My thanks to the Honourable Mandarin Mole and all other magnificents present," he exclaimed.

Bowing so low that he nearly kootoo'd he left the room, rattling in his pocket the taels he had received.

His visit had been of great value to Harkaway and Harvey.

They talked the matter over, and decided to arm themselves and go at once to the lake.

It was their intention to capture Bigamini, and, taking back the thousand pounds they had paid for Emily's return,

convey the rascal to Hong-Kong, and hand him over to the police.

They were in great doubt as to the fate of young Jack and Monday

It was possible that they were captured.

Equally possible was it that they had been killed.

Harkaway was ill at ease when he thought of his son and his faithful friend Monday.

He resolved to proceed with the utmost caution.

It was a case in which it behoved him to look well before he leaped.

They took their pistols as well as rifles, and were about to start, when Mole returned from the window, where he had been standing, and looked angrily at them.

He had been, like Achilles, sulking in his tent, at what the thought-reader, Tien Sin, had said.

Also was he annoyed because Harkaway and Harvey had not consulted him as to their plan of action.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

MR. MOLE'S VALOUR, AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

"I DON'T take it very kindly of you two young men," he exclaimed, "to arrange to go after Bigamini, and not invite me to accompany you."

"Is your life insured?" asked Jack.

"Why do you inquire?"

"You might lose it, if you are too venturesome."

"Nonsense! If you want to know, I can inform you that I am insured in two offices, each for two thousand five hundred. I can tell you more than that, Harkaway and Harvey."

"Go ahead, sir, while you are in a communicative mood."

"I have left both of you something—how much shall remain a secret."

"That is extremely kind of you."

"Beware!" cried Mole. "If you do not treat me with more consideration, I shall add a codicil and cut you off."

"Don't be vexed," said Harkaway.

"How can I help it, when my courage is called into question?"

"We did not ask you to come, because Tien Sin——

"Enough of him! The fellow is a mountebank, nothing more. I call him an automatic chatterer."

"He revealed some strange things."

"Bah! Put a few taels in the slot, and he will jaw for an hour. When I was a tutor at Oxford, and was paid for lecturing, I could keep on talking for an hour."

"You can come if you like," replied Harkaway. "We do not want to prevent you."

"Do all the fighting, and we will look on," said Harvey.

"Yes," answered Mole, helping himself to a nip of rum, "that would just suit you to the ground, down to the very pavement. You want me to lead the van, as usual."

"No, we do not."

"Tush! it was always thus. Haven't I lost two legs? Don't I go about with wooden ones, having simply the aid of a crutch?"

"That is true enough."

"In whose service did I lose my limbs? Answer me that."

"Is it a conundrum, sir?" asked Harkaway, winking at Harvey.

"No, it is not. I would be ashamed to joke about such a subject. For the loss of one leg I have to thank this scoundrel Bigamini, and I want revenge."

"You shall have it."

"Is it not my right? I have been maimed through serving and accompanying you in your adventures."

"Make haste and equip yourself," said Jack.

The conversation was growing irksome.

Mr. Mole was inclined to find fault, lament, nag, and quarrel generally.

"Hadn't you better take your monkey?" asked the professor, sneeringly. "I am sure he would be of more use than I should."

"Ha! very human," observed Jack.

"Kind of family likeness between the two," said Harvey.

"Do you want to madden me with your taunts?" cried Mole.

"Don't rib up for nothing," replied Jack. "If Nero is your first cousin, you can't help it. I will take you both."

"Let me lead. I will show you the way to victory."

"By all means."

"Like Cæsar the Great, I will exclaim—'I came, I saw, I conquered!' Yes, alone I'll do it. Here is my rifle and my cartridge-belt; I want no more. I feel that this is going to be a glorious day. I shall cover myself with laurels. We will storm the Lake House, if the garrison does not surrender at the first summons."

"Brave words, sir!"

"From a brave man, as you know me to be. Honour the brave," rejoined Mr. Mole, arming himself.

Going into the garden, Harkaway called Nero.

The animal was perched on a branch of a tree, but at once jumped down when he heard his name.

"We are going after your young master. Will you come?" asked Jack.

The monkey uttered a peculiar cry.

He seemed to thoroughly understand what was said to him.

There was a thick bamboo lying on the ground.

He picked it up and shouldered it, as if it were a musket putting himself by Harkaway's side.

Mole and Harvey joined them.

"Look at the intelligent animal," exclaimed Harkaway. "He knows as much as you, sir."

"Please don't place a Simian—a half-bred gorilla, a member of the ape tribe, on a level with me," replied the professor.

"You shall march together."

"No! I'm hanged if we do! I go first. I am the leader of this exploration party, but the ape can take a back seat."

"As you like. Harvey and I will follow. Proceed."

"You said you knew this lake, Dick," continued Mole.

"Very well. I have walked as far several times."

"Which way shall I go?"

"Straight ahead as the bird flies, and you can't miss it."

"I'm off, like an arrow from a bow."

Saying this, Mr. Mole made a start.

To his great annoyance, Nero walked up to him and took the position of rear-rank man.

Hearing something behind him, Mole turned his head.

He shook his fist savagely at the monkey.

"Go back!" he cried; "or I shall hit you."

Nero bared his gums and chattered, but he did not move.

"Confound the beast!" muttered Mole. "I don't want to be mocked by an ape."

There was no help for it, however. Nero would not move away, and Mole had to go on, followed by his comical-looking attendant.

Owing to his wooden legs, the professor did not make quick progress.

It was hard work to get over the sand, even with the aid of a crutch.

Harkaway and Harvey lounged along, smoking and chatting, about two hundred yards behind.

"I reckon we shall have Bigamini this time," said Harkaway, "and he shall pay the penalty of his many crimes."

"What will be done to him, if we catch him and hand him over to the police?" queried Harvey.

"We can prove that he is the agent and associate of pirates. They will execute him, I should think."

"He has as many lives as a cat."

"It is my opinion that he has come to his last chance."

"So I hope. The dastardly spy was always a thorn in our sides."

"You are right. He has given us a lot of trouble," replied Jack! "and so he is now."

"No doubt the fellow is in league with a gang. They receive the stolen goods from the pirates, when the ships are plundered and burnt, and they are feathering their nests," suggested Harvey.

"Of course. Hunston has put him into that."

"They have always been bad, those two—no redemption for them. They don't try to go straight."

"If they did try, they couldn't."

"What is your opinion about young Jack and Monday?" asked Harvey.

"I feel very anxious about them."

"So do I. They must have fallen into Bigamini's hands."

"Would he kill them?"

"I do not think so. He would either hold them to ransom, as he did Emily, or somehow endeavour to send them to Hunston and the pirate king."

"We must stop that."

"Exactly. I hope to be able to do so. The day is young

yet. They have not been missing so very long," answered Harkaway.

"May good luck be on our side."

"So say I."

"Jack is a splendid specimen of the courageous, lion-hearted British boy, and I shall never get over it if any thing happened to him."

"Don't speak about it, Dick."

Harkaway was visibly affected by the thought of his son's danger and that of Monday.

Seeing this, Harvey dropped the subject.

"It strikes me," he exclaimed, after a pause, "that we shall not easily get at Bigamini."

"Why not?" inquired Harkaway.

"If his house is built on piles in the lake, there is water between us, and we shall want a boat."

"What then?"

"If we can procure a boat, which is doubtful, he may fire at us."

"Should he do that, we can fire back. According to the law of China, if we can shoot him, it would be justifiable, because it is in self-defence," said Harkaway.

"He is so confoundedly artful," mused Harvey. "You never know how, when, and where to have that man."

"True. The spirit of evil is incarnate within him."

In a short time they came in sight of the lake.

The house was distinctly visible in the glorious sunlight.

No one was to be seen at the windows, or in the verandahs.

There was a clump of trees, a quarter of a mile from the lake.

It afforded a cool and safe shelter.

"Let us wait here and see what old Mole will do," exclaimed Harevy.

"Perhaps he will come to grief without us," replied Harkaway.

"I don't see how he can."

"It would be a pity any thing happened to the old buffer."

"So it would. I should be the last to wish it," Harvey answered.

They both liked the professor too well to wish him any harm.

He had become almost like a father to them.

From their boyhood up to now they had been associated with one another.

"Mole's more than half tight," continued Harkaway. "I hope he won't make an ass of himself."

"How can he?" queried Harvey.

"He generally contrives to do so."

"Wait and see. We can come to his rescue in a few minutes, by running over the flat to the lake."

"I can't see anyone about."

"Nor I."

It was very amusing to see the monkey marching behind Mole.

The imitative creature limped and stumbled every now and then, as if he, too, had something the matter with his legs.

When Mole reached the landing-stage he looked at the house, and then turned his head.

Harkaway and Harvey, hiding behind the trees, were nowhere to be seen.

"Deserted!" he ejaculated. "Pooh!"

He gave vent to a sigh of disgust.

"Paltry cowards!" he continued. "They are afraid to bear the brunt of the battle, and put an old man forward."

Then he saw the monkey.

"There's that infernal ape at my heels," he went on. "Plague take the beast!"

Nero had sunk down on his four legs.

He began to scrape the boards, chattering all the while in the most excited manner.

The monkey was strangely agitated.

Something of an extraordinary nature had moved him all at once.

"Keep quiet, you wretch!" said Mole. "You won't find any nuts under there."

Suddenly Mole heard a faint voice.

It seemed to come from the bowels of the earth.

"Help! For the love of heaven, help!" was the moan.

It was beneath his feet.

What could it mean?

From whom did it emanate?

He stooped down to listen.

It struck him that the tones were familiar, but the voice was so hoarse and weak that he could not be sure.

The professor was about to speak, when there was the explosion of a gun, and a bullet whizzed past his ear.

He stood upright, and, looking at the Lake House, saw Bigamini.

The latter had noticed Mole, and recognised him at once.

Going into his rifle-gallery, he discharged a gun at him.

Mole returned the shot.

Bigamini was artful enough to sink on his knees, and escaped unhurt.

The next minute he pulled the cord of the death-trap.

In a second the boards collapsed.

Mr. Mole and the monkey went down into the hole, the boards resumed their former position, and Bigamini clapped his hands, as if to applaud himself.

Harkaway and Harvey had witnessed this strange scene from their place of concealment.

So rapidly had everything occurred, that they could not understand it.

Mole and Nero had certainly disappeared.

Where had they gone to?

That was the perplexing question that utterly bewildered their senses.

"What has become of Mole and the monkey?" asked Harkaway, in amazement.

"The earth opened and swallowed them up," replied Harvey.

"It only does that kind of thing when there is an earthquake; there has been none in this instance. We saw earthquakes in Limbi."

"Plenty of them."

"Tell me what it means."

"Some infernal trickery," said Harvey.

"Bigamini fired at Mole, he missed, and was shot at in return. Then this happened."

"We must examine into the matter. It is a trap."

"Look out for his rifle."

"We will do it in this way," exclaimed Harkaway, who was as clear-headed as he was daring and adventurous. "You keep your eyes on Bigamini, rifle in hand."

"Right you are."

"If he does not retire when we appear within range, shoot him like a dog, and risk the law of the land."

"You may depend upon me," said Harvey.

"Don't hesitate a moment."

"Very well. I understand. Death to him or me," answered Harvey.

They emerged from their shelter and advanced towards the lake.

Harkaway did not busy himself with him.

It was his task to examine the ground, and find out the reason for Mole's disappearance.

A wild cry of rage was heard from the house.

Bigamini saw that he was beset.

How many people were behind Harkaway and Harvey he could not tell.

Perhaps there were several in ambush under the trees.

He had a powerful field-glass, which he put to his eyes.

There could be no doubt that the redoubtable Harkaway had found him out, and tracked him to his lair.

If there was one man in the world he was more afraid of than another, it was Jack Harkaway. The latter had a very heavy score to settle with him.

What mercy could he expect, if captured?

His position was, at that moment, a desperate one.

Bigamini retreated to his rifle gallery, and fired two shots at long range.

They did no harm whatever.

Being in the house and under shelter, nothing could be seen of him,

"Halt!" said Jack. "The fellow is firing under cover. We shall be potted like shrimps, if we don't look out."

"What is to be done?" asked Harvey.

"I am at a loss to find out."

