Dead Man's Rock

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A Romance

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DEAD MAN'S ROCK:

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DEAD MAN'S ROCK:

A Romance.

BY

Q.

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To

THE MEMORY OF

MY FATHER

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DEAD MAN'S ROCK.

Book I.

THE QUEST OF THE GREAT RUBY.

CHAPTER I.

TELLS OF THE STRANGE WILL OF MY GRANDFATHER, AMOS TRENOWETH.

WHATEVER claims this story may have upon the notice of the world, they will rest on no niceties of style or aptness of illustration. It is a plain tale, plainly told: nor, as I conceive, does its native horror need any ingenious embellishment. There are many books that I, though a man of no great erudition, can remember, which gain much of interest from the pertinent and appropriate comments with which the writer has seen fit to illustrate any striking situation. From such books an observing man may often draw the exactest rules for the regulation of life and conduct, and their authors may therefore be esteemed public benefactors. Among these I, Jasper Trenoweth, can claim no place; yet I venture to think my history will not altogether lack interest—

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and this for two reasons. It deals with the last chapter (I pray Heaven it be the last) in the adventures of a very remarkable gem—none other, in fact, than the Great Ruby of Ceylon; and it lifts, at least in part, the veil which for some years has hidden a certain mystery of the sea. For the moral, it must be sought by the reader himself in the following pages.

To make all clear, I must go back half a century, and begin with the strange and unaccountable Will made in the year of Grace 1837 by my grandfather, Amos Trenoweth, of Lantrig in the County of Cornwall. The old farm-house of Lantrig, heritage and home of the Trenoweths as far as tradition can reach, and Heaven knows how much longer, stands some few miles N.W. of the Lizard, facing the Atlantic gales from behind a scanty veil of tamarisks, on Pedn-glâs, the northern point of a small sandy cove, much haunted of old by smugglers, but now left to the peaceful boats of the Polkimbra fishermen. In my grandfather's time however, if tales be true, Ready-Money Cove saw many a midnight cargo run, and many a prize of cognac and lace found its way to the cellars and store-room of Lantrig. Nay, there is a story (but for its truth I will not vouch) of a struggle between my grandfather's lugger, the *Pride of Heart*, and a certain Revenue cutter, and of an unowned shot that found a Preventive Officer's heart. But the whole tale remains to this day full of mystery, nor would I mention it save that it may be held to throw some light on my grandfather's sudden disappearance no long time

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after. Whither he went, none clearly knew. Folks said, to fight the French; but when he returned suddenly some twenty years later, he said little about sea-fights, or indeed on any other subject; nor did many care to question him, for he came back a stern, taciturn man, apparently with no great wealth, but also without seeming to want for much, and at any rate indisposed to take the world into his confidence. His father had died meanwhile, so he quietly assumed the mastership at Lantrig, nursed his failing mother tenderly until her death, and then married one of the Triggs of Mullyon, of whom was born my father, Ezekiel Trenoweth.

I have hinted, what I fear is but the truth, that my grandfather had led a hot and riotous youth, fearing neither God, man, nor devil. Before his return, however, he had "got religion" from some quarter, and was confirmed in it by the preaching of one Jonathan Wilkins, as I have heard, a Methodist from "up the country," and a powerful mover of souls. As might have been expected in such a man as my grandfather, this religion was of a joyless and gloomy order, full of anticipations of hell-fire and conviction of the sinfulness of ordinary folk. But it undoubtedly was sincere, for his wife Philippa believed in it, and the master and mistress of Lantrig were alike the glory and strong support of the meeting-house at Polkimbra until her death. After this event, her husband shut himself up with the tortures of his own stern conscience, and was seen by few. In this dismal self-communing

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he died on the 27th of October, 1837, leaving behind him one mourner, his son Ezekiel, then a strong and comely youth of twenty-two.

This brings me to my grandfather's Will, discovered amongst his papers after his death; and surely no stranger or more perplexing document was ever penned, especially as in this case any Will was unnecessary, seeing that only one son was left to claim the inheritance. Men guessed that those dark years of seclusion and self-repression had been spent in wrestling with memories of a sinful and perhaps a criminal past, and predicted that Amos Trenoweth could not die without confession. They were partly right, from knowledge of human nature; and partly wrong, from ignorance of my grandfather's character.

The Will was dated "June 15th, 1837," and ran as follows:—

"*I, Amos Trenoweth, of Lantrig, in the Parish of*
"*Polkimbra and County of Cornwall, feeling, in this year*
"*of Grace Eighteen hundred and thirty-seven, that my*
"*Bodily Powers are failing and the Hour drawing near*
"*when I shall be called to account for my Many and*
"*Grievous Sins, do hereby make Provision for my Death*
"*and also for my son Ezekiel, together with such Descend-*
"*ants as may hereafter be born to him. To this my*
"*son Ezekiel I give and bequeath the Farm and House*
"*of Lantrig, with all my Worldly Goods, and add my*
"*earnest hope that this may suffice to support both him*
"*and his Descendants in Godliness and Contentment,*

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"knowing how greatly these excell the Wealth of this
"World and the Lusts of the Flesh. But, knowing also
"the mutability of earthly things, I do hereby command
"and enjoin that, if at any time He or his Descendants
"be in stress and tribulation of poverty, the Head of our
"Family of Trenoweth shall strictly and faithfully obey
"these my Latest Directions. He shall take ship and go
"unto Bombay in India, to the house of Elihu Sanderson,
"Esquire, or his Heirs, and there, presenting in person
"this my last Will and Testament, together with the Holy
"Bible now lying in the third drawer of my Writing Desk,
"shall duly and scrupulously execute such instructions
"as the said Elihu Sanderson or his Heirs shall lay upon
"him.

"Also I command and enjoin, under pain of my
"Dying Curse, that the Iron Key now hanging from the
"Middle Beam in the Front Parlour be not touched or
"moved, until he who undertakes this Task shall have
"returned and have crossed the threshold of Lantrig,
"having duly performed all the said Instructions. And
"furthermore that the said Task be not undertaken lightly
"or except in direst Need, under pain of Grievous and
"Sore Affliction. This I say, knowing well the Spiritual
"and worldly Perils that shall beset such an one, and
"having myself been brought near to Destruction of Body
"and Soul, which latter may Christ in His Mercy avert.

"Thus, having eased my mind of great and pressing
"Anguish, I commend my soul to God, before Whose
"Judgment Bar I shall be presently summoned to stand,

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"the greatest of sinners, yet not without hope of Ever-
"lasting Redemption, for Christ's sake. Amen.

"AMOS TRENOWETH."

Such was the Will, written on stiff parchment in crabbed and unscholarly characters, without legal forms or witnesses; but all such were needless, as I have pointed out. And, indeed, my father was wise, as I think, to show it to nobody, but go his way quietly as before, managing the farm as he had managed it during the old man's last years. Only by degrees he broke from the seclusion which had been natural to him during his parents' lifetime, so far as to look about for a wife—shyly enough at first—until he caught the dark eyes of Margery Freethy one Sunday morning in Polkimbra Church, whither he had gone of late for freedom, to the no small tribulation of the meeting-house. Now, whether this tribulation arose from the backsliding of a promising member, or the loss of the owner of Lantrig (who was at the same time unmarried), I need not pause here to discuss. Nor is it necessary to tell how regularly Margery and Ezekiel found themselves in church, nor how often they caught each other's eyes straying from the prayer-book. It is enough that at the year's end Margery answered Ezekiel's question, and shortly after came to Lantrig "for good."

The first years of their married life must have been very happy, as I gather from the hushed joy with

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which my mother always spoke of them. I gather also that my first appearance in this world caused more delight than I have ever given since—God forgive me for it! But shortly after I was four years old everything began to go wrong. First of all, two ships in which my father had many shares were lost at sea; then the cattle were seized with plague, and the stock gradually dwindled away to nothing. Finally, my father's bank broke—or, as we say in the West, "went scat!"—and we were left all but penniless, with the prospect of having to sell Lantrig, being without stock and lacking means to replenish it. It was at this time, I have since learnt from my mother, that Amos Trenoweth's Will was first thought about. She, poor soul! had never heard of the parchment before, and her heart misgave her as she read of peril to soul and body sternly hinted at therein. Also, her best-beloved brother had gone down in a squall off the Cape of Good Hope, so that she always looked upon the sea as a cruel and treacherous foe, and shuddered to think of it as lying in wait for her Ezekiel's life. It came to pass, therefore, that for two years the young wife's tears and entreaties prevailed; but at the end of this time, matters growing worse and worse, and also because it seemed hard that Lantrig should pass away from the Trenoweths while, for aught we knew, treasure was to be had for the looking, poverty and my father's wish prevailed, and it was determined, with the tearful assent of my mother, that he should start to seek this Elihu Sanderson, of Bombay,

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and, with good fortune, save the failing house of the Trenoweths. Only he waited until the worst of the winter was over, and then, having commended us both to the care of his aunt, Elizabeth Loveday, of Lizard Town, and provided us with the largest sum he could scrape together (and small indeed it was), he started for the port of Plymouth one woeful morning in February, and thence sailed away in the good ship *Golden Wave* to win his inheritance.

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CHAPTER II.

TELLS HOW MY FATHER WENT TO SEEK THE TREASURE; AND HOW MY MOTHER HEARD A CRY IN THE NIGHT.

So my father sailed away, carrying with him—sewn for safety in his jersey's side—the Will and the small clasped Bible; nor can I think of stranger equipment for the hunting of earthly treasure. And the great iron key hung untouched from the beam, while the spiders outvied one another in wreathing it with their webs, knowing it to be the only spot in Lantrig where they were safe from my mother's broom. It is with these spiders that my recollections begin, for of my father, before he sailed away, remembrance is dim and scanty, being confined to the picture of a tall fair man, with huge shoulders and wonderful grey eyes, that changed in a moment from the stern look he must have inherited from Amos to an extraordinary depth of love and sympathy. Also I have some faint memories of a pig, named Eleazar (for no well-explained reason), which fell over the cliff one night and awoke the household with its cries. But this I mention only because it happened, as I learn, before my father's going, and not for any connection with my story. We must have

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lived a very quiet life at Lantrig, even as lives go on our Western coast. I remember my mother now as she went softly about the house contriving and scheming to make the two ends of our small possessions meet. She was a woman who always walked softly, and, indeed, talked so, with a low musical voice such as I shall never hear again, nor can ever hope to. But I remember her best in church, as she knelt and prayed for her absent husband, and also in the meeting-house, which she sometimes attended, more to please Aunt Elizabeth than for any good it did her. For the religion there was too sombre for her quiet sorrow; and often I have seen a look of awful terror possess her eyes when the young minister gave out the hymn and the fervid congregation wailed forth—

"In midst of life we are in death,
Oh! stretch Thine arm to save,
Amid the storm's tumultuous breath
And roaring of the wave,"

which, among a fishing population, was considered a particularly appropriate hymn; and, truly, to hear the unction with which the word "tu-mult-u-ous" was rendered, with all strength of lung and rolling of syllables, was moving enough. But my mother would grow all white and trembling, and clutch my hand sometimes, as though to save herself from shipwreck; whilst I too often would be taken with the passion of the chant, and join lustily in the shouting, only half

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comprehending her mortal anguish. It was this, perhaps, and many another such scene, which drew upon me her gentle reproof for pointing one day to the text above the pulpit and repeating, "How dreadful is this place!" But that was after I had learned to spell.

It had always been my father's wish that I should grow up "a scholar," which, in those days, meant amongst us one who could read and write with no more than ordinary difficulty. So one of my mother's chief cares was to teach me my letters, which I learnt from big A to "Ampusand" in the old hornbook at Lantrig. I have that hornbook still,

——— "covered with pellucid horn,
To save from fingers wet the letters fair."

The horn, alas! is no longer pellucid, but dim, as if with the tears of the many generations that have struggled through the alphabet and the first ten numerals and reached in due course the haven of the Lord's Prayer and Doxology. I had passed the Doxology, and was already deep in the "Pilgrim's Progress" and the "Holy War" (which latter book, with the rude taste of childhood, I greatly preferred, so that I quickly knew the mottoes and standards of its bewildering hosts by heart), when my father's first letter came home. In those days, before the great canal was cut, a voyage to the East Indies was no light matter, lying as it did around the

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treacherous Cape and through seas where a ship may lie becalmed for weeks. So it was little wonder that my father's letter, written from Bombay, was some time on its way. Still, when the news came it was good. He had seen Mr. Elihu Sanderson, son of the Elihu mentioned in my grandfather's Will, had presented his parchment and Testament, and received some notes (most of which he sent home), together with a sealed packet, directed in Amos Trenoweth's handwriting: "To the Son of my House, who, having Counted all the Perils, is Resolute." This packet, my father went on to say, contained much mysterious matter, which would keep until he and his dear wife met. He added that, for himself, he could divine no peril, nor any cause for his dear wife to trouble, seeing that he had but to go to the island of Ceylon, whence, having accomplished the commands contained in the packet, he purposed to take ship and return with all speed to England. This was the substance of the letter, wrapped around with many endearing words, and much tender solicitude for Margery and the little one, as that he hoped Jasper was tackling his letters like a real scholar, and comforting his mother's heart, with more to this effect; which made us weep very sorrowfully when the letter was read, although we could not well have told why. As to the sealed packet, my father would have been doubtless more explicit had he been without a certain distrust of letters and letter-carriers, which, amid much faith in the miraculous powers of the Post

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Office, I have known to exist among us even in these later days.

Than this blessed letter surely no written sheet was ever more read and re-read; read to me every night before prayers were said, read to Aunt Elizabeth and Uncle Loveday, read (in extracts) to all the neighbours of Polkimbra, for none knew certainly why Ezekiel had gone to India except that, somewhat vaguely, it was to "better hisself." How many times my mother read it, and kissed it, and cried over it, God alone knows; I only know that her step, which had been failing of late, grew firmer, and she went about the house with a light in her face like "the face of an angel," as the vicar said. It may have been: I have never since seen its like upon earth.

After this came the great joy of sending an answer, which I wrote (with infinite pains as to the capital letters) at my mother's dictation. And then it was read over and corrected, and added to, and finally directed, as my father had instructed us, to "Mr. Ezekiel Trenoweth; care of John P. Eversleigh, Esq., of the East India Company's Service, Colombo, Ceylon." I remember that my mother sealed it with the red cornelian Ezekiel had given her when he asked her to be his wife, and took it with her own hands to Penzance to post, having, for the occasion, harnessed old Pleasure in the cart for the first time since we had been alone.

Then we had to wait again, and the little store of money grew small indeed. But Aunt Elizabeth was a

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wonderful contriver, and tender of heart besides, although in most things to be called a "hard" woman. She had married, during my grandfather's long absence, Dr. Loveday, of Lizard Town—a mild little man with a prodigious vanity in brass buttons, and the most terrific religious beliefs, which did not in the least alter his natural sweetness of temper. My aunt and uncle (it was impossible to think of them except in this order) would often drive or walk over to Lantrig, seldom without some little present, which, together with my aunt's cap-box, would emerge from the back seat, amid a *duetto* something after this fashion:—

My Aunt.—"So, my dear, we thought as we were driving in this direction we would see how you were getting on; and by great good fortune, or rather as I should say (Jasper, do not hang your head so; it looks so deceitful) by the will of Heaven (and Heaven's will be done, you know, my dear, which must be a great comfort to you in your sore affliction), as Cyrus was driving into Cadgwith yesterday—were you not, Cyrus?"

My Uncle.—"To be sure, my dear."

My Aunt.—"Well, as I was saying, as Cyrus was driving into Cadgwith yesterday to see Martha George's husband, who was run over by the Helston coach, and she such a regular attendant at the Prayer-meeting, but in the midst of life (Jasper, don't fidget)—well, whom should he see but Jane Ann Collins, with the finest pair of ducks, too, and costing a mere nothing. Cyrus will bear me out."

My Uncle.—"Nothing at all, my dear. Jasper, come here and talk to me. Do you know, Jasper, what happens

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to little boys that tell lies? You do? Something terrible, eh? Soul's perdition, my boy; soul's ev-er-last-ing perdition. There, come and show me the pig."

