

Why I did not go to Sea

R.M. Ballantyne

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Chapter One.

There is mystery connected with the incidents which I am about to relate. Looked at from one point of view, the whole affair is mysterious eminently so; yet, regarded from another point of view, it is not so mysterious as it seems. Whatever my reader may think about it as he goes along, I entreat him to suspend his judgment until he has reached the conclusion of my narrative. My only reason for bringing this mysterious matter before the public is, that, in addition to filling me with unutterable surprise, it had the effect of quenching one of my strongest desires, and effectually prevented my becoming a sailor.

This, I freely admit, is not in itself a sufficient reason to justify my rushing into print. But when I regard the matter from what may be termed a negative point of view, I do feel that it is not absolutely presumptuous in me to claim public attention. Suppose that Sir John Franklin had never gone to sea; what a life of adventure and discovery would have been lost to the world! what deeds of heroism undone, and, therefore, untold! I venture to think, that if that great navigator had not gone to sea, it would have been a matter of interest, (knowing what we now know), to have been told that such was the case. In this view of the matter I repeat it, as being of possible future interest, that the incident I am about to relate prevented my becoming a sailor.

I am said to be a soft boy that is to say, I WAS said to be soft. I'm a man now, but, of course, I was a boy once. I merely mention this to prove that I make no pretension whatever to unusual wisdom; quite the reverse. I hate sailing under false colors not that I ever did sail under any colors, never having become a sailor and yet I shouldn't say that, either, for that's the very point round which all the mystery hangs. I DID go to sea! I'm rather apt to wander, I find, from my point, and to confuse my own mind, (I trust not the reader's). Perhaps the shortest way to let you understand how it was is to tell you all about it.

My name is Robert Smith not an unusual name, I am given to understand. It was of little use to me during the period of my boyhood, for I never got any other name than Bob sometimes SOFT was added. I had a father. He loved me. As a natural consequence, I loved him. He was old, partially bald, silver-haired, kind, affectionate, good, five feet six, and wore spectacles. I, at the time I write of; was young, stout, well-grown, active, and had a long nose much too long a nose: it was the only point in regard to which I was sensitive. It was owing to the length of this member, I believe, that I once went by the name of Mozambique. You see, I conceal nothing. The remarkable the mysterious the every way astonishing incidents I am about to relate, require that I should be more than usually careful and particular in stating things precisely as I saw them and understood them at the time.

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In this view of the matter I should remark that the softness with which I was charged did not refer to my muscles they were hard and well developed but to my intellect. I take this opportunity of stating that I think the charge unjust. But, to conclude my description of myself; I am romantic. One of my dearest companions used to say that my nose was the same, minus the tic! What he meant by that I never could make out. I doubt if he himself knew.

My chief delight in my leisure hours was to retire to my bedroom and immerse myself in books of travel and adventure. This was my mania. No one can conceive the delight I experienced in following heroes of every name over the pathless deep and through the trackless forests of every clime. My heart swelled within me, and the blood rushed through my veins like liquid fire, as I read of chasing lions, tigers, elephants, in Africa; white bears and walrus in the Polar regions; and deer and bisons on the American prairies. I struggled long to suppress the flame that consumed me, but I could not. It grew hotter and hotter. At last, it burst forth and this brings me to the point.

I thought one dark, dismal night in the middle of November I thought, (mind, I don't say I determined; no, but I thought), of running away from home and going to sea!

I confess it with shame. The image of my dear father rose before me with a kind and sorrowful look. I repented; started to my feet, and seized the book I was reading with the intention of tossing it into the fire. In doing so, I accidentally turned over a leaf. There was an illustration on the page. I looked at it. An African savage firing the whole contents of a six-barreled revolver down the throat of a Bengal tiger, without, apparently, doing it any harm! I thought not of the incongruous combination. My soul was fired anew. Once again I thought of running away from home and going to sea not by any means with the intention of remaining at sea, but for the purpose of reaching foreign if possible unknown lands.

Having conceived the thought, I rose calmly, shut the book carefully, but with decision, thrust my hands firmly into my pockets, knitted my brows, and went out in search of my bosom friend John Brown also a commonplace name, I believe at least, so it is said.

Jack, as I used to call him, had a mother, but no father his father died when Jack was an infant. I've often fancied that there was a delicate bond of union between us here. He had a mother, but no father. I had a father, but no mother. Strange coincidence! I think the fact helped to draw us together. I may be wrong, but I think so. Jack was on a visit to us at the time, so I had only to cross the passage to reach his room.

Come in, he cried, as I knocked.

Jack, come to my room. It's more comfortable than yours. I want your advice.

He rose, in some surprise, and followed me.

If John Brown's name was commonplace, his person was certainly not so. He looked like a young lord. He was a noble fellow, by nature if not by birth. A clear, sunny face, masculine chin and nose, sweet, firm mouth, the eye of an eagle, and the soft, curly, golden hair of a child. Tall, broad-shouldered, elegant, bold as a lion, gentle and kind as a lamb such was my best, my dearest friend, Jack.

Jack, said I, I'm going to run away!

My friend fell into a chair, put both legs straight out, and looked at me in speechless amazement for a second; then he burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter.

Jack, I repeated, I'm going to run away.

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You'll do nothing of the sort, said he.

And, I continued, regardless of his remark, I mean that you shall run away with me.

I'll do nothing of the sort, he replied. But come, Bob, my boy, you're joking. Surely this is not the object for which you called me out of my room.

Indeed it is. Listen to me, Jack. (I looked at him impressively. He returned the look, for Jack was earnest as well as gay.) You know that my dear father positively refused to let me go abroad, although I have entreated him to do so again and again. Now I think that's hard, you know. I love my dear father very much, but

You love yourself better. Is that it?

Well, put it so if you choose. I don't care. I'm going to run away, and if you won't go with me you can stay at home that's all.

Come, come, Bob, don't be cross, said Jack, kindly; you know you don't mean it.

But I do; and I'm sure I don't see what it is that prevents you from going too, said I, testily.

H'm! well, there is a small matter, a sort of moral idea, so to speak, that prevents.

And what is that?

Respect for my mother! Bob, my boy, I've been too deeply imbued with that in my babyhood to shake it off now, even if I wished to do so; but I don't, Bob, I don't. I'm proud of my mother, and, moreover, I remember her teachings. There's one little verse I used to repeat to her every Sunday night, along with the rest of the ten commandments, 'Honor thy father and thy mother,' etcetera. It seems to me that running away is rather flying in the face of that. Doesn't it strike you in that light, Bob?

I was silent. I felt that I had no argument against such reasoning. Jack rose.

It's late, Bob; we are to start on our fishing expedition to-morrow morning at six, so it behoves us to get into bed. Good-night! and think over it!

I seized his hand and pressed it warmly.

Good-night, Jack, I will!

Chapter Two.

My bedroom was a small one, with little furniture in it. A small iron stove in the fire-place acted instead of a grate, and as I was accustomed to read late my father allowed me to light it in cold weather. It was blazing cheerfully when Jack left me, and the bright gleams of ruddy light that darted through the chinks of the door and fell on the opposite wall, threw the light of my solitary candle quite into the shade.

I have already remarked that the night was dark and dismal. In addition to that, it was stormy. The wind moaned drearily among the venerable elms that surrounded our quiet country residence, and ever and anon came in sharp, fitful gusts that caused the window-frames to rattle, and even shook the house, at times, to its foundation. Heavy

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drops of rain fell occasionally on the window-panes, and in a few minutes the storm broke forth in full violence.

As the old house had stood many such, in years gone by, I did not give myself much concern about the gale; but pulled down the blind, placed my little table and books near the stove, and, drawing in my chair, sat down to think. How long I remained in this condition I cannot tell; but my reveries were broken by the large clock on the stairs striking twelve.

I started up, and clinching my hands exclaimed aloud, No! I've made up my mind, I WON'T run away! Under the impulse of the feeling I threw open the door of the stove and heaped on fresh coals, muttering to myself; as I did so, No, I won't run away, I won't run away; no, no, no, I won't run a

I was checked suddenly by my eye falling a second time on that terrific African savage sending from his revolver a charge down the throat of that magnificent Bengal tiger, that would have blown the inside entirely out of any living creature smaller than an elephant. I sat down. I gazed at the picture. I read the account. I followed up the adventurous savage. My head reeled with excitement. A strange terrible heat seemed to dart like lightning through my veins, and the book began to flicker before my eyes. I became alarmed.

Surely some terrible fever is seizing on me! I exclaimed, and in the terror of the thought I started up and paced my room rapidly. But the fire increased, and my head swam. I meditated ringing the bell and alarming the household; but the thought of this quieted me, and gradually I became calmer.

It was at this moment that my former resolution returned upon me with tenfold violence. I'll submit to this no longer, I growled between my teeth; I WILL run away!

The instant I said that, I felt as if I were imbued with a determination that nothing could shake. Jack's reasoning never once came into my mind. I took down the knapsack that hung on a nail ready packed for the intended fishing expedition of the morrow. I buckled it on; put on my thickest shoes, and, seizing a stout cudgel, issued softly from my apartment, and tapped gently at Jack's door.

Come in!

I entered, and was overwhelmed with surprise at finding my friend standing in the middle of the room accoutred for the road just like myself. He put his finger to his lips.

Hush! Bob. I was on the point of going to your room to say that I've made up my mind to run away with you.

I was staggered. I did not relish this unaccountable change. If I had persuaded him to go, it would have been all right; but to find him thus ready and eager was unnatural. I felt as if I were accountable for this change in his opinions and actions, and immediately, strange to say, experienced a tendency to dissuade him.

But, Jack, you forget what you said to me some hours ago.

No, I don't, he answered, gloomily.

Perhaps we'd better think over it again.

No, we won't. Come, Bob, don't show the white feather now. Don't waste time. It's about dawn. It's too late to reason. You have tempted me, and I have given in.

Saying this, he seized me by the collar and pushed me before him.

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And now the mysterious events which I am about to relate began. The conduct of my friend Jack on this occasion was in itself a mystery. He was by nature the gentlest and most inoffensive of human beings, except when circumstances required him to act vigorously: then he was a lion irresistible. Since the commencement of our acquaintance, which was of many years' standing, he had never by word or look given me the slightest cause for anger; and yet here he was grasping me violently by the collar and pushing me forcibly before him.

I did not get angry. My conscience smote me. I said to myself; Ah! this is the result of evil conduct. I have tempted Jack to act against his judgment; he is no longer what he was.

Instead of melting under this feeling, I became hardened. I stepped out, and so dragged my friend after me down the back stairs which led to the lower part of the house, where the servants slept. Jack whispered, All right, and let go his hold.

Now we must be cautious, I said, in a low tone, as we proceeded to traverse the passage, on each side of which were the rooms occupied by the servants. We took off our shoes and advanced on tip-toe. At the far end of the passage we heard a sound like a trombone. That was the butler; we knew of his snoring propensities, and so were not alarmed. His door was open; so was his mouth I could see that plainly, as I passed, by the dim light of a candle which he always burned at night. The butler was excessively fat. I merely mention this because it accounts for the fact of his not awaking when we unlocked the street door. Fat people are not easily wakened.

The lock of the door was an old-fashioned large one. It grated slightly as Jack turned the key; then at a certain point the key lost control over it, and it shot back with a report like a pistol-shot! My heart flew to my mouth, and almost choked me. The butler gave a double snort and turned in his bed as Jack and I darted round an angle of the wall and hid in a dark corner. The butler soon gave unquestionable evidence that he had not been thoroughly aroused, and we were about to issue from our place of concealment, when the door of our man-servant's room opened, and he peeped out. Edwards that was his name was a stout young fellow, and we felt certain that he would not rest satisfied until he had found out the cause of the noise.

We were right. He stepped cautiously into the passage with a poker in his hand. My heart sank within me. Just at that moment a cat darted across the passage with its back and tail up, and its eyes glaring. Edwards flung the poker at it, missed the cat, and knocked over an old tin umbrella-stand, with which the poker made a hideous clatter on the stone floor of the passage.

Ha! you brute! Wot? it's you as is makin' all that row, is it?

Oh, dear, Edwards, what's happened? cried a shrill voice from the other end of the passage it was cook.

Oh, nothin', only the cat, replied the man as he sauntered into the butler's room. The butler seemed at that moment to have been smitten with a fit of apoplexy we could see him from our dark corner; he grew purple in the face, gasped once or twice, choked awfully, and then sat up in bed staring like a maniac.

Oh! Jack, I whispered in horror.

