THE BOY CORAL-FISHERS; or, THE SEA-CAVERN SCOURGE.

BY ROGER STARBUCK,
AUTHOR OF "OLD TAN KNUCKLE AND HIS BOY CHUMS," ETC., ETC.
Suddenly the damaged link parted, and the life-line snapped snapper with the increased strain.

"Jerushalem! we are in for it now!" cried Frank, as Will vainly strove to work the craft around.

"How are we ever to get back to our friends?"

"I can think of no way!"

"We will surely drown again."

His companion, however, prevented this by moving the lever and attaching the machinery; otherwise the vessel must have settled among some coral branches in which it would have been caught. But as it is, we are being carried along by the current, in spite of our efforts, which I believe are vain."

"I don't think we understand how to handle them."

Both boys looked at each other in dismay. Under the sea, cut off from the upper world, they were utterly alone. Frank laughed, but his mirth was evidently forced.

"No use," said Will. "You've pluck enough, but you can't deceive me. You feel our situation as well as I do."

"I don't deny it, Will, and I say God help us, although I tried to laugh it off just now." He assumed a serious air, and said, the submarine craft could not be made to head against the current, which was very strong. Undoubtedly they were all dazzled by the lurid glare of the lantern giving them an_unused aspect.

At last they reached a rock.

"Look out!" cried Frank, "or we will be drawn into the crevice by the current!"

He pointed to a black yawning opening in the rugged mass. Boats and other objects steered clear of it, but the current drew the vessel into the dark hollow, where it was caught fast between two masses of coral. The boys suddenly ventured to work it out. Will looked excitedly at the clock above his head, but only a little air came out!

The two looked at each other in dismay. They had little or no air supply. This air would not last them half an hour longer. Suddenly they began to feel as if suffocating. A deathly faintness came over them, a light mist seemed to veil their vision. They knew that the end was near.

All at once Frank pointed upward, and looking that way through the glass window, Will saw a Malay girl, with long, black hair and gleaming eyes, under the water peering at him and his companion. She vanished as he gazed, but a minute later a strange-looking native, with an eyes that seemed to light up the iron chain by which the submarine craft was to be helped to the surface.

"We are saved!" murmured Frank.

"I hope so; but don't be too sure."

The vessel soon began to shake and reel. Strong hands were pulling on the iron chain attached to it. At last it ascended. Frank and Will were nearly unconscious until it reached the surface, dashed open the door and crawled out into the fresh air.

A Malay girl and three men stood before them.

CHAPTER II

A STRANGE VISION.

The Malay girl was very pretty, with black eyes, long hair of the same color, and a graceful form. Unlike most of the people of her race, she wore a very pretty loincloth, a lovely white as the pearls of her native sea. She was a fine example of the Malay type, with an aquiline nose, and long, straight black hair that frayed towards the neck, a sash and a straw hat; her feet were bare.

The men were dark-looking fellows, armed with krees—knives with blades nearly fourteen inches long, having carved ivory, handles, and set in shells of pearl.

The party stood on a shelf of rocks that projected into the sea. The man who had hooked the rope to the machine under water. "Come boat from—"

"We are not going to the lagoon again."

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The Boy Fishermen.

Moco-superstitions as are all the Acheseans—refused to go after coral in this particular spot.

The sloop was headed off to a point some fathoms away, and there the fishing was continued for several days.

Black, pink, white, and red coral were here obtained. One afternoon a small sleep or tar was visible, heading along in the distance. Moco pointing to it, said to the captain:

"That's a good one."

"Do those rascals have come?"

"Yes, so far—too far out. Why's that not tell sure?"

"I must know. This coral bank is too precious to leave unless I am chipped to go."

"Me go and look if pirate."

"Do they know you? Would they harm you?"

"Him know dis him. No lie, but not hurt. Me fadder was priest. No dare hurt son of priest."

"Well, you can go, Moco."

"But they are my revolvers, requested permission to accompany him. Both Moco and Will's uncle tried to persuade the lad to remain aboard, but they pleaded so strongly that the captain finally consented.

The three entered Moco's canoe, and away it went through the shallow channels between the rocks. Moco paddled to the beach.

"Stay here, boys, till me come back. Why dat? because dem pirate him keep prison."

The boys got out on the beach, and, soon after, they saw the canoe disappear in a fog bank.

They waited long for Moco, but he did not come. They saw a coconut tree and climbed it to see if the canoe were there among the branches than they beheld a long canoe full of armed Malays emerge from the mist and approach them.

"I believe those are the pirates," said Frank, "what happened to our friends, with them," he added, as the canoe drew nearer.

The canoe was directed to the beach, and the men were taken. They had fierce, dark faces, and they wore their heads closely-fitting kerchiefs of red silk. One, the taller of the group, was dressed in a sailor's outfit, his head shirtless, behind the tree, while the others moved lower down and crouched among masses of rock.

All seemed to be on the watch. As the head of a paddle was heard and a small canoe, containing a girl, was seen moving along close to the shore. The girl was Moco's sister.

The canoe was passing close to the beach, when the men behind the tree sprang forth, seizing the prow with one hand and striving to drag the girl out by the arm with the other.

She resisted, uttering wild cries of entreaty, when the man raised his knife threateningly.

In an instant Frank and Will, who had witnessed these happenings, leaped from the head of the canoe and knocked the man to the ground, a companion of the from a bunch, sent the misaligned straight to the head of the Malay. The heavy man in the beard was on the attack, and struck the pirate, for such he evidently was—on the head, laying him out senseless.

As quick as thought the two boys sliding down to the tree sprang into the larger canoe.

"Quick boys!" shouted Frank; "you save me from pirate! Him want to carry off—make wife. No like."

"There's a girl to lose. Yelling and brandishing their kreeens, the gang that had lain concealed among the rocks, were now seen advancing.

"Me pilot!" continued Amoene, as she entered her canoe.

Each of the boys picking up a paddle in the larger one, kept in her wake.

Amone looked round her with keen eyes. Suddenly she spotted to the dark heads of the Malays, as they swam out from a part of the shore where, towards the rocks through whose channels the two canoes must pass.

"They are going to try to head us off!" cried Frank.

"Yes," answered Will. "The rocks are so near each other that they can leap from one to the other."

"If hurry, me can get through before pirate can, which could be seen."

The boys strained every nerve. Amone passed through in time to escape the Malays, but several spears stuck in the rock, bordering the edge of the narrow channel just as the lads reached it.

Like tigers the three made a spring for the boat.

"Fire!" shouted Frank. "Remember, Will, we shoot for our lives."

Crack! crack! crack! went the two revolvers. Two of the pirates were streaming from their bows, came crashing into the boat.

The third native, just missing the shot, stumbled into the lode of the spear, and his knees dropping from his benumbed hand.

One of those in the boat savagely sprung upon Frank, and with a fierce chop of his short sword, sliced the blade between his ribs, when Will struck the fellow from his breast, and with a blow of his paddle.

He had rid himself of the other Malay, who was more severely hurt than his companion, by a tigress quick to the scene from the rocks. He had not his paddie. He gave the rowboat a toss, and was with the Malay, who had fallen into the water. The paddle he had urged in the canoe forward, away from the two natives in the sea, who had made a clutch at the stern.

Meanwhile Frank was struggling with the dismembered body, as it smote against his tooth and mail like some wild beast.

"We will come," shouted Will. "He will do for a hostage!" cried Frank, as he struggled to assist his captive.

But the wild natives, only now overpowered, contrived a sudden twist of his葫芦 form; to roll over into the sea.

He swam swiftly, passed the rocks on which stood his late companions. The tide had now nearly passed away.

The lads parted; with Amone, he had been before they reached their craft.

"Bail! How has happened?" cried Will.

His uncle's boat was alongside, broken and half filled with water. There were signs as of a desperate struggle. Almost under the highest point, one of the oars was snapped short off, a coil of rope was disarranged, and the paint was scraped as if a huge weight had been passed. He had fastened the chains, they boarded the sloop, surprised that no one came to greet them. Not a soul met it, but they were deck as they moved toward the cabin.

"Uncle?" called Will.

No response.

"Jeromieu! what can be the matter?" said Frank.

Both looked into the cabin.

No one there.

The men ran forward and searched the forecastle.

The crew were gone.

All articles in cabin and forecastle were just as they had been. The captain and crew disappeared in the most mysterious manner.

CHAPTER IV

CAUGHT IN A SQUALL.

The two boys looked at each other in surprise and dismay.


One of those sudden squalls common to this region was at hand.

Here it comes!" cried Will.

The wind had jammed the bellows, and howling, the storm burst upon the sloop.

Fortunately all sail had been taken in. As the men were pouring in upon her, the cable snapped in twain. Frank and Will sprung to the wheel. Over went the mast to catch the capsized canoe, that righted, and away she went, swaying along under bare poles, through storm and ruck, with the wind howling through her masts.

"What in the deuce will become of us?" yelled Frank, in his companion's ear.

"Me only knowing is that the best we can. Run forward, Frank, and keep a lookout astern."

The white, boiling sea roared like a thousand thunders.

Forward, Frank sprang on the bow, clutching the fore-stay. The mast bent and swayed like a whip-stalk. The air was full of electricity. Now here, then hard balls of fire seemed to chase each other along the edges of the seas.

"Land of O!" shouted Frank, suddenly.

"I haven't a way!" yelled Will, in a top.

"Right ahead—ROCKS AND BREAKERS!"

"It's all up with us, then!" cried Will.

He sighted something with his eyes, a head straight toward the breakers, the white spray of a boat shining in the air.

"Can't you holler!" shouted Frank.

"No!"

"We could, it would save us?"

"No use; I can't do it."

Just then there was a noise like a cannon shot, a portion of the craft toppled down, was blown clear, and was flapping wildly about.

"That may be to help us," said Frank.

With his knife between his teeth, he swung snatching the wheel.

The wind almost blew him off, but he clung with his knees and one hand to the stay, while, reaching a foothold, he followed his dear destiny manufacturing and finally grasping it, like a turn with a very sharp edge.

Will was now able to nuff a little. The sloop's bow pointed diagonally toward the breakers. They were there, and he had the direction of the lightning, and breathes if a timer, no human power apparently could escape!"

In a few seconds the sloop safely passed the breakers, and now there were those death rocks ahead.

The little vessel made a plunge. The water cannoned over her. In a trough of the sea, her speed was for a moment diminished. Prow into the white, boiling foam and spray, Frank saw the outline of something like a black ball, lighted by two eyes of fire. The wind had blown the smoke away. It was the sailor. He had taken his head, as the native sat doubled up in his half-capsized canoe. With a scream like a wild hen, she had bounded up, with body raised, fast to the rope, and caught the mainstays, clinging to it with his teeth and hands, as the sloop rolled under him. From thence, a splendid instant, as they were seen as he turned the deck as they moved toward the cabin.

"Moco! It is Moco!" yelled Frank.

"My blone, he been down been drown if sloop not come—think man wash—afloat."

Moco looked surprised.

"God only knows!" answered Frank, and he quickly explained.

"Your life is saved; but it will be lost in another minute!" said Frank, pointing toward the breakers, now not more than a hundred feet distant.
A grim smile lighted Moco's visage. He walked quietly toward the wheel.