What agonies of conscience it must have cost these two good souls thus to conspire together for benevolence, none ever knew. Nor was it less pathetic that the fraud was so hollow and transparent. I doubt not that the sin of it was washed out with self-reproving tears, and cannot think that they were shed in vain.

So the seasons passed, and we waited, till in the late summer of 1849 (my father having been away nineteen months) there came another letter to say that he was about to start for home. He had found what he sought, so he said, but could not rightly understand its value, or, indeed, make head or tail of it by himself, and dared not ask strangers to help him. Perhaps, however, when he came home, Jasper (who was such a scholar) would help him; and maybe the key would be some aid. For the rest, he had been stricken with a fever—a malady common enough in those parts—but was better, and would start in something over a week, in the *Belle Fortune*, a barque of some 650 tons register, homeward bound with a cargo of sugar, spices, and coffee, and having a crew of about eighteen hands, with, he thought, one or two passengers. The letter was full of strong hope and love, so that my mother, who trembled a little when she read about the fever, plucked up courage to smile again towards the close. The ship

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would be due about October, or perhaps November. So once more we had to resume our weary waiting, but this time with glad hearts, for we knew that before Christmas the days of anxiety and yearning would be over.

The long summer drew to a glorious and golden September, and so faded away in a veil of grey sky; and the time of watching was nearly done. Through September the skies had been without cloud, and the sea almost breathless, but with the coming of October came dirty weather and a strong sou'-westerly wind, that gathered day by day, until at last, upon the evening of October 11th, it broke into a gale. My mother for days had been growing more restless and anxious with the growing wind, and this evening had much ado to sit quietly and endure. I remembered that as the storm raged without and tore at the door-hinges, while the rain lashed and smote the tamarisk branches against the panes, I sat by her knee before the kitchen fire and read bits from my favourite "Holy War," which, in the pauses of the storm, she would explain to me.

I was much put to it that night, I recollect, by the questionable morality at one point of Captain Credence, who in general was my favourite hero, dividing that honour with General Boanerges for the most part, but exciting more sympathy by reason of his wound—so grievously I misread the allegory, or rather saw no allegory at all. So my mother explained

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it to me, though all the while, poor creature, her heart was racked with terror for *her* Mansoul, beaten, perhaps, at that moment from its body by the fury of that awful night. Then when the fable's meaning was explained, and my difficulty smoothed away, we fell to talking of father's home-coming, in vain endeavours to cheat ourselves of the fears that rose again with every angry bellow of the tempest, and agreed that his ship could not possibly be due yet (rejoicing at this for the first time), but must, we feigned, be lying in a dead calm off the West Coast of Africa; until we almost laughed—God pardon us! —at the picture of his anxiety to be home while such a storm was raging at the doors of Lantrig. And then I listened to wonderful stories of the East Indies and the marvels that men found there, and wondered whether father would bring home a parrot, and if it would be as like Aunt Loveday as the parrot down at the "Lugger Inn," at Polkimbra, and so crept upstairs to bed to dream of Captain Credence and parrots, and the "Lugger Inn" in the city of Mansoul, as though no fiends were shouting without and whirling sea and sky together in one devil's cauldron.

How long I slept I know not; but I woke with the glare of a candle in my eyes, to see my mother, all in white, standing by the bed, and in her eyes an awful and soul-sickening horror.

"Jasper, Jasper! wake up and listen!"

I suppose I must have been still half asleep, for I

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lay looking at her with dazzled sight, not rightly knowing whether this vision were real or part of my strange dreams.

"Jasper, for the love of God wake up!"

At this, so full were her words of mortal fear, I shook off my drowsiness and sat up in bed, wide awake now and staring at the strange apparition. My mother was white as death, and trembling so that the candle in her hand shook to and fro, casting wild dancing shadows on the wall behind.

"Oh, Jasper, listen, listen!"

I listened, but could hear nothing save the splashing of spray and rain upon my window, and above it the voice of the storm; now moaning as a creature in pain, now rising and growing into an angry roar whereat the whole house from chimney to base shook and shuddered, and anon sinking slowly with loud sobbings and sighings as though the anguish of a million tortured souls were borne down the blast.

"Mother, I hear nothing but the storm."

"Nothing but the storm! Oh, Jasper, are you sure you hear nothing but the storm?"

"Nothing else, mother, though that is bad enough."

She seemed relieved a little, but still trembled sadly, and caught her breath with every fresh roar. The tempest had gathered fury, and was now raging as though Judgment Day were come, and earth about to be blotted out. For some minutes we listened almost motionless, but heard nothing save the furious

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elements; and, indeed, it was hard to believe that any sound on earth could be audible above such a din. At last I turned to my mother and said—

"Mother dear, it is nothing but the storm. You were thinking of father, and that made you nervous. Go back to bed—it is so cold here—and try to go to sleep. What was it you thought you heard?"

"Dear Jasper, you are a good boy, and I suppose you are right, for you can hear nothing, and I can hear nothing now. But, oh, Jasper! it was so terrible, and I seemed to hear it so plainly; though I daresay it was only my——Oh, God! there it is again! listen! listen!"

This time I heard—heard clearly and unmistakably, and, hearing, felt the blood in my veins turn to very ice.

Shrill and distinct above the roar of the storm, which at the moment had somewhat lulled, there rose a prolonged wail, or rather shriek, as of many human voices rising slowly in one passionate appeal to the mercy of Heaven, and dying away in sobbing, shuddering despair as the wild blast broke out again with the mocking laughter of all the fiends in the pit—a cry without similitude on earth, yet surely and awfully human; a cry that rings in my ears even now, and will continue to ring until I die.

I sprang from bed, forced the window open and looked out. The wind flung a drenching shower of spray over my face and thin night-dress, then tore

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past up the hill. I looked and listened, but nothing could be seen or heard; no blue light, nor indeed any light at all; no cry, nor gun, nor signal of distress—nothing but the howling of the wind as it swept up from the sea, the thundering of the surf upon the beach below; and all around, black darkness and impenetrable night. The blast caught the lattice from my hand as I closed the window, and banged it furiously. I turned to look at my mother. She had fallen forward on her knees, with her arms flung across the bed, speechless and motionless, in such sort that I speedily grew possessed with an awful fear lest she should be dead. As it was, I could do nothing but call her name and try to raise the dear head that hung so heavily down. Remember that I was at this time not eight years old, and had never before seen a fainting fit, so that if a sight so like to death bewildered me it was but natural. How long the fit lasted I cannot say, but at last, to my great joy, my mother raised her head and looked at me with a puzzled stare that gradually froze again to horror as recollection came back.

"Oh, Jasper, what could it be?—what could it be?"

Alas! I knew not, and yet seemed to know too well. The cry still rang in my ears and clamoured at my heart; while all the time a dull sense told me that it must have been a dream, and a dull desire bade me believe it so.

"Jasper, tell me—it cannot have been——"

She stopped as our eyes met, and the terrible sus-

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picion grew and mastered us, numbing, freezing, paralysing the life within us. I tried to answer, but turned my head away. My mother sank once more upon her knees, weeping, praying, despairing, wailing, while the storm outside continued to moan and sob its passionate litany.

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CHAPTER III.

TELLS OF TWO STRANGE MEN THAT WATCHED THE SEA UPON POLKIMBRA BEACH.

MORNING came at last, and with the first grey light the storm had spent its fury. By degrees my mother had grown calmer, and was now sleeping peacefully upon her bed, worn out with the passion of her terror. I had long ago dressed; but even had I wished to sleep again, curiosity to know the meaning of that awful cry would have been too strong for me. So, as soon as I saw that my mother was asleep, I took my boots in my hand and crept down-stairs. The kitchen looked so ghostly in the dim light, that I had almost resolved to give up my plan and go back, but reflected that it behoved me to play the man, if only to be able to cheer mother when I came back. So, albeit with my heart in my mouth, I drew back the bolt—that surely, for all my care, never creaked so loudly before or since—and stepped out into the cool air. The fresh breeze that smote my cheeks as I sat down outside to put on my boots brought me back to the every-day world—a world that seemed to make the events of the night unreal and baseless, so that I had, with boyish elasticity of temper, almost forgotten all fear as I began to descend the cliff towards Ready-Money Cove.

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Before I go any further, it will be necessary to describe in a few words that part of the coast which is the scene of my story. Lantrig, as I have said, looks down upon Ready-Money Cove from the summit of Pedn-glâs, its northern arm. The cove itself is narrow, running in between two scarred and rugged walls of serpentine, and terminating in a little beach of whitest sand beneath a frowning and precipitous cliff. It is easy to see its value in the eyes of smugglers, for not only is the cove difficult of observation from the sea, by reason of its straitness and the protection of its projecting arms, but the height and abruptness of its cliffs also give it seclusion from the land side. For Pedn-glâs on the north rises sheer from the sea, sloping downwards a little as it runs in to join the mainland, but only enough to admit of a rough and winding path at its inmost point, while to the south the cove is guarded by a strange mass of rock that demands a somewhat longer description.

For some distance the cliff ran out as on the north side, but, suddenly breaking off as if cleft by some gigantic stroke, left a gloomy column of rock, attached to it only by an isthmus that stood some six or seven feet above high-water mark. This separate mass went by the name of Dead Man's Rock—a name dark and dreadful enough, but in its derivation innocent, having been but Dodmên, or "the stony headland," until common speech perverted it. For this reason I suppose I ought not to call it Dead Man's

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Rock, the "Rock" being superfluous, but I give it the name by which it has always been known, being to a certain extent suspicious of those antiquarian gentlemen that sometimes, in their eagerness to restore a name, would deface a tradition.

Let me return to the rock. Under the neck that joins it to the main cliff there runs a natural tunnel, which at low water leads to the long expanse of Polkimbra Beach, with the village itself lying snugly at its further end; so that, standing at the entrance of this curious arch, one may see the little town, with the purple cliffs behind framed between walls of glistening serpentine. The rock is always washed by the sea, except at low water during the spring tides, though not reaching out so far as Pedn-glâs. In colour it is mainly black as night, but is streaked with red stains that bear an awful likeness to blood; and, though it may be climbed—and I myself have done it more than once in search of eggs — it has no scrap of vegetation save where, upon its summit, the gulls build their nests on a scanty patch of grass and wild asparagus.

By the time I had crossed the cove, the western sky was brilliant with the reflected dawn. Above the cliffs behind, morning had edged the flying wrack of indigo clouds with a glittering line of gold, while the sea in front still heaved beneath the pale yellow light, as a child sobs at intervals after the first gust of passion is over-past. The tide was at the ebb, and the fresh breeze dropped as I got under the shadow of Dead Man's

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Rock and looked through the archway on to Polkimbra Sands.

Not a soul was to be seen. The long stretch of beach had scarcely yet caught the distinctness of day, but was already beginning to glisten with the gathering light, and, as far as I could see, was desolate. I passed through and clambered out towards the south side of the rock to watch the sea, if perchance some bit of floating wreckage might explain the mystery of last night. I could see nothing.

Stay! What was that on the ledge below me, lying on the brink just above the receding wave? A sailor's cap! Somehow, the sight made me sick with horror. It must have been a full minute before I dared to open my eyes and look again. Yes, it was there! The cry of last night rang again in my ears with all its supreme agony as I stood in the presence of this silent witness of the dead—this rag of clothing that told so terrible a history.

Child as I was, the silent terror of it made me faint and giddy. I shut my eyes again, and clung, all trembling, to the ledge. Not for untold bribes could I have gone down and touched that terrible thing, but, as soon as the first spasm of fear was over, I clambered desperately back and on to the sands again, as though all the souls of the drowned were pursuing me.

Once safe upon the beach, I recovered my scattered wits a little. I felt that I could not repass that dreadful

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rock, so determined to go across the sands to Polkimbra, and homewards around the cliffs. Still gazing at the sea as one fascinated, I made along the length of the beach. The storm had thrown up vast quantities of weed, that lined the water's edge in straggling lines and heaps, and every heap in turn chained and riveted my shuddering eyes, that half expected to see in each some new or nameless horror.

I was half across the beach, when suddenly I looked up towards Polkimbra, and saw a man advancing towards me along the edge of the tide.

He was about two hundred yards from me when I first looked. Heartily glad to see any human being after my great terror, I ran towards him eagerly, thinking to recognise one of my friends among the Polkimbra fishermen. As I drew nearer, however, without attracting his attention—for the soft sand muffled all sound of footsteps—two things struck me. The first was that I had never seen a fisherman dressed as this man was; the second, that he seemed to watch the sea with an absorbed and eager gaze, as if expecting to find or see something in the breakers. At last I was near enough to catch the outline of his face, and knew him to be a stranger.

He wore no hat, and was dressed in a red shirt and trousers that ended in rags at the knee. His feet were bare, and his clothes clung dripping to his skin. In height he could not have been much above five feet six inches, but his shoulders were broad, and his whole

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appearance, cold and exhausted as he seemed, gave evidence of great strength. His tangled hair hung over a somewhat weak face, but the most curious feature about the man was the air of nervous expectation that marked, not only his face, but every movement of his body. Altogether, under most circumstances, I should have shunned him, but fear had made me desperate. At the distance of about twenty yards I stopped and called to him.

I had advanced somewhat obliquely from behind, so that at the sound of my voice he turned sharply round and faced me, but with a terrified start that was hard to account for. On seeing only a child, however, the hesitation faded out of his eyes, and he advanced towards me. As he approached, I could see that he was shivering with cold and hunger.

"Boy," he said, in an eager and expectant voice, "what are you doing out on the beach so early?"

"Oh, sir!" I answered, "there was such a dreadful storm last night, and we—that is, mother and I—heard a cry, we thought; and oh! I have seen——"

"What have you seen?"—and he caught me by the arm with a nervous grip.

"Only a cap, sir," I said, shrinking—"only a cap; but I climbed up on Dead Man's Rock just now—the rock at the end of the beach—and I saw a cap lying there, and it seemed——"

"Come along and show it to me!" and he began

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to run over the sands towards the rock, dragging me helpless after him.

Suddenly he stopped.

"You saw nothing else?" he asked, facing round and looking into my eyes.

"No, sir."

"Nor anybody?"

"Nobody, sir."

"You are sure you saw nobody but me? You didn't happen to see a tall man with black hair, and rings in his ears?"

"Oh, no, sir."

"You'll swear you saw no such man? Swear it now; say, 'So help me, God, I haven't seen anybody on the beach but you.'"

I swore it.

"Say, 'Strike me blind if I have!'"

I repeated the words after him, and, with a hurried look around, he set off running again towards the rock. I had much ado to keep from tumbling, and even from crying aloud with pain, so tight was his grip. Fast as we went, the man's teeth chattered and his limbs shook; his wet clothes flapped and fluttered in the cold morning breeze; his face was drawn and pinched with exhaustion, but he never slackened his pace until we reached Dead Man's Rock. Here he stopped and looked around again.

"Is there any place to hide in hereabouts?" he suddenly asked.

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The oddness of the question took me aback; and, indeed, the whole conduct of the man was so strange that I was heartily frightened, and longed greatly to run away. There was no help for it, however, so I made shift to answer—

"There is a nice cave in Ready-Money Cove, which is the next cove to this, sir. The smugglers used to use it because it was hidden so, but——"

I suppose my eyes told him that I was wondering why he should want to hide, for he broke in again—

"Well, show me this cap. Out on the face of this rock, you say—what's the name? Dead Man's Rock, eh? Well, it's an ugly name enough, and an ugly rock enough!" he added, with a shiver.

I climbed up the rock, and he after me, until we gained the ledge where I had stood before. I looked down. The cap was still lying there, and the tide had ebbed still further.

