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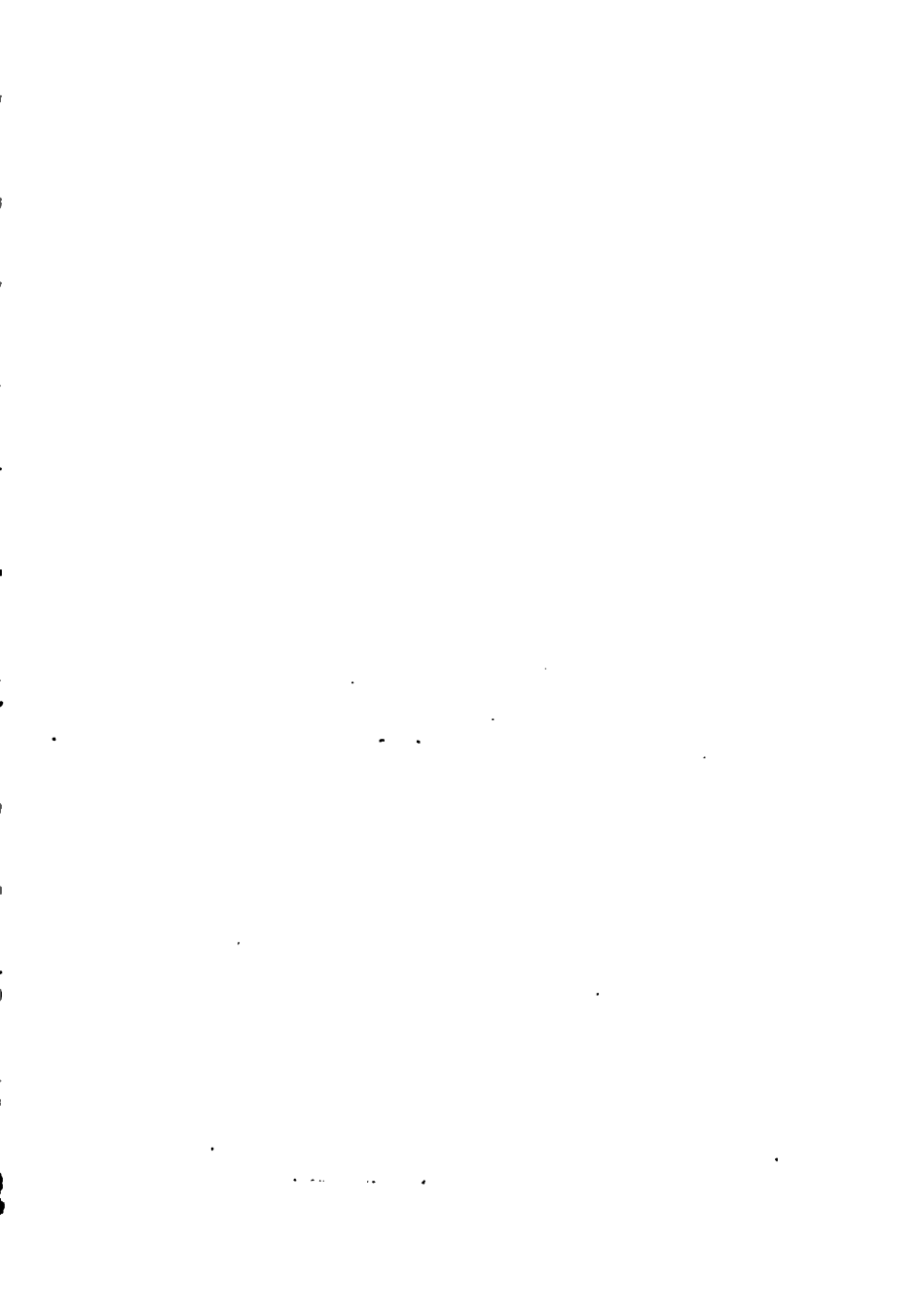


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NEPTUNE'S SON







Jim opened and read the paper

(Page 181)

NEPTUNE'S SON

By

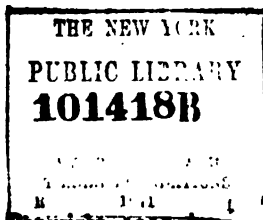
RUPERT S. HOLLAND

*Author of "Lafayette, We Come!" "Historic
Boyhoods," etc.*



PHILADELPHIA
GEORGE W. JACOBS & COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

1873



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made from trafficking on the great waters, and were now the homes of old sailors and their families. The little town of Kennebunk, three or four miles to the west and on the great highroad that ran from Portsmouth to Portland, might belong to the mainland and deal in mainland trade, but Kennebunkport, or the Port, as every one called it, still belonged to the ocean, into which it jutted its rocky shores.

Captain Nathaniel sat up straighter and smiled, for he heard a whistle he knew coming up the street. Then the whistler himself appeared in view, a tall, slim boy of sixteen or seventeen, in blue flannel shirt and khaki trousers. He waved his hand to the captain, and jumping over the low picket fence, strode up to the porch. "Hello, Cap'n," he said, "the custom officers just came on board and left you this newspaper."

Captain Burgess took the paper and fixed his spectacles on his nose, while his grandson sprawled on the edge of the porch, his back against a post. Presently he drew a small block of wood and a knife from his pocket and continued his carving of a Chinese dragon.

The old sailor glanced at the headlines of the Boston paper, then turned to the inner page that



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was always his goal. Here was the column that gave the news of shipping, the sailings and arrivals of vessels and all the nautical information that was so dear to his soul. He scanned the fine print as eagerly as though he expected to find the name of one of the ships he had himself commanded in the list. And only when he had read every single item did he put down the paper and look at his grandson. “A fine sailing breeze this morning, eh, Jim? And steady weather for a fortnight more.”

“Aye, aye, sir,” agreed the boy, looking up from his carving.

“And if I’m not mistaken, here comes the ‘Carrie B.’ tackin’ up to hail us.”

The “Carrie B.” was a short and stocky man, about the same age as Captain Burgess, who was crossing the street from the white house opposite. He waved his walking-stick at the pair on the porch. “Mornin’, Cap’n Nat. Mornin’, First Mate Jim. How’s she ridin’?”

“Come aboard an’ see, Cap’n Ben,” responded Captain Burgess. “I reckon you can navigate the channel between the flower-beds.”

“I reckon I can,” agreed the stout “Carrie B.,” and he came up the path and sat down in a big

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wicker chair on the porch beside his friend. "You've read all the mornin' news?" he asked, pointing at the newspaper.

"All that's of any importance. Seems to me they don't print as much shipping news as they used to."

"They don't care as much about ships," asserted Captain Benjamin Libby. "The country's goin' to the dogs what with all these railroads and automobiles!"

"Seems to me anybody ought to know that a country can't get along without shipping, what they call a merchant marine these days." Captain Burgess shook his head. "It wasn't so in the old days! No, sir-ee! Sea-trade was just as important as land-trade, and a durn sight more!"

"The papers are always talkin' about how the United States ought to build up its shippin'," observed Captain Libby. "But what I want to know is how you're goin' to have shippin' without sailors. All the lads I know want to be clerks in stores." He too shook his head at the situation.

The boy who was whittling looked up. "Oh, no, they don't, Cap'n Ben! I want to be a sailor. I've always wanted to be one. I've just finished read-

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ing ‘Two Years Before the Mast’ for the third time, and every time it seems harder to stay ashore.”

“A fine book that,” assented Captain Libby. “But it was writ about the old days, son.”

“And ‘Treasure Island’ and ‘The Cruise of the Cachelot’ too!” said Jim. “I’ve read ’em a dozen times!”

“‘Treasure Island’s’ more like ‘Robinson Crusoe,’ I reckon,” said Captain Libby, “a good sea yarn. Howsomever, I’ve known mighty excitin’ things to happen out at sea. Well, Jim, there’s seafarin’ in your blood. Why don’t you have a try?”

The boy looked at his grandfather, who slowly took off his spectacles, wiped them on his handkerchief and put them in his pocket. “Mary’d rather he’d follow his father and travel out west for the hardware company.”

“But I don’t want to do that!” Jim exclaimed. “The country’s got to have shipping and how can it have shipping without sailors, as Cap’n Ben says? I’d rather be the captain of my own ship than president of the biggest bank in Boston. Oh, I love the sea!”

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Captain Burgess smiled. These were words from his own heart. "How could any lad born and bred in this old town feel any different?" he said. "And to sail your own ship! You know how that feels, Benjamin."

The other old sailor nodded. "There's nothin' finer on this earth, Nat. Sometimes I dream about my first trip as Cap'n. An' your ship! Why, it's like your first-born child!"

"The lad here's got it in his blood, just as you say, Benjamin." Captain Burgess frowned. "I won't say as I so much mind my son being in business, but I've had other hopes of this here grandson all along."

"Mother won't mind so much if you talk to her that way," put in Jim. "She'll know it's just natural."

"It's right ticklish business talking to women," objected his grandfather. "They don't seem to understand the call of the sea. They're always talking about the dangers of it. Just as if there wasn't a lot more danger in the city from trolley-cars and automobiles."

"The nighest squeak I ever had," said Captain Libby, "was in Portland, when a carpenter

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dropped a rivet off of a roof and it struck the brim of my hat.”

“I want to see something of the world, and to have some adventures like those you two have had!” exclaimed Jim eagerly.

“Well, I don’t want to have no more adventures in cities!” Captain Libby grunted. “They don’t need no traffic policemen on the open sea.”

“Please, grandfather, please speak for me!” begged the boy.

“We’ve got to wait till the right time, Jim. I’m not much good arguing with your mother.”

“Well, I hope the right time comes pretty soon,” said Jim. “You were both of you sailors before you were my age.”

Each of the two old mariners stirred in his seat. To each of them Jim’s words spoke like a voice out of his own past. And while they were still considering the boy’s problem an interruption occurred. It took the shape of a click at the latch of the gate. Captain Burgess glanced up. “Who’s this?” he muttered.

“One o’ them summer visitors,” murmured Captain Libby, speaking with the slight disdain of the

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native for that curious race who only came to the Port to play in summer.

The newcomer's white flannel suit and checked cap proclaimed him a summer visitor beyond doubt. But there was certainly nothing disagreeable or superior in his face or manner. He was tall and well-built, sunburned, and he smiled affably as he tipped his cap to the group on the porch. "Captain Nathaniel Burgess?" he inquired.

"The same, sir," said the captain. "What can I do for you?"

The stranger flushed slightly. "I don't want to intrude, sir. But they told me you were an old sailor, with more voyages to your credit than any other man hereabouts. I've been collecting stories of the sea; I write them up for the magazines. My name's Jeremy Grantham. I wonder——" he hesitated; "I wonder if you'd mind telling me about some of your voyages? But I don't want to interrupt you."

"No interruption," answered Captain Burgess. "Come up and take a chair. This is Cap'n Benjamin Libby and this is my grandson Jim."

Now neither of the captains had anything par-

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ticular to do that morning, and there are few pleasanter occupations for old mariners than to tell their adventures. Moreover Jeremy Grantham was evidently an amiable young fellow. So it followed naturally enough that soon Captain Burgess was sailing the high seas in his imagination, recounting the manifold experiences that had befallen him in his good ship *Miles Standish*. Jim resumed his carving, Grantham smoked his pipe, and Captain Libby interrupted every now and again. Then Captain Libby told of some of his voyages in the *Carrie B.*, while Captain Burgess took his turn at interrupting and reminding his friend of details, as old cronies are apt to do. And so full of the lore of the sea were the two aged mariners that it actually seemed as if the strange sights and scents of foreign lands, the roar of waters on reefs, the feel of tropical gales, of calms, typhoons and cyclones were present to the four on the porch. Jim stopped whittling and sat drinking in every syllable of the sea-yarns. So absorbed were they all that they forgot about the time until Mrs. Burgess, Jim’s mother, came out and announced that dinner was waiting.

“I must be going,” said Grantham. “I cer-

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tainly have enjoyed all your stories. It was just like sailing oneself."

Captain Burgess grinned. He liked this most receptive listener. "Come round to-night after supper," he invited, "and I'll show you some of the things I picked up in foreign parts."

"Thank you. I'd be delighted. Hope to see you all soon," and the visitor was off to the gate.

That afternoon Jim went down to the little harbor, cast scornful eyes at the canoes and catboats of the summer visitors, and wandered across the bridge to the opposite shore where men were building a ship for the merchant marine. It was only a small ship; but still it was a ship, and reminded one of the days when whole fleets had been built and manned by men of the coast of Maine. Farther on he went, to the edge of the ocean, and looked out at the smoke of steamers and the white sails of ships traveling north and south on the great blue level highway. And all the time he was studying his own problem;—how was he to follow in his grandfather's footsteps and be the mariner he wished to be?

Jeremy Grantham came in that evening and saw the captain's treasures, carved chests and boxes of

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sandalwood, china bowls from the east, Buddhas of strange patterns, charms and trinkets and knick-knacks such as a sailor collects. Presently he and Jim were left alone in the sitting-room while the captain went to the attic for another box. “What fun the old sailors had!” Grantham exclaimed. “Do you know I’ve half a mind to go on a voyage myself!”

“Oh, how I wish *I* could!” Jim cried, and his voice spoke his intense feeling. “I want to be a sailor more than anything else! And the country needs sailors if we’re to use all the ships we’re building.”

“Yes indeed, the country does need sailors. And I think you’d make a fine one. Why don’t you do it?”

“Mother’d rather I stayed on shore.” Jim lowered his voice. “Sometimes I think I’ll have to run away and try it anyhow.”

“Oh, I wouldn’t do that. Now let me see.” Grantham thought a few minutes. “I have a friend who’s in a shipping company. Suppose I got him to let me go on one of his ships as passenger or clerk or supercargo, and got you a berth before the mast? Then I could keep an eye on you. I’ve been

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wanting to go on a voyage like that for a long time. Perhaps your mother wouldn't mind so much if you had an older friend along."

"I don't know ——" said Jim doubtfully.

"I like the idea better and better the more I think of it," said Grantham. "Tell you what we'll do. We'll both sleep on it and I'll come round in the morning and see how it works out."

That night Jim dreamed of sailing into strange ports and meeting foreign peoples.

Next morning Grantham came again and explained his plan in detail to Jim and the captain. Captain Burgess nodded. "So far as I'm concerned," said he, "I'd a heap rather have Jim sailing on the ocean than clerking in a store. I'd let him ship anyway. But I reckon it would suit his mother better to have a man like you along with him."

"It's just what I want," declared Grantham. "I'll write a book about it. And it's just what Jim wants too. Let me have a chance to talk with Mrs. Burgess and see if I can't persuade her."

He was very persuasive. He pointed out that it was only fair to Jim to let him have a try at the sea before he decided what he wanted to do, that

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the country needed sailors, and that those who had been born and bred on the coast and came of seafaring stock would by nature be best for the work. Then he said that he would sail on the same ship as the boy and would keep an eye out for him. “I’ve only known your son for a day and a half,” he said to Jim’s mother, “but I’ve taken a liking to him. And he’ll never have a better chance to try the sailor’s life,” he concluded.

“What will his father say if I let him go?” said Mrs. Burgess. “He’s out west just now.”

“I’ll speak for my son,” declared the captain. “He’d want Jim to have his chance. The lad’s strong and husky. I wasn’t half his size when I shipped as a cabin-boy at fifteen.”

“You want him to go, don’t you, dad?” said Jim’s mother.

“Of course I’ll miss him, Mary, just as you will,” the captain answered. “But I’d miss him just as much if he was out west selling hardware like his father. Jim’s got a right to live his own life, you know, and it’s only a matter of nature that he should want to sail. Why, I wouldn’t give much for him if he didn’t, living in sight of the ocean all his days!”

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“ And you, Jim, my dear? ” asked his mother.

“ I'll come home safe and sound, ” said the boy.
“ And think how much I'll have to tell you then! ”

“ It looks to me as if I'd have to let you go, dear, ” said his mother. “ But I'm very glad Mr. Grantham is going along with you. ”

So the matter was settled. The right moment, as Captain Burgess had said, had come along, and Jim had jumped at the chance that this new acquaintance had offered. But Jeremy Grantham did not seem like the ordinary casual acquaintance. He had won the friendship of the Burgess family almost at the start. He looked so wide-awake and merry and was so much interested in everything that met his eye. And there was something about him that made one instinctively rely on his good judgment. Finally he had the look of one who was constantly hunting for new adventures and experiences, and that look drew Jim and the captain to him instantly. “ He may be a summer visitor and have plenty of money to spend, ” the captain said to his daughter-in-law that evening, “ but he ain't anybody's fool, or I lose my guess about him. ”

Jeremy Grantham left Kennebunkport and went back to Boston. A week later there came a letter

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to James Burgess from his new friend saying that he had arranged for Jim to sail on the *Barnacle*, bound out of Boston for South America, and that Grantham was to go as clerk for the shipping company. Jim instantly took the letter to his grandfather, who was sitting with Captain Libby on the porch. “*Barnacle!*” read Captain Burgess. “That’s a good name! If she sticks as tight as them little critters do, your ship’s all right, my boy.”

“So the lad’s really goin’, eh?” said Captain Libby. “I wish him as good luck as I had in the old *Carrie B.!*”

“And speaking of good luck,” said Captain Burgess, “I’ll put him on to a few things this afternoon and give him one of my charms. You mayn’t think so much of those things in your own home, but sometimes they help a lot when you’re in foreign parts.”

The attic, always a place of delightful mystery to Jim ever since he was a small boy, was filled with boxes and bales and the sailor’s treasures that had overflowed the living-rooms below. Captain Burgess went to a dark, cobwebby corner, and with a little key that was fastened to his watch-chain un-

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locked an old, brass-bound chest. Squatting down on his haunches the captain hunted among the contents. He took out one small box after another, squinted at it, and put it back again. At last he found what he wanted, for, with a grunt of satisfaction, he stood up, a blue silk bag in his hand, and walked over to the window. "Here it is, Jim my lad," said he. "Come see what I've got for you."

Jim, all attention, followed. Captain Burgess pulled the strings that held the bag's mouth, and, putting in his hand, drew forth a wad of yellow cloth. Unfolding this, he displayed a round flat piece of green jade, about an inch in diameter, fastened to a green cord. There were markings on both the smooth sides. The captain pressed a tiny spring at the edge, and the two pieces opened like an oyster. Within, on the green surface was carved a dragon, with long tongue and claws, and around the dragon were symbols that looked to Jim like words in some language unknown to him.

"There she is, my fine sailor boy!" said the captain. "I had that from a captain in Singapore, a fellow I did a good turn for once on a time, when I saved him from getting a coolie's knife between his ribs. It's a stone that's fairly well known to

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sailormen who’ve been out to the East. The critter in the middle is the dragon of good luck and the words around it, in some sort of Yellow Sea lingo, mean that the fellow who harms the chap that’s got this has got to reckon with the devil mighty soon. Of course you and I, Jim, here in ‘The Crow’s Nest’ in the old Port know that it’s all only a funny story, but it’s different when you’re at sea, ’specially in the East.” The captain scratched his head thoughtfully. “Out there they think a whole lot o’ these things. It ain’t so much the little stone itself or the critter inside that does the trick as it is the fear in the other fellow that there might be something in the story if he did you any harm. There mightn’t be anything to it,—but then again there might. That’s the way he sizes it up—and he’d ruther not take any chances. Almost every sailorman has got some sort o’ charm about him,—lucky piece, they call it,—and I carried this here one on a dozen voyages. You wear it around your neck on the string. Take it with you, lad, and good luck go with you!”

Jim opened his shirt and fastened the little flat piece of jade in place. “I’ll flash it on them, grandfather, if I ever get in a tight fix. That is, if I

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don't forget all about it. And thank you ever so much."

With that they went down-stairs and set to work to make ready for Jim's departure. Part of his outfit he would get with Grantham in Boston, but he wanted to take some things from home with him, and as a sailor's chest is small it took a good deal of thought to decide what to put in and what to leave out.

Meantime Mrs. Burgess had written to her husband in Chicago, and two days later a telegram came from him, giving his consent to his son's sailing and wishing him Godspeed. "The men all think it's right that you should go, my dear," said Jim's mother, "and I'm sure I don't want you to stay at home when you're longing for the sea. A sailor's life is a fine one. Goodness knows, it's only right and proper that I should think that, seeing how I've lived on the seacoast all my life!"

So, on a blue-skied summer day Jim said good-bye to his mother and grandfather and Captain Libby and a few other friends who had come to see him off, and set out for Boston. "The Crow's Nest" looked very dear to him as he turned at the gate to wave his hand in farewell, but his boy's heart

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craved the sea and sails and strange lands and he was glad to be setting forth on adventure.

First a motor-bus and then a trolley and then a train carried him to Boston. There, without much difficulty, he found the house where Jeremy Grantham had his bachelor apartment. The man was very glad to see him, and soon the two were out, getting the supplies they needed.

That night Grantham had a party of friends at his rooms, and he and Jim were slapped on the back and congratulated on their good luck and seasons were sung and much music was made on an old, battered piano. At eleven o'clock the party broke up and Jim sought his bed in Grantham's guest-room. The latter, however, went for a good-night walk with one of his cronies and stayed so long that when he came back and knocked on Jim's door Jim thought it must be nearly morning. He sat up and called, "Come in."

Grantham came in and leaned on the rail of Jim's bed. "Tell you what it is, my fine fellow," he said, "I've just heard something that makes it look as if there'd be something doing on this trip of ours. I promised not to tell what it is unless certain things happen. But the captain and the

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first mate of the *Barnacle* know, and so does Jerry Grantham! I've been specially instructed to look after some matters that may turn up in Brazil or thereabouts. Talk about sport! If we get wind of this and can come up with it, we're going to have the time of our lives, my hearty!"

His friend's air of mystery and excitement was infectious. "Why, what sort of thing can it be, Mr. Grantham?" Jim exclaimed, wide-eyed.

"Never you mind, my lad. But it's the sort of adventure that one doesn't expect to happen along nowadays. Just keep your eyes open and your mouth shut, and you'll see what you will see. And by the way, don't call me Mr. Grantham; just call me Jerry, now we're shipmates together. This is going to be fine, old sport! I can hardly wait till the *Barnacle* sets sail."

"I'm mighty glad I'm going along," said Jim.

"I shouldn't wonder if we'd have something to tell the two old captains of Kennebunkport when we get back," said Grantham. "Now go to sleep and dream about Father Neptune and flying-fish and Mother Carey's chickens. I'm going to have a look at the chart of the South Atlantic Ocean before I turn in."

CHAPTER II

ROLLING DOWN TO RIO

THE *Barnacle*, a Yankee clipper, under command of Captain Thomas Flanders of New Bedford, carried a varied cargo out of Boston. There were several hundred cases of starch, as many kegs of nails, three large wagon-loads of sewing-machines, five hundred bales of oakum, and hardware that ran all the way from pocket-knives to plows and grain-binders. She also had on board four whale-boats, each over thirty feet long, going to Alaska, for, odd though it seems, few good whale-boats are built on the Pacific coast and the best are sent all the way around to Sitka from New Bedford. These were hard to stow in a deep-water ship so that they should not be crushed by heavier cargo, but the second mate, John Perkins, was a master-hand at packing merchandise in a vessel's hold.

The *Barnacle* was a three-master, very loftily rigged, as sailors say, with three sky-sail yards, and a mainyard all of ninety feet long. There was a

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large house on the main-deck, containing the fore-castle, sail-room, galley, and carpenter-shop, with a twenty horse-power donkey engine. The cabin was also large, with comfortable accommodations for the captain and officers, as well as for occasional passengers like Jeremy Grantham, who might get permission from the ship's owners to make a voyage.

Thomas Flanders, the captain, son of a long line of Yankee mariners, was a big, raw-boned man with a skin tanned by sun and wind to a fine orange-red. The first mate, always called "the mate," Alonzo Mason, was short and stocky, with bristling mustache and beetling eyebrows, a taciturn man who gave his commands with the sharp bark of a dog. John Perkins, the second mate, had been born in England, but had come to Boston when a boy and become a naturalized citizen of the United States. He was tall and straight, with blue eyes, and a smile generally lurking about the corners of his mouth. There were two bosuns, both young fellows, one Samuel Holt, from Rockland, Maine, the other David Gardner, of Truro, out on the tip of Cape Cod, and both were bred to the sea like Captain Flanders. As for the crew, they were of

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all sorts and conditions, many of them picked up in port shortly before the ship sailed.

The cook and the steward both hailed from the Far East. The cook, who came from Canton, in China, was a tiny man and an excellent cook. The steward was a Malay, smiling and sleek, with very little to say, but with most expressive gestures. Then there was the carpenter, nicknamed "Shavings," whose hands were always covered with turpentine and sawdust, and the red-headed boy-of-all-jobs Pete, who could instantly fall asleep when he was not wanted on some errand. These, with Jeremy Grantham as clerk and agent of the shipping company, and Jim Burgess as apprentice seaman, made up the list of officers and crew that sailed out of Boston on the *Barnacle*.

Fresh breezes carried the ship under full sail out of harbor, along the north shore of Cape Cod and past the great shaft that rises above the sand-dunes of Provincetown, splendid memorial to the landing of the Pilgrims there. Jim was very busy. For all his knowledge of the ships at Kennebunkport and all his grandfather had taught him he found that he still had a great deal to learn. But he knew how to handle himself and was quick at picking up sea-

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lore, and under the careful instruction of the second mate and the friendly advice of the sailors he soon felt fairly at home aloft as well as on the firmer footing of the deck.

Jim was a good sailor, but Jeremy Grantham was not so fortunate. It took him three days to get his sea-legs and the most of that time he spent in his berth, taking no interest in what was going on aboard ship. On the fourth morning, however, he appeared on deck, looking almost as bright-eyed as usual, and hunting out Jim, where the latter was busy mending a sail, asked how things were going. "Fine!" said Jim. "I like the grub, I like the men, and I like the sea best of all!"

"Regular old sea-dog you are already, eh? That's what comes of being born to the water. I'm only an adopted son, as you might say." He glanced up at the rigging. "I'm mighty glad I don't have to go up there in all kinds of weather."

"It does make you kind of dizzy at first," Jim admitted. "But, Jerry, you soon get so interested in the job that you don't think anything more about the water than if you were on dry land."

"I suppose so," said the other doubtfully. "But

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it looks to me a good deal like swinging on a trapeze in the circus,—only there isn't any net underneath to catch you if you fall."

"You get to be like a cat," said Jim, "with claws to your feet and hands."

"It's wonderful weather," said Jerry. His eyes roved over the great expanse of water, here deep blue, there green-blue, near the horizon almost silver. He drew in great breaths of the cool, salt air. "This is better than town, old sport! It makes you feel like a fighting-cock, my hearty!"

The wonderful weather held. With favoring winds the *Barnacle* sped on her way southward. They were out of sight of land, but they knew they were well past Long Island and Sandy Hook and opposite the shores of the Southern States. The southwest wind blew warmer, and presently the captain announced that he was going to catch a bonito, a number of which were playing about the forefoot of the ship. Jerry told Jim, and the pair of them went up on the forecastle head, and sitting there watched Captain Flanders creep out along the bowsprit with a cod-line and a hook baited with a small piece of cloth. Fishing in this fashion required a great deal of agility, but the skipper was

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an old hand at the game, though once he nearly managed to slip off the jib-boom. He would suddenly drop the rag-bait until it just touched the water, and then instantly jerk it up again. Jim, watching the shining fish darting here and there a few feet below the surface, thought they looked exactly like young dolphins. Captain Flanders got red in the face and began to call the fish names, but at last his skill and patience were rewarded, and he hooked a bonito and pulled it up, snapping and struggling, and dropped it into a sack held by one of the sailors. The fish must have weighed about six pounds, and as it came up looked like a fine, plump mackerel. "We'll have him for supper," declared the captain. "I've had enough of fishing for to-day."

Late that afternoon the *Barnacle* sighted a steamer on the lee bow, and as she was bound westward and there was a good chance to signal her Captain Flanders put up his helm and kept away a couple of points. The stranger was an English tramp freighter. The *Barnacle* ran up her number and the message "Report me all well." The freighter hoisted her answering pennant and the crews of the two ships eyed each other curiously

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as men do when they meet company on the high seas.

Jim's first Sunday at sea was a clear, hot day, but there was enough of a swell to send light draughts of air from the slatting sails. By now every rope was coiled and in its proper place, the brass fittings shone like mirrors, and the decks were as clean as hard scrubbing could make them. Some of the crew sat in the shade of the bulwarks, others beside the deck-house. When Jim was off watch he and Jerry took themselves to the fore-castle-head, where the swinging of the big foresail and jibs made cool air circulate. As they sat there, watching the sea and the light, fluffy clouds that floated so lazily across the blue sky, the only sounds were the flapping of the canvas overhead, the scrape of the blocks, and the turn of the rudder-head as the *Barnacle* rolled about in the swells. "It's peaceful as all get out!" said Jerry. "It seems as if it couldn't ever blow or rain!"

"It'll be a fine Sunday at the Port," said Jim. "I wonder what mother and grandfather are doing. I suppose they'll be just about starting out for church now."

A sudden breeze came up, and the quiet stopped

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for the moment. Alonzo Mason, the mate on watch, barked out, "Square the crojjick-yard!" The men of the watch jumped to their feet and hurried forward. "Square the crojjick-yard, sir!" they repeated in their echoing voices. Immediately the heavy yards began to creak slowly round, as if obeying the deep tones of command from the bosun.

Then quiet reigned again, though now with a little more breeze and a little more speed to the ship. Captain Flanders came up and greeted Jerry. "What I want is enough wind to show the sky-sails to, Grantham," said he. "But I reckon I ain't goin' to get it. There were a lot o' those blessed Mother Carey's chickens flyin' around last night, and when those bloomin' birds cry we're sure to be in for a long spell o' light weather."

As the big skipper walked away Jerry grinned at Jim. "I've never yet seen a captain who really liked the weather, no matter what it was. They always want it to be a little different."

Jim grinned back at his friend. "They think about the weather all the time, don't they? Well, I suppose it's the most important thing there is at sea."

"I don't see anything wrong with this," said

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Jerry. "I couldn't have made it better if I'd ordered it myself."

There was plenty of work for Jim to do, however, even in calm weather, and some of it, such as helping to work the pumps, pushing the heavy handles around for fifteen minutes at a stretch, and then at it again after a short rest, made him ache in every muscle. But he grew tough and hard, bronzed like an Indian, ate like a wolf, and went to sleep the instant he shut his eyes. Even Pete, the boy-of-all-work, wasn't a readier hand at sleeping than the new sailor.

When the *Barnacle* struck the trade-winds she made better speed, her average daily run for a number of days being one hundred and ninety miles. The weather continued hot, with no rain. One day the wind shifted to the south and a great blue-black cloud rose from the southwest and brought thunder and lightning. Then the air grew heavy, dense and sultry as it is in the tropics. That night Jerry preferred to sleep on deck to the close quarters of his little cabin.

Next day real dolphins were playing about in the water, and the second mate undertook to catch one to help out the larder. He rigged his harpoon and

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intimate acquaintance. The *Barnacle* sailed south along a strip of flat country that lay between the sea and a chain of low, sugar-loaf mountains only a short distance inland. Her course lay between this mainland and the islands of Maya and Payo. A wind had now sprung up and tall solitary palm trees twisted and whirled about above groves of bananas. One sugar-loaf mountain after another slipped astern. The bosun pointed out to Jim that the chain of hills looked very much like the figure of a giant lying on his back. The figure was easy to see against the western sky, where the sun was now setting in red and golden glory.

Before the *Barnacle* could enter the harbor of Rio she had to cross a bar. The air was now quite cold, in striking contrast to the past week. For a time Jim and all the crew were very busy, ready to follow the barking commands of the mate as hounds answer the horn of the huntsman. Yet he had time to notice the glittering rim of lights that framed the approaching city and to catch something of the twilight beauty of the bay as it opened before him. They passed two more islands, on one of which stood a lighthouse. When they reached the bar the wind was blowing off the land and there

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was very little sea. Once they were inside the water was as still and calm as that of the little river on which Jim had often canoed at the Port.

A gun boomed and a blue light shone from Fort Santa Cruz on one side, and was answered by similar signals from Fort Santa Lucia on the other shore. The *Barnacle* dropped her anchor in the quarantine ground of the Brazilian harbor and made all snug for the night. For a long time after his work was done Jim stood at the bow with Jerry, looking eagerly at the first foreign land he had ever seen.

“ I ought to find a cable at the company’s office here,” said Jerry. “ You haven’t forgotten what I told you the night before we sailed? ”

“ No, indeed,” Jim answered. “ I’ve been wondering what on earth it was you meant.”

“ Well, maybe you won’t have to wonder about it very much longer. If there is a trail we ought to pick it up here in Rio. But I’m not going to tell you any more about it until I know more myself.”

Sunrise next morning found the officers and crew of the *Barnacle* hard at work, making ready to dock and unload part of their cargo and take on fresh supplies. Presently they weighed anchor and

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found another berth nearer to the city, where the health officers and the custom-house officials came on board and interviewed Captain Flanders. Then the unloading and the taking on of stores began, and Jim worked like a beaver. Jerry, as clerk, kept tabs on the merchandise, but about the middle of the afternoon his services were completed and he went ashore.

That evening they had fresh meat and vegetables for supper, a treat the young fellow from Maine greatly appreciated. He was watching the lights of the city from the forecastle head when Jerry returned and, after a short talk with the captain, came up to him. "The old man says you can go ashore with me, Jim," Jerry announced. "Come have a look at the town. I found the cable waiting at the office."

Rio was beautiful in the moonlight, sweet with the fragrance of many flowers. The streets were filled with people, strolling in the soft, balmy air. There were many wide thoroughfares and open places, and more trees than Jim had ever seen in a city. They passed a number of fine-looking residences with big gardens, the railings covered with orange-colored creepers or lilac passion-flowers.

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Presently Jerry turned in at a gate and went up a flagged path. "This is where Mr. Knowlton, the company's agent, lives," he explained. "Ah, here he is on the porch. Mr. Knowlton, I want you to meet Jim Burgess of Kennebunkport. Jim's as old a sea-dog as I am myself."

The agent, who was dressed in a very cool-looking white suit, shook hands with Jim and invited them both to take seats on the veranda. A clap of his hands fetched a negro, who shortly returned with a pitcher of an iced pink drink and glasses. Jim sipped his glass, wondering what the delicious beverage was, but not liking to betray his ignorance. Jerry and Mr. Knowlton were both smoking cigars and discussing the various items of the *Barnacle's* cargo. Then, when Jerry had finished his glass he leaned forward and said in a slightly lowered voice, "And now about the 'X.' You know what I mean. You can trust Jim Burgess as you would me."

"There's no risk of being overheard here, Grantham. The darkey's at the back of the house and there's no one else about." Knowlton flicked off the ash from his cigar. "The 'X' is somewhere south of here. That's fairly certain. She's been

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sighted by various vessels and their descriptions of her all tally with ours. And she must have a crew of a dozen men or so, headed by Red Derek. Lord knows what she's got on board besides the stuff she took from the *Mary Parrot*. She's been picking up odd lots from time to time, easing the cargoes of smaller fry than herself. Her trouble is that she can't get rid of the stuff at any of the big ports; she's got no papers and men won't buy blindfolded. Her game is to try to let the goods seep in through small traders and at little settlements down the coast. The natives there don't bother to ask questions."

"But what will she do with the *Rose*?" asked Jerry.

"Aha!" said the agent, and chuckled. "What will she do with the *Rose*? I'll wager that problem's puzzling old Derek himself! You can't handle that pretty creature as if she was ginseng or opium or ivory, can you?"

"She's easier to get hold of than to get rid of," said Jerry.

"And not so precious easy to get hold of, either, if one's to believe what one hears. I don't envy you all of your job, Grantham; though I can't say

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but what I'd like to try a fling at such a fine game myself. Derek's got lots of nerve, and he knows, and his crew knows too, that they're no better than pirates."

Here Jerry turned round and rested his hand on Jim's knee. "Well, old scout, how does it sound? Have you been listening?"

"You bet I have! But I haven't got the hang of it yet."

"You'll pick up the threads fast enough, once they begin to unwind. There's a ship somewhere between here and Cape Horn, a ship that we call the 'X,' because she's had so many names we don't know what else to call her, that was once a respectable sailing vessel, but lost her reputation and has turned rascal. She held up the *Mary Parrot*, out of Bombay for Boston, and stole the half of her cargo. That's where she got the *Rose*. Of course the hand of every honest ship captain's against her, but it's our particular job to come up with her if we can and make her mend her ways. Captain Flanders knows about it, and I've got my orders here from Mr. Knowlton. It's a real party, boy!"

"It sounds like one," said Jim. He was bursting to ask a hundred questions, but kept silent, having

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already learned to hold his tongue and watch and listen from his training on board ship.

“If the *Barnacle* can pull this off it'll be worth more to the company than the whole of her present cargo out to Frisco,” the shipping agent said. “A vessel like this of Derek's is worse than a derelict, and she doesn't stick to the Sargasso Sea and other unlikely places either. She's a sort of a gadfly, likely to sting any other ship that comes along. And if you can land the plunder she's got on board you and your mates will deserve all the credit that's going, Grantham.”

Jerry nodded, as if he thoroughly agreed with all that Knowlton said. “It's a whacking big order; but Captain Flanders and I have talked it over, and we're ready to have a try at it. Luckily Flanders knows the coast like the back of his hand.”

“It's likely they're somewhere south of Montevideo, in the neighborhood of the Falkland Islands,” observed the agent. “Patagonia's pretty primitive still. They might find men to buy their stuff there, though I'm thinking they'd not get very high prices for it, and would have to take the most of it in trade.”

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Jerry chuckled. "You wouldn't find the Indians bidding for the Rose, would you?"

"No. Derek would like to sell her in London or Paris or New York, but he wouldn't dare to show his face in any of those places. I shouldn't wonder if there were others tracking the Rose tonight as well as we."

"From what I've heard of India I shouldn't wonder either," Jerry agreed.

To Jim the quiet old house of his grandfather at Kennebunkport seemed to be in another world as he sat on the vine-covered porch in Rio and listened to the mystery-laden words of his friend and the agent. The sea was full of mystery, though so far in his experience of it it had been fairly smooth and smiling. But this veranda in the Brazilian city and the air full of the pungent odors of flowers and plants unknown to him and the talk of sea-robbers coasting along a strange shore were far more thrilling than anything he had ever imagined. He thought of the tales the old captain and Benjamin Libby had told him of their experiences on the water, but none of them seemed to compare in excitement with the vista of adventure that was being unrolled before him by Jerry Grantham and

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Knowlton. And he, Jim Burgess, was to have a hand in the game!