"Hardie up!" he shouted.

"It's sho' a bonny day - we had a bully hard time," said Will.

"No; no, mean hardies up wheel!"

"We're safe, I hope."

"Nebber mind, you see?"

He seized the spokes, and the wheel was quickly turned.

The vessel fell off.

"Shoo-eat! you little piggin-mary! Da's way you gets out of talking to the craft as if it was alive.

The vessel spun along, the native humming a wild refrain.

"Moco, have you gone crazy?" cried Will.

"Yes; yes, we're going - toward the worst rock of all!

"Dis vessel; good she behave berry well!"

was Moco's refrain.

The boys shuddered. As pale as death they clung to the rigging, awaiting the dreaded shoal.

A sea buried the sloop toward the rock. The lash bound their eyes and gave themselves up for lost.

Instead of striking the rock, the craft, guided by the moon, turned, passed through a wide channel that separated it, but which, being hidden by the spray and the storm-race, the boys did not see them.

"She all safe now, little piggin-mary. Got open the wheel, and he's off. Good 'un!"

and shouted. Da's way wad dem wild misters.

And as he spoke Moco carelessly stove the wheel.

CHAPTER V.

A SNEAK SERPENT.

The squall soon passed away to leeward. The boys had time to see the sloop toward the coral ground they had left.

On the way Moco stated that after quitting their companions, they had heard a suspicious-looking craft, and discovered her to be a peaceable fisher.

He saw a pros in the distance, but on the way the wind had caught him out toward the sea, as already shown.

"Moco," said Will, "we must find my uncle and his crew. It is a mystery what has become of them. We could have been carried off by the pirates."

"No; if pirate take, we hear noise. Besides, no man would find us here. We's he had heard a suspicious-looking craft, and crew better dem hims take piggin-mary craft, too!"

"It's not pleasant."

"Moco, you will help us look for our missing people?"

"Yes, but fruard neebid find if sea-girl take. Maybe sea-girl not take," he added, thoughtfully.

The sloop finally reached the coral ground, when, leaving Moco on watch, the boys retired to their berths, where, after talking over the strange disappearance of their friends, they at last fell asleep.

Early next morning, before breakfast, they went on deck and discovered that plates were concerned in all directions.

Still no sign of the captain and crew!

The boys, with Moco, went ashore, and made inquiries, but they could learn nothing about the missing friends.

"There has been violence," said Will.

"The condition in which we found my uncle's boat - breaks our hearts - shows that. Can it be there has been mutiny?"

Frank did not think so; neither did it seem possible that any mutiny could have taken place.

Altogether, it was a strange mystery.

"I tell you what, Will," said Will, "we'll continue the coral-fishing, and meanwhile keep a look-out. The captain, and his men may return for the implements.

A crew of Achenese were provided by Moco.

Next morning they went to work. The swab was fastened under water to valuable stems of coral, which were drawn up by means of the capitain, four men turning it, and the others keeping the sails trimmed and full, that the headway and steady assist in hauling up the precious material. As soon as the coral was collected, the men and the crew cleansed it of shells and parasites adhering to it, after which it was stowed.

Late in the afternoon, wearing the diving armor, the diving divan, went down to the bottom for more.

Through the glass in their helmets they could see all around them. There were about a thousand shells they could descry, her copper bottom above them.

They found the under-current so strong there that they had to cling to a coral branch to keep upright.

Suddenly Frank saw Will pointing upward, and looking out a long time over something long and dark swaying against the bottom of the sloop. The light was too indistinct for the boys to make out the object perfectly. At first it seemed to resemble a cable. But, dropping from the divan, they separated, and then the spectators caught the golden gleam of its hundreds of little scales. A moment it hung suspended over the heads of those below, then, with one supreme motion, it coiled its whole length, about twenty feet, into a ring, and a ring, and a round, and round, and round, until suddenly, bulging eyes, was turned toward the divers, while a short, sharp fin in front of it was moved slowly from side to side.

"A Stokken sea-serpent." was Will's mental exclamation.

He had heard his uncle speak of this creature, peculiar to these waters, and dreaded by the natives swimming there.

The monster, glaring down a few seconds at the boys, approached them with a slow, easy motion, as if watching their movements.

An icy thrill went to their very hearts. The gradual movement of the serpent, containing, was, perhaps, more appalling than a swifter movement would have been.

What should they do? To pull the life-line would result in their being hauled up straight toward the creature. They looked round them, but there was nothing to be seen on the branches.

Simultaneously they drew themselves along toward it, as swiftly as they were able.

Will pointed among the branches, and they both climbed up between the intricate stems. Here, down under the water, they crouched, watching the serpent. It flung its tail slowly from side to side as it darted swiftly toward them. The water around the coral stems was tinted of a rose and crimson, the creature's eyes a lurid, terrible appearance. It did not attempt to insert its body between the coral, whose sharp points bordered it, and hindered its movements, but it coiled round and round the boys' retreat, like a ring of fire. Now and then it turned and opened its mouth near the mouth of the hollow, as if to make sure of its intended position. They should have left their quarters. Nearly an hour had passed since they dove; unused to the helmet and the heavy weight, they should have been nearly exhausted. They felt unable to stay below longer. They must leave their retreat and face the serpent.

And there was the serpent in wait for them!

A terrible fire store for them. They could imagine the cold, slimy coils about their forms, crushing out their breath.

But there was a hope. Catching their knives firmly, they clambered down and moved toward the mouth of the hollow. The moment the monster raised its head. Like an arrow it darted toward them, and they had given it up for lost, when, at a bright instant a flash shot athwart the serpent's vision.

Instantly it glided off, and the boys beheld their deliverer none other than Moco, still holding in his right hand the lantern he had made use of.

Under water, his big head and staring eyes gave him a goblin-like appearance.

The boys pulled the life-line for loss, when a bright instant a flash shot athwart the serpent's vision.

CHAPTER VI.

SEEING THE GANTAR.

"Well, how like you it under deck?" questioned Moco, as soon as the chums had recovered from their emotion.

"Not at all," said Frank.

"No, no," echoed Will. "We don't like such kind of ats as are down there.""}

The party were over their singular encounter. Then they spoke of the broken sloop and tried to find out the day they missed the captain and his crew. There had been signs of a struggle in that boat. Was there any connection between the two vessels? They had seen, and the loss of the party?

They shuddered at the thought which long thereafter haunted their dreams.

The coral fishing was continued a part of the day. In the afternoon Moco went ashore with the Achenese crew. Hours passed, and the party did not return.

The next day, when they landed off the island of Poco-Lingen, saw several dark pros and a sloop, or tartan, in the distance. Inspecting them by telescope, they perceived that these craft were crowded with dusky fellows, "armed to the teeth." The pros with their laten sails looked like ugly bats. The gloom of night soon hid them from view.

"Are those our pirates?" said Will.

"So do I, but we are not sure."

"We had better make sail," said Frank.

"Yes; I should. And his people were here.""

"We cannot wait. The pirates are coming swiftly."

The usual topall, and jib sheets were set. Will manned the wheel and away went the sloop, bearing no paper, no cờ, or anything.

"Sail!" cried Frank, who was on the lookout; "right ahead!"

The like a black snake, a long sloop, or tartan, was seen stealing toward the coral craft. A lurid gleam streamed from several lanterns that were suddenly lighted up.

Tigerish-looking fellows, with handkerchiefs under their smiling heads, and spears and kreeses gleaming in their motion, as if they were walking the decks, peering at the sloop. A simultaneous yell broke the silence when they saw their intended prize so near them.

"Stuck up the main and jib sheets!" shouted Will, as he followed the sloop. Will! We're goin' to battle!"

In a moment the crash of musketry was heard. A burst of fire was full of forked flashes and flying bullets - the latter whistling and humming about the escaping crew.

Seaward flew the little Petrel before the wind, the tartan closely following in her wake. Will looked toward the ship. He and Frank loaded the seven-pound gun and brought it to bear on the Malay.

Frank pulled the lock-strings - the gun roared, and sent its lead into the water.

"Good for us! Hoopray!" shouted Frank, as the lateen sail fell over the tartan's side.

"We've seen some more of the lead!" cried Will.

The boys reload.

But the Malay was still afloat.

"Hoo-yah! Hoo-yah! yah! yah! hoo-oo!" was the Malay's cheer.

as their bowspit, with half a dozen fellows driving the gun, crashed into the sea.

"Now, if we get to them!" gave them Hail Columbia! shouted Will, as both boys now rolled their sleeves to the shoulder.

A third time the gun was loaded.

"Hold up," said Will, pointing ahead, as Frank was about to fire. Another vessel, a pros, was now visible in that direction.

"What is done for?" cried Frank, as he pointed out a third craft closing up on the starboard quarters.

"We say 'die,'" answered Will. "Rooned with gun, Frank. We'll give the fellows ahead a taste of our Yankee lead."

At the time the Malay's bullets were cutting the air about all the lads.

The gun was pointed for the head pros.

Bang again.

The shot missed. Exciting yells came from the pros.

"Never mind, you devils! We have some more for you!" cried Frank, as he pointed out a third craft closing up on the starboard quarter.

"We say 'die!'" answered Will. "Rooned with gun, Frank. We'll give the fellows ahead a taste of our Yankee lead."

He ran to the wheel, for the sails were shakin'. Having got them fully, he returned to his post.

The two vessels drew nearer every moment. Soon Frank saw them, by the glint of the gun's eyeballs that could be seen by their lantern's glare.

Frank, now free! - A flash - a thunderous peal!

The shot swept the pros lengthways. Several men were killed and wounded. With a crash
The Boy Coral-Fishers.

The most awful moment came when Will went to the board. At the same moment Will sprang to the wheel, while Frank gave a pull on the lee braces. Suffocating, Will sent the starboard bow deep down to her bed on the boom.

The Malays are very acute in repairing damages. They first transferred the boats to their lee, and then continued again making swift headway. They got to windward of the ship and then bore down to head her off. This compelled the boys to veer round. The Malays, as usual, continued to throw stones to them. They soon had an enemy to labor and starboard all hands filled the sails, and they made their escape without the pirates发觉ing any thing. The pirates had put out their lights. The boys would not risk wasting ammunition. They were heard on the other side of the ship.

“We are heading shoreward. Reefs ahead!” sung out Frank.

“Not half a mile. I can see the white water. It is an Island. A mist had been gradually gathering. Soon the vessel’s occupants could not see the other’s course. The reef now was not three ship’s lengths ahead. Will called up with me!” said Will. "We must either heave to or run on the reef!"

"Here! I’ll throw pepper in those rascals’ eyes! The canoe in which the boys had escaped was at hand. It was full of the Malays’ remains, and they were all killed on the broken boat and put in on the reef. Will sprang on the bow. All hands were there. The Malays were encamped and there stood the Malays’ canoe making for the canoe. Will sprang aboard the canoe. Will and the Malays were engaged in a desperate struggle. The sound of their being to and lowering the canoe was heard. Will and Frank said Frank, as he slapped his chum’s shoulder.

"They’ll find out the trick," said Will, "but we’ve gained time, and are leaving them."

"They’ll be up with us before long."

"That’s so, and then we’ll be lost."