"He has the advantage all round," said Harvey. "If I could see him, I should not care."

"There are holes in the wall he fires through."

"Then we are baffled."

"It looks like it. Hang the luck!"

"But he is discovered and cornered. If we can not get at him, he can't get away."

"Why can't he? I can see boats moored under the house. We are on this side of the lake. All he has to do, if he wants to bolt, is to get into a boat and scull to the other side."

"And get clear off, eh?"

"Exactly. We can't stop him," replied Harkaway, in a tone of deep vexation.

All at once they heard the sound of cart-wheels.

A Chinaman was to be seen driving a horse that drew a waggon full of ricestraw.

It was a large vehicle, and contained a considerable quantity of straw, amounting to over two tons in weight.

"I have an idea," continued Jack. "We will buy that straw."

"What use will that be?" asked Harvey.

"My dear Dick, don't you see that it will make a wall impervious to bullets."

"Well?"

"If Bigamini fires at all, we shall be safe behind it. Let us buy it, and make a rampart or a bulwark of it on the landing-stage. Then I can examine the boards, see where Mole has vanished to, and deal with the spy afterwards."

"Excellent! Nothing could be better," replied Harvey.

Harkaway walked up to the Chinaman, who halted his horse as he saw him coming.

"Wantee me?" asked the man.

"Where are you going with that load of straw?" said Jack.

"To the Mandarin Mole. Litter for horsee."

"I will buy it from you. How much? You can get some more for Mr. Mole."

"I'm gottee plenty. What you givee?"

They bargained for a brief space, and at last agreed upon a price.

Jack immediately put his hand in his pocket and produced the money.

"Where I takee it?" asked the driver, who was a small farmer, living in the neighbourhood.

"You see that wooden landing-stage at the lake-shore?"

"Yes. That belongee to Biga-ing-ming-ming."

"I am a friend of his. He wants some straw. In fact, he told me to get him some. Put it down on the boards in a kind of thick wall, six feet high, close to the water."

"Vellee goodee," replied the farmer.

He at once turned his horse's head and took the waggon to the place indicated, where he deposited the straw as directed.

Bigamini did not appear to comprehend the meaning of this manœuvre.

He might have shot the man or the horse, but he did not attempt to do so.

In a quarter of an hour the straw was piled up as Jack had ordered it to be.

The driver, with a customary Chinese bow and smile, whipped off his horse, and went back home.

He was only too glad to be rid of his load so quickly.

Bigamini began to fire again, but the bullets lodged harmlessly in the thick wall of straw.

He was furious with rage at the clever trick that had been played upon him.

Between the sharp crack of his rifle his frantic shouts could be heard.

Harkaway sank on his knees on the platform.

Muffled cries came from below.

"Help! help!" was cried loudly.

"That's Jack's voice, I'll swear!" he muttered. "That's Mole's—that's Monday's. They are all in some accursed pit."

"How does it open?" Harvey asked.

"I am trying to find out."

He had a strong hunting-knife in his pocket.

With this he began to prise up the boards where they joined in the middle.

It was hard work.

The perspiration rolled down his face in streams.

At last, by almost superhuman exertion and putting forth all his great strength, he succeeded.

The bolt gave way.

"Back!" shouted Harvey, as the boards moved.

They both gave a spring, and luckily managed to get on the edge of the pit.

When the boards fell down, the sun shone upon the imprisoned victims below.

Nero made good use of his claws.

He contrived to climb up the sides, and dripping with the water in which he had been swimming, was the first to reach dry land.

His delight at his escape knew no bounds.

He capered about and chattered incessantly.

Young Jack and Monday presented a pitiable spectacle, as they were chilled to the bone and nearly exhausted.

"Courage," exclaimed Harkaway.

"All right, father," replied young Jack; "we are not dead yet."

"There am um kick in the old horse yet," said Monday.

"Who have we got to thank for it?" asked Jack.

"Bigamini," replied Harkaway.

"The wretch. I half suspected it."

Mr. Mole was up to his neck in the water.

He had broken his two wooden legs in falling down.

Harkaway looked around for some means of getting them out.

There was no ladder to be got.

Fortunately his eye fell upon a stout rope, which the farmer had lost out of his cart.

It was lying on the ground, within a few yards of him.

"Hurrah! the very thing," he said.

"Capital! We can haul them up one by one," replied Harvey.

Harkaway made some knots in the rope and lowered it into the pit.

"Catch hold of that," he cried.

"Mole first," answered Jack. "He says he has broken his wooden pins."

"Fasten the rope under his arms."

This was done, and the professor, more dead than alive, was drawn up, and laid in the sun to recover.

It was comparatively easy to hoist up Jack and Monday.

Their legs were so enfeebled by standing in the water for so many hours, that they were obliged to sit down.

In a few words, Harkaway informed them of all that had happened since they started on their memorable scout.

"Thank heaven, Emily is safe," said Jack. "You are always up to date, father."

"If I wasn't, I don't know what would become of you."

"What a devilish contrivance this pit is."

"Worthy of the evil mind that designed it," replied Harkaway.

The question now was how to get at and capture Bigamini.

From his behaviour, they had a right to treat him as a wild beast or a brigand.

They fully intended to do so.

In a short time young Jack and Monday recovered the use of their limbs.

But they were not in a fit state for fighting.

They wanted food and rest immediately.

Harkaway pulled out some of the boards which were hanging over the pitfall, and, with the aid of the rope, constructed a rude litter.

On this he placed Mole, who was very faint, and told his son and Monday to carry him back to the house.

This they did willingly, for they saw they would be of no use at the lakeside.

When they were gone Harkaway and Harvey held a consultation.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

BIGAMINI IS ATTACKED IN AN UNEXPECTED MANNER.

"THE dastardly little wretch knows that he is master of the situation," exclaimed Harkaway, "and defies us."

"Why should he be master?" asked Harvey.

"Because we cannot get at him. If he had built his house on land, it would be a different thing. There is water between us."

"Let us go to Hong-Kong and get the police. They will discover some means of dealing with him."

"No, no!" cried Harkaway; "he is discovered and will take to flight. He has boats. What is to prevent him from scuttling to the other side of the lake at any moment, and getting clear off?"

"If we had a boat—"

"He would shoot us, before we could get near his dwelling," Harkaway interrupted.

"Then we can do nothing."

"I am afraid not."

"Had we not better go home, then? Emily is recovered—young Jack, Monday, and Mole are all right. We can start at once for Greece and the treasure island."

"There is nothing to prevent us, but I should like to get the thousand pounds back that Bigamini has extorted from us."

Perhaps it will be as well to leave it alone."

"Bigamini has fairly cornered us. I hate to be done," said Harkaway.

He bit his lip with vexation.

At this moment Nero came up to them.

The monkey had not gone back to the plantation with his young master.

He had been looking at the house on the lake, and was chattering, as if he wanted to talk.

"That creature has got some idea in his head, only he cannot make us understand what it is," remarked Harvey.

"He is a most intelligent animal," replied Jack.

"Almost human."

"I believe he would go and fight Bigamini, if he could swim, only that is not one of his accomplishments."

Suddenly a large Newfoundland dog named Cæsar, belonging to Harkaway, ran up to his master.

Cæsar, had been made a present to Jack by the consul in Hong-Kong, who had a breed of these famous dogs.

He was about two years old, and a fine specimen.

Missing his master, he had tracked him to the lake.

It happened that Nero and Cæsar were great friends, the dog permitting the monkey to take any liberty he liked with him.

Nero was accustomed to ride on Cæsar's back.

When he saw him he chattered to him, and raised his paw in the direction of the lake.

The next moment he sprang on his back, and the dog ran towards the water and plunged into it.

Nero kept his seat, holding on to one of the Newfoundland's ears.

The latter swam straight to the Lake House.

Owing to the pile of rice straw which protected them from rifle bullets and observation, Harkaway and his old friend were unable to watch the animal's proceedings.

They were very anxious to do so, however.

"There is something up with those two," observed Harvey.

"Shall we crawl round the corner and look?" asked Harkaway.

"By all means. I believe Nero is going to attack the king in his castle."

"It would not surprise me, but I should not like the poor thing to come to any grief."

"Nor I. Young Jack is so much attached to him."

They went down on their hands and knees, and got into a position where, without being clearly distinguishable themselves, they could see the house.

Bigamini, rifle in hand, was seated in the verandah, smoking a cigar and scanning the shore.

There was a look of placid contentment on his face, as if he feared nobody.

In the water was Cæsar, with Nero seated on his back, making his way slowly but surely towards the house.

The sun was high in the heavens, and a dull haze hung over the surface of the lake.

Bigamini did not see the dog and his companion, the monkey.

He was looking out for human beings, not animals,

The dog, swimming nobly and being thoroughly at home in the water—as all Newfoundlands are— reached the ladder.

In an instant the monkey landed, and ran up the steps.

Cæsar paddled about in the water, evidently waiting for him.

His sagacious instinct told him that he was required to take Nero back again.

"Look out for high jinks," Harvey said. "The ape is going to maul Mr. Bigamini."

"It seems so," replied Harkaway.

"They have been in contact before, and monkeys, like elephants, you know, have revengeful memories."

"That they have. I should not like to offend Nero."

"Nor I. Keep quiet. Watch him."

Nero reached the top step without attracting the attention of Bigamini, who seemed to be rather sleepy.

He occasionally applied his lips to a tumbler on a table by his side, which contained brandy. The monkey noiselessly approached him.

Getting behind the man, he made a spring, perched on his shoulders, and began to scratch his face.

At the same time he bit his ears, and with his sharp teeth tore the skin from his forehead.

In a very short time Bigamini was streaming with blood, which blinded him.

He could not see who his assailant was.

His nose and mouth were clawed, and his hair torn out by the roots.

He fell off his seat to the floor of the verandah in a pitiable condition.

"Lo Mung! Hi Li! help! Come to me!" he yelled.

The monkey retreated when he began to shout, descended the steps, sprang lightly on Cæsar's back, and was conveyed to the shore.

He waved his tail triumphantly in the air.

It was clear that he thought he had done a very brave and grand action.

The whole thing had been visible to Harkaway and Harvey.

They had enjoyed it immensely.

"By Jove!" said Jack, "he has polished off old Bigamini."

"I never saw such a thing in my life," replied Harvey.

"He can't see, or he'd shoot."

"His men are going to do so, though. Two Chinese have come up with rifles."

"Retreat at the double."

"No fear."

They crawled back again to their shelter, just in time to escape a couple of bullets. These were fired by Lo Mung and Hi Li.

A third shot followed.

There was heard a wild howl.

Cæsar had just reached the bank. Nero had jumped off his back, but the dog was shot dead.

The faithful beast sank to rise no more.

Nero took one glance at him, which seemed to be full of sorrow, and went behind the straw.

He crouched down at Harkaway's feet, and deposited a handful of hair.

It was a portion of that which he had despoiled Bigamini of.

"Where's the dog?" asked Jack.

Harvey looked round the corner.

"Dead as a door-nail," he replied.

"Poor beast! Keep your eye on the house, Dick. I don't want you to expose yourself, but I want to know what is going on."

"I'll be on the job. The two Chinamen are taking Bigamini indoors."

"He's badly hurt, I expect. Good old Nero! I'll give you a big bunch of bananas when we get home."

"Do you mean to stay here long?" asked Harvey.

"I'll stay an hour or two. Keep your eyes open, and when you are tired of watching I'll relieve you."

"Right! It's as well to see what the beggar's next move is."

"I think he'll bolt," said Harkaway.

"If he does do a bunk, we can nip round the lake and follow."

"We will too."

"Agreed! replied Harvey, who, concealing himself as well as could, bestowed his attention upon the house.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE FATE OF HYSA.

WHEN the monkey left Bigamini alone he was in a miserable condition.

His ears, nose and forehead were mangled, his cheeks bitten and scratched—he was covered with blood, and had to lament a serious loss of hair, which, not being of the type of Absalom, he could ill spare.

Lo Mung and Hi Li were summoned to his aid by his cries.

They led him, blinded with blood, into the house, seating him in his private room.

Hysa came to him with a basin of water and a fine-linen rag, with which she which she washed his wounds.

Schneider and Blowhard, his partners, were lying on the sweet-scented matting which covered the floor.