“Time to be going, Jim,” said Jerry, standing up. “I’ll send you word whenever I get a chance, Knowlton.”

“Good luck to you both!” said the agent. “I can tell you this; there’s no better captain afloat than old Tom Flanders. He mayn’t talk much, but he knows what to do in a pinch.”

Jerry and Jim went back to the sea-front, where the *Barnacle* was gently riding in her berth. They climbed on board and sought their bunks, Jerry in the cabin, Jim up forward with the crew.

Two days later the *Barnacle* sailed from Rio. Jim had seen something of the city in the half-day’s leave he was allowed ashore. Meantime the new cargo had been taken aboard, and Captain Flanders showed impatience to be at sea again. Knowing what he did, Jim was impatient too.

CHAPTER III

PICKING UP THE TRAIL AT THE TRADER'S

THE great harbor of Nictherohy, the sea-front of Rio de Janeiro, lay astern, the sugar-loaf mountains grew more and more distant and misty, the bar was crossed and rougher water encountered, schools of bonitos, apparently playing an endless game of tag, welcomed the ship to the ocean. After the first few hours out from port there were squalls, which freshened to a gale, and the *Barnacle* went scudding along, her storm canvas set, followed by crowds of cape-pigeons and cape-hens, and a few albatrosses. A couple of ships were passed, bound north, both flying the green and yellow flag of Brazil. The crew were put to work, shifting sails, repairing some of the gear, finishing a new main-top-gallant-yard. Shavings, the carpenter, was very busy. He was all over the ship, dodging back to his little shop to avoid the drenching spray, and jumping out in a lull to go on with his sawing and planing.

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From time to time they caught distant glimpses of land to the west. They were now off the River Plate, which meets the ocean just south of Montevideo in Uruguay and flows up to Buenos Aires, the chief city of Argentina. The *Barnacle* was not to stop at either port and gave the coast a wide berth. "But we're likely to know we're off the bloomin' old Plate," Alonzo Mason confided to Jim. "I've never been off this point without meetin' up with one of these gales they call a pampero."

They struck the pampero sure enough, as if the river was bound to show them what it could do. One afternoon the wind freshened rapidly and the mate ordered a reef in the foretop-sail. Then came a lull until midnight, when the wind breezed up again, and the maintop-sail was reefed. By early morning the *Barnacle* was full in a gale from the west-southwest and pounding along in an ugly sea, but not taking much water aboard, though spray was flying wildly about her bow.

Jim had known the wind to whistle in many a winter storm on the coast of Maine, but he had never heard it shriek and roar as it did that morning in the ship's rigging. As he went about his

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work on the slippery, sliding deck the spray that was whipped off the tops of the seas stung his face like powdered glass. When he climbed aloft he clung to ropes like a monkey, plunging now this way, now that, the wind a perfect Babel in his ears. The gale increased and Captain Flanders ordered another reef in the maintop-sail. One of the crew, Paul Jacques, a French-Canadian, was thrown so hard across the deck and against an anchor-fluke that his left foot was badly cut and he was put out of commission for any work except steering. And still the wind was rising, until at noon the captain declared it was blowing fifty-five nautical miles an hour.

Jim, coming on deck shortly after noon to stand his watch, saw John Perkins on the lee side of the wheel-house. He was about to join the second mate when the latter yelled, "Hi there, Burgess, don't you see that sea?—jump!" Jim looked over his shoulder and saw a great hill of water rising higher and higher in the slow, steady manner of huge waves. For an instant he did not think that it would break aboard, but the next moment there was a crash like a broadside of cannon, and he was swept off his feet like a twig in a flood. A lucky

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clutch at the hatch-house kept him from being beaten against the rail. Swash came the water back again, this time completely drenching him. Perkins, watching his chance, shot out and, catching Jim by the back of his oilskin slicker, dragged him across to the companion door. But as the mate thrust the door open there rose above the gale a shriek, "The cabin's flooded!"

One glance proved the truth of the cry. The enormous sea had broken the forward skylight of the cabin-house and the dining-room was swamped with hundreds of gallons of salt-water. The Malay steward was clutching at the table to keep his feet, while red-headed Pete, energetic for once, was trying to bail out the water with a bucket. Heavy plates, thick glass tumblers, knives, forks and spoons, everything that had been on the table a few minutes before, were dancing about on the floor and bringing up in the corners.

Jerry came out from his cabin and looked aghast at the scene of wet desolation. But Perkins only grinned. "You'll have to get used to this sort of thing, Grantham," he said. "You'll get your dinner in a half hour or so." Then he turned to Jim. "And you, young feller, will have to learn to keep

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your lamplights peeled when you come on deck in a gale. You're mighty lucky you didn't get your head stove in that time."

It was a real full-grown, life-sized pampero. 'All afternoon the wind blew harder and harder and the sea boiled and bubbled and seethed like a gigantic teapot. A squall would come and the gale would scream with wild delight. Then would follow a stretch of sunshine and comparative quiet. Then another squall, making the surface of the sea as white as milk, tearing the crests from the waves and hurling them through the air, sending the *Barnacle* over until her lee rail was under water, rolling her back down the windward side of the sea, and finally driving her in a headlong dive through the valley between the sheer walls of water on either hand. Forty feet from crest to trough, Alonzo Mason figured the higher seas, but to Jim they looked almost as high as the sky.

The Plate River had shown the *Barnacle* what it could do to any ship that ventured off its mouth. By the following morning the pampero broke, having blown for twenty-four hours, and Captain Flanders ordered the main-sail set. There followed a light and fitful breeze, and the *Barnacle* wallowed

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through a choppy sea in what seemed almost silence to ears accustomed to the howling wind. The cape pigeons came back and the sun sent a cheering warmth over the southern ocean.

Ships were sighted and passed, only one, however, coming close enough to attract attention. This one hoisted the signal "What is your longitude?" Captain Flanders was flying the number of his ship from the signal-halyards and he now ran up the answer to the question. The stranger dipped her ensign in thanks, but gave no indication of who she was. John Perkins, however, studying her through his glasses, announced that she flew the flag of Chile, a broad red band at the bottom, a white and a blue square above, with a large white star in the upper left-hand corner.

Although the pampero had left them, the *Barnacle* was still abreast of the huge estuary of the Rio de la Plata, or River of Silver, whose mouth is three degrees in width. This river, as Jim learned from Perkins, who had taken a fancy for the new sailor, was like Cape Hatteras in being the dividing line between two climates. Each is about equidistant from the equator, and the River of Silver divides the hot lands of Brazil from the cold and

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bleak pampas of Argentina and Patagonia as Hatteras separates the climates of the Southern and Northern States along the coast of the United States. Already Jim found that the nights were growing colder although it was still midsummer by the calendar.

Gentle winds and calms succeeded, wonderful sunrises and nights when the sky was aglitter with clear, cold stars. Often at night Jim and Jerry talked together, the latter going over and over all he knew of the history of the mysterious bark called "X" and Jim listening intently. "Flanders is on the watch. It means money in his pocket if we succeed," said Jerry. "But there's nothing he can do until he catches sight of the quarry. I suggested dropping in at some small port along the coast to see if we could pick up any news there, but he says there's none with a decent harbor along here. He's got his eyes fixed on the Falklands, and we've got to let him have his own way unless we want to get off and walk ashore."

Calms tried the captain's temper even more than storms, but fair sailing breezes brought all his good nature to the surface. One night they had a beautiful sunset, almost too gorgeous in fact, for Per-

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kins said he didn't like too many colors in the western sky. The moon rose bright and clear, however, and when Jim turned in for the night the ship was breezing along over a perfect sea. It seemed to him no time at all before one of his watch was shaking him by the shoulder. As he drowsily hurried on deck he heard one of the bosuns say, "The barometer's going down very fast, and there's a lot of lightnin' in the sou'west. There's a heavy storm coming up."

The storm made a splendid sight as the crew prepared for it. On one side a heavy bank of inky black clouds was rapidly approaching, while the rest of the sky was dazzling bright with sheet and forked lightning. Thunder rolled and rattled without stopping. The wind had dropped and an ominous calm had followed. Jumping about like monkeys in the tree-tops the crew had barely time to lower all the sails on deck, without waiting to stow them, leaving only the foresail and jib standing, when the squall struck them. The air was as hot as a blast from a furnace, and for a minute or two the *Bar-nacle* shivered and shook. Alonzo Mason, preparing for worse, bawled out his orders in rapid-fire time. But the storm passed away rapidly to wind-

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ward and was followed by torrents of rain. The *Barnacle* had struck only the tail of the gale.

Other boats, however, had not been so fortunate. In the early light of morning the lookout sighted a dark speck on the horizon, which proved to be a small fishing-smack, and on nearer view was seen to be disabled. Her mast had splintered and carried the rigging overboard, so that she bobbed about on the water like a duck trailing a broken wing behind. It was evident the *Barnacle* must pick her up, and the mate gave the necessary orders. In fifteen minutes the small wreck was alongside and her crew of three dark, wizened-looking men were climbing up the rope ladder.

Captain Flanders spoke a little Spanish and a little less Portuguese, and with a mixture of these tongues he addressed the strangers. Then he took them down to his cabin for a half hour, and when they all came on deck again he talked for a few minutes with Jerry. After that he gave some directions to the mate. The *Barnacle* changed her course to the west, the three men who had been picked up staying on board, while their small mastless vessel danced along in the wake of her rescuer.

Soon after they changed their course Jerry found

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a chance to speak to Jim. "The old man learned something from those fellows," he said. "Not a great deal, because he can't talk their lingo very well. But some of the words they dropped in answer to his questions has made him want to have a look at the place they come from. Maybe we won't have to reach the Falklands, after all, before we get busy."

"Those three look like a kind of Indian to me," said Jim, "only they're much smaller and not so red as ours."

"They are Indians mostly who live along here, or half-breeds. I know a little Spanish myself, but this jargon they talk doesn't sound like anything I ever heard before. I'm hoping I'll find some one ashore who talks like a Christian."

"Land ahead! Land ahead!" the lookout called several times during the forenoon, but each time close examination through a glass proved that what he had taken for the coast was only a low bank of clouds. It was not until late afternoon that the real shore came into view and then it was seen to be a low, sandy shingle with a background of clay-colored cliffs and no signs of vegetation.

One of the three rescued natives took his stand

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by the man at the wheel and with gestures indicated the right course. South sailed the *Barnacle* along the barren shore, and presently a long spit ran out into the water. Rounding this head the mouth of a tidal river was revealed, and a quarter of a mile up the stream, in a semicircle of the clay-colored cliffs, which rose like the sides of a basket, nestled a tiny town of wooden huts. "Santa Madalena," said one of the Indians to Jim and the rest of the crew who were looking over the rail.

Santa Madalena was a very fine name for the woebegone-looking collection of huts that clung to the foot of the cliffs. Fishing appeared to be the main industry, for there were a number of small smacks like the wrecked one moored to rude piers and docks along the water. The Indians climbed down into their boat and rowed her ashore while Captain Flanders dropped anchor in the stream.

Jim was finishing supper when Pete brought him word that the captain wanted him on deck. He learned that he was to go with the captain and Perkins and Jerry to have a look at the town. "I'm taking you along, Burgess," said Flanders, "because Grantham wants to have you with him." And he added with a wink, "I guess you must be a

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right smart chap from the way he talks about you."

"I know Jim better than I know the rest of the crew," said Jerry shortly, "and I like to have a fellow I can trust when I'm going on business like this."

As they rowed ashore in the long-boat Jerry whispered in Jim's ear, "Keep your temper and don't get mad, no matter what happens, old sport. Remember it's easy-going that makes the best impression on strangers."

A crowd of natives, all small and dark and not very intelligent-looking, welcomed the party on shore and stood bluntly staring at them. One of the fishermen Captain Flanders had rescued brought up a man who appeared to be the chieftain of the village and Flanders jabbered away with him in some form of patois. Then the captain and Perkins accepted an invitation from the chief to make a call at the latter's house. Jerry and Jim, left to their own devices, took a road that appeared to lead around the settlement, and, leaving the inquisitive swarm of natives behind, made a tour of inspection by themselves. There was not much to inspect and there was no possibility of getting lost,



THE MAN WAS WRITING ON THE BARREL TOP



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since the road made a complete circle and the only other avenue was a sandy stretch along the river that led inland.

At the point where this other avenue joined the village stood a wooden building, slightly more pretentious than the neighboring shacks, which was evidently a trading-store. "I guess that most of the good people of Santa Madalena are tucked in bed by now," said Jerry, "but I see there's a light burning here. Let's go in and barter for some crackers or whatever the Patagonians eat."

The interior resembled a small and very stuffy warehouse, being crowded with boxes, barrels and bags, and lined with bunches of bananas and other fruits and grasses hung up to ripen. Jim had never smelt so many different kinds of odors. Beside a box at the rear of the store sat a man and woman, a candle giving them light and showing that the woman was making a basket of leaves and the man writing on a barrel-top.

"Good-evening," said Jerry in Spanish. "It's a very fine night."

The man peered through the dusk, rose and shambled forward. He was taller than most of the other natives and did not seem so dark of skin.

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He answered his visitor's greeting, and Jerry muttered to Jim, "He speaks a Spanish that I can understand. What luck!"

A little more conversation followed, which Jerry interpreted to Jim as meaning that the trader had seen the strangers come ashore from the *Barnacle*, and knew all about them. Then Jerry began to bargain for some ostrich eggs he saw in a basket and finally bought the basket and half a dozen eggs, paying for them with a small silver coin of Brazil. The silver appealed to the trader and he invited his customers to sit on a couple of stools near the candle while he showed them a guanaco-skin robe and an ostrich rug that his wife had made. Jerry looked and admired and tried to talk to the woman, but she was too shy to speak and soon withdrew into a dark cubby-hole at the rear of the store.

"He's not pure Indian, he's a half-breed," Jerry murmured as the trader moved about. "He knows more than the rest of these people. I'm going to see what I can do with another piece of silver."

The trader came back and sat down. Jerry asked some questions, first about Santa Madalena, then about Patagonia, and so on to Argentina and

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Buenos Aires. From the other man's nods and gestures and a few words he caught and understood Jim gathered that the trader knew considerable about all those places. Then Jerry took out a silver coin and laid it on the box in front of him. "You get the wares you sell here mostly from the interior, I suppose?" he said, and translated the Spanish in an undertone to Jim.

The trader nodded. "Yes, señor. Very few ships ever stop at Santa Madalena." This also Jerry interpreted for Jim and continued to translate the rest of the conversation.

"But ships do put in here sometimes and try to sell you part of their cargoes?" Jerry's words were not so much a question as a statement.

The trader's face was blank. "Sometimes. Not often," he answered.

Jerry picked up the silver coin, which represented quite a sum of money for such a place as Santa Madalena, and twirled it round and round in his fingers. Jim, watching the other man, thought he saw a gleam of desire in the black eyes.

"But a ship *was* here lately, within the last month perhaps?" Jerry continued. "A small ship, with a crew of about a dozen?"

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The trader shrugged his shoulders. "Since the señor knows, why does he inquire?" he asked.

"And the captain was a stocky man with red hair," Jerry persisted. "And he wanted to sell you some of the goods in his cargo."

"Perhaps," said the trader with seeming indifference.

"Now see here," said Jerry. "I have a mind to buy that ostrich rug your wife made, and I might even pay the very high price you ask for it. I haven't decided yet how much I want it. I'm making up my mind now. Do you understand?"

Again the trader nodded. "It's a very fine rug," he said, "and sewed with the best leg-sinews of the ostrich. It would bring more than the price I ask if it were on sale in Buenos Aires."

"That may be so or it may be not," said Jerry. "Did the red-headed captain want you to sell some of his cargo for him in Argentina?"

The other man leaned forward, and for the first time a smile played about his bearded lips. "What does the señor mean to do with that piece of silver he holds in his hand?"

"I mean to give it to you for the ostrich rug, and a little information on the side."

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“The rug alone is worth that piece of silver.”

“Very well then. We’ll talk no more about it.”

Jerry slipped the coin back into his pocket.

“Ah, señor, but I like to talk with such an intelligent gentleman as you.”

“You haven’t seemed over-inclined to answer my questions.”

“Ah, but the señor is such an intelligent man; he knows everything—almost everything—already. What can he want of me?”

“Just a little friendly gossip—nothing more.”
Again the coin appeared and was laid on the box.

“Very good, señor.” The trader sat back on his stool, a pleasant, ingratiating smile on his dark face.

“Did the red-headed captain want you to buy some things to sell at a big profit in the cities?”

“Yes, señor.”

“Such things as silks and ivory and opium, and other wares from the East?”

“Yes, señor. Beautiful things that would bring big prices in Buenos Aires.”

“And why didn’t you take them?”

The trader shrugged. “I didn’t have the money. And then I thought the merchants in the cities

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would wonder how a poor man from Santa Madalena had such things to sell them."

"You suspected the red-headed captain then?" Jerry continued.

"Why would a ship with such a cargo come to a little port like this, señor? Yes, I suspected him."

"You made no trade with him then?"

"I sold him a few provisions in exchange for some tea and coffee. Any one may trade in tea and coffee."

"Quite so. I compliment you on your wisdom."

The trader bowed. "That other captain was not so polite as you, señor. He talked very loud."

"That's always a mistake," said Jerry, smiling. "And where do you think he meant to sail from here?"

"Southward, to Tierra del Fuego, perhaps to the Falkland Islands. There are many trading-posts down there, and all have much more money than I."

"Did you hear the name of his ship?"

"They called it the *Sahib* in Santa Madalena."

"I guess they've called it a good many things in the last six months. What did she look like?"

The trader described a small sloop.

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“ Did she carry a flag? Did the captain tell where she hailed from? ”

To each of these questions the trader shook his head.

“ How long ago did she leave here? ”

The man counted on his fingers. “ Four days ago to-night, señor.”

“ Good. Is there anything else you can think of to tell me? ”

“ The señor knows as much as I do now.”

“ Very well then.” Jerry rose from his stool. “ The piece of silver is yours in exchange for the ostrich rug.”

With a smile at what he considered an excellent bargain the man produced the rug, rolled it up and handed it to Jerry, who gave him the coin. A few minutes later Jim and Jerry stood in the deserted, star-lit road.

“ Derek wouldn't have shown him the Rose,” said Jerry, as they walked to the water. “ I don't think there's anything more I could have pumped out of that fellow.”

“ It seems to me he told a pretty straight story,” said Jim. “ I watched him and he didn't hesitate.”

“ As straight as he could. It's odd how a man

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like that—with considerable intelligence, for he spoke very good Spanish—will drift to a place like this and stay here. It's some of the Indian in his blood, I suppose."

The little huts of Santa Madalena appeared to be sound asleep as the two made their way to the primitive landing-stage where they had left the long-boat. On an overturned skiff sat Captain Flanders and Perkins, talking in low tones.

"Well," said the captain, as Jerry and Jim approached, "you two must have been to a real party. Here we've been twirling our thumbs for a good half hour, and wondering if we ought to go hunt you."

"I bought an ostrich rug for a friend in Boston," said Jerry.

"And is that all you've been doing while John Perkins and I have been swapping yarns with the chief nabob of the village? He gave us something to drink that tasted like vinegar with a dash of bay rum in it, but we managed to spill most of it on the floor."

"We've been to the store," said Jerry, "and we found an interesting fellow who talks Spanish."

"Did ye now?" said the captain. "That sounds

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promising. And unless I'm much mistaken there's a hint of something in that smooth voice of yours."

"Derek was here four days ago in a small sloop he called the *Sahib*."

"I got that much from the chief," said Flanders. "But I didn't get anything more, except that he didn't seem to care very much for Derek or his crew. They weren't over-polite to the people here."

"He tried to get the trader to take some of his cargo off his hands and smuggle it into the cities, where he said it would fetch big prices. The trader pretended that he thought he'd be nabbed as a thief or receiver of stolen goods if he tried that game, but the real reason he didn't come to terms with Derek was that he hadn't the money. Derek's still got his share of the cargo of the *Mary Parrot* and he's off somewhere to the south, trying to unload, just as we suspected."

"I reckon it's the Falklands then," said Captain Flanders.

"Or somewhere in between," suggested Jerry.

"He's likely to stick fairly close to the coast," put in Perkins. "There's lots of these little villages hidden in bays."

The captain considered a minute. "Well, I

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guess I can navigate this coast as well as he can. We'll drop along to the south, and if we don't do anything else we'll let the natives know there's somebody after the old rascal. Come along, boys; it's time we were going aboard."

With Perkins and Jim at the oars, the long-boat pulled out to the *Barnacle*. Next morning, as the first light of dawn was creeping up into the sky, the ship hoisted her sails and stole quietly away, leaving the little hamlet of Santa Madalena tucked in the protecting arms of the clay-colored cliffs and looking as if it wanted to have nothing whatever to do with the rest of the world.

CHAPTER IV

THE CHASE TO THE FALKLANDS

SOON after the *Barnacle* left the little settlement in the clay cliffs the sun began to sulk and presently disappeared in a bank of clouds. The air grew chill, with half a gale from the westward, and the ship, under reefed topsails, dug deeply into a strong head-sea. The sky-sails were taken in before noon, and a little later Perkins told Jerry that he thought he would put the gaskets on the royals. "Why do you want to stow the royals?" Jerry asked in surprise. "There certainly isn't enough wind for that."

"It's not the wind," said the second mate, "but this sea's making ahead, and she'll strain going into it with the royals on." He glanced up at the rigging, then at the pounding bow. "I like the old-style wooden ship, but you have to be mighty careful in handling her. That's the great advantage in an iron ship. You can drive her through almost anything and never give her a thought."

As the afternoon wore on, the weather grew

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squally, and the mate ordered the fore- and main-top-sails reefed. Under this shortened canvas the ship plowed gallantly through the rising swells. Presently she came up with a fleet of albatrosses, feeding on the water. As the *Barnacle* neared them the big birds rose, flapped their long wings, and began rapidly paddling with their large feet to gain momentum. As soon as the wind caught their outspread wings they tucked their feet up in their stern feathers and with a few great flaps soared away, rising and sailing over the swells with scarcely any motion. Their great beaks and odd, hunched-up shoulders gave them a strange appearance and Jim watched the flock until they were only a speck in the distance to windward.

A Cape pigeon struck the taffrail near where Jim was standing and fell on the deck by the wheel-house. He picked up the little bird and stroked its feathers, admiring its snow-white breast, its dark-brown wings streaked with white, and its glossy black head and neck. As soon as it grew calm in his hands he tossed it into the air and it whirled screaming away to join its mates, who had followed the ship all day. Squalls and storms seemed to make little difference to albatrosses and Cape

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pigeons, they were as much at home riding on the great mountains and deep valleys of water as when they rested on the smooth seas.

Pete came and chatted with Jim, telling him of his home and friends in South Boston, which now seemed very far away. Jim liked the boy, and Pete, now that he had stopped showing his sense of superiority over a sailor so much less experienced than himself, began to give expression to his admiration for a fellow who learned so quickly. "Wot's up?" he asked. "This ain't a reg'lar sailing-voyage, I'll be bound. Why did the old man put in at that place, and why did he take you ashore with him? Not to have a look at it or lay in ostrich eggs. Say, Jim, wot's in the wind?"

"There seems to be a good deal in the wind," said Jim, glancing up at the reefed canvas.

"Oh, quit yer kiddin', an' tell a feller."

"Can't do it now, Pete. Just you wait and you'll see soon enough."

From time to time they caught sight of the shore, but it did not look very inviting. The coast appeared low and sandy, with occasional patches of brushwood, and a background of rocks and mountains. "Folks must be pretty hard up to live 'way

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down here," said Pete. "It looks to me like it was made for goats."

Next day there were strong winds from the westward, which shifted during Jim's watch to southeast. A heavy, dreary rain began to fall, and with the shift in the wind the captain wore ship and stood inshore on the port tack, the *Barnacle* heeling well over to a strong breeze. Soon she was taking a great deal of water aboard. The sky grew darker and darker; over the bow came clouds of whirling spray, the rain whipped the deck in anger, now and again a great wave crashed against the forward house and those who had to be on deck clutched at the rail or anything handy to keep from being thrown down. It was a wild and wonderful sight to Jim, but in spite of the thrill it gave him he was glad when the wind hauled off and the ship took an easier motion through the sea.

Captain Flanders was looking along the shore for something, and when the water grew quiet he studied the coast intently through the rain and fog. Gradually he wore the *Barnacle* more and more inland, and by mid-afternoon the ship was in close view of the low, sandy beaches. Like a careful mariner the captain felt his way and at evening

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lay-to off the shore, hoping for less fog on the morrow.

In the morning the fog had become only a light mist, though the rain continued to fall. Through the drizzle the coast looked as black and inhospitable as could be imagined, even less inviting than the stretch of water to the east. But Flanders pursued his course and was presently rewarded by sighting the mouth of a river and a small settlement standing up from the beach. To the south of the river, where there was some protection afforded by high hills inland, he cast anchor.

There followed much excitement. Two boats were to go ashore, and the captain cautioned the men that he had no idea how the natives might treat them. All carried revolvers, but were told not to use them, except under command of one of the officers. Jim and Jerry went in the captain's boat, while Perkins had charge of the other, the first mate being left to look after the ship.

There was no crowd on the beach, but dark-skinned figures were peering from the doors of huts and round the scrubby underbrush at a little distance. Flanders stood up in the stern-sheets and waved a white flag. No one ventured out in the

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rain. Then, as the boats were beached and the crews splashed out into the water the captain advanced, holding his hands, with the flag, above his head. "We're friends, friends," he said in his best Portuguese. "I want to speak to the chief."

The mahogany-colored figures stared, there was a rustle in the bushes, but no one came forward. Flanders took some more steps up the beach and repeated his words. "The chief. The chief," he said. "I want to speak to the chief. We are friends, friends; honest sailors."

Again there was a pause, and then a man came slowly out from a door. He shook his head and made signs with his hands, and the signs, to Jim, looked as if he wanted the strangers to go away quickly.

The captain held out his right hand in greeting, still holding the flag in his left. "Is there any one here who understands Portuguese or Spanish or English?" he asked.

The meaning of this appeared to dawn on the native, who turned and called out something to a man at the door of a hut. This fellow shambled forward, and, to Jim's surprise, in spite of his weather-tanned skin, he looked almost white com-

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pared with the first man. To Jim's still greater surprise this second man mumbled, "I speak English. What do you want?"

"A beach-comber, by Jove!" exclaimed Jerry. "Who'd have thought to find a white man in a place like this?"

"I'm Captain Flanders, of the *Barnacle*, from Boston. What's the name of this town?"

The other man muttered an Indian name that none of the ship's crew could understand, and then added, "It's called Porto Cristobal by the traders."

"By the traders, eh?" said Flanders. "Have any of them been along here lately?"

The man scowled, which did not add to the attraction of his face, which seemed to Jim shifty and evil. The stubby beard on his chin, his long and unkempt hair, and his tattered coat and trousers gave him the look of a bedraggled scarecrow standing in the rain. "These people don't want nothing to do with white men," he snarled. "You'd better go back to your ship and sail away." He half turned on his heel, as if to go back to the rest of the villagers, who were now staring with even more interest than before at the strangers on the beach.

"Hold on a minute!" cried the captain. "We

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may have something on board that your people would like to get. We're willing to play fair."

"That's what the last white rascals who stopped here said," growled the other man. "An' when they found we didn't want nothin' to do with them they tried to steal our stores."

"So there were some others; and they weren't any better than thieves, eh?" said Flanders. "Now see here. We're after those fellows, and if we can only catch 'em we'll make 'em pay good and proper for what they did to you. We're decent, law-abiding men, and I should think you'd be glad to help us lay hands on that other crew."

The scarecrow-looking man hesitated, evidently weighing this proposal.

"If we can only get 'em we'll have 'em in irons," persuaded Flanders. "Wouldn't you like to put 'em there yourself?"

The idea of revenge was plainly appealing to the other man, who nodded his head slowly.

"Come now; how about it?" urged the captain. "That red-headed fellow in irons?"

"I'd like to see him get it!" growled the beachcomber. "He come in here two days ago an' raised an awful racket. When he found we

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wouldn't trade he tried to take what he wanted. One of his men clubbed a boy and well-nigh broke his head. He said he'd shoot the whole place to blazes, but I guess he didn't like the look of the people, for all of a sudden he took to his boat and next morning he was sailing east."

"Next morning? That was yesterday morning?"

"Just so it was."

"Do you know where he was heading?"

"Over to the islands, I guess. The people along the mainland ain't very friendly to white men."

"Then we ought to be able to overhaul him mighty quick!" exclaimed Flanders. "I'm much obliged to you. Sure you don't want to trade anything?"

"Sure we don't," said the other. "We don't want to trade with white folks here."

"All right. Back to the boats, my lads!"

The captain turned, and the two crews sprang to their rowboats. But as soon as their backs were turned a growl came from the brush at the top of the beach. Jim whirled about in time to see an arrow whiz close to the captain's head.

On the instant there was a shot. Perkins had

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fired his revolver; not at the dusky figures but at the top of the brush, and so close that the bullet chipped off a branch. Flanders wheeled about also, his revolver in his hand, angry words snapping from his mouth like pistol-cracks.

The one shot was enough for the natives. Howls arose, but no more arrows followed. The captain and the second mate stood at the edge of the water while the sailors took their places at the oars. The two revolvers leveled at the brush were a barricade and screen for the white men. Then, at a word from the bosun, Flanders and Perkins stepped backward and climbed into the boats, their firearms still covering the village.

Over the rain-streaked water the rowboats raced to the ship, the crews clambered aboard, and the boats were swung to their places. The captain gave his orders to the mate, the men jumped to their stations, and to the shrill blowing of the bosun's whistle the *Barnacle* turned her bow to the south-east and shook herself free from the shore. In the dreary, dismal rain the little handful of thatched huts that was Porto Cristobal looked forlorn enough. It seemed as much of a scarecrow in its way as the beach-comber who had been stranded



ONE SHOT WAS ENOUGH FOR THE NATIVES

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there and preferred to live the life of a half-clad native rather than return to his own people.

Jim was glad to see the village drop away in the distance. He had no liking for poisoned arrows and judged that he and his mates had barely escaped being caught in a flood of them. Moreover, he knew that the *Barnacle* was now right on the heels of the outlaw sloop and might overhaul her any minute. A little south of east lay the Falkland Islands, and in that direction the helmsman set his course.

As night came on the rain stopped and squalls took its place. Early in the morning the fore- and maintop-sails had to be reefed. This was not enough for the wind, however. A sudden gust struck the ship and carried away the great iron hook on the cross-jack-tack. Both watches were called and had to work fast to keep the sail from following. "Haul away on the buntlines! Haul away on the buntlines!" the mate roared over and over and over again; and Jim hauled away until every muscle ached. The sail was saved, however, and the crew, wet and cold and tired, were rewarded by cups of hot coffee, fresh from the galley.

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By now the *Barnacle's* crew was fairly well informed as to the work on hand, and as the sun rose every one kept a sharp lookout for sight of a sail or land. The air grew cold and clear, and the sea more placid. With a favoring wind Flanders crowded on canvas and sent his ship at a spanking pace southeast. But no sail appeared until mid-afternoon, when a cry from the lookout brought every one to attention. Far on the horizon was a spot, which soon became a bit of canvas, then a ship. She was making the same course as the *Barnacle*. With luck the latter ought to overhaul her sometime about sunset.

The wind held strong, the clipper raced through the sea, making good her captain's boast that she could outsail anything of her size and build. Nearer and nearer they drew to the stranger, until they could see that she was a small sloop, flying no flag, but with all her canvas set. Jerry and Jim, standing at the rail, watched the lessening distance. "I'm sure that must be Derek!" Jerry kept repeating. "I'm sure that must be he! Once let the old man come up with him, and he'll make Derek surrender or dog his footsteps till he drives him into port!"

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There came a cry from the lookout, "Land ahead!"

"There it is," said Jim, pointing to a strip of gray far on the horizon. "I suppose that's the Falklands!"

Jerry nodded. "There's a couple of hundred of them, most of them uninhabited, I think. But there's a port, Stanley, where we could take the sloop."

The sun was beginning to set, the sloop and the strip of land grew nearer and nearer. Flanders and the mate were talking at the bow, the crew were watching the chase with tense excitement, the *Barnacle* drove ahead faster and faster. Now they could make out the shore, now detect islands and inlets, now mark how the sloop was straining to escape them. "We'll be up with her in twenty minutes, a half hour at the most!" exclaimed Jerry. "She knows we're after her hotfoot, my boy!"

Then a mist came stealing over the water, a soft film of white that seemed to wrap the shore. The air grew colder, the wind shifted a point. And almost before the *Barnacle* knew what was happening she was sailing into a fog, at first a light fog, but very soon almost as dense as a curtain.

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The fog demanded a change. The sloop might be right before them, but Flanders couldn't sail through such a blanket off an unknown coast. He had to take in sail, he had to change his course a point or two. Studying his chart he gave orders to the mate, and the mate barked them out as though he were mad clear through.

Through the fog the *Barnacle* poked her nose, Jerry and Jim watching over the rail to catch any glimpse of the sloop. The latter, of course, was in the same predicament as themselves, and might almost as easily run directly into their path as keep out of it. But they caught no sight of their quarry; instead very shortly they were in shallower water. Flanders dropped his sails. Through a rift in the fog the crew caught sight of the shore to either side. They had come into a bay and could hear the sound of waves breaking on pebbly beaches.

There the *Barnacle* anchored, baffled of her prey. There she would have to stay until morning. "I never did like these islands," Jim heard the mate say. "It's always cold and wet here. They're not good for anything except as a port of call."

No place looks attractive in a fog, and from the little glimpses Jim had of the coast here it seemed

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as bleak and repellent as the beach at Porto Cristobal. He had heard his grandfather speak of the Falklands, however, and was curious to know something about them, so when he found the bosun, David Gardner, studying the chart in the wheelhouse he asked him a few questions. "The islands belong to England," said the bosun, "and they're right useful to her for refitting ships and coaling and taking on stores. There's a good-sized shipyard and chandlery at Stanley, which lies at the head of Port William inlet on the northeast coast of East Falkland. You see, we're close to Cape Horn, where there's more ships damaged than anywhere else in the Seven Seas, and so the repair-shops pay well. They ought to, for they certainly charge big prices. I've known a ship to lie there nearly a year, gettin' tinkered up." He pointed to the chart. "Only two of the islands are any size, East and West Falkland; East Falkland's got an area of about three thousand square miles, and there must be around a thousand people at Stanley. I hope they like their weather better than I do. Give me old Cape Cod in place of these here diggin's any day in the week!"

The fog lifted a trifle before supper, but there

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was no sign of the sloop. Obviously it was not a night to go cruising along an unknown shore, so things were made snug, and all prepared, with what patience they could, to await a change in the weather. Jim was delighted, however, when soon after supper Jerry told him that the captain had given permission for Jerry and Perkins and a couple of sailors to go ashore and see what they could learn.

Landing in the inlet was easy, and there was less fog on the beach than on the water. The boat was made fast, and the second mate and the other sailor, armed with revolvers and electric torches, started south along the inlet while Jerry and Jim took the other direction, that led along the ocean. There was still enough light to see by, and Jerry had a compass, but they were careful to note every landmark in case they might need it later.

No one can land on an unknown shore, no matter how bleak and barren, and prowl along its borders, without the keen thrill of the explorer. In this case the thrill was heightened for Jim and Jerry because they had a definite object in view, the attempt to learn what they could of what had happened to Derek's sloop when the fog suddenly hid

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her. There was not much of sandy beach; soon they had to cross a marshy ground, filled with odd-shaped, gnarled trees, twisted oaks and willows, where the ooze squdged beneath their feet and they had to step warily and slowly. Then they came to a firmer stretch of higher land, with pines and underbrush, and here they were nearer to the sea again and could hear it monotonously sweeping back and forth across the pebbles. The fog had drifted offshore, in places the sky was clear and a few stars gave some light. From what they could see the interior was densely wooded, only along the edge had the trees halted before the rigors of the ocean.

There were several little estuaries that had to be forded or circled. Once a wild duck rose with an angry quack and flew off over the tops of a stretch of bulrushes. The noise made Jim jump, then he chuckled; an explorer must expect to find birds and beasts in his path; he would be lucky if he roused nothing more dangerous than a duck.

Then they came to a thicket. Thorn-fingers caught and tore at their clothes and they had to bend low and twist and turn to make their way through. Jerry went first, using his electric torch,

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and the progress was so slow and difficult that presently he stopped. "I guess we've gone about far enough, old sport," he said. "I feel like a porcupine, I'm so full of stickers."

But the lure that always calls to men to go a little farther to see what lies next would not let them stop yet. Gaining their breath again they pushed on, determined to get through the thicket. And soon the thicket ended; they came into the dim starlight again and felt the breath of the sea and saw before them a short slope leading down to a small bay. Jerry snapped off his light; they could see better without it here.

Something was moving at the foot of the slope; the something was a man. Jim could see no boat at the edge of the water; the man appeared to be prowling alongshore like themselves. Jim touched Jerry's arm and pointed. Jerry nodded. "Wait!" he whispered.

The man was moving to their right, he was approaching a rocky point that jutted into the ocean. Every few steps he stopped and looked about, but in the screen of the thicket neither Jim nor Jerry was visible. He was walking into a pocket, for there was a cliff on the other side of the rocks and

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the two observers now commanded the landward reach of the beach. Evidently he, like them, was led along by the lure of exploration, the desire to see what there was on the island. Presently he reached the rocks and was hidden in a crevice.

“Now!” muttered Jerry, drawing his revolver.

Down the slope they stole, careful not to dislodge a stone. In the sand at the water’s edge their feet made no sound. Soon they came to the rocks and just as Jerry stepped on them the other man reappeared, clambering up from the crevice and using both hands and feet. Jerry had him covered. “Hands up!” he called.

The climber grunted. “All right, friend. Soon as I get my hands free. There now. What can I do for you?” Getting his footing on a smooth place, he held up his hands.

The look of the man, his clothes, the twang of his voice, all bespoke the sailor. He appeared thin and wiry. A small water-keg was slung over his shoulder and seemed to indicate that he might have been looking for a spring. “No harm’s intended, mates,” he said. “You needn’t keep that gun panted at my face.” There was an unmistakable Cockney twist to his words.