"How’s that, Will?"

"The canoe is full of us, beyond the end of the reef, there is a small bay between two rocks and the land, I am going to run in there."

"Well, I believe I know a thing or two, and we can get the water."

"Better yet, you’re an American boy."

"I believe you, and you’re a chip of the old block."

Will soon ran the canoe into the little bay, and took in his sail. But before that he could anchor until he saw the faint outline of the prosa as they passed the mouth of the bay not two ship’s lengths distant. It was an anxious moment for the boys, and they did not breathe freely until they beheld the last of the three pirate craft disappear. The deep shadows of the high land under which they passed, only served to add to the horrors of the scene, and thinking they had killed off, the savage crew and continued their course, believing the pirates had been scared off. To prevent their vessel from drifting on the rocks, the canoes now let go their spare anchor.

CHAPTER VII.

A NARROW ESCAPE.

After supper, Will took the first watch, which Frank considered marvelous. "Anything, up, inquired Frank, when his friend awoke him, a few hours later, to take his turn. "No. It is still pitch dark, and there is still a heavy sea. I have seen nothing of the pirates."

"Good, so far."

"There is a passage out of this bay between the rocks. We can run it, and if they miss it at the larger entrance, we might give them the slip by running through that channel."

"Yes, if one of them, should not be posted at the other end of it."

Will had the morning watch. It was nearly daylight, when he fancied he heard the slight cracking of yards, not far off. He peered through the mist ahead, but he could not see any craft. To obtain a better view, he crawled out on the boom. Again he heard that cracking noise, which warned him that the pirates were approaching, the entrance of the bay and had set up a lookout. He turned intending to awaken Frank, and get up anchor, when his surprise, he beheld, on the other side, the head of his chief on the knees, the figure of a Malay.

The fellow evidently contrived to steal alongside unperceived in the mist, and had climbed aboard, just as Will went out on the boom.

Bending forward, with glittering eyes, he held a long spear pointed toward the boy. Will instinctively clasped the mercy of the pirate. His pistol was in his belt, but before the cock was out of the dark.

"Got now," said the Malay. "Me son of pirate chief! Quick kill you young lubee (Indian)."

"Why?" inquired Will. "Would you not prefer to take me alive?"

Will was considering the moment. Will hesitated. "We must have our revenge."

The firing of the spear had followed Will’s movement, and the Malay shouted a few "ta-ta-ta!" A yell in the distance betokened that the pirates in their prosa were coming. Will hesitated. "We must do it."

Will leaned over the boom. The Malay sprang at him like a tyro, his knife drawn. The boy dodged the weapon, the pirate fell forward, and just as he caught it in the links of the chain, and snatching off the spear.

"Furucka!" shouted the Malay. "Up, and we’ll take this fellow prisoner for a hostage!"

An instant later Frank came running on deck.

Will and the Malay had climbed and fallen. They were rolling over and over in a desperate struggle.

The native was a sappy young fellow, but Frank, placing the blade of his pistol at the Malay’s head, threatened to shoot him dead if he resisted further.

Panting, the man then lay quiet, glaring at the two.

"What shall we do with him?" said Frank.

Will considered a moment.

"The prosa are coming. We will fasten him to the bow and leave him to kill them if they do not go away from us."

"That’s so."

"Good. But will they care for that?"

"I think not so, as this fellow is son of the pirate chief,"

"That’s lucky for us."

"How do you propose to lash him to our gun?"

"Just so!"

"Capital!"

"Get up!" said Frank to the Malay.

"Ne."

"Get up, I say, or take a dose of cold lead!"

"I will" continued Frank.

"Fire like his — no stir! Son of chief not to be resisted!"

Will drew the gun along to the open gun gangway near which the man lay. Then he brought some strong lashing.

The two boys seated the Malay, and after a slight struggle, succeeded in tying his hands and feet. Then they ran him out, and secured him with ropes over the muzzle of the gun, in a chest position. The pirates, under arms, being fastened to the barrel of the piece. Other cords were wound about his legs and hitched to the gun-carriage, so that he could not get loose.

The man writhed and struggled in vain.

"There! The gun is loaded, and we have only to pull the lock to fire this fellow below to pieces."

"Now we can start him and get secure."

"That’s so, and the sooner the better."

The captain of the windlass, and they had soon the little anchor up, and were making sail.

At the moment the black masts of two prosa were seen looming through the mist beyond the head of the bay, and they were driven.

"Here they come!" cried Will. "We will have to take the channel between the rocks?"

"You are right. Tell Frank," said Will, pointing to the extreme of the passage.

Frank looked to descry the dim outline of a prosa stationed there, evidently to cut off their retreat in that direction!

"Outwitted!" he cried. In fact they were hemmed in by their foes! What can we do?"

Will looked toward the prosa, and a simultaneous cry of dismay escaped them.

While they were getting up anchor the man who had handled Frank took a small cutlass, and tagged with all his strength to free himself. The result had been different from what he had expected. He had been closely watched for so near the gangway that the carriage had been driven for him. The Malay had set up a lookout on the arch of the stairs, by his frantic efforts to keep it from going over. But a wave suddenly gave the ship a lee roll, the Malay stumbled forward, and, rolling down toward the sea, in spite of the struggles of the Malay to prevent it.

One long, wild, despairing cry escaped the wretched; then he was jerked out of sight of the weak metal as it descended to the bottom.

Through the mist the boys could see the approaching prosa. They were driven to a corner now; we have no guns, neither have we ammunition left for our pistols," said Will. "We’ll have to leave you sleep.

Wishing their shoes to be laid as, the two lads swam to the beach.

The moon, cautiously, half a dozen Malays suddenly sprung up from behind a rock and surrounded them with their manacles as if about to cut the prisoners to pieces, when one, who seemed to have authority, gave the signal for the attack.

They forced the boys into a canoe, and took them to the isle of Pulo Lingos. They were a long, low huts, and the men were huddled together. At one end was seated a tall, dark fellow, who was the head chief of all the pirate bands of the island. The captives were brought before him. He scowled upon them, said a few words, and the prisoners were bound with cords of a wrecker schooner, there with their faces lifted to the sky, and their dark, their dark, their dark visages lighted by lanterns carried by some of the gang, confronted them at the distance of three yards. The men were held so as to shed an indescible gleam upon the boys. This was done to render more exciting the fearful game which was about to be practised. The pirate chief, who was present, called the name of one of the men. He stepped forward a few feet, and drew his kris. Balancing it carefully, holding the handle with his right hand, and holding it before his left, he suddenly sent it spinning through the air toward the two lads. It struck the water, a beautiful swood, and a hair’s breadth of Frank’s temple. The young prisoners shuddered. They let drop their kris and their manacles. The manacles were left, but their barbarous sport was to be continued until they should be handed to death with the knives, the pistols—those terrible weapons. What would they throw at them? As soon as the first thrower who had thrown at them was a second name, another man stepped forth and drew his weapon.

Frank uttered a cry of surprise, as the lantern’s light fell full upon the Malay’s visage.

"Will, whispered he, joyously, "do you not recognize that face?"

"Yes, it is like Amonia’s!"

"You forget what Moco told us," answered Will. "That Amonia had a fatik brother who was with the pirates."

The young Malay was a long time balancing his kris and looking around.

At last it flew whizzing from his hand, but so accurately was his aim that the knife struck the deck of the wreck.

The thrower ran to secure the weapon. As he ran, the other close behind him. Will had another knife, hidden under his sleeve, to cut the rope that held each to the hull. He leapt into the boat, and shouted to the man at the mast. The man at the mast whispered, "and run down in cabin. Canoe tow astern."

"We’re in it!" shouted Frank. "We’re in it!"
the light vessel was paddled swiftly along in the wake of the others.

Meanwhile the shouts of the baffled pirates were heard as they searched the wreck in which the boys were. No one heard the noise, or saw it, for the ship lay at a long distance.

Chapter VIII
The Coral Cave.
The boys were soon aboard the sloops with their sufferers, looking wonderfully about them as they shook hands with Musco. Then, getting at the person who had saved them, they were sure they could not now be mistaken in the face.

"You are not Amoco's brother, but Amoco himself," said Brimmer.

"Yes, Brimmer, come to see me yesterday—meet on beach. At last he say he leave pirates. Not to take me off—but to take me back and make him mad. Brimmer den put on older clothes and said look like prisoner when he had on it. When he hear me noise on beach. See pirate get me. Me make up mind save. Put on Brimmer's clothes and go to pirate prison. We look so much like day think we Brimmer. Dad's here, he do all for you."

"Often see him," said Musco. "Now tell how we get sloop here. After me leave you, me see friend talk and have to stay away longer than want to. Bumpy hear noise of gun you fire, and know pirate after me. Me run to beach and keep sharp watch. At last I see pirate coming to sloop in bay. Me know man to take. Me take bang, a nice quick, and get aboard before pirate can see through mist, and me steer sloop into dis cave. Pir rate no see me go, he think be scatted. Den day go away. After dat, me go ashore—see nieces. She tell me pirate been take you off and she go try to save."

He now entered the cave with some of his men, and going to an alcove near the entrance, the natives pulled out a rope, which caused the broken mast of a wreck to swing across the entrance of the cavern, thus forming a barrier.

"Good contrivance," said Will, when the native returned.

"Yes, good cave. Here bad times. Not come out."

"But how does that lead to it?" asked Frank.

"Come, me show," said Musco.

In the latter's cave the lad passed through the cavern.

By the light of the lantern Musco had brought with him they then beheld a beautiful spectacle.

They were in a coral cave about fifteen by twenty, and about fifteen feet high. White and red coral—here rising like the trunks of trees with pruned branches—there forming large bushes, and other places merely a mass of tangled mass of living coral, every branch broken off into incalculable bush-like twigs, caught the rays of the lantern and glittered with the horses in the water. So clear was the water that the fish swam in great numbers in and out of the cave, and took no notice of the presence of any one.

"Why, Musco, here's a fortune for us!" said Will.

"No; dis coral not berry good—too coarse. Jewellin no earn maek rice-wir him for white boys to shok in ear."

He guided the canoe to a long slanting shelf of rock. At the end of it, in the cavern wall, there was an opening that sloped downward as if leading to a chamber. The boys had heard a roaring noise coming up through the hole.

"Be careful not ever fall in there," said Musco.

"Grant if I do?" Will, who was one of the most plucky of the partitioners, asked.

"What is it? A pit?"

"Tink so, nether been down dere. Once a day water come in dere. Once a day water come out again, alive."

"Where does it come from?"

"Tink bad spirit dere. Him Crow water.

The curiosity of the lads was aroused, and, after they had harangued their native friends on the mysteries of the pit, they began to explore the strange cavern.

Several bayonets were held in the air, and the vessel was still in the cave. On the morning of the fourth day, Will and his chum had entered the coral cave beyond, with Musco. Hearing the flapping of wings, the boys looked up, to see an ugly-looking bat circling about their heads.

With a blow of the canoe paddle, Will brought the creature down.

"Hello! what is this?" cried Will, taking a small piece of paper, which had been fastened to a stick with a string.

There was writing in pencil upon this paper, but the latter was so soiled that the words could not be made out.

"How came the paper here?" inquired Frank. "It must have come from your uncle."