Their faces wore a peaceful expression, as if they were enjoying the sort of sleep which waits upon easy consciences.

A pillow had been placed under their heads, as if to make them comfortable.

But they would not want any thing more in this world.

Theirs was the eternal sleep of death, from which there is no awakening here.

The poison Bigamini had given them—as we described previously—had done its fell work.

All was over with the fraudulent shipbrokers, who, under

the guise of business men, were nothing else than the skilful agents of daring pirates.

They were dead, and Bigamini had taken from their pockets all the money they possessed.

Hysa fancied the two men slumbered, as did Lo Mung and Hi Li.

After bathing his face, Hysa applied some healing ointment to the hurts her brutal husband had sustained.

This checked the severe pain he had been suffering, but it did not improve his temper, which was savage in the extreme.

"Go and catch that infernal monkey!" he exclaimed, addressing the Chinaman.

"No catchee. Too latee," said Lo Mung.

"How is that?"

"He ridee on swimming dog's back. On land now."

"Where is he?"

"Hidee behind the straw with Harkaway and Harvey," said Lo Mung.

"Are they watching the house now?"

"Me thinkee watchee. Not able see much. They not go home. Mole mandarin, Monday nigger, young Jack, all go. They get out of hole in ground."

"Then I am besieged!" cried Bigamini. "They do not mean to let me alone. Mole and the others have gone for reinforcements, no doubt."

"Hangee all if get taken, because stealee girl and shootee," remarked Lo Mung.

Bigamini fixed his hard, steely eye upon the Mongolian.

"Are you afraid of being hanged?" he asked.

"Not vellee nicee way to die," Lo Mung answered.

"If you were obliged to choose a mode of dying, which would you select?"

"So many wayees," said Lo Mung, shrugging his shoulders.

"Yes, I know. Make a choice. Hanging from bar, poison, stabbing, shooting——"

"Yes, that the best," cried Lo Mung.

"No cut throat—makee too muchee mess. Shoot bullet through heart, or head."

"Oh, you are sure that is your choice?"

"First chop. Yes. Chin Chin. Vellee good."

"You sha'n't be disappointed, hang me, if you shall," exclaimed Bigamini.

"What you be a meaner of?"

"Didn't you state that you preferred death by shooting to any other means of shuffling off this mortal coil?"

"That be the trufer—allee trufer—but not die yet," said Lo Mung.

"I don't know about that. My fancy is that you stand a good chance of it."

"Why? Me not understandee."

"I'm going to shoot you. Down you go, fool."

As he spoke, Bigamini, out of pure viciousness and devilry, drew his pistol and fired.

The harmless, inoffensive Chinaman, who had served him so faithfully as a spy, uttered a cry.

He dropped his head to his breast and fell back.

Hi Li caught him in his arms, and laid him gently on the floor.

He was not surprised at his master's violence.

It takes a great deal to astonish a Chinaman, and he is so confirmed a fatalist, that if told he was to die in five minutes, he would not take the trouble to say a prayer.

What is to be will be, is his creed.

Individual effort can do nothing to avert the decree of Fate, in his estimation.

"I'll kill the lot of you," cried Bigamini. "You are no good. I'm going to leave here, and I don't intend to take any of you with me. Now Harkaway has discovered me, the game is played."

Hi Li ran away.

A second bullet, however, brought him down.

He sank to the floor, weltering in blood, which flowed from a wound in his back. Hysa glided away.

"Here! Where are you going to? Come back!" shouted the murdering wretch. "You don't think I want you with me?"

There was no answer.

Hysa was gone, but her infuriated husband went after her.

He looked in the kitchen; she was not there; he went out on the verandah.

The woman, paralysed with fear, was stepping into one of the boats.

"Come back!" Bigamini vociferated, "or I'll shoot you. I'll drop you in your track, as I did Lo Mung and Hi Li!"

She paid no heed to his summons, but got into the boat, and pushed off.

"Curse you!" he yelled. "Won't you obey me?"

There was an iron stove on the verandah; it was used for boiling the kettle to make the tea with.

Seizing it with both hands, he hurled it at the little skiff in which the woman now sat.

She had the sculls in her hand, and was about to pull to the adjacent shore.

His treatment of Lo Mung Hi and Li had stricken her with terror.

It was clear that he had been rendered desperate since his enemies had discovered his abode.

The stove missed her, but fell into the boat, in which it smashed a large hole.

Going through the bottom, it sank into the lake.

The boat instantly filled with water.

Hysa could not swim a single stroke.

In a few seconds the skiff heeled over, and she was precipitated into the water.

"Drown, drown, you cat!" cried Bigamini.

The woman's clothes were very thin.

There was no support whatever in them.

She sank like a stone, and did not appear again.

Such was the fate of the unhappy Hysa.

Bigamini smiled grimly.

"Now I am free," he muttered. "I have got rid of all those who surrounded me and were a drag. I will start again somewhere else. A new life shall be mine."

The house and the land attached to the lake-side was now his own property.

He had bought it at at first, but after he improved it a little he sold it to advantage, contenting himself with renting it.

The last half year's rent he had not paid.

He took a match from his pocket.

"I'll burn the house," he continued; "there are four corpses in it; that will destroy all traces of them. I can say it was an accident, my wife perished in the flames; that will do for me, if I am asked questions; or, if the body turns up, I will declare that she jumped into the water and was drowned."

He went to the kitchen, threw a can of oil on the floor, and deliberately set fire to it.

Immediately a huge flash of flame arose.

The wood caught fire and the frail place was fully alight in a very short time.

Bigamini had his money secured about his person in two stout canvas bags.

He made his way to the verandah, got into the one remaining boat, and sculled towards the opposite shore.

It was his purpose to studiously avoid any contact with Harkaway and Harvey.

But his departure was seen.

His escape had been noticed.

Harvey's sharp eyes saw the villain as he left the house on the lake.

He got up, and ran behind the wall of straw, to communicate the news to his friend.

Oppressed with the heat, Harkaway had fallen asleep.

"Wake up, Jack!" cried Harvey.

Harkaway was on his feet in a moment.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE ESCAPE AND THE PURSUIT.

"WHAT's up?" asked Harkaway.

"Bigamini has left the house in a boat," replied Harvey.

"Come on. We will follow him."

"I'm ready. Start!"

Shoulder to shoulder they began to run round the lake to intercept Bigamini at the other side.

It was child's play to them.

They were use to hare-and-hounds in their boyish days, and always, by their active lives, kept themselves in training.

"I've a lot to tell you," continued Harvey.

"What has the fiend been doing?" inquired Jack.

"He drowned a woman just now."

"Killing women, or running away with them, seems a favorite amusement of his."

"Healthy recreation he would call it."

"He's set the house on fire, if I may judge by the smoke and flames issuing from it."

"What a demon he is."

"Worse than Hunston."

"No," replied Harkaway, "you cannot find anyone as bad as Hunston, if you search the whole world through."

"They are well matched."

The circuit they had to make was a large one.

It seemed odds of a thousand to one that Bigamini would out-distance them easily.

But an unforeseen accident happened to him before he had got far from the house. They kept the boat well in view.

A few yards from the house, Bigamini stopped sculling to view the burning of his residence.

It was like a lot of tinder, or matchwood.

The whole building was in flames in an almost incredibly short period.

Dense volumes of smoke rose on the summer air.

Forked tongues of fire shot up, as if they wanted to lick the sky.

Satisfied that the destruction of the premises would be as complete as he could desire, Bigamini again dropped his suspended sculls in the water.

Then arose a ghastly spectacle.

His wife Hysa came to the surface.

Her face was convulsed with horror.

In his surprise, Bigamini dropped one of his sculls in the water.

A gentle breeze fanned the bosom of the lake, and drifted it away.

Despite all his efforts, he was unable to recover it.

Hysa seemed to gaze upon him reproachfully, and then the body sank again.

"Confound the witch!" he murmured.

It was hard work, after this, to paddle the skiff with one scull to the opposite shore.

Harkaway and Harvey had a great advantage over him.

It was of no use to try to return to the house, for that was nearly reduced to ashes by this time.

He did not notice his pursuers, who were running round the lake.

With great difficulty, he managed to slowly get the boat to the shore.

It was fringed with a thick hedge of bamboos.

Running the boat in, he jumped on land.

Harkaway and Harvey had arrived there before him.

They were crouching on the ground.

No sooner had he stepped foot on the earth than they sprang up.

Each had a revolver in his hand, levelled at him.

Bigamini trembled in every limb.

This was a reception that he had not calculated upon.

He was armed with a knife and a pistol, but he had no opportunity of using them.

"Hands up!" cried Jack, "or you are a dead man."

Bigamini threw up his hands.

He saw it was useless to resist.

"Search him, Dick," continued Harkaway.

Harvey lost no time in taking from the wretch his knife, pistol, and the two bags of coin.

"We've got our money back," Harvey remarked.

"And we have captured the hateful spy, the villain, the scoundrel, who has cropped up again to be a thorn in our sides," replied Jack.

Bigamini sank to the ground, looking the picture of misery.

"I give in, Mr. Harkaway, sir," he whined.

"Because you can't help yourself," was Jack's answer.

"Don't pile it on and hit a man when he is down."

"You deserve no mercy."

"Let me go, sir."

"You will be given into the custody of the Hong-Kong police. That is your fate."

"I haven't done anything."

"Did you not try to rob Mr. Mole? Haven't you abducted little Emily? Didn't you put my son and Monday into your pitfall, liar and thief?" Jack cried.

"I am very sorry, sir," snivelled the vagabond.

"Get up. I hate to see one man grovelling before another."

"You mustn't kill me. The law of the land——"

"Bah!" interrupted Jack. "You never respected one law in the decalogue! Don't talk to me of law!"

"Is my life safe?"

"Yes. We do not intend to harm you. The police shall deal with you."

Bigamini rose to his feet.

His face assumed an insolent air at once.

So long as he knew he was safe, he did not care one snap of the fingers.

"Where are you going to take me?" he inquired.

"To Hong-Kong," replied Jack.

"What are you about to charge me with?"

"Stealing my friend Harvey's child, and trying to kill my son and others in a trap."

"Can you prove it?"

"I don't think there will be any difficulty about that."

"Well, I shall accuse you of highway robbery. I no sooner get on shore out of my boat, than you spring from the bamboos and take my money away."

Jack burst out laughing.

"You always were an impudent rascal," he said. "I had a good knowledge of you in Naples. It was a pity you were not drowned, but I suppose you were born to be hanged."

"A man may as well die one way as another."

"March. We've got you, and we'll keep you."

Bigamini stepped out. Harkaway pointed a pistol at his head.

Harvey took him by the arm, so that he could not make any attempt to escape.

They proceeded round the lake to Mr. Mole's plantation.

When they had gone half-way they came to the main road leading from the country to Hong-Kong.

Accidentally they met Fan Chi, whom they knew well as one of the head commissioners of police.

He was on horseback, and accompanied by two ordinary policemen on foot.

Some robberies had recently been committed in the neighbourhood, and he had been to make personal investigations.

When encountered, he was on his way back to the city.

"Good day!" exclaimed the commissioner, in very excellent English. "I trust you and your party eat well."

By this speech, he meant to inquire if they were in good health.

"Thank you, we do. And you?" replied Harkaway.

"I am in the enjoyment of an excellent appetite. Who have you with you?"

"A prisoner. It is fortunate that we have met with you, as we can now give him into your custody."

"What has he done?" inquired Fan Chi.

Jack narrated his misdeeds, and said something about his former history.

"Ha! Child-stealing—extorting money—in league with pirates. He is a great criminal," cried the commissioner.

"If you will conduct him to prison, we will appear against him to-morrow."

"By all means. It shall be done. Ho! there, seize him."

The two policemen promptly took Bigamini into custody.

His misfortunes were complete now, but the rascal did not appear to be cast down.

In fact, when he was arrested, his countenance actually brightened.

Bigamini knew more about Chinese justice than either Harkaway or Harvey did.

We shall see what his knowledge amounted to presently.

"How is your distinguished friend, Mandarin Mole?" asked Fan Chi.

"He has recovered from his injury," replied Jack.

"That is good news to hear. Please convey my regards to his excellency."

"I will do so with pleasure."

"I have the supreme honour to kiss your hand," continued Fan Chi.

"And I to salute the hem of your robe," said Jack.