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“Who are you, and what are you doing here?” demanded Jerry.

“I am a piceable citizen, takin’ a look at the lay o’ the land. This here’s a free country, ain’t it? There ain’t no call to push me into the water.”

“Peaceable or not, I want to know more about you. Jim, go and see if he’s got a pistol or a knife about him.”

“Look-a-here, what business o’ yours is that?” questioned the other.

“It is my business, all right.” Jerry stepped closer to the stranger. “See you keep your hands up! Now, Jim, you go through his clothes.”

In the side-pocket of the man’s pea-jacket Jim found a revolver and from a ring at his belt hung a jack-knife with a long blade. Both of these Jim appropriated and then announced that he found no other weapons.

“Very good,” said Jerry. “Now you can let your hands down, but if I see you try any monkey business I’ll nip you quick as a wink!”

“Why should I try any monkey business, mate? I’m a piceable chap, as I tell ye, out lookin’ for a spring o’ fresh water.”

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“How comes it you’re on this island? You don’t live here, I know.”

“I sailed over from Stanley.”

“Not by yourself. Where are the rest of your crew?”

The man made a vague gesture westward.

“What’s the name of your ship? Who’s your captain?”

“See here, mate, you want to know an awful lot, you do. I ain’t askin’ you any questions about yerself.” The speaker’s tone was not angry nor even querulous, rather it indicated amusement.

“Supposin’ I was to tell yer the name o’ the boat an’ the skipper, what then? Most likely ye’d never heered o’ them before. I don’t mind tellin’ you.”

“Most likely I wouldn’t believe you. Jim, I think we’ll have to walk him back with us.”

“Now I wouldn’t do that, if I was you,” said the other man. “It would save you a heap o’ trouble to part comp’ny piceable-like. You’ve got my gun an’ knife, an’ I couldn’t do yer a bit o’ harm, even if I’d want to, an’ I ain’t got any such want in me.”

“You take my torch, Jim,” said Jerry, “and lead the way back. This man’ll go between us,

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and I'll keep him covered to see that he minds his step. Start along there. I don't mean to argue with you."

The prisoner shrugged his shoulders. "As you say. It's yer party." He fell into step back of Jim.

Jim led them into the woods, and keeping within sound of the surf on the shore so as not to lose his direction, he plunged through the thickets and underbrush. The prisoner followed, apparently meek and submissive, and necessarily so, since Jerry was close at his heels and ready to prod him with his revolver in case the man showed any inclination to use his hands or feet in any other way than to push through the thicket.

They came out of the woods, crossed the high ground, splashed through the marshes, and finally reached the beach where they had landed. Perkins and the sailor were waiting for them. "Well, I say!" exclaimed the second mate, as he saw the three. "You brought some one back with you, didn't you?"

"A shipwrecked mariner, scouting alongshore," declared Jerry. "Take a look at him."

Perkins snapped on his torch and held it full in the face of the prisoner, who blinked at the sudden

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light. "Well, I'll be switched!" cried the mate. "If it isn't Slim Sam Pigeon! I'd know that scar across his cheek anywhere!"

There was a scar on the lean brown cheek. For a minute the prisoner's eyes had the angry gleam of an animal caught at bay. Then he grinned and stuck his hands nonchalantly in his jacket-pockets. "Glad to see you, Johnny Perkins. How's everything at home?"

"So you're one of Derek's men? I haven't laid eyes on you or heard of you for a long time. But I might have known you'd get yourself mixed up in something like this." Perkins nodded. "So you've turned pirate, have you?"

"Not as I'm aware of. I'm an honest seafarin' man, the same as you. I came over from Stanley yesterday."

"Well, I reckon you'd better explain your doings to Captain Flanders," said the mate. "Ready with the boat," he ordered Jim and the other sailor. "You come along with me, Slim Sam. The old man'll be glad to make your acquaintance, and if your shipping-papers are O. K. we'll set you ashore in the morning."

Perkins turned to the boat and stepped in after

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the two sailors, who had picked up their oars. The prisoner followed to the edge of the water, Jerry after him. Slim Sam raised his foot to step in over the gunwale, but instead of doing so he suddenly wheeled about, ducked, and drove his elbow hard into Jerry's side. Jerry fired, but the bullet whizzed in the air. Slim Sam butted his head into Jerry's stomach. Before Perkins could get out his revolver the prisoner was streaking it up the beach, while Jerry lay toppled on the sand.

The mate fired and jumped out of the boat. But the underbrush was very close to the water and Slim Sam had dashed into it and was hidden. Jerry, regaining his feet, and Perkins went after him. All they found was a tangle of brush and beyond it a thorn thicket. Into this they fired, but there came no answering cry. The man had disappeared, and though they searched for half an hour they caught no further sight of him that night.

Jerry blamed himself bitterly for having been caught napping, but Perkins tried to reassure him. "That fellow's as slippery an eel as ever lived," he said. "He's squeezed out of many a tighter hole than this in his time."

CHAPTER V.

CAPTURED BY DEREK'S CREW

BY next morning the fog had lifted and a faint and chilly sunshine allowed the crew of the *Barnacle* to see the bay and the shores where they had put in the night before. The island was not inviting; bleak and desolate, it looked as if only trees and grass accustomed to wet and stormy weather could grow there, and the sight of it reminded Jim forcibly that he had come far from the coast of Maine and was sailing in seas at the southernmost end of the western hemisphere.

Captain Flanders knew of the capture and escape of Pigeon, which indicated pretty clearly that Derek's sloop had taken refuge somewhere to the west. In a light sailing breeze he left his anchorage and poked along the shore, keeping a sharp lookout as he passed any bays or inlets large enough to harbor a craft. They saw no sign of the sloop, and felt fairly certain that she must have taken to her heels, as the shores were low and mostly bare and afforded few good hiding-places. Derek must

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know by now that the *Barnacle* was looking for him and would hardly dare to stay around the Falklands, where he might meet other ships that had been warned of his presence. A hundred chances to one he would head for Tierra del Fuego, and in that direction Flanders set his course so soon as he had passed the westernmost point of the islands.

With a freshening wind the clipper made good speed, but no sails were sighted before the low line of the mainland loomed on the horizon. The usual routine of life aboard-ship went on, Jerry and Jim talked together a good deal and watched and waited, as men on ship have to do. So a day passed, and the following morning Perkins pointed out to Jim Cape Virgin, the entrance from the Atlantic Ocean into the Straits of Magellan. Later, around noon, they sighted the land on the weather-bow, and soon the lonely shores of Tierra del Fuego rose out of the sea. "Land of Fire it means," the second mate told Jim, "and I've heard they call it that because the natives light beacons on the headlands when they want to send messages or call meetings. It reminds me of the way the old Scotch chiefs used to summon their clans together."

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Soon land also rose on the port bow, for the *Barnacle* was now sailing straight into the middle of a deep bight. Then ice-covered mountain-peaks appeared, and as they drew nearer and nearer to the shore the panorama of waste and rolling country, tipped with the snow-white, glittering points, grew wider and more impressive. At sunset the view was the finest that Jim had ever seen. The air was transparent, with a sparkle of frost; the sun set slowly, very slowly indeed, into far-away gold and purple clouds, and the light was reflected on snow-fields and in the water until the whole world was bathed in a glow of color. A long twilight followed, much longer and lighter than any Jim had known even in midsummer in New England.

All night the *Barnacle* lay off and on under shelter of the coast, waiting for a favorable slant of wind. Under the foresail and lower topsails the ship would approach to within eight or nine miles of land, then wear round, standing to the north for twenty miles, and repeating this course time and time again. The water was perfectly smooth here, but outside, the second mate said, it might be blowing a gale. "I'm willing to leave it to the captain,"

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he went on. "We may seem to be dawdling along here, but he knows these seas and their tricks better than any other man on board, and haste here'd be likely enough to make for waste afterward."

The slant that Captain Flanders wanted had not come by next morning. Shortly after Jim's watch had breakfasted, however, the lookout announced the approach of a canoe on the port bow. This brought the crew to the rail, and from there Jim saw a tiny craft heading for the *Barnacle*. A man was standing up, waving a skin round his head, shouting, and gesticulating so wildly that it looked as if he might upset his little bark any moment. As the canoe came nearer Jim saw that it was made of rough planks, tied together clumsily with thongs of rawhide, and so unseaworthy that one of the three people in it had to keep bailing continually in order to keep it afloat. The mate flung out a rope, which one of the natives caught, and so drew the canoe alongside the ship, while the three in the little cockle-shell kept shouting "Tobáco, galléta," which Mr. Mason interpreted as meaning tobacco and biscuits.

Biscuits and tobacco were thrown into the canoe, whereupon the natives stripped off the skin mantles

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they were wearing and handed them up to the crew. The mantles were each made of eight or ten sea-otter skins sewed together with fine sinews. Captain Flanders declared the skins were of very fine quality, so more tobacco, some small knives, and some strings of red and blue glass beads were dropped into the canoe, which set the three Fuegians fairly dancing with joy. Barter was evidently their only object, for once they had been paid for their wares they set off paddling shoreward, shouting and chanting a primitive pæan of praise as they bobbed over the water.

It was that same afternoon, as the *Barnacle* was tacking along the wildly beautiful shore of Tierra del Fuego, that Captain Flanders, acting on some plan of his own, decided to send three boat-loads to land. Jim and Jerry went with Alonzo Mason, and with them was Pete, who was the most delighted young rascal imaginable at being allowed his first liberty from the ship since they had left Rio. When they reached shore the mate explained that it was the captain's purpose to send out scouting parties, and Jim and Jerry and Pete struck out southward.

The coast and the land back of it was wonderfully

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formed. In places vertical walls of rock fell straight down to the sea, while inland the steep hills revealed deep gorges filled with snow. Still farther inland stretched a wide and rolling plateau, covered with small knolls; and beyond rose a great range of white-clad mountains, thousands of feet above sea-level, the true monarchs of this deserted, volcanic land. The three scouts went warily, making as sure as they could of their footing on the slippery rocks and the sliding snowfalls. Sometimes they had to circle a chasm that opened sharply before them, sometimes to climb along the very seaward edge of the precipice to avoid the gorges. And they had not gone very far, not out of sight of the landing-place indeed, when Jerry's foot slipped and he came an ugly cropper on the ice.

Jim helped his friend up, but at the very first step Jerry grunted and groaned. "Ugh! I've twisted my ankle! I'll sit down a minute and see what rubbing will do." Rubbing had small effect, and after a few minutes Jerry shook his head. "I don't think I'd better go on, boys," he said. "I can limp back to the boat all right. You two go on. I can call to the men at the landing if I need any help."

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It was clear that he could get back if he walked slowly and favored his ankle, so Jim cut him a stick from a gnarled tree, and, after seeing him start along with this, Pete and Jim went on. They were both naturally clear-headed and sure-footed, as sailors have to be, but after seeing their friend's mishap they doubled their precautions. Along the rocky wall, along the edges of the gorges they climbed, until they came to a more level stretch, hidden from the boats and the *Barnacle* by a ridge of hills.

This stretch soon led to a gully, down which they clambered, holding to roots and points of rock like true Alpine climbers. The gully ran inland toward a wooded plateau. "I'm going along this way," said Pete. "I want to have a look at those trees. There might be people 'round."

"I want to see what's over that hill," said Jim. "We were told to stick to the shore. Some of the others are going inland."

"Well, I want to do a little snooping inland myself," Pete objected. "I'm getting tired of all these rocks and snow."

"All right," said Jim. "I'll go ahead by myself then. And I'll meet you back here in half an hour."

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Don't forget; and don't get lost, whatever you do."

"How'm I goin' to get lost in a place like this?" Pete demanded with scorn. "I might get lost in a city, but not where there's only rocks and hills and trees. So long. I'll be back as soon as you are."

The red-headed boy trotted away along the bottom of the gully, while Jim, crossing it, mounted the slope on the other side. He found the shore was like a griddle, little hills and valleys running in from the sea. Progress could not be rapid, but having decided to follow this course he kept at it, sliding down one bank and crawling up the next, getting very dexterous as he grew used to the game.

There was snow on one of the hillsides; he started down it, lost his balance, sat down, and guiding himself with his hands, coasted down the incline. This gully was deeper and wider than the others, and as he shot down into it he saw a man below him. He could not stop himself now; in a fine flurry of loosened snow he brought up at the bottom, only a few yards away from a white man in sailor's clothes.

This man, his hands on his hips, surveyed Jim as

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if he had never seen a creature like him before. "What in thunder are you doin' here?" he demanded. "Tumblin' offen that razor-back like you was a avalanche or somethin'! Was you tryin' to knock me off my pins? Was you? Was you?"

"No, I wasn't," said Jim, getting up and shaking himself free from snow. "I didn't know you were here. I wouldn't have come down so quick if I could have helped it."

The sailor rocked forward on his toes and began to chuckle. "No, I don't take it you would, son; I don't take it you would. Leastways I wouldn't if I'd been in your place. An' now perhaps you'll tell me what an English-speakin' lad like you is doin' in these dismal diggin's."

"I was taking a look along the coast," said Jim, as nonchalantly as if it was the most natural thing in the world for him to be walking there.

"Where's your ship?"

"Back yonder." Taking hold of a twisted root, Jim started to pull himself up the steep incline.

"No, you don't! Oh, no, you don't, matey! You stay just where you are!" The sailor's tone was sharp and aggressive now. He turned his head

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and called down the valley. "Come here, boys! Come a-runnin' and see what I've found!"

It was clearly impossible for Jim to race up the slippery hillside; the sailor could pick up a stone or a chunk of ice and brain him with it. Non-resistance was plainly the better part of valor here, and so he stood still and waited.

Answering shouts came along the valley, and after a few minutes two other men appeared. "See what I've got, Slim!" exclaimed the sailor. "See what came rollin' down the hill like a bloomin' football!"

"Ho, ho, Bill! Seems to me I've seen this feller before."

Jim was facing the man with the scar on his cheek, who had slipped away from Jerry the night on the island. He knew now that his unlucky coast had brought him full into the hands of Derek's crew. He held his tongue, however, and tried to look as innocent as he could.

"I reckon I surprised old John Perkins and that guy with the gun the other night, eh?" said Pigeon, with a grin that made the scar on his cheek look very ugly. "So you left the Falklands too, an' came over here after us, did ye? Well, seein' you're

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here, we might as well treat you hospitable, an' ask you along with us."

"Thanks. But I was just taking a look along the shore," said Jim, trying to bluff it out. "I ought to be getting along."

"Well, that's all I was doin' the other night when you and your cocky friend made yourselves disagreeable. Did you let me alone? No, siree, you didn't! You made me march a couple of miles through a forest and scratched my face up some-thin' awful! Just come here an' let's see what you've got."

Jim saw no help for it but to do what he was ordered. Each of the three men in front of him looked like a dangerous character to argue with, and the three were an altogether overwhelming force. He allowed Pigeon to take his clasp-knife from him, the only weapon he had, and he made no protest when he was commanded to walk in front of his captors up the valley.

By following this lower land they managed to round the next high ridge, that ran in from the sea like a giant's finger, and after a short tramp came to a stretch of shore. In this nicely sheltered haven a long-boat was floating, and a short distance over

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the water was the sloop. Most of the crew were ashore, and half a dozen were gathered round a small fire of brushwood that had been laid close to a wall of rock.

To this fire Pigeon led Jim and announced, "I didn't find any pesky blacks, but I found this feller. Maybe you'd like to talk with him, Cap'n."

There was no mistaking the captain. He, alone of the outfit, wore a jacket that still retained some of its gold trimmings, though they were tarnished and stained. He was short and very broad, a squat figure, with red hair and a reddish-brown beard on his face, apparently strong as a bear, but also giving the impression that, like a bear, he might be slow of movement. He was smoking a stumpy black pipe, and he continued to pull at it for a moment while he regarded Jim with his keen blue eyes.

"What's your name?" Derek presently demanded.

"Jim Burgess," came the answer, since the owner could see no point in refusing to speak.

"Where's your ship?"

"Up to the north, five miles or so."

"What's her name?"

"The *Barnacle*, from Boston."

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“ Merchant ship, bound around the Horn? ”

Jim nodded. “ Bound for San Francisco. ”

“ Who's her captain? ”

“ Thomas Flanders. ”

“ Is he looking for me? ”

Jim hesitated, taken off his guard by the abrupt question. “ Why, I —— ” he began.

“ From what I've seen and from what Slim tells me I take it he is, ” said Derek. “ I know when a man's lying. It'll be better for you, Burgess, to stick to the truth. Well, I can take care of Flanders and a hundred like him any time he comes along. ”

There followed a short silence, during which Derek continued to stare so fixedly at Jim that the latter grew uneasy, shifted his weight from one leg to the other, and gripped his hands behind his back. Meantime the rest of the group were grinning, smoking, and whispering their opinions of the *Barnacle* and its captain in contemptuous terms.

“ Does Flanders know I'm here? ” Derek finally shot out.

“ I don't know, ” said Jim truthfully. “ He wouldn't be apt to tell me what he knows. ”

Again there followed a long stare from the keen

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blue eyes, and then the man waved his hand with the pipe. "Take him away, Slim, and keep him where he's safe. We'll stay here the night anyhow."

Glad to get away from Red Derek's eyes, Jim followed Pigeon to a brine-soaked log that had somehow managed to get itself washed up on that desolate shore. Twilight had now set in, and the wind, coming off the snow-capped mountain peaks to the northwest, was chill and biting. Jim turned up the collar of his reefer and hugged his arms about him. "Never been as far from home as this before, eh, Burgess?" said Slim. "You'll get used to it if you stick to the sea. I don't mind admittin' though, as between friends, that I'd a whole lot rather be in a tidy little plice I know of in Liverpool than down here in this rotten country. But we've got to tike what we can get, you know, son."

"You knew John Perkins, didn't you?" asked Jim.

"Yes, I knowed him. I've no grudge against John; he's a decent feller. But he'll never make any money on a merchantman. Whereas we stand to make a nice pile o' money if the cards fall right."

This was delicate ground, where Jim dared ask

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no questions; and Pigeon vouchsafed no further information. They sat in silence a short time, staring out at the sloop, and then Slim announced that it was time to be putting offshore.

Slim appeared to be Derek's right-hand man. He gave orders, and the long-boat put out to the sloop, carrying the crew and their prisoner. The *Sahib* was not nearly so large nor so clean as the *Barnacle*, and it took Jim only a few minutes to see that there was far less respect for authority on board her than there was on his own ship. This he judged was in a way only natural, since men who break the law against others could hardly be expected to have great regard for law among themselves. With every honest man's hand against them they had to hold together for their own safety; beyond that one bond it was a case of every man trying to get as much for himself as he could.

The crew were not ugly to Jim, they simply let him alone. Slim got him a bowl of soup, a plate of stew and a cup of coffee in the galley, and pointed out a place where he could sleep. Then he also let Jim alone, and the latter curled up in a corner of the galley and began to wonder what they would do with him. Presently the cook finished his chores

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and departed, probably to join the rest of the men in the forecastle. Jim stretched his legs, stood up, and began to prowling about in the semi-darkness. He went out into the passageway, which was unlighted, and felt his way along. Shortly he heard voices, coming from what he took to be the cabin. A door was slightly open, and he stopped back of it to listen.

"But what can you do with it, Red? For the thousandth time I arsk you what can you do with it?" These were the words Jim heard in Pigeon's Cockney twang.

"Well, what can I do with it, Slim?" came Derek's snarl. "I'm not goin' to cast it overboard, you bet!"

"The Saints forbid!"

"And I'm not goin' to hand it to an Indian as if it was a glass bead. I've got to keep it till we can get to a city of some sort. I don't see why you're always naggin' me about it."

"Oh, you don't see, eh? Well, perhaps it's because you haven't give me any line on where you've got it put. We're all concerned about that purty Rose, Cap'n."

"I've got it where it's safe. The less that knows

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where it is the better. You'll all get your share when the right time comes."

"But when's the right time comin'? That's wot I want to know. You haven't dumped out much of the rest of the stuff so far."

"Don't I know that as well as you, Slim?" Derek's voice indicated that he was growing angry. "Haven't I tried my best to make the traders take it? It ain't as easy as you think to get rid of stolen goods; not such goods as we've got aboard anyhow."

"What do you make of this here *Barnacle*?"

"Oh, she's after us all right. But I'll shake her clear as soon as we round the Horn."

"So you're goin' to the Pacific?"

"Sure I am. Chile's the place for us. Valparaiso's a town where men don't have to know all about what they buy. Maybe I can get rid of the Rose there. Who knows?"

"Well, I'm sure I don't, if you're arskin' me. But I wanter be on hand when you make the sale. I ain't runnin' my head into danger all for nothin'."

"See here, Slim!" cried Derek, and he ripped out a string of oaths so loud that Jim decided he had heard quite enough and tiptoed back to the

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galley, where he curled up again in his corner and meditated on what might happen if only this crew of bandits would get to quarreling among themselves.

He must have fallen asleep over his meditations, for when he opened his eyes he was stiff and cramped. There was no one else in the galley. He got to his feet and stole over to the door. Very cautiously he made for the companionway and thrust his head above the deck. The sky was clouded over, but as well as he could make out there was no one about, although he felt certain there must be a lookout stationed in the bow.

Noiselessly, stopping every few steps to make certain he was not seen, Jim progressed to the rail and stooped down in its shadow. Evidently the *Sahib's* crew believed in sleep at night-time; there was not a sound except the slapping of water against the side of the sloop. Daring to poke his head above the rail he sidled along until he could distinguish a rowboat resting on the water, bumping softly now and then against the ship's hull. Again he paused and listened. Then like an eel he wriggled over the rail and let himself down to the boat by the rope.

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It was the work of a couple of minutes to unknot the painter and let the small boat float away from the big one. Lying in the bottom, Jim managed to handle the rudder so that his little bark turned her bow toward the shore. The distance to land was less than a hundred yards and the tide was setting in. On and on he floated, finally crouching on his knees in order to steer better. The rollers of the tide caught his skiff and sent her inland faster. Then suddenly came a yell from the sloop; some one had seen the boat; and almost immediately there was a splash close at hand as a bullet struck the water.

It was only a matter of twenty yards or so now, and rather than stick to the skiff, which was certain to be a target, Jim dove overboard. The water was very cold, but Jim had been a swimmer all his life and the rollers bore him inland. Breathless and chilled, but unharmed, he was flung into shallow water, found his feet, and dashed out on the beach. He thought a bullet whizzed past him, but considering only speed he dashed for the near-by rocks and dropped behind them.

He did not stay there long, only time to collect his wits and gain his breath, and then he crawled

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back of the shelter of rocks to a place where he could safely make his way inland. Presently he was able to stand up and run over the grass and soon he came to the gully into which he had inadvertently tobogganed that afternoon.

Two things perplexed him. Why had not Captain Flanders sent out a party to find him, since his absence must have been noticed early in the evening? The only answer he could find to this was that possibly some of the *Barnacle's* men had hunted for him, and, catching sight of the sloop, had returned to report to the captain. The other problem was, how came it that Derek dared to stay that night so close to where he knew the *Barnacle* was lying? Reckless as Jim knew these pirates were, he could not believe that Derek would run such a risk as that.

His own object, however, was clearly to get back to the *Barnacle* as soon as he could. Over the fingers of hills he went, stumbling and slipping, but keeping on until he reached the valley where Pete had left him to go inland. Here he stopped to rest a minute, and as he rested he thought he heard voices. On the still night, over the snow, sounds carried clearly. Soon he was sure of the voices,

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they were coming nearer; and he crouched down back of some brushwood to see who their owners were.

After a couple of minutes, to his great surprise, he saw John Perkins and Pete and half a dozen of the *Barnacle's* crew coming up the valley. He sprang out and ran to them. "It's I, Jim Burgess!" he cried. "It's Jim Burgess!"

"By Gorry, so it is!" exclaimed the second mate. "We thought you'd fallen into one of these crevasses and broken your precious neck!"

"The sloop,—the *Sahib*,—Derek's ship isn't more than a mile away!" Jim announced, and as briefly as he could he told what had happened to him since he fell in with Sailor Bill that evening. Perkins listened and asked a few questions and then stated that in his opinion their first duty was to get back to the *Barnacle* and inform Captain Flanders as quickly as they could. "See here, Pete," he added, shaking his finger at the freckled one, "we might have those rascals by the heels now if you hadn't taken it into your bloomin' head to go an' get into trouble!"

"I was only explorin'," said Pete. "How'd I

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know there was anythin' wrong about that clump o' trees?"

"What happened to Pete?" asked Jim.

"Come along, boys!" ordered the second mate. "We can't stand palaverin' here all night." As he led the way north, Jim by his side, he added, "You see, our rescue party came to a gully where there wasn't much snow, and the only footprints we could find headed up the valley. We didn't locate yours; so we turned west, toward the plain and the trees. The other side of the trees was a little village and we found Pete trying to explain what he was doing to a committee of natives who didn't seem over-glad to see him. He'd been talkin' English and they'd been talkin' goodness knows what, and when we came on the scene they were pretty tired tryin' to make each other understand and the committee looked as if they were about ready to make a nice stew out of Pete. We joined in the debate, and after showing we were armed an' makin' the committee a present of some tobacco an' a few choice strings of beads they decided they weren't hungry an' let us have the scamp. That's what we've been doing all evening."

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“They’re really cannibals, are they?” Jim asked in great surprise.

“Well, I wouldn’t want to take any chances with them,” declared Perkins. “I’ve heard tell some of ’em are.”

By now they had come to a headland, where a bold clump of bushes stood far out on the rocks. The second mate, to see his way better, switched on his electric torch. Instantly there was a rustle from the bushes. “What’s that? A gull’s nest?” exclaimed Perkins, and he poked his light in the direction of the noise.

It was no gull, however. They caught a momentary glimpse of a man; he slipped out from the brush and swung down over the rocks.

“Hold on there!” cried the mate, revolver in hand.

But the only answer was the sound of a stone splashing in the water; the man, whoever he was, had wriggled away over the edge of the cliff and was lost in the darkness. “Well,” cried Perkins, “somebody was watching the *Barnacle!* I’ll bet that was one of Derek’s men! The old fox isn’t such a fool as you think him, Jim!”

There was no use wasting time hunting for the

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lookout. By now he might be in a boat, sculling alongshore to the sloop. Ahead of them they could see the light at the bow of the *Barnacle*. With such speed as they dared on the tricky surface they sped along back to their own harbor.

The stars in the paling sky saw Captain Flanders leave his anchorage. Through the growing light Jim watched the line of the coast. But the early breeze was light and the *Barnacle* dropped along the cliffs, the gridiron ridges and gullies at what seemed to the impatient lad a snail's pace. At last, however, they rounded the scene of his slide over the snow and came into view of the beach. "Is that the place?" Perkins asked at Jim's elbow.

"Yes, that's the place," said Jim.

But there was no sloop there now; there was nothing to show that men had ever been there. In the clear morning light the shore and the water were in primitive quiet.

CHAPTER VI

OFF TIERRA DEL FUEGO

“**T**RICKY as all get out!” Captain Flanders declared the coast of Tierra del Fuego to be; and the crew of the *Barnacle* soon had reason to agree with their captain’s opinion. They knew that Derek’s sloop must be somewhere within twenty miles or so of them, but to find her in all these channels, fiords and inlets was no easier than to pounce upon a needle in a haystack. She might be just around the corner from them, she might be winging well out to sea; all they could do was to wait and to keep the sharpest lookout they knew how.

Meantime Jim and Jerry studied the chart and asked the mate many questions. The boy from Maine learned a great deal about the land and the sea at the opposite end of the hemisphere from his home. He found that though people spoke of Cape Horn as the southernmost extremity of South America, it was really not part of the mainland at all, but an island, the farthest southern point of the

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great archipelago of Tierra del Fuego, and that Cape Froward, in the Straits of Magellan, one hundred and twenty-two miles north of the Horn, was the final headland of South America.

Of course Jim had told Captain Flanders what he had heard of the talk between Derek and Pigeon, and the captain decided that the sloop would make her way to the west, heading for a port in Chile. Yet, knowing that Derek might double on his tracks, Flanders combed the archipelago with care, keeping the keenest of lookouts and investigating every channel and fiord before he sailed on. In this way he passed Cape St. Vincent and Thetis Bay. The days were not very long now, the sun rose after eight and set by half-past three, so that on dark days, of which there were many, there were not more than six hours of what could be called daylight. Then one evening, by the light of a new moon, the *Barnacle's* men caught sight of the huge, snow-bound cliffs of Cape San Diego, the southeasternmost end of Tierra del Fuego, and a little later the clear water of the Le Maire Straits opened out before them. Outside a thick bank of woolly clouds hung low down in the southwest, betokening heavy weather, and that, added to the long,

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heaving swell that came through the open water of the Straits, decided the captain to wear round and stand to the northward again.

When Jim woke next morning the wind was howling and hail was rattling on the deck. Not more than three miles away a great headland was plainly visible, Cape St. Anthony, as David Gardner told him. The *Barnacle* was in a ticklish situation. At dawn Captain Flanders had decided to try the Straits, and had sailed half-way through, when the wind came on in a gale, and he had had to stand to the north again. The strength of the current was hard to calculate; it ran very fast through the Straits, and the first thing the captain knew he was on a lee shore and unable to carry sail enough to make sure of doubling the point.

Jim, jumping from post to post at the bark of the mate, could readily see the danger they were in. Great surges seethed and broke on the coast, where the cliffs were so bold that a ship might lay her jib-boom end head-on against them and still have fathoms of water under her keel. The *Barnacle* only carried her lower topsails and foresail, but a short struggle with the gale showed that with such limited canvas the ship could not hold her own.

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The mate ordered a double-reefed maintop-sail set, and the crew sprang to the rigging. Instantly the difference in going to windward was felt. But it was a question whether the clipper could carry that extra sail. And yet she must; if she didn't there would be the end of the *Barnacle* and her crew in those mighty surges.

Nobody thought of breakfast. The wind blew harder and harder, until in the heavy, windward rolls it seemed as if the masts must crack under such terrific puffs. Slowly the ship made headway, but as she forged ahead she also drew closer and closer to the rocks. She was fighting like a desperate animal now, and all the crew knew it. Jim, with the rest of the men, stood at the weather-rail in the waist, eyeing the nearing land, the enormous gray-brown cliffs, broken by huge fissures that ran inland, the sea throwing walls of water high in air. The captain stood on the cabin-house, all intentness, now and then moving his arm as a signal to the man at the wheel to hold the ship up as hard as he could between the puffs.

Time passed without track while the *Barnacle* and the gale fought for supremacy. Then suddenly the crew realized that the ship was holding a

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better wind and that the land was no longer creeping closer. That eased the strain a little; the men began to talk; Jerry nudged Jim and indicated with his hands the growing space of water. In half an hour it was seen that the worst was passed, that they ought to make the point without disaster. Captain Flanders called to the helmsman, "Now give her a good rap-full!" Soon the mate ordered the men to stow the upper maintop-sail, which had stood the blow so well, and Jim took that to mean that the danger was over.

Safe they were, though the wind went on blowing with almost hurricane force and the sea was breaking mountains high. But the land was now some protection, and the ship rode in comparative calm over the great swells. By mid-afternoon the *Barnacle* was hove to, and rode out the twilight and night like a duck at rest on the ocean.

The morning broke clear and cold; in the brilliant sunshine the snow-clad peaks and the purple-shadowed valleys were like a dream-world of the most exquisite beauty. So dazzling were the mountains that they might have been icebergs. Stupendous glaciers ran down to the sea, and great masses of ice, breaking off from the main bulk,

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dashed into the water with a roar like thunder and sent gigantic waves rocking against the cliffs. The wind was still blowing, no longer a hurricane, nor even a gale, but chill with its passage over hundreds of miles of antarctic sea and land.

Captain Flanders wanted to try the Straits again that day, but the wind was not favorable. By afternoon snow-clouds had blown up and the weather was wintry again. Westerly gales were in the ascendant, and such gales had sometimes kept ships off Cape Horn for a month or more. Sailors have to be patient, and Jim spent his leisure time reading in the forecastle, where the lamp had to be lighted by two o'clock in the afternoon. Two days of this followed, and the captain had about decided to give up the Straits and keep off for Cape St. John when the wind suddenly veered to the proper quarter and the clipper, shaking out her sails, went scudding through the passage as easily as any one could wish.

Where was the sloop? Again the *Barnacle* poked her nose into fiords and inlets, again the process of combing the coast was resumed. Derek must have chosen the Straits; of that Flanders was convinced. He could have gained nothing by sail-

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ing further south. The captain sent a party ashore to reconnoitre a stretch of beach; they found the remains of a recent fire, but no natives. That night, however, the watch on deck heard shouts on the shore, and toward morning the fire was re-lighted. But dawn showed no sign of men, and the captain concluded it would be a waste of time to hunt for the Fuegians.

Threading her way through sounds and channels, the *Barnacle* slowly rounded the jagged, deeply indented point of Tierra del Fuego. Each day was a new revelation of the wonder, the beauty, and the desolation of these antarctic regions. Mountains, mantled with snow, were always in view; icebergs appeared, dazzling in color, sometimes resembling full-rigged ships, sometimes swans, sometimes dwarfs or giants floating on the water. When Jim came on deck early one morning he found the moon, almost full and brilliant gold, high in the sky, while the very first streaks of dawn were just beginning to tip the summits of the highest mountains with pink and rose. Rocks, trees, even icebergs were still in deep shade, and only those shining peaks were lighted by the coming day. Then, as the sun rose higher, the pink tips changed

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to gold and yellow, and so to dazzling white, while the cliffs and valleys and fields of ice became a kaleidoscope of greens and reds and purples. The sea was a blue as deep as the sky. Never had Jim seen such wonderful colors, and every day and every hour they seemed to arrange themselves in new and more marvelous combinations.

And yet this gloriously brilliant country was inhabited by only a few thousand of the most primitive and ignorant of men. As the days went by the crew of the clipper saw something of these natives. One day the cry "Canoe ahead!" brought every one on deck. A good-sized boat came paddling out from behind an island. There were half a dozen people in it, armed with spears and bows and arrows, and long fishing-rods stuck out on either side. One man was standing up, waving a piece of cloth. As the native boat came near Jim saw its occupants were wild-looking, dark-skinned people, two men, three women, and a small boy who was crouching over a fire in the bottom of the canoe. And as if these were not enough, there were also four small dogs, resembling Esquimau dogs, only smaller, who were pawing at the sides and barking as loud and fast as they could.

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The man who was waving the cloth had a square robe of sea-otter skins fastened about his shoulders, two of the women were wearing sheepskins, and the rest of the party were entirely naked. Their black hair was long and shaggy, and their skin looked as if it had been tanned by constant exposure to sun and rain. They wanted tobacco and biscuits and beads, that much of their guttural yells Jim could understand; and the mate got these presents ready for them, adding a few small looking-glasses and some knives from the store he kept to barter with Indians. But the native in the bow of the canoe was clumsy, and failed to catch the rope that Mr. Mason threw him. The channel at that particular point was narrow and the current strong, the *Barnacle* had a good headway, and Captain Flanders wouldn't stop to allow the Fuegians to approach again. Furious at losing their chance to get provisions the natives yelled louder than ever, and the last Jim saw of them as the ship rounded a headland all six were standing up and shaking their fists and spears while the dogs were yelping as if they were about to spring over into the water.

At another time Jim, from the masthead, saw crowds of natives, armed with bows and arrows and

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long spears, pushing their canoes out from hiding-places in a hollow. His calling the news to Perkins brought an increase in canvas, which soon carried the *Barnacle* out of danger, for the captain had no desire to be surrounded and his ship made the target for a flight of arrows. Soon after this they came to narrows, where a strong current ran, and, to avoid the shoals, it was necessary to steer so close to the shore that the bowsprit almost projected over the land, while the branches of trees nearly swept the rigging and the rocks scraped the sides of the ship. Two men were placed at the wheel, as a matter of precaution. It looked to Jim as if the *Barnacle* was heading straight for the shore at good speed, when Perkins suddenly gave the command, "Hard a port!" and the clipper instantly flew round and sailed past the dangerous spot into wider waters.

It was Pete who gave the alarm next night that Indians were approaching. Tumbling out on deck, Jim saw a flotilla of canoes bearing down on the ship and right in the course she was taking. The moon was bright and the naked bodies shone, as if they were coated with oil. At first they came on in silence, but as the warriors saw there was motion on the deck they began to utter loud, blood-

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curdling yells. Arrows whizzed through the air and the *Barnacle's* crew were careful to keep well hidden. They had to go on, however, and soon they were in the centre of a whole bevy of wasps, savage, howling men, who looked as if they were ready to swarm up over the ship.

Pistols had been passed out to the crew, and just as the enemy were under the gunwales Captain Flanders gave the order to fire. A fusillade of shots answered; the yells stopped for a minute, then rose louder than ever. Another scattering fire, and the canoes turned tail and fled. No one on board the *Barnacle* knew how many of the enemy had been wounded, all they could see was the paddlers trying frantically to get out of reach of the bullets. Captain Flanders brought his deck-cannon into action, and one roar from that woke the echoes alongshore and was followed by distant howls. Watch-fires suddenly blazed and the crew heard the beating of tom-toms, but the ship sailed on and the natives had to vent their rage in harmless noise.

A fortnight had passed since the *Barnacle* entered the Straits when she sighted a settlement on the Chilean side of Patagonia that made some pre-

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tension to size. A great many huts filled a wedge-shaped piece of ground that lay between the spurs of two mountain-ranges, woods that looked dense and evergreen separated the habitations from the distant glaciers and ice-fields, and several good-sized fishing-boats were moored at the entrance to a little creek. What interested Captain Flanders most was that the flag of Chile was flying from a pole in front of a square log-house near the water.

The *Barnacle* came to anchor, and after a short conference the captain, Perkins, Jerry, Jim, and four of the crew went ashore in the long-boat. Recent experience had taught them to be wary, and to look to their arms, and the sight of many half-naked savages running up and down the beach and hallooing to each other added to their caution. A great number of the usual small dogs were barking in an endless chorus, and children, without a stitch of clothing, seemed to be everywhere.