"God only knows! It is more than likely the captain had been in this cave," said Frank. In another part of the cave came from, remarked Will. "We do not know where that was."

They returned to the sloop, and told Musco about their discovery.

The Acheenese looked perplexed.

"Often see him," said Musco. "Tell how we get sloop here. After me leave you, me see friend talk and have to stay away longer than want to. Bumpy hear noise of gun you fire, and know pirate after me. Me run to beach and keep sharp watch. At last I see pirate coming to sloop in bay. Me know man to take. Me take bang, a nice quick, and get aboard before pirate can see through mist, and me steer sloop into dis cave. Pirate no see me go, he think be scatted. Den day go away. After dat, me go ashore—see nieces. She tell me pirate been take you off and she go try to save."

Musco started.

"Might come from dere, but not sure. Plenty bat all over island. Once find one in bed, siting, face, two big, hard, pick eye. Dat was our fellows. Frank and Will consulted by themselves. They know him, his superstitions. Why he not go out. They see his going in dis mine. They not like it. They go to sloop to load the rope from this cavern!"

"Will cry, ""Frank, I come."

The boys moved on. The muddy passage between the coral masses was not six feet wide. It described a gradual ascent, and the cave narrowed as they went on.

All at once a whirring sound was heard. The air became dark with bats. Around the lads they flew, clashing and passing hard and heavy masses of these animals clinging to their clothes. The two adventurers fought and struggled to rid themselves of these pests. At last, by the free use of their knives, they drove them off, the creatures flying away among the coral branches.

Will moved on ahead of Frank. He walked a few yards when he found himself sinking. He looked around for his chum, but the latter having observed some oyster shells adhering to the base of a rock at one side, had crawled in to examine them, and was among the rocks when he disappeared. He was doing so had digested a large mass of coral, that was fastened by slender thread-like stems to one of the masses topped by one of many of such crustaceans, and blocked up the passage through which he had come.

"Help! Frank, help!" shouted Will, who now was in almost total darkness.

The boys were beneath the sand. He withdrew one, only to feel the other go still further down.

Both legs now went up under the knees.

He knew he was in quicksands! He threw out his hands, striving to grasp a rock on one side. It was beyond his reach—only about two inches beneath.

He was now up to his breast in the sand. The sight of the line of rocks, with its coral branches, which he could almost touch with the tips of his fingers, was maddening.

Frank was making desperate efforts to reach his chum, who in his clothes, his hat in hand, was tangled among the coral stems, and he made a straight rush to his comrade.

Will's shoulders and arms went under.

The sand was up to his chin. "Help, Will! Hurry! Hurry!" he cried. Frank contrived at last to climb over the coral mass. Drawing himself along the rocks, he arrived opposite to his friend just as the latter's mouth was nearly under the sand.

While gasping, the impertinent led by the hands and thus kept him from going further. Tug and strain as he might, however, he could not free himself from its hold.

And now, with a rush, the bats came to torment the two struggling boys.

They fastened in their hair, in their clothes, and on their necks. Whizzing and whirring, clouds of them circled and swarmed about the water came rushing out of the pit. Leave Musco, Frank, and save yourself. You can do no more.

Frank made one tremendous effort and got away, but the interference of the bats kept Will in the water. He gasped and quivered on the edge of the cave. The imperial boy made desperate efforts.

"Here comes the tornado!" shrieked Frank, as the white foam became visible in the distance.

"Leave Musco, Frank!" said Will again.

But the brave boy resolved to remain to the last.

He fastened his teeth in Will's jacket as he continued to haul.

Bats were in ruins.

At that critical instant a strange figure appeared from among the hollows of the coral. A form clad in the peculiar dress of the natives, and covered with a filth that seemed to have been fastened to the wall of the cave, seemed to be about to climb up the wall.

One hand was clinging to a mass of coral, while the other was held out, open, and the figure seemed to have seen the two boys, for he raised his hand and waved it gently. The boys, eagerly watching this movement, rapidly uttered some strange gibberish, which the boys could not understand, and showing his white hands, asked in a deafeat roar, trembling and foaming, the torrent came dashing down toward the trio!
The Boy Coral-Fishers.

"No, it flows through the hole of the pit, as Moco said."

"It would not be a bad plan to throw ourselves on our backs and get this thing to carry us through, I have had enough of this piece."

"I can believe you, after your being down in the well for a day and night."

"It was horrible! If I’m to be drowned, let it be in water—not this filthy water shining up against the light."

"And leave all these treasures—coral and pearls."

"We can come again for them—but what did you say—pearls?"

"Is that so?" cried Will, with glistening eyes.

"Why, what a precious cave this! It is a wonder Moco could have been kept from coming here!"

"Superstitious! His idea of a fiend being here and not having come from the presence of that madman in the cave. He has probably heard his strange laugh at some time—and coming up out of the mouth of the pit, and—"

"He suddenly ceased—and then uttered a cry of astonishment as he pointed down at the glistening water.

This was dimly lighted by the lantern, which Frank held out of hand and, now, sailing along, her person half above the surface, here and there, glittering in the gleam, was the form of the mermaid!

On she went, so swiftly in the dim light that the well-defined features of the mermaid disappeared in the obscurity beyond.

The lads looked at each other in wonderingly.

"I could not do this while we have a chance," said Will, shrugging his shoulders.

"It is not easy to get out—see!" Again Frank pointed downward, and Will perceived the surface of the water was nearly black with the fins of sharks.

"Mr. and Mrs. Coral, as it was swept along with the current, of one of these monsters was seen leaping upward.

"What are they doing here?"

"They have probably been sucked in with the current wherever it takes them."

The tide moved along the coral masses, and finally arrived within a few yards of the pit through which the waters rushed with a hollow sound.

The mouth of the pit was now nearly choked up with fragments of wood and old roots which the current had carried there.

Many small fish were keeping up widely, in vain, a current of air, among the rocks of which had attacked them.

The wind, hard spring after their prey, and catch them in their sharp fins. The snapping of their jaws, and the splashing of their bodies against the rushing waters. The boys counted as many as twenty, some of them nearly six feet long.

"I can’t run the gantlet of those fellows!" said Frank.

"If I were to try I will have to wait until the water subsides ere we try to get out."

"And now about the bat we saw with the piece of paper tied to it. Do you think it came from here?"

"That madman we saw."

"True," said Frank, thoughtfully.

"And when after the water began to recede, and finally disappeared.

The other of a day which had descended into the mouth of the pit was bitten in two.

"Good for crying Robin, they have done the mischief!"

"After all," said Will, smiling, "we have only to shout, and they will hear us, and bring another rope.

Again and again they called in vain, to no purpose, to mimic them. They turned to see the mad native perched on a coral branch. He turned his arms as he strove to imitate their voices.

Then he darted out of sight among some of the holes.

"Strange Moco does not hear us!" said Frank.

"He cannot on account of that continuous box. He never does when I believe in our voices."

"I wonder where that noise comes from?"

"That remains to be found out."

"Well, as we cannot make ourselves heard,

we may as well go and look at those pearls I saw."

The oysters were found here and there adorning the sides of a rock. Frank opened one with his knife.

He cleaned it out.

"Where are the pearls?" said Will, laughing, for nothing was visible on the inside of the shell.

"This fellow is too old. Here is a smaller one."

He picked up the oyster and opened it. Carefully removing the inside two round, dazzling white pearls, each nearly the size of a pea, were disclosed to view by the current.

"Hellowy!" cried Will, "these are the best of all.

"But who—" Oyster after oyster was opened. Some were found to contain the coveted treasures, others nothing but sand. The last pearl was the handsomest, one of them nearly as large as a cherry.

"There’s one we have dropped!" cried Will, pointing to something glistening near the rock.

Frank picked it up.

"It is not a pearl, but a pearl button," he said.

Will examined it, and gave a cry of surprise.

"That looks like one of my uncle’s button!"

"Are you sure?"

"It is. Some kind he wore on his shirt."

"After all, it may have belonged to some one else—may have been brought here by the current."

Just then the boys heard the uncertain, weird, gurgling of the current, and the mermaid disappeared in the obscurity beyond.

The lads looked at each other in wonderingly.

"We could not do this while we have a chance," said Will, shrugging his shoulders.

CHAPTER X
A Mermaid's Visit.

"We are not sure it was your uncle’s button you know," answered Will.

At all rates, Moco and the rest should be brought here to help us search the place. But how are we to see them? how are we to get out?"

"I have a plan," said Frank. "I noticed a couple of broad planks nailed together, lying among rocks near the shore. They may do for a raft. We will get on it when the water comes back, and run the gantlets of the sharks!"

"It will be all right," said Will.

"We have our knives. I have also a hatchet; besides, we can swim. Finally, the water is low, so we may pass through the pit opening before they attack us."

"Hold!" cried Will. "How do we know they will come at all, next time?"

"You are a joy, Frank."

"The lads continued to hunt for pearls, and found a few more. They also broke off a piece of coral to throw to Moco.

Long hours passed ere they heard again the roar of the advancing waters. They had posted themselves on a rock and had the raft ready. Soon came along the rushing tide, and, launching the raft, the boys got upon it, one behind the other. As yet they had seen no sharks, and they began to think they would not have much to do.

Away they went toward the mouth of the pit.

"Here we go! Houray! isn’t this a gay ride!" cried Frank.

"Just so!" answered Will.

Ker-bong! went the forward end of the raft, striking a crevice in a projecting rock, where it stuck fast.

Of course both boys pitched forward—Frank, who was ahead, striking his nose against the rock; Will landing on top of him.

"Thumber!" said Frank, "no more such rides for me! My nose feels like a door-knob!"

They now exerted themselves to free the raft.

They got it clear at last, and away they went again.

As they drew near the pit, they perceived that it was partly choked up as before with old roots, drift-wood, etc.

They also noticed something still worse—swarms of sharks at their former game of catching fish. The monsters had passed, escaping their attention while they were freeing the raft.

"We are in for it!" cried Will, whipping out his knife.

Frank drew his hatchet, and both boys prepared.

The raft was swept into the midst of the voracious monsters, it could not pass through the opening on account of the impediments in the way, and its occupants found themselves in a truly desperate situation. On both sides of them the sharks were leaping up.

As at first they did not appear to notice the lads at all as concealed as it was at Frank’s leg.

Just then the boy struck it with his hatchet. The creature flung up its tail, but did not otherwise seem to heed the wound. Frank drew his leg back, and again thrust. His friend’s knife also sunk to the haft in the shark’s side.

The water was stained with the animal’s blood, but he sprang out his full length and his legs were fastened in the lad’s jacket. Frank must thus have been pulled into the water but for his chum, who, with a sweep of his knife, nearly cut off the monster’s head.

It splashed back into the stream, and now all the other sharks darted up as if maddened with rage.

It was a horrible sight. The wounded creature swimming pell-mell, the programme of its enemies darting with each other for the possession of the fragments.

Meanwhile the boys endeavored to clear away the obstructions about the mouth of the pit. A big root was jammed in so tightly that they could not move it.

"We must get it up," said Frank.

With all his might the boy worked, Will picked up, tried to shove the raft, to one side, against the nearest coral tree, about ten feet distant. The way of the current seemed to bound him and the coral, opposed his progress, throwing themselves against the raft and bible.