After this exchange of compliments they parted.

Bigamini was marched off in custody.

"You are a great rogue," remarked Fan Chi, addressing him.

"I am a villain of the deepest die," replied Bigamini.

He was aware that it would be dangerous to contradict the commissioner.

"You deserve to be beaten to a jelly, and then hanged in public," added Fan Chi.

"That fate would be too good for me. I ought to be cut to pieces with a knife."

"I see that you are a reasonable man, in spite of your villainy; but I shall at once have you flogged."

"I shall be very grateful to your high mightiness for your extreme condescension."

"The air shall ring with your cries; your blood shall flow, and you will wish that you never were born."

"That is a fitting punishment for my misdeeds."

There was a slight pause.

Then the commissioner of police again spoke.

"I have known some rogues make money," he said. "Are you one of that description?"

"Yes. I can put my hand on some cash," Bigamini answered.

"How much?"

"It would give me the greatest pleasure to make your respectable highness a present; but it is for you to state what sum is befitting your dignity and worth."

"I cannot accept a trifle; it would lower my pride. Yet, if you offered me two hundred and fifty pounds I would take it."

"In that case, would you allow me to visit some relatives?"

"For how long?" asked Fan Chi.

"Say forty-eight hours," rejoined Bigamini.

"I have no objection to that. The request is very reasonable. When a man is sure to be hanged, he naturally wants to put his affairs in order and take leave of his friends."

"That is my feeling, most upright and just."

"You must underake to give yourself up at my police-court at the expiration of the time."

"Certainly, protector of the peace, terror of evil-doers, and exterminator of criminals."

"When can you make me this present?" continued Fan Chi.

"At once, if you will come to my bank with me. I will draw a cheque in your favour for the amount."

"It is well. I perceive that you are a business man."

The bargain had been struck.

Chinese officials are very corrupt, and from the first Bigamini was well aware that his liberation was only a question of money.

He had got off cheaper than he had expected.

Being well off, the sum was a trifling one to him.

They continued their way in silence to the city, and proceeded at once to the bank.

There Bigamini obtained the cash in gold, and handed it to the venal commissioner.

It was a scandalous abuse of justice, but such things are constantly occurring in China.

The commissioner shook him cordially by the hand.

"May your chopsticks never be idle," he said.

"It is my heartfelt wish that you may always eat your rice with relish," replied Bigamini.

"I shall rely upon seeing you at my office when forty-eight hours have expired."

"Most certainly. I shall not fail to be there."

Fan Chi walked away with his officers.

He knew very well that he would never see his late prisoner again; but what did it matter to him?

Though he was a police commissioner, he was so corrupt that he did not care a straw whether justice was done or not.

All he wanted to do was to make money.

Those who could pay got off scot-free; those who could not had to suffer.

Bigamini was no sooner alone than he drew another cheque, and took all his money out of the bank.

It amounted to a very reputable sum, being sufficient to support him for a long time in affluence.

He was aware that he could not stay in Hong-Kong for any lengthened period.

Bending his steps towards a restaurant where he intended to dine, he grated his teeth together.

"You have foiled me this time, Jack Harkaway," he muttered; "but you have not seen the last of me. I live! I breathe! Beware!"

With these menacing words he disappeared within the walls of the restaurant.

He had escaped from the toils.

Harkaway thought his enemy was caged, and doomed to death, but he was mistaken.

The spy and ally of Hunston was free to do more mischief.

But what his future movements were to be, Bigamini had yet to decide.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

MR. MOLE AND THE RED DRAGON.

As Harkaway and Harvey returned to Mr. Mole's house, they were in high spirits.

All their troubles were over. Little Emily and young Jack were safe at home, and they were at liberty to depart for the treasure island when they liked.

They determined not to linger in the Flowery Land.

A little experience of China goes a long way, and although it is a country to make money in—that is at the treaty ports—Englishmen are generally glad to get out of it.

They had been looking after a ship which they intended to charter.

Hunston was still at large, but they hoped to give him the slip.

It would be strange if he found out that they had gone to the Mediterranean Sea.

How was he to gain the intelligence?

Reaching the house, they stopped in the front garden to gather some roses for their wives.

There was an extensive lawn, studded with beautiful standard roses.

In the centre stood a block of wood, which had been carved into the semblance of a dragon.

It was painted a bright vermilion colour.

Every body alluded to it as the Red Dragon.

It was about five feet in height.

The former proprietor of the house considered it a great ornament.

All the Chinese delight in hideous designs—monstrosities—the grotesque in art.

The uglier a thing is, the more they like and admire it.

All at once Jack heard Mr. Mole's voice.

"This way, Monday," he cried.

"On the lawn, sare?" asked Monday.

"Yes. I have got my weapon, and I mean to have a fight with that Red Dragon."

"Him am a deadun, sir."

Mr. Mole looked angrily at Monday.

"Don't tell me such a lie as that," he said. "You know the dragon is as much alive as I am."

"Think um so, if you like."

"If I don't kill the loathsome beast, he will attack us in the night. Wheel me up."

Harkaway pulled Harvey behind a tree, which was a large magnolia.

Here they could see what was going on, without themselves being perceived.

"Here's a lark," said Jack. "We shall have some fun."

"Mole's been lapping," Harvey replied. "He is as full as a goat."

The professor, being bereft of his legs, had got into a bath-chair, which he had bought during his illness.

Monday had procured him a bottle of rum, part of which he drank.

It soon got into his head.

Young Jack was relating his adventures to Emily and Hilda and his sweetheart.

No one took any notice of Mole and Monday.

The professor had been looking out of the window.

He caught sight of the old wooden Red Dragon, and imagined, in a quixotic manner, that it was a live one.

It did not occur to him that dragons were fabulous monsters.

Snatching up an old ship's cutlass, he told Monday to wheel him into the garden.

This the black was doing when Harkaway and Harvey appeared upon the scene.

The bath-chair was propelled by Monday to within a foot or two of the Red Dragon.

"Now," cried Mole, "see me slay this jabberwock, or perish in the attempt."

"You better take care, sare," said Monday.

"Why should I?"

"The beast asleep now. Talk so loud, wake um up."

"Is he asleep, really? I fancied I saw fire and smoke coming out of his mouth."

"Me hear him snore, sare."

"All the better. I will take an unfair advantage of him, and smite him."

"Cut um head off?" said Monday.

"That is precisely what I intend doing," answered Mole. "If I have no legs to walk on, I can fight."

"Um very brave man."

"You can't extinguish my spirit. Sitting in this chair, unable to stand, I defy the Chinese Red Dragon!"

"Um very awful kind of brute. You can't most generally always tell what they'll do."

"Scratch and bite, eh? Wake him up. I don't like to take an unfair advantage of him, after all."

"Me 'fraid to come too near."

"You coward!"

"That's me. I is a coward," replied Monday.

"I know you to be one," continued Mole. "When I was a tutor I gave object lessons. You shall have one in courage."

"Trot um out."

"The dragon is the object. People have declared that it is a mythical beast, like the unicorn. But no. Behold it! The creature looms in my sight! I will be another Guy of Warwick, and slay him."

"Shall I wake um up, sare?"

"Yes. The knights of old did not kill hydras in somnolent condition."

"Stir um up with um long pole?"

"Give him a kick, but mind he does not bite you."

"All right. Look out!"

Monday went behind the Red Dragon.

As he moved, the professor raised his sword.

It was a formidable-looking weapon, and, though old, very sharp.

Monday shook the wooden thing.

It oscillated slightly.

Mole gave it a slashing blow, and cut the head clean off.

It rolled to the ground, disclosing a large hole, in which something shone like gold.

"Victor!" shouted Mole. "I have killed the pestilential dragon. All honour to me."

Harkaway and Harvey stepped forward.

"Bravo!" said Jack.

"Hurrah!" cried Harvey.

"Was it not splendidly done?" asked Mole, who believed in the reality of the whole thing.

"I never saw any thing like it in my life," replied Jack.

"Am I not a hero, Harkaway?"

"Indeed you are."

"Worth the Victoria Cross."

"Half-a-dozen of 'em—putty medals included."

"I can do it."

"You can. Henceforth you shall be known as the dragon slayer."

"Was he not a formidable beast?"

"Awful. But, I say, what is this in his inside?"

Harkaway had looked in the hole, and seen the golden glitter.

He made an examination.

To his surprise, he found and produced a score of gold cups and vases.

They were very heavy and extremely valuable.

The Red Dragon had evidently been used as a receptacle for property of this kind.

It was hollow.

Perhaps it had formerly been in the possession of a miser.

"Here's luck!" exclaimed Jack.

"By Jove!" said Harvey, "it would take a couple of thousand pounds to make those things."

"All that."

Mr. Mole's head sank back in the bath-chair, and his eyes closed.

He went to sleep.

Having as he thought killed the ferocious dragon, he was not interested in any thing further.

Harkaway and Harvey, with Monday's assistance, conveyed the newly-found treasure into the house.

They regarded this discovery, through Mole's drunken freak, as a happy omen.

It was an augury of success.

In fact, it made them look forward with hope to their voyage to the treasure island.

They would be off in a few days.

There was nothing to keep them in China now.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

MR. MOLE GETS HIS NEW LEGS AND TAKES A DRIVE WITH YOUNG JACK AND MONDAY TO THE TEMPLE OF KIANG.

When enquiry was made at the dock, it was found that the ship Harkaway and his friends had chartered would not be ready to sail for a week.

The time threatened to hang heavily on their hands.

All were anxious to be off.

The party that had gone fishing came back much delighted with their excursion.

They had enjoyed plenty of sport, and caught some uncommonly fine fish peculiar to Chinese waters.

Though they were of a peculiar shape they were excellent to eat.

Long conversations took place between the leaders of the expedition and the Greek.

Nothing could shake his confidence in the existence of the treasure.

He inflamed the ambition of his hearers, and fanned their hopes.

Young Jack grew tired of listening to the talk of his elders, and made up his mind to have what he called a day's outing.

He had heard that, at a village about ten miles from Mr. Mole's plantation there was a famous temple.

It was built in the pagoda fashion and very high, the ground floor being of some extent.

The village was named Kiang, and contained some two hundred inhabitants exclusive of the priests of the temple, who were no less than thirty in number.

Religious people came from all parts to visit the temple of Kiang.

It was considered a particularly sacred one.

Gifts of money and food were made to the priests, who were a flourishing and prosperous community.

Young Jack had never been over a Chinese temple, or joss-house, as the natives call their church.

He had a strong desire to do so.

To drive over to Kiang would kill the time of one day, at all events.

Besides, it would be something to say in future years that he had been over the joss-house.

He got his mother to pack him up a lunch-hamper, in which all kinds of good things were stored.

Then he told Monday that he wanted him to accompany him to Kiang, and proceeded to Mr. Mole's private room to ask for the loan of his horse and carriage.

The door of the room was open, and young Jack took the liberty of entering without knocking.

He saw the professor standing before a table, on which was a looking-glass.

The learned gentleman was surveying himself.

On his wrinkled but erudite face, there was a look of placid satisfaction. Like the young man of old, named Narcissus, who beheld his countenance in a sheet of water and fell in love with it, he seemed to be proud of himself.

"What's the old fool up to?" said Jack to himself.

"I shall do; yes," remarked Mole. "I look and feel uncommonly fit. Never was I in better form."

Jack coughed.

In a moment Mr. Mole turned round.

"Oh! is it you, my young and intelligent friend. Come in!" exclaimed Mole.

"I am sorry to intrude upon your privacy, sir," replied Jack.

"Don't mention it. You are always welcome, because you are the son of your father."

"Then you don't altogether care for me for myself?"

"You are slightly inclined to be mischievous. There is a little of the crisp in your composition. However, I will forget that, as I am in a remarkably good temper."

"What is that owing to, sir? Have you had a consignment of the finest old Jamaica?"

"Rude remarks I object to."

"I apologise, sir. It shall not happen again," said Jack, with mock contrition.

"Take care that it does not. My high spirits arise from the fact that I have recovered my understanding."

"Your what, sir?"

"I speak figuratively. Some people have eyes, but they see not. Am I not erect? See! I can agitate the light fantastic, artificial toe."

As he spoke, Mole lifted up one leg and then the other.