Captain Flanders called out a greeting in his best Portuguese, which was answered by yells and barks and a waving of arms. He stood up and held out some strings of beads, gesturing to indicate that he wanted to bestow these valuable gifts on the people. There were more yells and a great deal of hopping

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about and one native pulled off his otter-skin cloak and swung it over his head. "I don't know whether they want to fight or bargain," said the captain. "I reckon they'd like to bargain first and fight afterward. Anyhow, I'm going to look them over. Now mind you, men; you've got to act as if you loved every blessed one of the rascals."

The natives didn't look as if it would be easy to love them, or even to go near them. They were short, with long black hair that fell to their shoulders, and Jim thought he had never seen so many ugly faces. Amid snarls and shouts and the yapping of the host of dogs the long-boat ran into shallow water and was brought up against a low ledge of rock. Out jumped Flanders and the rest, and the captain, holding out his strings of beads, smiled his very best smile at the crowd of ugly faces.

The beads made an impression. After a minute or two of staring at the strangers and slow edging forward half a dozen natives stepped out and came up. They began to jabber and reach out their hands. "Show them a looking-glass, Jerry," said the captain. Jerry produced a mirror he had been carefully carrying and held it so that one of the

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ing he was ——” The man made a gesture of drinking.

“ Captain Flanders is talking to him now,” said Jerry. “ Have some tobacco?” He pulled out his pouch and offered it to Sampson.

“ Thanks. Don’t mind if I do.” Sampson produced a pipe, filled and lighted it. “ Now see here. How do matters stand atween us? You haven’t got nothin’ agin me, have you?”

“ Well,” said Jerry, “ I don’t know. It depends on what you’re doing.”

“ Doin’?” snorted Sampson. “ I’m doin’ nothing but hang ’round the worst hole in all creation! I’m sittin’ here an’ watchin’ old Quillota cuss the natives. He can cuss worse’n any sailorman I ever heard. An’ I’m cussin’ Red Derek an’ his crew for the dirty trick they played me! Me, as honest a feller as ever sailed the sea!” He was growing rapidly angry, his face was very red and his eyes were ugly.

“ Come, what’s the trouble?” said Jerry soothingly. “ White men ought to stand together in a place like this.”

“ They ought to; but they don’t! I’m through with Derek! I’d like to catch him with a knife

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atween the ribs! An' all along o' my wantin' a divvy o' the spoils, just the share I was rightly entitled to!"

"I heard him quarreling with Pigeon," Jim put in.

"Aye, he quarrels with everybody. He's got a nasty temper. I think he wants to take it all himself, when every single one o' us done as much as he did. What I wanted was to have a chest for myself, somethin' I could count on an' sell as quick as I got the chance. I told him so; I pinte it out to him that Bill Sampson wasn't goin' to let him sell it all for what he could get an' then like as not vamoose without a divvy. 'I want my share, an' I want it now, an' I want it where I can lay my hands on it!' I says to him. An' what does he answer me? 'If I let you do that, I'd have you all fightin' each other inside a week,' says he. 'Mebbe so an' mebbe not,' I answers. 'But if you don't you'll have us all fightin' you right now!' I says that thinkin' the rest o' the crowd would stand by me; they'd swore they would. But they didn't, when Derek faced 'em. They turned about an' let me be the goat. An' then he landed me on a bloomin' pint o' land an' told me I could walk back

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home! I walked all right. That's how I got here."

"Where's the sloop now?" Jerry asked. "I don't suppose you mind telling me after the way he treated you."

"No, I don't mind tellin' you. An' I hope you catch the old devil an' give him his deserts. To think of him treatin' me that way after all I'd done for him! He's got enough aboard to make us all rich men, an' here I am a beggar! I hope you catch him! He must have passed by here a couple o' days ago. Quillota says he saw the sloop, but Derek didn't put in."

"He had luck to get through the Straits ahead of us," said Jerry. "Captain Flanders thought the sloop wouldn't go 'round the Horn if she could possibly slip through here."

"He's got the devil's own luck!" declared Bill Sampson. "That's what'll make Old Red careless some day, and then they'll trip him up. He let this young shrimp here get away from him—though I don't think he minded that much, seein' as how he wouldn't have known what to do with him if he had stayed aboard. An' he hung 'round that place till the last minute, just to show how easy he could

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sneak away from your boat when he'd a mind to do it. An' then take the Rose! Why, that's Jonah enough for any ship to carry! It may be worth a million pounds all right; but what's he goin' to do with it? I don't take no stock in stealin' an eye from any o' those heathen gods!"

"Well, at least it wasn't Derek who stole the ruby eye from that Buddha in Delhi," said Jerry, smiling. "Some other man lifted it from there, and what Derek did was to make that other man on the *Mary Parrot* hand it over to him."

"All right, all right," agreed Sampson. "But Derek's got it now, and like as not the god's goin' to have revenge on him some o' these days. He don't care who took it; what he wants is to get even with the feller who's keepin' his precious eye from him now. I've knocked 'round the East, an' I tell you what it is,—there's queer things happen out there; an' sometimes those gods has fingers that reach out an' nab a chap 'way across the sea. Blimme if I don't hope they nab that old red-headed devil some fine day!"

Jerry nodded. "I don't blame you. He certainly played you a mighty scurvy trick, putting you ashore like that, where you might have starved

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as easily as not, or fallen into the hands of cannibals. I think you're in luck, Sampson, to be here with a whole skin. Ten chances to one you might have been stuck full of arrows by this time!"

"But I've lost my share o' the swag," the man complained. "An' I thought I'd get enough out o' it to settle down honest-like somewheres on shore."

"It wouldn't be very honest-like living on what you took from the *Mary Parrot*. You've got a much better chance of that if you stick to us."

"I'll stick to anybody who'll help me get even with Derek!" exclaimed Sampson. "Want to know where he's headin'? For one o' those islands off the coast o' Chile. He can tuck hisself away there while he sees what chance he's got o' gettin' rid o' the loot in Valparaiso."

"Come up and tell that to the captain," suggested Jerry. "He's a white man and he'll treat you right."

"Sure I will," said Sampson. "I've seen enough o' these pesky black devils an' that fool o' a Quil-lota!"

The three went into the log-house, where Flanders was still talking with the Chilean agent. Quil-

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lota offered them glasses and a black bottle, but the three declined. Sampson told his story to the captain, and the agent corroborated the fact that he had seen such a sloop as Sampson described pass off shore two days before. Much talk followed, for Quillota was very loquacious now and saw so few white men that he wanted to make the most of his present company. Finally, to stop him from describing any further the hardships of his post, which he made out to be the very worst in the world, Flanders invited him to come out and have a respectable dinner on the *Barnacle*.

Doubtless it was the presence of Quillota, who appeared in some way to have acquired complete mastery over the savage people in his charge, that accounted for the peaceful departure of the long-boat from shore. The looking-glass was still the centre of attraction for a large crowd, and at sight of the white men the natives came flocking, demanding more presents and thrusting their otter- and sheepskins in the strangers' faces. Quillota snarled at them and shoved them out of his path. He said something in their own tongue, something evidently forceful and convincing, for they stopped their howling and fell back to let him and the white men

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pass. As soon as the boat pushed out from shore, however, the chorus of cries recommenced, and Jim, safely out on the water, had to laugh at the spectacle of men, women, children and dogs trying to make the most hideous noise they could.

Quillota had dinner at the captain's table and afterward, reluctant, was rowed ashore. Meantime Flanders had invited Bill Sampson to sail on the *Barnacle*, and the latter had jumped at the idea. He stood at the rail as the clipper set sail and shook his head at the cluster of native huts. "I've had enough o' that place," he said. "I was mighty glad to see old Quillota when I got there—glad to hear him jabber and eat real food again. But I don't feel no regret at tellin' 'em good-bye. White men for me! Real white men, I mean. Not such as Derek an' his ornery, low-down crew."

Jerry and Jim talked together as the ship drew further and further away from the snow-clad mountain-peaks and stood out to sea. "When thieves begin to fall out, then honest men get their due," said Jerry. "Many a pirate crew have stolen treasure only to fall foul of each other when it came to dividing the spoils, and ended by treating each other worse than they did the rightful owners. There's

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something about stolen loot that carries a long train of crime and punishment behind it.”

“What did Sampson mean about the god in Delhi stretching out its fingers to catch the man who has its ruby eye?” Jim asked.

Jerry laughed and shrugged his shoulders. “India’s full of superstitions. It’s easy for men with bad consciences to believe in such things too. The East Indians are a slow-moving, patient people. India’s a land where they take plenty of time to do things, but they don’t forget a wrong done them, and sometimes years afterward they get their revenge. The priests of the temple haven’t forgotten their precious Rose of Delhi, and doubtless Derek knows that and thinks about it sometimes.”

“But what can they do to him ’way over here?”

“Ask me something easier, Jim. I’m sure I don’t know. Maybe his own uneasy conscience will turn the trick for them.”

“He didn’t seem to me a man easily frightened,” Jim said thoughtfully.

“I don’t believe he is. I think he’s a man who means to hold on to all he’s got, including the Rose, and make it mighty hard for anyone to take his

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booty from him. You wouldn't expect a pirate to knuckle under, would you?"

With all sails set the Yankee clipper left the antarctic seas behind and flew through warmer waters toward the chain of islands that lie off the coast of Chile.

CHAPTER VII

THE ISLAND IN THE PACIFIC

THERE was plenty of sunshine and a smooth sea, and the air grew dry and exhilarating as the *Barnacle* left the region of Cape Horn and set her course to the north. No land was in sight most of the time, and the good ship had the ocean all to herself except for the birds that followed her as if she had been a magnet. The Cape pigeons hovered about her constantly, now dashing by the standing-gear in wild flight, now soaring above the mast-heads, now skimming over the water as a boy skips a stone. They were a merry, friendly lot of fellows until the cook threw scraps of food overboard. Then it was a case of each look out for himself and grab all he could get, like a crowd of pickaninnies scrambling for pennies thrown to them from a car-window. As soon as the scraps of food touched the water two or three of the birds would catch sight of them, and instantly fifty or so would join the first ones in a furious battle. They beat each other with their powerful wings, they plunged at each other

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with their sharp, curved bills. One would seize a morsel, only to be set upon immediately by others, who would bear down upon him and actually beat him under the water. But when a pigeon once got a scrap of food in his bill nothing seemed able to make him loose his hold of it.

Sometimes during these civil wars a new enemy would appear. A great molly-hawk, having sighted the combat, would loom up astern, and presently come dashing into the midst of the pigeons. His great wings and huge beak would be too much for them. Scattering them like chaff before a whirlwind he would seize the choicest bit of food and soar away with it. When he was safely out of reach the little fellows would come back and pick up what was left. Sometimes they would sight a scrap far below the surface of the water and would dive for it. Up they would come with the morsel in their bill, rising as suddenly from under the sea as if they had been shot upward by a gun. Then, when the food was gone and the cause for warfare ended, they would become friends again and resume their skimming and soaring and acrobatics.

Jim and Jerry often watched the battles of the pigeons, and once Jerry said, "Those little fellows

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are like the men aboard Derek's sloop. They're friendly enough until they get a sight of the plunder and then each one wants to lay hold of all he can for himself."

Southern Chile has a fretwork of islands, like a border of lace, that fringes its jutting shore-line. Jim was told strange stories by some of the crew about the natives who lived in this archipelago. The women were Amazons, much bigger and stronger than the men, and did all the fighting. It was a bad place to be cast ashore; there were many blood-curdling tales of what had happened to white sailors who had had the misfortune to be shipwrecked there. But the *Barnacle* gave this chain of islands a wide berth. Flanders had heard what Bill Sampson had to tell of Red Derek's plans. Derek would not run the risk of falling afoul of these savages, where he could do nothing with his plunder, but would make for the other islands to the north, nearer Valparaiso, where he would wait his chance to sell his cargo on the mainland. So the clipper headed for Masafuera and Juan Fernandez, the island that was said to be the scene of Robinson Crusoe's adventures.

Calm seas followed day after day until one noon the great peak of an island loomed up out of the

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ocean. As the *Barnacle* neared it the island appeared to be made of steep and rugged hills. Palms, great tree-ferns, and thick underbrush formed its vegetation, and the coast was indented with many rock-bordered inlets. Captain Flanders dropped his anchor a safe distance from the shore.

An hour later two boats were beached in a cove, and Jim and Jerry and Pete, forming one exploration party, were toiling through the underbush and up over the hills. The hills were not easy to climb, for they were largely made of rocks covered by very shallow soil, which kept slipping under the feet. And the underbrush was as thick as a jungle, so that in places they had to cut their way with knives through creepers and vines. The sun was hot and there was little shade, frequently they stopped and drank from the water-bottles that were slung over their shoulders. Sometimes swarms of midges buzzed about them, and once Pete gave a shout and pointed out a great lizard basking on a rock close at hand. After that the three advanced with even greater caution, investigating the ground in front before they set foot on it.

Captain Flanders' plan was to have a number of his men explore the island and report what they

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found to him. Jerry and Pete and Jim each carried a knapsack with provisions. Their course lay across the island, which, according to the chart, they ought to be able to cross by sunset. And, as the sun was just about to set, they did come in sight of water to the west.

They made for the slope of a hill that faced southward, and, tired by their strenuous tramp and hungry and thirsty, sat down on a grass-covered ledge of rock and ate supper. So far as they had discovered they had the island to themselves. A crescent moon rose in the sky and a soft breeze stirred the leaves of some neighboring palms. "Pretty smooth place this," said Pete, stretching out on the ledge, his hands under his head. "I wouldn't mind sleepin' here, if it wasn't for the lizards."

"It feels mighty good to get off the ship once in a while!" said Jim, and he likewise stretched out on his back, watching the silver moon up in the dark blue sky.

Jerry looked at his watch. "We've got to get back to-night, you know."

"Ugh!" grunted Pete. "I hate those vines an' things. They'll be worse'n ever in the dark."

"I'll give you half an hour," said Jerry. He

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they were welcomed by Pigeon with a chuckle and the comment, "What you folks are doin' 'way out here in the sea I don't know!"

In the cabin Derek was smoking his pipe and drinking a glass of whiskey. He showed no surprise when Pigeon marshaled the three before him. "Well," he said gruffly, "your ship's put in here, has she? That Yankee skipper's a regular bloodhound, eh?"

"Gime o' hare an' hounds, that's wot it's gettin' to be," observed Pigeon.

Derek looked at Jerry. "What does he want? How much'll he take to call it quits?" he demanded.

"He won't call it quits," said Jerry.

Derek's eyes slowly narrowed, his lips curled and his whole expression grew venomous and ugly. "He won't, eh? Then I'll see all we've got aboard sunk ten fathoms deep before he sets his fingers on it!"

"I wouldn't do that," said Pigeon lightly. "It ain't necessary."

"No, it ain't necessary," Derek agreed. "Cast off at once, Slim. North by west. Keep her well to the west till we've given the beggars the slip."

That was all Derek had to say. He poured him-

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self another glass of grog and gave a curt nod of dismissal to the three prisoners. They followed Pigeon on deck and stood by the rail while the crew of the sloop raised the anchor and started the *Sahib* on her westward course.

It was clear that this course would keep her from view of the *Barnacle*. She slipped out from her pocket under the peak of the island and stood for the open ocean. And the three by the rail realized that they were completely helpless, that they were to go wherever Derek might take them, and that their fate was quite immaterial to him.

"It's a pretty kettle of fish!" said Jerry. "But we're in the kettle all right, and we might as well make ourselves as happy as we can."

"I never thought I'd get in a fix like this!" said Pete. "I wish I was back on the island! I wouldn't mind the lizards—or even snakes!"

"I wonder how soon they'll find we're gone?" said Jim. "I hope they don't stop to hunt over the whole place for us."

"Well, mates," said Jerry, trying to be as jovial as he could, "there's one thing certain. It's up to Captain Flanders to try to find us, and we can bet he won't stop till he does it."

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The crew of the sloop didn't seem to be a particularly bad lot. They looked much like other sailors, grumbled and swore as much, but didn't go out of their way to be disagreeable to the three prisoners. Pigeon, in fact, appeared to want to be friendly with them, talked to them for a while, and saw that they had comfortable places to sleep.

When they came on deck next morning, after breakfast in the galley, they found that the sloop was heading to the northeast and bowling along at a good pace under full stretch of canvas.

It was during that day that Pigeon joined the three in the bow. "Now see here, lads," said he in an easy, pleasant manner, "seein' we're messmates we might as well be chummy. Derek's not so all-fired perlite, I'll grant you; but I ain't got any grudge. Wot's the reason your captain's so almighty hotfoot after us? We ain't done nothin' to him, have we?"

The man's tone was so much that of injured innocence that Jerry had to smile. "Didn't you hold up the *Mary Parrot* and help yourselves to the better part of her cargo? Well, the *Mary Parrot's* owned by some of the same men who own the *Barnacle*."

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“We didn’t take all her cargo. We left plenty to pay for her voyage out an’ back.”

“You took ivory and silks and lots of valuable wares; to say nothing of the Rose of Delhi.”

“So you know about her, do you? Well, then, p’raps you know too that the man we took her from had stolen her himself from some old temple? He hadn’t any more right to her than we had.”

“I’m willing to grant you that,” said Jerry, “for the sake of argument. But two wrongs don’t make a right, you know. The ruby ought to go back to the priests of Delhi.” He paused a moment. “And I’ve a feeling that some day the Rose will be returned to the eye of the idol where she belongs.”

“Oh, you’ve a feeling that way, have you?” Pigeon looked out over the sea for a few minutes. “Well, I don’t mind tellin’ you that I didn’t want to tike the cussed thing. I told Derek so; but he would have it. Said it was worth more’n all the rest o’ the cargo put together. I don’t believe in rubbin’ any speerits or idols the wrong way;—no, that I don’t!”

“I know I wouldn’t want to monkey with ’em,” said Pete very positively. “Think o’ stealin’ the

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eye from a bloomin' statue! I wouldn't sleep sound at night!"

"We didn't steal it, I tell you!" Pigeon exclaimed. "Some other fools stole it. It don't lay on my conscience! Howsomever," he added slowly, "that purty pice o' red glass might be a Jonah to Derek an' all the rest o' us."

"Derek doesn't mind having it about?" Jerry ventured to ask.

Pigeon grinned. "He'd like mighty well to get rid o' it—at his own price. But he'll keep his paws on it if all the devils o' Indja try to steal it from him. He's a tough nut, our old Red Derek is! He don't let anythin' stand in his way, no more'n a tornado does. Mind ye, I don't mean that he ain't got his own leetle pet superstitions. Every right-minded sailor has got some o' those things tucked away somewheres."

Derek had now come on deck, and Pigeon, catching sight of him, sidled away from the three, as if he didn't want to be discovered talking to them. Jim watched the captain as the latter paced up and down the after-deck. He was not a handsome figure, but he looked as though he could fight any dozen men.

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Two days the sloop bore to the northeast, then directly to the east, and the only sail she sighted was that of a bark, to which she gave a wide berth. Jim and Jerry and Pete kept to themselves, ate three meals a day and slept at night, and none of the crew molested them or had anything to say. Occasionally Pigeon slipped up to them for a chat. As for Derek, he paid no attention to them at all. He seemed to take little interest even in his own crew, but watched the sloop and what went on aboard her as a spider might watch whatever happened in his web.

“Land ho!” came the cry about sunset. A beautiful island, hilly, fringed with palms, and not unlike the one they had left, rose from the sea. All about stretched the open ocean. Ringed by the great expanse of silver water the place looked lonely, as if it had nothing to do with the world of men, but it was lovely in the sunset light and green as an emerald.

The sloop dropped along the shore until she found good anchorage. The moon rose and touched harbor and land with her magic glitter. The crew made everything snug, under Pigeon’s directions. And ten o’clock found the ship as quiet as the sea and shore.

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The three prisoners went to bed. Jim, however, didn't fall asleep. He lay in his bunk wide-eyed, wondering what Derek intended to do, wondering what would happen to the three of them now they had reached land again. He may have dozed a little, but after a time he caught the noise of steps on the deck above his head. There are always such noises on a ship at night-time, but these noises continued, as if a number of men were hurrying about.

He listened for some time. There were no sounds in his part of the sloop, and presently he crawled out of bed and in his bare feet stole to the companionway. Here he crouched several minutes; then slowly raised his head higher and higher until he had a view of the deck. Men were busy at the rail, men were carrying boxes and bales from the hold far forward to the side of the sloop and lowering them over by ropes. Evidently Derek meant to land a part of his cargo.

The noise on deck ceased. Then Jim, listening intently, caught the sound of oars plashing in the water. He heard directions given in Pigeon's voice. Those of the crew still aboard turned from the rail and went forward. Jim stole down the steps.

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Jerry and Pete were sound asleep, and, seeing no point in waking them, Jim slipped back to his bunk.

Next morning, out of earshot in the bow, he told his two mates what he had seen at night. "Derek's hiding his cargo on shore,—or at least a part of it. He doesn't mean to lose all his plunder, no matter what happens. Perhaps he thinks he'll tire the *Barnacle* out, and when Captain Flanders gives up the chase he'll sail back here again and pick up what he's hidden."

"It's a likely looking place to hide stuff," said Jerry, his eyes roaming over the wooded, hilly island.

"I'll bet it's full of caves," said Pete. "You couldn't ever find anythin' there he didn't want yer to!"

"I wonder how long he's going to stay?" Jerry scratched his cheek thoughtfully. "Does he think that Flanders will make for the mainland?"

"Search me!" said Pete.

"I wish I could send a wireless to the *Barnacle!*" sighed Jim.

Jerry laughed. "Well, all we three can do is to keep our eyes wide open. Hello! Derek's going

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ashore! I suppose he's after spring water, or perhaps he's ——"

"Yes, perhaps he is," agreed Jim with a wink. "Perhaps he'll find the spring near where he's left something else."

Derek and part of the crew spent the day ashore. It was a wonderful, balmy day, and as the sloop rode at anchor less than fifty yards from the beach, the clear, translucent water whispered a great desire to Jerry to take a swim in it. Real baths are not frequent aboard ship, and this was a splendid opportunity to have one. So he sought out Pigeon, who had been left in charge, and told him his desire. Pigeon, with a grin, gave his permission. "But that water's colder than it looks, my friend," said he. "Tell you what I'll do. A couple of the men are going to land in a small boat an' you can put your clothes aboard it. They'll leave your things on the beach, an' if you'll take my advice you'll swim straight for it an' get back into your togs quick as ever you can. One o' the boats'll pick you up later. I know how it is. Sight o' a beach does always make a chap hanker to stretch his legs."

Ten minutes later the three of them, stripped and with their clothes tossed into the boat that was about

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to start for shore, were ready to dive into the clear green water. About Jim's neck hung the round piece of jade that his grandfather had given him in the attic of "The Crow's Nest," and as Pete's eyes lighted on it the red-headed lad asked the owner what it was. "That?" said Jim. "Oh, I'd almost forgotten all about that! It's something to keep the spooks off. It came from somewhere in the East Indies. Well, come along, Pete! That water looks mighty good to me!" From the rail of the sloop he dove, straight and true as an arrow, as he had often cut the water on the coast of Maine.

Two other splashes followed, and then three wet heads bobbed up and shook themselves with glee. The water was cold, though no colder than it often was at Kennebunkport, and the swimmers struck out lustily, hand over hand, shooting through the greenness like so many dolphins. Then, first of the three, Pete headed for the shore, was pursued and overtaken by Jim and Jerry, and they all came out on the beach, slapping themselves with their hands and chortling with satisfaction. Like so many colts in a pasture they danced and cavorted over the sand, and as the rowboat bearing their clothes touched shore they made a dash for it, rubbed themselves

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dry with their shirts and hurried into their garments.

“Great! That’s great!” cried Jerry. “Now for a sprint or two! I’ll race you to that rock! Are you ready? Set! Go!” The three were off at a bound; it was Jim who reached the rock first, and threw himself on the sand, breathless and panting.

The two men in the boat were now paddling in the opposite direction from the bathers, apparently seeking what they might discover of the shore. The sloop was quiet, Pigeon had disappeared, a man in the bow was smoking a pipe and keeping a lookout to the south. Jim took all this in; then, sitting up, he suggested, “Why shouldn’t we have a little look around? Nobody’s watching us. I suppose they think we’re safe enough on the island.”

“And safe enough we are, too,” said Jerry. “But I don’t see why we shouldn’t.”

“We might discover what Derek’s been doing,” Jim suggested.

Getting up, they strolled a little way along the beach. No one shouted to them, no one was watching. At a break in the underbrush they turned inland and soon were out of sight of the sloop and in a thicket.

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The thought that they might learn something about Derek's business there cautioned them to silence. As noiselessly as they could they made their way north. Every few minutes they stopped to listen. "It looks like a trail," Jerry whispered, pointing to a fresh cut in the trunk of a tree. It certainly seemed as if a path led through brush and thickets. Presently they found another blazed place. "Must have come about a mile," whispered Jerry. "Keep a sharp lookout now."

The woods were dense enough to give them a good cover; when they came to a space of brambles and thorn they skirted it, keeping to the trees for protection. In this way they went another mile and picked up a third blaze. Then, somewhere in front of them they heard a noise, a rustle in the brush. Instantly they were all down, flat as pancakes. The noise ceased, and they crept forward again. A few minutes later there was another rustle, this time much nearer. They had just time to crouch back of a clump of thorn-bushes when three of the sloop's crew appeared, evidently on the homeward trail.

The men went on. A twig snapped under Pete's hand. "What's that?" called one of the men. The

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fellow back of him muttered something about animals better left alone, and the men ploughed ahead. Soon they were out of sight. Then Jim wriggled forward, Jerry and Pete behind him, and they zig-zagged in the direction from which the men had come, on their hands and knees, and sometimes on their stomachs.

Again there was a noise ahead, again the three crouched. Then, stealing forward to a barrier of underbrush, Jim parted the branches and looked through. Beyond was an open space, a little glade in the woods; at one side was a great rock with a small cave at its bottom; two men were shoving a box into this opening, and Derek sat on a fallen tree, making marks with a pencil on a sheet of paper.

In silence the audience of three, not daring to move, scarcely daring to breathe, watched the proceedings. The two men stowed the box away and came back to Derek. "That's all," said one of the two.

"That'll do then," said Derek. "You go back to the sloop. I'll come as soon as I've done this."

The two men left the glade; they could be heard for several minutes tramping through the brush.

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Derek went on with his drawing. Jerry touched Jim's arm and gestured that he thought they had better be going and pointed in the direction of the east. One at a time, first Pete, then Jerry, wriggled away through the brambles, taking infinite care not to be overheard. When he thought that the other two were safely on their way Jim started to crawl. Flat on the ground he went for a dozen yards; then stood up. He took a step forward, another step. He dared to run. A vine caught about his leg and brought him to his knees.

That made some noise. He scrambled up, tried to pull his leg free, took a couple of steps, and the vine tripped him again. Lying on his face he tried to tear away the tenacious stickers when a voice close behind him growled out, "Just you lie where you are till I have a look at you!"

Jim knew who was speaking. He was caught like a rat in a trap and all he could do was to lie still.

"Now you turn over!" commanded Derek.

Jim turned over and found himself looking straight at Derek's revolver.

"Sit up!" ordered Derek. "What are you doing here? Spying, that's what you're doing!"

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Jim sat up. Derek's face was cold and hard with anger.

"I've half a mind to be rid of you now, you young, prying weasel! Stand up, and be quick about it!"

Jim stood up. The vine, still wound about his leg, tripped him and threw him forward. It looked as if he had tried to jump at Derek.

"You dog!" roared the latter, his finger trembling on the trigger. "What are you trying to do?"

"Nothing!" cried Jim. "My foot caught! I didn't mean any harm!"

The man surveyed him in silence, his eyes as chill as steel. "So you saw us," he said at length. "Well, I don't see why I should be plagued by you any longer. What have you got to say?"

Jim grasped for words, for anything to say that might save him. Then in a flash he thought of something. "Wait a minute! Wait a minute!" he begged. "I want to show you something, something I've got about my neck, something my grandfather, Captain Nathaniel Burgess, gave me!"

With trembling fingers he tore open his shirt and pulled over his head the cord with the piece of green

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jade. He held it out in his two hands. "Did you ever see a thing like that? Do you know what it is?" he asked.

Derek craned his neck forward. "If you try any nonsense on me, I'll blow you to Timbuctoo! What have you got there?"

Jim's fingers pressed the spring at the edge of the jade and the two halves opened. "See," he said, "it's a—what do you call it?—a charm. It came from the East Indies."

"Oh, it did?" said Derek. "What's it got to do with me an' you?"

"There's a dragon, and words that say it doesn't pay to do any harm to the person who's got this. My grandfather sailed in the East and he saw it work. A captain in Singapore gave it to him for saving him from a coolie."

"The East's full of yarns like that," said Derek. "I've been there myself."

"It works," said Jim. "It doesn't pay to get the devils angry."

"It doesn't, eh?" Derek retorted. "I've seen that same dragon with those same things around it before. Do you think you can frighten me, you young cub?"

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“ I wasn't trying to frighten you. I was only hoping you'd let me go on the chance there might be something in the charm, after all. You've got the ruby from Delhi ——”

Derek stared. “ You mean I've got enough to look after with that, do you? You believe in angry spirits.”

“ I've heard plenty of tales about them,” Jim answered boldly.

“ So have I. All rubbish! Still I have got that ruby ——”

“ I haven't done you any harm,” said Jim.

Derek's brow wrinkled in thought. He wasn't considering Jim, he was thinking of other matters. “ What's the use of gambling when you've nothing to win?” he said finally. “ Put your precious charm back. I'll let you off this time, but the next time you get in my way I'll make an end of you.” With that he stuck his revolver back in his belt, turned on his heel, and strode away through the brush.

Jim watched till the burly form of the outlaw was hidden by the trees, then slowly and thoughtfully, wondering just how much superstition had had to do with the man's actions, he replaced the

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locket around his neck and fastened his shirt again. By now he knew that Jerry and Pete must be some distance away. He listened, but heard nothing. Taking his bearings from the place where Derek had disappeared into the woods he set out to make a parallel course, not wishing to overhaul the outlaw if he could help it.

In this way he came to a hill and took some time in making his way around it. The brush was very thick, he got tangled in it, he had no view of anything but thorn-bushes and trees. He decided he could make little progress through such a wilderness and concluded to find the trail they had followed before. This led him to the right, through dense woods; but though he kept the sharpest lookout he saw none of the blazes. Fearful of getting lost, he stopped to consider, but the more he considered the more uncertain he became as to the right direction. For an hour more he wandered about in a maze of brambles and thickets, and was just about to admit that he was lost and to try hallooing for help when he caught a glimpse of the sun, low down in the sky now, through the interlacing aisles of trees.

That gave him his bearings, and taking fresh courage he plunged again through the forest in the

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“Holy smokes!” said Pete. “What are we goin’ to do?”

“That’s what I’d like to know,” said Jim.
“We’ve got to do some mighty hard thinking.”

CHAPTER VIII

THE TWO CASTAWAYS

JIM and Pete, standing high up on the rocky headland, saw the three-masted ship disappear behind a clump of palms that hid the western ocean. "That's not the *Barnacle*," said Pete. "She looks different somehow. I'll bet I could tell the old *Barnacle*, no matter how far out she stood."

"I'll bet Derek took her for the *Barnacle*, and that's why he sailed away," said Jim.

They looked at the rim of the ocean, searching it slowly as far as they could see from west to east. There was not a sail in sight. The sun had now dropped below the horizon and the colors of sky and sea were saffron, salmon and pink. "Nothin' doin'," said Pete, and shook his head. He glanced at Jim, and then suddenly he grinned. "An' we ain't neither of us ever been shipwrecked before!"

That grin sent a thrill through his companion. If Pete could grin so could Jim Burgess. Jim nodded. "Well, we're on dry land; and that's something!"

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Yet they both realized that that was about all that could be said for their situation. So far as they knew they were the only human beings on a small island off the coast of Chile, an island probably rarely visited by ships and not in one of the lanes of ocean travel. That Red Derek should have abandoned them there to save his own skin was not surprising; it was highly likely that, once having sailed away, he would forget all about them and leave them to their fate. They walked down on to the beach, each considering these facts by himself.

Hard thinking at last brought Jim to a conclusion. "It seems to me the first thing to do is to have a look at the whole place. We might sight a ship on the other side."

"An' I was so glad to get out o' those woods," sighed Pete. "I never saw a place so all-fired easy to get lost in."

"Same here," said Jim. An idea occurred to him. "Do you suppose Jerry could have got lost in there too?"

"He might," answered Pete. "Let's yell."

They yelled, singly and together, they woke the echoes of the beach and brush in a series of ear-

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piercing war-whoops; but there was no answer, and presently they desisted.

“He got away all right,” said Pete. He wrinkled his freckled forehead in thought and rubbed his stubby nose with a finger. “It wouldn’t do any good for us to try to find the place where they hid that stuff, would it? There’s nothin’ but boxes of loot there, I reckon. Nothin’ we could eat.”

Jim shook his head. “I don’t want to go back in there to-night. Let’s try the shore.”

So they followed the shore to the west, climbing rocks, skirting beaches, pushing through outgrowing bushes, while the afterglow of sunset paled, the stars came out and at last the moon rose. But they discovered only what nature had made of the coast, nothing of man or his works. And presently they had to admit that they were very tired and footsore. “Might as well camp here as anywhere,” said Jim. “We’ll feel more like going on in the morning.”

Up from the shore they found a strip of grass, sheltered by trees and bushes. The air was soft, and the brush would protect them from any rising night-wind. Here they lay down and talked for a little while. For the first time since Jim had known

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Pete the latter was slow in falling asleep. But presently they were both in the Land of Nod.

The sun came up in full glory and took a look at the island far out in the Pacific. He saw two young fellows stretching, rubbing their eyes, sitting up, getting to their feet stiffly, as if their muscles ached. He saw them walk down to the shore and splash cold water over their faces. Then he saw them climb to a rock and search the ocean eagerly.

“No sail yet,” said Jim. “How do you feel, Pete?”

“I feel all right. I wouldn't mind lookin' for a banana-tree this morning.”

“Oh, I guess we'll find something to eat all right.” Jim spoke bravely enough, but he knew he had his doubts on this all-important matter of food. And Pete had his doubts too, but he grinned. “I reckon we might catch some crabs or fish after a while,” he suggested.

“Let's go on alongshore to the north,” said Jim, still hoping to sight a sail. “Then we can go inland and look for a spring.”

Again they explored westward and northward, for now they had come almost to the opposite side of the island from the place where they had landed.

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They saw no sail, they saw no banana-tree, and presently, becoming thirsty, they decided to strike into the brush and see if they could find fresh water.

For a couple of hours they toiled through the wilderness, discovering nothing that could furnish them food or drink. They were both becoming more than discouraged. Then again they caught a distant glimpse of the ocean, and headed for it because they were tired of the brush. This course brought them to a small inland lake, sheltered from the sea by a ridge of dunes. Jim knelt and scooped up some of the water. "It's saltish," he said, tasting it. "But I don't think it's real salt water. There must be a spring somewhere near."

Encouraged by that thought they set to work searching at once, and were rewarded by finding a spring hidden back in the woods. Pete gave a whoop of delight and drank all he could, followed by Jim. "Well, that's something!" exclaimed Pete. "We know where we can get water! Now all we've got to do is find out where we can get food!"

The water was a great help, but it was only part of their struggle for existence. And as they sat on the bank above the spot where the little stream bub-

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bled out from the earth each of the two realized that food might prove a much more difficult matter to provide. They did not say so, however, though both were beginning to feel very hungry. Jim stood up. "I think we ought to keep a lookout for ships," he declared. "I don't like the idea of letting one of them go by."

"Same here," said Pete. "But, say, Jim, supposin' we did see a ship, how are we goin' to let her know we're here? We might have a bonfire at night; but what about the daytime?"

"I've been thinking about that," said Jim. "I don't know the answer yet. But we've got to do all we can and trust to luck."

That was a serious problem, and so was the subject of food, and neither of them, in spite of their finding the spring, felt very cheerful as they skirted the little lake, climbed over the sand-dunes and came down on to the beach. From west to east the ocean stretched sunny and level, but there was not a ship to be seen as far as the horizon.

"What's that?" said Pete, pointing along the sand.

"It looks like a box," said Jim. "Probably some old wreckage."

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In fault of anything better to do they approached the object. It was a box, a good-sized box of wood, with two leather straps across the top and fastened to hasps in front by pegs of wood. And neither the wood nor the leather was stained by salt water, but appeared perfectly dry.

The castaways stared at the box. "What's that stuck under the strap?" said Pete. "It looks for all the world like a bill o' ladin'. Now what would a ship be leavin' a cargo at a place like this for?"

"I'll tell you," said Jim, "if you'll just wait a minute." There was a folded piece of paper caught under one of the leather strips and he jerked it free and opened it. "Listen, Pete, listen!" he cried, and read: "We had to leave you two on the island. Mighty sorry, but we had to do it. We couldn't rightly wait for you to show up. Here's some food, and there's springs in the woods. Also there are cocoa and date palms on the nor'east point. I've put in some fishing-tackle and a tin of matches. Keep a watch for ships and don't get down-hearted. We've got the other guy aboard the sloop with us. See you later—mebbe. Slim Sam.'"

Pete yelled; then in a burst of joy turned a

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couple of handsprings on the sand and yelled again. Meantime Jim pulled out the pegs that held the straps of the box and threw back the cover. Inside was a regular larder of ship's supplies.

Strips of salt pork, cold baked beans and hard-tack tasted like the veriest feast of Lucullus to the two. They ate and grinned and chattered. "I allus did like that there Pigeon," said Pete. "We've got matches now, so we can have a fire at night."

"I'll bet Jerry begged him to do this," said Jim. "They must have sailed round the island to the east after they sighted that three-master."

"Cocoa palms!" cried Pete. "An' fish an' dates an' plenty o' fresh water! Why, it's a reg'lar picnic, that's wot it is!"

"A ship's bound to come along some day," declared Jim. "And when it does come we'll have the biggest kind of a bonfire ready for it."

"Sure thing!" said Pete. "Right on that point there."

"But the ship might come from the south," Jim objected.

"Well, it's fifty-fifty, for it might come from the north too. An' the box is here, an' the spring. An'

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we can climb one o' those palms every once in a while an' take a good look 'round."

The bonfire was important, and as soon as they had finished eating they set to work to gather brush and carry it out on the point. Then Jim baited a fish-hook with a bit of pork and cast his line into one of the deep pools beside the rocks. He caught a couple of shining, fair-sized fellows that resembled sea-bass and put them on a flat rock near the box until it should be time to cook them.