In their eagerness the lads forgot their rags, and hatchet still kept at bay those which sprang up at him and his friend.

The chums had nearly gained the coral tree, when, passing themselves, some of the sharks made a final leap, struck the raft as it seemed as if they must catch the boys’ clothing with their horrid fangs.

Frank added his coming.

"Jump, Will, jump for the coral, or we are lost!" he yelled.

As he spoke he gave a bound that carried him to the coral tree, to which he clung. Will followed suit, and, with a bound of the same, reached the landing-place into the water.

In a moment the water was nearly black with the ferocious creatures. Turning over, belly up, according to their custom, to escape the water, each one did his best to get to the shore. The sharks leaping around him, the surface of the water, and Frank uttered a great howl.

"My God! They’ve got him!" he shrieked.

Leaping far over, he succeeded in clutching his friend by the collar, pulling vigorously, he drew him up. As Will scrambled, half-a-dozen sharks sprang out of the water and one, crouching the heel of his shoe, tore it off.

"You are safe!" cried Frank, joyfully, as he looked at his chum from head to foot. "I expected to haul up only a part of you—to find a big piece taken off!"

"I am glad," grumbled Will, "I thought they had me. I can’t imagine what saved me."

"It was the current. When the sharks dove they fed them a little away from you, and so they lost time."

"Yes, indeed! I thought the stream of blood I saw was yours, but it must have come from him."

CHAPTER XI
A Marooned Skipper.

At last the stream again began to recede; in a short time it was quite a pool, taking with it sharks, driftwood and all.

"I should like to know where that water goes!" said Frank.

"So should I. Of course it must have some outlet, and we must find it. We may be able to get from the place they lived."

The lads had been many hours in this strange retreat. They were both hungry and thirsty. They also felt very drowsy. It was ten o’clock at night with Will’s watch.
The Boy Coral-Fishers.

"Yes, indeed; there is no better oil to burn than that of the turtle," cried Frank. "They really did carry out the fat, allowing the oil to drip into one of the pieces of shell, of which they had a good supply."

The lads turned and started off, and the means of light for a long time afforded. The returning tide took it on its way, Will sprawling to the water's edge, and landing over, caught a round, dark object which was being turned over and over. The two lads fished out half a dozen more, for they had discovered that these were conch shells.

"Good again for that current?" cried Will joyfully.

"Yes, and we brought us the means of providing our thirst," said Frank.

The boys refreshed themselves with the conch shell, and there was quite a lot of the cooked turtle remaining. That which was raw they carefully stowed away in a hollow space along the coral for future use. They then set out to explore the stream. It was hard work, but they were obliged to keep along the rocks because of the current. They had proceeded about a dozen yards, when they came to a large, flat rock:

"No, said Frank, pointing to the remains of a clay pipe."

"Why should not the native smoke a pipe as well as other people," said Will.

"I have not yet seen him smoke. Look there, boys," said Frank.

The boy had been poking among the ashes with his knife, and by the time he showed it to his friend a small object he had picked up. It was a pistol-cylinder.

"Hey, boys, the water is full. Now you may talk! This is a good find. I'm sure the native has neither pistol nor cap." And Frank, with a rush, swept up the unburned fmglu, and hung it under his arm.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PIRATE'S BOX.

The two lads talked over their discovery.

"Let us keep on. We may find something more," said Will.

They proceeded. The rocks became more difficult to cross. Now and then a fragment fell from the roof. Most of the rocks were of a reddish granite, and they were closely packed. It was its downward course that gave such velocity to the stream. At length the boys found their further progress blocked by a granite wall, which rose to the roof of the stream; this wall was not more than five feet wide. In the granite barrier there was an archway through which the water flowed. The lads waited for it to recede ere they could keep on their course.

"It is a mystery how they have stored the water," said Will. "We have seen that the cave seems to descend an ascent the way—probably its whole length. Water cannot run up hill."

The ascent is very slight," said Frank. "Perhaps the water is backed up by the sand. That, perhaps, is what makes the sand so soft—causes the erosion of the sides."

"Part of the water is soaked up, I don't doubt, but so much of it would not vanish so quickly in the desert."

"Just so. There is a mystery about that. There seems to be plenty of mystery in this coral cave," said Frank.

Yes, indeed. Jerusalem! what was that?"

A sudden sharp report had reverberated through the cave. It seemed to come from a distance—ahead of the boys. Frank started forward.

"So it sounded. Who could have fired it?" "Can it be that our friends have a pistol?"

"No; see there he is now. A few moment's later, he saw the crazed cannon perched on a coral branch, grinning at them foolishly.

"A moment later, he disappeared in the tunnel. "Frank," said Will, indignantly, "the person who fired this pistol was a pest."

"Yes, if we are sure it was a pistol shot," said Frank. "All the more eager now were the boys to obtain the assistance of Mr. Moco and his men to search the cavern."

As soon as the water had receded, they made their way to the base of the pit, and called.

For some time there was no response. At last a faint croak was heard, and Frank thought it might be Moco. A moment later the head of a native was thrust through the pit opening. He saw them, and his face was immediately withdrawn.

"Do you recognize him, Frank?"

"No; the light was too faint, but I doubt he is not one of Moco's men," said Frank. "Then, we'll be taken from this hole."

"To come back again and search for my uncle," said Frank.

"You are sure he has not been carried off?"

"Yes, Frank, whispered Will, "let us bounce upon the Malay."

The boys did so, although they could see but the dim outline of the person.

He eluded them by a nimble twist of his body, and at the same time shouted for assistance.

"Shall we light our lantern?" inquired Frank.

"Not yet."

They could not see through the gloom, and the Malay took fright.

They listened if they could hear any one else coming to the pit opening.

Having waited some minutes without hearing any one, Frank relighted the lantern with a match taken from his pocket.

"The man's signals are probably out of carpool," said Will. "They may never know this fellow was here."

Good for us. Where is he?"

Just then the lads saw the pirate spring down from a rock upon the very spot that had proved so nearly fatal to Will—upon the soft sand."

He sunk at once nearly to his hips. A yell escaped him. The time the boys had given him had become indistinct. His mouth was under the sand! A fearful spectacle presented itself, his eyes looking wild, his head, long hair fairly blazing with terror. Before the boys could move he was beneath the sand in a moment—then, as it seemed, it was part of the sand. Will endeavored to grasp it, but it disappeared as he reached toward it.

The lads shuddered.

"A terrible death," said Frank. "It is evident now that the pirates have discovered the secret of which our sloop was anchored."

"Yes, but I wonder if the sloop was there then? Moco may have contrived somehow to elude them."

"I am much more than ever convinced there is some one besides ourselves and the man in this cave. The pistol in the distance was fired for a second time."

"Yes, whoever or whosoever is the person, he can't get to us. Otherwise the report of the pirate's weapons would have brought him here."

"We can't find near enough to see him—to discover if he is or is not my last uncle,"

"Let us go."

A general started forward. As they proceeded the strange roaring noise which has been described had now been heard.

The boys at last found themselves opposite to the rocky barrier which had previously prevented them from entering. Scarcely penetrated the gloom of the archway, from which they proceeded almost deafening, the roaring ceased.

The cause of the din obviously was to be found here. It was a gurgling, rushing noise, seemingly of water.
Frank, advancing close to the mouth of the archway, held up the lantern.

"That hole must be very deep," said Will, "judging by the noise the water makes. I don’t know through which the entrance can be far off. The opening must face to the south, for the direction of the sea-currents and tides is from the north."

"Yes!" cried Frank, "and at high tide, from the water below the hole, the sargassum drifts into the archway, and part of what has entered the cavern pours into the hole."

They were soon on the ledge. They followed the madman, hoping to reach the outlets of the archway.

As Frank spoke he put one foot upon the space of sand which it was necessary to cross to reach the rock in which was the water-hole. His foot sank in the sand, and he exclaimed:

"Quicksands again!" he cried. "It is impossible for us to get through the archway."

"Just then the lads heard the gurgling of the maniac, and he passed them, leaping to a flat rock near the edge of the archway. They saw him crawl across the ledge, and then, throwing them a ledge was there wide enough for them to cross on.

On passing through the archway, they emerged into an arch of rock, smooth and polished, where they bordered the stream, but very jagged and pointed everywhere else. Among these jagged places they were not difficult, but they continued to the native in sight.

Suddenly turning, he seemed aware that they were following him and stopped. The cave at this point was not very wide, feet wide, but its roof was about eleven feet high. In front of the native rose a wall of red granite, which appeared to bar all further progress. Looking down at the base of it, however, the lads saw an opening through which flowed the stream that entered the deep cave.

"In fact, by means of it we may yet escape from this cavern."

The boys climbed up the stone wall, with great difficulty, and continued to the native in site.

Frank had already reached the hallowed spot and was about to turn away.

"What now? Something new!" said Frank. Will had already discovered a small iron figure or small marble—such as seamen carry about in their pockets, and which we are wont to term “spoons.” He had found it imbedded in a crevice of the wood near the stern:

"Those poor little seamen! I have been using them just such a fit."

"Don’t most sailors use them?"

"Yes, just for that."

"What is the matter with the pearl button, the pistol-cap, etc., looks very much as if my uncle has been here."

"That is strange enough and we are not, for we could not swim against such a current."

Frank fearlessly allowed himself to drop into the stream. He found it very deep, and he was glad to sink against the towel of the wind.

It swept him rapidly along:

"A cry of dismay as he moved along the rock, trying to keep up with his friend. Now and then he throw himself down flat and endeavored to reach him by his hand, but the rock was too high for that."

There was no projection the imperiled boy could grasp.

He was being carried straight toward the deep water-hole in the archway beyond.

"Go! Go! I am lost!" cried Will, in agony. "Oh, if I only had a rope!"

Frank, glancing about and laughing as if in high glee, said:

"Faster every moment was Frank borne along:

Bewailing his fate, the lad beheld the maniac, standing on a rocky shelf that projected from the granite wall, and was reached by an ascending stream, which hissing as it grunted and waving his arms, he was about to wrench. I cannot bear to see him," said Frank.

"But I am he who may be harmless."

"If you let me go, I promise to do no evil."

"You have not promised to do no evil, and the madman had appeared."

"Where have you gone to so suddenly?" cried Frank.

"That’s a mystery: he has not had time to descend the ledge. Suppose we go up and take a look at that shelf on which he stood."

They ascended the rock by one small above, but on inspecting this the two could see nothing of the native!

CHAPTER XIV.

WANTING to know how the maniac had disappeared so suddenly, the boys now descended the ledge. By the gleam of the two lanterns, by the glimmer of the water, and by the light of the stars, they could distinguish the three animals at times attacking a boy’s crew.

"Come, now, that’s a little too heavy," said Frank.

"It’s a great thing elevated, its eye glowing like coal of fire, the fun on the back of the maniac, and a fiery light in the holes, discerning its fangs, the creature twisted its coils, fighting madly against the current.

"Crouching against the rock, the boys watched it, hoping it would be carried on out of sight; but as it ran out of the base of the obstruction they occupied, it flung the lower part of its body in a curve, then leaped and began struggling as if to prevent the tide from taking it further. Thus clinging to the rock, the upper part of its body only could be seen, its flat head meanwhile turning in all directions.