With the aid of his stick (a trusty bamboo), he walked round the room—a little stiffly, perhaps, but with perfect ease.

He had received from the artificial limb-maker in Hong-Kong a pair of the very latest improved, flexible, patent cork legs.

Putting them on, he found that they answered his purpose, and gave him every satisfaction.

With his stick to balance himself, he could walk very well indeed.

It was a triumph of modern science and handicraft.

"My legs, Jack, my legs," continued the professor—"my new corybantic. I feel like a nymph of the ballet. I could dance a *pas seul* or a can-can. Merrily could I tread the measure of the mazy waltz."

"I most heartily congratulate you, sir."

"Ah, it's a great thing to have your legs. What is a man without them?"

"Only half a man, I should think."

"Right. Still, it is better than being like Charles the First, without your head."

"I have come to ask a favour, sir."

"Bless me! you generally take French leave when you want anything. How is it you condescend to come and ask the old man?"

"Respect for old age, sir. I want you to lend me your horse and trap."

"Can't have it. I'm going to use it myself," snapped Mole. "Why should I put myself out of the way for a snip of a boy who can't write a set of Latin verses without making a false quantity in every third line?"

"If you don't lend it me, I shall take it. I thought I would ask your royal highness and high mightiness, as a matter of courtesy."

"What! steal my trap?"

"Borrow it."

"I'll prosecute you—I'll give you a month! That trap's mine; I'm going out in it."

"So you shall, if you like to come with me," replied young Jack, in a conciliatory tone.

"Where are you going?" asked Mole.

"Not very far. I have planned a little excursion. There is a place near here called Kiang, and in it is a famous pagoda temple, or joss-house."

"Ah! that is a good idea. I have long wanted to see one of these churches where the priests keep their wooden gods."

"They worship idols, sir."

"I know it; they are heathens. I will go with you. Count me in. I have a collection of Chinese curiosities, and all I require to make it complete is a joss."

"Be careful," said young Jack. "Mind what you are doing."

"Why? What now?"

"They are very jealous of their idols. It would not do to meddle with them."

"Bosh! If I get a chance I shall take one."

"They think nothing of torturing and killing a man for touching one of their deities."

"Are they so sacred?"

"To their benighted minds they are," replied Jack.

"Well, I shall be careful that no one is looking. How about the inner man—food and drink?"

"Mother has prepared a large hamper."

"Go and get the trap out of the stable. I will be with you in ten minutes. These legs just suit me to perfection; I feel quite young again."

Mr. Mole took up his rum bottle and helped himself to a dram.

"There is one beautiful thing about being as I am," he added. "If the drink does take hold of me, it cannot get into my legs. Ha, ha! I must have my joke."

"Old Ikey Mole is a merry old soul," sang Jack.

"Why shouldn't I be? Isn't it better to laugh than cry?"

"Far better. Get yourself ready, sir, while I go after the equine. If you don't look sharp, we shall not make a start to-day."

Saying this, Jack hastened to the stable.

With Monday's help, he soon put the horse between the shafts.

It was an animal of somewhat mulish aspect, and given to such bad habits as shying and kicking, but it was the only one they had, so they were obliged to put up with it.

In a few minutes Mr. Mole joined them.

He walked wonderfully well, with the help of a stick, considering that the lower half of him was nothing but cork.

The three got into the carriage, which was a native concern made of bamboo, somewhat after the fashion of an English gig.

The horse started, ambling off at the rate of about four miles an hour.

Neither whip nor voice could induce him to go any faster.

There was no doubt that they would have got to Kiang quicker by walking.

If the horse was bustled or worried overmuch, he had a pleasing way of standing still in the middle of the road.

This attitude it would preserve for ten minutes, as if it were waiting to have its photograph taken.

"I think, sir," remarked Jack, "that you ought to enter this steed of yours for the Derby Stakes at Epsom."

"Oh! He's a very fine animal, if you only know how to manage him," replied Mole.

"Go on. I never saw such a screw in my life."

"Um only walk about to save um funeral expenses," observed Monday.

"What do you know of the points of a horse, my sable friend?" asked Mr. Mole.

"This camel been in the funeral line, I should think, for certain."

The horse started again, and the journey was performed in due course.

A tea-house at the entrance to the village of Kiang invited their attention.

They stopped, secured the horse under some trees, had a cup of tea, and went off to view the temple.

This edifice was built on rising ground, which made it seem better than it really was.

It was approached on all sides by flights of stone steps, but there was only one entrance for priests and public.

A walk up the street, which was lined with houses standing in large gardens, brought them to the temple.

It being mid-day, there was nobody in the place of worship, prayers being, as a rule, offered by the Celestials morning and evening.

No visitors had as yet arrived from Hong-Kong, though every day generally brought some of the curious or the pious.

At the bottom of the steps, facing the entrance door, was a Chinaman, who came up to them.

"Oh, you of the most excellent English," he exclaimed.

"We have nothing to give away," replied Mole, thinking the fellow was a beggar.

"Of your honourable condescension I ask pardon."

"Take it and go," cried Jack.

"I am of the family of Loo Chow," continued the man, who was not to be put down by a refusal.

"We don't want to make your acquaintance, Loo Chow."

"Me puttee myself in your way, because father, grandfather, and now me, have all been guides to this temple."

"Oh, you're a guide, are you?" Mole exclaimed. "Why didn't you say so at first?"

"Me not havee time; you too muchee ready talk."

"You fellows beat about the bush so and rigmarole. What's your figure?"

"Me takee all over for five shilling, English. That my pricee, high mightiness."

"You shall have it. I don't call that dear. There is a

lot of ground to be got over in that building, up stairs and down, I reckon," said Mole.

Loo Chow was engaged, and, putting himself by the professor's side, began to give him details about the temple —when it was built, how many priests it contained, and the number of joss-shrines to be seen.

"I don't like the look of that fellow," remarked Jack; "his forehead is low, denoting cunning; his chin narrow, showing deceit."

"Me keep um eye on him, sare," replied Monday.

"I wish Mole had not employed him. We should have got on ever so much better in our sight-seeing without his assistance."

"Mist' Mole him want to look big."

"That is his great fault. I hope he won't make a fool of himself."

"How um do that, sare?" asked Monday. "Can't play much fool in um church."

"He has been making a collection of curios since he has been in this country, you know."

"Yes. Me see um—all kinds of things, from um big kite to um opium-joint, from pair of slippers to carved ivory ship. Chinaman Johnny very clever carver."

"They are splendid artificers. It is a pity that, as a nation, they ruin their brains with opium."

"Who make the opium and sell it them, Mast' Jack? Answer me that. English make it in India."

"Yes, we do the trade, I know," Jack replied. "It's a pity, all the same. But I was going to talk about Mole. He has been trying lately to get a joss."

"What am that?" Monday inquired.

"It is a wooden god," said Jack. "If I remember rightly, you worshipped the same thing when in Limbi?"

"Before me become a Christian which your father teach me."

"The Chinese are like you Limbians, idolaters; though they have a system of ethics, or code of morality, whichever you like to call it, laid down by their great philosopher and writer, named Confucius."

"Suppose John Chinaman think a lot of um joss idol," Monday observed.

"Of course, he does; and if Mole goes handling or cribbing one of them, there will be no end of a row," replied Jack.

"They kill him, perhaps.'"

"I shouldn't wonder if they did, in the event of his being caught. He'd have had a better chance of bagging a joss without Loo Chow, who, I'll swear, would be the first to give him away."

"That um sure thing," Monday said.

Mr. Mole and the guide had, by this time, entered the ancient Temple of Kiang.

Jack and Monday quickly followed them.

A dim, religious light prevailed.

Several huge and hideous idols were to be seen in various parts of the large building.

On tables over which lighted lamps were suspended were smaller ones.

Spectral-looking forms might be seen gliding about.

These were priests connected with the administration of the temple.

Here and there, a worshipper or a penitent was prostrated before one of the larger idols.

One curious thing was noticeable.

At the foot of all the idols were deposited plates containing rice, ready cooked for eating, roast-chickens, meat, and little piles of money.

All these were offerings to the wooden gods, and, of course, were, at the expiration of each day, appropriated by the priests.

On the second story, and on the third of the pagoda was a smaller edition of what was to be seen below.

All the stories above this were the priests' private apartments, into which the public were not allowed to enter.

Such was the great Temple of Kiang.

Jack looked in all directions for Mr. Mole and the guide.

They were nowhere to be seen.

There was nothing in losing sight of one another, however, as they were sure to meet again.

They would come together inside or outside before long.

Talking in a low voice, as became the character of the place, to Monday, he walked about, examining every thing carefully.

If there was nothing to impress the mind of a Western man, there was much to interest and amuse.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE DISASTROUS RESULT OF INTERFERING WITH A CHINESE JOSS.

MR. MOLE was conducted—there is really nothing like being personally conducted when you are in a strange country and out of your orbit, as it were—by Loo Chow, all round the ground floor of the temple.

When he had exhausted all the idols, big and little, he was taken up to the second tier.

To this succeeded the third, the ceiling of which was rather low.

In this section of the pagoda there was no room for idols fifteen and twenty feet high.

The wooden gods were carved on a small scale.

Anyone could take one up in his hand and put it in his pocket.

At an ivory shrine, elaborately carved and interlaid with gold, there was a joss about a foot in height.

It was made of wood, like the rest, but awfully ugly.

In fact the uglier an idol was the more the priests and the public thought of it.

The eyes of this joss were made of *lapis lazuli*. It had gold rings and bracelets on its fingers and arms, and anklets of gold adorned its feet.

It was painted a chrome yellow, and, taken altogether, was a very striking specimen of the joss commodity.

There was no one in the third section of the temple but the guide and Mr. Mole.

They were absolutely alone.

No prying eyes could bear witness to any of their actions, whatever they might be.

"That vellee sacred jossee," exclaimed Loo Chow. "Only head priest of the temple touch that one."

"I like the look of it," replied Mole.

He regarded the joss with a large amount of satisfaction.

It would be just the very thing to add to his collection.

But how was he to obtain it?

Was the guide to be trusted?

That was the perplexing question which he was not able to answer.

Only enthusiastic collectors can understand Mr. Mole's anxiety to possess that gaudy-looking joss.

"Will they sell that wooden curiosity, my friend?" he asked.

The guide looked horrified.

"No sellee," he replied. "It is five thousand years old."

"Nonsense! You don't mean to say so!"

"Vellee sacred."

"I'll give you a pound if you'll turn your head the other way for a minute.

"Whatee for?" enquired Loo Chow.

"I want it to take away with me."

The guide hesitated a moment.

Then he said—

"Givee money. Me not lookee."

Mole put his hand in his pocket and produced a sovereign, which he presented to his companion.

Loo Chow looked away from him, and Mr. Mole, leaning over the table, seized the joss.

He held it up admiringly.

"By Jove!" he muttered, "this is an acquisition. If not strictly a work of art, it is quaint and unique. I am proud to be the possessor of it."

He placed it under his coat.

Having obtained the treasure, he was anxious to get away.

He had seen all he wanted to see of the famous Temple of Kiang.

It was lunchtime.

Thirst and hunger reminded him that the lunch hamper was in the carriage at the tea-house.

A horrible suspicion entered his mind.

Some cunning and daring thieves might have discovered it; if so, he would have to put up with the simple, and not over appetising fare of the tea-house.

"Loo Chow," he exclaimed, "we will retire."

There was no answer.

The guide was nowhere to be seen.

He had vanished suddenly and silently, like a Mahatma at the sound of an astral bell.

"Hang the fellow!" muttered Mole, "I hope he is not going to betray me. That would be awkward."

For a moment he had a repentant idea of putting the joss back from where he took it.

But the greed of the collector was upon him.

He felt that he must retain it at all hazards.

Grasping it tightly with one hand under his silk coat, he walked quickly to the staircase to go down.

When he reached the doorway, he found his progress barred by four priests.

Before he could offer any resistance, he was seized by both arms.

The silk coat was torn open, the joss discovered, and rudely taken from him.

One priest, who was an aged man, spoke very good English, and addressed him in that language.

"You have been readily admitted to this temple, free of charge, and without let or hindrance," he said.

"Yes—I— What is there to pay?" stammered Mole.

He saw that he had been found out.

His theft had been discovered by the priests.

It was an extremely serious affair.