No ship appeared, but the castaways were not inclined to worry about that now. They had food and water, and the afternoon was bright and sunny, and presently they stretched themselves in the sand-dunes and went to sleep.

When they woke the sun was dropping low behind the woods to the southwest. They started out to the east, reaching the point where the cocoa and date palms grew, as Pigeon had described them. "We don't need any fruit now," said Jim, "and I think we ought to have a look at this side before it gets dark." So they went on along the eastern shore, which was not very different in form from the opposite side of the island, and looked across the

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open expanse of ocean that lay between them and the distant coast of Chile.

They supped well on the fish, cooking them over a little fire they lighted on the beach. Pete, going for water, reported that he had seen wild ducks on the inland lake. They lighted the bonfire high up on the rock and collected a large store of fuel for it. Then, when they could think of no more evening chores to do, they made themselves comfortable in the dunes.

It was then that Jim told Pete how Derek had found him near the cave in the woods and how he had shown the man the jade charm. Pete wanted to see the lucky piece and Jim took it off and opened the locket for him. The red-headed lad looked at the carved dragon with eyes of awe. "You might stand up to anybody with a thing like this ready to hand, Jim!" he said.

"I don't suppose it really frightened Derek," Jim answered with a grin. "He didn't look frightened. But maybe he thought he'd got enough spooks on his track through having the Rose with him."

"What's the Rose? Tell me about it," begged Pete.

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So Jim told all he knew about the ruby from Delhi, and when he had finished his companion's eyes were round as saucers. "By golly," he cried, "if I was Derek and had that big red eye in my pocket I'd throw it into the water as quick as a wink!"

Jim laughed. "That wouldn't suit the Buddha very well, would it? He'd have hard work to fish up his eye from the sea."

"Then I'd take it back to him, an' see he got it right an' proper, an' put it where it belonged. I wouldn't take no chances with one o' them heathen gods."

"Why, Pete, you don't believe in any such nonsense?"

"Don't I though! You just bet I do. Why, when you steal a thing from another feller you don't like to meet him afterward. An' when you steal his eye from a critter like this you'd be afraid to be alone in the dark. He'd have his feelers out for you all the time."

"I suppose you mean your conscience would raise the dickens with you," Jim said reflectively.

"You can call it what you like. These critters an' gods has got followers, haven't they? How'd

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those followers like to have their gods lose their beautiful eyes? Wouldn't they be lookin' for the feller who's keepin' the eye to hisself?"

"They might in India," agreed Jim, "but Derek's a long way from India."

"No place is a long way from any other place," said Pete. "You can take a ship an' sail." He closed the locket and handed it back to its owner. "Derek was scared all right. He mayn't have showed it, but he was scared just the same. Why, any sailor is bound to be scared when he meets up with somethin' he can't rightly understand. An' how is a sailor goin' to understand spooks an' devils?" He grinned at Jim. "You don't understand 'em, do you?"

"No," said Jim. "But I don't believe in them, either."

"Well, I do," proclaimed Pete. "You haven't been a sailor long enough. That's the matter with you."

There was no use arguing with such positive opinions as those. Jim put the jade charm back about his neck and dug a hollow in the sand for his shoulder. "Good-night, old sport," he said. "Now don't you go to dreaming of angry spooks."

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“There’s nothin’ on my conscience,” answered Pete. “It’s A number one. I sleep like a hummin’ top, I do.”

Morning found the two taking a dip in the ocean. No sail was on the horizon. The fair weather showed no sign of change. The two had breakfast from the stock in the box and again replenished the fire-wood. Pete set out to climb a cocoa palm and Jim busied himself with his fishing-line. Half a dozen cocoanuts and a dozen fish were the result of the morning’s enterprise. The fish they had for dinner, but, having no knives, they laid the cocoanuts aside until they could devise some means of cutting into them.

“We must have a look to the south,” Jim declared when they had finished dinner. “You don’t get much of a view in that direction from the tree-tops, do you?”

“No,” said Pete. “There’s a couple of hills in between.”

“How do you feel? Fit to go on a hike?”

“Sure. I feel like a mountain-goat.”

Stuffing rations of bread and meat in their pockets to serve for supper they took a short-cut inland by the lake that brought them out at the east-

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ernmost point of the island. Here the waves broke on a reef fifty yards from shore and the lagoon that lay in between was flecked with foam as white and fluffy as cotton. On this side the rocks were bolder than at any other place and alternated with sandy caves. The spurs of the hill that was the island's chief landmark ran close down to the water and were covered with coarse grass and a small red flower that looked like a pimpernel. To avoid this hill and the thick undergrowth and woods that clothed its western side the explorers kept close to the shore. Beyond the hill was a forest, and, skirt-ing this, Jim and Pete found themselves arrived at the promontory at the eastern end of the beach where they had originally landed.

They climbed the ledge of rock and had a new expanse of sea open before them. In plain sight was a ship, all sails set to catch the light winds, the most beautiful thing the castaways had ever looked on.

"Glory be!" cried Jim. "I believe it's the *Barnacle!*"

"It is the *Barnacle!*" cried Pete. "It's her! It's her! An' I think she's makin' for us!"

"A bonfire quick!" exclaimed Jim.

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Fifteen minutes later a pile of driftwood and brush rose like a cone on the promontory and Jim had lighted it with one of the matches he had taken from Pigeon's box. With their caps the two fanned the flames and soon a column of smoke was rising into the blue sky.

The three-masted clipper came on. The castaways put their hands to their mouths and shouted through these trumpets. The clipper ran up her ensign and the two knew she was their ship and that she had seen their signal. "Well," said Jim, "I didn't think I could ever be so glad to see anything as I am to see that boat!"

"An' we might have had to stay here for years an' live off fish an' cocoanuts an' dates," said Pete. "Gee, but I'm glad she came!"

They went down to the beach and watched the *Barnacle* slowly draw inshore. They yelled greetings to her and were answered by shouts from her crew. They saw the *Barnacle* drop her anchor and lower her long-boat. Captain Flanders and Perkins and Gardner and a couple of sailors came ashore.

The two lads told their story, both at once, but the main facts of it were clear enough to be readily,

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understood. "We hunted for you three most of the next day," said the captain. "We went over that island from top to bottom and from side to side. We left some grub at the place where we landed, in case we might have overlooked you somehow. Then we sailed north, Sampson bein' pretty sure that Derek would be somewheres about one o' these islands. We ran into a spell o' calm weather an' had to lie idle out there twenty-four hours. Then we sighted this place an' was makin' for it, when we saw your fire. So Derek's gone, an' he's got Jerry Grantham with him?"

"He sailed just about this time day before yesterday," said Jim. "Yes, he's got Jerry. And the only reason he didn't take us was because we got lost in the woods."

"An' we can show you where he hid part of his cargo, in a cave a couple of miles through the woods," said Pete.

"First rate!" exclaimed Flanders. "But I think we'd better have supper an' get some more of the men before we hunt it up."

Pete and Jim went on board the ship, where they had to tell all their adventures over again to the inquisitive crew. They ate supper, and then with

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the captain and Perkins and a dozen men landed and took up the trail inland, armed with torches and lanterns, and following the blazes on the trees.

By midnight the boxes and bales in the cave, which Flanders figured from a list he had must be about one-fourth of what Derek had taken from the *Mary Parrot*, were stowed in the *Barnacle's* hold. The captain then held a council in his cabin, talking with the two mates, Sampson, Jim and Pete, the upshot of which was that he leaned to the opinion that Derek had most likely made for the neighborhood of Valparaiso, with intent to get rid of the rest of his cargo as quickly as he could.

At dawn the *Barnacle* sailed around the island, sent a boat ashore to pick up the box of provisions that Pigeon had supplied, and then stood to the eastward. The wind freshened by midday, grew stronger and stronger, and soon was a capital sailing breeze. By the following afternoon the coast of Chile hove in view, and the clipper stood to the northward, the direction of Valparaiso.

Captain Flanders did not mean to enter that harbor, however. He thought that Derek would hardly dare bring his sloop to such a frequented

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roadstead, but would find a less prominent place along the shore. There were plenty of these little harbors south of the main port, and into one of these the *Barnacle* ran early in the evening and dropped anchor.

Next morning they had a clear view of the distant Andes, and saw that their port was faced by a cliff, green with vegetation, and with a road winding around it that branched off at various levels to houses and farms. The captain called Jim to him. "You've got a good head on your shoulders, Jim," said he. "I'm going to send you ashore with Mr. Perkins. What I want is some detective work done. You take your orders from him. He'll give you some money, for you may have to pay for your lodgings for a couple o' nights."

Perkins and Jim were set ashore. The morning was warm and the place, the cliff, the vegetation and the houses were full of color. They stopped at a fisherman's shanty, but Perkins, with his smattering of Spanish, could extract no information as to a sloop having been seen thereabouts in the last few days. Their course plainly lay inland, and they started by the winding path that coiled about the heights. At the top they had a wonder-

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ful view over fertile fields toward the mountains, and on the other side, far below their feet, lay the sparkling ocean.

A wide and well-built road, evidently the highway by which the farmers took their goods to the city, paralleled the shore. "Here's a chance to get rid of our sea-legs, Jim," said Perkins. "I guess we've got to hoof it to-day."

Walk they did, and walking was a pleasure. On either side of the road grew a golden shrub that Perkins said was called the espinosa, little yellow balls of flowers on shiny branches. The air was sweet with roses, which grew wild, in great clumps, and in the fields that were not under cultivation were a great many wild-flowers that Jim had never seen before.

Sometimes they came to farmhouses, and whenever Perkins saw a man who looked as if he were inclined to chat he would stop and exchange words with him. Living in sight of the sea, almost on the edge of it in fact, it would be natural they should know if any ship had put in on their own stretch of coast. But after each chat Perkins shook his head as he rejoined Jim. "Nothing been seen of our friends here," he announced. "Plenty of small

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“fishing-boats in and out all the time, but none as big as the sloop.”

They bought bread and cheese and goat's milk at a farmhouse for their noon meal, and had a lift of a couple of miles in a wagon later. Sunset found them at the outskirts of the city, and Perkins, pointing ahead at the cluster of roofs, declared, “There's our goal for the night.”

Valparaiso, so far as Jim could see that evening, consisted mainly of two interminably long streets that ran along the edge of the sea and were flanked on the landward side by hills, where most of the people lived in comfortable country villas. There were very few dwellings in the town itself, most of the buildings on the two long streets being shops and warehouses. People were lounging on the sidewalks and in the open squares, after the fashion of South American cities, where no one likes to go indoors if he can possibly stay out. Chatter, laughter, lively gestures were everywhere. “One of the first things that strikes a sailor ashore is how much people talk,” said Perkins. “And these South Americans are certainly magpies.”

They did not go to any of the good-sized hotels that were to be found on the street nearest the

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water, but instead turned in at a small and quiet-looking place that had an enclosed garden, set with a number of tables and chairs, between it and the thoroughfare. The proprietor, who greeted them at the door, was voluble and full of expressive gestures. He talked a little English, of which he was very proud, and he assured the new arrivals, with many bobs of his head and waves of his hands, that he could make them more comfortable than any other hotel-man in Chile.

The room to which he showed them, a large, airy apartment with two beds, had a good view from its front windows of the harbor, which was now filled with shipping. Perkins and Jim washed and went downstairs to dinner. Afterward they walked about the rim of the harbor, but though there were a number of sloops at anchor the one commanded by Derek was not among them.

Coming up from the docks Perkins overheard a couple of sailors talking English and stopped to exchange news with them. They knew nothing of the *Sahib* and no sloop answering her description had been seen by either of them. "I didn't think Derek would dare to bring his boat here," Perkins said as he and Jim moved on. "Sailors and

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shipping agents are an inquisitive lot and want to know everything about every craft they see. They'd ask too many questions to suit his royal nibs. If Derek and his men come to Valparaiso it'll be on foot or in a wagon, and the sloop'll be hid at a safe distance from the port-officers."

When they returned to their hotel they found a number of people sitting at the little tables in the garden, drinking and smoking and enjoying the fine, soft air. "I like this foreign custom," said the mate. "I wish we sat outdoors more at home. It's too early to go to bed; let's sit down and have some lemonade."

They picked out a table at one side of the garden and near a hedge of roses. A waiter brought them their order. Perkins lighted a cigarette and cocked his feet up comfortably on a chair. "Pretty soft, this, after the old *Barnacle*," said he. "I always get a lot of fun out o' watching people, 'specially people in foreign parts."

Jim found it interesting too. The snatches he caught of conversations in a foreign tongue, the animated voices, the lively gestures, all so different from what he was accustomed to in Kennebunkport, entertained him as much as a play at a theatre. He

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watched and listened and sipped his lemonade, and now and then murmured some comment to Perkins.

Presently his eye fell on a tall man walking into the garden. He did not look like the Chileans, he was taller and moved slowly, with a great deal of dignity in his erect carriage. He was dressed in a light suit of linen or one of those stuffs that men wear in warm climates and on his head was a wide-brimmed Panama hat.

The man stopped midway in the path to the hotel door and slowly surveyed the people in the enclosure. His eye lighted on an unoccupied table next to the one where Jim and the mate sat and he came over to it. Sitting down, he held up his hand for the waiter and ordered a glass of some mineral water. Then he took off his hat. There was sufficient light for Jim to see that the man was very dark-skinned, chocolate-colored in fact, that his hair was coal-black, and that his profile was very fine and clear-cut.

Perkins also was observing the other man, and now he murmured to Jim, "That fellow's an East Indian, or an Indian proper. Hails from Calcutta or Bombay or somewheres around there."

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Jim saw that the dark-skinned man had overheard, as was natural, since he was sitting only a few yards away. The man glanced over his shoulder, turned back and took a drink from his glass, and then slowly shifted his position so as to face his two neighbors. "I ask your pardon, señors," said he, "but I heard you speaking in English. It is always a pleasure to meet gentlemen who speak that tongue."

The words were spoken in the slow, careful fashion of one to whom a language is not native but who has learned it by much study, and the speaker's voice was soft and deep and resonant as a bell.

"We're from the States," said Perkins. "We sailed from Boston a couple of months ago."

"I have never been to your country," said the other man in his deep and dignified voice. "I hope to go there some day. It must be a marvelous country, so young and enterprising."

"And you?" said Perkins. "Perhaps you heard me guess that you come from India?"

The man slowly nodded his head. "From India. From Delhi, to be exact."

"That's a long way from here," said Perkins lightly.

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“Space is purely material,” said the other. “I visit my home in Delhi for an hour every day.” A slight smile touched his face as he added, “Mentally visit it, I mean, of course. But the mind is far more powerful than the body.”

“Do you know the temple in Delhi?” Jim asked. “The temple of Buddha?”

“Naturally,” said the other. “Have you been there?”

“No, but I’ve heard about it.” Jim hesitated, uncertain whether he might give offense by saying more.

“What have you heard about it?”

There was a compelling power in the man’s deep voice.

“I’ve heard that some one stole the ruby from the Buddha’s eye; the ruby that they call the Rose of Delhi.”

There followed a short silence while the stranger gravely regarded the young fellow’s face. “And how do you come to know of the Rose of Delhi?”

Again Jim had the feeling that he must answer this strange man’s question, and answer it truthfully. “I know it because we’re hunting for the man who has it.”

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Again a silence. "You are?" said the stranger. "Then something guided me to sit down at this table by you. I am come to find the ruby, and so of course to find the man who has it. Our ends are one and the same, gentlemen. My name is Haj Putali. And now if you will tell me what you know about the unhappy man who has the Rose in his possession I will tell you how I come to be in Chile."

"Well, I swear!" exclaimed Perkins. "It's an odd chance that we should happen to meet you here to-night, and no mistake!"

"Not an odd chance, my friend," said Haj Putali, with his slow smile. "Your ship is called the *Barnacle*. I have been waiting here for news of her."

"Why, that's stranger still!" cried Perkins. "You must be some kind of a magician!"

The other man shook his head. "I am only a priest of the temple," he said softly. "We are well met, friends, for we can help each other."

CHAPTER IX

THE MAN FROM THE TEMPLE OF DELHI

THE hour was growing late and most of the people who had been sitting in the hotel garden had now left. Where the man from India and Jim and Perkins sat there was little risk of being overheard and less of being understood, since they talked in English. The priest of the temple in Delhi moved his chair so as to join the other two and gazed reflectively at a large star that hung low over the harbor of Valparaiso. Jim noticed again how fine his features were and how long and slender the fingers that lightly clasped the rim of his straw hat.

“Space and time are nothing,” he said. “As I sit here I can feel the breeze in the trees about my home and smell the spices that grow in my garden. The spirit is always one and indivisible. You of the Western World may not give the spirit the same form that we of the East do, but nevertheless the spirit is the same. We choose to worship it in our temple at Delhi, you find it in your churches.” The

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words were pronounced more carefully than Jim had ever heard any American speak.

The Indian's gaze left the star and rested on his two companions. "When the *Rose* was stolen from our temple three of us set out to follow it. The distance we must travel meant nothing to us. The ruby was somewhere, and if we did not find it others of our race would. Two went to New York and I to Brazil. There, in Rio, I heard from the others what you already know. The ship on which was the thief who had the ruby had been attacked by a pirate, who took all the valuables there were on board. The pirate ship was a sloop, known as the *Sahib*, and commanded by a rascal called Red Derek. The *Barnacle* had orders to try to find this vessel, and was cruising along the coast of South America. One of my comrades went to the Argentine, I came to Chile, and the third should now be somewhere in Peru or Ecuador. That explains how I happen to be here and how I know something concerning your ship."

"You're quite right about it," said Perkins. "The captain of the *Barnacle* is Thomas Flanders; I'm the second mate, name of John Perkins; and this lad is James Burgess. He's met with Derek

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already, and can tell you all about him." Thereupon Perkins, helped out by Jim, related the adventures of the *Barnacle* and told how the two of them happened to be in Valparaiso that night.

Haj Putali listened to the story in silence and then asked a few questions. "By now this Derek has doubtless discovered that the Rose is no light thing to have in one's possession," he observed. "It may not readily be converted into gold in the market-place. He will not throw it away, for a man does not throw away the Rose of Delhi. And he will learn that a man may not keep from the gods the gods' possessions. The ruby will go back to Delhi." He thought a moment. "Meantime he is trying to dispose of the goods he stole from the *Mary Parrot*."

"That's what we think," said Perkins. "But we haven't found any trace of his sloop or himself to the south of here."

"To the north then," said the Indian. "And, with your gracious consent, I should like to go with you."

"I've no objection to that," Perkins answered. "The wits of three ought to be better than the wits of two."

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Haj Putali smiled and nodded. "I thank you, my friend. I will add my wits to yours. I have thought best to wear the clothes of the West, so as to arouse less comment, but my wits are still of the East. By joining forces we will combine two ways of thinking, and that will be to our mutual advantage."

"Do you believe in charms and superstitions, the Evil Eye and that sort of thing?" Jim asked impulsively.

The Indian, who seemed never in a hurry to speak, studied the night sky, now glittering with stars. "You give one name to a thing and I may give another name to the same thing, and therein may lie a great difference. You may see only a caterpillar where I may see the promise of a butterfly. What you call the Evil Eye may be in reality a guilty conscience working on a man's spirit. Charms and superstitions are names we give to fancies and fears that come to men at certain times. I believe in mysteries. I see them all about me. What was it that brought you and me to this same corner of a small hotel garden so far from our two homes?"

"I think it was chance," put in Perkins.

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“You call it chance, another might call it Kismet,” said Haj Putali. “Think of the things that might have kept us apart! And yet here we are. And we are here because something sowed the seed of an evil greed in the heart of a man so that he stole the eye of Buddha from the temple at Delhi. What I say to you now is as surely the fruit of that evil deed as the lotus-blossom is fruit of the lotus-seed.”

As Jim listened he caught a glimpse of the spirit of the Far East, so different a spirit from that of his own matter-of-fact home. There was a sense of mystery in the priest's deep, wonderful voice, in his slow, thoughtful words, in his very appearance and personality. Jim felt he could understand how things he regarded as superstitions might appear very real facts to those who lived in a country peopled with such men as this.

“These are weighty subjects,” said Haj Putali, smiling and putting his hand in friendly fashion on Jim's knee. “It is time to sleep now. We will meet in the morning.” He rose and bowed. “Good-night, sirs. May you sleep as sound as the jewels in my temple, safe in the knowledge that good spirits shall preserve them!”

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Jim watched the Indian priest disappear at the door of the hotel. "Well, he's certainly the most wonderful man I ever saw!" he exclaimed.

"He's a wonder all right," the mate agreed. "It does seem mighty odd falling in with him here. He's correct about the East being different from the West. They're as different as black and white."

"I wouldn't want to try to fool him about anything," Jim said reflectively. "He could look right through you."

"Well, luckily we don't have to try to fool him," said Perkins with a laugh. "We're both playing on the same side in this game, messmate."

They went up to their room and to bed, and Jim fell asleep still pondering the strange impression the man from Delhi had made upon him.

Next morning after breakfast the two from the *Barnacle* found Haj Putali waiting for them in the hall of the hotel. He had a long dark brown cloak on his arm, but otherwise he was dressed as on the night before. He saluted them with a pleasant smile and inquired how they had slept; then he stated that he was entirely at the mate's disposal.

The three walked north on the main street of Val-

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paraiso and came into the country. As on the previous day they had the ocean to one side of them and fertile fields on the other. And as before Perkins stopped from time to time and talked to farmers and women at their doors, but from none of them did he get any useful information.

Their midday meal was procured at a small restaurant in a town located on the railroad, and as they went by the station they saw a crowd of dark-skinned girls, dressed in the brightest colors, waiting to sell baskets of strawberries, melons, oranges, sugar-cane and bananas to passengers on the train for Valparaiso. The stretch of country through which they were walking was a most luxuriant market-garden, with fruit of every kind growing in profusion.

Sunset found them on the edge of a shallow valley, with a small hamlet nestling at their feet. Haj Putali stopped and gazed about him. To the right a road led between hedges of roses to a long, low house that looked like the home of a prosperous planter. "Let us ask for our night's lodging here," he said. "I prefer the view from that door to what we are likely to find in the settlement yonder."

The house had a wide veranda, and as the three

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approached they saw that a stout man, in a white suit, and a woman almost as stout and also in white, were sitting before the door. Haj Putali took off his hat and bowed. "Peace be with you," he said in English. "Could you find it convenient to give shelter for the night to the three of us, two from North America who follow the sea, and one, myself, from the city of Delhi in India?"

There was a grace and courtesy, a winning quality in the speaker's voice and bearing that could not fail to attract attention. The man on the veranda rose and said in very fair English, "Indeed you have traveled far and deserve a welcome. Please come up here." And as they stepped on the porch the planter added, "I am Señor Fernando, and this lady is my wife."

A few minutes' chat was sufficient to convince the Chilean gentleman and his wife that the three travelers were respectable, and once being assured of that their hospitality was generous. Señor Fernando had been a traveler too; he had spent some time in Europe and had studied for several years in London, which accounted for his acquaintance with English. He was extremely interested in Haj Putali and was asking him endless questions when

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his wife interrupted with the suggestion that if their guests had been walking all day they would probably like to wash off the dust of travel and freshen themselves before dinner. Then he showed them to three rooms in a wing of his house and directed a servant to fetch whatever they needed.

Dinner was a hearty affair. The host talked at length of the splendid vegetables and fruits that his part of the world provided, and his guests had ample proof in the food that was set before them. Afterward they sat out-of-doors, looking down on the hamlet in the little valley. Again Señor Fernando plied Haj Putali with questions about India and the priest of Buddha talked about the unusual customs of his country.

Presently the Indian asked their host if he knew anything of the arrival of a sloop on his part of the coast.

“No,” said Fernando, “but one might very well have put in without my knowing of it. I give all my attention to my plantations. My son, who is married and has a house of his own, and I own a thousand acres, and as the most of that is under cultivation you can imagine that it keeps us very busy. What would this sloop be doing here, señor?”

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“ Her captain has a cargo he would like to land at some small trading-post. A little of his cargo here, and a little there,” said Haj Putali.

“ But not at Valparaiso, eh? ” said the planter with a wink. “ Too many questions asked down there for the captain’s comfort, eh? ”

“ You are doubtless right,” said the Indian, nodding.

“ There’s a trading-store in the village,” observed the planter, “ and Manuel Poa, who owns it, is not an inquisitive man. Also he has plenty of money tucked away, as I happen to know. It might be well to keep your eye on Manuel for a while.”

“ He deals in Valparaiso? ” Perkins asked.

“ He deals wherever he can make a piece of silver. Doubtless he would be an excellent person to feed your friend the captain’s cargo into the city if it were made worth his while. But Manuel takes his own time. I suggest that you don’t hurry away until you have studied him.”

“ We are in no haste,” Haj Putali said. “ Tomorrow and the day after are the same as to-day if we gain our object.”

“ Well, there must be a lot at stake to have

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brought you all the way from Delhi here," commented Fernando.

The Indian smiled. "Again you speak of the distance, as my friends here did when I first encountered them. A whisper, caught on the wind from some far place, will send a man to the end of the world in pursuit. Have you never felt the calling, in the spring, when the trees begin to bud? Every man has felt it. What is it? Nothing that you can lay your finger on. Yet many men have followed it. It need not be much that brings me here, a wish, a desire, a dream perhaps."

"But this captain you're looking for isn't a dream," said the planter.

"No, he is not a dream," agreed Haj Putali, smiling. "He is a means to an end. I need him only to gain the dream I seek."

"Now that is interesting!" exclaimed Fernando, and began again to ask questions.

The man from Delhi, however, rose from his chair. "To-morrow I will be glad to talk, señor," he said politely, "but to-night I feel a great need of sleep."

"And no wonder," put in the planter's wife,

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“since you’ve walked all the way from Valparaiso to-day!”

Fernando’s house was open to his guests; he urged them to stay as long as they chose when he left them next morning to ride over his plantation. Perkins was for their making their descent on the village at once, but Haj Putali urged him to be wary. “Three men together make more comment than one,” he said, “and those who ask questions raise more questions in their track. Let us each go separately and use our eyes rather than our tongues. We are three travelers, unacquainted with each other for the present. You go first,” he added, turning to Jim. “You may wish to make some purchase of this Poa. I will go last. It comes easily to me to go last, since in my country there is no such thought as haste.”

So it was that Jim left Fernando’s veranda and reaching the highroad, followed it over the dip toward the hamlet below. He was some distance from the ocean, since the coast ran out in the shape of an elbow here. He loitered along, admiring the crops and the roses, which seemed to grow everywhere, and took a good hour to reach the scattered houses.

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It required little observation to locate the store, which, simple though it was, was yet the most pretentious building in the village. He read the sign over the door and passed on. At a little distance he stopped and sat down in the grass at the side of the road, taking off his shoes and pretending to look for pebbles in them.

A few people, evidently natives of the village, went in and out at Poa's door. There was nothing whatever to arouse suspicion that Derek or his men had any dealings here.

Jim strolled back to the store and went in. There was the musty odor common to such places, the usual collection of every kind of merchandise, the unwashed windows, the unswept floor, the cobwebs in corners of shelves and partitions. A young fellow whose black hair and copper-colored skin gave him the appearance of being as much Indian as white was grinding coffee and stopped to say something that Jim couldn't understand. Jim shook his head, shrugged his shoulders and spread out his hands as he had seen many people do in Valparaiso. That seemed to satisfy the clerk, who went on with his grinding, while Jim prowled about, looking over the stock in trade at his leisure. He

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saw nothing, however, that in his opinion could once have been part of the cargo of the sloop.

He finally whistled to the clerk and pointed out a couple of red bananas, a cheese he liked the looks of, and some crackers in a tin box. These were wrapped up and handed to him. The question of how much he was to pay for them was a more difficult matter and was finally decided by his laying on the counter a number of small Chilean coins that Perkins had given him in Valparaiso and allowing the clerk to pick out the amount of his purchase. With his package under his arm he went out, and catching sight of Perkins coming down the road from Fernando's he turned into a little path that led in the direction of the ocean.

The ocean was some distance off, but presently he came to a small, narrow inlet where the water washed noisily in and out over a beach of pebbles. Here he sat down and ate his lunch and then resumed his route northward. The land was high, cliffs rose above the sea, giving no harbor for boats. Far to the east he could see the deep blue outline of the swelling slopes of the Andes.

There was nothing here to help him in his search and he cut across country, coming back to the high-

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road a couple of miles to the north of the village. He did not take to the road, however; he chose instead to continue through the fields, making a loop that presently brought him to four buildings that stood about a quarter of a mile east of Poa's store. Two of the buildings appeared to be the dwellings of farmers, another was a barn and the fourth was a square structure that might have done duty as a storehouse. On one side of the latter was a clump of bushes, now in bloom with a brilliant lavender flower that Jim had never seen before.

He was admiring these flowers when he heard a slight cough behind him. Turning, he saw to his surprise Haj Putali approaching from the direction of the barn. The Indian bowed slightly, such a salutation as he might have made to any stranger, and said in his calm voice, "The señor is admiring the flowers? Indeed they are beautiful and merit study. Suppose we take a nearer look at them."

Following the Indian's suggestion Jim went closer to the bushes. Haj Putali picked a couple of the flowers, smelled them, opened them in his fingers. He circled about the clump until the greenery hid him and Jim from sight of the two houses. Then he turned and regarded a window in the frame

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building by which they stood. The window was only a few feet away from them, about on a level with their heads, and the glass of the pane was broken. Haj Putali put his finger to his lips and bent forward to listen.

Jim, ducking below the open window and then standing as close as he dared on the other side, listened and heard men's voices inside. They seemed to be dickering over some matter of barter, for he caught figures and weights in English, though most of the talk was in Spanish. For five minutes he listened and then Haj Putali gestured his readiness to depart. Shortly they were again admiring the flowers and afterward they moved slowly away from the building.

It pleased the Indian priest to converse only about the shrubs of Chile and those of his own land until they reached a slope of the hill that led up to Señor Fernando's. There he stopped, took off his hat, and turned about to enjoy the view. "A beautiful country!" he said. "So different from my own, but very alluring. There are so few people here, whereas in India there are so many. Do you see those three men down there?"

Jim looked and saw three men come out from the

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building by the flowering bushes. They went to the structure he had taken for a barn and after a few minutes two of them drove out in a wagon and the third crossed to one of the farmhouses. "The two in the wagon are sailors, from the cut of their clothes," he said.

"Yes, they are sailors; and the third is Señor Manuel Poa, unless I am much mistaken. I saw him earlier in the afternoon; a big man with a beard, and the look of one who is over-fond of food. The sailors have left some boxes in Señor Poa's charge."

"You think they are Derek's men?" Jim exclaimed.

"I should not be surprised," said Haj Putali serenely. "Watch where the wagon goes."

Jim followed the course of the wagon as it crawled to the northeast and until it was hidden by a distant grove.

Back at the planter's house Jim found Perkins in his bedroom. The mate admitted that he had discovered nothing, although he had been scouting about the neighborhood all day. When he heard what Jim and Haj Putali had seen he was delighted. "That chap's a born detective," he said. "He doesn't make any more noise than a cat and he

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never misses a trick. I wonder if we'd better warn this fellow Poa that the stuff they're fetching him is stolen goods."

"I guess he knows that already," said Jim. "I think we'd better follow Haj Putali's suggestions."

Perkins laughed. "He's got you hypnotized, my boy. I've watched you while he's been talking. You drink in every word he says as if you were mighty thirsty."

"I've never seen any one like him," Jim admitted. "He's so very quiet, and he thinks so much and what he thinks seems to be very important. It isn't like other people's thoughts."

"Not like mine, you mean, half-baked," said Perkins, with a grin.

"He makes me feel that his Rose of Delhi has some mysterious power that's drawing him to it. It isn't an ordinary ruby when he talks about it."

"Yes, that's a trick of India," said Perkins. "They give strange powers to material things out there."

"I'm sure he'll get the ruby," Jim said thoughtfully. "And I never felt so sure that the crew of the *Barnacle* would."

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“That’s not very complimentary to your own folks.”

“Well, you see,” said Jim, “to us it’s only a ruby, but to him it’s the eye of his god. That makes a difference.”

“East is East and West is West,” agreed the mate. “There’s no getting away from that. Hello, there goes the gong for dinner!”

After dinner Haj Putali asked the planter if he might have a horse and cart that evening. Fernando said of course he might and started to ask some questions, but the Indian stated that he would prefer to say nothing about his purpose at the moment, only that he wanted to go on a short evening expedition with James Burgess. This left out Perkins, who, however, good-naturedly resigned himself to entertaining the planter and his wife while he watched his two companions drive off in the cart.

At a slow jog the man from Delhi drove down the highroad, past the hamlet and turned toward the building where he and Jim had heard the sailors and Manuel Poa talking that afternoon. From there he followed the road he had seen the wagon take. Twilight was giving place to starlight, but there was no difficulty in seeing the countryside,

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screen the two peered down at the sloop moored close below them.

"There's nothing doing on board," Jim whispered. "I don't believe the crew can be there."

"So it seems to me," agreed the Indian. "It looks to me like a last year's nest, with the birds flown."

They were just about to withdraw when Jim gripped his companion's arm. He had caught the creak of the front door of the house. The two stood still, waiting. Then, from their screen, they saw the door swing open and two men emerge. They were only a few yards away and as they came into the starlight Jim saw that one was Pigeon and the other a man of the *Sahib's* crew.

"Well, we've got all the stuff out of her now," said Pigeon, "and this fellow here's goin' to keep an eye on the boat."

"I'm sure I don't care if I never see her again!" said the sailor. "But are you sure we've got all the stuff out?"

"What do you mean? The ruby? D'ye think Derek'd leave her lyin' 'round loose there?" Pigeon gave his deep throaty chuckle. "The ruby's all right. She won't get away from the old

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man till he's ready to let her go—an' it'll be for a good price too!"

"He won't give us the slip?" queried the other.

"Not if I know it, he won't! Rest easy on that. We'll all come in on the purse."

They moved away, in the opposite direction from the trellis. The watchers waited, caught a glimpse of the two figures mounting the high ground, lost them at a turn of the ascending path.

Five minutes later Jim and Haj Putali stole round the back of the house. The light had disappeared now, the dwelling, the inlet and the cliffs were silent save for the gentle lapping of the waves below.

They retraced their course to the grove, got into the cart and drove back to the highroad. "I suppose we might have followed those two and found where they're staying," said Jim.

"And we might have stepped into a wasp's nest," said the Indian. "We are learning, my friend. We know that this Derek has a stronghold not very far off, that he has carried his booty there, and is trying to get rid of it through Poa."

"Mr. Perkins and I ought to go back and report

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to Captain Flanders. He could easily capture the sloop when he knows where she's hidden."

"The sloop is of little value. Wait, my friend. Let us know where the cargo is before we summon your captain. The three of us, you and I in fact, can do more now than a hundred men."

They had almost reached Señor Fernando's hill before Haj Putali spoke again. "They are all greedy for the ruby," he said slowly. "As like as not they have already quarreled over it. If the ruby went out in the world and became the plaything of the world's men and women it would be the cause of countless greed and passion and strife. In the temple it is safe. Such things belong to the gods and not to men and women. In the temple all may see it and all share in its beauty. Why will men try to take for themselves what rightfully belongs to all? Let me tell you, my friend; if the ruby were sold in the market-place and passed from hand to hand many of those who came to own it would gladly throw it away if they could have back again the things they paid for it."

"I think I understand," said Jim. "And the people who did have it would always be afraid that somebody else was going to steal it from them."

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“Fear! That’s what the ruby brings to those who keep her from the temple. This Derek is afraid and so are all his crew.”

“If only we could use that as some sort of a weapon against them!”

“We will use it. We are using it. The god is stretching out his fingers to the place where the robbers are now.”

Jim glanced at the man beside him, and as he looked at the quiet, thoughtful face, the deep, brooding eyes he felt afresh the power of the dim East, something entirely new to this son of the young world of the West, but something that fascinated him strangely.

Then the Indian broke the spell. “The god is working through you and me, my friend. It is you and I, and perhaps the men from your ship, who will finally make this thief give up what he has stolen. We will know more about that by this time to-morrow.”

CHAPTER X

THE SEARCH FOR THE PIRATES' TOWER

PERKINS and Jim and Haj Putali held a council early next morning, and the result of their discussion was a decision to tell Señor Fernando what they were up to and what they had learned concerning Derek and his men. The Indian thought it well to let their host know their plans, since he might easily feel offended if he were kept any longer in the dark; but he was anxious to keep the planter from taking an active part in the adventure, at least for the present. "We owe it to the señor's hospitality," he said, "to acquaint him with our business here, but the more fingers that dip into a bowl of water the more ripples there are. We do not want unnecessary ripples now."

They told the planter their business after breakfast. The four buildings to the east of the village, Fernando said, belonged to Manuel Poa. "I know the little land-locked harbor you describe," he said, "but I don't know who lives in the house up above

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it. As for where this sea-captain and his crew are hiding, I couldn't be sure." He considered for several minutes. "I wonder if it might be in the neighborhood of what we call the Pirates' Tower?"

"That would be a good name for it," said Perkins.

"It's about a mile northeast of where you saw the sloop," Fernando continued. "There's a hill, thickly grown with trees, and about the summit of it there are the stones of an old tower that was used to watch the sea for pirates. It's only a ruin now, but it would make a pretty good shelter in a storm, and it's not near any road that's generally traveled." He took a piece of paper and a pencil from his pocket and drew a rough map to indicate the location of the place.

"It sounds very likely to me," said Perkins, "and it don't look as if it would be very easy to nab these rascals there."

"Would you like me to warn Poa," said the planter, "that he'd better not deal with these men? I dare say the old scamp knows these goods are stolen, but he doesn't know how close you are after them."

"Please say nothing about it, señor," Haj Putali

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begged. "Let the matter lie in your thoughts, but only there. Leave action to my two friends and me."

Fernando smiled. "It's your own game, of course. Naturally you want to handle it in your own way. You can trust me to keep my mouth shut. But if you want any help I can give you it's yours for the asking any time, you know."

The three, providing themselves with packages of sandwiches, but declining horses or the cart, set out soon afterward. They followed the road through the village, thence to the fork where the Indian had turned off the night before, and from there they went cross-country in the northeasterly direction the planter had indicated on his map. This brought them into territory wilder and more barren than any they had seen since leaving the *Barnacle*. The mountains were in full view, houses were very scarce, and once they caught sight of a herd of wild donkeys on an upland. The herd, watching the men for a minute, turned and galloped away in wild fright. Here, as along the coast, there were multitudes of roses, most of them large double pink ones, but some white and some deep scarlet. In places the vines climbed thirty or forty feet up

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the trees, and being covered with blossoms, made wonderful curtains of pink. Haj Putali, delighted with the color and the fragrance, continually called the attention of his companions to the flowers.