The lads glided cautiously from the rock on the side opposite to the serpent, and swam themselves to the top of another. There was a dark hollow here large enough to contain one person.

"You go there, Will, and I’ll find another," said Frank, surrendering the lantern to his friend.

Will entered the hollow, and Frank moved on a few feet further.

The boys were finally able to quickly gain the top of the ledge, which he hoped would be out of reach of the animal, but suddenly rising up before him, he held the maniac, who steadied waving his skinny arms as if to dispute with him a position on the ledge.

Frank, however, kept on, for the head of the maniac was not visible from the opposite bank.

He reached the ledge, but the madman seized him in a strong clasp, and with wild shouts endeavored to tear him away.

A desperate struggle ensued. The native seemed to possess the vigor of a demon, while the boy only fought like a man almost superhuman strength."

The maniac disappeared, and Frank, left the hollow, intending to go to the aid of his friend. But before he could reach him, Frank had concreted a large thorny cactus. The native sprang forward to recover his hold, he lost his footing, and went sliding down the ledge.

The serpent saw him, and in an instant, the upper part of his scaly coils was twisted about the body of the maniac!

Such a spectacle as the boys then witnessed was never seen before or since. It was as if the form of the native in its coils, thin, clumsy cactus, the monster held it for some moment."

In this position the aspect of the maniac was frightful. His face was ghastly, his eyes glared with an expression of hate, and his beard was bristles and his face contortions of his face. It was livid and swollen, and his eyelids protruded. His arms were thrust outward, and his long, skinny fingers quivered. Soon his struggles and cries became more feeble; a dreadful crunching sound broken as that the tight clasp of the serpent was crushing his bones.

And now hissing him against one of the rocks, the huge reptile finished what little life remained in its victim. Then, evidently finding that its purpose to return to its native element, out of which this species of serpent cannot long remain, it plunged into the depths of the waves. The two boys were soon borne out of sight with its prey, in the shadows beyond.

"T’was a most miserable affair," cried Frank, "I hope we will never see that thing again."

"It will probably return with the ebbing current," said Will.

"I felt sorry for that madman," said Frank. "The madman, who had reached the serpent in time to do any good, I would have given it a few cracks with the hatchet."

"Some of them are—especially the large ones. This creature which I have read about, is a species of a terrifying kind."

"I never before knew that sea-snakes were so ferocious."

"It is a most fearful animal. How are you going to escape?"

"I cannot think of a way except to go through those jagged rocks, which would be very dangerous."

"I have heard of some men who have escaped from sea-snakes by digging into the space lighted by the rays of the lantern, an object that startled both boys. It was the first time they had seen one, and they had encountered, some days before, in the depths of the ocean.

"What’s up now, I wonder?" cried Frank. "By the gleam of the water, the madman the warden, which had been thrown against the wall near front, as before."

"Yes, indeed, or I am a gone coast," but now I am to get out of the water, and the water floods the cavern again?"

"Yes, indeed, or I am a gone coast," but now I am to get out of the water, and the water floods the cavern again?"

"What a godsend that canoe way?" said Frank. "Do you mean to say that you are going to get it? said Frank. "Do you mean to say that you are going to get it?"

"Yes, indeed, or I am a gone coast," but now I am to get out of the water, and the water floods the cavern again?"

"Yes, indeed, or I am a gone coast," but now I am to get out of the water, and the water floods the cavern again?"
They said, "They are always spinning yarns."

"At any rate, we know they will, under certain circumstances..."

"Hallo!" cried Frank. "There is another small opening at the top."

Suddenly they climbed to it, but there was not room between the roof and the top of the rock for their heads to be sticking at the opening. Suddenly they looked at each other, and held their heads in a listening attitude.

Then they were on the other side of the wall. The boys looked at each other significantly. Then Will joined Frank on the ledge, and they probably made a longer search than they had done before.

"Here you are!" cried Frank, suddenly holding up his left hand.

Between the top of the granite rock and the roof of the boys beheld a cavity.

"Who can have fired the pistol?"

"Among the rocks were numerous dark hollows which the light of the lantern did not penetrate.

"Will, leaving his chum, commenced to search in a neighboring cavity."

Suddenly his foot slipped, and he slid into one of these cavities. As he staggered, he raised his hands to the top of the rock. At the bottom, his arm came in contact with a human hand.

"I was Frank, this way!" he shouted.

Frank came. He held the lantern down into the hollow, and saw his chum a few feet below him.

"Both boys saw something else—the form of a man, without his head, and without his arms, seated on a rocky shelf with his legs jammed tightly down in a crevice of rock. His hat was off, and about his head, where he was ever so far away from the ledge, was tied a fantastic wreath of reeds and sticks. On the side of the hand in the other hand a pistol was tightly clinched.

"Hallo!" cried Frank. "It was you, then, who fired the pistol?"

There was no reply.

"Will had lain his head on the man's shoulder.

"He said what he was the inquirer."

"Still no response."

"What took the lantern, and bending over, looked the cavity?"

Then a cry of horror escaped him."

"Will's face was, of course, the last to be seen."

"Hallo!" cried Frank, suddenly holding up his left hand."

"Why did you put that strange wreath on his head?"

"Did you not do it? The man has gone!"

"He said he had."

"You could not have done it! The maniac must have placed it there after the man died."

"Will started, and stared at his chum."

"That would make it that the pistol-shot came from the dead! You know it was only a few minutes ago, that we heard the report—since the maniac came from here."

"You are right. It is mysterious. I don't understand it."

The two looked more closely at the face.

Then there was a cry from Will.

"There is a hat on his head."

"Yes, he is dead, he said."

"But it must have been placed on the head of the man who had fired the pistol."

"But how came you to be shut up in this part of the cave?"

"Then the boys started in from the roof into the cave, and found the maniac leaning back against the wall of the cave, his face supported by a slender column. I discharged my pistol, which seemed to cause it to become dislodged. It broke off and rolled down. It is in my opinion that all the rocks in this cave—especially those of the roof—are very weak and liable to come crashing down at any moment."

The captain then explained how he came to enter the caverns of the first place.

"My crew and I had lowered our boat along side the slope, he said, "to pick up a barrel of fresh water. The maniac hoisted from the boat and which had fallen overboard by the giving away of the tackle. As we pulled it in, it slipped from the tackle to the other part of the rock over which you have just entered. I was always the first man to which the cave was opened by the maniac, supported by a slender column. I discharged my pistol, which seemed to cause it to become dislodged. It broke off and rolled down. It is in my opinion that all the rocks in this cave—especially those of the roof—are very weak and liable to come crashing down at any moment."

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"My crew and I had lowered our boat along side the slope, he said, "to pick up a barrel of fresh water. The maniac hoisted from the boat and which had fallen overboard by the giving away of the tackle. As we pulled it in, it slipped from the tackle to the other part of the rock over which you have just entered. I was always the first man to which the cave was opened by the maniac, supported by a slender column. I discharged my pistol, which seemed to cause it to become dislodged. It broke off and rolled down. It is in my opinion that all the rocks in this cave—especially those of the roof—are very weak and liable to come crashing down at any moment."

Then the boys uttered a cry of astonishment.

"Yes, you say, that Hans a continent ago."

"There was not a soul aboard on the day we first missed you, and yet you state that you did not take him with you?" said Will.

"Yes,"

"Then why, in Heaven's name, came he to be in this cave?"

"Who—Hans! Hans in this cave?" cried the captain. "He is not here; he has not been here!"

"He is on the other side of that wall, dead, replied Will."

"You saw Hans—dead? repeated the captain, looking at the maniac."

"Yes; we can show him to you."

All were on the other side of the rocky wall, and they could see the body of the maniac in the hollow in which was the dead man.

"Yes, it is Hans, and no mistake," cried John Thomas. "I knew he would come here. I knew he came here is a mystery."

"Yes, I said: "Who fired the pistol?" said Frank; "but we now know we were mistaken. It was yourself."

"No, but how came that pistol in his hand?" said the captain.

"At last the truth seemed to burst upon him."

"I did not understand it, and I have been foul of liquor, and I have heard him say he could not swim. Taking advantage of my absence, he must have helped himself too freely to my grog and have fallen overboard and been drowned. Subsequently the current must have carried him into this cave. It might have done so without my seeing the body, as the lantern I brought with me was not sufficiently strong to reach the dead man.

"Then Will's voice, "is that you, Will?"

"Yes; Frank and I came to look for you."

"Where are you? How can we reach you?"

"I am Mooc with you! Have you tools—a crowbar or anything of that kind?"

"No."

"Then we don't see how you can get to us. You will have to come out!"

Will then explained why he and his friend could not come out.

"Thank fortune we have a hatchet," he continued. "With this we may succeed in getting to you."

He at once went to work, knocking away pieces of rock. It was a slow task; but with the hammer and the chisel, he was enabled to make a hole large enough for the boys to crawl through.

The captain, who was now facing down upon the forms of the captain and his crew.

"We meet at last, uncle," said Will, as he held the lantern, and his relation to the captain.

"But how came you to be shut up in this part of the cave?"

"In an ordinary voyage, the damaged vessel was propelled by the wind of the shore."

"I don't believe it, uncle."

"I don't believe it, uncle."

"Yes; I found one of them," said Will, and held up a pistol. "Are there no more of them?"

"Yes; there are another four. The maniac's chums have been thrown overboard, the vessel was also too short: besides, we had no means of saving ourselves."

"We explored the cave, but, as you are aware, we could discover no way of leaving it. Finally I made a path down into the subterranean recess. We could see him at a distance, and, by means of the moon, to get his hand into the space where you found us."

"I fired my pistol many times, hoping the noise might be heard and might bring people to our rescue. I also caught a bat and fastened a piece of written paper to it, thinking the creature might possibly fly outside, and that it might attract the attention of some one who would come to the assistance of the distressed sailor."

"Yes! One of them, said Will, and held up a pistol."

"Yes, Hans and his uncle and his chum's adventures since they missed his uncle and his crew."

"The captain explained that those devils have got our slope," said the captain.

"I am afraid so."

"The party, crawling through the enlarged opening up over the top of the fallen rock, went to the entrance at the other end.

"They saw nothing of the serpent until they reached the shore, and then they saw a loud hissing noise coming up from the depths."

"It is not a creature is down in that hole," cried Will, "let us go and see it and look!"
The Boy Coral-Fishers.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ATTACK.

The ladder was placed, and the captain ascended. On passing through the mouth of the cave, he found the entrance to the opening leading from the coral cave to the outer one.

This light enabled him to see his way along the sloping shelf of rock upon which he had entered. The depth of the water, and found that it was shallow enough for to be waded. He moved to the outer cave in which the boys had said the hoop was.

A sloop was there, but it was not his own. He knew by the rig, which he could dimly discern by the light of the lantern aboard, that she was one of those vessels shaped something like a "tartan," which are used by the Malay in addition to their prows.

As he rounded the bend, he noticed that the craft was deserted, but sudden though he had been taken by surprise, he did not lose his head. Within the vessel, he saw the faces and glinting black eyes of a native, who was peering at him over the stern-rail!