My companion looked for a moment, then, with a short cry, scrambled quickly down and picked it up. To me it had looked like any ordinary sailor's cap, but he examined it, fingered it, and pulled it about, muttering all the time, so that I imagined it must be his own, though at a loss to know why he made so much of recovering it. At last he climbed up again, holding it in his hands, and still muttering to himself—

"His cap, sure enough; nothing in it, though. But he was much too clever a devil. However, he's gone right enough; I knew he must, and this proves it,

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curse him! Well, I'll wear it. He's not left behind as much as he thought, but mad enough he'd be to think I was his heir. I'll wear it for old acquaintance' sake. Sit down, boy," he said aloud to me; "we're safe here, and can't be seen. I want to talk with you."

The rocky ledge on which we stood was about seven feet long and three or four in breadth. On one side of it ran down the path by which we had ascended; the other end broke off with a sheer descent into the sea of some forty feet in the present state of the tide. High above us rose an unscaleable cliff; at our feet lay a short descent to the ledge on which the cap had rested, and after that another precipice. It was not a pleasant position in which to be left alone with this strange companion, but I was helpless, and perhaps the trace of weakness and a something not altogether evil in his face, gave me some courage. Little enough it was, however, and in mere desperation I sat down on the side by the path. My companion flung himself down on the other side, with his legs dangling over the ledge, and so sat for a minute or two watching the sea.

The early sun was now up, and its oblique rays set the waves dancing with a myriad points of fire. Above us the rock cast its shadow into the green depths below, making them seem still greener and deeper. To my left I could see the shining sands of Polkimbra, still desolate, and, beyond, the purple line of cliffs towards Kynance; on my right the rock hid everything from

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view, except the open sea and the gulls returning after the tempest to inspect and pry into the fresh masses of weed and wreckage. I looked timidly at my companion. He was still gazing out towards the sea, apparently deep in thought. The cap was on his head, and his legs still dangled, while he muttered to himself as if unconscious of my presence. Presently, however, he turned towards me.

"Got anything to eat?"

I had forgotten it in my terror, but I had, as I crossed the kitchen, picked up a hunch of bread to serve me for breakfast. This, with a half-apologetic air, as if to deprecate its smallness, I produced from my pocket and handed to him. He snatched it without a word, and ate it ravenously, keeping his eye fixed upon me in the most embarrassing way.

"Got any more?"

I was obliged to confess I had not, though sorely afraid of displeasing him. He turned still further towards me, and stared without a word, then suddenly spoke again.

"What is your name?"

Truly this man had the strangest manner of questioning. However, I answered him duly—

"Jasper Trenoweth."

"God in heaven! What?"

He had started forward, and was staring at me with a wild surprise. Unable to comprehend why my name should have this effect on him, but hopeless of

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understanding this extraordinary man's behaviour, I repeated the two words.

His face had turned to an ashy white, but he slowly took his eyes off me and turned them upon the sea, almost as though afraid to meet mine. There was a pause.

"Father by any chance answering to the name of Ezekiel—Ezekiel Trenoweth?"

Even in my fright I can remember being struck with this strange way of speaking, as though my father were a dog; but a new fear had gained possession of me. Dreading to hear the answer, yet wildly anxious, I cried—

"Oh, yes. Do you know him? He was coming home from Ceylon, and mother was so anxious; and then, what with the storm last night and the cry that we heard, we were so frightened! Oh! do you know —do you think——"

My words died away in terrified entreaty; but he seemed not to hear me. Still gazing out on the sea, he said—

"Sailed in the *Belle Fortune*, barque of 600 tons, or thereabouts, bound for Port of Bristol? Oh, ay, I knew him—knew him well. And might this here place be Lantrig?"

"Our house is on the cliff above the next cove," I replied. "But, oh! please tell me if anything has happened to him!"

"And why should anything have happened to

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Ezekiel Trenoweth? That's what I want to know. Why should anything have happened to him?"

He was still watching the waves as they danced and twinkled in the sun. He never looked towards me, but plucked with nervous fingers at his torn trousers. The gulls hovered around us with melancholy cries, as they wheeled in graceful circles and swooped down to their prey in the depths at our feet. Presently he spoke again in a meditative, far-away voice—

"Ezekiel Trenoweth, fair, broad, and six foot two in his socks; why should anything have happened to him?"

"But you seem to know him, and know the ship he sailed in. Tell me—please tell me what has happened. Did you sail in the same ship? And, if so, what has become of it?"

"I sailed," said my companion, still examining the horizon, "from Ceylon on the 12th of July, in the ship *Mary Jane*, bound for Liverpool. Consequently, if Ezekiel Trenoweth sailed in the *Belle Fortune* we couldn't very well have been in the same ship, and that's logic," said he, turning to me for the first time with a watery and uncertain smile, but quickly withdrawing his eyes to their old occupation.

But he had lifted a great load from my heart, so that for very joy at knowing my father was not among the crew of the *Mary Jane* I could not speak for a time, but sat watching his face, and thinking how I should question him next.

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"Sailed in the *Mary Jane*, bound for Liverpool," he repeated, his face twitching slightly, and his hands still plucking at his trousers, "sailed along with—never mind who. And this boy's Ezekiel Trenoweth's son, and I knew him; knew him well." His voice was husky, and he seemed to have something in his throat, but he went on: "Well, it's a strange world. To think of him being dead!" looking at the cap—which he had taken off his head.

"What! Father dead?"

"No, my lad, t'other chap: him as this cap belonged to. Ah, he was a devil, he was. Can't fancy him dead, somehow; seemed as though the water wasn't made as could have drowned him; always said he was born for the gallows, and joked about it. But he's gone this time, and I've got his cap. 'Tis a hard thought that I should outlive him; but, curse him, I've done it, and here's his cap for proof—why, what the devil is the lad staring at?"

During his muttered soliloquy I had turned for a moment to look across Polkimbra Beach, when suddenly my eyes were arrested and my heart again set violently beating by a sight that almost made me doubt whether the events of the morning were not still part of a wild and disordered dream. For there, at about fifty yards' distance, and advancing along the breakers' edge, was another man, dressed like my companion, and also watching the sea.

"What's the matter, boy? Speak, can't you?"

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"It's a man."

"A man! Where?"

He made a motion forwards to look over the edge, but checked himself, and crouched down close against the rock.

"Lie down!" he murmured in a hoarse whisper. "Lie down low and look over."

My arm was clutched as though by a vice. I sank down flat, and peered over the edge.

"It's a man," I said, "not fifty yards off, and coming this way. He has on a red shirt, and is watching the sea just as you did. I don't think that he saw us."

"For the Lord's sake don't move. Look; is he tall and dark?"

His terrified excitement was dreadful. I thought I should have had to shriek with pain, so tightly he clutched me, but found voice to answer—

"Yes, he seems tall, and dark too, though I can't well see at——"

"Has he got earrings?"

"I can't see; but he walks with a stoop, and seems to have a sword or something slung round his waist."

"God defend us! that's he! Curse him, curse him! Lie down—lie down, I say! It's death if he catches sight of us."

We cowered against the rock. My companion's face was livid, and his lips worked as though fingers were plucking at them, but made no sound. I never

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saw such abject, hopeless terror. We waited thus for a full minute, and then I peered over the ledge again.

He was almost directly beneath us now, and was still watching the sea. At his side hung a short sheath, empty. I could not well see his face, but the rings in his ears glistened in the sunlight.

I drew back cautiously, for my companion was plucking at my jacket.

"Listen," he said—and his hoarse voice was sunk so low that I could scarcely catch his words—"Listen. If he catches us it's death—death to me, but perhaps he may let you off, though he's a cold-blooded, murderous devil. However, there's no saying but you might get off. Any way, it'll be safest for you to have this. Here, take it quick, and stow it away in your jacket, so as he can't see it. For the love of God, look sharp!"

He took something out of a pocket inside his shirt, and forced it into my hands. What it was I could not see, so quickly he made me hide it in my jacket. But I caught a glimpse of something that looked like brass, and the packet was hard and heavy.

"It's death, I say; but you may be lucky. If he does for me, swear you'll never give it up to him. Take your Bible oath you'll never do that. And look here: if I'm lucky enough to get off, swear you'll give it back. Swear it. Say, 'Strike me blind!'"

He clutched me again. Shaking and trembling, I gave the promise.

"And look, here's a letter; put it away and read it

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after. If he does for me—curse him!—you keep what I've given you. Yes, keep it; it's my last Will and Testament, upon my soul. But you ought to go half shares with little Jenny; you ought, you know. You'll find out where she lives in that there letter. But you'll never give it up to him. Swear it. Swear it again."

Again I promised.

"Mind you, if you do, I'll haunt you. I'll curse you dying, and that's an awful thing to happen to a man. Look over again. He mayn't be coming—perhaps he'll go through to the next beach, and then we'll run for it."

Again I peered over, but drew back as if shot; for just below me was a black head with glittering ear-rings, and its owner was steadily coming up the path towards us.

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CHAPTER IV.

TELLS HOW A SONG WAS SUNG AND A KNIFE DRAWN UPON DEAD MAN'S ROCK.

THERE was no escape. I have said that the ascent of Dead Man's Rock was possible, but that was upon the northern side, from which we were now utterly cut off. Hemmed in as we were between the sheer cliff and the precipice, we could only sit still and await the man's coming. Utter fear had apparently robbed my companion of all his faculties, for he sat, a stony image of despair, looking with staring, vacant eyes at the spot where his enemy would appear; while as for me, dreading I knew not what, I clung to the rock and listened breathlessly to the sound of the footsteps as they came nearer and nearer. Presently, within about fifteen feet, as I guess, of our hiding-place, they suddenly ceased, and a full, rich voice broke out in song—

"Sing hey! for the dead man's eyes, my lads;
Sing ho! for the dead man's hand;
For his glittering eyes are the salt sea's prize,
And his fingers clutch the sand, my lads—
Sing ho! how they grip the land!

"Sing hey! for the dead man's lips, my lads;
Sing ho! for the dead man's soul.
At his red, red lips the merrymaid sips
For the kiss that his sweetheart stole, my lads—
Sing ho! for the bell shall toll!"

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The words were full and clear upon the morning air—so clear that their weird horror, together with the strangeness of the tune (which had a curious catch in the last line but one) and, above all, the sweetness of the voice, held me spellbound. I glanced again at my companion. He had not changed his position, but still sat motionless, save that his dry lips were again working and twitching as though they tried to follow the words of the song. Presently the footsteps again began to advance, and again the voice broke out—

"So it's hey! for the homeward bound, my lads,
And ho! for the drunken crew.
For his messmates round lie dead and drowned,
And the devil has got his due, my lads—
Sing ho! but he——"

He saw us. He had turned the corner, and stood facing us; and as he faced us, I understood my companion's horror. The new-comer wore a shirt of the same red colour as my comrade, and trousers of the same stuff, but less cut and torn with the rocks. At his side hung an empty sheath, that must once have held a short knife, and the handle of another knife glittered above his waistband. But it was his face that fascinated all my gaze. Even had I no other cause to remember it, I could never forget the lines of that wicked mouth, or the glitter in those cruel eyes as their first sharp flash of surprise faded into a mocking and evil smile.

For a minute or so he stood tranquilly watching our

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confusion, while the smile grew more and more devilishly bland. Not a word was spoken. What my comrade did I know not, but, for myself, I could not take my eyes from that fiendish face.

At last he spoke: in a sweet and silvery voice, that in company with such eyes was an awful and fantastic lie, he spoke—

"Well, this is pleasant indeed. To run across an old comrade in flesh and blood when you thought him five fathom deep in the salt water is one of the pleasantest things in life, isn't it, lad? To put on sackcloth and ashes, to go about refusing to be comforted, to find no joy in living because an old shipmate is dead and drowned, and then suddenly to come upon him doing the very same for you—why, there's nothing that compares with it for real, hearty pleasure; is there, John? You seem a bit dazed, John: it's too good to be true, you think? Well, it shows your good heart; shows what I call real feeling. But you always were a true friend, always the one to depend upon, eh, John? Why don't you speak, John, and say how glad you are to see your old friend back, alive and hearty?"

John's lips were trembling, and something seemed working in his throat, but no sound came.

"Ah, John, you were always the one for feeling a thing, and now the joy is too much for you. Considerate, too, it was of you, and really kind—but that's you, John, all over—to wear an old shipmate's cap in affectionate memory. No, John, don't deprive yourself of it."

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The wretched man felt with quivering fingers for the cap, took it off and laid it on the rock beside me, but never spoke.

"And who is the boy, John? But, there, you were always one to make friends. Everybody loves you; they can't help themselves. Lucy loved you when she wouldn't look at me, would she? You were always so gentle and quiet, John, except perhaps when the drink was in you: and even then you didn't mean any harm; it was only your play, wasn't it, John?"

John's face was a shade whiter, and again something worked in his throat, but still he uttered no word.

"Well, anyhow, John, it's a real treat to see you—and looking so well, too. To think that we two, of all men, should have been on the jib-boom when she struck! By the way, John, wasn't there another with us? Now I come to think of it, there must have been another. What became of him? Did he jump too, John?"

John found speech at last. "No; I don't think he jumped." The words came hoarsely and with difficulty. I looked at him; cold and shivering as he was, the sweat was streaming down his face.

"No? I wonder why."

No answer.

"You're quite sure about it, John? Because, you know, it would be a thousand pities if he were thrown up on this desolate shore without seeing the faces of his old friends. So I hope you are quite sure, John; think again."

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"He didn't jump."

"No?"

"He fell."

"Poor fellow, poor fellow!" The words came in the softest, sweetest tones of pity. "I suppose there is no mistake about his melancholy end?"

"I saw him fall. He just let go and fell; it's Bible oath, Captain — it's Bible oath. That's how it happened; he just—let go—and fell. I saw it with my very eyes, and——Captain, it was your knife." To this effect John, with great difficulty and a nervous shifting stare that wandered from the Captain to me until it finally rested somewhere out at sea.

The Captain gave a sharp keen glance, smiled softly, set his thin lips together as though whistling inaudibly, and turned to me.

"So you know John, my boy? He's a good fellow, is John; just the sort of quiet, steady, Christian man to make a good companion for the young. No swearing, drinking, or vice about John Railton; and so truthful, too—the very soul of truth! Couldn't tell a lie for all the riches of the Indies. Ah, you are in luck to have such a friend! It's not often a good companion is such good company."

I looked helplessly at the model of truth to see how he took this tribute; but his eyes were still fixed in that eternal stare at the sea.

"And so, John, you saw him fall? 'Who saw him die?'—'I,' said the soul of truth, 'with my little eye'

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—and you have very sharp eyes, John. However, the poor fellow's gone; 'fell off,' you say? I don't wonder you feel it so; but, John, with all our sympathy for the unfortunate dead, don't you think this is a good opportunity for reading the Will? We three, you know, may possibly never meet again, and I am sure our young friend—what name did you say? Jasper?—I am sure that our young friend Mr. Jasper would like the melancholy satisfaction of hearing the Will."

The man's eyes were devilish. John, as he faced about and caught their gaze, looked round like a wild beast at bay.

"Will? What do you mean? I don't know—I haven't got no Will."

"None of your own, John, none of your own; but maybe you might know something of the last Will and Testament of—shall we say—another party? Think, John; don't hurry, think a bit."

"Lord, strike me——"

"Hush, John, hush! Think of our young friend Mr. Jasper. Besides, you know, you were such a friend of the deceased—such a real friend—and knew all his secrets so thoroughly, John, that I am sure if you only consider quietly, you must remember; you who watched his last moments, who saw him—'fall,' did you say?"

No answer.

"Come, come, John; I'm sorry to press you, but really our young friend and I must insist on an answer. For consider, John, if you refuse to join in our conver-

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sation, we shall have to go—reluctantly, of course, but still we shall have to go — and talk somewhere else. Just think how very awkward that would be."

"You devil—you devil!"

John's voice was still hoarse and low, but it had a something in it now that sounded neither of hope nor fear.

"Well, yes; devil if you like: but the devil must have his due, you know—

"And the devil has got his due, my lads—
Sing hey! but he waits for you!