"We must be getting somewhere near the tower," Perkins said presently. They were following a road, little used from the look of it, and almost as he spoke they saw a small cottage on their right, an insignificant frame building with a couple of sheds behind it. On the doorstep sat an old woman, weaving a straw basket. Her face was very brown and wrinkled, and her hair, long and unkempt, fell about her shoulders. She looked up at the strangers and mumbled something that might have been either a greeting or a curse.

"I'm going to try my Spanish on her," said Perkins. "I'll tell you chaps what I say and what she answers—if I can." He lifted his cap politely. "Good-morning, *señora*. A beautiful day. And what a fine basket you're weaving." This he interpreted after he had spoken.

The crone looked up, eyeing him sharply. "Good-morning, *señor*. The day is fine enough. But I have made better baskets."

Perkins repeated this in English and stepped

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nearer the woman, his companions following him. "May I look at the basket?" he asked in his politest tones.

The woman gave him the basket, which he admired, and handed to the others, who also nodded approvingly. "We are strangers," Perkins continued. "Doubtless you have guessed that already. We are looking for a place called the Pirates' Tower."

Again the sharp old eyes scrutinized him for a minute and then the crone raised her lean arm and pointed in the direction her cottage faced. "The high ground," she said. "You can see the ocean from it."

"We have heard of the view," said Perkins. "We are travelers and wanted to see the ruins of the tower."

The old woman reached out her hands for the basket, which Haj Putali gave her, and then she commenced again to weave. "Well, I guess we're dismissed," Perkins said with a chuckle and turned away.

The woman, however, looked up and shook her head slowly from side to side. "There is nothing good to be found at the tower," she said, almost as

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if she were speaking to herself. "Only a nest of snakes."

"Snakes?" Perkins exclaimed, facing back again. "What kind of snakes do you mean?"

"The place is evil," murmured the old woman. "I haven't been there for years, but I know. Strangers should beware of it. There is plenty to be seen in the lowlands. Keep to them, you three."

"But we want to see the ruins, the place where your people used to look for pirates on the coast."

"Pirates?" repeated the crone. "There have been outlaws there many times since then. I have seen men go there and knew they did not go only to look at the ruins. But I did not try to learn their secrets. I minded my own business, and that is what you also should do, you strangers."

"Now that sounds interesting!" exclaimed Perkins. He took a piece of silver from his pocket and tossed it into the basket on the woman's lap. "There's something for your story. Now tell me, have you seen any men go up there recently?"

The woman nodded. "Men come and go there while I sit here weaving baskets. Men from the sea."

"They carry things with them."

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"Sometimes. I never ask questions and they never talk with me."

"You know nothing more about them?"

A shake of the head. "I want to know nothing about them. And neither will you if you are prudent men."

"I guess that's all we'll learn here," Perkins said to his companions. "Thanks, señora." He bowed again and the three returned to the grass-grown road.

"Well, she gave us sufficient warning," Perkins chuckled. "The old lady doesn't think very well of the tower, that's certain."

Jim glanced over his shoulder. The woman, looking for all the world like a witch in a fairy tale, sat hunched up on her doorstep, her eyes so intent on the strangers that she might have been trying to read their inmost thoughts. As she caught Jim's glance she shook her head and pointed back in the direction from which they had come. There was something uncannily fascinating about her wizened face and deep-set eyes.

It was not a holiday jaunt; Jim thoroughly appreciated that fact. He could well understand the wisdom of the crone's warning. The three of them

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were in a strange country, some distance from any city or even village, and in the neighborhood of a gang of reckless men. It would be easy for any one to disappear here and never be heard of again; doubtless that had more than once happened when men had pursued cattle-thieves and robbers to these lonely foothills of the Andes. The ruined tower, with its evil reputation, would indeed be a good place to keep away from when criminals were there. He looked from the warning figure of the old woman to the two men who stood beside him in the road.

Perkins appeared as easy and confident as when he gave orders on the deck of the *Barnacle*. He had a goal in view and it was clear that he didn't intend to let the fancies of the basket-weaver keep him from gaining it. Haj Putali looked more serious, as if he were weighing and balancing the facts of the situation, but he too gave no sign of turning back. He too had a definite goal and he knew that somehow he was going to attain it.

The Indian turned to Jim. "Having come so far we ought to have a look at this place. But there is no need of the three of us going. One might well stay here."

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"I want to go," said Jim.

"You can't leave me out!" Perkins exclaimed.

"Very good," said Haj Putali. "Let us go on a little farther, where we will be out of sight of this inquisitive woman, and eat our midday meal. Then each of us will take a different path and learn what he can of this robbers' stronghold."

They moved down the road to a natural hedge of the great climbing roses, sat in the grass and ate the lunch they had brought with them. Then they separated, Jim to make a *détour* over the rising ground to the east, Haj Putali to the west, and Perkins to see what he could do on the southern side.

Heading toward the mountains Jim soon came to a stream, bordered by a fairly thick row of trees and bushes. This gave him shelter to the lower slope of the hill, past which the stream continued to the north. On this side the ground was rugged, scattered with boulders here and there and covered with clumps of vines and roses and clusters of twisted dwarf trees. Up the slope he went, creeping on all fours where the bushes were low, and picking out good hiding-places ahead in case he should see a man. His progress was slow, but pres-

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ently he found himself on more level ground and saw that the hill was shaped very much like an inverted bowl.

Some distance off and partially screened from him by a grove he discovered the outlines of a stone tower. This rose perhaps thirty feet, and the jagged row of the stones at the top indicated that it might once have reached higher. At the base was a heap of stones, overgrown with vines. A tangle of shrubbery grew about it on all sides and at one corner several wind-twisted trees thrust out protecting green arms.

Nearer and nearer he crept. Then from behind a boulder he had a view of the distant rim of the ocean, a line of silver-blue far away to the west. This widened as he went on. Nearer and nearer to the tower he crept until he could see the separate stones that formed it. There was no opening on his side and so he concluded that he was coming to it from the back.

Suddenly he heard voices, and quick as a rabbit jumps across a road he dived behind some bushes. Not a second too quick was he, for around the tower came a man. The man stopped, called back something to some one who was hidden, then came in

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Jim's direction. The man was Pigeon, and he came so close to Jim's covert that when he tossed away a match with which he had lighted his pipe it fell on top of the bushes behind which Jim lay. Holding his breath Jim watched Pigeon pass him, and turned his head to see the man go over the shoulder of the hill. For fifteen minutes he lay still, and then crept out again. Not daring to go much closer in this direction he stole first to the north, then to the south, and at last, shielding himself in some shrubs, he drew on a piece of paper a map of the tower and its surroundings. This seemed all he could do for the present, and the map might prove useful later in case Captain Flanders should approach the place in force.

Yet he hated to leave the neighborhood of the tower in case he might learn anything more by staying. He waited all afternoon, prowling about, but saw no more of Derek's men. At last, when the sun had set, he started back, this time going a little to the south of the way by which he had come.

Slowly and carefully he descended the brow of the hill and came to more tangled country. Then he caught some noise behind him and stepped back of a tree, from which fell a mantle of roses. The

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sounds came nearer and nearer; some one was following close to the direction he had taken. He felt fairly safe behind his curtain, in the twilight, and when the noise of footsteps indicated that the other person was not too close for comfort, he parted the vines and peered out.

Jim stared, leaned forward, then boldly ran from his hiding-place, dashing through the bushes. "Jerry!" he whispered loudly. "Jerry! Jerry! It's I, Jim Burgess! Jerry! Jerry!"

The man whose steps he had heard stopped and stared across the bushes. "Good Lord, so it is!" whispered Jerry. "So it is! Jim Burgess! What are you doing here?"

Jim reached his friend, caught his hand. "Are you all right, Jerry?"

"Sure thing, my boy. Come. This is no place to talk."

Close together they went down the hillside. At the bottom Jerry stopped to take breath. "You know where we are, Jim, old scout?"

"I've got a pretty good notion of it," said Jim. "Just you follow me."

The mountains were his guide. He led his friend over the rolling country to the road that ran by the

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stream. Once on the road they slackened their pace again. "How did you get away from them?" asked Jim.

"Are you all alone here?" asked Jerry. "I left you on a deserted island and here you turn up in this forsaken spot!"

"I asked you first," said Jim.

"Well, I've been watching for a chance, and it came this evening. There were only a couple of men there and they both fell sound asleep. Derek's away on business and Pigeon vamoosed. So I took French leave and I don't mean to go back." He caught Jim's arm and shook it. "I tell you what! I've had enough of that crowd! They weren't so bad at sea, but since they've been on land they yelp and growl at each other all day long. As soon as they get their money they're going to spend it and it won't be in each other's company by a long chalk!"

"Pigeon treated Pete and me pretty decently," said Jim. "We found the box our second day on the island. We were pretty hungry then and mighty glad to see it."

"When I saw they were going to leave you there," said Jerry, "I went to Derek and spoke my

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mind out freely. He didn't care what happened to you, he told me that plainly; but Pigeon was more decent. Derek knows most of the men like Pigeon better than they like him,—as a matter of fact I think they all hate Derek,—and when Pigeon stood right up to him and said if he didn't leave some food and fishing-lines for you he'd be the meanest man that ever sailed the seas, why, he let Pigeon have his way and set the box ashore. He'd sighted a three-masted ship to the south and thought it might be the *Barnacle*."

"That wasn't the *Barnacle*, but she did come in the next day. Pete and I showed them where Derek had hidden part of his cargo, and we took it all on board."

"Well, what are you doing here? Where are Captain Flanders and the crew?"

"They're with the ship, south of Valparaiso."

"You don't mean you're alone?"

"No, there are three of us, Mr. Perkins and a man from India named Haj Putali. He's a priest of the temple of Delhi where the ruby came from."

Jerry looked at his friend. "A priest from the temple in Delhi! I always thought they'd be tracking the *Rose* somehow."

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“They are. This one’s a wonderful fellow. We met him in Valparaiso.”

“Where is he now? And where’s Perkins?”

“Somewhere around here. We each set out by ourselves to find out all we could about the Pirates’ Tower.”

“Well, you’re mighty keen scouts, that’s all I’ve got to say. I don’t see how you ever happened on this deserted place. I thought Derek had hid where nobody’d ever find him.”

“We know where he’s trying to sell his goods. It’s through a man named Manuel Poa, who lives in a little village near the coast.”

“So that’s the way of it, is it? I know we left the sloop in a small harbor one night and drove up here in a couple of wagons with the cargo. Since then they’ve been taking it away, a few boxes at a time. But there’s quite a lot of it still stored up there in the tower.”

Evening had come as they approached the place where Jim had left his companions early in the afternoon. The country to either side might have been a desert, the only sound being the occasional song of a bird seeking its nest. The road was dark in places, where the roses hung thickly over trees

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and hedges. Jim began to wonder where he was to meet Perkins and Haj Putali.

They had come abreast of the house of the basket-weaver without any sight or sound of a human being. Here Jim stopped and waited a few minutes, thinking it a likely place for his friends to be. The house was shut tight and no light showed through the single window on the roadside. "I wonder what's happened to them?" he said. "Of course they may have gone on."

"Seems to me I hear horses coming this way," muttered Jerry. "Listen. Do you hear that?"

Jim did hear the noise; it sounded very near too. There was no shelter where they were standing. "Come to the house!" whispered Jim, and made tracks in that direction.

At the corner of the house they peered back and saw a wagon, drawn by two horses, come up the road from the east. It stopped and they distinctly heard Derek's voice giving some directions. There seemed to be an argument, apparently settled after a minute, for the wagon drove on and disappeared in the farther shadows of the hedges. "That's the old man, all right," said Jerry. "I'd know that sharp voice of his anywhere."

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Some one else appeared to have heard it too, for the door of the house opened and the old woman came out. She looked around the corner, as if she had heard Jerry's words, and then she doubled up her fist and shook it at them. A flood of angry, high-pitched exclamations burst from her lips.

"Holy cats!" said Jerry. "She is giving it to us! She says she doesn't want any robbers round here."

"Let her have a look at me," said Jim, stepping forward. "I saw her this morning."

The woman evidently did recognize Jim, for she stopped shaking her fist and lowered her voice somewhat.

"She says she knew you'd bring trouble to her and wants you to go away as quick as you can," Jerry interpreted.

"Ask her if she's seen either of my friends," said Jim.

The crone shook her head in answer to Jerry's question. "She says she hasn't seen them and doesn't want to," Jerry explained. "She says we're a pack of fools and it would serve us right if the snakes in the old tower stung us. She says she

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wants to be let alone. I've told her all right, we're going."

"Come this way then, back of the sheds," Jim suggested. "There might be another wagon or more of Derek's men on the road."

The woman stared after them; then, as they came to the nearer shed they heard her door slam shut.

Behind the shed they considered. "It's getting pretty late," said Jerry.

"Yes," agreed Jim. "And it's a long way back to the place where we've been staying. My legs are pretty tired."

"I wonder if we couldn't bunk here to-night. That woman wouldn't know the difference."

Jim prowled about, found the door of the second shed open, looked in and discovered a pile of straw on the ground. "I'm going to stay," he declared. "I don't care what the woman says. It'll take more than her tongue to make me go any farther to-night."

They left the shed-door open for air, and pulled the straw about to make two beds. Jim slipped out of his shoes, which were tight and heavy on his feet now, and rolled up his coat for a pillow. "My, but

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that's comfortable!" he sighed as he snuggled down in the straw.

They were not to get to sleep just yet, however. Jim was dozing off when a figure appeared in the starlight at the door. Jerry touched his friend's arm and Jim drowsily sat up. "What's the matter?" he whispered.

Jerry pointed. "Who's that?" he murmured.

Jim looked through the open doorway. "Why, it's Haj Putali!" He whistled softly.

The man outside heard him and stepped in. "So this is where you are, my friend. We have been searching for you."

Back of the Indian came Perkins, and when he saw Jerry he caught him by the hand. "Well, this is a treat for sore eyes! Good old Jerry Grantham! Here's the chap Derek kidnapped! Allow me to introduce my friend from India, Mr. Haj Putali."

Haj Putali bowed. "I fear we have disturbed your slumbers, gentlemen. Now we have found James Burgess I think we may well rest. This place seems safe to me. Nothing is gained by telling our histories now, they will keep till morning."

"There's plenty of straw," said Jim.

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“Right-o!” came from Perkins. “I’m going to hit the hay before I’m a minute older.”

“Hit the hay?” repeated Haj Putali, puzzled. Then, as he grasped the mate’s meaning he smiled. “You men of America have such strange expressions. But this one—how do you put it?—oh, yes—this one fills the bill, as I’ve heard your countrymen say. I think I will hit a little of the hay myself immediately.”

The sun was not much more than just above the tops of the Andes when the four in the shed awoke. To the mate’s questions Jerry told briefly what had happened to him since Derek sailed away with him from the island. Haj Putali and Perkins related their scoutings about the Pirates’ Tower the afternoon before, how they had met shortly after sunset and started on the road to the west but seeing nothing of Jim had turned and come back to hunt for him. And Jim produced his map and told what he had learned and how he had fallen in with Jerry. “And now,” said Perkins, “what’s the next thing to do? If that place on the hill was the sloop I’d know how to tackle it, but seeing that it’s not I’d like some suggestions from you land-lubbers.”

“My first suggestion is food,” said Jerry.

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“Something tells me that I didn't have anything to eat last night, and I don't think well when I'm hungry.”

“You are right,” said Haj Putali in his thoughtful, serious voice. “Let us deal with the inner man before we deal with the outer.”

“I wonder if the lady with the long locks would sell us some breakfast,” suggested the mate.

“Speak to her in honeyed tones, old man,” said Jerry. “Treat her like a princess.”

When they came to the front of the house they found the door shut. A rap brought no response, and a dozen knocks were needed before the woman appeared. The four outside bowed and smiled in the friendliest fashion, but the woman frowned, shook her head and gestured them to go away. Perkins and Jerry took turns at making her polite speeches, and finally the former drew out a coin and held it toward her. The wrinkled face grew more friendly, the black eyes became eager, and a lean hand was extended for the money.

“Food, señora,” said Perkins.

A nod, a gesture for them to stay outside, and the woman retired. Presently she came back with a basket containing two loaves of black bread, a small

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bunch of bananas and some oranges. She gave the mate this for his money, adding a drinking-cup of straw and telling him where he could find a well on the other side of the house.

They drank at the well and took the provisions back to the shed, where they had breakfast. When the last banana had disappeared Haj Putali turned to Jerry. "Tell me, Mr. Grantham, did you see the ruby while you were with those men, or hear where they kept it hidden?"

"No," answered Jerry. "They talked about it sometimes, but they never mentioned where it was."

"It is here, though. Not very far away," said the Indian. "I feel that I am near it. But we cannot take it ourselves—just the four of us. The god requires more fingers."

To that the mate nodded. "I think he does. There are too many of them up there for us to tackle them this way."

"If I could meet them one by one——" the priest of Buddha mused.

Perkins regarded the other man's slender figure; the Indian did not look like a physical match for the hardy sailors that made up Derek's crew. "You

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think you could handle them? They're a pretty tough lot."

"Not with my hands, my friend. But I could talk to them, I could use powers we know in India. Victory does not always go to brawn. I have seen lads in Delhi, mere striplings, who had the power of what you call hypnotism, make strong men do their bidding. Do you believe such things?"

"Well, I don't know," answered the mate, smiling. "But I swear that when you look at me that way I could believe almost anything you tell me."

Haj Putali nodded gravely, then a smile parted his lips. "I shall not put you to the test, my friend. And now it might be as well if we bestirred ourselves to bring the other fingers."

Over the road to the west they went, keeping a lookout for any of Derek's men, but meeting only a couple of farmers returning in their carts from market. Noon found them at the village, and soon afterward they were at the planter's house and glad to sit down at his well-provided dinner-table. Señor Fernando listened eagerly to their recital. "The old tower's keeping up to its reputation," he said, laughing. "It's a tough nut to crack. How are you going about it?"

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"We're going back to our ship to get some Yankee sailors," Perkins answered.

"And then?"

"Then the old woman who lives at the foot of the hill will see something doing!" the mate exclaimed.

"You agree?" asked the planter, glancing at Haj Putali.

"I agree that Yankee sailors may be very useful," assented the latter. "I have found my friends here all that I could wish."

To save time the planter had his guests driven over to a station on the railroad several miles distant, and there they took a train for Valparaiso. From that city another train carried them south to a village not far from where the *Barnacle* lay at anchor. By night they had reached the coast, and a short walk brought them to the ship. Going on board at once they told their story to Captain Flanders and Alonzo Mason in the cabin. "You can take the sloop any time you want, sir," said Perkins. "But there's nothing aboard her. If you sail north you may be seen and Derek'll take to his heels again. What you want is to get the men and the goods at the tower."

"We'll start to-morrow by land," said Captain

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Flanders. He turned to Jerry. "I tell you I'm glad to have you back, Jerry Grantham! I'd have hated to have to report that we'd lost you!"

"Not half as much as I'd have hated it, sir," laughed Jerry.

On the deck Jim met Pete. "Who's the dark-skinned guy you've brought back with you?" the cabin-boy demanded.

"He's a priest from the temple at Delhi. He's come for his Buddha's eye."

Pete whistled. "Jumping Jupiter! Is that so? I'm glad I ain't in old Red Derek's boots! I tell you what, this foolin' with spooks is awful! Didn't it frighten you just to be with that feller?" Pete's eyes were wide with wonder.

Jim had to laugh. "Not a bit it didn't. He only frightens his enemies. I never met a man I liked better. But he can see through you, Pete."

"Then I don't wanter have nothin' to do with him. I don't like to be seen through. I ain't a pane o' glass!"

CHAPTER XI

THE BARNACLE'S CREW ON SHORE

BILL SAMPSON, the sailor who had quarreled with Derek and been picked up by the *Barnacle* at the Patagonian village, was eyeing Haj Putali from under the brim of his cap. They were walking side by side along a road that led directly toward the great blue barrier of the Andes, and Jim and Pete were following close at their heels. "I never took no stock in havin' that ruby aboard ship," said Sampson. "I saw it once. That was when Derek lifted it from the *Mary Parrot*. Then the old man hid it. He didn't seem to mind havin' it 'round, but the rest of us wasn't over-easy about it. If it had come from a palace it would have been different, but from a temple—no, sir—there's no knowin' what those heathen spirits will do. Beggin' your pardon for referrin' to 'em as heathen, but that's the way we always talks about 'em. Your things aren't any more heathen than our things, I reckon, when you come to look at it fair an' square like."

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"I don't mind your calling my things heathen," said the Indian with a smile. "Heathen usually means something one doesn't understand."

"Just so," said the sailor. "Just so. I don't understand your Buddha, but I know enough not to want to keep my hands on anything that belongs to him. There was a crew once that swiped a necklace of emeralds from a temple in Calcutta. They got away to sea safe enough, but inside a month they'd all fought an' killed each other on account o' those stones, an' their ship was found driftin' in the Indian Ocean, with the necklace lyin' safe an' sound on the cabin-table."

"Did you hear that?" asked Pete, nudging Jim. Jim nodded.

"Now if Derek had sold this ruby an' given me my share o' the money," Sampson was saying, "I reckon it would have scorched my fingers mighty bad. I haven't never touched it. There's nothin' on my conscience. You don't suppose anybody or anything bears me any grudge for what I did, do ye?"

The big, bronzed sailor looked appealingly at the slender, olive-skinned man from India; he was evidently afraid of some power he didn't understand,

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something quite beyond the comprehension of a plain seafaring fellow.

“I wouldn’t be worried about that,” said Haj Putali. “Your hands are clean now. You are trying to help me take the ruby back to its home.”

“You bet I am!” exclaimed Sampson. “Nobody’d like it better than me to see that Buddha get his eye again! I’ll fight for it like a good un, I will! Just let me get a chance at Derek, man to man!”

They plodded on over the road to the mountains. The company was made up of half the *Barnacle’s* crew, Captain Flanders, Perkins, Gardner, Jerry, the carpenter Shavings, Jim and Pete and ten more. All were armed with revolvers and carried knapsacks of food and water-bottles. They might be gone for only a few days or for a couple of weeks. The clipper, under command of the first mate, was to wait where she was until further orders.

Haj Putali had made a great impression on the crew. It interested and amused Jim to see how the men regarded him with almost superstitious awe. He had come all the way from India in pursuit of a jewel, and, though he spoke English and wore what they called civilized clothes, he was so plainly ut-

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terly different from the men they knew. He was a mystery to them; in some way he had managed to carry to the coast of Chile that strange sense of hidden powers that belonged to the temples of his own brooding East.

Pete was frankly afraid of him. He watched Haj Putali all the time, listened to his every word, but never spoke to him and fidgeted like an eel when the Indian glanced at him. When Jim tried to remonstrate and assured him that the priest was really very gentle and kind-spoken the cabin-boy shook his head. "He may seem that way, but he's terrible deep inside. He knows I ain't much good, an' don't know much. He sees it all plain as day when he looks at me."

"He doesn't, Pete. I've told him about our being alone on the island, and what a dandy you were—never got frightened or anything like that. You oughtn't to be afraid of a thing just because you don't understand it."

"That's just the kind of things I am afraid of," Pete protested. "If spooks were just like common people—like you an' me—I wouldn't give a hang about 'em."

Jim had to laugh, the freckle-faced boy looked

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so serious and worried. "I'm going to make you talk to him," he said, and hooking his arm through Pete's he pulled him up to the Indian. "Haj Putali, my friend Pete wants to know you better. He comes from East Boston, and he's the best cabin-boy that ever sailed the sea."

"He knows a great deal more than I do," said the tall man. "I don't know anything about the sea. I am sick most of the time I'm on it."

"Pete knows every sail and rope like his own hand, and I guess he could sail the *Barnacle* by himself if he had to."

"What is your phrase for it?" Haj Putali hesitated. "Oh yes, I take off my hat to you, Pete, my friend. A ship is a wonderful thing to know all about."

"Well, I was brought up knockin' about boats," said Pete apologetically. "It comes to me natural."

"Just as it comes to me to serve in the temple. I know about a few things, and you know about other things. No one can hope to know about everything."

"There, Pete, what did I tell you?" said Jim. "You know as much as he does in your own line. Just you tell him about the time you and those two

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other boys ran away and sailed around Cape Cod—tell him the way you told me that night on the *Barnacle*.”

Pete told the story, and was talkative enough as long as Jim stayed by him, but when Jim dropped back to chat with Jerry he instantly grew tonguetied and as soon as he could found an excuse to get away from the Indian. “Maybe you’re right,” he admitted to Jim, “an’ that man ain’t as frightening as he looks; but I don’t feel comfortable with him. He don’t interrupt. He just looks and listens, an’ what he says is so perlite it makes me think he’s laughin’.”

Pete made Jim and Jerry laugh. “You like somebody to jolly you, that’s your trouble,” said Jerry.

“I guess that’s it,” Pete admitted. “An’ I don’t take no stock in his sayin’ he don’t know nothin’ about a boat. I’ll bet he could handle one as slick as sawdust.”

When Captain Flanders had planned his expedition he had seen at once that it wouldn’t do to take his men north from Valparaiso in the direction of the Pirates’ Tower. So many men were bound to be seen at once and news of their coming be carried

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to Derek. The alternative was to make a wide dé-tour in the direction of the mountains, approaching Derek's hiding-place from the east, where there were no villages and only widely-separated plantations. He had a map of the region and on this he and Perkins, Jerry and Haj Putali had plotted out a route by roads that made a big half-circle.

Fortunately for their plans they met few people and these few only stared at the company of foreign-looking sailors who trudged along the road. The weather held fine; to Jim it seemed as if Chile was a land of perpetual sunshine, but the abundant vegetation told him that there must be plenty of rain in season. Always before them were the peaks of the Andes, that great backbone of mountains that effectively divides the eastern countries of South America from those on the west. And they had almost come to that high barrier when they swung to the north and paralleled the mountains for the space of a day's march.

When they camped that night, on the edge of a wood, they were almost due east of the Pirates' Tower, according to Jerry's calculation. The difficulty of their approach lay in the fact that the country was mostly open and that they might be seen

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at a considerable distance from the stronghold. Therefore the next day Captain Flanders divided his band into groups of twos and threes, and these set out at intervals over the old, little-used road to the west.

Jim and Jerry, as two who had some knowledge of the neighborhood, went first with the captain. They pointed out the wooded summit of the hill with the ruined tower which stood up high above the surrounding country. "There's a fair-sized grove a couple of miles this side of it, I should judge," said Flanders, studying the landscape. "I reckon that's where we'll have to stow the men for now."

When they came up to the grove they stopped and Captain Flanders waited to halt the rest of his company there and confer with Perkins and the Indian. He allowed Jerry and Jim to go on. Presently they reached the stream Jim remembered from his former visit and following it to the north-west found themselves in a fairly respectable shelter of willows.

The hill beyond was quiet, as innocent-looking in the warm sunlight as the open fields that lay between it and the stream. "I don't see how we're ever going to take Derek but by making sure he

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and his men are up there, then crawling through the trees and capturing the old tower by force," Jerry said after a thoughtful silence. "And that seems mighty dangerous work to me."

Jim could think of no other plan, and they were still lying behind the willows, scheming and debating, when a rustle close at hand made them turn. Haj Putali had crept up along the stream and now sat down beside them. "Well," he said, "what have my friends to report?"

"Nothing, absolutely nothing," Jerry answered. "They might have flown the coop for all we know."

"Flown the coop?" The Indian looked puzzled.

"Vanished, disappeared," Jerry interpreted.

"Oh, yes, I see. I don't think they have. I saw a little smoke rising from the top of the hill a few minutes ago."

They waited patiently, and presently had their reward. A man appeared from among the trees on the lower slope and headed in the direction of the stream. "It's the fellow they call Tom," Jim whispered.

Jerry nodded. "A tough nut too. He can swear like a trooper."

The man had a bucket and was approaching the

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stream a little to the right of the watchers, where the water made a loop and the willows fringed it like a pocket.

Jerry felt for his pistol. "We'd better pick 'em off one by one if we can," he murmured.

Haj Putali laid a restraining hand on Jerry's elbow. "We don't want to give an alarm if we can possibly help it. A shot carries a long distance in this stillness. Let me try to deal with him."

Quietly as a shadow the man from Delhi rose and stole into the pocket of willows that bordered the loop of the stream. He was on the near bank and the man who was approaching was on the other side, but the distance across the water wasn't more than a dozen yards. Jim and Jerry lay perfectly still and watched, their revolvers in their hands in case of need. They saw Haj Putali conceal himself behind a tree.

The other man came to the willows, and pushing his way through the tangle of branches knelt at the edge of the stream and filled his bucket with water. He started to stand up, holding the bucket with both hands, and at the same instant Haj Putali stepped out from his shelter. "I come from the

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temple at Delhi," said the Indian. "I require the ruby eye that belongs to the Buddha there."

Well as he knew the voice of Haj Putali, Jim felt a quiver from head to foot as he heard these words, spoken slowly and softly in the deep tones of the priest. The latter appeared to have come from nowhere, to have stepped out of space while Tom was kneeling to fill his bucket. In the shade of the willow circle he made a majestic figure, his black eyes gleaming in his dark face. His words hung in the air like a strain of eerie music. There was not a sign of doubt or fear about him. He raised his right arm and pointed it at Tom.

Tom let the bucket fall. "Why—why ——" he stammered.

"The god has sent his priests for the Rose of Delhi. One of us will carry it back to him. If anything happens to us the god will see that you who have his eye pay the debt. There is no escape from him." The Indian's words were clear and deep as a bell.

Tom's hand jerked toward his pocket.

"Stop!" came the quick command. "Would you hurt a priest of Buddha?"

At the threat in the voice, at the warning in the

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deep eyes Tom dropped on his knees, utterly terrified, utterly at the mercy of this mysterious creature who had seemed to come from space. "I haven't got your ruby," he grunted. "I've only seen it once. I don't want it. I'm afraid of it."

Haj Putali let his arm drop to his side, but he didn't take his glance from the sailor's face. "Well for you that you do not want it!" he said. "Look at me. What do you see in me?"

Tom turned his eyes to the Indian's. "I don't know," he said, his voice as piteous as the whimpering of a dog that expects to be beaten. "Lemme alone. Don't do nothin' to me. Don't work a spell on me. I'm only a poor, good-for-nothin' sailor."

"And such as you would dare to keep the Rose of Delhi!" There was infinite scorn in Haj Putali's voice.

"Don't look at me like that!" begged Tom. "I'm willin' to do whatever you want of me."

"You will come with me," said the Indian, "and be thankful you suffer no worse fate. You will stay as you are, on your knees, while my companions get you."

And Tom stayed on his knees while Jerry and

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Jim, wading the stream, pistols in their hands, came up and took his revolver and knife from him. Then they let him stand up. "Well, I'm glad I'm away from Derek," he said with a touch of bravado.

But he had no air of bravado whenever he glanced at the Indian. He feared the latter's eyes, terrified at the thought that they might lay some hypnotic spell upon him. So it was as a thoroughly cowed prisoner that they led the sailor back to Captain Flanders' camp.

The whole of the *Barnacle's* crew had now reached the grove and were lunching off the provisions they had brought with them, supplemented by fruit they had picked along the road. When Bill Sampson saw who Haj Putali had with him he jumped up and confronted his late shipmate. "Blest if it ain't Tom Sikes!" said he. "Did you an' Red have a fallin' out, same as him an' me did?"

"No, we didn't," said Tom in a surly growl. "I thought it would be better for my health to give the old man the go-by."

Sampson looked surprised, but the next instant he caught Tom stealing a glance at Haj Putali, and a light dawned on him. "An' I reckon it was better for your health too, you old lobster!" he exclaimed.

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“ You didn’t know what was after you, did you? But now you do know, I hope you’ll behave yourself.”

“ You’re pretty chipper, ain’t you, Bill? ” said Tom. “ Derek thinks you’re eatin’ grass down around the Horn.”

“ So I might be, for all o’ him! But it don’t look very good for Derek just now, to my way o’ thinking. We’ve got devils out o’ Indy to catch up with that old red-headed son of a sea-cook! ”

The captain questioned Sikes, and under the watchful eye of Haj Putali the sailor gave what appeared to be truthful answers. Derek was disposing of his stolen cargo through Manuel Poa in the little village. He had raised a storm when he found on his return to the tower that Jerry had escaped and had threatened to beat with his own fists the careless fellows who should have been watching the prisoner. But when his first rage wore off he had concluded that Jerry could do very little against him, since it would take the latter some time to convince the officials in Valparaiso of the need to arrest the robbers, and Derek expected to dispose very quickly of what he had left of his cargo. Sikes knew nothing about his chief’s plans

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concerning the ruby, for, although the men often discussed how much the jewel would bring them, Derek never mentioned it to them.

“Is Derek up there now?” Flanders demanded.

Tom shook his head. “He’s away with three of the men. He left early this morning.”

“Is he likely to be back to-night?”

“He’s likely to. But there’s no tellin’ about Derek. He’s a clam when it comes to tellin’ his plans.”

“You’ve been telling me the truth, have you, Sikes?” said the captain sternly.

“So help me I have!” Tom turned his eyes to Haj Putali. “I have been tellin’ the truth, haven’t I?” It was evident he believed that the Indian priest had a touchstone by which he could instantly detect a falsehood.

“I believe you have,” Haj Putali agreed. “What you’ve said tallies with what I know.”

“So you know most of this already?” Tom asked in wonder.

The man from Delhi smiled. He wasn’t going to lessen his influence by telling just how much or how little he knew.

Two sailors were appointed to guard Sikes, and

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the rest were told where they were to keep look-outs on the approaches to the Pirates' Tower. If Derek was away there was little use to attempt an attack on the place at present; Flanders wanted to catch all the birds at once. So the afternoon passed in desultory waiting, and it was not until twilight had begun to darken the country that Jim left the grove again.

He set out with Jerry and Pete, who had begged to go along. They crossed the stream, where Perkins and Gardner were stationed in the willows, and followed the road that led past the old woman's house. The house was dark and by the time they had reached it the road ahead was a mass of shadows. To the right was a small gully that led about the base of the hill. Taking this as a path they presently emerged in a swampy meadow. Frogs were piping in the distance, but otherwise the night was very still. "We can reach the road this way," Jerry suggested, and headed across the meadow, keeping to the high ground.

They came out on the road, and hearing nothing there turned back toward the trees that stood near the old woman's cottage. There they decided to wait for a while and made themselves comfortable

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in the grass back of the rose-hedge. A half hour passed before they heard something coming on the road to the west. They crept close to the hedge and waited. In the starlight they made out a covered wagon driving toward them.

"What'll we do?" whispered Pete. "Hold 'em up? I'm game."

"S-sh!" came from Jerry.

The wagon crawled slowly along, as if its single horse were tired. It reached them, passed them a few yards, and came to a stop. They heard no voices from under its cover of canvas, they could just make out the dim figure of the driver, who was leaning over the reins and apparently peering around.

Then the driver called something in Spanish. He was evidently shouting in the direction of the cottage. He waited a minute and called again. No one appeared at the door of the house; if the woman was there apparently she didn't intend to answer his summons.

"Come!" whispered Jerry, and pulling out his revolver he jumped the hedge and ran up to the wagon. Jim and Pete, each pistol in hand, came close behind him.

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The driver saw the three figures and the three pistols, and he let out a yell that made his tired horse jump.

Jim could see under the hood of the wagon; the driver was the only person in it.

“Shut up!” ordered Jerry in Spanish. “Come down from there and be mighty quick about it!”

The man dropped the reins and slid down from his seat. Once on the ground he began to jabber volubly, gesticulating with both hands.

Jerry paid no attention to the man's protests. “Jim, Pete,” said he, “see if he's armed.”

More rapid talk from the driver. “He hasn't got anything on him,” Jim reported.

“Now you keep quiet!” Jerry addressed the man. “Another peep from you and I'll sit on your head!” He slid his revolver back into his holster. “You two lads get up there with him and drive on. I'll come along at the back as a rear-guard.”

Jim drove the wagon, while Pete sat close to the captive and pinched his arm whenever he showed signs of wanting to talk. In this way they came to the stream and then beyond it, and shortly had reached the headquarters in the grove.

One of the sailors, on watch at the side of the

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road, came up and inspected the wagon. "Hello, here's Jim an' Pete drivin' along like lords! Where'd you get the carriage an' who's that you've got with you?"

"Some big bug or other," answered Pete. "He's crazy to tell us all about himself, but we don't want him to hurt his throat."

Jerry had now come up. "He wanted to know the road to the Pirates' Tower. That's what he was yelling back there. And that being the case I thought we'd better size him up for ourselves. Drive in, Jim, and tie the horse, and we'll take our talkative gentleman to the captain."

Captain Flanders was sitting with his back against a tree, smoking a pipe. Perkins and Haj Putali, cross-legged on the mossy ground, were discussing the difference in customs and manners between India and the United States. A ship's lantern, brought all the way from the *Barnacle* by the carpenter, lighted an open space in the grove but could not be seen from the highroad. Into this circle of light Pete now proudly pushed the driver of the wagon, who kept giving little squeaks like a pig as the cabin-boy pinched his arm. He was dressed like a native farmer and his steeple-crowned

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straw hat had so wide a brim so turned down at the edge that it almost hid his face.

"Who's this?" demanded the captain. "He looks like a real live bandit and no mistake!"

Jerry related what he had heard the man calling out and why he had taken him captive.

"Very good," said Flanders. "Do you speak English?" he asked.

"A little," answered the man.

"Then tell us why you were looking for a path to the Pirates' Tower."

The prisoner began to speak, but he talked so fast and excitedly that Flanders roared out, "Stop! I can't catch the drift of your talk when you scream like that. Take off your hat so I can see your face, and for goodness' sake don't wave your arms like a windmill."

The man took off his hat, showing a swarthy face with a bristling black beard.

"What's your name?" asked Flanders.

"Manuel Poa." The speaker went on talking rapidly till the captain held up his hand.

"You say you're an honest merchant in a neighboring village and came out here to-night on a little matter of trade. That's good as far as it goes, but

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it doesn't explain why you were looking for that old ruined tower up on the hill."