Don't be alarmed; it's only his usual way of waking up. I've seen him do it often.

What noise is that? What's going on down there? cried a deep bass voice in the distance. It was my father. No one replied. Presently my father's bedroom bell rang with extreme violence. Edwards rushed out of the butler's room. The butler fell back, opened his mouth, and pretended to be asleep snoring moderately. This of itself would have undeceived any one, for when the old hypocrite was really asleep he never snored MODERATELY. The cook and housemaid uttered two little shrieks and slammed their respective doors, while the bell rang violently a second time.

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Now for it, whispered Jack. He opened the back door softly, and we darted out. A streak of pale light on the horizon indicated the approach of day. We tried to close the door behind us, but we heard the butler choke, gasp, and shout at the top of his voice, Hi! hallo! At the same instant the old dinner-gong sent a peal of horrible sound through the house, and we took to flight filled with unutterable terror.

Oh, how we did run! We had scarcely cleared the offices and got fairly into the avenue when we heard Edwards shout as he started in pursuit.

We were both good runners, but Jack soon took the lead, and kept it by about five yards. Our feet scarcely touched the ground. I felt as if I had wings, so great was my terror. We reached the end of the avenue. The gate was full five feet high. To my inexpressible amazement, Jack went clear over it with one bound!

I have never been able to analyse my feelings and impulses on that occasion. I am, and always was, rather a poor jumper; yet, without hesitation, without even a doubt as to my ability to clear it, I went at that gate like an Irish hunter at a stone wall, and leaped fairly over it! The leap did not even check my pace for an instant. I remember, in the whirl and confusion of the moment, that I attributed my almost superhuman powers to terror; but the feeling that we were pursued again absorbed all my faculties.

We dashed on at a killing pace, and, strange to say, without feeling the slightest fatigue. Having cleared the avenue, we mounted the high ground in the neighborhood, passed the church, entered the village, and went through it like a railway train; came out upon the road beyond, and reached a wooded part of the country where several roads and by-paths diverged from the highway. All this time Edwards kept close on our heels. He did not gain on us, but we felt that we did not distance him. Down here! cried Jack, doubling suddenly into a lane.

We passed a small bridge that crossed a mill-lake. Beyond, there was a farm-yard. The path-way was high, and we could look down on the tops of the stacks. One of these, a haystack, stood about ten feet from the low wall that skirted the road. It had been half pulled down, and the hay was loose. Without a word or warning Jack sprang completely across this space, turned right over, and plunged head first into the hay. I followed instantly, and disappeared. We lay for a few seconds perfectly still, and heard Edwards pass at full speed. Then we struggled out and watched him out of sight.

Sliding down, we regained the lane, returned to the high-road, and continued our flight.

We saw no more of Edwards.

About eight miles from my father's house there was a small seaport town. We made for this, and reached it just as the sun rose in all his golden glory on the distant edge of the sleeping sea.

Chapter Three.

On entering the village we found it in a state of unusual bustle. I had often been there before, and had thought it rather a quiet place for a seaport. But now there was a sort of bustling activity and an air of mystery about it that I could not understand. I mentioned my feelings to Jack, but he did not answer me, which was a piece of rudeness so unusual, that I could only suppose that his mind was so deeply affected with the circumstances, in which we had placed ourselves, as to render him somewhat absent.

On arriving at the chief, indeed the only, inn of the place, we discovered the reason of all the bustle. A strange ship had arrived the night before a large ship, fitted out for an expedition to some distant part of the world. She had come to complete her supply of provisions and to engage a few extra hands.

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Here then was a fortunate opportunity! We asked at once where we could find the captain. He was in the bar-room of the inn. We entered it and found him there, standing with his back to the fire and a coat-tail under each arm. He was a big fat man, with a savage expression of countenance, and ragged head and beard, and a red nose.

Sir, said Jack, we wish to ship with you.

The captain stared, took a pencil-case out of his pocket, picked his teeth therewith, and surveyed us from head to foot.

Oh, you do, do you? You wish to ship with me?

Yes.

Suppose I don't want you.

Then we shall have to try elsewhere.

The captain smiled grimly, shut up the pencil-case, and said

What can ye do?

We can read, and write, and count, said I, taking the words out of Jack's mouth; for I felt that his brusque manner of replying was not calculated to commend us to the captain.

Oh, you can read, and write, and count, can ye? repeated the captain, with deep sarcasm. If ye had said ye could feed, and fight, and shout, it would have bin more to the purpose.

Perhaps we can do a little of that sort of thing, too, suggested Jack, with a broad grin.

Hah? ejaculated the captain. Wot else can ye do?

Oh, anything, said Jack.

I gin'rally find, observed the captain, that w'en a boy says he can do anything, he very soon proves that he can do nothing.

Well, I don't mean that exactly, rejoined Jack; I mean we can TRY anything.

Ha! that's more to the pint. Where did ye come from?

We looked at each other. That, said I, is a matter of no importance to any one but ourselves. We have run away from home, and we want to go to sea as fast as possible. If you are willing to take us, we are willing to go. What say you?

Run away! ho! ho! run away! said the captain, chuckling; you are just the lads I want. Nothing like runaway boys for me. I wouldn't give a pinch of snuff for your good boys that do wot they're bid. Commend me to the high-spirited fellers that runs away, and that folk are so wicked as to call bad boys. That's the sort o' stuff that suits OUR service.

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I did not by any means relish the manner and tone, in which all this was said: so I asked him what particular service he belonged to.

You'll know that time enough, he replied, laughing; but after all, why shouldn't I tell ye? there's nothing to conceal. We're a discovery-ship; we're goin' to look for Sir John Franklin's expedition, and after we've found it we're going to try the North Pole, and then go right through the Nor'-west passage, down by Behring's Straits, across the Pacific, touchin' at the Cannibal Islands in passin', and so on to China. Havin' revictualled there, we'll bear away for Japan, Haustralia, Cape o' Good Hope, and the West Indies, and come tearin' across the Atlantic with the Gulf-stream to England! Will that suit ye?

It may seem strange, and the reader will hardly believe me when I say, that, transparently absurd though this statement was, nevertheless I believed every word of it and so did Jack. I saw that by his glowing eye and heightened color.

And when do you sail? I inquired joyfully.

In half an hour; so get aboard, boys, and don't give so much tongue. I've other matters to mind just now. Come, be off!

We retreated precipitately to the door.

What's her name? inquired Jack, looking back.

'The Ring-tailed Smasher,' cried the captain, fiercely.

The what?

'The Ring-tailed Smasher,' roared the captain, seizing the poker.

We vanished. In five minutes we were on board the ship. To this hour I have no remembrance of how we got on board. My brain swam with intense excitement. I felt as if I were flying, not walking, as I ran about the deck and clambered up the rigging.

Shortly after, the captain came aboard. The rope that attached the vessel to the quay was cast off, the sails flew out as if by magic, and the shore began to fall rapidly astern.

It was now, for the first time, that a full sense of what I had done came over me. I leaned over the stern of the ship, and gazed at my native shore as it grew fainter in the distance, until the familiar hills became a mere line of blue on the horizon, and were finally blotted from my view by the blinding tears that sprang suddenly to my eyes. Oh! the agony of that moment I shall never forget. The words that Jack had quoted to me the night before Honor thy father and thy mother seemed to be stamped in letters of fire within my brain. I felt keenly that, in a moment of passionate self-will, I had done that which would cause me the deepest sorrow all my life.

In that dark hour I forgot all my romantic notions of travel in foreign lands; I cared not a straw for hunting, or fighting, or wild adventures. I would have cheerfully given worlds, had I possessed them, to be permitted to undo the past to hasten to my dear father's feet, and implore forgiveness of the evil that I had done. But regret was now unavailing. The land soon sank below the horizon, and, ere many hours had passed, our ship was scudding before a stiff breeze and leaping wildly over the waves of the Atlantic Ocean.

Chapter Four.

Ho! tumble up there, tumble up! All hands, ahoy! tumble up! Look alive, lads; there's work to do, my hearties!

Such were the words, uttered in the most terrifically violent bass tones, that awoke me on the first morning after I went to sea. Instantly all the men around me leaped out of their hammocks. They were all half-dressed, and I noticed that the greater part of them completed their toilet in the short interval between quitting their hammocks and gaining the deck. Jack and I had lain down in our clothes, so we were on deck almost as soon as the others.

Here the most unexpected sights assailed us. It seemed to me as if a miraculous change had taken place on everybody and everything during the night. The ship when she had set sail was as untidy and lumbered about the decks as a merchantman usually is on quitting port. Now everything was clean, in its place, snugly fastened, and in order. The sails appeared to have undergone some modification. I fancied, too, that the masts raked aft a good deal more than they had done, and round the foot of them were ranged muskets, pistols, cutlasses, and boarding-pikes, where masses of cordage and handspikes had been before. The hencoops had vanished, and in their place were rows of brass carronades, while in the center of the deck an enormous swivel gun occupied the place, on which the long-boat had formerly rested. Even the captain seemed to have changed. His costume was somewhat Eastern in its character, and his whole aspect was much more ferocious than when I first saw him.

Vague and terrible suspicions crossed my mind as I viewed these wonderful transformations; but I had no time to indulge them, for the men had hastened with the promptitude of men-of-war's men to their stations, leaving Jack and me alone in the middle of the deck.

Hallo, boys! shouted the captain, no idlers allowed aboard this ship. Here, stand by this gun, and lend a hand with the ropes when you're told to. Obey orders, that's the only duty I've got to lay on you.

We hastened to the gun pointed out, and while I was standing there waiting for orders, I looked over the side, and, for the first time, became aware of the cause of these proceedings.

About two miles to leeward of us, just off our larboard bow, I saw a large ship running under a press of canvas. She was a huge clumsy-looking merchantman, and I heard our first mate say she was an East-Indiaman.

Then why chase her? thought I, and why these warlike preparations?

It struck me at the time, I remember, that the captain must have guessed my thoughts, for he glanced at me quickly, and then turning to the mate, with a sarcastic smile, said,

I thought you had better sight than you seem to have. In my judgment that's a Russian merchantman, and as we happen to be at war with Russia just now I'll take the liberty of overhauling her.

Instead of replying to this, the mate burst into a loud laugh in which, strangely enough, he was joined by the captain and all the men who were within hearing. I felt uneasy at this, and expressed my feelings in a whisper to Jack, who shook his head and looked at me mysteriously, but said nothing.

I felt that, even though we were at war with Russia, we, as a discovery-ship, had no right whatever to interfere in the capacity of a war-ship, and I was about to remonstrate with the captain at all hazards, when my thoughts were suddenly changed by the order being given to fire a shot across the stranger's bows. The gun at which I was stationed was run out.

Stand by! cried the captain.

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Fire!

In the excitement of the moment, and without knowing what I had to do, though deeply impressed with the feeling that something ought to be done when an order was given, I pulled violently at the rope which I had in my hand; the effect of which was to move the gun very slightly when it exploded. The result was that the ball, instead of passing well ahead of the strange vessel, passed close to its bow, and carried away half of the bowsprit.

The captain turned on me a face absolutely blazing with wrath. He seized a handspike, and I thought he was about to dash out my brains on the spot. He hissed at me between his clinched teeth; then, suddenly bursting into a shout of fiendish laughter, he cried,

Well, well, after all there's no harm done. It'll make them understand that we don't mean to trifle with 'em. Clear the boarding-pikes there. Are the grappling-irons ready?

Aye, aye, sir.

By this time the stranger had hove-to, and we were bearing down on her so rapidly that a few minutes more would bring us alongside. Our men stood ready for action. They were the worst-looking set of scoundrels I ever beheld.

Ship ahoy! shouted our captain as we drew near, what ship's that?

A smart young officer leaped on the bulwarks, and cried, Come alongside and I'll tell you. Show your colors.

At the word our colors went up, as colors are usually hoisted, rolled up like a ball. I watched with intense interest, for I felt that now at last I should know our true character. The ball of what seemed to be dark-blue bunting reached the masthead and hung for one instant then its folds fell heavily, and were swept out by the breeze. The flag was black, and in the center were a white skull and crossbones!

I almost fainted at the sight. I looked at Jack, who stood beside me. He was as white as a sheet; but his lips were firmly compressed, and his brows knitted.

Do we deserve what we have got? he muttered in a deep, sad voice.

I did not reply; but my conscience answered, We do at least I do.

We were now hove-to about a pistol-shot to leeward of the ship, and our captain, leaping on the bulwark, cried, with a dreadful oath, Send your gig alongside instantly with your captain and papers. If you don't look sharp I'll blow you out of the water.