Yes, John, devil or no devil, *I'm* waiting for you. As to having my due, why, a lucky fellow like you shouldn't grudge it. Why, you've got Lucy, John: what more can you want? We both wanted Lucy, but you got her, and now she's waiting at home for you. It would be awkward if I turned up with the news that you were languishing in gaol—I merely put a case, John—and little Jenny wouldn't have many sweethearts if it got about that her father—and I suppose you are her father——"

Before the words were well out of his mouth John had him by the throat. There was a short, fierce struggle, an oath, a gleam of light—and then, with a screech of mortal pain and a wild clutch at the air, my companion fell backwards over the cliff.

* * * * *

It was all the work of a moment—a shriek, a splash,

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and then silence. How long the silence lasted I cannot tell. What happened next—whether I cried or fainted, looked or shut my eyes—is to me an absolute blank. Only I remember gradually waking up to the fact that the Captain was standing over me, wiping his knife on a piece of weed he had picked up on the rock, and regarding me with a steady stare.

I now suppose that during those few moments my life hung in the balance: but at the time I was too dazed and stunned to comprehend anything. The Captain slowly replaced his knife, hesitated, went to the ledge and peered over, and then finally came back to me.

"Are you the kind of boy that's talkative?" His voice was as sweet as ever, but his eyes were scorching me like live coals.

I suppose I must have signified my denial, for he went on—

"You heard what he called me? He called me a devil; a devil, mark you; and that's what I am."

In my state of mind I could believe anything; so I easily believed this.

"Being a devil, naturally I can hear what little boys say, no matter where I am; and when little boys are talkative I can reach them, no matter how they hide. I come on them in bed sometimes, and sometimes from behind when they are not looking; there's no escaping me. You've heard of Apollyon perhaps? Well, that's who I am."

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I had heard of Apollyon in Bunyan; and I had no doubt he was speaking the truth.

"I catch little boys when they are not looking, and carry them off, and then their fathers and mothers don't see any more of them. But they die very slowly, very slowly indeed—you will find out how if ever I catch you talking."

But I did not at all want to know; I was quite satisfied, and apparently he was also; for, after staring at me a little longer, he told me to get up and go down the rock in front of him.

The agonies I suffered during that descent no pen can describe. Every moment I expected to feel my shoulder gripped from behind, or to feel the hands of some mysterious and infernal power around my neck. Close behind me followed my companion, humming—

"And the devil has got his due, my lads—
Sing hey! but he waits for you!"

And though I was far from singing hey! at the prospect, I felt that he meant what he said.

Arrived at the foot of the rock, we passed through the archway on to Ready-Money Cove. Turning down to the edge of the sea, the Captain scanned the water narrowly, but there was no trace of the hapless John. With a muttered curse, he began quickly to climb out along the north side of the rock, just above the sea-level, and looked again into the depths. Once more he was disappointed. Flinging off his clothes, he dived

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again and again, until from sheer exhaustion he crept out, bundled on his shirt and trousers, and climbed back to me.

"Curse him! where can he be?"

I now saw for the first time how terribly worn and famished the man was: he looked like a wolf, and his white teeth were bare in his rage. He had cut his foot on the rock. Still keeping his evil eye upon me, he knelt down by the water's edge and began slowly to bathe the wound.

"By the way, boy, what did you say your name was? Jasper? Jasper what?"

"Trenoweth."

"Ten thousand devils!"

He was on his feet, and had gripped me by the shoulder with a furious clutch. I turned sick and cold with terror. The blue sky swam and circled around me: then came mist and black darkness, lit only by the gleam of two terrible eyes: a shout—and I knew no more.

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CHAPTER V.

TELLS HOW THE SAILOR GEORGIO RHODOJANI GAVE EVIDENCE AT THE "LUGGER INN."

I CAME gradually back to consciousness amid a buzz of voices. Uncle Loveday was bending over me, his every button glistening with sympathy, and his face full of kindly anxiety. What had happened, or how I came to be lying thus upon the sand, I could not at first remember, until my gaze, wandering over my uncle's shoulder, met the Captain's eyes regarding me with a keen and curious stare.

He was standing in the midst of a small knot of fishermen, every now and then answering their questions with a gesture, a shrug of the shoulders, or shake of the head; but chiefly regarding my recovery and waiting, as I could see, for me to speak.

"Poor boy!" said Uncle Loveday. "Poor boy! I suppose the sight of this man frightened him."

I caught the Captain's eye, and nodded feebly.

"Ah, yes, yes. You see," he explained, turning to the shipwrecked man, "your sudden appearance upset him: and to tell you the honest truth, my friend, in your present condition—in your present condition, mind

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you—your appearance is perhaps somewhat—startling. Shall we say, startling?"

In answer to my uncle's apologetic hesitation the stranger merely spread out his palms and shrugged his shoulders.

"Ah, yes. A foreigner evidently. Well, well, although our coast is not precisely hospitable, I believe its inhabitants are at any rate free from that reproach. Jasper, my boy, can you walk now? If so, Joseph here will see you home, and we will do our best for the —the—foreign gentleman thus unceremoniously cast on our shores."

My uncle seemed to regard magnificence of speech as the natural due of a foreigner: whether from some hazy conception of "foreign politeness," or a hasty deduction that what was not the language of one part of the world must be that of another, I cannot say. At any rate, the fishermen regarded him approvingly as the one man who could—if human powers were equal to it—extricate them from the present deadlock.

"You do not happen, my friend, to be in a position to inform us whether any—pardon the expression—any corpses are now lying on the rocks to bear witness to this sad catastrophe?"

Again the stranger made a gesture of perplexity.

"Dear, dear! I forgot. Jasper, when you get home, read very carefully that passage about the Tower of Babel. Whatever the cause of that melancholy confusion, its reality is impressed upon us when we stand

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face to face with one whom I may perhaps be allowed to call, metaphorically, a dweller in Mesopotamia."

As no one answered, my uncle took silence for consent, and called him so twice—to his own great satisfaction and the obvious awe of the fishermen.

"It is evident," he continued, "that this gentleman (call him by what name you will) is in immediate need of food and raiment. If such, as I do not doubt, can be obtained at Polkimbra, our best course is to accompany him thither. I trust my proposition meets with his approval."

It met, at any rate, with the approval of the fishermen, who translated Uncle Loveday's speech into gestures. Being answered with a nod of the head and a few hasty foreign words, they began to lead the stranger away in their midst. As he turned to go, he glanced for the last time at me with a strange flickering smile, at which my heart grew sick. Uncle Loveday lingered behind to adjure Joe to be careful of me as we went up the cliff, and then, with a promise that he would run in to see mother later in the day, trotted after the rest. They passed out of sight through the archway of Dead Man's Rock.

For a minute or so we plodded across the sand in silence. Joe Roscorla was Uncle Loveday's "man," a word in our parts connoting ability to look after a horse, a garden, a pig or two, or, indeed, anything that came in the way of being looked after. At the present moment I came in that way; consequently,

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after some time spent in reflective silence, Joe began to speak.

"You'm looking wisht."

"Am I, Joe?"

"Mortal."

There was a pause: then Joe continued—

"I don't hold by furriners: let alone they be so hard to get along with in the way of convarsing, they be but a heathen lot. But, Jasper, warn't it beautiful?"

"What, Joe?"

"Why, to see the doctor tackle the lingo. Beautiful, I calls it; but there, he's a scholard, and no mistake, and 'tain't no good for to say he ain't. Not as ever I've heerd it said."

"But, Joe, the man didn't seem to understand him."

"Durn all furriners, say I; they be so cursed pig-headed. Understand? I'll go bail he understood fast enough."

Joe's opinions coincided so fatally with my certainty that I held my tongue.

"A dweller in—what did he call the spot, Jasper?"

"Mesopotamia."

"Well, I can't azacly say as I've seen any from them parts, but they be all of a piece. Thicky chap warn't in the way when prettiness was sarved out, anyhow. Of all the cut-throat chaps as ever I see—— Mark my words, 'tain't no music as he's come after."

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This seemed so indisputable that I did not venture to contradict it.

"I bain't clear about thicky wreck. Likely as not 'twas the one I seed all yesterday tacking about: and if so be as I be right, a pretty lot of lubbers she must have had aboard. Jonathan, the coast-guard, came down to Lizard Town this morning, and said he seed a big vessel nigh under the cliffs toward midnight, or fancied he seed her: but fustly Jonathan's a buffle-head, and secondly 'twas pitch-dark; so if as he swears there weren't no blue light, 'tain't likely any man could see, let alone a daft fule like Jonathan. But, there, 'tain't no good for to blame he; durn Government! say I, for settin' one man, and him a born fule, to mind seven mile o' coast on a night when an airey mouse cou'dn' see his hand afore his face."

"What was the vessel like, Joe, that you saw?"

"East Indyman, by the looks of her; and a passel of lubberin' furriners aboard, by the way she was worked. I seed her miss stays twice myself: so when Jonathan turns up wi' this tale, I says to myself, 'tis the very same. Though 'tis terrible queer he never heard nowt; but he ain't got a ha'porth o' gumption, let alone that by time he's been cloppin' round his seven mile o' beat half a dozen ships might go to kingdom come."

With this, for we had come to the door of Lantrig, Joe bid me good-bye, and turned along the cliffs to seek fresh news at Polkimbra.

Instead of going indoors at once I watched his short,

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oddly-shaped figure stride away, and then sat down on the edge of the cliff for a minute to collect my thoughts. The day was ripening into that mellow glory which is the peculiar grace of autumn. Below me the sea, still flaked with spume, was gradually heaving to rest; the morning light outlined the cliffs in glistening prominence, and clothed them, as well as the billowy clouds above, with a reality which gave the lie to my morning's adventure. The old doorway, too, looked so familiar and peaceful, the old house so reassuring, that I half wondered if I had not two lives, and were not coming back to the old quiet everyday experience again.

Suddenly I remembered the packet and the letter. I put my hand into my pocket and drew them out. The packet was a tin box, strapped around with a leathern band: on the top, between the band and the box, was a curious piece of yellow metal that looked like the half of a waist-buckle, having a socket but without any corresponding hook. On the metal were traced some characters which I could not read. The tin box was heavy and plain, and the strap soaking with salt water.

I turned to the letter; it was all but a pulp, and in its present state illegible. Carefully smoothing it out, I slipped it inside the strap and turned to hide my prize; for such was my fear of the man who called himself Apollyon, that I could know no peace of mind whilst it remained about me. How should I hide it? After some thought, I remembered that a stone or two in the now empty cow-house had fallen loose. With a

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hasty glance over my shoulder, I crept around and into the shed. The stones came away easily in my hand. With another hurried look, I slipped the packet into the opening, stole out of the shed, and entered the house by the back door.

My mother had been up for some time—it was now about nine o'clock—and had prepared our breakfast. Her face was still pale, but some of its anxiety left it as I entered. She was evidently waiting for me to speak. Something in my looks, however, must have frightened her, for, as I said nothing, she began to question me.

"Well, Jasper, is there any news?"

"There was a ship wrecked on Dead Man's Rock last night, but they've not found anything except——"

"What was it called?"

"The *Mary Jane*—that is—I don't quite know."

Up to this time I had forgotten that mother would want to know about my doings that morning. As an ordinary thing, of course I should have told her whatever I had seen or heard, but my terror of the Captain and the awful consequences of saying too much now flashed upon me with hideous force. I had heard about the *Mary Jane* from the unhappy John. What if I had already said too much? I bent over my breakfast in confusion.

After a dreadful pause, during which I felt, though I could not see, the astonishment in my mother's eyes, she said—

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"You don't quite know?"

"No; I think it must have been the *Mary Jane*, but there was a strange sailor picked up. Uncle Loveday found him, and he seemed to be a foreigner, and he said—I mean—I thought—it was the name, but——"

This was worse and worse. Again at my wits' end, I tried to go on with my breakfast. After awhile I looked up, and saw my mother watching me with a look of mingled surprise and reproach.

"Was this sailor the only one saved?"

"No—that is, I mean—yes; they only found one."

I had never lied to my mother before, and almost broke down with the effort. Words seemed to choke me, and her saddening eyes filled me with torment.

"Jasper dear, what is the matter with you? Why are you so strange?"

I tried to look astonished, but broke down miserably. Do what I would, my eyes seemed to be beyond my control; they would not meet her steady gaze.

"Uncle Loveday is coming up later on. He's looking after the Cap—I mean the sailor, and said he would run in afterwards."

"What is this sailor like?"

This question fairly broke me down. Between my dread of the Captain and her pained astonishment, I could only sit stammering and longing for the earth to gape and swallow me up. Suddenly a dreadful suspicion struck my mother.

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"Jasper! Jasper'! it cannot be—you cannot mean—that it was *his* ship?"

"No, mother, no! Father is all right. He said—I mean—it was not his ship."

"Oh! thank God! But you are hiding something from me! What is it? Jasper dear, what are you hiding?"

"Mother, I *think* it was the *Mary Jane*. But it was not father's ship. Father's all right. And, mother, don't ask me any more; Uncle Loveday will tell all about it. And—I'm not very well, mother. I think——"

Want of sleep, indeed, and the excitement of the morning, had broken me down. My mother stifled her desire to hear more, and tenderly saw me to bed, guessing my fatigue, but only dimly apprehensive of anything beyond. In bed I lay all that morning, but could get no sleep. The vengeance of that dreadful man seemed to fill the little room and charge the atmosphere with horror. "I come on them in bed sometimes, and sometimes from behind when they're not looking"—the words rang in my ears, and could not be muffled by the bed-clothes; whilst, if I began to doze, the dreadful burthen of his song—

"And the devil has got his due, my lads—
Sing ho! but he waits for you!"—

with the peculiar catch of its lilt, would suddenly make me start up, wide awake, with every nerve in my body dancing to its grisly measure.

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At last, towards noon, I dozed off into a restless slumber, but only to see each sight and hear each sound repeated with every grotesque and fantastic variation. Dead Man's Rock rose out of a sea of blood, peopled with hundreds of ghastly faces, each face the distorted likeness of John or the Captain. Blood was everywhere — on their shirts, their hands, their faces, in splashes across the rock itself, in vivid streaks across the spume of the sea. The very sun peered through a blood-red fog, and the waves, the mournful gulls, the echoes from the cliff, took up the everlasting chorus, led by one silvery demoniac voice—

"Sing ho! but he waits for you!"

Finally, as I lay tossing and tormented with this phantom horror in my eyes and ears, the sound died imperceptibly away into the soft hush of two well-known voices, and I opened my eyes to see mother with Uncle Loveday standing at my bedside.

"The boy's a bit feverish," said my uncle's voice; "he has not got over his fright just yet."

"Hush! he's waking!" replied my mother; and as I opened my eyes she bent down and kissed me. How inexpressibly sweet was that kiss after the nightmare of my dream!

"Jasper dear, are you better now? Try to lie down and get some more sleep."

But I was eager to know what news Uncle Loveday had to tell, so I sat up and questioned him. There

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was little enough; though, delivered with much pomp, it took some time in telling. Roughly, it came to this:—

A body had been discovered—the body of a small infant—washed up on the Polkimbra Beach. This would give an opportunity for an inquest; and, in fact, the coroner was to arrive that afternoon from Penzance with an interpreter for the evidence of the strange sailor, who, it seemed, was a Greek. Little enough had been got from him, but he seemed to imply that the vessel had struck upon Dead Man's Rock from the south-west, breaking her back upon its sunken base, and then slipping out and subsiding in the deep water. It must have happened at high tide, for much coffee and basket-work was found upon high-water line. This fixed the time of the disaster at about 4 a.m., and my mother's eyes met mine, as we both remembered that it was about that hour when we heard the wild despairing cry. For the rest, it was hopeless to seek information from the Greek sailor without an interpreter; nor were there any clothes or identifying marks on the child's body. The stranger had been clothed and fed at the Vicarage, and would give his evidence that afternoon. Hitherto, the name of the vessel was unknown.

At this point my mother's eyes again sought mine, and I feared fresh inquiries about the *Mary Jane;* but, luckily, Uncle Loveday had recurred to the question of the Tower of Babel, on which he delivered several

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profound reflections. Seeing me still disinclined to explain, she merely sighed, and was silent.