He had just time to draw back, a canoe, full of armed pirates, shot from round the bow toward him.

As he retreated, their yells rent the air, and so rapid were their movements, that he had not a moment to spare. He leaped ashore but for Will and the captain, who, rushing up, sent bullets cracking into the pirate's heads.

A few minutes later the head of a pirate was cautiously thrust through the pit opening. Frank had darkened the lantern he had with him, and had thrown it among the rocks, so that the man might see nothing.

The captain fired; his shot passed through the brain of the pirate, and the head of the pirate fell down, stone dead.

There was a cry of rage from the others. A volley was discharged through the pit, but the bullets whistled past the ears of the coral-aters.

"I don't think they will try to come down here," said the captain, "at least not at present."

He was right. The Malays, perceiving that, owing to the number of these enemies, the pirates were much more likely to touch the caves, they did not.

"We can't afford to give away our advantage," the captain continued. "I wish we could only run the gauntlet of these fellows," said Will.

"Our only hope is to get a few of these pirates back into the coral atoll."

"Yes, as I thought. It may be that our men have been able to catch a few of fish, and we have had plenty of coconuts."

"I wonder where the coconuts come from?" said Frank.

"Many trees, as you know, were blown down in the gales we had the other day," said Will. "These, no doubt, in the water. They are probably washed from the branches and are drawn in here."

"But how can it be?" said Will. "The water..."

"The voices of the pirates were heard a few minutes near the opening; then they receded. They are trying to contrive some plan to get down here, I suppose," said the captain. "We will have a couple of men on watch, while the rest of us go down."

This plan was adopted. Next evening the smackers were awakened by the rustling of the water of the stream. It was evening against the pit-opening, but by means of the light, it was not difficult for him to make out. He was interrupted by a loud crash. Not far from the mouth of the grotto a huge rock had fallen into the river. It was heavy enough to have killed the whole party had they been at it, but they had time to go down and clear the way of the debris before it came tumbling down, crushing a beautiful coral reef beneath it.

They didn't like this at all, said the captain. "The fall of these masses was probably not the only thing that happened, but we have all noticed, from the first, that the reef comes down now and then. The water is badly injured later in the day. They all come tumbling upon us, if we are here much longer!"

pent rolled, thrashing the foaming waters and striking at its enemies with head and body. As fast as their fangs sunk into it, the huge sea reptile would roll and thrash, gathering all its strength. But it was evident the sharks must finally get through, and if it could not escape after all, it would have to be endured, as it was a case of constant renewal; they clung to the serpent at times for several minutes.

At this time, before hand, to increase his size, the long, flaxen monster, fairly flinging itself, bleeding, and mangling, on the rocks. He was nearly finished at it, and the serpent was knocked down, and struck at its body, when, with a movement as the reptile had been, it coiled about the arm that held the weapon.

The boy was hurried over on his back, and the head of the crew was tossed up. He could see the horrid eyes glaring upon him, and the sharp white teeth in the open jaws.

"Here you are!" said Will, "but for Will and the captain, who, rushing up, sent bullets cracking into the pirate's heads.

The serpent's body on Frank's arm relaxed, and the reptile fell back into the torrent, where it was pounded upon by the sharks."

"There's an end to that pest," said the captain, "Are you hurt, Frank?"

"No, sir," answered the boy.

The dying struggles of the serpent were soon over, and the malevolent blood blackened the stream fighting over the remains.

The party were glad when at last, the receding waters carried off these creatures and their prey.

Leaving the two men on watch under the pit opening, Captain Thomas now gave directions to the man to proceed. Before a considerable quantity had been gathered.

Several days passed, which were occupied in this manner. A valuable quantity of coral and pearls had been obtained, and these the captain placed in a large hollow near the rear of the cave, where they would be sure not to be reached by the incoming torrent.

"We have now, with what is aboard, almost coral enough for a cargo," he remarked. "It is good work; but if we cannot escape from this place!"

"We may come out of it after all," said Will. "Ay, there's the question—do they know it, or do they not?"

The men on the watch now were seeing up at the entrance. The captain had not discovered that the pirates had rolled a fragment of rock against the mouth of the pit to block it up. But the sight of us in that way like rats in a hole, said the captain. "The water, prevented from passing through, would rise to the roof of the cave."

"Then we are lost," said Will.

"Well, we are going to get rid of that rock by blasting it!"

The printed iron by which the mermaid had been dropped to the metal pedestal, was in his possession. He drew it forth, the ladder was placed and provided with Frank's hatchet, a man was at once set to work drilling a hole in the rock barrier.

As the rock was of granite—not very hard—the hole was soon made. The captain filled it with powder from his flask and having prepared a wisp with a piece of a newspaper, he inserted it and lighted the end.

The spectators ascended the ladder, and standing off, the party saw the rock explode, leaving the opening again exactly as before.
CHAPTER XVII.
WILL'S VENTURE.

Hours passed, but as yet nothing had been heard above to indicate the presence there of the boy and the pirates. All at once something rolled down through the pit to the cavern, right among the party. If it was a stone or a piece of rock, it gave them a shudder. "Halloa! What's up, now?" said Frank, stepping to the edge of the well and peering down, his heart being in his mouth. "Do these fellows think we are fools enough to taste any of their liquor they send us?"

The sound of a horse's hoofs, with an iron grapple and drew him quickly away. "Back! for your life!" he shouted, "there is a light-house! Foul play! Get in the boat!"

In an instant all eyes were turned to the nearest corner, where they had scarcely done, wheels, with a tremendous report, the bilge pumps were set going, and the ship was driven from rock to rock, under the force of the main channel of the water. notorious for its maelstrom, and the captain and his companions were obliged to be constantly on guard to avoid the falling masses.

"If this keeps on, we will be buried," said the captain. "I will not stay here, I am sure," said Bill. "I will go and see," said Will. "I will be scared or shot down," said the captain.

"If they have sail, what are the consequences of them dropping a heavy shot down the well, it would have been broken to fragments and the boy's ears; but he contrived to dodge it. The old man, he again complained, the Mermaid, which had contained three Malays was pursuéd from the shore, and there was the canoe coming up not far out in front of him.

"I am small enough for to get inside this wooden image," said Will. "The boats were more and more way out of the way, on account of the mud arising. He was surprised at the lightness of the image. His movements, however, were not noticed, and the sea and the mast; raising a large spear he had brought in the canoe.

"But Will," said the captain. "Always a good swimmer," said the captain.

"I wish I could go too! Sorry the hollow image in the image is not large enough to hold us both," said the captain.

Will was soon inside of the Mermaid. The head and shoulders were fastened on him, and the mud had broken off, so that he could get his hand on the flagstaff of the hollow image.

The boat scrambled out, rather clumsily for a mermaid was among the rocks, and had been among the rocks of the Mermaid, which the boat had come out. The boatman scrambled up, tried to find his way to the beach.

"One of the Malays searched for the lad. He dimly saw the mermaid crouched near a rock, and pointed him out to his companion.

"Come on," said the captain, "raise a large spear he had brought in the canoe; but Will, who was swimming out of sight, could not hear it.

"If it is as bad as a New York girl's pull-back," he said, "I am an experienced swimmer in the sea and the rocks.

The rope-ladder was placed, and he ascended it. All was darkness in the cave above. The boy cautioned against the snatching stab of rock. On reaching out his arm at the lower end and where he had expected he would, the bow of a canoe.

Through holes, which had been punched in the cliff, the boy was able to speak to him. He had stood in the darkness, the vehicle was empty. He entered it, and sent it through the water as carefully as he could, lay a pirate tawara or sloop, lighted by a lantern, aboard, and then began to lay asleep near her bow. Not far from them reclined a dusky fellow, keeping a close watch.

Will should now have endeavored to return to his friends, but he was curious to take a look at the beautiful mermaid seated in the canoe.

At sight of him they raised a shout of wonder. The head of the pros was turned, and she reeled. The supernatural vision had excited the terror and suspicion of the Malays; they were excited, at the fact of the mermaid being in a canoe. The pros drew nearer. Will's arms were plainly seen.

There was a sudden yell, and a couple of shots were fired. One of these passed through the head of the image, grazing the boy's eye.

The "mermaid" concluded to beat a retreat. Flying his paddle, Will re-entered the cavern, suddenly appearing before the startled lookout, who, hearing the noise, was now on the lookout. Seeing the strange object in the dim light of the cave, the man had a yell of terror, which awoke his companions. He stood on one knee, the gun had been broken to fragments and the boy's ears; but he contrived to dodge it. The old man, he again complained, the Mermaid, which had contained three Malays was pursuéd from the shore, and there was the canoe coming up not far out in front of him.

Keeping in the shadow of the rock, Will pried his paddle vigorously, and was soon among the rocks, and the canoe was nearly on the shore. Close behind him came the three Malays. The boatman's canoe gave a sharp rib of rock, and was stoned.

When the mermaid was discovered, the Mermaid, which had contained three Malays was pursuéd from the shore, and there was the canoe coming up not far out in front of him. Will pried his paddle vigorously, and was soon among the rocks, and the canoe was nearly on the shore. Close behind him came the three Malays. The boatman's canoe gave a sharp rib of rock, and was stoned.

Now, whispered Moco, (for it was he) as the searching party moved off a few yards, (Will placed up a cable at every rock at end of bay. Den you see fisher boat. You wait for me. Be careful not let pirate see. Keep in shadow, if possible.

"But how came you with the pirates, Moco?"

"No stop talk now. Go quick, or lost."

"All right. I'm off like an elephant," replied the mermaid.

Will looked to Varnish, Will obeyed directions. He passed the high rock at the end of the bay and beheld, near the base of the wooded ascent, a large, gloomy, dark, and desolate spot of some kind of a boat. It was a fathom from the shore, as well as the boy could make out, making a zig-zag course through the calm, clear water, and following a large yawl. As the ducking of the water was shallow enough to enable him to wade out to it, he thought it best to go aboard; but he was not within ten yards of it when he found himself in deep water.

To swim with his wooden case upon him was hard work; he was in a cry of dismay, the man dropped his lantern, which was shattered to fragments, pulled off his sheet, and away he went, plunging seaward before a good breeze.

Heading up the Mermaid, and giving a show!"

The hollow wood the voice had a sepulchral sound, and, again uttering a cry of superstitions terror.

The mermaid was hanging on to the gunwales, with clasped hands and a look of despair in her eyes, looking about her, on hearing the noise, and looking toward him. On seeing this strange object, the native held up a lantern to the image.

At the same moment Will came alongside.

The light showed the proportions of what appeared to be a large and beautiful mermaid, and a cry of dismay, the man dropped his lantern, which was shattered to fragments, pulled off his sheet, and away he went, plunging seaward before a good breeze.

The boy scrambled out, rather clumsily for a mermaid was among the rocks, and had been among the rocks of the Mermaid, which the boat had come out. The boatman scrambled up, tried to find his way to the beach.

One of the Malays searched for the lad. He dimly saw the mermaid crouched near a rock, and pointed him out to his companion.

"Come on," said the captain. "Raise a large spear he had brought in the canoe; but Will, who was swimming out of sight, could not hear it.