Again came the jumble of rapid, excitable words.

"Oh, hold on!" exclaimed Flanders, out of patience. "I can tell you why you're here. I happen to know about you. You wanted to see a rascally fellow named Derek about some stolen goods he's trying to sell with your help. That's the truth of the matter."

Poa shook his head and waved his hands to refute the idea.

"Oh, yes, it is," said Flanders. "And what's more, you knew the goods were stolen. No honest sea-captain would deal with you as this Derek has." He glanced at Hāj Putali. "What do you think about it?"

"We thought Derek was down in this man's village to-day," said the Indian slowly. "Evidently he was not. It appears that he must have found other traders, perhaps to the north, with whom he is dealing. What did you find in the wagon?" he asked, addressing Jerry.

"Nothing but a couple of empty boxes and some gunny-sacks, also empty."

"Yet Poa came up here to-night on some errand.

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What was it? Some very private matter no doubt. Did you look through his clothes?"

"He hadn't a pistol or a knife," Jim answered.

"Go through his pockets," said Haj Putali.

"He might have some important papers."

The order was pleasing to Pete. He thrust his hands in the pockets of Poa's coat, both inside and out. There was nothing but a few small coins, a pipe and a bag of tobacco. He thrust his hand in the nearer trouser pocket. Poa tried to pull away, but Jim held him fast. Pete brought out a small, square cardboard box, tied with a string. "There's something," he announced, and handed the box to Haj Putali.

The Indian took the box and pulled off the string. He lifted the cover and brought out the contents, holding it so that all could see. It was a large and beautiful red stone and blazed like fire in the light of the ship's lamp.

"Well, I'll be!" cried Flanders. "It's the ruby!"

Every one leaned forward staring as the priest turned the gem in his fingers, looking at each of its facets as if he remembered each one. His face was tense and devoted; he might have been holding in

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his fingers the most precious thing in the world. He began to murmur words in his own language, soft, endearing sounds such as a mother uses to her child.

Presently he looked at Poa. "How did you come by this?"

"It's mine. I bought it at Valparaiso. I trade in gems, and I like to have some for my own pleasure."

"You don't trade in gems like this, nor keep them for your own pleasure." Haj Putali stepped forward, directly in front of Poa, and suddenly his face and manner grew stern. "Where did you get this ruby? Did you get it from Derek?"

"No. I bought it, I tell you. And you haven't any right to take it away from me."

The Indian stared at the man so intently that his eyes seemed to burn into Poa's face. But Poa held his ground and stared back at the priest.

"Your story is true," said Haj Putali, "so far as I can read a man's features." He stepped back, held the red gem before him, and again turned it slowly round and round in his fingers. Then he stopped, picked up a small stone, and struck it against a facet of the jewel. He held the facet close to his eyes.

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The men in the grove looked on fascinated. No one moved, for each realized that the Indian was studying some intense problem. For once his smooth brow was wrinkled with deep thought. Then he threw back his head as if he had decided. "This is not the Rose of Delhi. This has splintered, and the Rose would not. Some one has made a copy. It is fine work, but this is not a real ruby. I know, from my eyes and from something that tells me."

The tension released, the men began to whisper. "I told you it was mine," Poa protested. "I got it from a man in Valparaiso."

"As to whether it's yours, that I don't know," said Haj Putali, shrugging his shoulders. "I'd like to see the bill of the jeweler first."

"Well, I'm going to keep it for the present. That's sure," said Flanders. "If, when we straighten this business out, we find the stone does belong to you, you shall have it. Meantime it and you stay with us. Make him comfortable, Mr. Perkins, and see there's a rope tied to his hands and ankles so he won't be leaving us in the night."

Haj Putali handed the shining red stone to the

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captain, who put it in his pocket. "This Derek is a shrewd man," said the priest of Buddha. "He meant to be prepared for any chance. But I shall know the true Rose when I find it."

CHAPTER XII

THE SIEGE OF DEREK'S STRONGHOLD

JIM and Pete finished their lunch of hardtack and bacon and squeezed the last drops of juice out of a couple of very sweet oranges. It was early afternoon of the day following the capture of Manuel Poa, and they were acting as scouts on the rough and rocky slopes to the north of the Pirates' Tower. So far as they could tell Derek had not yet returned to his stronghold; two sailors that Captain Flanders had stationed on the road to the west of the wooded hill had reported that no one had passed over it during the night. Flanders wanted Derek more than all the rest of the robber crew put together, and Haj Putali agreed with him, since it was certain that Derek alone knew where the ruby was. So Pete and Jim had watched during the forenoon, but they had nothing to report beyond having scared some rabbits out of hiding.

Pete, always ready for a nap, stretched himself comfortably in the shade of a ledge overgrown with brambles, and said he was going to take forty winks.

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The forty winks grew to many more, but Jim didn't disturb him. He sat with his back against a rock and his hands clasped round his knees. On this side the country stretched in broken marshlands, dotted here and there with the deep green of long grass, almost to the coast. There was no house in the near view, only the open fields as far as the eye could see, now warm in the summer light, with a couple of hawks, soaring, dropping and then soaring again in the clear blue sky. Not a sound to break the stillness except the occasional buzzing of a bee in the rose-bush on Jim's right.

After a while Jim stood up, and without rousing Pete began to prowl about. On this side the slope fairly bristled with rocks of all sizes and with clumps of bushes, some flowering and some only stiff and thorny. Jim walked to the north, following his natural bent for exploring. Each boulder tempted him to have a look at the ground beyond it, each clump of trees made him inquisitive as to the view on the opposite side. In this way he came to a windbreak of dwarf oaks and then to the little gully they had partly explored the night before. The gully led him farther north, and presently he caught sight of a tiny spring bubbling out of the

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bank beneath a rock. The spring made him feel thirsty and he crouched down in front of it, holding his two hands as a cup and lapping up the water.

Something fell over his head, a bag; something caught his hands, the strong fingers of a man. He tried to wrench himself free, but the fingers had his wrists in a grip of steel. With the bag over his head he could see nothing, but he felt the rub of a rope over his arms, a jerk, and the knot of the rope had caught his hands tight together at the wrists. That stopped his struggling; some one's arm had closed about his waist and was pulling him away from the spring. As well as he could judge from the uneven footing he was being pulled along the bank of the gully.

He was not taken far, not more than fifty yards, he thought. Then the arm left his waist. But with his wrists tied and the bag over his head he could do nothing. After a couple of minutes a hand on his shoulder made him sit down on a rock. Then some one said, "Shout as loud as you like, my boy. I'd like to have some of your mates come up."

Jim didn't shout, he understood the danger of doing that; he sat very still as some one pulled the bag from over his head.

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The some one was Sam Pigeon. He sat down on a rock opposite his prisoner and regarded Jim with twinkling eyes. Jim saw that they were in a sort of a bowl in the hill, well protected from observation by high banks except to the north, where they had come in.

“Howdy, Jim,” said Pigeon. “We seem to be meetin’ each other every once in a while.” He grinned and helped himself to a cigarette from the pocket of his coat. “Make yourself comfortable. I ain’t a-goin’ to hurt you as long as you act friendly.”

Jim had to smile. There was something about Pigeon that disarmed anger; he might be a criminal, but there was nothing cruel in his make-up.

“You got the box and my little billet-doux back on the island?”

“Yes, I got them, and I want to thank you for them. You were mighty white.”

“I never marooned a mate afore, and I swore to Derek I wouldn’t have any such dirty business on my conscience. But I hoped it’d be a lesson to you, Jim, I surely hoped it would.”

Again Jim had to smile. The lean-faced man with the scar across his cheek reminded him of a

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schoolmaster lecturing a boy for playing hooky. "We got off the island all right," he said, "and we brought the box away with us."

"Yes, you got off. I can see that plain enough. But why in thunder do you want to keep on hangin' 'round where you ain't wanted?"

The answer was so plain that Jim said nothing.

"We picked out a nice quiet spot up here in Chile an' we're spendin' a few weeks here restin' from the sloop, an' along you come again, an' I suppose since you're here the rest o' your crew's here too. I saw you from up on the hill, an' I picked up a bag an' a rope and thought I'd scoop you in." Pigeon grinned. "Lucky for you it was me that saw you. The chief an' the rest of 'em ain't as kind-hearted as I be. What were you doin' there?"

"Exploring," said Jim.

"That's a good word," said Pigeon, "an' covers a lot o' things. I reckon it was that fellow Grantham that tipped you off where we was. Well, we're havin' a good time, plenty to eat an' not too much to do. We'll be rested up in a couple o' days more and then you can have this part o' the country to yourselves." He looked out through the entrance over the bushy, rocky slopes to the

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meadows and then back again at Jim. "But you'll be safer if you wait till we've finished here afore you get busy. Just you stay quiet now, an' you'll get back to your ship all right. I won't say as much for any that tries to fool with us up here. Derek's an ugly fellow."

"I don't see how you can stick to him," said Jim.

Pigeon's eyes grew humorous. "You don't, eh? Well, just between you an' me, some of the crew have wondered at that themselves. But there's reasons, an' they're good an' sufficient once you know about 'em. When we finish this business I know one lad who won't care if Derek falls off a cliff an' breaks his neck. But till we do get it finished right an' proper we've got to see that the old man keeps his health. I reckon you get me, Jim? You ain't a fool."

Jim nodded.

Pigeon stood up. "I've got some things to attend to up at our hotel on the top o' the hill. I'm goin' to leave you here for a while. I won't forget about you. An' I don't want you to get into no more trouble, so I'm goin' to tie another rope about your legs. Then you'll stay here quiet an' peaceful. You can shout if you like, but I reckon

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Derek'll hear you as quick as any one else." He took a short length of rope from his pocket, wound it around Jim's ankles and knotted it. "You won't be uncomfortable that way," he added, "an' you'll be better fixed for every one concerned. Don't be gettin' impitient. I'll see you don't starve. Look out over that landscape an' amuse yourself tryin' to figure what Derek's done with the ruby." He winked. "So long, James. If you should get lonely a yell'll bring somebody down from the old hotel on the hilltop."

With that he went out by the path between the two high banks and disappeared around a corner. Jim sat on the rock, looking out through the entrance, the ropes preventing his moving his hands or feet.

Jim was fairly comfortable for a while. He wondered if Pete had waked up and what he was doing. Then it occurred to him that in all probability his own part in the expedition was at an end; Derek might come back to the tower and Captain Flanders might try to capture him, but while this was happening Sam Pigeon would see that Jim Burgess stayed safely in the bowl in the hill. Pigeon had been decent to him; he might have made

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him far more uncomfortable than he was. But Jim didn't care for a kindness that left him tied hand and foot and kept him safe at the expense of having nothing to do with what might happen.

He grew tired of looking out through the opening between the banks; he wished he had Pete's gift of taking a nap anywhere, sitting up or even standing. The afternoon wore on and he judged from the softening light that the sun was setting. The ropes began to chafe, he twisted and turned about, flexed his shoulders backward and forward, and changed his seat on the rock, which was commencing to feel very hard and cold. He studied the ropes, wondering if there might be any way in which he could loosen them with his hands tied. But he decided that Pigeon had fixed the knots in such clever sailor-fashion that there was no undoing them without outside help.

He was watching the shadow of a small bush lengthen when a man came round the corner and entered the bowl. He was one of Derek's men and he brought a loaf of bread, a square of cheese and a jug of water. He nodded to Jim. "Sam sent me down here with this for you," he stated. "He's busy, but he says he'll take a look at you before

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dark. Hold out your hands." The sailor, accustomed to knots, quickly untied the rope about Jim's wrists and Jim began to rub his hands together and double up his fists.

"Hungry?" asked the sailor. "Pitch in then." He gave Jim the food and the jug and stood watching him eat and drink. This Jim did slowly, liking company, even if it was no other than this taciturn fellow. He munched the bread and cheese and sipped the water while the man stood with his hands in his pockets, his back to the entrance, regarding Jim with the solemn intensity of an owl.

Suddenly a rope flew through the air. A lasso caught the sailor about the elbows and was jerked tight so quickly that it threw the man off his feet, sprawling on his back. At the same instant Pete dashed in through the opening, threw himself on the sailor's head and stuffed a handkerchief in his open mouth. The man's attempted yell was smothered into a low growl. And back of Pete came the carpenter, Shavings, the end of the rope in his hand.

It was only the work of a couple of minutes to bind and gag the sailor. Then Shavings with his knife cut the bonds on Jim's ankles. "Mum's the

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word," he muttered. "We'll get away from here in no time. Pete, have you got that rope about the fellow's legs so he can walk but so we can jerk it tight if we want to?"

Pete nodded. He was pulling the man up to his feet and whispering words of advice to him to behave and keep quiet. The latter counsel was scarcely necessary since the cabin-boy had so gagged the sailor that he couldn't possibly have uttered a sound.

Not until they had left the cup in the hillside some distance behind them, had in fact passed the place where Pete had taken his nap, did they begin to talk. On the lower slope to the northwest they were out of ear-shot of the tower and entirely screened from it by the growth of thick timber. It was now past sunset but there was still plenty of light for them to see their way. Pete began to chuckle. "Pretty neat the way Shavings roped this feller. He'd always been tellin' me what a slick guy he was with a lasso, how he'd lived with the cowboys out on the plains one summer."

"So I did," said Shavings. "Don't you believe it now?"

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"Sure I do. You couldn't have done it smoother, nobody could have."

"If we'd fired a shot they'd all have heard it. It's mighty handy to know how to throw a rope."

"Who was it got you, Jim?" asked Pete. "You'd oughto have known better than to go walkin' away without me to protect you."

"It was Pigeon," said Jim; and he told how Slim Sam had captured him at the spring.

"When I woke up you'd disappeared," said Pete. "I looked all 'round but I couldn't see you nowhere. So after a time I went back to the road and there I found old Shavings, sittin' behind a tree whittlin' a bow and arrows. I told him what had happened, an' he was just crazy to come find you himself, without tellin' the others. He had a rope with him, he carries everything from a saw to a tack, an' so we loped back here an' down there in the bushes we caught sight of a feller comin' down from the top o' the hill. We watched him an' we crawled up behind him an' we saw him duck into that place where you were sittin'. You know the rest. Pretty proud, old Shavings is! Don't he look like a cock struttin' along?"

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"You'd be a heap wiser, Pete, if you didn't sleep so much," the carpenter retorted.

"Huh," said Pete. "If Jim had taken a nap too he'd never have got pinched! When you're asleep you can't get into trouble."

They marched the sailor, gagged and bound at the arms, about the base of the hill and eventually reached the road. The place was quiet as usual, but Jim saw that the woman who wove baskets was sitting on her doorstep gazing intently at them. "I don't believe she ever saw so many people around here before," he said, pointing the woman out to his companions. "I wonder what she makes of all these goings-on?"

"There's the tree where I left my bow and arrows," said Shavings. "I'm going over to get them."

He crossed the short open stretch of ground to a tree near the cottage, the others following him. Jim, curious as ever about the solitary basket-weaver who had warned them away from the neighborhood, walked over to look at her and try the few words of native dialect he had by now picked up. Shavings and Pete, with their prisoner, had joined him, and were making friendly gestures to the

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woman when she suddenly put her hand to her ear and looked down the road to the west. A horseman came in view, riding at a gallop. There was still plenty of light to make him out and Jim, after one long look, exclaimed, "Whew, it's Derek!"

The rider could see them plainly if they stayed where they were. No bushes or trees were near enough for a cover; the only possible hiding-place was inside the cottage. Jim seized the sailor's arm and shoved him in through the open doorway, almost upsetting the woman in his haste. "Come in!" he called back to the others; and they followed. "Leave the door open. He can't see us in the dark."

The house was dark enough, to be sure. Mats of woven straw hung over the two tiny windows of the front room, which appeared to be kitchen, sleeping-room and everything else, and was warm and stuffy. Over the head of the woman, who was now again stolidly sitting on the doorstep, Jim and Pete and Shavings looked out at the horseman in the road.

Derek reined in abruptly. What was he going to do? Could he have seen or heard them? Then

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he jumped his horse over the low hedge and rode directly up to the cottage.

The front door opened inward, and Jim pushed it part way shut, allowing the three of them to look out through the crack between the hinges. Their prisoner was behind them, and Shavings kept a hold on the sailor's blouse, so that he shouldn't make any noise.

The question was, what would the woman do? The turn of events depended entirely on her.

Derek came riding up to the door, looking very fierce and frowning, a pistol in his hand. He stopped a few yards in front of the woman and began to talk in Spanish. It sounded as if he were asking questions and making threats in case he didn't get answers.

Then the woman spoke. She kept shaking her head and spreading out her hands. At least she hadn't yet indicated that any one was in her house.

Should they try to capture Derek? That was what Jim was thinking as he crouched behind the door and watched and listened. But Derek sat pistol in hand and was clearly more than ready to meet any attack they might make on him.

Derek scowled and jerked his thumb over his

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shoulder in the direction of the hill. The woman seemed to be losing patience, for her voice grew more shrill and she began to shake her finger at the horseman.

Then there came a loud thud from behind the door. The sailor, pulling himself free from Shavings' grip, had allowed himself to fall on the floor and in falling had upset a three-legged stool that went rolling against the wall. Instantly Pete was on him, pinning him down with his knees, but the noise had been heard outside, Jim could see that from the sudden startled expression on Derek's face.

Derek was storming again, evidently wanting to know what had caused the noise. Then he called out in English, "If there's any one hiding in there he'd better come out this instant, or I'll shoot the whole place up!" He pointed his revolver as if to make good his words.

It was a ticklish moment. A bullet might come whizzing through the open door or even through the crack between the hinges. Then the woman got to her feet, blocking up the opening, and she shook her fist at Derek and poured out a torrent of words. Although Jim couldn't understand them, he could

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make a good guess at their meaning; she was defying the horseman to fire into her house.

And Derek couldn't fire while that old lioness stood on her doorstep without hitting her. He answered back as fiercely as before, but he let the hand that held his pistol drop to his knee again. And after a further exchange of threats and warnings he wheeled his horse about and rode him slowly over the open stretch to the hedge.

"I can get him now!" muttered Shavings, pulling the door wide open, his pistol in his hand.

But the woman faced about, blocking the doorway as effectively to those within as she had to the horseman without. She made a motion to Shavings to put his pistol away, and he reluctantly did so. It was clear that she didn't intend to have any fighting about her premises.

"You've got nerve all right!" Jim said to her. "The way you stood up to Derek was a sight to see!"

Of course she didn't understand his words, though she may have glimpsed some of the admiration that was expressed in his face. The one thing she had in mind at present was to rid herself as quickly as she could of all these troublesome people

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who were disturbing her. She glanced over her shoulder. The horseman had now disappeared in the dusk of twilight. Then she made a gesture at Shavings and his companions as if she were trying to shoo a brood of chickens out of a coop.

Pete took his knees from the sailor's stomach and pulled the prisoner up. "You did your best to make trouble, but your best wasn't good enough. Now you just walk along like a little lamb or I'll teach you a lesson. May we go out, ma'am?" Pete addressed this last to the woman in the doorway.

She understood enough to let them pass. The four came out from the house and crossed to the road. The night was still and lighted with many stars. Cautiously they proceeded, Pete and the sailor in front, Jim and Shavings all eyes and ears for any unusual sight or sound. They were near the brook when a pistol-shot rang out in the stillness, not near at hand, somewhere on the western slope of the hill with the tower. "Some one's sighted Derek!" Jim exclaimed. "I guess the old fox knows we're on his trail now! Pigeon knows it too, and so do the rest of the gang!"

Others had heard the shot. When they reached

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the trees by the stream they found Perkins and Jerry, who wanted to know what was up. Jim told them Derek had come back. "Then some of our men saw him on his way up to the tower," said Perkins. "We've got them all through the woods on the watch for him."

"He must have left his horse at the foot," said Jim. "He couldn't ride up there."

"It's time we got busy," said Jerry. "Shavings and Pete had better take this fellow back to headquarters and tell the captain what's happened."

The two went on with the sailor while Jim stayed at the brook. Very quickly Captain Flanders, Haj Putali and four of the *Barnacle's* crew joined them. The captain gave his orders. He had scouts on the slopes ready to climb to the tower. All that was needed was for his party to give the word to the scouts.

Jim went with Jerry and Haj Putali. They were to take the side of the hill to the east, the side that Jim had climbed on the first day. As they walked along the Indian talked in low tones. "The fingers are closing in on the thieves. I may have the Rose by midnight. All afternoon I have been meditating. The god must have his eye. He is

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not impatient. He knows that time is immaterial when weighed with greater things. But he has need of his eye. And his hand is stretching out to take it, and we, my friends, are his fingers."

"Suppose that Derek shouldn't have it? Suppose he's already gotten rid of it?" said Jerry.

"Then I should follow wherever he's taken it, and the fingers would reach out for the next thief. But something tells me it is up there on the hill, somewhere under that bright star with the red light." He pointed up at the night sky and Jim saw the star, hanging like a beacon over the ruined tower.

They started up the slope. Where the ground was open progress was easy, for the stars gave plenty of light. When they came to boulders and bushes they climbed more warily; every moving shadow might be a man, any slip or tumble give warning to some one on watch. And when they reached stretches of timber they went with the utmost caution, for here the starlight was dim and falling through the interarching branches made patches on the ground that were constantly shifting and giving the appearance of something moving in the depths of the woods.

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They had wound their way somewhat to the south when Jerry, who was in the lead, abruptly stopped and gave a low warning hiss. Peering ahead through a dim-lit aisle of the trees, Jim made out a man coming down the hill a short distance to the west of them. He seemed to be carrying something, but almost immediately he disappeared behind some high bushes. The climbers stood still and waited. The man appeared again in another space of starlight, and now Jim could see that there was a second man behind the first one, and that they were carrying a good-sized box between them. Derek must have taken the alarm and must now be trying to get some of his cargo away from the tower.

The men with the box were almost as silent as shadows. They moved very slowly, evidently feeling their way forward with great caution. Now they set down the box and rested for a few minutes. Jim glanced at Jerry; the latter stood revolver in hand. Then he looked at Haj Putali, and the Indian, catching his eye, gestured to him to get behind a tree. Haj Putali repeated the gesture to Jerry, and immediately the three were hidden back of trees.

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Then from the depths of the forest, in the stillness of the night, the deep and wonderful voice of the priest from Delhi rose like a sudden wind. It did not startle so much as it thrilled the ear. It was not like the sound of a man speaking, it was more like the voice of a spirit hovering in the air. "I come from the land of the gods," it said, "the gods that are older than time and greater than men, the gods to whom everything is clear as the light in a crystal globe. I come for the eye of Buddha. And woe to those who keep the eye from me. For the god does not forget nor forgive. His hand is over all."

The words seemed a part of the night, coming from regions of space. They sent little shivers running through Jim, well as he knew the speaker. He knew how the men who had never heard that voice before must feel. He looked and saw they were standing stock-still, turned to statues by the mysterious sound.

"I neither forget nor forgive. I remember all things. Beware, oh men who would set yourselves against me!" So came the Indian's voice, deep and clear as before.

The men in the forest deserted their box and ran,

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plunging into the bushes, making as much noise as wild creatures in a panic.

And after them came their pursuers. Jim picked out one fellow and crashed through the brush behind him. The man ran into a rock, fell sprawling, was up again and on. He ran into a tangle of vines, tripped and lay there, groaning. And Jim sat down on the fellow's back, out of breath, but gripping the man's shoulders in his hands.

The other sailor escaped down the hill. Jerry came up to Jim, took his prisoner's revolver and knife, and ordered him to get up. The two of them led him back to the star-lit space where Haj Putali stood beside the box. "I ain't got the ruby! I ain't got it!" the sailor kept whining. "Don't let him touch me! I ain't done nothin' but what I was told to do!"

The priest, in his white suit, standing like a pillar of silence in that lonely place, was an impressive figure. The sailor cringed before him. "I don't want to hurt nobody," he said. "I'll give you all I've got. You're welcome to the box. Only take the spell off me. I didn't mean no harm."

"Is Derek up at the tower?" asked Jerry, shaking the sailor's arm.

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The man hesitated. "Why, I dunno ——"

"Is the man with the eye of Buddha at the tower?" Haj Putali's voice was keen as the edge of a knife.

"Yes, yes, he's up there! He's got what you want."

"What were you two doing?"

"He told us to take that box down to the road. I don't know what he's up to. He tells us to do a thing an' we go an' do it."

"Next time you'd better think twice before you help a man steal. And now get along down the hill. I'll remember you, so be careful what you do."

The man slunk away through the woods, greatly relieved at the outcome of such an unpleasant adventure.

"We've no time to waste on him," Haj Putali said. "He'll not go back to Derek this night. As for the box, it's safe enough where it is."

"I want to laugh when I think how those fellows scampered off," said Jerry. "I never saw two people more scared in all my life."

"In India it is often that way," said the man from Delhi. "The power of the voice is mighty."

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When it speaks in the temple all men bow. And these woods are like a temple to me to-night. However," he added with a smile, "those two rascals aren't over-intelligent, you know."

Leaving the box, they went on, as cautiously as before. They came to the rough, rocky stretch where Jim had hidden and made his map on the afternoon he found Jerry. Above the boulders the dark outlines of the Pirates' Tower stood up against the star-strewn sky. They edged around to the west again and caught glimpses of other figures stealing along the rising ground, men of the *Barnacle's* crew coming up the sides of the hill to gain the plateau at the summit. All were keeping hidden from the tower; all were alert as they stole higher and higher toward the stronghold.

Jim and his two companions crept around a boulder fringed with bushes. The tower was not fifty yards from them. But between them and the entrance stood a rampart of boxes and bales, high as a man's head, a very effectual barrier of the way. "Hello!" muttered Jerry, "there's the cargo! And Derek's back of it! We've driven the old fox into his burrow; but how are we ever going to

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dig him out of it? It looks like a stiff proposition!"

And Jim, regarding the rampart and the stone tower back of it, agreed with Jerry's conclusion.

CHAPTER XIII

THE FINDING OF THE ROSE

THE circular plateau that formed the top of the hill had almost in its centre the old stone tower, the summit of which was crumbling and jagged, to be sure, but the base strong enough to withstand anything but a battering-ram. There were a number of small loopholes and in several places stones had been pulled away, but vines had grown over most of these openings and made them hard to distinguish. The door faced the west, and it was at a little distance in front of this that the rampart had been hurriedly constructed. At either end of this wall of boxes and bales there were boulders and small bushes, such as were to be found cropping up all over the summit, and any one of these would afford fairly good protection to a man who was kneeling or lying flat on the ground. It was back of these stones and shrubs that the crew of the *Barnacle* crouched, all intent on what was happening behind the rampart, which was clearly visible in the starlight.

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Jim, with Jerry and Haj Putali, was at the southern end of the line fronting the tower. For some little time after these three reached the scene there was comparative quiet, only an occasional murmur of voices or the sound of men moving behind the boxes. Then what looked like a head showed above the wall. Instantly a pistol barked, and was followed by a derisive yell. The head was pushed farther up and proved to be a bag with a sailor's cap on top of it. More shots saluted the bag, but only spattered harmlessly against the stones of the tower.

Yet the shots had a telling effect in another way. They made it clear to Derek's men that their pursuers were in earnest and would go to any length to capture them. And though the former might have a temporary advantage in the protection of the tower the latter could besiege them and ultimately force them to come out or starve. They knew by now that Captain Flanders was dogged and determined and that his men would follow him anywhere. So, soon after those first shots, a handkerchief on a stick was poked up over the rampart and Pigeon's voice was heard calling, "We've got something to say to you!"

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"All right," Flanders answered. "I'm ready to listen. None of my men will shoot."

Pigeon appeared above the boxes. "See here, friends," said he, "we're all sailors an' we shouldn't rightly be poppin' at each other. We'd sooner make terms with you than hurt any of you. We'll let you have all the stuff we've got up here if you'll let us go back to our ship piceable-like an' sail away without layin' hands on us. That's a fair offer. You get the goods you're after, and nobody gets his head broke."

"I don't see it that way," said Flanders. "How do I know how much of the *Mary Parrot's* cargo you've sold or stowed away somewhere else? We want every bit of that cargo, an' we want the ruby, the one they call the Rose o' Delhi. We won't talk business with you till you hand over that stone."

"The Lord love you!" cried Pigeon. "I don't know where that stone is an' none o' the crew knows! It's disappeared. It's took wings an' flown back to Indy. We can't give you somethin' that we don't know where to find."

"The Rose is somewhere here," came in the clear voice of Haj Putali, who had stood up and walked

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over near the captain. "You may not know where it is, but I mean to find it."

"Well, you're pretty cock-sure, I must say!" Pigeon retorted. A number of heads had now bobbed up above the boxes, all eyes gazing at the Indian. Pigeon turned to his crew. "I siy, do any o' you lads know where the bloomin' red egg is?"

There was a chorus of voices, all declaring that they hadn't the least idea what had become of the ruby.

"Nonsense!" called out Flanders. "Red Derek knows an' he's got too much sense to tell the rest of you. Why doesn't Derek come speak for himself?"

"He's appointed me to speak for him, that's why," returned Pigeon. "If that man in white knows so much more than the rest of us, why don't he tell us where to look? Who is he anyhow?"

"A priest of the temple who's come from Delhi to reclaim the Buddha's eye. Three of your men I have met and dealt with already. None of them had the ruby; if they had they would have handed it over in their fright. The jewel is still among you."

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Pigeon laughed. "Well, you've come a long way, old feller, all on account o' the eye o' your bloomin' idol! Seems like you deserve to get it."

"I will get it to-night, or it will be the worse for you and all your men." There was a convincing assurance in the Indian's words.

Again Pigeon laughed. "A right positive feller you are!" he exclaimed. But the rest of the men behind the boxes didn't laugh; they were all staring at the priest and whispering to each other.

"We want the ruby," said Flanders, "and we want to know what you've done with each piece of the stolen cargo, and we'll hold you all as hostages till we recover each piece. There's our terms."

"But we can't give you the ruby," retorted Pigeon.

"Then let each man come out and be searched, one by one," said the captain.

"An' how do we know you'll let us go free then?"

"We don't mean to let you go free, seeing that you're no better than pirates; but if you do as I say we'll see that you get off easier than if you don't."

"Heads you win, tails we lose—no, you don't!" cried Pigeon. "We'll let you think it over out

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there a while longer." He jumped down back of the rampart, taking the white flag with him.

There was a murmur of voices behind the boxes. The *Barnacle's* crew hid themselves again. Jerry whispered to Jim, "Derek's going to have his hands full keeping his men in line. They don't like the look of our friend Haj Putali. They want to save their skins and I don't think they're over particular how they do it. The ruby's their Jonah, and if Derek won't let them have it to throw over to the priest they're likely to chuck Derek over."

"Derek won't give in so easily," said Jim, remembering his first impression of that forceful character.

They waited five, ten minutes. Now there was no sound behind the wall of boxes. A figure went snaking forward from rock to rock; it was David Gardner. He rose and dashed for the rampart, crouching down close this side of it. He listened, and wedged the bales and boxes a little apart. Then he turned and beckoned to his mates: Over the space they went, pistols ready to fire. But when they reached the wall they found the enemy had abandoned this outpost and retreated to the tower. "Perhaps they thought we'd be satisfied

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with all these goods," said Gardner, "an' leave 'em alone!"

"Perhaps they didn't have enough ammunition," suggested Shavings.

"Maybe they're squabbling," said Perkins, "an' Derek drove 'em inside to prevent us hearing."

This explanation sounded the most reasonable to Jim.

But whatever might be going on inside the tower, no information of it leaked out. The one fair-sized opening, the door, was protected by stones and a couple of big boxes, and there was not enough light to give a glimpse through the space between them. Naturally no one wanted to go very close to the door and risk the chance of a shot. There was the same risk in approaching the other smaller openings in the tower, the attackers were plainly visible in the starlight and had no way of knowing when they might be within range of fire.

To protect his men, Captain Flanders ordered the boxes and bales that formed the rampart separated and pushed forward so as to make a number of isolated bulwarks. In this way there were soon a number of small towers dotting the summit, each one sheltering two or three of the crew. While

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they worked at this there came no sound from within the tower; to all intents and purposes Flanders and his men might have had the hill entirely to themselves. "But those old stone walls are mighty thick," Jerry said to Jim. "When I was a prisoner here I could stand a few yards outside and not hear a whisper of the talk that was going on inside."

Jim, squatting behind a box, was studying a gap in the tower, a few feet above the ground and almost entirely overgrown with vines. He decided that he could reach this without great danger of being seen by taking a roundabout course from bush to bush, and confided his scheme to Jerry. Jerry thought the plan feasible. So Jim crept away from his shelter, made a half-circle, and arrived close up to the wall; there, lying flat, he pushed himself along until he came directly under the gap, and could raise his head and be shielded by the vines.

At first he could hear little but the murmur of voices. As Jerry had said, the stones were very thick, those at the base being small boulders. But Jim soon became convinced that no one was watching on the inner side of this particular hole, and then he dared to thrust his head sufficiently into the opening to hear what was going on.

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It was Derek's voice he heard, an angry, snarling voice. "You fools, do you want to throw away what we've risked our necks for? Do you know what we did? We turned pirate when we held up the *Mary Parrot*. Do you know what happens to pirates? I reckon each of you knows that. We took an almighty big chance, but we've still got what we went after, an' if we can hold on to it a little longer every man Jack of us'll be rich. An' now you're scared. A pretty lot o' scared fools, ready to surrender."

"They've got us, Derek, they've got us!" came from one of the sailors. "If you give us the ruby we can make terms with 'em."

"Maybe you'll save your necks, but you won't get any money," the leader retorted. "Do you want to go home barefoot when you might go home rich?"

"Looks as if we mightn't go home at all if we stick to you," some one grumbled.

"It's the ruby that's done it!" another exclaimed. "We've had nothin' but bad luck ever since we took it."

"An' here comes a man from Indy, an' Lord knows what he an' his devils'll do to us," a third

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voice whined. "He said he'd got three of us already."

"The way to fight devils is to turn devil yourself," Derek snarled. "Do you think I'm afraid of all the spooks in Indy? I'm not! An' as for bad luck, that's because you're all cowards!"

There was a threatening rumble of voices. "Give us the ruby, the ruby!" several men demanded.

"It looks to me like you'd better do it, chief," came the lighter voice of Sam Pigeon.

"You've got it," said another. "You needn't try to tell us you don't know where it is."

"I'd never have sailed with you if I'd known you were goin' to take a thing like that!" declared a sailor. "I've been out to the East an' I've seen a lot o' strange things!"

"You dogs!" stormed Derek. "I've sailed around the world a couple o' times and I've never seen such a white-livered crew as you! Of course you believe in spooks an' charms an' spells, you're the kind that would, you're the sort that the fakirs make up their yarns to frighten! I wonder you ain't afraid of the dark an' shadders. You can go out there an' lay yourselves down like lambs an'

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take what's comin' to you, an' likely as not it'll be a long term in a cell, if it ain't something worse. But I'm not goin' to lay down, an' I ain't goin' to give you the ruby. I took it an' I'm goin' to hold it until I get my price!"

Again the rumble of voices, more threatening than before.

"You give it to us now!" one demanded, and instantly there was a chorus repeating the words. "Hand the ruby over!" "Quick now!" "No more talk about it!"

Jim judged the men were about to close in on their leader.

There came a sharp warning from Pigeon. "Stand back there! Stand back, I tell you! I'm a friend to you all! I've stood by you when you wanted something from the chief, an' I'm goin' to stand by him now! Do you want to shoot each other like a parcel o' crazy fools! Joe, you keep your watch by the door there. Derek won't give up the ruby. Mebbe I think he oughter; but he won't. Mebbe he's plumb crazy, but you'd be a whole lot more crazy to try to take it from him. Let him have the blessed thing for himself. That's his look-out; if it does for him that's his own affair. If we

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take to fightin' each other now we're done for, lads, an' no mistake. Many a crew's met its end that way. We've got to stand together!"

The angry voices rose again, proclaiming that the crew believed its safety depended on surrendering the jewel.

"Another step and I shoot!" cried Derek.

"Another step an' I shoot with him!" said Pigeon. "He may be a fool, but you're worse if you do this!"

A pause, a murmur. Jim listened for a shot. Then Pigeon spoke again. "We may have a chance if we stick it out together; we haven't a chance if we fall foul o' each other. Derek's still our captain, an' I'm his right-hand man. Let the two of us do the thinkin'."

"He's done it long enough, an' see where it's got us!" one cried.

"Well, we're still alive an' kickin', ain't we?" Pigeon demanded. "Kickin'? Sure we be! It's lucky those outside don't know what fools we be."

The muttering ceased; it appeared that Pigeon had won a respite for his chief for the time at least. But almost immediately there was an ex-

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clamoration from a man by the door. "Look out! Look out!" he cried. "They're up to something!"

From the sounds within Jim judged that Derek's crew were hurrying to the door. Wondering what was happening he withdrew his head from the hole and looked around. The men of the *Barnacle* had cut some trees and placing them against the tower out of reach of the door and windows were climbing up them. Already a couple of sailors had reached a row of jutting stones that ringed the tower and were seeking holds for their hands and feet on the rougher stones above. They meant to take the pirates from the top, where the old crumbling tower stood exposed to the sky.

Hurrying back to Jerry, Jim told in a few words what he had overheard. Meantime the men were making progress up the tower, rather slow progress, for the stones, rough as they were, were not as easy to hold by as the rigging of a ship, but still working their way up with a good deal more agility than would have been possible for landmen.

Jim was about to climb one of the poles himself when Jerry caught him by the sleeve. "Hold on!

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There are enough getting up aloft now. Some of us have got to stay at the bottom in case they make a dash."

"That's right, Jerry. Come round to the back with me. It sounds as if something was going on there. Pete's yelling!"

They ran around to the eastern side, where the bushes were bigger and closer together than in front of the tower. Pete was behind a clump and he was shouting like a sailor in a storm. Jim dropped down beside him. "What's the matter? I don't see anything. What's your trouble?"

"There's a break in the wall there, just beyond that big rock. Somebody stuck out his head an' arms a minute ago. He's tryin' to get out the back way."

Whoever it was had disappeared, for Jim and Jerry, watching where Pete pointed, saw no sign of a man. Then came a shout from the front of the tower, high up, and Jim, glancing that way, saw the figures of men almost at the top. He looked back again, and even as he did so two men leaped out through the break on the east side and dashed for the nearest bushes. Then came a third, Sam Pigeon. He streaked across in the starlight and

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threw himself flat on the ground behind a boulder just as Pete fired.