But when Uncle Loveday had broken his fast and, rising, announced that he must drive down to be present at the inquest, to our amazement, mother insisted upon going with him. Having no suspicion of her deadly fear, he laughed a little at first, and quoted Solomon on the infirmities of women to an extent that made me wonder what Aunt Loveday would have said had he dared broach such a subject to that strong-minded woman. Seeing, however, that my mother was set upon going, he desisted at last, and put his cart at her service. Somewhat to her astonishment, as I could see, I asked to be allowed to go also, and, after some entreaty, prevailed. So we all set out behind Uncle Loveday's over-fed pony for Polkimbra.

There was a small crowd around the door of the "Lugger Inn" when we drove up. It appeared that the coroner had just arrived, and the inquest was to begin at once. Meanwhile, the folk were busy with conjecture. They made way, however, for my uncle, who, being on such occasions a person of no little importance, easily gained us entry into the Red Room where the inquiry was about to be held. As we stepped along the passage, the landlord's parrot, looking more than ever like Aunt Elizabeth, almost frightened me out of my wits by crying, "All hands lost! All hands lost! Lord ha' mercy on us!" Its hoarse note still sounded in my ears, when the door

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opened, and we stood in presence of the "crowner's quest."

I suppose the Red Room of the "Lugger" was full; and, indeed, as the smallest inquest involves at least twelve men and a coroner, to say nothing of witnesses, it must have been very full. But for me, as soon as my foot crossed the threshold, there was only one face, only one pair of eyes, only one terrible presence, to be conscious of and fear. I saw him at once, and he saw me; but, unless it were that his cruel eye glinted and his lips grew for the moment white and fixed, he betrayed no consciousness of my presence there.

The coroner was speaking as we entered, but his voice sounded as though far away and faint. Uncle Loveday gave evidence, and I have a dim recollection of two rows of gleaming buttons, but nothing more. Then Jonathan, the coast-guardsman, was called. He had seen, or fancied he saw, a ship in distress near Gue Graze; had noticed no light nor heard any signal of distress; had given information at Lizard Town. The rocket apparatus had been got out, and searchers had scoured the cliffs as far as Porth Pyg, but nothing was to be seen. The search-party were returning, when they found a shipwrecked sailor in company with a small boy, one Jasper Trenoweth, in Ready-Money Cove.

At the sound of my own name I started, and for the second time since our entry felt the eyes of the stranger

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question me. At the same time I felt my mother's clasp of my hand tighten, and knew that she saw that look.

The air grew closer and the walls seemed to draw nearer as Jonathan's voice continued its drowsy tale. The afternoon sun poured in at the window until it made the little wainscoted parlour like an oven, but still for me it only lit up one pair of eyes. The voices sounded more and more like those of a dream; the scratching of pens and shuffling of feet were, to my ears, as distant murmurs of the sea, until the coroner's voice called—"Georgio Rhodojani."

Instantly I was wide awake, with every nerve on the stretch. Again I felt his eyes question me, again my mother's hand tightened upon mine, as the stranger stood up and in softest, most musical tones gave his evidence. And the evidence of Georgio Rhodojani, Greek sailor, as translated by Jacopo Rousapoulos, interpreter, of Penzance, was this:—

"My name is Georgio Rhodojani. I am a Greek by birth, and have been a sailor all my life. I was seaman on board the ship which was wrecked last night on your horrible coast. The ship belonged to Bristol, and was homeward bound, but I know neither her name nor the name of her captain."

At this strange opening, amazement fell upon all. For myself, the wild incongruity of this foreign tongue from lips which I had heard utter such fluent and flute-like English swallowed up all other wonder.

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After a pause, seeing the marvelling looks of his audience, the witness quietly explained—

"You wonder at this; but I am Greek, and cannot master your hard names. I joined the ship at Colombo as the captain was short of hands. I was wrecked in a Dutch vessel belonging to Dordrecht, off Java, and worked my passage to Ceylon, seeking employment. It is not, therefore, extraordinary that I am so ignorant, and my mouth cannot pronounce your English language, but show me your list of ships and I will point her out to you."

There was a rustling of papers, and a list of East Indiamen was handed up to him: he hastily ran his finger over the pages. Suddenly his face lighted up.

"Ah! this is she!—this is the ship that was wrecked last night!"

The coroner took the paper and slowly read out —"The *James and Elizabeth*, of Bristol. Captain—Antonius Merrydew."

"Ah, yes, that is she. The babe here was the captain's child, born on the voyage. There were eighteen men on board, an English boy, and the captain's wife. The child was born off the African coast. We sailed from Colombo on the 22nd of July last, with a cargo of coffee and sugar. Two days ago we were off a big harbour, of which I do not know the name; but early yesterday morning were abreast of what you call, I think, the Lizard. The wind was S.W., and took us into your terrible bay. All yesterday we were tacking

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to get out. Towards evening it blew a gale. The captain had been ill ever since we passed the Bay of Biscay. We hoisted no signal, and knew not what to do, for the captain was sick, and the mate drunk. The mate began to cry when we struck. I alone got on to the jib-boom and jumped. What became of the others I know not, but I jumped on to the rock by which you found me this morning. The vessel broke up in a very short time. I heard the men crying bitterly, but the mate's voice was louder than any. The captain of course was below, and so, when last I saw them, were his wife and child, but she might have rushed upon deck. I was almost sucked back twice, but managed to scramble up. It was not until daylight that I knew I was on the mainland, and climbed down to the sands."

As this strange history proceeded, I know not who in that little audience was most affected. The jury, fascinated by the sweet voice of the speaker, as well as the mystery about the vessel and its unwitnessed disappearance, leant forward in their seats with strained and breathless attention. My mother could not take her eyes off the stranger's face. As he hesitated over the name of the ship, her very lips grew white in agonised suspense, but when the coroner read "the *James and Elizabeth*," she sank back in her seat with a low "Thank God!" that told me what she had dreaded, and how terribly. I myself knew not what to think, nor if my ears had heard aright. Part of the tale I knew to

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be a lie; but how much? And what of the *Mary Jane?* I looked round about. A hush had succeeded the closing words of Rhodojaui. Even the coroner was puzzled for a moment; but improbable as the evidence might seem, there was none to gainsay it. I alone, had they but known it, could give this demon the lie—I, an unnoticed child.

The coroner put a question or two and then summed up. Again the old drowsy insensibility fell upon me. I heard the jury return the usual verdict of "Accidental Death," and, as my mother led me from the room, the voice of Joe Roscorla (who had been on the jury) saying, "Durn all foreigners! I don't hold by none of 'em." As the door slammed behind us, shutting out at last those piercing eyes, a shrill screech from the landlord's parrot echoed through the house—

"All hands lost! Lord ha' mercy on us!"

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CHAPTER VI.

TELLS HOW A FACE LOOKED IN AT THE WINDOW OF LANTRIG; AND IN WHAT MANNER MY FATHER CAME HOME TO US.

My mother and I walked homeward together by way of the cliffs. We were both silent. My heart ached to tell the whole story, and prove that my tale of the *Mary Jane* was no wanton lie; but fear restrained me. My mother was busy with her own thoughts. She had seen, I knew, the glance of intelligence which the stranger gave me; she guessed that his story was a lie and that I knew it. What she could not guess was the horror that held my tongue fastened as with a padlock. So, both busy with bitter thoughts, we walked in silence to Lantrig.

The evening meal was no better. My food choked me, and after a struggle I was forced to let it lie almost untouched. But when the fire was stirred, the candles lit, and I drew my footstool as usual to her feet by the hearth, the old room looked so warm and cosy that my pale fears began to vanish in its genial glow. I had possessed myself of the "Pilgrim's Progress," and the volume, a dumpy octavo, lay on my knee. As I read

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the story of Christian and Apollyon to its end, a new courage fought in me with my morning fears.

"In this combat no man can imagine, unless he has seen and heard as I did, what yelling and hideous roaring Apollyon made all the time of the fight: he *spake like a dragon;* and, on the other side, what sighs and groans burst from Christian's heart. I never saw him all the while give so much as one pleasant look, till he perceived that he had wounded Apollyon with his two-edged sword; then indeed he did smile and look upward! but it was the dreadfullest sight that ever I saw."

I glanced up at my mother, half resolved. She was leaning forward a little and gazing into the fire, that lit up her pale face and wonderful eyes with a sympathetic softness. I can remember now how sweet she looked and how weary—that tender figure outlined in warm glow against the stern, dark room. And all the time her heart was slowly breaking with yearning for him that came not. I did not know it then; but when does childhood know or understand the suffering of later life? I looked down upon the page once more, turned back a leaf or two, and read:

"Then did Christian begin to be afraid, and to cast in his mind whether to go back or stand his ground. But he considered again that he had no armour for his back, and therefore thought that to turn his back to him might give him greater advantage, with ease to pierce him with his darts; therefore he resolved to venture and stand his ground."

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"I come on them in bed sometimes, and sometimes from behind." The words of my Apollyon came across my mind. Should I speak and seek counsel?—What was that?

It was a tear that fell upon my hand as it lay across my mother's lap. Since the day when father left us I had never seen her weep. Was it for my deceit? I looked up again and saw that her eyes were brimming with sorrow. My fears and doubts were forgotten. I would speak and tell her all my tale.

"Mother."

Somewhat ashamed at being discovered, she dried her eyes and tried to smile—a poor pitiful smile, with the veriest ghost of joy in it.

"Yes, Jasper."

"Is Apollyon still alive?"

"He stands for the powers of evil, Jasper, and they are always alive."

"But, I mean, does he walk about the world like a man? Is he *really* alive?"

"Why, no, Jasper. What nonsense has got into your head now?"

"Because, mother, I met him to-day. That is, he said he was Apollyon, and that he would come and carry me off if——"

Half apprehensive at my boldness, I cast an anxious look around as I spoke. Nothing met my eyes but the familiar furniture and the dancing shadows on the wall, until their gaze fell upon the window, and rested there,

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whilst my heart grew suddenly stiff with terror, and my tongue clave to my mouth.

As my voice broke off suddenly, mother glanced at me in expectation. Seeing my fixed stare and dropped jaw, she too looked at the window, then started to her feet with a shriek.

For there, looking in upon us with a wicked smile, was the white face of the sailor Rhodojani.

For a second or two, petrified with horror, we stood staring at it. The evil smile flickered for a moment, baring the white teeth and lighting the depths of those wolfish eyes; then, with a fiendish laugh, vanished in the darkness.

He had, then, told the truth when he promised to haunt me. Beyond the shock of mortal terror, I was but little amazed. It seemed but natural that he should come as he had threatened. Only I was filled with awful expectation of his vengeance, and stood aghast at the consequences of my rashness. By instinct I turned to my mother for protection.

But what ailed her? She had fallen back in her chair and was still staring with parted lips at the dark pane that a minute ago had framed the horrid countenance. When at last she spoke, her words were wild and meaningless, with a dreadful mockery of laughter that sent a swift pang of apprehension to my heart.

"Mother, it is gone. What is the matter?"

Again a few meaningless syllables and that awful laugh.

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And so throughout that second awful night did she mutter and laugh, whilst I, helpless and terror-stricken, strove to soothe her and recall her to speech and sense. The slow hours dragged by, and still I knelt before her waiting for the light. The slow clock sounded the hours, and still she gave no sign of understanding. The mice crept out of their accustomed holes and jumped back startled at her laugh. The fire died low and the candles died out; the wind moaned outside, the tamarisk branches swished against the pane; the hush of night, with its intervals of mysterious sound, held the house; but all the time she never ceased to gaze upon the window, and every now and then to mutter words that were no echo of her mind or voice. Daylight, with its premonitory chill, crept upon us at last, but oh, how slowly! Daylight looked in and found us as that cruel sight had left us, helpless and alone.

But with daylight came some courage. Had there been neighbours near Lantrig I should have run to summon them before, but Polkimbra was the nearest habitation, and Polkimbra was almost two miles off, across a road possessed by horrors and perhaps tenanted by that devilish face. And how could I leave my mother alone? But now that day had come I would run to Lizard Town and see Uncle Loveday. I slipped on my boots, unbolted the door, cast a last look at my mother still sitting helpless and vacant of soul, and rushed from the house. The sound of her laughter rang in my ears as the door closed behind me.

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Weak, haggard and wild of aspect, I ran and stumbled along the cliffs. Dead Man's Rock lay below wrapped in a curtain of mist. Thick clouds were rolling up from seaward; the grey light of returning day made sea, sky and land seem colourless and wan. But for me there was no sight but Polkimbra ahead. As I gained the little village I ran down the hill to the "Lugger" and knocked upon the door. Heavens! how long it was before I was answered. At last the landlady's head appeared at an upper window. With a few words to Mrs. Busvargus, which caused that worthy soul to dress in haste with many ejaculations, I raced up the hill again and across the downs for Lizard Town. My strength was giving way; my head swam, my sides ached terribly, my legs almost refused to obey my will, and a thousand lights danced and sparkled before my eyes, but still I kept on, now staggering, now stumbling, but still onward, nor stopped until I stood before Uncle Loveday's door.

There at last I fell; but luckily against the door, so that in a moment or two I became conscious of Aunt Elizabeth standing over me and regarding me as a culprit caught red-handed in some atrocious crime.

"Hoity-toity! What's the matter now? Why, it's Jasper! Well, of all the freaks, to come knocking us up! What's the matter with the boy? Jasper, what ails you?"

Incoherently I told my story, at first to Aunt Elizabeth alone, but presently, in answer to her call,

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Uncle Loveday came down to hear. The pair stood silent and wondering.

They were not elaborately dressed. Aunt Elizabeth, it is true, was smothered from head to foot in a gigantic Inverness cape, that might have been my uncle's were it not obviously too large for that little man. Her nightcap, on the other hand, was ostentatiously her own. No other woman would have had strength of mind to wear such a head-dress. Uncle Loveday's costume was even more singular; for the first time I saw him without a single brass button, and for the first time I understood how much he owed to those decorations. His first words were—

"Jasper, I hope you are telling me the truth. Your mother told me yesterday of some cock-and-bull story concerning the *Anna Maria* or some such vessel. I hope this is not another such case. I have told you often enough where little boys who tell falsehoods go to."

My white face must have been voucher for my truth on this occasion; for Aunt Elizabeth cut him short with the single word "Breakfast," and haled me into the little parlour whilst the pair went to dress.

As I waited, I heard the sound of the pony without, and presently Aunt Elizabeth returned in her ordinary costume to worry the small servant who laid breakfast. Whether Uncle Loveday ever had that meal I do not know to this day, for whilst it was being prepared I saw him get into the little carriage and drive off towards Lantrig. I was told that I could not go until I had

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eaten; and so with a sore heart, but no thought of disobedience, I turned to breakfast.

The meal had scarcely begun when the door opened and Master Thomas Loveday sauntered into the room. Master Thomas Loveday, a youth of some eight summers, was, in default of a home of his own, quartered permanently upon my uncle, whose brother's son he was. His early days had been spent in India. After, however, both father and mother had succumbed to the climate of Madras, he was sent home to England, and had taken root in Lizard Town. Hitherto, his life had been one long lazy slumber. Whenever we were sent, on his rare visits to Lantrig, to "play together," as old age always rudely puts it, his invariable rule had been to go to sleep on the first convenient spot. Consequently his presence embarrassed me not a little. He was a handsome boy, with blue eyes, long lashes, fair hair, and a gentle habit of speech. When I came to know him better, I learnt the quick wit and subtle power that lay beneath his laziness of manner; but at present the soul of Thomas Loveday slept.

He was certainly not wide awake when he entered the room. With a sleepy nod at me, and no trace of surprise at my presence, he pursued his meal. Occasionally, as Aunt Elizabeth put a fresh question, he would regard her with a long stare, but otherwise gave no sign of animation. This finally so exasperated my aunt that she addressed him—

"Thomas, do not stare."

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Thomas looked mildly surprised for a moment, and then inquired, "Why not?"

"Does the boy think I'm a wild Indian?" The question was addressed to me, but I could not say, so kept a discreet silence. Thomas relieved me from my difficulty by answering, "No," thoughtfully.