No doubt the rascally guide had betrayed him, although he had taken his money.

At all events, he was fairly in the toils.

There was no escape now unless he came to terms with the priests of the temple.

His experience of China and the Chinese had told him that much could be done with money.

He hoped to be able to buy himself off.

In this expectation, however, he was doomed to be disappointed.

"It is not a question of payment," replied the old priest. "I have been in your country, and I know that you are rich, and that you think your money will allow you to commit offences with impunity."

"You have got your joss back," said Mole. "I am a collector of curiosities."

"It was not yours to take."

"Sell me one."

"We do not make a market of our gods," answered the priest. "They are too precious."

"I'm not particular about a few pounds,"

"You have desecrated the shrine; you have insulted the Temple of Kiang and its priests, therefore you must suffer."

"Eh—what?" Mole ejaculated.

"You will have to pay the penalty of your audacity and rashness; in short, we shall put you to the torture."

Mr. Mole's countenance fell.

"How dare you talk to me like that!" he demanded, in a faltering voice.

"We are the masters here. You stole our joss."

"But, my dear sir, allow me to respectfully inform you that the wooden monstrosity——"

"Silence!" interrupted the priest.

"Beg pardon! I meant to say—curiosity."

"No more words."

"I will speak! It is my right. The thing is once more in your possession."

"No thanks to you."

"I demand to be led before a magistrate."

"We are above the law, and administer justice in our own way. Come with us."

"I am a British subject. If you interfere with me, you will regret it, for I have rich and influential friends. Two of them are in your temple at the present moment. They know that I am here. Beware! I am Mr. Mole, Professor of Oxford University, England, and proprietor of a tea-garden in China!"

"We care not who you are!"

"Reflect! Pause!"

"You have committed sacrilege! What would you say if I came to one of your churches in your country and basely stole a piece of the communion plate, or the cross from the altar?"

"It is altogether different."

"Not at all. Our religion is as sacred to us, as yours to you. Come!"

Mr. Mole made no further resistance.

He saw that it was useless to argue the point with the priest.

It was a dilemma from which he could not escape.

They led him gently, but firmly, up the stairs to the fourth story of the pagoda.

It was used as a kind of reading and lounging room.

He was placed in a chair, and his arms were tightly bound to the back of it.

"Let him undergo the torture of the iron boots," said the priest.

The attendants went to a cupboard and took out two boots made of iron.

In these they put Mr. Mole's feet, or what should have been his feet.

Little did they suspect that they were made of cork.

It was their impression that they were flesh and blood and bone, like their own.

So well were his artificial legs made, that they looked truly natural.

The Chinese priests were deceived.

The boots were of a large size, and the cork feet, which had socks and high shoes on them, easily went in.

"The wedges and the hammer," the priest continued.

An attendant went a second time to the cupboard, and produced a heavy hammer and four iron wedges.

He put one of the wedges inside the right boot, and began to hit it with the hammer.

The intention of the priest was to crush the bones of the foot and lame him for life, which would cause him intense agony.

Mr. Mole saw their design and smiled inwardly, with a sense of satisfaction.

So long as they operated upon the lower part of his body, they could not hurt him.

It would not do to let them know that he was half made of cork.

If they did find that out, they most likely would practise on him in some more vulnerable portion of his anatomy.

It was necessary for him to act a part.

With this end in view, as soon as the attendant struck the wedges with the hammer, he uttered a most unearthly yell.

The next blow was followed by a wild Arab howl, worthy of a dying Haden-dowa of the Soudan.

He writhed, he twisted, he contorted his features.

When the wedge had gone down into the boot the attendant did the same thing with the other foot.

Mole continued to shout, scream, squirm, and utter bad language.

At last, he let his head fall back, shut his eyes, and drew his breath gently.

He has fainted under the severity of the punishment," said the head priest.

It is enough."

"What shall we do with him, master?" asked the attendant.

"Put him in a basket and convey him under the palm-trees that grow on the left side of the temple; there leave him. If his friends find him, well and good; If not, the charitable may take him to the Hong-Kong Infirmary, for he will not walk again for months. I care not. The priests of the temple are above the law. No one dare interfere with us doing our duty. Shall our josses be stolen with impunity by foreign devils? No. All China would support us. We have taught the wretched Fanqui a lesson."

The attendant and a priest procured a large wickerwork basket, into which they put Mr. Mole, after removing the wedges and the iron boots.

He pretended to be perfectly helpless, and insensible to everything that was going on around him.

The two men took up the basket and carried it down the stairs, through the ground floor of the temple, and so on into the open space around, in a portion of which the palm trees grew.

Here they deposited the burden they had been carrying, and hastened back to the sacred pagoda.

As they went along, the attendant said—

"How the foreign devil did swear and howl."

"It was music in my ears," replied the priest.

"For a long time he will not get over it."

"If he had died it would have served him right."

"Ah! We of the temple know how to protect our josses."

Mole congratulated himself heartily on his escape, but he did not deem it prudent to move at present.

If he did, and the priests from the windows of the temple saw him walk away unhurt, they might seize him again and inflict real injuries upon him.

For once in his life he blessed himself for having artificial legs.

If his legs had been real, the iron boot and wedges would have injured him terribly.

The feet are full of little bones, the toes are tender, and the ankle is easily hurt by a knock.

It was a cruel mode of torture.

The professor resolved never to enter a joss-house again, as he had a wholesome dread of the priests.

He would consider his collection complete without adding a Chinese god to his curios.

Much as he wanted lunch, he was afraid to move.

"I must stay in this basket," he muttered, "until it is dark, though my stomach pines for corn and wine—mean cold fowl, ham, etc. Columbus! it will be a long time between drinks, quite contrary to my usual custom, but I will make up for it. It is wrong for a man of means to get into debt with his stomach. He should never owe it any thing."

With this comforting reflection Mr. Mole closed his eyes, and having nothing better to do, went to sleep.

CHAPTER XL.

YOUNG JACK AND MONDAY ARE PERPLEXED AND ALARMED ABOUT THE PROFESSOR.

After wandering about for some time on the three sections of the pagoda open to the public, Jack and Monday found that they had seen enough of it.

It is a show worth seeing," said Jack; "but it isn't a patch on Westminster Abbey or St. Peter's at Rome."

"Um nice kind of temple," replied Monday. "Where am Mr. Mole got to, sare?"

"That is what is bothering me."

"Perhaps him cop a joss, and the jossers of the pagoda cop him. Yah! yah!" laughed Monday.

"I hope not. The priests are dangerous people to tackle," replied Jack. "It would be of no use applying to our consul."

"Why not, sare?"

"He dare not interfere with the religious order. The Chinese are very fanatical, there would be a riot."

"We must have um Mole hunt, Mast' Jack."

"Where shall we look for him?"

"Moles gen'rally live underground; p'r'aps put the old silly in a dungeon."

"I won't go home without him!" cried young Jack. "If he has got into trouble, it would be a cowardly shame to leave him to his fate."

"Your father not sail without um old friend."

"I am sure he would not, therefore we must exert ourselves on the old man's behalf."

"Me carry my knife, sare," said the black, baring his gums and showing his white, gleaming teeth.

"And I have my revolver. I wish we could come across that guide chap. What was his name?"

"Loo Chow," answered Monday, "got um false look about um face, and no mistake."

They were standing in the shadow of the entrance to the great Kiang Temple.

As the black spoke, Loo Chow passed by them.

He was leaving the sacred edifice in a hurried manner.

Young Jack ran after and caught him by the arm before he had had time to descend more than a dozen steps.

"Here, I say, hold hard!" cried Jack.

Loo Chow looked up with an uneasy glance.

It was evident from his manner that he wished himself far away.

"Whatee wantee?" he demanded.

"My friend."

"Me not knowee. He payee me, I go—leavee him."

"It's an infernal lie to say you don't know," exclaimed Jack. "Come on to the bottom of the steps. Let me get you under the trees, and I'll knock some 'knowee' into you, you highly interesting specimen of a Celestial living in a flowery land."

"Lettee me go," said Loo Chow.

"Not much. Help him along behind, Monday, please."

Monday raised his foot.

The result was, that the guide went down three steps at once, and would have dragged Jack with him, had not the latter let go his hold.

Loo Chow raised himself.

In a moment, Monday was in attendance upon him.

Another vigorous kick administered to the guide while in a stooping position sent him flying.

It was a sight to see Loo Chow rolling, hopping, jumping, bumping down the steps of the pagoda.

Sometimes he would be on his feet, at others on his head, and then he would be doing the trapeze business on nothing.

He had to negotiate sixty steps before he reached the

bottom. When he did so, his body gave one bound upwards, and then he fell down as flat as a brick.

Monday put his hands to his sides, opened his capacious mouth, and laughed loudly.

"Yum, yum!" he cried. "That um bully kick, Mast' Jack. I sent him kiting. It was a hyster, as we used to say in New York."

"I hope he is not killed," replied Jack; "because I want to get some information out of him."

"These Chinamen pretty tough, sare."

"Let us go down and see if we can revive him. It is ten to one he knows what has become of Mole, or he would not have tried to bolt."

"That um moral certainty."

They descended the steps, and drew the body of Loo Chow under a tree.

He was breathing heavily, was quite senseless, and blood was issuing from his mouth and nose.

The peculiar way in which he had gone down stairs had not agreed with him.

It was clear that he was not a heaven-made acrobat, born for the profession.

"He looks bad," remarked Jack. "I fancy the poor beggar's going to kick out. It's a pity you rammed him so hard with your boot."

"I'd got to do it, Mast' Jack. Could not resist it, if I was never to eat pie again's long's I live," said Monday, with a grin.

"I am sorry. If he could speak, we might get something out of him about Mole."

"How we going to find the gentleman?"

"That's a puzzler. Let us leave Mr. Loo Chow where he is for a bit, and get farther into the shade. He may come to soon," exclaimed Jack.

"Don't you think it time for to eat um grub, Mast' Jack?" enquired Monday.

"By Jove! Yes. I'd forgotten all about it in the excitement of the moment, but while we are uncertain as to Mr. Mole's fate, I could not sit down with any appetite."

"This child could struggle with a bit."

"For shame! Don't be so selfish. Think of Mole," said Jack, in a chiding tone. "I'm going to smoke a cigarette. The palms are nice and shady just here."

"It no use thinking of Mole when um hungry," remarked Monday; "take a lot ob moles to fill this creature up Come and have some lunch, Mast' Jack."

"I tell you I shall not till I have found the professor."

"You very fond of him all at once."

"Hold your row. Here's a cigarette for you; and there's an old basket under that palm; sit down, smoke like a chimney, and make your miserable life happy."

"Me should do that, but I think our hamper up at the tea-house."

"It's all right," said young Jack.

"Is it! Yah! yah!" laughed Monday. "You see presently. Every Chinaman Johnny is a born thief. I call um daylight robber. You'll find how much you got left."

"If it is all gone, I can't help it."

"Nice kind of a picnic to come out to, and lose all the grub."

"Leave off snacking and snarling and nagging!" cried young Jack.

"I can't help it. Good things going to be stolen——"

"Sit down, and let me think what I ought to do about Mole."

Monday sat down on the old basket, leant his back against the tree, and lighted his cigarette.

His young master walked moodily up and down.

He was greatly vexed to think that Mole should have got into some trouble.

How was he to discover him and extricate him from it? In vain he racked his brains to find out how to act.

"Poor old Mole! I'm afraid he has gone up this time," he observed.

"Climbed the golden stairs—ascended um Jacob's ladder," repled Monday.

"Hold your noise, or I'll——"

"No, you won't, Mast' Jack. Never quarrel with old Monday. Ugh! what's this?"

His face assumed an expression of alarm.

"Is a mosquito biting you?" asked Jack.

"'Tain't no skeeter, sare."

"What then?"

"There's a kind of Mumbo Jumbo, or um Chinese joss about."

"Don't act the fool!"

"I tell you, Mast' Jack, there um something alive in this basket I'm sitting on."

"Bosh! how can there be?"

"You look—you listen. Something shove up—something talk."

Jack did listen attentively.

He heard a voice exclaim—

"Let me out."

Mr. Mole had been roused from his slumber.

Badly scared, Monday sprang up.

The basket opened, and the professor was revealed.