Jim was glad the cabin-boy's shot had missed. He liked Pigeon, he was glad he was out of the tower. He watched where the three men were hidden, he saw the bushes move, and he clutched at Pete's arm. "Let 'em go, let 'em go!" he whispered. "Pigeon did us a good turn."

"Right, Jim," muttered Pete. "I only fired to hurry 'em up a bit."

"I'm glad the fellow got away," Jerry chimed in. "There they go."

Jim saw the three men steal cautiously from their shelter and disappear down the hill.

"But we don't want Derek to get out that way," Jerry continued. "I'll go over there and the next fellow who shows his head will find me waiting for him."

Jim went back to the front, careful to keep away from the door and the loopholes. His mates were now at the jagged top of the tower, shielding themselves behind the pointed stones. Flanders stood on the ground, giving directions to the men aloft as if they were furling sails. Jim caught hold of a pole, shinnied up it, reached the ledge, climbed

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higher, and perched himself close to the top. Looking down he could make out the remnant of Derek's crew, now only a half-dozen men, hiding back of three or four boxes.

The attackers had their opponents at their mercy. The pirates might pick off a few of the men on top, but the first shot they fired would bring a fusillade of bullets down upon them, and they knew it. Captain Flanders had given his men orders not to fire except under provocation. But this situation could not last long; Derek's crew were cornered beyond hope of escaping, and all that was left for them to do was to come out and surrender.

Bill Sampson was one of the men who were perched aloft, and now he called down to Derek: "Remember the day you put me ashore, Cap'n? I told you then we'd meet again some day, an' I reckon you ain't so glad to see me as I be to see you. You was goin' to let me starve or be stuck full of arrers by those heathen. I ain't so unkind to you. All I got waitin' for you is a pair o' handcuffs. Better come out an' try 'em on, Red Derek."

Derek didn't deign to make any answer, but one of his crew spoke. "I'm quit o' this job. If I walk out o' the door will you treat me decent?"

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“Sure as you know,” answered Perkins from his perch on the tower. “Throw down your gun, hold up your hands, and march out. Nobody’ll shoot at you.”

The man followed directions. Jim saw him come from behind his box and walk out through the door. Then another followed the first one’s example, and another, until all but Derek had surrendered.

“Better come along, chief,” Sampson urged. “You’ll be lonely there. I was lonely when you put me ashore down in Patagony, but I don’t bear you no grudge. I don’t want no one to feel as lonely as I did when I saw you sail away.”

Derek stood, partly hidden, near the rear of the tower. He was silent, and as far as Jim could see motionless. Captain Flanders came to the door, pistol in hand. “You’d better give up, Derek,” he said. “The game’s done. I don’t want to do you any harm if I can help it. If you’re a sensible man you’ll see now that you’re bound to be taken, dead or alive.”

But Derek gave no sign that he heard the captain’s words.

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“He’s a game one!” muttered Perkins.

Jim nodded. Derek was made of different stuff from the men of his crew.

Jim noticed that Sampson was climbing down from the top of the tower. He heard Captain Flanders speak again. “Don’t be a fool, Derek! I don’t mean to stay here all night. You haven’t a chance if I tell my men to shoot.”

There came no word from the pirate chief. Flanders was losing patience. “Stubbornness won’t help you. I’ll ——”

Jim saw a man slip through the opening at the back of the tower where Pigeon had escaped. He saw the man leap at Derek and wrench his revolver away. He saw Derek give a lurch and turn on his enemy. The other man was Sampson. Now the two were locked in each other’s arms and swaying backward and forward.

For a minute they fought, each trying to throw the other. Then Derek’s big body went back, farther and farther back. He was strong as an ox, but Sampson had him, had him now by the throat, was squeezing the breath out of him. Derek swayed and fell, his enemy upon him. Crash they came to the ground, and at the same instant

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Flanders sprang to Sampson's side and stood over Derek's head.

Jim came down from the top in record time, faster than he had ever swung down the mast of the *Barnacle*. The tower was now filled with his mates, crowded about the fallen Derek. Slowly Sampson was getting to his feet. "Well, we're quits now, Red," he muttered between gasps of breath. "I don't care what happens to you now. I've had my hands on you, an' that pays me back for the rotten trick you played me."

Derek was gasping too and somewhat stunned by his fall. But after a couple of minutes he slowly rose to his feet. "You've got me, Flanders," he said. "That's all there is about it. But you wouldn't have had me if I'd had a decent crew."

The plateau in front of the tower, littered with boxes and bales containing valuable goods from the Far East, lighted by the stars in the midnight sky, was now filled with the men of the *Barnacle* and their prisoners. Far away over the silent, sleeping meadows lay a faint silver line that was the Pacific Ocean, in the other directions were the fertile fields of Chile, with the dark heights of the Andes swelling on the west. As Jim came out from the

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tower it occurred to him that the chase which had begun in Boston had reached its climax in as far away and lonely a spot as could have been found anywhere.

The half-dozen men of Derek's crew were standing close together under guard of a couple of sailors. Perkins led the pirate chief out into the starlight. Flanders' smiling face showed his complete satisfaction with the night's work. "Well, sir," he said to Haj Putali, "we've cleaned 'em up! I'll be taking back to the States about all the cargo these rascals stole from the *Mary Parrot*."

The Indian was smiling too. "I congratulate you, my friend. You have done it without shedding blood, which is a great blessing." He looked at Derek. "And now, where is the ruby?"

Derek, standing there almost as squat and heavy as one of the figures of Buddha, looked as expressionless as a carved idol.

"The Rose is here—that I know," went on the even tones of the priest. "I do not need the words of your men to convince me. You took the Rose from a man on the *Mary Parrot*; you have never let it go out of your keeping, though you had a copy made; you know where it is now. Give it to me."

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Derek might not have heard him for all the sign he gave.

“The Buddha that sits in the temple of Delhi will have his eye again,” Haj Putali continued. “Do you know the ways of the gods of the East with those who offend them? Almost you and your men destroyed each other to-night, as many crews that have stolen from the gods have destroyed each other before now. Have you not learned your lesson?”

“Go talk to them,” said Derek, and he nodded toward his men in the background. “That sort o’ talk frightens them.”

The Indian smiled. “But you are different, are you? Perhaps it was all that the god required that your men should feel his power. The result is the same, you see.” He turned abruptly to Flanders. “I will ask you to have him searched, my friend,” he added.

“Go through his clothes, Mr. Perkins and Jim,” the captain ordered. “And see you don’t miss anything.”

With Gardner in front of Derek to keep him in order, Jim and the mate went through every stitch the prisoner had on. They emptied his pockets,

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they took off his jacket, they looked at his belt and his boots, they searched his shirt and his trousers. Again and again they went over Derek from his shoulders to his feet. They examined his cap. And finally Perkins turned around. "There's no ruby on him, sir. I'll take my oath to that."

Flanders looked at Haj Putali. "He might have hid it somewhere in the tower," he suggested.

The Indian considered this for several minutes. "From what I know of the man," he said at length, "he never let the ruby out of his hands. He took it to a jeweler in Valparaiso. I think I can see him there. He held the ruby so that the jeweler could study it, and the jeweler did study it, for he made a copy that was almost perfect. But the Rose stayed in his fingers."

"We might take him along with us now," Flanders suggested. "I'll see that he doesn't escape, and if he has the stone it's bound to appear sooner or later. Though I must say that I don't see where he can have it, after the way those two went through his clothes."

Haj Putali shook his head. "There's too much risk," he said. "He might get rid of it in some way

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on the march. If we're ever to find it we can find it now."

They all stared at Derek, who fronted them imperturbably, himself apparently the least interested of the entire group in what was going on.

"I might try a little persuasion," said Flanders. "I've known men to answer a question under force."

"No. Not that way," said the Indian. He stepped closer to Derek and looked him straight in the face. Derek answered his glance with a look as straight as his own. "You can never dispose of the ruby," said Haj Putali. "If you give it to me now I will speak a good word for you later."

"I don't want your good words! You're no better than a fakir with all your black magic!" Derek's words were the height of contempt.

Haj Putali flushed and his lips set tight. He stepped back a few paces and his eyes traveled over Derek from top to toe. Then suddenly he stepped up again and caught the man's hands in his own, holding them like a vise. "Pull off his boots, Jim! Pull off his boots! Ah, that makes you squirm! You won't let them have your boots! Very well!"

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His two hands gave a quick push, and Derek lost his balance and would have fallen on his back if Perkins hadn't clutched him in his arms.

Derek struggled, pinioned as he was, but Jim pulled off the man's heavy boots and handed them to Haj Putali. "Give me your knife," said the Indian, and Jim obeyed. The priest held the boots bottom up, and Jim saw, to his surprise, that the heels were unusually large and deep.

Haj Putali stuck Jim's knife into the heel of one boot, dug into the leather, with an effort sliced off the top. He threw the boot away. Then he cut the second heel. As he sliced off the top of this Jim saw that the heel was a box, with something in it. The Indian dropped the boot and held up a round object wrapped in cotton.

Another second and the cotton wrapping was off and the priest was holding a red stone in his two hands. He stepped back and held the stone up in the starlight. As carefully as he had studied the first red gem he now studied this one. Then he nodded, smiled, and lifted the sparkling jewel on his open palms. "The eye of my god!" he said, his deep voice quivering. "I give thanks that I have it safe again!"



A ROUND OBJECT WRAPPED IN COTTON

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Slowly he sank on his knees, still holding the ruby before him, and bowed his head toward the east. The men on the hill stared at him, thrilled at the strange spectacle.

CHAPTER XIV.

“THE CROW’S NEST” AHOY!

IT was several minutes before Haj Putali stood up, and then he said to the captain, “Now that I have the Rose of Delhi again, my business here is finished, unless I can be of some help to you.”

“I reckon we’re all done here,” said Flanders. “That is, except for checking up the boxes and bags and seeing how many of ’em are still missing. I’ll leave that business in charge of Davy Gardner and Pete. Mr. Perkins, you and Jim Burgess fetch Derek along. He’ll want to put his boots on before he walks down this hill.”

Derek, who sullenly pulled on his boots, was guarded by the mate and Jim as carefully as Haj Putali was guarding the ruby, and that was saying a great deal, for the priest of Buddha held the precious jewel in both hands, apparently unwilling to trust it even to his own pocket. With their prisoners the captain and crew of the *Barnacle* now started down toward the highroad, leaving Gardner

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and the cabin-boy to make a list of the cargo that was scattered inside and outside the Pirates’ Tower.

Without further adventures the sailors reached the headquarters at the edge of the grove just as the first streaks of dawn were beginning to show in the sky. The men who had been left on guard there reported that all was well, and after seeing that the prisoners were secure and setting sentries Flanders advised the others to get as much sleep as they could. It took Jim some time to fall asleep; he heard Gardner and Pete come into camp before he began to doze.

Next morning Flanders held a council under the shade of the trees. He heard the bosun’s report as to the amount of cargo in and about the tower; he added to this the items that he had recovered on the island and which were now safely stored in the hold of the *Barnacle*; and comparing all these with his list he found that there were not more than a couple of dozen boxes missing from the total that Derek had taken from the *Mary Parrot*. Then he had Manuel Poa brought before him, and when that shrewd trader learned how matters stood, he made a full statement as to his dealings with Derek. He had some of the missing cargo in his storehouse, a

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few bales had already been sold in Valparaiso. He was of the opinion that Derek had also been dealing with another trader in a village to the north. The goods that Derek had doubtless been able to sell to this man, and the few boxes he had disposed of in small settlements on the east coast of South America would account for the sum total of his stolen wares. Flanders would thus be able to take back with him practically all the missing cargo.

Poa also told how he had accompanied Derek to a jeweler in Valparaiso and heard Derek order an exact imitation of the ruby. Derek had not let the jewel leave his sight, but the jeweler was so clever that he had contrived a copy that would have fooled any one but Haj Putali. Poa was to bring this copy out to Derek, and the latter expected, in case his own crew or his enemies should force him to give up the ruby, to pass the imitation off as the true jewel. Derek had already paid for the copy, and so Flanders now added this counterfeit to the stores he held to make up for the goods that were missing.

These matters disposed of, the next question was as to the disposition to be made of the prisoners. They had rounded up all the crew except Pigeon and the two who had escaped with him and those

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two others who had fled down the hill after the meeting with the Indian. Flanders decided to let these go rather than take more time to hunt for them, saying that he would leave word with the police of Valparaiso concerning them and offer a reward for their capture.

There remained to divide up certain work. Gardner, with several men, was commissioned to procure wagons and convey the stores from the tower to the *Barnacle*. Perkins, with certain others, was to go to the bottle-shaped inlet where the *Sahib* lay and sail the sloop around to the harbor of Valparaiso. Jerry and Jim and Haj Putali were to go back with Manuel Poa to the village and see about the wares that trader held. Flanders, with the remainder of his crew, would march the prisoners to the city and give them in charge of the proper authorities, notify the American Consul of their capture, and cable a report to the shipping company in Boston. When they had done these several affairs the men were told to rejoin the clipper and sail north on board her.

Toward noon Jim and Jerry and the Indian climbed into Poa’s wagon and with the trader driving, took the road west to the village. They passed

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the brook and came in sight of the crone's cottage. The woman was sitting on her doorstep, weaving a basket. "Wait a minute," said Jerry, and dropped from the wagon. Soon he came back again, a basket in his hand. "I bought this for a souvenir," he said. "And I tried to make her understand what had happened. I think she's glad we cleaned out the old tower. She shook her head every time I mentioned it; but you ought to have seen her grin when I gave her the money."

Jim turned and waved his hand to the woman. She stared a second, then waved back at him. "She's a good sport," said Jim, as they drove on again. "She treated us all right yesterday."

When they reached the village they found that Poa had told the truth about the boxes Derek had sent him. They arranged to have these carted south to the *Barnacle*. Then they made a call on Señor Fernando, and, as it was growing late, they accepted his invitation to spend the night with him. Sitting on his wide veranda they gave him a complete account of their adventures. Haj Putali unwrapped the cotton from about the ruby and showed the gem to the planter. "A wonderful stone!" said the latter, amazed at the size and the

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brilliancy of the Rose. “It must be worth a fortune! No wonder men are greedy to possess it.”

“It is too beautiful for any man to own,” the priest answered slowly. “You think you know its value, but only those of us who live in India can form any idea of its true magnificence. Ages ago a Rajah gave it to Buddha in thankfulness for the recovery of his son from illness. Since then it has shone as the eye of the god on millions of worshippers. There is no other ruby like it in the world, and the ruby is the most beautiful and precious of all gems. Now it goes back to the temple for countless millions more to see and reverence. What folly for any man to think he can hold it wholly to himself. It is like the sun or the sea or the wind in the trees at nightfall; it belongs to all, like all the possessions of the high gods.”

“You are not afraid to have such a jewel with you?” asked the planter.

“Afraid?” There was the slightest note of scorn in the Indian’s voice. “I am the child of the god. Who shall take the god’s possession from me?”

Late they sat and talked, all of them again under the spell of Haj Putali’s mystical words of India.

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Early next morning the three traveled on to Valparaiso. There Haj Putali sent word of his success to his brother-priests of Buddha. Then they went south to the *Barnacle's* harbor. Captain Flanders arrived that night and invited the man from Delhi to sail to San Francisco with him. As it was necessary to straighten out the legal ownership of the ruby with the officers of the shipping company the priest agreed, greatly to the satisfaction of Jim, who wanted to see more of this fascinating friend whom chance had brought his way.

The different members of the crew who had been carrying out the captain's orders reported aboard the ship that day and the next. Derek and the other prisoners were safe in jail in Valparaiso and would stay there until Flanders had placed the matter of bringing them to trial in charge of the shipping company's lawyers in San Francisco. Bill Sampson wasn't imprisoned with his former mates; he had asked the captain to take him along as one of the crew of the *Barnacle* and had promised that he would do whatever Flanders directed when they should reach the United States. In view of the part Sampson had played in the capture of Derek, Flanders was willing to agree to this.

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Perkins reported that he and his men, with the aid of a couple of native sailors he had picked up alongshore, had brought the *Sahib* safely to Valparaiso, and given the sloop in charge of the agent of a steamship line, who was to hold her until he received orders from Boston. Nothing of any value was in her hold; Derek had carried everything to his inland stronghold; had he been able to sell his stolen cargo to men like Poa he would probably have left the sloop where she was, and dividing the profits among his men, have told them to scatter, and so throw any pursuers off their trail.

The boxes and bales from the Pirates’ Tower were brought to the *Barnacle* by Gardner; those that Poa had had in his storehouse arrived in a wagon from the village; all were stowed away in the hold of the clipper, which was now filled to overflowing with merchandise. And just about a fortnight after the good ship had come to anchor off the Chilean shore the *Barnacle* set her sails again, and leaving the cliff near which she had been moored headed out on the Pacific.

It was good to taste the salt breezes again, to see the great expanse of sky and water, to hear the wind whistling in the rigging, to feel the warm sun of

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midday and to watch the stars at night. There was plenty of work to be done. Everything that could be moved was taken out of the forward house and spread on the forecastle-head to air, clothing and bedding were washed and dried, and the forecastle itself was cleaned with soap and water. Decks were swabbed, sails mended, brasswork polished till it shone in the sun. But Jim enjoyed it all. He didn't know until he came back to it after his stay ashore how much he really liked the life on the sea.

Again gulls followed the ship. The Pacific was smooth and smiling, so gentle in its treatment of the clipper that Haj Putali was able to stay on deck most of the time, poor sailor as he was. The weather grew warmer as they neared the Equator. One morning as Jim was hanging over the side in the shade of the sails, watching the copper gliding smoothly through the sea, he caught sight of something bright green resting on the surface of the waves. He thought it was a bunch of sea-grass. Shavings, who was standing near him, saw the green object also, and called out, "Hello, there's a turtle!" As the *Barnacle* came closer Jim had a good view of the turtle's broad back, at least three

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feet across, and saw that the turtle was sleeping, his head drawn in, but his feet and tail extended something like the arms of a starfish. The turtle seemed to be enjoying his nap, rising and falling gently on the swell of the sea.

The Equator was reached and crossed and the clipper made more speed as the southeast Trades freshened. One day’s run was two hundred and fifty miles, an excellent showing that delighted the captain. The weather was very hot, but cool breezes came with the sunset and the nights were wonderful. It was then, when his watch was off duty, that Jim sat with Haj Putali on the roof of the forward house and listened to his stories.

When she picked up the northeast Trades the *Barnacle’s* course was not quite so smooth. The sky-sails were taken in, and the man from India retired to his bunk. The heat lessened, at times a cold wind blew, and presently a fine rain came in level clouds across the ship, almost as dense as fog. Wet weather followed off and on for several days, then the skies cleared, over a calm sea thousands of flying-fish shot back and forth in glittering rainbow colors, little pink clouds floated across the deep blue bowl of sky that rose from the horizon. The tropics

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were now left behind, the clipper was well up in the northern hemisphere.

North and north the *Barnacle* bore. Now her bowsprit was pointing toward the brown crags of the Golden Gate of San Francisco. When the watch was changed at midnight the mate sang out, "All hands on deck to tack ship!" Then came the order, "Put your helm down!" Then, "Helm a-lee!" Then, "Maintop-sail haul!" The crew cast off the braces, the heavy yards clattered round. "Let go and haul!" cried the mate. The head-yards swung round, and in a few minutes the clipper was braced up on the port tack, heading to the north of east.

It was noon of a September day when the *Barnacle* entered the Golden Gate under a cloudless sky. Jim, in the bow, watched the approach to the famous harbor. It was a great spectacle. The ship sailed on between wild, rugged hills that rose sheer out of the ocean. Presently she glided past a headland and suddenly was poking her nose into a maze of wooden and steel ships, a wide expanse of shining water ahead, perpendicular streets running down to the shore on the starboard side and a seemingly endless chain of beautiful hills on the other.

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No wonder, thought Jim, that the men who reached this haven after stormy months at sea christened it the Golden Gate. It thrilled him to think that this matchless port belonged to his own country.

Soon after midday the captain gave the order “Let go.” There was a heavy splash, the loud rush of the cable, and the big anchor bedded itself fast in the mud of San Francisco Bay. “Back to our native heath again!” Jerry cried at Jim’s elbow. “And we’ve seen some right exciting times since we left the U. S. A.”

That afternoon some of them went ashore. Jim sent a telegram to his mother at Kennebunkport to tell her of his safe arrival. Jerry went with the captain and Haj Putali to the office of the shipping company and made his report. For a week conferences were held to decide as to what should be done with Derek and his crew and the cargo they had stolen from the *Mary Parrot*. The pirates were to be extradited from Chile and placed on trial in the United States and the cargo returned to its owners. And the officials decided that, since the man who had had the *Rose of Delhi* in his possession on the *Mary Parrot* had undoubtedly stolen the ruby from the temple and since Haj Putali furnished them

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convincing proof of his identity, the Rose should be given to him to take back to the temple. Jim couldn't help wondering what Haj Putali would have done if the officers had decided against his claim; he couldn't imagine the Indian giving up the jewel for any reason at all now that he had it safe in his hands.

Some of the crew left the clipper at San Francisco, according to agreements they had made when they shipped at Boston. Among them was Jim. Jerry had arranged that Jim should go with him and Haj Putali by train to New England, and that the Indian should sail for home from New York. "You must see something of this new Western World now you are here," he said to the priest. "Perhaps we can show you some things almost as wonderful as those you have in the Far East." And Haj Putali, always eager to learn, accepted the chance.

So it happened that on a crystal clear afternoon in early autumn Captain Nathaniel Burgess, sitting on the porch of "The Crow's Nest" at Kennebunkport, reading a Boston newspaper, was startled to hear a war-whoop apparently at his own gate. He looked up in great surprise and saw

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three people coming along the path, a very dark-skinned man whom he took at once to come from the east of Suez, the tall fellow named Grantham, and his own grandson Jim. The captain dashed the newspaper on the porch and stood up. “Ship ahoy!” he roared. “Shiver my timbers if it isn’t Jim! Come a-running, Mary! Here’s our sailor boy!”

Jim bounded up the steps and was caught in his grandfather’s arms. Mrs. Burgess appeared at the door and her son gave her a hug that would have done credit to a polar bear. She laughed and cried at the same time and called the big, sunburned fellow a hundred pet names. “That’s right, that’s right!” exclaimed the old sea-captain, waving his walking-stick round and round like a wand.

After a few minutes Jim, remembering his companions, drew away a little from his mother. “Grandfather, mother, of course you remember Jerry Grantham. I want you to meet Haj Putali, who comes from Delhi in India; he’s the most wonderful man I’ve ever known!”

The Indian bowed low, a twinkle in his black eyes. “Your son does me too much honor, madam.

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If I have taught him some things, he has taught me others no less valuable. It gives me great pleasure to meet Jim's mother, and likewise his grandfather the captain, of whom I have heard so much."

Captain Burgess held out his hand. "Glad to welcome you here, sir. Your people in India always made me feel at home out there. I remember Delhi well; a beautiful place." He turned to Jerry. "And you've brought our boy back safe, Mr. Grantham. Did he make a good sailor?"

"Took to the ship the minute he set foot aboard her, sir," Jerry answered. "Captain Flanders said any one could see at a glance that Jim came from a race of sailors."

"Aye, aye, that's as it should be," nodded the grandfather. "Well, Jim, you've grown a whole lot, and you look as hard as nails." He surveyed his bronzed grandson with great pride. "You'll be sailing your own ship one of these days, and I reckon it'll be a bigger and a faster ship than any I ever sailed. Sit down, gentlemen, and let's hear all about it. Of course you'll stay to supper. I've been looking forward to this all summer."

Haj Putali and Jerry took chairs while Jim sat in his favorite place on the steps, his back against

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the porch-rail. “You begin, Jim,” said Jerry, “and we’ll interrupt when we think you’ve omitted anything important.”

But Jim had hardly begun when there came a hail from the street. Captain Benjamin Libby stood there. “Ahoy, ahoy!” said he. “Are you ready for boarding-parties?”

“Aye, aye, sir,” called back Jim. “Come aboard, sir.”

The little captain mounted the porch, was introduced all round, and sat down. “Takes me back to old times, Nat,” said he. “Remember how we used to reel off the log soon as ever we reached the home port?”

“And we used to tell whoppin’ big stories, eh, Ben?” said Captain Burgess. “Spin away, Jim, my boy. You can’t make your yarn any too tall for us.”

“I’m only telling the truth, grandfather,” Jim protested.

“That’s what a sailor always says,” said the captain, nodding.

“Well, I’ve got Jerry as witness to the first part and Haj Putali to the rest. You’ll believe the three of us, won’t you?”

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“Sure we will,” said Captain Libby. “The more exciting a yarn is the more I believe it.”

The two old salts had heard many accounts of adventures on the sea in their time, but never one so full of thrills as this that Jim, assisted now and then by Jerry, spun that afternoon. He made them see and know the *Barnacle* as they had seen and known their own ships. He told how he learned to handle the sails, to take the day's reckoning, to judge the wind and the weather. The two captains frequently nodded and occasionally interrupted to give their own opinions on nautical points. But when he began to relate the search for Derek's sloop they sat silent and absorbed. Intent on every move the men of the *Barnacle* made they followed the chase from the Argentine to the Falkland Islands, thence around Tierra del Fuego, and so to the Pacific. Jim told how he and Pete had been left on the little island and Jerry took up the tale to describe his adventures on the sloop as Derek's prisoner. Then Jim related the meeting of Perkins and himself with Haj Putali in the hotel-garden at Valparaiso. “Now it's your turn,” said Jim, turning to the man from Delhi.

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“You’re doing it well,” said the Indian. “I’d rather hear your story.”

So Jim finished the history with the hunt for the Pirates’ Tower and the ultimate capture of Derek and his crew. “And that’s the way we turned the trick,” he concluded. “And if you want further proof perhaps Haj Putali will show you the ruby.”

“Well, I must say,” said Captain Libby, “that was a real voyage you lads made and no mistake!”

Captain Burgess leaned forward. “I would like to see that ruby if the gentleman doesn’t mind.”

Haj Putali unbuttoned his coat. At his belt hung a small silk bag. Opening this he drew out a ball of cotton and from its midst produced the Rose. He held it out on his palm while the two old captains stared at it in great delight.

“My word, what a beauty!” exclaimed Captain Burgess. “I’ve seen rubies in the East in my day, but never a stone like that!”

Captain Libby touched the jewel with his finger, delicately, almost as if he were afraid of hurting it. “I used to know a lot about gems,” he muttered. “I traded in ’em sometimes, on the side. But I couldn’t begin to figure the value of that.”

“No man has ever attempted to put a value on

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it," said Haj Putali. "Its value to us in Delhi is more than any figures could express."

"I know," said Captain Burgess. "How could any men be so crazy as to think they could steal a thing like that and get away with it?"

"Not all men know India as you do, sir," said the priest. "Not all know how we guardians of the temples follow what is ours to the ends of the earth."

"Aye, it's the East." Captain Burgess' voice was reminiscent. "I have seen strange things there. I hinted at them to my grandson when I gave him that jade charm. Well, the charm seems to have had some effect on that man Derek when Jim showed it to him on the island."

"Your grandson is not so sure of that amulet's effect," said Haj Putali, his eyes twinkling.

"Such things do seem right odd here in America," put in Captain Libby.

"He must come to my India," said the priest. "Then will I show him the Rose where it belongs, the beautiful eye of Buddha." Carefully he wrapped up the ruby and put it back in the bag that was fastened at his belt.

"Jim," said Captain Burgess, looking at his

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grandson, “you remember how I always told you seafaring men were wiser than landlubbers. Perhaps you understand what I meant now?”

“I’m sure I know a great deal more now than I did when I shipped aboard the *Barnacle*,” Jim answered, “and it isn’t only about sailing a clipper either. Think of all we’ve seen and done since we left Boston harbor!”

“I’d no idea we’d have such luck!” Jerry chimed in. “I’ve got enough for a dozen books of the sea.”

“Oh, you sailors!” Haj Putali exclaimed. “How you do love the ocean! And yet when I’ve been aboard ship I’ve heard you sailors complain of the winds and the waves, the storms and the calms. No weather seemed to suit you.”

Captain Libby rapped his walking-stick on the floor of the porch. “Of course we grumble,” he grunted. “It’s a sailor’s right to grumble. How’d we ever get proper weather if we didn’t teach it to behave itself by cussin’ at it? The weather’s just like a mule, always balky and stubborn, an’ when it does act decent for a spell you can bet your boots it’s goin’ to change soon.” He stood up. “I must be toddlin’ along, mates. The cook in our galley at

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home likes me to be smart at meal-times. Well, gentlemen, when all's said an' done, there's no life like the one on the boundin' wave. When you strike port, like me an' Cap'n Nat, an' have to stay there, you'll begin to appreciate the ocean." With that he took himself off down the path.

The guests stayed to supper, which seemed to Jim the best he had ever eaten. There never was such baked ham, such blueberry muffins, such quince jelly, and such rice pudding as his mother made. Then they gathered around an open fire indoors, for the autumn nights are cold on the coast of Maine, and Captain Burgess asked a thousand questions about the ports of South America he had known in his sailing days.

Jerry and Haj Putali spent the night at "The Crow's Nest." Jim gave the Indian his room and made up two beds in the attic, where he and Jerry slept. Next morning was one of those beautiful clear and cold days that seem more wonderful on the coast than anywhere else in the world. The three who had been messmates on the clipper went out on the rocks and looked at the dazzling deep blue ocean. "You have a beautiful country, my friends," said Haj Putali. "As beautiful as my

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land. We have no coast like this. And your air is enough to tell me why you are men of such vast energy. My land is warm and lulls the thoughts to slumber. Here you must be active. Your temples—you call them churches—are not like mine. They are not adorned with jewels. Their spires soar toward the sky, but they are plainly built. How far away the East seems when we look toward it from these rocks!” He was silent a few minutes, thoughtful, almost dreaming. “But I hear my East calling. I can see my temple in the warm sun, the yellow road that leads to it, the green trees about it. I can see the beggars by the roadside, I can hear the bells that call to prayer. My people need me, the god needs his eye. I must go, my friends.” He held out his hand to Jim, then to Jerry. “Good-bye. You must both come to Delhi some time. The god will bless you for what you have done for him.”

That same day Haj Putali and Jerry left for Boston. The priest was to take a steamer from New York for Liverpool and sail from the English port for India.

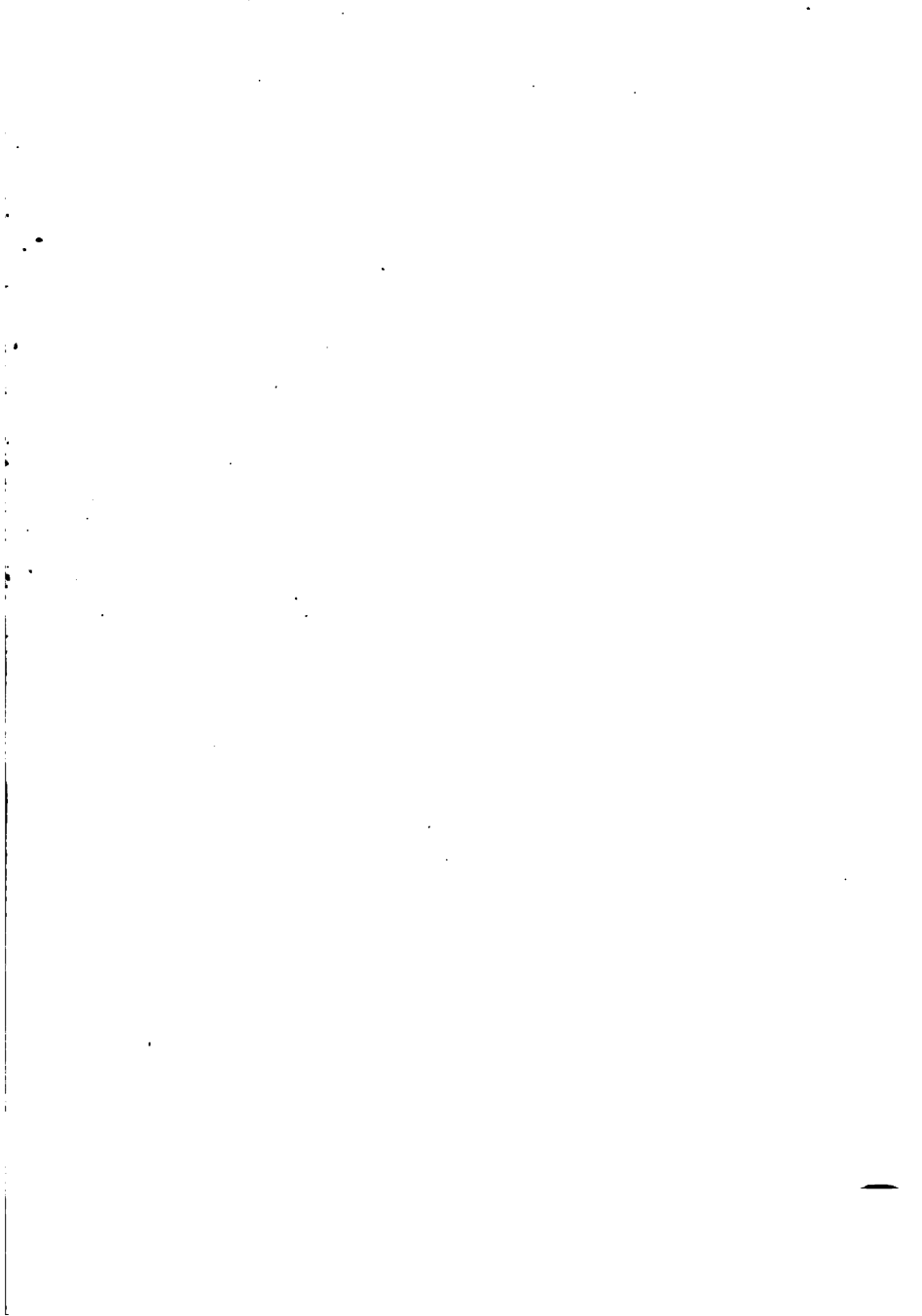
“When the *Barnacle* gets home again,” Jerry said to Jim, “you must come to town. I’ll hunt

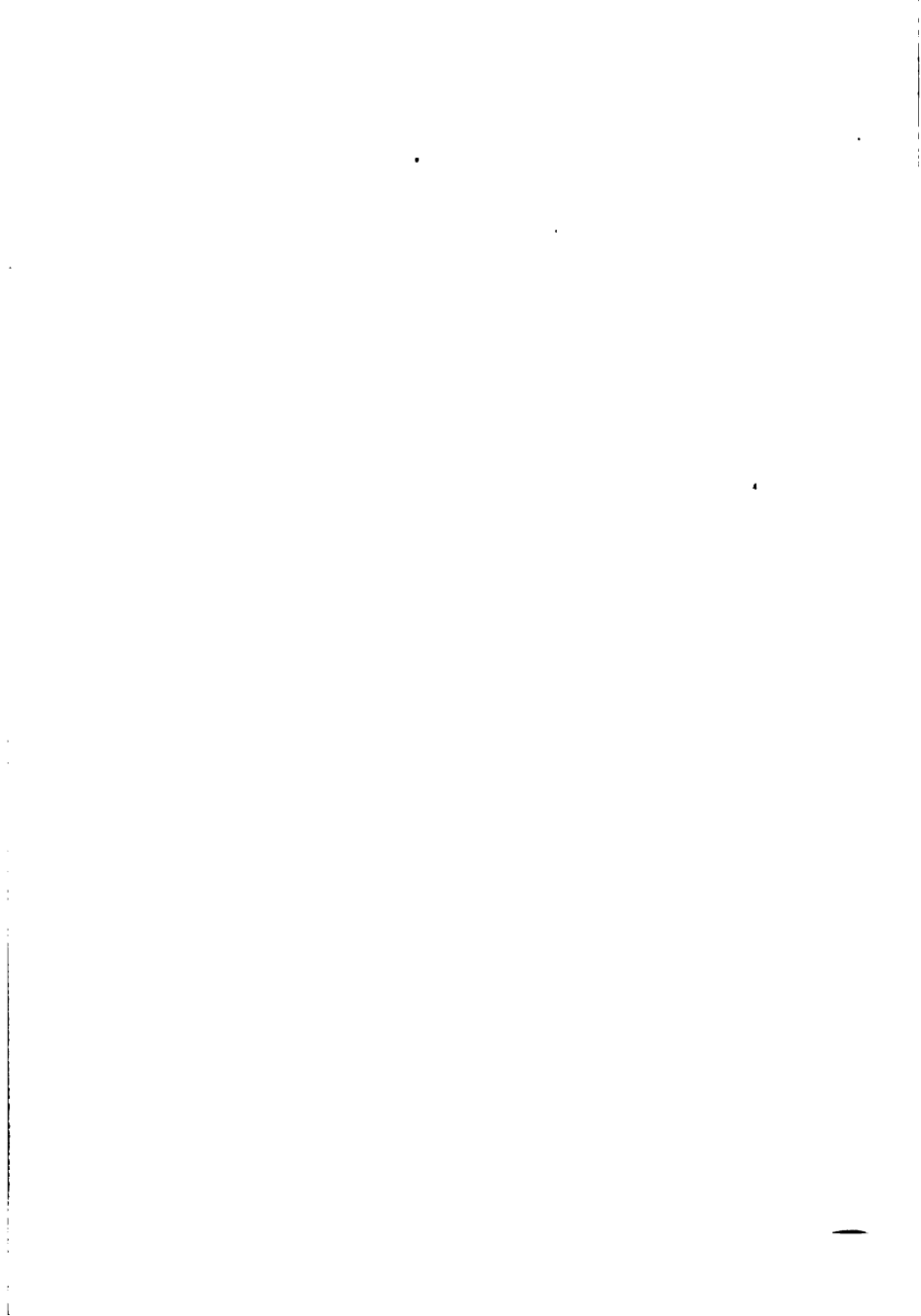
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up Captain Flanders and Mason and Perkins and Pete and Gardner and Shavings, and we'll have a reunion. We'll seek the good old Rose of Delhi all over again."

"And I'll make plans for my next voyage," Jim answered. "Once a sailor always a sailor, you know. I'm going to follow the sea."

"Maybe I'll go with you," said Jerry. "I believe I'm almost as much a son of Father Neptune as you are yourself."







APR 16 1941