"Then why stare so? I'm sure I don't know what boys are made of, nowadays."

"Slugs and snails and puppy-dogs' tails," was the dreamy answer.

"Thomas, how dare you? I should like to catch the person who taught you such nonsense. I'd teach him!"

"It was Uncle Loveday," remarked the innocent Thomas.

There was an awful pause; which I broke at length by asking to be allowed to go. Aunt Elizabeth saw her way to getting rid of the offender.

"Thomas, you might walk with Jasper over the downs to Lantrig. It will be nice exercise for you."

"It may be exercise, aunt, but——"

"Do not answer me, but go. Where do you expect little boys will go to, who are always idle?"

"Sleep?" hazarded Thomas.

"Thomas, you shall learn the whole of Dr. Watts's poem on the sluggard before you go to bed this night."

At this the boy slowly rose, took his cap, stood before her, and solemnly repeated the whole of that melancholy tale, finishing the last line at the door and

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gravely bowing himself out. I followed, awestruck, and we set out in silence.

At first, anxiety for my mother possessed all my thoughts, but presently I ventured to congratulate Tom on his performance.

"She has read it to me so often," replied he, "that I can't help knowing it. I hate Dr. Watts, and I love to go to sleep. I dream such jolly things. Sleep is ever so much nicer than being awake, isn't it?"

I wanted sleep, having had but little for two nights, and could therefore agree with him.

"You get such jolly adventures when you dream," said Tom, reflectively.

I had been rather surfeited with adventures lately, so held my peace.

"Now, real life is so dull. If one could only meet with adventures——"

I caught the sound of wheels behind us, and turned round. We had struck off the downs on to the high road. A light gig with one occupant was approaching us. As it drew near the driver hailed us.

"Hullo! lads, is this the road for Polkimbra?"

The speaker was a short, grizzled, seafaring man, with a kind face and good-humoured mouth. He drove execrably, and pulled his quiet mare right back upon her haunches.

I answered that it was.

"Are you bound for there? Yes? Jump up then. I'll give you a lift."

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I looked at Tom; he, of course, was ready for anything that would save trouble, so we clambered up beside the stranger.

"There was a wreck there yesterday, I've heard," said he, after we had gone a few yards, "and an inquest, and, by the tale I heard, a lot of lies told."

I started. The man did not notice it, but continued—

"Maybe you've heard of it. Well, it's a rum world, and a fine lot of lies gets told every day, but you don't often get so accomplished a liar as that chap—what's his name? Blessed if I can tackle it; not but what it's another lie, I'll wager."

I was listening intently. He continued more to himself than to us—

"An amazing liar, though I wonder what his game was. It beats me; beats me altogether. The '*James and Elizabeth*,' says he, as large as life. I take it the fellow couldn't 'a been fooling who brought the news to Falmouth. Didn't know me from Adam, and was fairly put about when he saw how I took it, and, says he, 'twas the *James and Elizabeth* the chap said, as sure as I stand here.' Boy, do you happen to know the name of the vessel that ran ashore here, night afore last?"

I had grown accustomed to being asked this dreadful question, and therefore answered as bravely as I could, "The *James and Elizabeth*, sir."

"Captain's name?"

"Captain Antonius Merrydew."

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"Ah, poor chap! He was lying sick below when she struck, wasn't he? And he had a wife aboard, and a child born at sea, hadn't he? Fell sick in the Bay o' Biscay, like any land-lubber, didn't he? Why, 'tis like play-actin'; damme! 'tis better than that."

With this the man burst into a shout of laughter and slapped his thigh until his face grew purple with merriment.

"What d'ye think of it, boy, for a rare farce? Was ever the likes of it heard? Captain Antonius Merrydew sick in the Bay o' Biscay! Ho, ho! Where's play-actin' beside it?"

"Wasn't it true, sir?"

"True? God bless the boy! Look me in the face: look me in the face, and then ask me if it's true."

"But why should it not be true, sir?"

"Because I am Captain Antonius Merrydew!"

For the rest of the journey I sat stunned. Thomas beside me was wide awake and staring, seeing his way to an adventure at last. It was I that dreamed—I heard without comprehension the rest of the captain's tale:—how he had come, after a quick passage from Ceylon, to Falmouth with the barque *James and Elizabeth*, just in time to hear of this monstrous lie; how he was unmarried, and never had a day's illness in his life; how, suspecting foul play, he had hired a horse and gig with a determination to drive over to Polkimbra and learn the truth; how a horse and gig were the most cursedly obstinate of created things; with much besides in the

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way of oaths and ejaculations. All this I must have heard, for memory brought them back later; but I did not listen. My life and circumstances had got the upper hand of me, and were dancing a devil's riot.

At last, after much tacking and porting of helm, we navigated Polkimbra Hill and cast anchor before the "Lugger." There we alighted, thanked the captain, and left him piping all hands to the horse's head. His cheery voice followed us down to the sands.

We had determined to cut across Polkimbra Beach and climb up to Lantrig by Ready-Money Cliffs, as in order to go along the path above the cliffs we should have to ascend Polkimbra Hill again. The beach was so full of horror to me that without a companion I could not have crossed it; but Tom's presence lent me courage. Tom was nearer to excitement than I had ever seen him; he grew voluble; praised the captain, admired his talk, and declared adventure to be abroad in the air—in fact, threw up his head as though he scented it.

Yes, adventure was in the air. It was not exactly to my taste, however, nor did the thought of my poor mother at home make me more sympathetic with Tom's ecstasy; so whilst he chattered I strode gloomily forward over the beach.

The day was drawing towards noon. October was revelling in an after-taste of summer, and smiled in broad glory over beach and sea. A light breeze bore eastward a few fleecy clouds, and the waves danced and murmured before its breath. Their salt scent was in

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our nostrils, and the glitter of the sand in our eyes. Black and sombre in the clear air, Dead Man's Rock rose in gloomy isolation from the sea, while the sea-birds swept in glistening circles round its summit. But what was that at its base?

Seemingly, a little knot of men stood at the water's edge. As we drew nearer I could distinguish their forms but not their occupation, for they stood in a circle, intent on some object in their midst concealed from our view. Presently, however, they fell into a rough line as though making for the archway to Ready-Money Cove. Something they carried among them, and continually stooped over; but what it was I could not see. Their pace was very slow, but they turned into the arch and were disappearing, when I caught sight of the uncouth little figure of Joe Roscorla among the last, and ran forward, hailing him by name.

At the sound of my voice Joe started, turned round and made a slow pause; then, with a few words to his neighbour, came quickly towards me. As he drew near, I saw that his face was white and his manner full of embarrassment; but he put on a smile, and spoke first—

"Why, Jasper, what be doin' along here?"

"I'm going home. Has Uncle Loveday seen mother? And is she better?"

"Aw iss, he've a seen her an' she be quieter: leastways, he be bound to do her a power o' good. But what be goin' back for? 'Tain't no use botherin' in-

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doors wi' your mother in thicky wisht state. Run about an' get some play."

"What were you doing down by the Rock just now, Joe?"

Joe hesitated for a while; stammered, and then said, "Nuthin."

"But, Joe, you were doing something: what were you carrying over to Ready-Money?"

"Look-ee here, my lad, run an' play, an' doan't ax no questions. 'Tain't for little boys to ax questions. Now I comes to think of it, Doctor said as you was to stay over to Lizard Town, 'cos there ain't no need of a passel of boys in a sick house: so run along back."

Joe's voice had a curious break in it, and his whole bearing was so unaccountable that I did not wonder when Tom quietly said—

"Joe, you're telling lies."

Now Joe was, in an ordinary way, the soul of truth: so I looked for an explosion. To my surprise, however, he took no notice of the insult, but turned again to me—

"Jasper, lad, run along back: do'ee now."

His voice was so full of entreaty that a sudden suspicion took hold of me.

"Joe, is—has anything happened to mother?"

"Noa, to be sure: she'll be gettin' well fast enough, if so be as you let her be."

"Then I'll go and see Uncle Loveday, and find out if I am really to go back."

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I made a motion to go, but he caught me quickly by the arm.

"Now, Jasper, doan't-'ee go: run back, I tell'ee—run back—I tell'ee you *must* go back."

His words were so earnest and full of command that I turned round and faced him. Something in his eyes filled me with sickening fear.

"Joe, what were you carrying?"

No answer.

"Joe, what were you carrying?"

Still no answer; but an appealing motion of the hand.

"Joe, what was it?"

"Go back!" he said, hoarsely. "Go back!"

"I will not, until I have seen what you were carrying."

"Go back, boy: for God's sake go back!"

I wrenched myself from his grasp, and ran with all speed. Joe and Tom followed me, but fear gave me fleetness. Behind I could hear Joe's panting voice, crying, "Come back!" but the agony in his tone set me running faster. I flew through the archway, and saw the small procession half-way across the cove. At my shout they halted, paused, and one or two advanced as if to stop me. But I dashed through their hands into their midst, and saw—God in heaven! What? The drowned face of my father!

Tenderly as women they lifted me from the body. Gently and with tear-stained faces, they stood around

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and tried to comfort me. Reverently, while Joe Roscorla held me in his arms behind, they took up the corpse of him they had known and loved so well, and carried it up the cliffs to Lantrig. As they lifted the latch and bore the body across the threshold, a yell of maniac laughter echoed through the house to the very roof.

And this was my father's "Welcome Home!"

Nay, not all; for as Uncle Loveday started to his feet, the door behind him flew open, and my mother, all in white, with very madness in her eyes, rushed to the corpse, knelt, caught the dead hand, kissed and fondled the dead face, cooing and softly laughing the while with a tender rapture that would have moved hell itself to pity.

In this manner it was that these two fond lovers met.

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CHAPTER VII.

TELLS HOW UNCLE LOVEDAY MADE A DISCOVERY; AND WHAT THE TIN BOX CONTAINED.

An hour afterwards I was sitting at the bedside of my dying mother. The shock of that terrible meeting had brought her understanding — and death: for as her mind returned her life ebbed away. White and placid she lay upon her last bed, and spoke no word; but in her eyes could be read her death-warrant, and by me that which was yet more full of anguish, a tender but unfading reproach. This world is full of misunderstandings, but seldom is met one so desperate. How could I tell her now? And how could she ever understand? It was all too late. "Too late! too late!" the words haunted me there as the bright sun struggled through the drawn blind and illumined her saintly face. They and the look in her sweet eyes have haunted me many a day since then, and would be with me yet, did I not believe she knows the truth at last. There are too many ghosts in my memories for Heaven to lightly add this one more.

She was dying—slowly and peacefully dying, and this was the end of her waiting. He had returned at

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last, this husband for whose coming she had watched so long. He had returned at last, after all his labour, and had been laid at her feet a dead man. She was free to go and join her love. To me, child as I was, this was sorely cruel. Death, as I know now, is very merciful even when he seems most merciless, but as I sat and watched the dear life slowly drift away from me, it was a hard matter to understand.

The pale sunlight came, and flickered, and went; but she lay to all seeming unchanged. Her pulse's beat was failing — failing; the broken heart feebly struggling to its rest; but her sad eyes were still the same, appealing, questioning, rebuking—all without hope of answer or explanation. So were they when the sobbing fishermen lifted her from the body, so would they be until closed for the last sleep. It was very cruel.

My father's body lay in the room below, with Uncle Loveday and Mrs. Busvargus for watchers. Now and again my uncle would steal softly upstairs, and as softly return with hopelessness upon his face. The clock downstairs gave the only sound I heard, as it marked the footsteps of the dark angel coming nearer and nearer. Twice my mother's lips parted as if to speak; but though I bent down to catch her words, I could hear no sound.

So, as I sat and watched her waxen face, all the sweet memories of her came back in a sad, reproachful train. Once more we sat together by the widowed hearth,

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reading: once more we stood upon the rocky edge of Pedn-glâs and looked into the splendours of the summer sunset "for father's ship:" once more we knelt together in Polkimbra Church, and prayed for his safe return: once more I heard that sweet, low voice—once more? Ah, never, never more!

Uncle Loveday stole into the room on tip-toe, and looked at her; then turned and asked—

"Has she spoken yet?"

"No."

He was about to leave when the lips parted again, and this time she spoke—

"He is coming, coming. Hush! that is his step!"

The dark eyes were ablaze with expectation: the pale cheek aglow with hope. I bent down over the bed, for her voice was very low.

"He is coming, I know it. Listen! Oh, husband, come quicker, quicker!"

Alas! poor saint, the step you listen for has gone before, and is already at the gate of heaven.

"He is here! Oh, husband, husband, you have come for me!"

A moment she sat up with arms outstretched, and glory in her face; then fell back, and the arms that caught her were the arms of God.

* * * * * *

After the first pang of bereavement had spent itself, Uncle Loveday got me to bed, and there at last I slept.

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The very bewilderment of so much sorrow enforced sleep, and sleep was needed: so that, worn out with watching and excitement, I had not so much as a dream to trouble me. It was ten o'clock in the morning when I awoke, and saw my uncle sitting beside the bed. Another sun was bright in the heavens outside: the whole world looked so calm and happy that my first impulse was to leap up and run, as was my custom, to mother's room. Then my eyes fell on Uncle Loveday, and the whole dreadful truth came surging into my awakened brain. I sank back with a low moan upon the pillow.

Uncle Loveday, who had been watching me, stepped to the bed and took my hand.

"Jasper, boy, are you better?"

After a short struggle with my grief, I plucked up heart to answer that I was.

"That's a brave boy. I asked, because I have yet to tell you something. I am a doctor, you know, Jasper, and so you may take my word when I say there is no good in what is called 'breaking news.' It is always best to have the pain over and done with; at least, that's my experience. Now, my dear boy, though God knows you have sorrow enough, there is still something to tell: and if you are the boy I take you for, it is best to let you know at once."

Dimly wondering what new blow fortune could deal me, I sat up in bed and looked at my uncle helplessly.

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"Jasper, you think—do you not—that your father was drowned?"

"Of course, uncle."

"He was not drowned."

"Not drowned!"

"No, Jasper, he was murdered."

The words came slowly and solemnly, and even with the first shock of surprise the whole truth dawned upon me. This, then, explained the effect my name had wrought upon those two strange men. This was the reason why, as we sat together upon Dead Man's Rock, the eyes of John Railton had refused to meet mine: this was the reason why his murderer had gripped me so viciously upon Ready-Money Beach. These few words of my uncle's began slowly to piece together the scattered puzzle of the last two days, so that I half guessed the answer as I asked—

"Murdered! How?"

"He was stabbed to death."

I knew it, for I remembered the empty sheath that hung at Rhodojani's waist, and heard again Railton's words, "Captain, it was your knife." As certainly as if I had fitted the weapon to its case, I knew that man had prompted father's murder. Even as I knew it my terror of him faded away, and a blind and helpless hate sprang up in its stead: helpless now, but some day to be masterful and worthy of heed. That the man who called himself Georgio Rhodojani was guilty of one death, I knew from the witness of my own eyes: that

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he had two more lives upon his black account—for the hand that struck my father had also slain my mother—I knew as surely.

"And the devil has got his due, my lads!"

No, not yet: there was still one priceless soul for him to wait for.

"He was stabbed," repeated Uncle Loveday, "stabbed to the heart, and from behind. I found this blade as I examined your poor father's body. It was broken off close to the hilt, and left in the wound, which can hardly have bled at all. Death must have been immediate. It's a strange business, Jasper, and a strange blade by the look of it."

I took the blade from his hand. It was about four inches in length, sharp, and curiously worked: one side was quite plain, but the other was covered with intricate tracery, and down the centre, bordered with delicate fruit and flowers, I spelt out the legend "RICORDATI."

"What does that word mean?" I asked, as I handed back the steel. My voice was so calm and steady that Uncle Loveday glanced at me for a moment in amazement before he answered—

"It's not Latin, Jasper, but it's like Latin, and I should think must mean 'Remember,' or something of the sort."

"'Remember,'" I repeated. "I will, uncle. As surely as father was murdered, I will remember—when the time comes."