The pirate hurried the spear. The point struck the wood of the mermaid. The curious what had occurred toward the boy. He endeavored to crawl round to the other side of the rock, which was very slippery. His slipper, however, went over him. The near end man raised the hatchet he carried to clefts his head in twain, when Will quickly throwing himself under water, turned up his wooden tail.

This cut the edge of the weapon, and the mermaid turned her head round. And now that he was down, the boy found it impossible to rise himself, as he could not sufficiently bend his joints for that purpose. The pirate savagely felt for him with his spear, which they thrust under the water, and the half suffocated lad had thought he was lost, when he felt himself seized by the arms and dragged vigorously into the hollow of a rock near him.

In the gloom he could not distinguish his rescuer, who, by the help of the moon shining over the water, had observed his plight, and the man at the wheel, perhaps, discerned it from that moment, lost his presence of mind. Instead of putting down the helm as he should have done, he put it up, and the bow of the boat turned against the wind, causing the vessel to fall upon them.

At length the moon rose, showing him that he was a long way from land.

The captain had a saw of some kind approaching.

Was it a pirate, or would it prove to be a friendly means of bringing assistance to the party in the cavern? As the craft drew near he noticed that she was a vessel of some kind, approaching.

A closer view showed him that it was his own vessel. He endeavored to free himself from his wooden incumbrance, but he found that he could not be done without assistance, and he waved his arm and shouted.

In the hollow image his voice had a singular sound.

There was an Acheenese at the wheel, and another was on the bow, keeping a lookout. He perceived the long, lower lying waters over him, now stopped and looked about him as if searching for the fugitives. A canoe from the pros had previously come up, and its late occupants were wading about to assist in the search. Will, who was in the Mermaid, and who now contrived to keep near him, was one of the crew of that canoe.

CHAPTER XVIII.
THE MERMAID'S RELIEF.

"Now," whispered Moco, (for it was he) as the searching party moved off a few yards, (Will placed up a cable at every rock at end of bay. Den you see fisher boat. You wait for me. Be careful not let pirate see. Keep in shadow, if possible.

But how came you with the pirates, Moco?"

"No stop talk now. Go quick, or lost."
The Boy Coral-Fishers.

As he gazed toward it, he saw the pros emerge from it and head toward Poelo Lengan, which lay along the beach.

Would they pass near enough to see him? He endeavored to work the fragment of wreck into the sand between him and the beach.

The pros kept steadily on. All at once her course was changed. As she was now not more than a hundred fathoms distant, he believed that the cockerel had seen the man he was sure of this when, as they drew nearer, he heard their shouts and the report of a pistol, the bullet whistled within a foot of his head. Will redoubled his exertions to reach the fragments.

He arrived there at last, and was screened from the gaze of his foes. But there could be no escape by running, for the locals.

He heard their shouts drawing nearer; then he heard another sound—the dip of a paddle. As he peered through the frame of his glasses, he entered and weaved and dodged fearfully. It contained a single occupant—a female. And as she drew nearer Will, to his intense joy, recognized her.

"Thank fortune!" he exclaimed; "but can you save us? The pirates are near!"

The hollow, sepulchral voices seemed to stir the girl. She looked a little frightened.

"What is to be done?" Will exclaimed, for he had already crossed the lad, and, "I am Will Warner, and this thing on me is only a wooden image!"

Another paddle was heard and the canoe swiftly. She helped the boy in.

The first thing to do is to take off this confounded monster and get it made by playing tricks, Will said.

He showed the girl how to take off the head and the rest. The moment he was freed from his incumbrance he shook hands with his rescuers, made a sign that he was nettled by the incident.

In the dim light he could perceive that her whole face was lighted with joy.

"Lord, how glad we are," she said, softly.

"You save my life now!"

"I'm not sure the pirates are coming straight down here, Hark! they cannot be twenty fathoms off!"

"She looked thoughtful a moment. All at once her eyes fell on the mermaid.

Replacing the head and shoulders, she fastened the image to the fragment of host to which Will had clung, and which was still alongside.

"You can't find boy inside!"

Go back—no more luck!"

"Cockers," said Will.

Ameza seized her paddle, and the canoe was directed away from the quarter the pros were supposed to be in, and with it the fragment of host to which Will had clung, and which was still alongside.

A few minutes later their cries of disappointment and then of joy, for they had reached the floating image, to nothing inside of it.

The girl had stopped paddling, to make sure the natives might not catch the sound, and the two occupants of the canoe heard soon after the repeating voices of the pirates.

CHAPTER XIX.

CONCLUSION.

"Where do you come from, to reach me just at the right time?" inquired Will.

"From slope," was the reply.

"What that from my uncle's slope?"

"Yes."

"Ameza then explained that she was aboard, but near the island, and that her canoe was in which Will sat. She heard the cries on deck, and hurried up to ascertain the cause. At first, although she had been usually reflected that there was some mystery about the strange figure being seen on Moor's boat, and she resolved to investigate it. But her Acheenese companions detained her—would not let her go.

At last she succeeded in allaying their superstitious terrors enough permit her to enter a canoe and paddle off in fear of the pirates. Will then made explanations.

You and Moco did not know of our being down here in the subterranean retreat, I suppose?"

"No, but we think so, for Acheenese see you and Fred get canoes to hole and go in coral cave. When Moco and I come back to slope they, us and we going to look for you when we hear noises of pirate coming. Think bad Acheenese shore been tell about cave. We know by what we hear that you know sweep, we get up anhunk quick and sail away. Dark night. We creep along rock and get out of way before go to sea. But way save us. We keep on and go away off to other part of island. We go look for Mariner or English man. If we catch them, man-of-war, we come back. But watch—now!"""

"Is! How's that come to be with the pirate captain?" Will exclaimed. "Must they come and trite to bring assistance, and that specially, to my friends."

"Yes. Me have been leave in command of sloop. Me see to-day Mariner war-ship pass island. Dat's why come out in sloop to look for him."

"God grant we may fall in with that man-of-war! " said Will.

Ameza finally guided her canoe to the coral sloop. Both occupants were gladly hailed by the Acheenese, to whom the mystery of the mermaid was soon explained.

"Bidding the crew keep a careful lookout for the war-ship, Will now went below to seek that repose which was necessary to one in his condition restored."

Among, who had been accustomed to small craft and to water from her childhood, had the sleep of the innocent, when taken aboard, uttered a cry of joy on seeing Will.

"Glad to aboard pngiunaing craft," he said. "Me escape from pirate in canoe last night. Dat's how come here. Not could find fishing boat."

Will explained; then he anxiously asked Moco if he could give him any news of his friends in the subterranean retreat.

Moco looked grave.

"Frantsz is the case," he said.

"You are not sure."

"Don't know! Hear rock fallin' down berry fast in deep mud, see a war-ship by it plenty big rock and plenty keep fallin', but no see captain and odders."

"A cry of despair escaped Will."

"You did not go down there and search for him?" he said.

"No. Me fraud; but me would go, only pirate not let."

"I'm afraid it's all up with them," said Will, sadly.

"Just then the cry of 'Sail! O!' came from a man who was paddling off down the river.

Will sprung up the rigging. Far away, where a line of mist had cleared, he saw a vessel, which he could not mistake for a war-

The little sloop was headed for it, with signals of distress hoisted at her masthead.

The stranger bore down for her.

When seen, who be to the Canton brig-of-war, an American craft of twelve guns.

To her captain Will explained matters, and the brig, piloted by the sloop, was at once headed for the bay, in which the pirate craft were stationed.

Long before, she reached it, however, the Malaya tars and a proa were seen putting off out of the town, Poelo Lengan. The pirates having discovered the approach of the war vessel had hastened to make off.

"Now, here are two things that they are not already buried, there is a chance we may save them," cried Will.

It was fully two hours ere the brig came to anchor off the bay. The sloop was anchored near her, and a cutter manned by a lieutenant and thirty seamen, with Will and Moco also in it, was sent toward the cave.

This was soon reached.

Moco and I was accompanied by the lieutenant, glided into the coral cavern, and were seen at the place by the light of a lantern. As they looked through, Will held up the lantern, and the light flashed on the broken masses, some of them formed by the roof."

"Uncle! Frank! Where are you called the boy!"

There was no response.

"They are lost—all have been ruined!" cried the lad, in agony.

As he spoke the whole rocky roof, as far as he could see, came thundering down, blocking up the cave. Then, as if by magic, the water was saved, and they were saved! They were saved! But why? Will and Moco say, "for the rock behind them, followed by the captain and his boats."

"Halloo! Why Frank? Why uncle and his men, too! Hooyay! hooyay!" shouted the overjoyed Will. "But what does it mean? Where did you come from?"

"From there," replied Frank, pointing to the man-of-war in the cove.

"Yes," said the captain. "And glad enough we are, nephew, to find you safe and well! The fact was, when a long time had passed, and you did not come back, we concluded that the pirates had captured you. Meanwhile the rocks were narrowing all around us, and knew we would hold the whole roof must soon go. Of course to remain there was our fate. But, as I resolved to see if we could not get out and hide ourselves in the upper cave. I ascended up the pile, and went to find you. By my surprise I found both caves deserted, but I could hear the pirates outside in the bay. My crew and I tried to make our way through, but the rocks brought up, and set my men to putting in it the coral and pearls we had collected. Then we made our way to the cove. A snug hollow yonder, among the coral cliffs, was the place. We had to see if you were here, and waited for a chance to escape. Soon after, the pirates came in from the bay, and peered into the cove; we could not escape."

"You have seen nothing of madman's body," said the lieutenant. "I am glad we came in time. It was the sight of our boats that made them come."

"You been seeing of nothing madman's body," said the boy.

"Then the sloop carried it off," replied Frank. "Probably he took it with him into the deep water."

"Knowing god dat him was," said Moco. "Barry queer person. Once on a time him kill odder him. Crime like dat Acheenese can't cut off. We try to cut him up, but dat they in in them times ear and now. After dat day drown him. Well die them. Nobody know where he gone to. Mee see him dat's for certain."

"Come, now, Moco, you don't expect us to believe that!"

"Moco not lie," said the native, drawing himself up, much offended. "Moco son of Frank, why he's what can depend on his him!"

"I have heard something of this before," said the lieutenant, who had intercourse with the natives.

"Pirates belong to a race called Gogoons, who inhabit this island."

"That's it," said Will, "and then the boy's story is finished; he'll starve in prison!"

The boys laughed, but Moco so solemnly assured himself that his statement that it staggered his gherers. Soon after, the captain and his party were aboard the little sloop, which the fire deep- covered had been kept in perfect order—thanks to the exertions of Moco and his niece.
On inspecting the cabin locker, he discovered that the man had left there the thirteen emeralds which were lost when the canoe had been capsized. The ship's papers which his watch had been to check, failed to give the name of his captain, so he could not trace it by that means. He had not been able to make out the name of his vessel, or to find anyone else aboard who could help him. He telegraphed the news, and all was over.

It was then that he learned that the man had been a pirate, and that he had been known in the South Pacific as "The Black Lady of the Duna." By the time he reached his cabin, the pirate was already嗅 the boat, and had left with a crew of six, to be lost in the darkness. But his discovery, as he saw it, was not the beginning of a new life, but the end of a long and perilous one.
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