He had scarcely finished speaking, when a loud shout rent the air, and the bulwarks of the strange vessel swarmed with soldiers. At the same moment, twenty concealed ports flew open and twenty heavy guns were run out.

Our captain gave the word, Fire! as he leaped on the deck and rushed to the wheel. The word must have been given at the same moment on board the chase, for both broadsides burst simultaneously from the vessels' sides with a deafening crash that sounded ten times louder and more terrible than the loudest thunder I ever heard. We were so near that the combined volumes of smoke completely blinded and almost suffocated me. I fancied, for a moment, that our powder-magazine had blown up.

The thunder of the broadsides was followed by the most appalling shrieks I ever heard, and by the ceaseless rattle of musketry as the soldiers opened on us with deadly precision. Through the smoke I saw men falling around me,

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and the decks were immediately covered with blood, while bullets and splinters of wood whistled round my head like hail.

I was stunned. I felt like one in a horrid dream. Gradually the smoke cleared away, and then I saw that our captain had put down the helm and our vessel was sheering off to leeward under full sail. The rapidity with which everything was done quite took away my breath. Before we were out of gun-shot the decks had been cleared, the dead thrown into the sea, the wounded carried below, and the decks washed with buckets of water.

Just then I thought of Jack, and looked round in haste. He was not there! I rushed below! he was not in his hammock. In an agony of anxiety I went down into the horrible den of blood where our surgeon was attending to the wounded. Here, amid groaning and dying men, I found my friend stretched in a cot with a blanket over him, his handsome face was very pale, and his eyes were closed when I approached. Going down on my knees beside him, while my heart fluttered with an inexpressible feeling of dread, I whispered his name.

He opened his large eyes slowly, and a sweet sad smile lit up his face for one moment, as he took me by the hand.

O Jack! Jack, my friend my brother are you wounded? I asked.

Yes, he replied, in a faint voice; I'm badly hurt, I fear.

Has the doctor dressed your wound?

He finished the the operation just before you came down.

Operation! I whispered, while a feeling of deadly sickness came over me. Where what I could not go further.

Poor Jack knew what I wished to ask. He gently lifted part of the blanket, and I felt as if I had been stunned by an electric shock on observing that his right leg had been amputated above the knee. For some moments I could not speak. I could not move. It was with difficulty that I could draw my laboring breath. Suddenly I clasped my hands,

O Jack! my beloved! my I gasped. My throat was parched. For one moment I thought I was dying. Suddenly I started up, uttered a great agonizing cry, and fell down on the deck. Then a flood of tears sprang into my burning eyes, and I sobbed as if my heart would burst asunder. I did not try to check this. It was too precious a relief to my insupportable agony. I crept close to my friend's cot, took his hand gently, and, laying my cheek upon it, wept there as I never wept before. Jack's former advice now came back to me vividly, and his words of caution, Honor thy father and thy mother, burned deep into my throbbing brain, while my accusing conscience whispered unceasingly, You brought him to this you brought him to this! My sorrow was broken in upon rudely by the first mate.

What are you doin' here, you young blackguard? he cried, seizing me by the collar, and dragging me to the foot of the ladder that led out of this bloody den. Skulking, eh! I'LL teach you to skulk; I'LL cure you o' that, my lad! I'LL tan your skin for you, and at each emphatic word he gave a blow with a rope's end that raised a bar of livid flesh across my back. There, he cried, giving me a final cut, and hurling me up the first few steps of the ladder, on deck with you!

I did not hesitate to comply. I gained the deck with unusual rapidity, smarting with pain and burning with indignation. But what I saw going on there made me almost forget my pain. The great swivel gun amidships was being cleared for action, and our captain was giving orders beside it as coolly and quietly as if nothing unusual had occurred that day.

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I was deeply impressed for a few minutes with this cool, calm indifference, which characterized the men as well as the captain; but when I had considered a little, I came to understand that they were used to battle and bloodshed, and that therefore it was quite natural. After that I ceased to wonder at anything. Indeed, the power to be astonished seemed to leave my breast altogether, and from that moment I regarded everything that happened on the pirate vessel as being quite what might be expected mere matter of course.

I now observed that we had not yet done with the supposed Russian. We had merely run astern out of range of her guns, but not beyond the range of our large swivel. In a few minutes it was ready. The captain sighted the gun, and gave the word Fire!

The ship quivered with the shock, and so large was the ball that I could distinctly trace its flight. It fell short a few yards. So, so, muttered the captain. The next will do its work.

He was right. The next ball struck the rails that ran round the poop, carried away the binnacle, and raked the upper deck from stern to stem. I could see it quite plainly with the glass.

Hurrah! shouted some of the crew.

Silence, you babies, growled the captain; time enough to crow when our work's done.

The men who had cheered fell back abashed. I noticed that they were chiefly the younger men of the crew, whose countenances were not yet utterly unhumanised by crime.

Load.

Ready.

Fire!

Again the huge iron mass sprang from the cannon's mouth, and rushed along its deadly track. It struck the top of a wave, and bounding up passed through the sails and cordage of the Russian, cutting one or two of the lighter spars, and also the main topsail halyards, which caused the yard to come rattling down, and rendered the sail useless. Seeing this, the pirate captain ordered sail to be reduced in order to keep at a sufficient distance astern to render the guns of the chase useless. Every shot from our gun now told with terrible effect. We could see the splinters fly as every ball entered the ship's stern, or swept her deck, or crashed through her rigging. Presently she turned her broadside to us.

She don't mean to waste her ammunition, surely, remarked the captain, with a sneer.

She did not mean to do so. She evidently meant to turn the tables by bearing suddenly down on us, and, if possible, give us a broadside before we could get out of range. The captain saw the intention instantly, and thwarted it.

Up your helm! Square the yards! Look alive there!

We fell off, and were soon running before the wind, with the swivel gun thundering over our stern, as it had formerly thundered over our bows. The Russian fired a broadside, and lay-to. Every ball fell short of us. We also lay-to, and now the fire was kept up steadily. The ship's fate was sealed. Those on board evidently thought so, for the colors which had hitherto been flying from the mast were presently lowered. Upon this we ceased firing, and ranged up alongside.

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Oh! you've had enough, have you? cried our captain. Perhaps you'll condescend to let your captain and papers come aboard NOW.

The Russian did not reply, but a boat was lowered. It was evident they meant to obey.

Here, you boy, cried our captain, as he paced the deck, awaiting their arrival. Here's a letter for you.

A letter, sir! I exclaimed, stepping forward, and touching my cap.

Aye, your father gave it to me just afore we set sail. He told me not to give it to you until you'd seen a little rough work. You've seen some now, I think, (he accompanied this remark with a horrible leer), so there's the letter. Go below and read it. I'll want you in half an hour for some still rougher work.

There seemed to me something very unaccountable and mysterious in this. I knew that the captain did not know my father. I had not even told him that I had a father. It seemed to me impossible that in the course of the short half-hour that intervened between the time of my engaging to serve in the RING-TAILED SMASHER, and the time of my setting sail, my father could have found out where I had run to, have met and conversed with the captain, and have written a letter to me. Yet it seemed that such was the case. I recognized the handwriting.

Whom did you get the letter from? Did you see my father?

Come, youngster, don't you go for to question me. Go below d'rectly, an' stop there till ye'r wanted.

The captain seized the end of a rope as he spoke, so I retreated at once to the bedside of my poor friend Jack, only too glad to escape from the presence of the men whom I now abhorred with all my heart.

Jack, said I, eagerly, here's a letter from my father!

He evinced no surprise, but, looking up solemnly, said, in a faint voice, Read it.

Breaking the seal, I read as follows:

My Beloved Son, I forgive you. You have sinned deeply in thus leaving me; but I know that you have repented. I know that your own conscience has rebuked you more sternly than any earthly parent could do. You cannot now recall the past you cannot undo what you have done; you must now continue your voyage, and, in order to relieve your oppressed heart, I give you my blessing. I commend you, my dear boy, to Him who is the Savior of sinners.

Beware of the captain. Obey him in all that is right, but do not serve him. Again, I say, beware of him. There are secrets concerning him that I cannot unfold. I have just been to see Jack's mother. She sends her forgiveness and blessing to her son. God bless you, boy. Your loving father,

John Smith.

My father understood human nature. No reproaches that he could have heaped upon me would have cut half so deeply into my heart as did this kind, forgiving letter. My heart was full. Yet I felt a deep undercurrent of joy at knowing that my father loved me still. I looked at Jack. He seemed to be asleep, but he was not. A single tear coursed over his pale cheek as he looked up and whispered,

We don't deserve this, Bob.

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Before I could reply, the ship was shaken by a tremendous explosion, and immediately after I heard the most appalling shrieks and yells on deck, accompanied by the clashing of swords and the scuffling of men in deadly conflict. I looked at Jack; he lay motionless, with his eyes closed. For a moment I feared that he was dead.

Bob Smith! Hallo! tumble up there, you skulker! shouted a voice down the hatchway. At the same moment two wounded men were carried into the place, and the surgeon appeared with his horrible instruments glittering, cold and sharp, on a wooden tray.

Seizing my cutlass, and thrusting a brace of pistols in my belt, I rushed on deck.

Chapter Five.

On reaching the deck I saw at once how matters stood. The Russian had allowed us to come alongside, and then, throwing out grappling-irons, had fired a broadside into us, and attempted to board. They were soon overcome, however, by the pirates, and driven back into their ship, whither they were immediately followed.

I resolved, come what might, that I would take no part in the fray; but I was carried, in spite of myself, on board the strange vessel in the rush that our men made when they drove their opponents back. There was a short, sharp skirmish on the deck of the Russian, and then the crew were driven below, and the hatches put on. I remembered having seen a number of soldiers on board when we first came up with this vessel. There were none now. Their mysterious disappearance struck me at first, but I soon forgot it in the thrilling scenes that followed.

In the middle of the vessel's main-deck there was a cage of wild beasts. How they had got there of course I knew not, but I at once concluded the ship must have been in southern climes, and these animals were being brought home to be presented to some menagerie or zoological garden. There were several fine specimens of lions and tigers, and the sight of blood which flowed plentifully on the decks had so excited these creatures that they were now filling the air with deafening roars, bounding against the sides of their cage, (which I expected every moment to see broken to pieces by their united strength), and glaring at us with the most awful expressions of ferocity I ever beheld.

Our captain, who looked almost as fierce as the wild brutes, could not make his voice heard for their roaring. In savage fury he rushed at the cage and made a desperate cut with his sword at the lion nearest the bars. The blood flowed from the wound freely, and the savage animal, being unable to wreak its vengeance on its cowardly assailant, attacked one of its comrades. This, and the blood now flowing in the cage, quite maddened them all. An indiscriminate fight ensued. The wooden partition that separated the tigers from the lions was smashed in, and the strong cage shook as if it were made of card-board.

Turn a gun in-board, yelled the captain, who seemed to have actually gone mad with passion.

The order was instantly obeyed.

Load to the muzzle grape canister chain shot. In with it.

He assisted in the operation; rammed home the extraordinary charge, pointed the gun at the cage, and applied the match. Instantly the gun leaped backwards as if it had been a living thing, broke down the bulwarks of the ship, and plunged overboard.

The effect of the shot was terrific. The cage was blown to atoms, and the mangled remains of the wild beasts were strewn about the deck. One animal, however, a magnificent Bengal tiger, had apparently escaped unhurt. It sprang

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at the captain with a hideous roar. He pointed a pistol at its open throat!

At that moment the woodcut in my book of travels flashed vividly before me. But I had not time to think. The pistol exploded, sending its contents down the creature's throat. The tiger fell short in its leap; blood poured from its mouth and nose. With another bound it cleared the bulwarks, and fell into the sea.

The calm that succeeded this thrilling incident was like a sudden lull in the midst of a furious storm. Even the pirates seemed to be solemnized by what had passed.

Now to work, cried the captain, wiping his sword, and laying it, with a brace of loaded pistols, on the capstan. What are you staring at, you fools? have you lost your senses? Open the after-hatch, and bring them up, one at a time. Get the plank ready.

The first who was led bound before the captain was the steward of the ship. He was deadly pale, and trembled very much.

Now, my man, said the captain, answer my questions. The TRUTH mind, else he touched the butt of a pistol significantly.

Where did you last sail from?

To my amazement, the man gave the name of the port from which we ourselves had sailed. I felt certain that this was a falsehood, and that the poor man's life would be forfeited. Judge, then, my surprise when the captain said,

I know that as well as you. I saw you sneak out just the day before we did. But you didn't escape me, ha! ha! You are too good to live, my man. Stand aside here till I call someone who's not quite so frightened. Here, hold him, one of you! Bring another!