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They were strange words from a boy. My uncle looked at me again, but doubtless thinking my brain turned with grief, said nothing.

"Have you told anybody?" I asked at length.

"I have seen nobody. There will be an inquest, of course, but in this case an inquest can do nothing. Murderer and murdered have both gone to their account. By the way, I suppose nothing has been seen of the man who gave evidence. It was an unlikely tale; and this makes it the more suspicious. Bless my soul!" said my uncle, suddenly, "to think it never struck me before! Your father was to sail in the *Belle Fortune*, and this man gave the name of the ship as the *James and Elizabeth*."

"It was the *Belle Fortune*, and the man told a falsehood."

"I suppose it must have been."

"I know it was."

"Know? How do you know?"

"Because the *James and Elizabeth* is lying at this moment in Falmouth Harbour, and her captain is down at the 'Lugger.'"

Thereupon I told how I had met with Captain Antonius Merrydew. Nay, more, for my heart ached for confidence, I recounted the whole story of my meeting with John Railton, and the struggle upon Dead Man's Rock. Every word I told, down to the dead man's legacy—the packet and letter which I hid in the cow-house. As the tale proceeded my uncle's eyes grew

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wider and wider with astonishment. But I held on calmly and resolutely to the end, nor after the first shock of wonderment did he doubt my sanity or truthfulness, but grew more and more gravely interested.

When I had finished my narrative there was a long silence. Finally Uncle Loveday spoke—

"It's a remarkable story—a very remarkable story," he said, slowly and thoughtfully. "In all my life I have never heard so strange a tale. But the man must be caught. He cannot have gone far, if, as you say, he was here at Lantrig only the night before last. I expect they are on the look-out for him down at Polkimbra since they have heard the captain's statement; but all the same I will send off Joe Roscorla, who is below, to make sure. I must have a pipe, Jasper, to think this over. As a general rule I am not a smoker: your aunt does not—ahem!—exactly like the smell. But it collects the thoughts, and this wants thinking over. Meanwhile, you might dress if you feel well enough. Run to the shed and get the packet; we will read it over together when I have finished my pipe. It is a remarkable story," he repeated, as he slowly opened the door, "a most marvellous story. I must have a pipe. A most—remarkable—tale."

With this he went downstairs and left me to dress.

I did so, and ran downstairs to the cow-shed. No one had been there. With eager fingers I tore away the bricks from the crumbling mortar, and drew out my prize. The buckle glittered in the light that

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stole through the gaping door. All was safe, and as I left it.

Clutching my treasure, I ran back to the house and found Mrs. Busvargus spreading the midday meal. Until that was over, I knew that Uncle Loveday would not attack the mystery. He was sitting outside in the front garden smoking solemnly, and the wreaths of his pipe, curling in through the open door, filled the house with fragrance.

I crept upstairs to my mother's door, and reverently entered the dim-lit room. They had laid the two dead lovers side by side upon the bed. Very peacefully they slept the sleep that was their meeting—peacefully as though no wickedness had marred their lives or wrought their death. I could look upon them calmly now. My father had left his heritage—a heritage far different from that which he went forth to win; but I accepted it nevertheless. Had they known, in heaven, the full extent of that inheritance, would they not, as I kissed their dead lips in token of my acceptance, have given some sign to stay me? Had I known, as I bent over them, to what the oath in my heart would bring me, would I even then have renounced it? I cannot say. The dead lips were silent, and only the dead know what will be.

Uncle Loveday was already at table when I descended. But small was our pretence of eating. Mrs. Busvargus, it is true, had lost no appetite through sorrow; but Mrs. Busvargus was accustomed to such

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scenes, and in her calling treated Death with no more to-do than she would a fresh customer at her husband's inn. Long attendance at death-beds seemed to have given that good woman a perennial youth, and certainly that day she seemed to have lost the years which I had gained. Uncle Loveday made some faint display of heartiness; but it was the most transparent feigning. He covered his defection by pressing huge helpings upon me, so that my plate was bidding fair to become a new Tower of Babel, when Mrs. Busvargus interposed and swept the meal away; after which she disappeared into the back kitchen to "wash up," and was no more seen; but we heard loud splashings at intervals as if she had found a fountain, and were renewing her youth in it.

Left to ourselves, we sat silent for a while, during which Uncle Loveday refilled and lit his pipe and plunged again into thought, with his eyes fixed on the rafters. Whether because his cogitations led to something, or the tobacco had soothed him sufficiently, he finally turned to me and asked—

"Have you got that packet?"

I produced it. He took his big red handkerchief from his pocket, spread it on the table, and began slowly to undo the strap. Then after arranging apart the buckle, the letter, and the tin box, he inquired—

"Was it like this when the man gave it to you?"

"No, the letter was separate. I slipped it under the strap to keep it safe."

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"It seems to me," said my uncle, adjusting his spectacles and unfolding the paper, "illegible, or almost so. It has evidently been thoroughly soaked with salt water. Come here and see if your young eyes can help me to decipher it."

We bent together over the blurred handwriting. The letter was evidently in a feminine hand; but the characters were rudely and inartistically formed, while every here and there a heavy down-stroke or flourish marred the beauty of the page. Wherever such thick lines occurred the ink had run and formed an illegible smear. Such as it was, with great difficulty, and after frequent trials, we spelt out the letter as follows:—

"The Wele . . . Home, Barbican, Plymo.

"My Deerest Jack,—This to hope it will find You quite well, as it leaves Me at present. Also to say that I hope this voyage . . . *new Leaf* with Simon as Companny, who is a *Good Friend*, though, as you well know, I did not think . . . came *courting me*. But it is for the best, and . . . liquor . . . which I pray to Heaven may begin happier Days. Trade is very poor, and I do not know . . . little Jenny, who is getting on *Famously* with her Schooling. She keaps the Books already, which is a great saving . . . looks in often and sits in the parlour. He says as you have Done Well to be . . . *Wave*, but misdoubts Simon, which I tell him must be wrong, for it was him that advised . . . the fuss and warned against liquor, which he never took Himself. Jenny is so Fond of her Books, and says she will *teech you to write* when you come home, which will be a great *Comfort*, you being away so long and never a word. And I am doing wonders under her teaching, which I dare say she will let you know of it all in the letter she is writing to go along with this . . . Simon to write for you, who is a . . . scholar, which is natural . . . in the office. So that I wonder he left it, having no taste for the

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sea that ever I heard . . . be the making of you both. I forgot to tell . . . very strange when he left, but what with the hurry and bussle it *slipped my mind* . . . wonderful to me to think of, my talking to you so natural . . . distance. And so no more at present from your loving wife, "LUCY RAILTON.

"Jenny says . . . will not alter, being more like as if it came from me. Munny is very scarce. I wish you could get . . . "

This was all, and small enough, as I thought, was the light it threw on the problem before us. Uncle Loveday read it over three or four times; then folded up the letter and looked at me over his spectacles.

"You say this cut-throat fellow—this Rhodojani, as he called himself—spoke English?"

"As well as we do. He and the other spoke English all the time."

"H'm! And he talked about a Jenny, did he?"

"He was saying something about 'Jenny not finding a husband' when John Railton struck him."

"Then it's clear as daylight that he's called Simon, and not Georgio. Also if I ever bet (though far be it from me) I would bet my buttons that his name is no more Rhodojani than mine is Methuselah."

He paused for a moment, absorbed in thought; then resumed—

"This Lucy Railton is John Railton's wife and keeps a public-house called the 'Welcome Home!' on the Barbican, Plymouth. Simon, that is to say Rhodojani, was in love with Lucy Railton, and his conduct, says she, was strange before leaving; but he pretended to be

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John Railton's friend, and, from what you say, must have had an astonishing influence over the unhappy man. Simon, we learn, is a scholar," pursued my uncle, after again consulting the letter, "and I see the word 'office' here, which makes it likely that he was a clerk of some kind, who took to the sea for some purpose of his own, and induced Railton to go with him, perhaps for the same purpose, perhaps for another. Anyhow, it seems it was high time for Railton to go somewhere, for besides the references to liquor, which tally with Simon's words upon Dead Man's Rock, we also meet with the ominous words 'the fuss,' wherein, Jasper, I find the definite article not without meaning."

Uncle Loveday was beaming with conscious pride in his own powers of penetration. He acknowledged my admiring attention with a modest wave of the hand, and then proceeded to clear his throat ostentatiously, as one about to play a trump card.

"As I say, Jasper, this fellow must have had some purpose to drag him off to sea from an office stool—some strong purpose, and, from what we know of the man, some ungodly purpose. Now, the question is, What was it? On the Rock, as you say, he charged John Railton with having a certain Will in his possession. Your father started from England with a Will in his possession. This is curious, to say the least—very curious; but I do not see how we are to connect this with the man Simon's sudden taste for the sea, for,

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you know, he could not possibly have heard of Amos Trenoweth's Will."

"You and aunt were the only people father told of it."

"Quite so; and your father (excuse me, Jasper) not being a born fool, naturally didn't cry his purpose about the streets of Plymouth when he took his passage. Still, it's curious. Your father sailed from Plymouth and this pair of rascals sailed from Plymouth—not that there's anything in that; hundreds sail out of the Sound every week, and we have nothing to show when Simon and John started—it may have been before your father. But look here, Jasper, what do you make of that?"

I bent over the letter, and where my uncle's finger pointed, read, "He says as you have Done Well to be . . . *Wave*."

"Well, uncle?"

"Well, my boy; what do you make of it?"

"I can make nothing of it."

"No? You see that solitary word '*Wave*'?"

"Yes."

"What was the ship called in which your father sailed?"

"The *Golden Wave*."

"That's it, the *Golden Wave*. Now, what do you make of it?"

My uncle leaned back in his chair and looked at me over his spectacles, with the air of one who has played his trump card and watches for its effect. A certain

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consciousness of merit and expectancy of approbation animated his person; his reasoning staggered me, and he saw it, nor was wholly displeased. After waiting some time for my reply, he added—

"Of course I may be wrong, but it's curious. I do not think I am wrong, when I mark what it proves. It proves, first, that these two ruffians—for ruffians they both were, as we must conclude, in spite of John Railton's melancholy end — it proves, I say, that these two sailed along with your father. They come home with him, are wrecked, and your father's body is found—murdered. Evidence, slight evidence, but still worthy of attention, points to them. Now, if it could be proved that they knew, at starting or before, of your father's purpose, it would help us; and, to my mind, this letter goes far to prove that wickedness of some sort was the cause of their going. What do you think?"

Uncle Loveday cleared his throat and looked at me again with professional pride in his diagnosis. There was a pause, broken only by Mrs. Busvargus splashing in the back kitchen.

"Good heavens!" said my uncle, "is that woman taking headers? Come, Jasper, what do you think?"

"I think," I replied, "we had better look at the tin box."

"Bless my soul! There's something in the boy, after all. I had clean forgotten it."

The box was about six inches by four, and some

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four inches in depth. The tin was tarnished by the sea, but the cover had been tightly fastened down and secured with a hasp and pin. Uncle Loveday drew out the pin, and with some difficulty raised the lid. Inside lay a tightly-rolled bundle of papers, seemingly uninjured. These he drew out, smoothed, and carefully opened.

As his eyes met the writing, his hand dropped, and he sank back—a very picture of amazement—in his chair.

"My God!"

"What's the matter?"

"It's your father's handwriting!"

I looked at this last witness cast up by the sea and read, "The Journal of Ezekiel Trenoweth, of Lantrig."

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CHAPTER VIII.

CONTAINS THE FIRST PART OF MY FATHER'S JOURNAL; SETTING FORTH HIS MEETING WITH MR. ELIHU SANDERSON, OF BOMBAY; AND MY GRANDFATHER'S MANUSCRIPT.

It was indeed my father's Journal, thus miraculously preserved to us from the sea. As we sat and gazed at this inanimate witness, I doubt not the same awe of an all-seeing Providence possessed the hearts of both of us. Little more than twenty-four hours ago had my dead father crossed the threshold of his home, and now his voice had come from the silence of another world to declare the mystery of his death. It was some minutes before Uncle Loveday could so far control his speech as to read aloud this precious manuscript. And thus, in my father's simple language, embellished with no art, and tricked out in no niceties of expression, the surprising story ran:—

"May 23rd, 1848.—Having, in obedience to the instructions of my father's Will, waited upon Mr. Elihu Sanderson, of the East India Company's Service, in their chief office at Bombay, and having from him received a somewhat singular communication in my father's handwriting, I have thought fit briefly to put

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together some record of the same, as well as of the more important events of my voyage, not only to refresh my own memory hereafter, if I am spared to end my days in peace at Lantrig, but also being impelled thereto by certain strange hints conveyed in this same communication. These hints, though I myself can see no ground for them, would seem to point towards some grave bodily or spiritual peril; and therefore it is my plain duty, seeing that I leave a beloved wife and young son at home, to make such provision that, in case of misadventure or disaster, Divine Providence may at least have at my hands some means whereby to inform them of my fate. For this reason I regret the want of foresight which prevented my beginning some such record at the outset; but as far as I can reasonably judge, my voyage has hitherto been prosperous and without event. Nevertheless, I will shortly set down what I can remember as worthy of remark before I landed at this city of Bombay, and trust that nothing of importance has slipped my notice.

"On the 3rd of February last I left my home at Lantrig, travelling by coach to Plymouth, where I slept at the 'One and All' in Old Town Street, being attracted thither by the name, which is our Cornish motto. The following day I took passage for Bombay in the *Golden Wave*, East Indiaman, Captain Jack Carey, which, as I learnt, was due to sail in two days. It had been my intention, had no suitable vessel been found at Plymouth, to proceed to Bristol, where the trade is much

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greater; but on the Barbican—a most evil-smelling neighbourhood—it was my luck to fall in with a very entertaining stranger, who, on hearing my case, immediately declared it to be a most fortunate meeting, as he himself had been making inquiries to the same purpose, and had found a ship which would start almost immediately. He had been, it appeared, a lawyer's clerk, but on the death of his old employer (whose name escapes my memory), finding his successor a man of difficult temper, and having saved sufficient money to be idle for a year or two, had conceived the wish to travel, and chosen Bombay, partly from a desire to behold the wonders of the Indies, and partly to see his brother, who held a post there in the East India Company's service. Having at the time much leisure, he kindly offered to show me the vessel, protesting that should I find it to my taste he was anxious for the sake of the company to secure a passage for himself. So very agreeable was his conversation that I embraced the opportunity which fortune thus threw in my way. The ship, on inspection, proved much to our liking, and Captain Carey of so honest a countenance, that the bargain was struck without more ado. I was for returning to the 'One and All,' but first thought it right to acquaint myself with the name of this new friend. He was called Simon Colliver, and lived, as he told me, in Stoke, whither he had to go to make preparation for this somewhat hasty departure, but first advised me to move my luggage from the 'One and

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All' (the comfort of which fell indeed short of the promise of so fair a name) to the 'Welcome Home,' a small but orderly house of entertainment in the Barbican, where, he said, I should be within easy distance of the *Golden Wave*. The walk to Old Town Street was not far in itself, but a good step when traversed five or six times a day; and, moreover, I was led to make the change on hearing that the landlord of the 'Welcome Home' was also intending to sail as seaman in this same ship. My new acquaintance led me to the house, an ill-favoured-looking den, but clean inside, and after a short consultation with John Railton, the landlord, arranged for my entertainment until the *Golden Wave* should weigh anchor. This done, and a friendly glass taken to seal the engagement, he departed, congratulating himself warmly on his good fortune in finding a fellow-traveller so much, as he protested, to his taste.

"I must own I was not over-pleased with John Railton, who seemed a sulky sort of man, and too much given to liquor. But I saw little of him after he brought my box from the 'One and All.' His wife waited upon me—a singularly sweet woman, though sorely vexed, as I could perceive, with her husband's infirmity. She loved him nevertheless, as a woman will sometimes love a brute, and was sorry to lose him. Indeed, when I noticed that evening that her eyes were red with weeping, and said a word about her husband's departure, she stared at me for a moment in amazement,

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and could not guess how I came to hear of it, 'for,' said she, 'the resolution had been so suddenly taken that even she could scarce account for it.' She admitted, however, that it was for the best, and added that 'Jack was a good seaman, and she always expected that he would leave her some day.' Her chief anxiety was for her little daughter, aged seven, whom it was hard to have exposed to the rough language and manners of a public-house. I comforted her as best I could, and doubt not she has found her husband's absence a less misfortune than she anticipated.