"You, sir—in a basket!" cried Jack. "What does this mean?"

"Oh, golly!" exclaimed Monday, "it am the old man."

"Thank heaven!" replied Mole. "Help me out. This is better luck than I expected."

"How did you get into the basket?"

"Thereby hangs a tale. I will unfold it."

Young Jack and Monday assisted him out of the basket, and when he was on his pins, he related his adventures.

They could not help laughing heartily.

It was the most comical adventure he had met with for a long time, although Mole was always doing something funny.

The guide had not recovered consciousness.

No one was sorry for him, because they all felt sure that he had betrayed Mole to the priests.

"Come on, boys!" said Mole; "we will go to lunch. I'm not hurt."

"Wooden legs are a great institution, sir," replied Jack.

"You bet! I have found them so."

"Do you want any more wooden gods?"

"I have done with josses. Let us be moving. These priests might get hold of me again, and then——"

He broke off abruptly.

A slight shudder ran through him.

The three lost no time in walking back to the tea-house.

Fortunately their lunch-hamper had not been touched, and they enjoyed themselves immensely.

In the cool of the evening they drove back to the plantation, which they reached in safety.

Only a few days now had to elapse before they started for the treasure island.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE WITNESS OF GUILT.

MEANWHILE matters had gone on rather seriously on board the pirate ship, "Flowery Land."

Let us return for a moment to the hours succeeding the untimely end of the wretched man, Robert Emmerson.

Just as daylight dawned, the watch was about to be changed, when an alarming discovery was made.

One of the men had disappeared.

This was Spirillo.

The other man was discovered lying upon his back on deck insensble.

This was one Von Koppenhaagen, the pirate who attempted to prevent Jack and his friends from escaping from the ship on the night of Emmerson's murder.

"Hold!" shouted the mate of the watch, "there has been some traitor's play here. Bring some water, and send for a doctor."

One ran for water and soon brought it, and they did their best to revive the unlucky Dutchman.

"Why doesn't the American doctor come," said the mate, impatiently.

The sailor who had been sent in search of the doctor, came back looking considerably upset.

"The doctor!" exclaimed the mate, impatiently. "Where is he?"

"Gone."

"Go and look after him," said the mate.

"I have looked after him everywhere, but he is not to be found."

"Bah!" ejaculated the mate, hastily, "bring him here at once—do you hear?"

"I think he must have left the ship—the two boys are gone, too."

The mate looked up.

It caugh this attention now, for the matter began to look serious.

"The boys, too?"

"Yes."

"That's strange."

Von Koppenhaagen groaned.

Then he opened his eyes.

"Der tuyvel!," he said. "Spirillo. Such a smacks to my eye, yer tuyvel!"

"Spirillo!" said the mate, eagerly; "but how did you get hurt like this?"

"Der toctor," answered the Dutchman. "Dat tam tuyvel, der Yankee doctor."

"What, the old American?" said the mate.

"Yah. I stop him as he was getting down into the boat, and he gave me der tam smack to der eye, and down I drops."

An exclamation burst from the mate.

"He's escaped, then! Confound him!"

"Zo zay I," said Von Koppenhaagen, "and der boys also; confounts der boys!"

"Stop, stop," cried the mate, "surely the boys——"

"Have escape, too—yah wohl, that is zo."

They looked through their glasses in every direction.

And looked in vain.

The little boat was long since out of sight.

"Devil take them!" cried the mate. "I'd sooner have knocked them on the head myself than have had them get off in this way."

"That's just what I proposed," said a voice at his elbow, "only you all opposed it then; now it is too late, and their escape puts us in great danger."

The mate turned round, and found the speaker was Hunston.

The man with the iron arm.

"I would have knocked them on the head," continued Hunston, viciously. "But like a pack of obstinate fools you opposed me."

"It was no fault of mine," said the mate.

"You're amongst the rest."

"It is false."

"I say it is true."

One of the crew came running up with a scared look and crying out—

"Emmerson is dead! Emmerson is murdered!"

"Emmerson!" exclaimed the pirate mate.

"Yes, Robert Emmerson. He lies dead, murdered in his cabin below."

Hunston might have been observed to change colour just then had they not been far too much engaged to notice it.

"Who can have done this dreadful deed?" said the mate. "Is there treason among us?"

The very mention of the word seemed to inspire alarm in the bystanders.

The pirates looked from one to the other and began to murmur ominously—

"Of all our new hands," said the mate, "this was the best and the bravest."

"You're not very polite," said Toro, advancing his huge body into the crowd gathered about Von Koppenhaagen, who, by the way, appeared still to be in a state of semi-insensibility.

"It is the truth," returned the mate, "and that's more in my way than politeness."

A fierce oath burst from the hot-blooded Italian, and he laid his hand on his knife.

Now Hunston by this time had somewhat recovered his presence of mind.

He gave Toro a warning sign, and then he said, as though a sudden thought had occurred to him—

"The American doctor is gone—the two boys are gone—why, of course, it is clear enough who has done it."

"Who?"

"Who but the doctor!"

"Not the toctor," exclaimed Von Koppenhaagen, suddenly gaining strength, "not the toctor."

"Who knows that?" said Hunston.

"You!" returned the Dutchman, with strange vehemence, "you do—no one better."

"I!" faltered the guilty Hunston; "I!"

"Yes—you—for you did it."

"A lie!" ejaculated Hunston, "a foul lie!"

"It is true, and you know it—I know it, for *I saw you strike Emmerson down!*"

Hunston tottered back, and fell against Toro.

"The man is mad, his mind is wandering."

"Of course he is," added the Italian. "Why, Hunston was next me in the cabin the whole night."

"You'll back him up," retorted Von Koppenhaagen; "you will, of course, for you vas his aggomplice."

Toro made a rush at the Dutchman, knife in hand, and had he got at him, he would probably have got this unpleasant witness out of the way with a single blow.

But the pirates would not permit this.

They closed round Toro and hustled him back.

"Keep off, or I will not answer for your lives," said the mate, "and let's hear Von Koppenhaagen out."

"He raves," said Hunston; "he is deranged."

"Not me," said the Dutchman, desperately; "and if you can find that one-armed man's knife, you will find der blood fresh upon it—Emmerson's blood."

"Seize him!"

The mate had hardly uttered the word, when a dozen horny hands grappled with Hunston, and ransacked his pockets for the knife. But it was not about him.

"He has not been so imprudent as to keep the knife about him," said Von Koppenhaagen. "But look at his iron arm."

Hunston fought like a lion to oppose this.

"Lend me a hand, Toro," he cried, "to keep these devils off."

Toro fell to it with a will, and hurling his huge carcase amongst them, bore down two or three of the pirates by sheer weight.

But this was only a short-lived triumph.

One of the men who was down seized the Italian giant by the legs, and so hampered his movements that in a moment they had him toppled over and pinned to the deck.

Hunston was likewise soon secured, and his sleeve dragged up, revealing the mechanical arm, the ingenious workmanship of the murdered Robert Emmerson.

And then they saw the legend upon the steel arm was smeared with blood, whose freshness was beyond all question.

"See! see!" cried Von Koppenhaagen; "that is Emmerson's blood there now!"

Thus brought home to him, Hunston stammered, and faltered out some meaningless words.

But this was only confirmatory of his guilt.

"Tie him up!" said the mate.

This was done.

Hand and foot he was bound, and in such a way that he was powerless.

Toro fought desperately—but all in vain.

He was tied up likewise by the pirates.

"And now," said the mate, "bring them before the captain, and he shall fix their punishment for acting without orders."

CHAPTER XLII.

THE STEEL ARM TELLS ITS TALE.

WITH no gentle hands, the pair of ruffians were brought up before their fellow-scoundrel and leader, the Chinese captain.

The latter was a big burly fellow, and for a Chinese, really a very superior man.

One fit to command.

His superiority to his fellows was shown by the way in which he kept his men in a perfect state of discipline.

The whole crew looked up to him, and to them, his lightest word was law,

He was a man who had travelled about a good deal, and spoke several languages, our own among the number, with considerable fluency.

"What have they done?" asked the Chinese captain.

"Nothing," said Hunston, "only made ourselves hated by the crew, for seeking your interest and theirs as well as our own."

The captain turned to their accusers.

"Speak," he said. "What have you to charge them with?"

"Murder."

"It is false!" began the furious Italian.

But they soon stopped Toro's mouth.

"Who have they murdered?" demanded the captain.

"Our comrade, Robert Emmerson."

"Emmerson!" iterated the captain. "Is Emmerson dead?"

"Yes."

"And they have murdered him?"

"Yes."

"A lie!"

"Silence!" said the captain. "Who accuses them?"

"I do, gaptain," said Von Koppenhaagen, stepping for-

ward, "and I can proof my vords, for I have seen Hunzton knog him down mit my own eyes."

A murmur ran through the crew.

A wave of the captain's hand quieted them.

"How came Von Koppenhaagen to witness this murder?"

"It was my watch," said the Dutchman. "Spirillo was mit me, and he tried to bersuade me to leab der shib, to get away vrom der 'Flowery Land' mit him and somevon else, for he haf got tired of it, he says. But I says—

"'No; I vill go ven I vants to, not before."

"While ve vas talking, up comes der boy, Jack Hargavay, and dey begins to speak togeder.

"Spirillo likes der boy because der boy nurse him when he fall from der shrouds. So I lets 'em talk, and presently up comes dem two.

"Dey bounce on der young Hargavay and dry to gill him, but he rons avay, and he gets down into der cabin vere Emmerson vas asleep; so I went back to get help."

"Help for what?"

"Help to save der boy," said Von Koppenhaagen, 'he is vorth a goodly ranzome."

"Right."

"Besides vich, it is der gaptain's orders."

"True."

"Vell, before I can get far, I hears a great noise, and back I go to der cabin, and jost as I gets on der ladder, I see Emmerson defending der boy.

"Dey dries all dey can to get him, but Emmerson is too much for dem, and den Hunzton draws his knife and stigs Emmerson."

"A lie!" shouted Hunston, fiercely.

"I swear it."

"It is a base lie!" ejaculated Toro, "and the murderer is no doubt Von Koppenhaagen, who has hatched all this tale to shift the guilt on to innocent shoulders."

"Silence! Go on with your story."

"But den dey comes op der cabin stairs and sneags avay, vile I hides; an' den I hear a noise ovare dere.

"I greebs up jost in time to see Spirillo get over der ship's side, and den young Hargaway, and den der toctor—tam him! I stobs der toctor, and he gibs me a splodge in der eye dat sents me down all of a lomps on der deck vast azleep, an'—an'—an' dat's all."

A short silence followed.

"And do you believe in this?" demanded Hunston, haughtily.

"Bah!" said the Italian, contemptuously.

The Chinese captain frowned at the speaker, and then said—

"What have you to say against the charge?"

"Why, only this," returned Hunston; "Robert Emmerson was my friend. It was he who did the greatest service that living man ever did by replacing my cruel loss."

And as he spoke, he raised the mechanical arm.

"What other proof have you of their guilt?"

"You vant more proof?"

"Yes."

"Den," said the Dutchman, quite as unmoved as ever, "if you vant der broof, just look at his zteel arm!"

"Hah!"

Hunston could not keep back an exclamation of alarm.

In an instant he was seized by a dozen eager hands, and the mechanical arm was laid bare. They all strode forward to catch a glimpse of it.

Then a murmur of horror ran through the throng.

The legend on the steel arm was smeared with blood.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE SENTENCE ON HUNSTON AND TORO.

"WHAT do you say, men?"

It was the pirate captain who spoke.

The evidence was overwhelming.

The two ruffians were dumfounded, and their own confusion at this critical moment confessed their guilt.

"Guilty!"

They would have protested, but the captain would not hear them.

"Silence!" he said, in solemn and impressive tones. "That condemns you! The steel arm avenges its inventor. The legend on it dooms you to death."

They had not a word to say for themselves now.

Hunston cowered with fear.

A superstitious dread settled upon him.

And why?

Can you not guess?

He remembered Robert Emmerson's words concerning the legend on the mechanical arm.

Already had the prediction of the luckless Protean Bob been verified in a certain manner.

The steel arm had been raised against a friend, and already had it betrayed the guilt of the wearer.

Hunston remembered all the peculiarities of the unfortunate Emmerson, and shuddered when he thought of the solemnity with which he—Emmerson—had predicted what had happened.