I started. My heart almost ceased to beat when the next man was led forward. He was my father's man-servant, Edwards. In the confusion and horror of that hour I could not reason; but a vague sense of some mysterious impossibility having actually taken place, oppressed me in a way that I cannot explain. The ship had sailed the day before ours did! I left Edwards behind me in the race from home! How, then, did I see him before me? Then the cage of wild beasts. How was it possible that a vessel leaving an English port could have such creatures on board? Then, my father's letter; it seemed more than ever mysterious how that letter could reach me, and through such a channel, and without a word of reference to Edwards.

He did not observe me as he passed. I tried to utter his name; but my tongue was tied. I could not speak. I could not move.

Where did you last sail from? began the captain.

You'll get nothing out of me, replied Edwards, stoutly. Do your most. Torture me if you like. I defy you to your teeth.

Do you, my fine fellow? said the captain, with a bitter sneer. Then I'll just send you overboard at once. I've no time to torture you; and as I shall find plenty of your comrades willing enough to tell me all they know, I'll not trouble you any further. Ho! run out the plank there!

I knew what that meant, and a cold shiver passed through my frame as the men obeyed, and blind-folded Edwards, preparatory to making him walk the plank. I could restrain myself no longer. Darting up to the captain, I shouted in a voice of indignation,

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Do you mean to murder an innocent man, you dastardly villain?

He looked at me for a moment in surprise; then, snatching a pistol, felled me with it to the deck. I was not rendered quite insensible. I heard the shriek of agony uttered by poor Edwards, as he fell off the end of the plank into the sea; then I fainted.

How long I lay, I know not; probably not long, for I was restored to a state of consciousness by being plunged into the sea. I had no doubt that the captain had ordered me to be thrown overboard, just after I fell under his brutal blow.

Being a good swimmer, I struck out at once and made for the side of the pirate vessel, where I caught the end of a rope, and soon clambered on board. I was much exhausted, and sat down on the breech of a carronade to rest and recover my stunned and scattered faculties.

The crew of the pirate were so busily engaged with the captured ship that I found myself quite alone on the deck. Not a man remained in the ship. An idea suddenly occurred to me just then. I glanced up at the sails. They were all flapping in the wind except the fore-topsail. That sail had slewed round, and was drawing so that the vessel strained the ropes and grappling-irons that held her to the captured ship.

I sprang up burning with eager excitement. I heard the shrieks of the ill-fated victims, as one by one they walked the plank, which, fortunately for the success of my design, was thrust out on the other side of the ship. A crowbar enabled me to wrench off the grappling-irons. Two cuts of a large axe severed the cable that had been fastened to the bow, and the vessel's head fell slowly off. As it did so, all the sails filled with a sudden clap. This was observed: I heard a shout, and saw the pirates spring on the bulwarks of the prize. I flew rather than ran to the stern, where the cable that held the vessel was rigid as a bar of iron. One blow cut it, and the rope recoiled violently in the faces of the men who laid hold of it. Next moment the pirate ship was heading away before a stiff breeze which was quickly freshening to a gale. As I sprang to the helm, a shower of musket and pistol bullets tore up the deck round me, and I heard the captain's voice give the order to load the guns.

It was a few minutes before the VIS INERTIAE of the ship was overcome, so that I was within close range when a whole broadside was fired at me. But not a shot struck. They tore up the water all round, and ricocheted over me. Before they could reload I was almost beyond range, for the gale was freshening every moment, and the canvas spread was enough almost to tear the masts out of the ship. The water hissed as she flew over the heaving waves, and in a few minutes I felt that I was FREE.

Oh the feeling of wild delight that filled me when I realized this! I lashed the helm amidships, and ran down below to tell Jack what I had done. He was asleep. By a powerful effort I restrained myself, and did not disturb him. Then I rushed on deck. My brain seemed on fire. I shouted, laughed, and sang, and wept, until I began to feel a terrible sensation of dread lest I should go mad. But this, instead of calming me, caused me to dance and sing and shout the more. A burning thirst came upon me. I ran to the water-cask and drank till I could drink no more. I was refreshed; but soon the fever returned fiercer than ever. I was mad! I knew it; I felt it; but I did not care. I saw that the storm increased; this caused me to shout again with joy at the thought that I was so quickly borne away from the scene of butchery, and from the fiends in human form with whom I had so lately associated.

The gale burst in all its fury upon us. The sails were new and strong; the ship plunged into the waves, a green billow swept in-board and burst in fury on the deck, carrying away boats and loose spars. I yelled with delight, and plunged into the brine that lashed the deck from stem to stern. I heard a noise overhead; but was so confused that I could not understand what it was. As I gazed, there came a terrific blast. The mainsail split from top to bottom. The topsails burst and were blown to ribbons. At the same moment, I received a violent blow on the head.

After that, all was darkness and oblivion.

Chapter Six.

When consciousness returned to me I found myself lying on my back on the deck of a vessel, surrounded and propped up by pillows; and Jack Brown sitting beside me reading a book.

I felt a curious sensation of weakness and emptiness in my head as if it were hollow, and a strange disinclination, almost inability, to speak or think. Suddenly this passed away, and the events which I have related in the previous chapters rushed back upon my memory with vivid power.

It must have been a dream, I thought, or I must have been ill and delirious, and these things have passed through my fevered brain.

At that moment the thought of Jack's amputated leg came into my head. That will prove it, thought I, and turned quickly to look at my friend. One glance was sufficient a wooden stump occupied the place of his right leg. I groaned aloud and burst into tears.

Come, Bob, said Jack in a soft, kind tone, laying down his book and bending over me. Come, my poor fellow, keep quiet. It's about time you had your dinner. Lie still and I'll fetch it to you.

I laid my hand on his arm and detained him. Then it's all true, said I in a tone of the deepest despondency.

Is what all true?

This this horrible your leg; your leg

Jack suddenly stooped and gazed earnestly into my face. Do you know me, Bob? He trembled as he spoke.

Know you, Jack! why should I not know you? When did I ever forget you?

Thank God! he exclaimed fervently, taking my hand and pressing it to his breast. You're all right again. Oh, how I have longed and prayed for this.

All right, Jack. Have I been wrong, then?

That you have just, said Jack, smiling sadly. You've just been as mad as a March hare, that's all!

I fell flat down and gazed at him. In a minute more I raised myself on one elbow, and, looking at him earnestly, said, How long, Jack?

Just three weeks to-day.

I fell flat down again, in which position Jack left me to go and fetch me some dinner. He returned quickly with a plate of soup. Before commencing to eat it I pressed my hand on my forehead, and said

Jack, I am surrounded by mysteries. How got you so soon well? Where got you that wooden leg? How are we here alone? Where are we going? Clear up my faculties, Jack, while I eat this soup do, like a good fellow.

I can easily do that, Bob. First, I got well because you took care of me.

What! I?

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Yes, you! At the commencement of your madness you tended me and cared for me as if you had been my mother. When you got to lose all 'method in your madness' I was well enough to take care of myself and you too. Secondly, I found this wooden leg in the carpenter's berth, and gladly availed myself of its services, though it IS three inches too short, and causes me to hobble in a most undignified manner. Thirdly, we are here alone because there is no one else with us. You took good care of that by cutting the ropes before any of our crew could get aboard so you told me just before you went mad.

Oh! I remember now! I recollect it all. Go on.

Fourthly, as to where we are going, I don't know. Our compass was smashed to pieces in the fight, and I've been running for the last three weeks right before the wind. So now you know all, and as you've finished your soup I'll go and get you a lump of boiled junk.

Don't, said I, rising and shaking myself. I've dined. I feel quite strong. I don't feel a bit as if I had been ill. Hallo! what land is that?

Jack started and gazed at it with surprise. He had evidently not known that we were in the neighborhood of land. A dense fog-bank had concealed it from us. Now that it cleared away it revealed to our gaze a stretch of yellow sand, backed by the lofty blue hills of the interior, and from the palm-trees that I could make out distinctly I judged that we must have been making for the tropical regions during the last three weeks.

Yet here again mystery surrounded me. How was it possible that we should have reached the tropics in so short a time? While I was puzzling over this question, the greatest mystery of all occurred to us. If I were not conscientiously relating events exactly as they occurred, I should expect my readers to doubt my veracity here.

As we were sailing smoothly along, our ship, without any apparent cause, began to sink. She went down gradually, but quickly inch by inch until the water was on a level with the decks. We struck no rock! we did not cease to advance towards the shore! I fancied that we must certainly have sprung a leak; but there had been no sound of a plank starting, and there was no noise of water rushing into the hold. I could not imagine what had occurred, but I had not much time for thought. We could do nothing to avert the catastrophe. It occurred so suddenly that we were both rendered mute and helpless. We stood gazing at the water as it crept over the deck without making the slightest effort to save ourselves.

At length the water reached the hatchway and poured in a roaring cataract into the hold. The vessel filled, gave a heavy lurch to port, a species of tremor passed through her frame as if she was a living thing and knew that her hour had come, then she went down in a whirlpool, leaving Jack and me struggling in the sea.

We were both good swimmers, so that we did not experience much alarm, especially when we felt that the sea was comparatively warm; we struck out for the shore, and, being the better swimmer of the two, I took the lead.

But now to our horror we found that we were followed by sharks!

No sooner did we observe this than we struck out with all the energy of terror. We never swam as we did on that occasion. It seemed to me quite miraculous. The water burst from our breasts in foam, and we left long white tracks behind us as we clove our way through the water like two boats. It was awful. I shall never forget my feelings on that occasion: they were indescribable inconceivable!

We were about a quarter of a mile from a point of rocks when our ship sank. In an incredibly short space of time we were close on the rocks. Being several yards ahead of Jack, I was the first to clamber up, my heart fluttering with fear, yet filled with deep gratitude for my deliverance. I turned to help Jack. He was yet six yards from shore, when a dreadful shark made a rush at him.

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Oh! quick! quick! I screamed.

He was panting and straining like a lion. Another moment and his hand would have been in mine, but at that moment I beheld the double rows of horrid teeth close upon him. He uttered a piercing shriek, and there was an indescribably horrible SCRUNCH as he went down. In a moment after, he re-appeared, and making a last frightful effort to gain the rocks, caught my hand. I dragged him out of danger instantly, and then I found, to my unutterable joy, that the shark had only bitten off the half of his wooden leg!

Embracing each other fervently, we sat down in the rocks to rest and collect our thoughts.

Chapter Seven.

I have often found, from experience, that the more one tries to collect one's thoughts, the more one's thoughts pertinaciously scatter themselves abroad, almost beyond the possibility of discovery. Such was the case with me, after escaping from the sea and the sharks, as related circumstantially in the last chapter. Perhaps the truth of this may best be illustrated by laying before my readers the dialogue that ensued between me and Jack on the momentous occasion referred to, as follows:

JACK. I say, Bob, where in all the world have we got to?

BOB. Upon my word, I don't know.

JACK. It's very mysterious.

BOB. What's very mysterious?

JACK. Where we've got to. Can't you guess?

BOB. Certainly. Suppose I say Lapland?

JACK. (Shaking his head), Won't do.

BOB. Why?

JACK. 'Cause there are no palm-trees in Lapland.

BOB. Dear me, that's true. How confused my head is! I'll tell you what it is, Jack, I can't think. THAT'S IT that's the cause of the mystery that seems to beset me, I can't tell how; and then I've been ill that's it too.

JACK. How can there be two causes for one effect, Bob? You're talking stuff, man. If I couldn't talk better sense than that, I'd not talk at all.

BOB. Then why don't you hold your tongue? I tell you what it is, Jack, we're bewitched. You said I was mad some time ago. You were right so I am; so are you. There are too many mysteries here for any two sane men. (Here Jack murmured we weren't men, but boys.) There's the running away and not being caught the ship ready to sail the moment we arrive; there's your joining me after all your good advice; there's that horrible fight, and the lions, and Edwards, and the sinking of our ship, and the the in short, I feel that I'm mad still. I'm not recovered yet. Here, Jack, take care of me!

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Instead of replying to this, Jack busied himself in fitting a piece of wood he had picked up to his wooden leg, and lashing it firmly to the old stump. When he had accomplished his task, he turned gravely to me and said,

Bob, your faculties are wandering pretty wildly to-day, but you've not yet hit upon the cause of all our misfortunes. The true cause is that YOU HAVE DISOBEYED YOUR FATHER, AND I MY MOTHER.

I hung my head. I had now no longer difficulty in collecting my thoughts they circled round that point until I thought that remorse would have killed me. Then suddenly I turned with a look of gladness to my friend.

But you forget THE LETTER! We are forgiven!

True, cried Jack, with a cheerful expression; we can face our fate with that assurance. Come, let us strike into the country and discover where we are. I'll manage to hop along pretty well with my wooden leg. We'll get home as soon as we can, by land if not by water, and then we'll remain at home won't we, Bob?

Remain at home! I cried; aye, that will we. I've had more than enough of foreign experiences already. Oh! Jack, Jack, it's little I care for the sufferings I have endured but your leg, Jack! Willingly, most willingly, my dear friend, would I part with my own, if by so doing I could replace yours.

Jack took my hand and squeezed it.

It's gone now, Bob, he said sadly. I must just make the most of the one that's left. 'Tis a pity that the one that's left is only the left one.

So saying he turned his back to the sea, and, still retaining my hand in his, led me into the forest.

But here unthought-of trouble awaited us at the very outset of our wanderings. The ground which we first encountered was soft and swampy, so that I sank above the ankles at every step. In these circumstances, as might have been expected, poor Jack's wooden leg was totally useless. The first step he took after entering the jungle, his leg penetrated the soft ground to the depth of nine or ten inches, and at the second step it disappeared altogether insomuch that he could by no means pull it out.

I say, Bob, said he, with a rueful expression of countenance, I'm in a real fix now, and no mistake. Come to anchor prematurely. I resolved to stick at nothing, and here I have stuck at the first step. What IS to be done?

Jack's right leg being deep down in the ground, it followed, as a physical consequence, that his left leg was bent as if he were in a sitting posture. Observing this fact, just as he made the above remark, he placed both his hands on his left knee, rested his chin on his hands, and gazed meditatively at the ground. The action tickled me so much that I gave a short laugh. Jack looked up and laughed too, whereupon we both burst incontinently into an uproarious fit of laughter, which might have continued ever so long had not Jack, in the fulness of his mirth, given his fixed leg a twist that caused it to crack.

Hallo! Bob, he cried, becoming suddenly very grave, I say, this won't do, you know; if I break it short off you'll have to carry me, my boy: so it behoves me to be careful. What is to be done?

Come, I'll help you to pull it out.

Oh! that's not what troubles me. But after we get it out what's to be done?

Jack, said I, seriously, one thing at a time. When we get you out, then it will be time enough to inquire what to do next.

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That's sound philosophy, Bob; where did you pick it up? I suspect you must have been studying Shakespeare of late, on the sly. But come, get behind me, and put your hands under my arms, and heave; I'll shove with my sound limb. Now let us act together. Stay! Bob, we've been long enough aboard ship to know the value of a song in producing unity of action. Take the tune from me.

Suiting the action to the word, Jack gave forth, at the top of his voice, one or two of those peculiarly nautical howls wherewith seamen are wont to constrain windlasses and capstans to creak, and anchors to let go their hold.

Now then, heave away, my hearties; yo—heave—O—HOI!

At the last word we both strained with all our might. I heard Jack's braces burst with the effort. We both became purple in the face, but the leg remained immovable! With a loud simultaneous sigh we relaxed, and, looking at each other, groaned slightly.

Come, come, Bob, never say die; one trial more; it was the braces that spoiled it that time. Now then, cheerily ho! my hearties, heave—yo—hee—o—HOY!

The united force applied this time was so great that we tore asunder all the fastenings of the leg at one wrench, and Jack and I suddenly shot straight up, as if we had been discharged from a hole in the ground. Losing our balance we fell over each other on our backs the wooden leg remaining hard and fast in the ground.

Ah! Jack, said I sorrowfully, as I rubbed the mud off my garments, if we had remained at home this would not have happened.

If we had remained at home, returned Jack, rather gruffly, as he hopped towards his leg, NOTHING would have happened. Come, Bob, lay hold of it. Out it shall come, if the inside of the world should come along with it. There now HEAVE!

This time we gave vent to no shout, but we hove with such a will, that Jack split his jacket from the waist to the neck, and the leg came out with a crack that resembled the drawing of the largest possible cork out of the biggest conceivable bottle.

Having accomplished this feat we congratulated each other, and then sat down to repair damages. This was not an easy matter. It cost us no little thought to invent some contrivance that would prevent the leg from sinking, but at last we thought of a plan. We cut a square piece of bark off a tree, the outer rind of which was peculiarly tough and thick. In the center of this we scooped a hole and inserted therein the end of the leg, fastening it thereto with pieces of twine that we chanced to have in our pockets. Thus we made, as it were, an artificial foot, which when Jack tried it served its purpose admirably indeed, it acted too well, for being a broad base it did not permit the wooden leg to sink at all, while the natural leg did sink more or less, and, as the wooden limb had no knee, it was stiff from hip to heel, and could not bend, so that I had to walk behind my poor comrade, and when I observed him get somewhat into the position of the Leaning Tower of Pisa I sprang forward and supported him.

Thus we proceeded slowly through the forest, stumbling frequently, tumbling occasionally, and staggering oft; but strange to say, without either of us having any very definite idea of where we were going, or what we expected to find, or why we went in one direction more than another. In fact, we proceeded on that eminently simple principle which is couched in the well-known and time-honored phrase, follow your nose.

True, once I ventured to ask my companion where he thought we were going, to which he replied, much to my surprise, that he didn't know and didn't care; that it was quite certain if we did not go forward we could not expect to get on, and that in the ordinary course of things if we proceeded we should undoubtedly come to something. To this I replied, in a meditative tone, that there was much truth in the observation, and that, at any rate, if we did not

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come to something, something would certainly come to us.

But we did not pursue the subject. In fact, we were too much taken up with the interesting and amusing sights that met our gaze in that singular forest; insomuch that on several occasions I neglected my peculiar duty of watching Jack, and was only made aware of my carelessness by hearing him shout, Hallo! Bob, look alive! I'm over! when I would suddenly drop my eyes from the contemplation of the plumage of a parrot or the antics of a monkey, to behold my friend leaning over at an angle of forty-five. To leap forward and catch him in my arms was the work of an instant. On each of these occasions, after setting him upright, I used to give him a tender hug, to indicate my regret at having been so inattentive, and my sympathy with him in his calamitous circumstances.

Poor Jack was very gentle and uncomplaining. He even made light of his misfortune, and laughed a good deal at himself; but I could see, nevertheless, that his spirits were at times deeply affected, in spite of his brave efforts to bear up and appear gay and cheerful.

Chapter Eight.

It was evening when we were cast ashore in this new country, so that we had not advanced far into the forest before night closed in and compelled us to halt; for, had we continued our journey in the dark, we should certainly have been drowned in one of the many deep morasses which abounded there, and which we had found it difficult to steer clear of, even in daylight.

As the moon arose and the stars began to glimmer in the sky, I observed, to my dismay, that all kinds of noxious creatures and creeping things began to move about, and strange hissing sounds and low dismal hootings and wails were heard at times indistinctly, as if the place were the abode of evil spirits, who were about to wake up to indulge in their midnight orgies.

Oh! Jack, said I, shuddering violently, as I stopped and seized my companion by the arm. I can't tell what it is that fills me with an unaccountable sensation of dread. I feel as if we should never more get out of this horrible swamp, or see again the blessed light of day. See! see! what horrid creature is that?

Pooh! man, interrupted Jack, with a degree of levity in his tone which surprised me much. It's only a serpent. All these kind o' things are regular cowards. Only let them alone and they're sure to let you alone. I should like above all things to tickle up one o' these brutes, and let him have a bite at my wooden toe! It would be rare fun, wouldn't it, Bob, eh? Come, let us push on, and see that you keep me straight, old fellow!

I made no reply for some time. I was horrified at my comrade's levity in such circumstances. Then, as I heard him continue to chuckle and remark in an undertone on the surprise the serpent would get on discovering the exceeding toughness of his toe, it for the first time flashed across my mind that his sufferings had deranged my dear companion's intellect.

The bare probability of such a dreadful calamity was sufficient to put to flight all my previous terrors. I now cared nothing whatever for the loathsome reptiles that wallowed in the swamps around me, and the quiet glidings and swelterings of whose hideous forms were distinctly audible in the stillness of approaching night. My whole anxiety was centered on Jack. I thought that if I could prevail on him to rest he might recover, and proposed that we should encamp; but he would not hear of this. He kept plunging on, staggering through brake and swamp, reedy pond and quaking morass, until I felt myself utterly unable to follow him a step farther.

Just at this point Jack stopped abruptly and said,

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Bob, my boy, we'll camp here.

It was a fearful spot. Dark, dismal, and not a square foot of dry ground.

Here, Jack?

Aye, here.

But it's it's all wet. Excuse me, my dear comrade, I've not yet acquired the habit of sleeping in water.

No more have I, Bob; we shall sleep on a fallen tree, my boy. Did you never hear of men sleeping in a swamp on the top of a log? It's often done, I assure you, and I mean to do it to-night. See, here is a good large one, three feet broad by twenty feet long, with lots of stumps of broken branches to keep us from rolling off. Come, let's begin.

We immediately began to make our arrangements for the night. With the aid of our clasp-knives we cut a quantity of leafy branches, and spread them on the trunk of a huge prostrated tree, the half of which was sunk in the swamp, but the other half was sufficiently elevated to raise us well out of the water. The bed was more comfortable than one would suppose; and, being very tired, we lay down on it as soon as it was made, and tried to sleep: having nothing to eat, we thought it well to endeavor to obtain all the refreshment we could out of sleep.

We had not lain long, when I started up in a fright, and cried,

Hallo! Jack, what's that? See, through the reeds; it creeps slowly. Oh; horror! it comes towards us!

Jack looked at it sleepily. It's an alligator, said he. If it approaches too close, just wake me; but, pray, don't keep howling at every thing that comes to peep at us.

Just at that moment, the hideous reptile drew near, and, opening its jaws, let them come together with a snap! Even Jack was not proof against this. He started up, and looked about for a defensive weapon. We had nothing but our clasp-knives. The alligator wallowed towards us.

Oh for an axe! gasped Jack.

The brute was within a few yards of us now. I was transfixed with horror. Suddenly an idea occurred to me.

Your leg, Jack, your leg!

He understood me. One sweep of his clasp-knife cut all the fastenings the next moment he grasped the toe in both hands, and, swaying the heavy butt of the limb in the air, brought it down with all his force on the skull of the alligator. It rang like the sound of a blow on an empty cask. Again the limb was swayed aloft, and descended with extraordinary violence on the extreme point of the alligator's snout. There was a loud crash, as if of small bones being driven in. The animal paused, put its head on one side, and turning slowly round waddled away into the noisome recesses of its native swamp.

Scarcely had we recovered from the effects of this, when we heard in the distance shouts and yells and the barking of dogs. Crouching in our nest we listened intently. The sounds approached, but while those who made them were yet at some distance we were startled by the sudden approach of a dark object, running at full speed. It seemed like a man, or rather a huge ape, for it was black, and as it came tearing towards us, running on its hind-legs, we could see its eyes glaring in the moonlight, and could hear its laboring breath. It was evidently hard pressed by its pursuers, for it did not see what lay before it, and had well-nigh run over our couch ere it observed Jack standing on one leg, with the other limb raised in a threatening attitude above his head. It was too late to turn to avoid the

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blow.

Uttering a terrible cry the creature fell on its knees, and, trembling violently, cried

Oh, massa! oh, massa, spare me! Me no runaway agin. Mercy, massa! mercy!

Silence, you noisy villain, cried Jack, seizing the negro by the hair of the head.

Yis, massa, gasped the man, while his teeth chattered and the whites of his eyes rolled fearfully.

What are you? Where d'ye come from? Who's after ye?

To these abrupt questions, the poor negro replied as briefly, that he was a runaway slave, and that his master and bloodhounds were after him.

We had guessed as much, and the deep baying of the hounds convinced us of the truth of his statement.

Quick, cried Jack, dragging the black to the edge of our log, get under there; lie flat; keep still; so saying he thrust the negro under the branches that formed our couch. We covered him well up and then sat down on him. Before we had well finished our task the foremost of the bloodhounds came bounding towards us, with its eyeballs glaring and its white fangs glittering in the dim light like glow-worms in a blood-red cavern. It made straight for the spot where the negro was concealed, and would have seized him in another instant, had not Jack, with one blow of his leg, beat in its skull.

Shove him out of sight, Bob.