"What shall we do with them?" demanded the captain.

"Hang them!" shouted the pirates.

"Get ready the rope."

By the alacrity displayed in making the ghastly preparations, it was clear that the verdict was in accordance with their wishes.

Toro was the boldest of the two desperadoes, but his heart quailed at what he now beheld.

"Is it possible," he said to himself, "that I have passed through all the many varied scenes and episodes of my life to come to this? To be hanged by a set of Chinese pirates. No, no; it can not be."

He would not accept his fate without an effort on his own behalf.

"You will do what you like, comrades," he said; "but might is not always right—nor is it now. You have no more right to dispose of our lives than we have to dispose of yours. When we joined you, it was to bring you certain information which was to be useful to you, and the profit to accrue from it was to be divided equally between us. And now that you have all we can bring, it is an easy way of getting out of your part of the bargain to assassinate us under a pretext."

The Chinese captain appeared to be in some measure struck by this bold address.

"You have some right to speak thus, Toro," he said, "but——"

"Right!" echoed the Italian, bitterly, following up with eagerness the faintest advantage; "who would venture to deny the right?"

"You have heard your sentence," said the captain.

"Yes."

"And you?" he added, turning to Hunston.

"I have."

"Then what have you to urge in mitigation of your doom?"

"This," retorted Hunston, with a brief flash of boldness: "you have no right to take our lives. We came here—trusted ourselves in perfect good faith in your hands, and had you not wanted our services or our information, you should have told us so, or let us know that you wanted to part company with us."

"Supposing we spared your lives, what would you propose?"

"We have no suggestion to make," replied Toro, obstinately. "We are innocent of all crime, and can have nothing to say."

"Then I will speak for you," said the captain.

Then turning to the crew, he went on to say—

"These two men have merited death at our hands. I object to these strong measures among ourselves, and propose that we should set them adrift in a boat, and let them shift for themselves. What do you say?"

But few dissentient voices were heard, when the captain spoke.

"Your will is law, captain," said the men.

"Lower the boat," called the captain; "and let us have done with this job at once."

The command was speedily obeyed, and into the boat were pitched a few days' rough rations—chiefly biscuit and water.

"Now begone," said the captain, pointing to the boat.

The prisoners sullenly shook themselves together, and made a few steps forward.

Then Hunston paused.

His first sensation, on hearing his punishment mitigated thus, had been one of unfeigned relief.

Now he began to feel uneasy.

An inward warning was at work, telling him that he was being conducted to a living death.

Death by slow torture.

Death in its most horrible form of all.

Starvation.

"I refuse to go," he said.

"Then you have but a few moments to live," returned the captain.

Then turning to the men, he made them a sign to proceed with the rope.

"What do you say?" said the captain to Toro; "do you go, or"—and here he gave a significant glance at the preparations at the rope—"stay!"

Toro grunted.

"It's no choice, captain," he said. "I will go."

"Over with you then."

With many a muttered imprecation, the huge Italian got over the ship's side, and was lowered into the boat.

"Now, men, place the rope round the other's neck, and off with him," said the captain.

They began to drag Hunston away, but the latter's fears got the better of his sullenness now, and he cried out for mercy.

"Since you give me the choice," he said, "I'll go with Toro."

The captain frowned.

"I gave you no choice, I only gave orders."

"Then I obey," said Hunston, eagerly.

"You must beg it as a favour now, upon your knees," said the captain, sternly.

"I do! I do!" said Hunston, on his knees, grovelling and abasing himself.

"Lower yet—in the dirt—prostrate yourself, or you shall hang for the gulls to peck at."

Hunston obeyed.

His fears took every spark of manhood from him, if ever he had been possessed of any.

"Mercy! mercy!" he cried, "any thing better than that."

The pirate captain spurned him with his foot, and turned away with a look of unutterable disgust.

And then they dragged the wretched Hunston up, and dropped him into the raging sea.

"Now swim away," cried the mate, leaning over; "for if you are within range by the time we have counted a hundred, we shall fire into you."

By this time the boat was a considerable distance from the ship.

Hunston, however, was a powerful swimmer, and gradually neared it.

But he had not calculated on the fatigue caused by

an incessant use of his artificial arm, and suddenly he found his strength fail.

Toro was standing up in the boat, watching the progress of his comrade.

Suddenly Hunston threw up both arms, exclaiming—

"Help, Toro! help me, for I am sinking."

CHAPTER XLIV.

MAGIC ISLAND AND FAIRY CREEK.

THE Harkaway party made up their minds to leave China forthwith.

Mr. Mole disposed of his plantation and property generally for the second time, and they invested the capital, thus realised, together with some money added by Harkaway, Dick Harvey, and Jefferson.

The ship thus became the joint property of the four persons named—Isaac Mole, Harkaway, Jefferson, and Dick Harvey.

Long consultations were held with Spirillo with regard to the treasure island of the Greek Archipelago, and the ex-pirate showed them to their entire satisfaction that young Jack's confidence in him had been entirely warranted.

He had not only charts and plans of the treasure island, but he had also a written description of the place, giving the most elaborate details.

So Harkaway and his friends quickly made arrangements to start in search of the pirate's treasure on the Greek island.

Jack and his party had their adventures, but as they did not materially affect the progress of this veritable narrative, we propose simply gliding over the water to the archipelago itself, changing the scene as rapidly as though our pen were a harlequin's wand.

And when they first sighted land, after a weary waste of water had been passed, Isaac Mole, who had been limp and despondent through seasickness, suddenly stumped along the deck, and regained his wonted joyous demeanour.

"So this is Greece?" he exclaimed to his pupil, who stood beside him.

"Yes, sir," said young Jack.

"Classic Greece. 'Those Isles of Greece,' as the poet has sung."

"Ile and grease is much of a muchness, sir, I thought," said young Jack.

"My dear boy," replied the tutor, "don't give your mind to vulgar joking; punning is the lowest kind of wit."

Spirillo here came up with Dick Harvey and Mr. Jefferson.

"We shall have to shift our course a point, sir," said the former.

"Is that our destination?" asked Mr. Jefferson, pointing to the land ahead.

"No, sir."

"What is the name of that place then?"

"That sir, must be the Island of Scio."

"'Scio's rocky isle,'" said Mr. Mole, who was irrepressible, when he had a quoting fit on him.

"So that is Scio, of which we have all heard and read so much; and how far is our journey now?"

"We shall sight our island, sir, in less than an hour."

Some of the party were for landing at Scio, and making a short stay upon the island.

But this was opposed by Jack Harkaway upon several grounds.

"Let us get through our work first," said he, "and then we can play as much as you wish, and I'll join you, for I long to get over to the place myself."

"But I don't see that the case is so urgent," suggested one.

"No," answered Harkaway, "but you must remember that our friend Spirillo has made this journey with that one sole object—the pirate's secret cave."

"Yes, it is best," said Jefferson, "for it would not do to risk every thing after coming thus far."

Scio was passed about an hour when they sighted land again.

Spirillo and young Jack were standing upon the quarter-deck together, and the former handed young Jack his glass.

"There," said he, "that is our destination."

The boy took the glass, saying—

"That?"

"Yes."

"The coasts seem to be covered with vegetation," said young Jack.

"They are."

"And is it possible that that island is uninhabited?"

"Not quite," replied Spirillo.

"Then how is it the pirates contrive to——"

"Keep it to themselves. Easily," answered Spirillo. "By his unscrupulous daring he got the treasure, and the place, too, to himself. The few he has chosen to keep are men devoted to him partly by love, but a great deal more, I doubt not, by fear. Monastos is a man to dread."

Young Jack stared.

"He must be a very desperate character."

"He is."

"Quite a magician in point of fact."

The ex-pirate smiled.

"I don't quite believe in magic," he said: "but this I know—Monastos is a man who in the dark ages would have been a king. He has been a great power in the political world, as it is."

"Indeed."

"Aye, indeed. You may laugh, Master Jack, but you don't know this part of the world; you can not imagine the state of things here. Why, Monastos has been such a power that the government truckled to him—the government has bargained with him."

"Bargained!"

"Yes."

"That's rather a strong expression!" said Jack.

"It answers exactly to the state of their relations with this pirate chief. They would have beaten him under, had they possessed the power."

"But they hadn't."

"No."

"That sounds odd."

"To Englishmen—yes, I know it. But here it's very different. What would you say if I told you that Monastos has served the government as banker?"

"Banker! Come, I say, Spirillo, that is stretching it a little too far."

"Not a bit," Spirillo replied. "Monastos has, with his enormous riches, helped to make up the deficit in more than one budget—they wink at it, that's all. He has had money to lend, and they have been willing to borrow."

"Why, Spirillo," said Jefferson, coming up just then, "I thought you spoke of landing about here."

"Yes, there is a creek so cunningly concealed in the coast, that no one has ever yet detected it to my knowledge," said Spirillo.

"Indeed!" said Jefferson, with a stare.

"So well hidden, sir that you shall seek for it and not find it, even knowing of its existence."

The confidence with which the ex-pirate spoke, excited considerable curiosity, and the interest of the party increased every minute.

The command of the vessel was left exclusively now to Spirillo, who scanned the coast closely, as they glided by.

Watching his expression closely, they perceived that a smile of satisfaction flitted across his face as he turned away and closed his telescope.

Then he gave orders for swinging the ship round a bit so as to set her full at a narrow little creek, whose banks were covered with thickly-grown trees and shrubs. So thickly as to appear wellnigh impenetrable.

Moreover, the creek did not appear to be more than a few feet wide, and as for its depth, it must be insignificant.

"Why, I can see to the end of the creek," declared one of the sailors.

"Well, if that's Cap'n Spriller's harbour, I think we shan't want much harb'ring long," said another sailor.

"What do you mean by that, my good man?" asked a voice at his elbow.

It was Mr. Mole.

The worthy Isaac was getting a bit uneasy.

"What do you mean?" repeated Mr. Mole, as the sailor stared very hard at him.

"Why, if your honour must know—and axing your pardon," was the sailor's reply, with a scrape, "I think we shall find the 'Sea Mew' on the beach—or mebbe on the rocks, keel up'ards."

"Goodness me!" ejaculated the tutor. "Don't you think she's sound?"

"Lawks, yes, she's right and tight."

"Tight," thought Mr. Mole, who was not to say strictly *compos mentis* himself. "That's an insinuation. The fellow means to hint that the ship'll roll over because she's tight; I'll report that fellow."

The "Sea Mew" swung round, answering her helm as truly as one of the penny steamers on the Thames, and shot

into the little creek, and through the foliage, which parted on being touched as readily as if it had been a screen of feathers, and closing in upon her, completely screened her from the view of any passing vessel on the ocean highway.

And as soon as they passed by the first dense screen of foliage, the creek widened, making a very respectable harbour

"I propose that we cast anchor here, Spirillo," said Harkaway.

"Good."

Young Jack and his companion, Harry Girdwood, stood amongst the crowd on deck, eagerly watching the progress of the vessel.

"I'll bet I'm the first to land."

"I'll have you, Jack," retorted Harry.

And then they both made a rush and a scramble, when a pretty musical voice, close by, told them that they had both lost.

"Somebody is there before you," said little Emily, with a merry laugh; "look up there."

They obeyed, and there they saw Nero, perched on the topmost branch of a lofty tree.

"You vagabond!" shouted young Jack, shaking his fist at the agile monkey, "you have stolen a march on us."

Nero grinned his reply.

Moreover, he retorted by an undignified gesture, that his young master had taught him with infinite pains—that defiant sign that is accomplished by placing the thumb to the nose and stretching out the fingers.

"I'm next at any rate," cried young Jack.

And before Harry Girdwood could guess what he was after, he had scrambled up, and stood bowing to the company generally that was assembled on the deck of the "Sea Mew."

"Brave hearts! Welcome to Magic Island!" cried young Jack. "Hurrah, hurrah!"

THE END.

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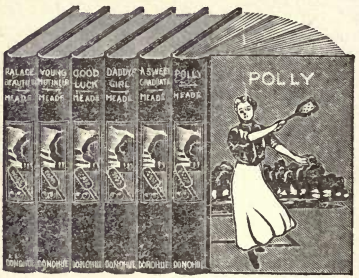

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