I seized the dead hound and obeyed, while my comrade prepared to receive the second dog. But that animal seemed more timid. It swerved as the blow was delivered, received on its haunches, and fled away howling in another direction.

Jack at once laid down his leg and sat down on the negro, motioning me to do the same. Then pulling an old tobacco-pipe out of his pocket, he affected to be calmly employed in filling it when the pursuers came up. There were two of them, in straw hats and nankeen pantaloons, armed with cudgels, and a more ruffianly pair of villains I never saw before or since.

Hallo! strangers, cried one, as they halted for a few moments on observing us. Queer place to camp. Fond o' water and dirt, I guess?

You seem fond o' dirt and not o' water, to judge from your faces, replied Jack, calmly, attempting to light his pipe, which was rather a difficult operation, seeing that it was empty and he had no fire. Ah! my light's out. Could you lend us a match, friend?

No, we can't. No time. Hain't got none. Did you see a nigger pass this way?

Ha! you're after him, are you? cried Jack, indignantly. Do you suppose I'd tell you if I did? Go and find him for yourselves.

The two men frowned fiercely at this, and appeared about to attack us. But they changed their minds, and said, Mayhap you'll tell us if ye saw two hounds, then?

Yes, I did.

Chapter Eight.

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Which way did they pass?

They haven't passed yet, replied Jack, with deep sarcasm, at the same time quietly lifting his leg, and swaying it gently to and fro; whether they'll pass without a licking remains to be seen.

Look 'ee, lads, we'll pay you for this, shouted the men as they turned away. We've not time to waste now, BUT WE'LL COME BACK.

I remonstrated with my friend. You're too rash, Jack.

Why? We don't need to fear TWO men!

Aye, but there may be more in the woods.

My surmise was correct. Half an hour after, the hound was heard returning. It came straight at us, followed by at least a dozen men. Jack killed the dog with one blow, and felled the first man that came up, but we were overwhelmed by numbers, and, in a much shorter time than it takes to tell it, both of us were knocked into the mud and rendered insensible.

Chapter Nine.

On recovering from the stunning effects of the blow that had felled me, I found myself lying on a hard earthen floor, surrounded by deep impenetrable darkness.

Are you there, Jack? I sighed faintly.

Aye, Bob, I'm here at least, all o' me that's left. I confess to you that I do feel a queer sensation, as if the one half of my head were absent and the other half a-wanting, while the brain lies exposed to the atmosphere. But I suppose that's impossible.

Where are we, Jack?

We're in an outhouse, in the hands of planters; so I made out by what I heard them say when I got my senses back; but I've no notion of what part o' the world we're in. Moreover, I don't care. A man with only one leg, no head, and an exposed brain, isn't worth caring about. I don't care for him not a button.

Oh, Jack, dear, don't speak like that I can't stand it.

You're lying down, ain't you? inquired Jack.

Yes.

Then how d'you know whether you can stand it or not?

I was so overcome, and, to say the truth, surprised, at my companion's recklessness, that I could not reply. I lay motionless on the hard ground, meditating on our forlorn situation, when my thoughts were interrupted by the grating sound of a key turning in a lock. The door of the hut opened, and four men entered, each bearing a torch, which cast a brilliant glare over the hovel in which we were confined. There was almost nothing to be seen in the place. It was quite empty. The only peculiar thing that I observed about it was a thick post, with iron hooks fixed

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in it, which rose from the center of the floor to the rafters, against which it was nailed. There were also a few strange-looking implements hanging round the walls, but I could not at first make out what these were intended for. I now perceived that Jack and I were chained to the wall.

Going to the four corners of the apartment, the four men placed their four torches in four stands that seemed made for the purpose, and then, approaching us, ranged themselves in a row before us. Two of them I recognized as being the men we had first seen in the swamp; the other two were strangers.

So, my bucks, began one of the former, a hideous-looking man, whose personal appearance was by no means improved by a closed eye, a flattened nose, and a swelled cheek, the result of Jack's first flourish of his wooden leg, so, we've got you, have we? The hounds have got you, eh?

So it appears, replied Jack, in a tone of quiet contempt, as he sat on the ground with his back leaning against the wall, his hands clasped above his solitary knee, and his thumbs revolving round each other slowly. I say, continued Jack, an expression of concern crossed his handsome countenance, I'm afraid you're damaged, rather, about your head-piece. Your eye seems a little out of order, and, pardon me, but your nose is a little too flat just a little. My poor fellow, I'm quite sorry for you; I really am, though you ARE a dog.

The man opened his solitary eye and stared with amazement at Jack, who smiled, and, putting his head a little to the other side, returned the stare with interest.

You're a bold fellow, said the man, on recovering a little from his surprise.

I'm sorry, retorted Jack, that I cannot return you the compliment.

I was horrified. I saw that my poor friend, probably under the influence of madness, had made up his mind to insult and defy our captors to their teeth, regardless of consequences. I tried to speak, but my lips refused their office. The man grinned horribly and gnashed his teeth, while the others made as though they would rush upon us and tear us limb from limb. But their chief, for such the spokesman seemed to be, restrained them.

Hah! he gasped, looking fiercely at Jack, and at the same time pointing to the implements on the wall, d'ye see these things?

Not being quite so blind as you are, I do.

D'ye know what they're for?

Not being a demon, which you seem to be, I don't.

Hah! these are, (he spoke very slowly, and hissed the words out between his teeth), torturers!

What? inquired Jack, putting his head a little more to one side and revolving his thumbs in a contrary direction, by way of variety.

Torturers man-torturers! What d'ye twirl your thumbs like that for, eh?

Because it reminds me how easily, if I were unchained and had on my wooden leg, I could twirl you round your own neck, and cram your heels into your own mouth, and ram you down your own throat, until there was nothing of you left but the extreme ends of your shirt-collar sticking out of your eyes.

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The mention of this peculiarly complicated operation seemed to be too much for the men: setting up a loud yell, they rushed upon Jack and seized him.

Quick the screws! cried the man with the flattened nose.

A small iron instrument was brought, Jack's thumbs inserted therein, and the handle turned. I heard a harsh, grating sound, and observed my poor companion's face grow deadly pale and his lips turn blue. But he uttered no cry, and, to my surprise, he did not even struggle.

Stop! I shouted in a voice of thunder.

The men looked round in surprise. At that moment a great idea seemed to fill my soul. I cannot explain what it was. To this day I do not know what it was. It was a mystery an indescribable mystery. I felt as one might be supposed to feel whose spirit were capable of eating material food, and had eaten too much. It was awful! Under the impulse of this sensation, I again shouted

STOP!

Why?

I cannot tell you why, until you unscrew that machine. Quick! it is of the deepest, the most vital importance to yourselves.

The extreme earnestness of my voice and manner induced the men to comply almost, I might say, in spite of themselves.

Now, lad, what is it? Mind, YOUR turn is coming; so don't trifle with us.

TRIFLE with you! I said, in a voice so deep, and slow, and solemn, with a look so preternaturally awful, that the four men were visibly impressed.

Listen! I have a secret to tell you, a secret that intimately concerns yourselves. It is a fearful one. You would give all you possess your wealth, your very lives rather than not know it. I can tell it to you; BUT NOT NOW. All the tortures of the Inquisition could not drag it out of me. Nay, you need not smile. If you did torture me BEFORE I told you this secret, that would have the effect of rendering my information useless to you. Nothing could then save you. I must be left alone with my friend for an hour. Go! You may leave us chained; you may lock and bar your door; you may watch and guard the house; but go, leave us. Much too much valuable time has been already lost. Come back in one hour, (here I pulled out my watch), in one hour and three minutes and five seconds, exactly; not sooner. Go! quick! as you value your lives, your families, your property. And hark, in your ear, (here I glared at them like a maniac, and sank my voice to a deep hoarse whisper), as you value the very existence of your slaves, go, leave us instantly, and return at the hour named!

The men were evidently overawed by the vehemence of my manner and the mysterious nature of my remarks. Without uttering a word they withdrew, and locked the door behind them. Happily they left the torches.

As soon as they were gone I threw my arms round my comrade's neck, and, resting my head on his shoulder, bemoaned our sad lot.

Dear, dear Jack, have they hurt you?

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Oh! nothing to speak of. But I say, Bob, my boy, what on earth can this monstrous secret be? It must be something very tremendous?

My poor Jack, said I, regardless of his question, your thumbs are bruised and bleeding. Oh that I should have lived to bring you to this!

Come, come, Bob, enough of that. They ARE a little soreish, but nothing to what they would have been had you not stopped them. But, I say, what IS this secret? I'm dying to know. My dear boy, you've no idea how you looked when you were spouting like that. You made my flesh creep, I assure you. Come, out with it; what's the secret?

I felt, and no doubt looked, somewhat confused.

Do you know, Jack, said I, solemnly, I have no secret whatever!

Jack gasped and stared,

No secret, Bob!

Not the most distant shadow of one.

Jack pulled out his watch, and said in a low voice,

Bob, my boy, we have just got about three-quarters of an hour to live. When these villains come back, and find that you've been humbugging them, they'll brain us on the spot, as sure as my name is John Brown and yours is Robert Smith romantic names, both of 'em; especially when associated with the little romance in which we are now involved. Ha! ha! ha!

I shrank back from my friend with the terrible dread, which had more than once crossed my mind, that he was going mad.

Oh, Jack, don't laugh, pray. Could we not invent some secret to tell them?

Not a bad idea, returned my friend, gravely.

Well, let us think; what could we say?

Aye, that's the rub! Suppose we tell them seriously that my wooden leg is a ghost, and that it haunts those who ill-treat its master, giving them perpetual bangs on the nose, and otherwise rendering their lives miserable?

I shook my head.

Well, then, suppose we say we've been sent by the Queen of England to treat with them about the liberation of the niggers at a thousand pounds a head; one hundred paid down in gold, the rest in American shin-plasters?

That would be a lie, you know, Jack.

Come, that's good! You're wonderfully particular about truth, for a man that has just told such tremendous falsehoods about a secret that doesn't exist.

True, Jack, I replied, seriously, I confess that I have lied; but I did not mean to. I assure you I had no notion of what I was saying. I think I was bewitched. All your nonsense rolled out, as it were, without my will. Indeed, I

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did not mean to tell lies. Yet I confess, to my shame, that I did. There is some mystery here, which I can by no means fathom.

Fathom or not fathom, rejoined my friend, looking at his watch again, you got me into this scrape, so I request you to get me out of it. We have exactly twenty-five minutes and a half before us now.

Jack and I now set to work in real earnest to devise some plan of escape, or to invent some plausible secret. But we utterly failed. Minute after minute passed; and, as the end of our time drew near, we felt less and less able to think of any scheme, until our brains became confused with the terror of approaching and inevitable death, aggravated by previous torture. I trembled violently, and Jack became again uproarious and sarcastic. Suddenly he grew quiet, and I observed that he began to collect a quantity of straw that was scattered about the place. Making a large pile of it, he placed it before us, and then loosened one of the torches in its stand.

There, said he, with a sigh of satisfaction, when all was arranged, we shall give our amiable friends a warm reception when they come.

But they will escape by the door, said I, in much anxiety, and we only shall perish.

Never mind that, Bob; we can only die once. Besides, they sha'n't escape; trust me for that.

As he spoke we heard approaching footsteps. Presently the key turned in the lock, and the door opened.

Chapter Ten.

Punctually, to a minute, our jailors returned, and once again drew up in a row before us.

Now, lads, wot have ye got to say?

My friends, began Jack, standing up and balancing himself on his one leg as well as he could, at the same time speaking with the utmost gravity and candor of expression, my companion here in TEMPORARY distress for I feel that it will be but temporary has devolved upon me the interesting duty of making known to you the secret which has burthened his own mind for some time, and which has had so impressive and appropriate an effect upon yours. But first I must request you to lock the door, and hang the key on this nail at my elbow. You hesitate. Why? I am in chains; so is my comrade. We are two; you are four. It is merely a precaution to prevent the possibility of any one entering by stealth, and overhearing what I say.

The man with the battered face locked the door, and hung up the key as directed, merely remarking, with a laugh, that we were safe enough anyhow, and that if we were humbugging him it would be worse for us in the long-run.

Come, now, out with yer secret, he added, impatiently.

Certainly, answered Jack, with increased urbanity, at the same time taking down the key, (which caused the four men to start), and gazing at it in a pensive manner. The secret! Ah! yes. Well, it's a wonderful one. D'you know, my lads, there would not be the most distant chance of your guessing it, if you were to try ever so much?

Well, but what is it? cried one of the men, whose curiosity was now excited beyond endurance.

It is this, rejoined Jack, with slow deliberation, that you four men are

Well, they whispered, leaning forward eagerly.

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The most outrageous and unmitigated asses we ever saw! Ha! I thought it would surprise you. Bob and I are quite agreed upon it. Pray don't open your eyes too wide, in case you should find it difficult to shut them again. Now, in proof of this great, and to you important truth, let me show you a thing. Do you see this torch, (taking it down), and that straw? (lifting up a handful), Well, you have no idea what an astonishing result will follow the application of the former to the latter see!

To my horror, and evidently to the dismay of the men, who did not seem to believe that he was in earnest, Jack Brown thrust the blazing torch into the center of the heap of straw.

The men uttered a yell, and rushing forward, threw themselves on the smoking heap in the hope of smothering it at once. But Jack applied the torch quickly to various parts. The flames leaped up! The men rolled off in agony. Jack, who somehow had managed to break his chain, hopped after them, showering the blazing straw on their heads, and yelling as never mortal yelled before. In two seconds the whole place was in a blaze, and I beheld Jack actually throwing somersets with his one leg over the fire and through the smoke; punching the heads of the four men most unmercifully; catching up blazing handfuls of straw, and thrusting them into their eyes and mouths in a way that quite overpowered me. I could restrain myself no longer. I began to roar in abject terror! In the midst of this dreadful scene the roof fell in with a hideous crash, and Jack, bounding through the smoking DEBRIS, cleared the walls and vanished!

At the same moment I received a dreadful blow on the side, and AWOKE to find myself lying on the floor of my bedroom, and our man-servant Edwards furiously beating the bed-curtains, which I had set on fire by upsetting the candle in my fall.

Why, Master Robert, gasped Edwards, sitting down and panting vehemently, after having extinguished the flames, wot have you been a-doin' of? I was standing speechless in the midst of my upset chair, table, and books, glaring wildly, when the man said this.

Edwards, I replied, with deep solemnity, the mystery's cleared up at last. IT HAS BEEN ALL A DREAM!

Wot's been all a dream? You hain't bin a bed all night, for the clo'se is never touched, an' its broad daylight. Wot has bin up?

I might have replied, that, according to his own statement, I had been up, but I did not. I began gradually to believe that the dreadful scenes I had witnessed were not reality; and an overpowering sense of joy kept filling my heart as I continued to glare at the man until I thought my chest would rend asunder. Suddenly, and without moving hand, foot, or eye, I gave vent to a loud, sharp, Hurrah!

Edwards started Eh?

Hurrah! hurrah! it's a DREAM!

Hallo! I say, you know, come, this won't

Hurrah!

Bless my 'art, Master Ro

Again I interrupted him by seizing my cap, swinging it round my head in an ecstasy of delight, and uttering cheer upon cheer with such outrageous vehemence, that Edwards, who thought me raving mad, crept towards the door, intending to bolt.

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He was prevented from carrying out his intention, and violently overturned by the entrance of my father in dishabille. I sprang forward, plucked the spectacles off his nose, threw my arms round his neck, and kissed him on both eyes.

I won't run away now, father, no, no, no! it's all a dream a horrid dream! ha! ha! ha!

Bob, my dear boy!

At this moment Jack, also in dishabille, rushed in. Hallo! Bob, what's all the row?

I experienced a different, but equally powerful gush of feeling on seeing my friend. Leaving my father, I rushed towards him, and, falling on his neck, burst into tears. Yes, I confess it without shame. Reader, if you had felt as I did, you would have done the same.

Jack led me gently to my bed, and, seating me on the edge of it, sat down beside me. I at once perceived from their looks that they all thought me mad, and felt the necessity of calming me before taking more forcible measures. This tickled me so much that I laughed again heartily, insomuch that Jack could not help joining me. Suddenly a thought flashed into my mind. My heart leaped to my throat, and I glanced downwards. IT WAS THERE! I seized Jack's right leg, tumbled him back into the bed, and laying the limb across my knee, grasped it violently.

All right! I shouted, straight, firm, muscular, supple as ever. I squeezed harder.

Jack roared. I say, Bob, gently

Hold your tongue, said I, pinching the thigh. Do you feel THAT?

Ho! ah! DON'T!

And that?

Stop him! I say, my dear boy, have mercy? Jack tried to raise himself, but I tilted him back, and, grasping the limb in both arms, hugged it.

After breakfast Jack and I retired to my room, where, the weather being unfavorable for our fishing excursion, I went all over it again in detail. After that I sent Jack off to amuse himself as he chose, and, seizing a quire of foolscap, mended a pen, squared my elbows, and began to write this remarkable account of the reason why I did not become a sailor.

I now present it to the juvenile public, in the hope that it may prove a warning to all boys who venture to entertain the notion of running away from home and going to sea.

Chapter One.

Norway, 2nd July, 1868.

Happening to be in Norway just now, and believing that young people feel an interest in the land of the old sea-kings, I send you a short account of my experiences. Up to this date I verily believe that there is nothing in the wide world comparable to this island coast of Norway. At this moment we are steaming through a region which the fairies might rejoice to inhabit. Indeed, the fact that there are no fairies here goes far to prove that there are none anywhere. What a thought! No fairies? Why all the romance of childhood would be swept away at one

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fell blow if I were to admit the idea that there are no fairies. Perish the matter-of-fact thought! Let me rather conclude, that, for some weighty, though unknown, reason, the fairies have resolved to leave this island world uninhabited.

Fortune favors me. I have just come on deck, after a two days' voyage across the German Ocean, to find myself in the midst of innumerable islands, a dead calm so dead that it seems impossible that it should ever come alive again and scenery so wild, so gorgeous, that one ceases to wonder where the Vikings of old got their fire, their romance, their enterprize, and their indomitable pluck. It is warm, too, and brilliantly sunny.

On gazing at these tall grey rocks, with the bright green patches here and there, and an occasional red-tiled hut, one almost expects to see a fleet of daring rovers dash out of a sequestered bay, with their long yellow hair, and big blue eyes, and broad shoulders not to mention broad-swords and ring-mail and battle-axes. But one does not always see what one expects. The days of the sea-kings are gone by; and at this moment, rowing out of one of these same sequestered bays, comes the boat of a custom-house officer. Yes, there is no doubt whatever about it. There he comes, a plain-looking unromantic man in a foraging-cap, with a blue surtout and brass buttons, about as like to a sea-king as a man-of-war is to a muffin.

Of course, the scenery is indescribable no scenery IS describable. In order that my reader may judge of the truth of this statement, I append the following description.

There are islands round us of every shape and size all of them more or less barren, the greater part of their surfaces being exposed grey rock. Here and there may be seen, as I have already hinted, small patches of bright green, and, sparsely scattered everywhere, are little red-roofed wooden cottages poor enough things the most of them; others, gaudy-looking affairs with gable-ends, white faces, and windows bordered with green. All of these are, while I write, reflected in the water as in a mirror, for there is not a breath of wind. Over the islands on my left are seen more islands extending out to sea. On the right tower up the blue hills of the interior of old Norway, and, although the weather is excessively hot, many of these are covered with snow. Everything is light, and transparent, and thin, and blue, and glassy, and fairy-like, and magically beautiful, and altogether delightful! There: have you made much of all that, good reader? If you have, be thankful, for, as I set out by saying, description of scenery, (at least to any good purpose), is impossible. The description of a man, however, is quite another thing. Here is our pilot. He is a rugged man, with fair hair, and a yellow face, and a clay-colored chin, and a red nose. He is small in stature, and thin, insignificant in appearance, deeply miserable in aspect. His garments are black glazed oiled-cloth from head to foot, and immensely too large for him, especially the vest, which is double-breasted, and seems to feel that his trousers are not a sufficient covering for such a pair of brittle looking legs, for it extends at least half way down to his knees. The flap of his sou'-wester, also, comes half way down his back. He is a wonderful object to look upon; yet he has the audacity, (so it seems to me), to take us in charge, and our captain has the foolhardiness to allow him.

If one goes out of the beaten track of routes in Norway, one is apt to get into difficulties of a minor kind. I happen to be traveling just now with a party of four friends, of whom three are ladies, the fourth a jolly young fellow fresh from college. A few days ago we had a few unusual experiences even for Norway. On leaving Bergen we had made up our minds, as the steamer did not sail to within about sixty miles of our destination, to get ourselves and our luggage put down at a small hamlet at the mouth of the Nord-fjord, and there engage two large boats to transport us the remaining sixty miles up the fjord.

The ladies of our party valorously resolved to sit up all night to see the magnificent island scenery, through which we were passing under the influence of the charming and subdued daylight of midnight for there is no night here just now.

As for myself, being an old traveller, I have become aware that sleep is essential to a comfortable and useful existence. I therefore bade my friends good-night, took a farewell look at the bright sky, and the islands, and the

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sleeping sea, and went below to bed.

Next day we spent steaming along the island coast.

At one o'clock on the following morning we reached Moldeoen, where the steamer landed us on a rock on which were a few acres of grass and half a dozen wooden houses. We had a good deal of luggage with us, also some casks, cases, and barrels of provisions, and a piano-forte, as our place of sojourn is somewhat out of the way and far removed from civilized markets. A few poverty-stricken natives stood on the rude stone pier as we landed, and slowly assisted us to unload. At the time I conceived that the idiotical expression of their countenances was the result of being roused at untimely hours; but our subsequent experience led me to change my mind in regard to this.

In half an hour the steamer puffed away into the mysterious depths of one of the dark-blue fjords, and we were left on a desolate island, like Robinson Crusoe, with our worldly goods around us. Most of the natives we found so stupid that they could not understand our excellent Norse. One fellow, in particular, might as well have been a piece of mahogany as a man. He stood looking at me with stolid imbecility while I was talking to him, and made no reply when I had done. In fact the motion of his eyes, as he looked at me, alone betrayed the fact that he was flesh and blood.

We soon found that two boats were not to be had; that almost all the men of the place were away deep-sea fishing, and would not be back for many hours, and that when they did come back they would be so tired as to require at least half a day's rest ere they could undertake so long a journey with us. However, they sent a man off in a boat to search for as many boatmen as could be found. He was away an hour. During this period the few inhabitants who had turned out to see the steamer, disappeared, and we were left alone on the beach. There was no inn here; no one cared for us; every place seemed dirty with the exception of one house, which had a very lonely and deserted aspect, so we did not venture to disturb it.

In the course of time the messenger returned. No men were to be found except three. This was not a sufficient crew for even one large boat we required two.

A feeling that we were homeless wanderers came over us now, and each, seating himself or herself on a box or a portmanteau, began to meditate. Seeing this, the three men coolly lay down to rest in the bow of their boat, and, drawing a sail over them, were quickly sound asleep.

The act suggested the idea that we could not do better, so we placed two portmanteaus end to end, and thus made a couch about six feet long. A box, somewhat higher, placed at one end, served for a pillow, and on this one of the ladies lay down, flat on her back of course, that being the only possible position under the circumstances. A shawl was thrown over her, and she went to sleep like an effigy on a tombstone.

Another of the ladies tried a similar couch; but as boxes of equal height could not be found, her position was not enviable. The third lady preferred an uneasy posture among the ribs and cordage of the boat, and I lay down on the paving-stones of the quay, having found from experience that, in the matter of beds, flatness is the most indispensable of qualities, while hardness is not so awful as one might suppose. Where my comrade the collegian went to I know not.

Presently one of the ladies got up and said that this would never do; that the next day was Sunday, and that we were in duty bound to do our best to reach the end of our journey on Saturday night. Thus admonished, my comrade and I started up and resolved to become men, that is, to act as boatmen. No sooner said than done. We roused the three sleepers, embarked the most important half of our luggage; left the other half in charge of the native with the idiotic countenance, with directions to take care of it and have it forwarded as soon as possible, and, at a little after two in the morning, pulled vigorously away from the inhospitable shores of Moldeoen.

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We started on our sixty–miles' journey hopefully, and went on our way for an hour or so with spirit. But when two hours had elapsed, my companion and I began to feel the effects of rowing with unaccustomed muscles rather severely, and gazed with envy at the three ladies who lay coiled up in an indescribable heap of shawls and crinolines in the stern of the boat, sound asleep. They needed sleep, poor things, not having rested for two days and two nights.

But my poor friend was more to be pitied than they. Having scorned to follow my example and take rest when he could get the chance, he now found himself unexpectedly called on to do the work of a man when he could not keep his eyes open. When our third hour began, I saw that he was fast asleep at the oar lifting it indeed and dipping it in proper time, but without pulling the weight of an ounce upon it. I therefore took it from him, and told him to take half an hour's nap, when I would wake him up, and expect him to take the oars and give me a rest.

On being relieved he dropped his head on a sugar–cask, and was sound asleep in two minutes!

I now felt drearily dismal. I began to realize the fact that we had actually pledged ourselves to work without intermission for the next eighteen or twenty hours, of which two only had run, and I felt sensations akin to what must have been those of the galley–slaves of old. In the midst of many deep thoughts and cogitations, during that silent morning hour, when all were asleep around me save the three mechanical–looking boatmen, and when the only sounds that met my ears were the dip of the oars and the deep breathing, (to give it no other name), of the slumberers in the midst of many deep thoughts, I say, I came to the conclusion that in my present circumstances the worst thing I could do was to THINK! I remembered the fable of the pendulum that became so horrified at the thought of the number of ticks it had to perform in a lengthened period of time, that it stopped in despair; and I determined to shut down my intellect.

Soon after, my shoulders began to ache, and in process of time I felt a sensation about the small of my back that induced the alarming belief that the spinal marrow was boiling. Presently my wrists became cramped, and I felt a strong inclination to pitch the oars overboard, lie down in the bottom of the boat, and howl! But feeling that this would be unmanly, I restrained myself. Just then my companion in sorrow began to snore, so I awoke him, and giving him the oars went to sleep.

From this period everything in the history of that remarkable day became unconnected, hazy, and confusing. I became to some extent mechanical in my thoughts and actions. I rowed and rested, and rowed again; I ate and sang, and even laughed. My comrade did the same, like a true Briton, for he was game to the backbone. But the one great, grand, never–changing idea in the day was pull pull pull!

We had hoped during the course of that day to procure assistance, but we were unsuccessful. We passed a number of fishermen's huts, but none of the men would consent to embark with us. At last, late that night, we reached a small farm about two–thirds of the way up the fjord, where we succeeded in procuring another large boat with a crew of five men. Here, also, we obtained a cup of coffee; and while we were awaiting the arrival of the boat I lay down on the pier and had a short nap.

None but those who have toiled for it can fully appreciate the blessing of repose. It was a clear, calm night when we resumed our boat journey. The soft daylight threw a species of magical effect over the great mountains and the glassy fjord, as we rowed away with steady and vigorous strokes, and I lay down in the bow of the boat to sleep. The end of the mast squeezed my shoulder; the edge of a cask of beef well–nigh stove in my ribs; the corner of a box bored a hole in the nape of my neck yet I went off like one of the famed seven sleepers, and my friend, although stretched out beside me in similarly unpropitious circumstances, began to snore in less than five minutes after he laid down.

The last sounds I heard before falling into a state of oblivion were the voices of our fair companions joining in that most beautiful of our sacred melodies, the Evening Hymn, ere they lay down to rest in the stern of the

boat. Next morning at nine we arrived at the top of the fjord, and at the end, for a time at least, of our journeying.

Chapter Two.

SALMON-FISHING EXTRAORDINARY.

Norway, 14th July, 1868.

Yesterday was a peculiar day in my experience of salmon-fishing in Norway.

The day was dull when I set out for the river, seven miles distant, in a small boat, with a Norseman. A seven-miles' pull was not a good beginning to a day's salmon-fishing, the weight of my rod being quite sufficient to try the arms without that; but there was no help for it. Arrived there I got a native, named Anders, to carry the bag and gaff.

Anders is a fair youth, addicted to going about with his mouth open, with a mild countenance and a turned-up nose.

Good weather for fishing, Anders, said I, in Norse.

Ya, said he, megit god, (very good).

This was the extent of our conversation at that time, for we came suddenly on the first pool in the river; and I soon perceived that, although the weather was good enough, the river was so flooded as to be scarcely fishable.

And now began a series of petty misfortunes that gradually reduced me to a state of misery which was destined to continue throughout the greater part of that day. But Hope told me flattering tales not to say STORIES for a considerable time; and it was not until I had fished the third pool without seeing a fin that my heart began fairly to sink. The day, too, had changed from a cloudy to a rainy one, and Anders' nose began to droop, while his face elongated visibly.

Feeling much depressed, I sat down on a wet stone, in my wet garments, and lunched off a moist biscuit, a piece of tongue, and a lump of cheese. This was consoling, as far as it went, but it did not go far. The misty clouds obliterated the mountains, the rain drizzled from the skies, percolated through the brim of my hat, trickled down my nose, and dropped upon my luncheon.

Now we shall go up the river, Anders, said I. Anders assented, as he would have done had I proposed going down the river, or across the river, or anywhere in the wide world; for, as I said it in English, he did not understand me. Evidently he did not care whether he understood me or not!

Up the river we went, to the best pool in it. The place was a torrent unfishable so deep that I could not wade in far enough to cast over the spot where fish are wont to lie. In making a desperate effort to get far in, I went over the boot-top; and my legs and feet, which hitherto had been dry, had immediate cause to sympathize with the rest of my person.

Anders' face became longer than ever. All the best pools in the river were tried, but without success, and at last, towards evening, we turned to retrace our steps down the valley. On the way I took another cast into the best pool going deeper than the waist into the water in order to cast over the right spot.

The effort was rewarded. I hooked a fish and made for the bank as fast as possible. My legs were like solid pillars, or enormous sausages, by reason of the long boots being full to bursting with water. To walk was difficult; to run,

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in the event of the fish requiring me to do so, impossible. I therefore lay down on the bank and tossed both legs in the air to let the water run out holding on to the fish the while. The water did run out it did more; it ran right along my backbone to the nape of my neck; completing the saturation which the rain had hitherto failed to accomplish. But I had hooked a fish and heeded it not.

He was a small one; only ten pounds; so we got him out quickly and without much trouble. Yet this is not always the case. Little fish are often the most obstreperous and the most troublesome. It was only last week that I hooked and landed a twenty-eight-pound salmon, and he did not give me half the trouble that I experienced from one which I caught yesterday. Well, having bagged him we proceeded on our homeward way, Anders' face shortening visibly and his nose rising, while my own spirits began to improve. At another pool I tried again, and almost at the first cast hooked an eighteen-pounder, which Anders gaffed after about twenty-minutes' play.

We felt quite jolly now, although it rained harder than ever, and we went on our way rejoicing Anders' countenance reduced to its naturally short proportions.

Presently we came to an old weir, or erection for catching fish as they ascend the river, where lies one of our favorite pools. The water was running down it like a mill-race. Pent up by the artificial dike, the whole river in this place gushes down in a turbulent rapid. There was one comparatively smooth bit of water, which looked unpromising enough, but being in hopeful spirits now, I resolved on a final cast. About the third cast a small trout rose at the fly. The greedy little monsters have a tendency to do this. Many a small trout have I hooked with a salmon fly as large as its own head. Before I could draw the line to cast again, the usual heavy WAUBLE of a salmon occurred near the fly. It was followed by the WHIR of the reel as the line flew out like lightning, sawing right through the skin of my fingers, (which by the way are now so seamed and scarred that writing is neither so easy nor so pleasant as it used to be).

The burst that now ensued was sudden and tremendous! The salmon flashed across the pool, then up the pool, then down the pool. It was evidently bent on mischief. My heart misgave me, for the place is a bad one all full of stumps and stones, with the furious rapid before mentioned just below, and the rough unsteady stones of the old dike as an uncertain path-way to gallop over should the fish go down the river. I held on stoutly for a few seconds as he neared the head of the rapid, but there is a limit to the endurance of rods and tackle. What made the matter worse was that the dike on which I stood terminated in a small island, to get from which to the shore necessitated swimming, and if he should go down the big rapid there was little chance of his stopping until he should reach the foot of it far below this island.

All at once he turned tail and went down head first. I let the line fly now, keeping my fingers well clear of it.

He's off, Anders! I shouted, as I took to my heels at full speed.

Hurroo-hoo-oo! yelled the Norseman, flying after me with the gaff.

How I managed to keep my footing in the rush over the broken dike I know not. It is a marvel to me. The bushes on the island overhung the water, the earth having been cut away by the force of the rapid. I tried to pull up because they were too thick to crash through; but the fish willed it otherwise. The line was getting low on the reel; the rod bent double; presently I had to straighten it out in another moment I was in the water over the boots, which filled of course in a moment. But this did not impede me as long as I was in deep water.

I was forsaken at this point by Anders, who sought and found a safe passage to the mainland, where he stood gazing at me with his eyes blazing and his mouth wide open.

I soon reached the end of the island, to my horror, for I had not previously taken particular note of the formation of the land there. A gulf of water of five or six yards broad of unknown depth lay between me and that shore, by

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which in the natural course of things I should have followed my fish as far as he chose. The rapid itself looked less tremendous than this deep black hole. I hesitated, but the salmon did not. Still down he went.

Now, then, thought I, hole or rapid?

The question was settled for me, for before I could decide, I was hauled into the rapid. No doubt I was a more than half-willing captive. Anyhow, willing or not willing, down I went. Ah! what a moment of ease and relief from exertion was that when I went a little deeper than the waist, and found myself borne pleasantly along on tip-toe, as light as one of those beautiful balls with which juveniles in these highly favored days are wont to sport in the fields!

And oh ho-o! how my spirit seemed to gush out through my mouth and nose, or out at the top of my head, when the cold water encircled my neck as I lost my footing altogether, and struck out with my right hand, endeavoring the while to support my rod in the left!

I heard Anders gasp at this point; but I saw him not. In another second my knees came into violent contact with a rock, (alas! every motion of my body, as I now write, reminds me painfully of that crash!) Immediately after this I was sprawling up the bank, having handed the rod to Anders to hold, while I tossed my legs again in the air, to get rid of the water which weighed me down like lead. How earnestly I wished that I could tear these boots off and fling them away! But there was no time for that. On regaining my legs I seized the rod, and found that the salmon had brought up in an eddy created by the tail of a gravel-bank in the center of the river between two rapids.

Good, I gasped, blandly.

Anders smiled.

Presently I found that it was the reverse of good, for, when I tried to wind in the line and move the fish, I perceived that the resistance offered was not like that of a salmon, but a stump!

I do believe he's gone! I exclaimed.

Anders became grave.

No fish there, said I, gloomily.

Anders' face elongated.

He has wound the line round a stump, and broken off, said I, in despair.

Woe, of the deepest profundity, was depicted on Anders' visage!

For full five minutes I tried every imaginable device, short of breaking the rod, to clear the line in vain. Then I gave the rod to Anders to hold, and, taking the gaff with me, I went sulkily up the river, and again taking to the water, made my way to the head of the gravel-bank, over which I walked slowly, oppressed in spirit, and weighed down by those abominable boots which had once more filled to overflowing! Water-proof boots are worse than useless for this sort of work. But happily this is not the usual style of thing that one experiences in Norwegian fishing. It is only occasionally that one enjoys a treat of the kind.

In the middle of the gravel-bank the water was only three inches deep, so I lay down on my back and, once again elevating my ponderous legs in the air, allowed a cataract of water to flow over me. Somewhat lightened, I advanced into the hole. It was deeper than I thought. I was up to the middle in a moment, and sighed as I thought

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of the boots full again. Before I reached the line the water was up to my shoulders; but it was the still water of the eddy. I soon caught the line and found that it was round a stump, as I had feared. With a heavy heart I eased it off when lo! a tug sent an electric shock through my benumbed body, and I saw the salmon not three yards off, at the bottom of the pool! He also saw me, and darting in terror from side to side wound the line round me. I passed it over my head, however, and was about to let it go to allow Anders to play it out and finish the work, when the thought occurred that I might play it myself, by running the line through my fingers when he should pull, and hauling in when he should stop. I tried this successfully. In half a minute more I drew him to within a yard of my side, gaffed him near the tail, and carried him up the gravel-bank under my arm.

He was not a large fish after all only thirteen pounds. Nevertheless, had he been fresh, it would have been scarcely possible for me to hold his strong slippery body. Even when exhausted he gave me some trouble. Gaining the shallowest part of the bank I fell on my knees, crammed the fingers of my left hand into his mouth and gills, and held him down while I terminated his career with a stone. Thereafter I fixed the hook more securely in his jaw, and, launching him into the rapid, left Anders to haul him out, while I made the best of my way to the shore.

This is about the roughest experience I have yet had of salmon-fishing in Norway.

The season this year bids fair to be a pretty good one. I have had about twelve days' fishing, and have caught sixteen fish, weighing together two hundred and seventy-six pounds, two of them being twenty-eight-pounds.

THE END.