"The *Golden Wave* weighed anchor on the 6th of February, and reached Bombay after a tedious voyage of 103 days, on the 21st of May, having been detained by contrary winds in doubling the Cape. I saw little of Simon Colliver before starting, though he came twice, as I heard, to the 'Welcome Home' to inquire for me, and each time found me absent. On board, however, being the only other passenger, I was naturally thrown much into his society, and confess that I found him a most diverting companion. Often of a clear moonlight night would we pace the deck together, or watch in a darker sky the innumerable stars, on which Colliver had an amazing amount of information. Sometimes, too, he would sing—quaint songs which I had never heard before, to airs which I suspect, without well knowing why, were of his own composition. His voice was of large compass—a silvery tenor of surpassing purity and sweetness, inasmuch as I have seen

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the sailors stand spellbound, and even with tears in their eyes, at some sweet song of love and home. Often, again, the words would be weird and mysterious, but the voice was always delicious whether he spoke or sang. I asked him once why with such a gift he had not tried his fortune on the stage. At which he laughed, and replied that he could never be bound by rules of art, or forced to sing, whatever his humour, to an audience for which he cared nothing. I do not know why I dwell so long upon this extraordinary man. His path of life has chanced to run side by side with my own for a short space, and the two have now branched off, nor in all likelihood will ever meet again. My life has been a quiet one, and has not lain much in the way of extraordinary men, but I doubt if many such as Simon Colliver exist. He is a perfect enigma to me. That such a man, with such attainments (for besides his wonderful conversation and power of singing, he has an amazing knowledge of foreign tongues), that such a man, I say, should be a mere attorney's clerk is little short of marvellous. But as regards his past he told me nothing, though an apt and ready listener when I spoke of Lantrig and of Margery and Jasper at home. But he showed no curiosity as to the purpose of my voyage, and in fact seemed altogether careless as well of the fate as of the opinions of his fellow-men. He has passed out of my life; but when I shook hands with him at parting I left with regret the most fascinating companion it has been ever my lot to meet.

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"Our voyage, as I have said, was without event, though full of wonders to me who had seldom before sailed far out of sight of Pedn-glâs. But on these I need not here dwell. Only I cannot pass without mention the exceeding marvels of this city of Bombay. As I stood upon deck on the evening before last and watched the Bhôr Ghauts (as they are called) rise gradually on the dim horizon, whilst the long ridge of the Malabar Hill with its clustered lights grew swiftly dyed in delicate pink and gold, and as swiftly sank back into night, I confess that my heart was strangely fluttered to think that the wonders of this strange country lay at my feet, and I slept but badly for the excitement. But when, yesterday morning, I disembarked upon the Apollo Bund, I knew not at first whither to turn for very dismay. It was like the play-acting we saw, my dear Margery, one Christmas at Plymouth. Every sight in the strange crowd was unfamiliar to my Cornish eyes, and I felt sorely tempted to laugh when I thought what a figure some of them would cut in Polkimbra, and not less when I reflected that after all I was just as much out of place in Bombay, though of course less noticed because of the great traffic. As I strolled through the Bazaar, Hindoos, Europeans, Jews, Arabs, Malays, and Negro men passed me by. Mr. Elihu Sanderson has kindly taught me to distinguish some of these nations, but at the time I did not know one from another, fancying them indeed all Indians, though at a loss to account for their diversity.

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Also the gaudy houses of red, blue, and yellow, the number of beautiful trees that grew in the very streets, and the swarms of birds that crowded every roof-top and ventured down quite fearlessly among the passers-by, all made me gasp with wonder. Nor was I less amazed to watch the habits of this marvellous folk, many of them to me shocking, and to see the cows that abound everywhere and do the work of horses. But of all this I will tell if Heaven be pleased to grant me a safe return to Lantrig. Let me now recount my business with Mr. Elihu Sanderson.

"I said farewell to the captain of the *Golden Wave* and my friend Colliver upon the quay, meaning to ask Mr. Sanderson to recommend a good lodging for the short time I intended to stay in Bombay. Captain Carey had already directed me to the East India Company's office, and hither I tried to make my way at once. Easy as it was, however, I missed it, being lost in admiration of the crowd. When at last I arrived at the doors I was surprised to see Colliver coming out, until I remembered that his brother was in the Company's employ. It seems, however, that he had been transferred to Trichinopoly some months before, and my friend's labour was in vain. I am bound to say that he took his disappointment with great good-humour, and made very merry over our meeting again so soon, protesting that for the future we had better hunt in couples among this outlandish folk; and so I lost him again.

"After some difficulty and delay I found myself at

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length in the presence of this Mr. Elihu Sanderson, on whom I had speculated so often. I was ushered by a clerk into his private office, and as he rose to meet me, judged him directly to be the son of the Elihu Sanderson mentioned in my father's Will—as indeed is the case. A spare, dry, shrivelled man, with a mouth full of determination and acuteness, and a habit of measuring his words as though they were for sale, he is in everything but height the essence of every Scotchman I remember to have seen.

"'Good day,' said he, 'Mr.—— I fancy I did not catch your name.'

"'Trenoweth,' said I.

"'Indeed! Trenoweth!' he repeated, and I fancy I saw a glimmer of surprise in his eyes. 'Do I guess your business?'

"'Maybe you do,' I replied, 'for I take it to be somewhat unusual.'

"'Ah, yes; just so; somewhat unusual!'—and he chuckled drily—'somewhat unusual! Very good indeed! I suppose—eh?—you have some credentials—some proof that you really are called Trenoweth?'—Here Mr. Sanderson looked at me sharply.

"In reply I produced my father's Will and the little Bible from my jersey's side. As I did so, I felt the Scotchman's eyes examining me narrowly. I handed him the packet. The Will he read with great attention, glanced at the Bible, pondered awhile, and then said—

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"'I suppose you guess that this was a piece of private business between Amos Trenoweth, deceased, and my father, also deceased. I tell ye frankly, Mr. Trenoweth—by the way, what is your Christian name, eh? So you are the Ezekiel mentioned in the Will? Are you a bold man, eh? Well, you look it, at any rate. As I was saying, I tell ye frankly it is not the sort of business I would have undertaken myself. But my father had his crotchets—which is odd, as I'm supposed to resemble him—he had his crotchets, and among them was an affection for your father. It may have been based on profit, for your father, Mr. Trenoweth, as far as I have heard, was not exactly a lovable man, if ye'll excuse me. If it was, I've never seen those profits, and I've examined my father's papers pretty thoroughly. But this is a family matter, and had better not be discussed in office hours. Can you dine with me this evening?'

"I replied that I should be greatly obliged; but, in the first place, as a stranger, would count it a favour to be told of some decent lodging for such time as I should be detained in Bombay.

"Mr. Sanderson pondered again, tapped the floor with his foot, pulled his short crop of sandy whiskers, and said—

"'Our business may detain us, for aught I know, long into the night, Mr. Trenoweth. Ye would be doing me a favour if ye stayed with me for a day or two. I am a bachelor, and live as one. So much

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the better, eh? If you will get your boxes sent up to Craigie Cottage, Malabar Hill—any one will tell ye where Elihu Sanderson lives—I will try to make you comfortable. You are wondering at the name "Craigie Cottage"—another crotchet of my father's. He was a Scotchman, I'd have ye know; and so am I, for that matter, though I never saw Scotch soil, being that prodigious phenomenon, a British child successfully reared in India. But I hope to set foot there some day, please God! Save us! how I am talking, and in office hours, too! Good-bye, Mr. Trenoweth, and'—once more his eyes twinkled as I thanked him and made for the door—'I would to Heaven ye were a Scotchman!'

"Although verily broiled with the heat, I spent the rest of the day in sauntering about the city and drinking in its marvels until the time when I was due to present myself at Craigie Cottage. Following the men who carried my box, I discovered it without difficulty, though very unlike any cottage that came within my recollection. Indeed, it is a large villa, most richly furnished, and crowded with such numbers of black servants, that it must go hard with them to find enough to do. That, however, is none of my business, and Mr. Sanderson does not seem the man to spend his money wastefully; so I suppose wages to be very low here.

"Mr. Sanderson received me hospitably, and entertained me to a most agreeable meal, though the dishes were somewhat hotly seasoned, and the number of servants again gave me some uneasiness. But when, after

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dinner, we sat and smoked out on the balcony and watched the still gardens, the glimmering houses and, above all, the noble bay sleeping beneath the gentle shadow of the night, I confess to a feeling that, after all, man is at home wherever Nature smiles so kindly. The hush of the hour was upon me, and made me disinclined to speak lest its spell should be broken—disinclined to do anything but watch the smoke-wreaths as they floated out upon the tranquil air.

"Mr. Sanderson broke the silence.

"'You have not been long in coming.'

"'Did you not expect me so soon?'

"'Why, you see, I had not read your father's Will.'

"I explained to him as briefly as I could the reasons which drove me to leave Lantrig. He listened in silence, and then said, after a pause—

"'You have not, then, undertaken this lightly?'

"'As Heaven is my witness, no, whether there be anything in this business or not.'

"'I think,' said he, slowly, 'there is something in it. My father had his crotchets, it is true; but he was no fool. He never opened his lips to me on the matter, but left me to hear the first of it in his last Will and Testament. Oddly enough, our fathers seem both to have found religion in their old age. Mine took his comfort in the Presbyterian shape. But it is all the same. There was some reason for your father to repent, if rumours were true; but why mine, a respectable servant of the East India Company, should want

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consolation, is not so clear. Maybe 'twas only another form of egotism. Religion, even, is spelt with an I, ye'll observe.

"'An odd couple,' he continued, musing, 'to be mixed up together! But we'll let them rest in peace. I'd better let you have what was entrusted to me, and then, mayhap, ye'll be better able to form an opinion.'

"With this he rose and stepped back into the lighted room, whilst I followed. Drawing a bunch of keys from his pocket, he opened a heavy chest of some dark wood, intricately carved, which stood in one corner, drew out one by one a whole pile of tin boxes, bundles of papers and heavy books, until, almost at the very bottom of the chest, he seemed to find the box he wanted; then, carefully replacing the rest, closed and fastened the chest, and, after some search among his keys, opened the tin box and handed me two envelopes, one much larger than the other, but both bulky.

"And here, my dear Margery, with my hand upon the secret which had cost us so much anxious thought and such a grievous parting, I could not help breathing to myself a prayer that Heaven had seen fit to grant me at last some means of comforting my wife and little one and restoring our fallen house; nor do I doubt, dear wife, you were at that moment praying on your knees for me. I did not speak aloud, but Mr. Sanderson must have divined my thoughts, for I fancied I heard him utter 'Amen' beneath his breath, and when I looked up he seemed prodigiously red and ashamed of himself.

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"The small envelope was without address, and contained £50 in Bank of England notes. These were enclosed without letter or hint as to their purpose, and sealed with a plain black seal.

"The larger envelope was addressed in my father's handwriting—

'TO THE SON OF MY HOUSE WHO, HAVING
COUNTED ALL THE PERILS, IS RESOLUTE.

'Mem.—*To be burned in one hundred years from this date, May 4th, in the year of our Lord MDCCCV.*'

"It likewise was sealed with a plain black seal, and contained the manuscript which I herewith pin to this leaf of my Journal."

[Here Uncle Loveday, who had hitherto read without comment, save an occasional interjection, turned the page and revealed, in faded ink on a large sheet of parchment, the veritable writing of my grandfather, Amos Trenoweth. We both unconsciously leaned further forward over the relic, and my uncle, still without comment, proceeded to read aloud as follows :—]

"*From Amos Trenowcth, of Lantrig, in the Parish of Pol-*
"*kimbra and County of Cornwall; to such descendant of mine*
"*as may inherit my wealth.*

"*Be it known to you, my son, that though in this parch-*
"*ment mention is made of great and surpassing Wealth, seem-*
"*ingly but to be won for the asking, yet beyond doubt the dangers*
"*which beset him who would lay his hand upon this accursed*
"*store are in nature so deadly, that almost am I resolved to*
"*fling the Secret from me, and so go to my Grave a Beggar.*
"*For that I not only* believe, *but* am well assured, *that not with-*

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"*out much Spilling of Blood and Loss of Human Life shall*
"*they be enjoyed, I myself having looked in the Face of Death*
"thrice *before ever I might set Hand upon them, escaping each*
"*time by a Miracle and by forfeit of my Soul's Peace. Yet,*
"*considering that the Anger of Heaven is* quick *and not re-*
"*vengeful unduly, I have determined not to do so* wholly, *but*
"*in* part, *abandoning myself the Treasure unrighteously won,*
"*if perchance the Curse may so be appeased, but committing it to*
"*the enterprise of another, who may escape, and so raise a fall-*
"*ing House.*

"*You then, my Son who may read this Message, I entreat*
"*to consider well the Perils of your Course, though to you*
"*unknown. But to me they are known well, who have lived a*
"*Sinful Life for the sake of this gain, and now find it but as*
"*the fruit of Gomorrah to my lips. For the rest, my Secret is*
"*with God, from whom I humbly hope to obtain Pardon,* but
"not yet. *And even as the Building of the Temple was with-*
"*held from David, as being a Shedder of Blood, but not from*
"*Solomon his son, so may you lay your Hand to much Treasure*
"*in Gold, Silver, and Precious Stones, but chiefly the* GREAT
"RUBY OF CEYLON, *whose beauty excels all the jewels of the*
"*Earth, I myself having looked upon it, and knowing it to be, as*
"*an Ancient Writer saith, 'a Spectacle Glorious and without*
"*Compare.'*

"*Of this Ruby the Traveller* Marco Polo *speaks, saying, 'The*
"*King of Seilan hath a Ruby the Greatest and most Beautiful*
"*that ever was or can be in the World. In length it is a palm,*
"*and in thickness the thickness of a man's arm. In Splen-*
"*dour it exceedeth the things of Earth, and gloweth like unto*
"*Fire.* Money cannot purchase it.' *Likewise* Maundevile *tells*
"*of it, and how the Great Khan would have it, but was refused;*
"*and so* Odoric, *the two giving various Sizes, and both placing*
"*it falsely in the Island of Nacumera or Nicoveran. But this*
"*I know, that in the Island of Ceylon it was found, being* lost
"*for many Centuries, and though less in size than these Writers*
"*would have it, yet far exceeding all imagination for Beauty*
"*and colour.*

"*Now this Ruby, together with much Treasure beside, you*
"*may gain with the Grace of Heaven and by following my*

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"*plain words. You will go from this place unto the* Island of
"Ceylon, *and there proceed to* Samanala *or* Adam's Peak, *the*
"*same being the most notable mountain of the Island. From*
"*the Resting House at the foot of the Peak you will then ascend,*
"*following the track of the Pilgrims, until you have passed the*
"*First Set of Chains. Between these and the Second there lies*
"*a stretch of Forest, in which, still following the track, you will*
"*come to a Tree, the trunk of which branches into* seven parts
"*and again unites. This Tree is noticeable and* cannot be
"missed. *From its base you must proceed at a right angle to*
"*the left-hand edge of the track for* thirty-two paces, *and you*
"*will come to a Stone shaped like a Man's Head, of great size,*
"*but easily moved. Beneath this Stone lies the Secret of the*
"*Great Ruby; and yet* not all, *for the rest is graven on the*
"Key, *of which mention shall already have been made to you.*

"*These precautions I have taken that none may surprise*
"*this Secret but its right possessor; and also that none may*
"*without due reflection undertake this task, inasmuch as it is*
"*prophesied that 'Even as the Heart of the Ruby is Blood and*
"*its Eyes a Flaming Fire, so shall it be for them that would*
"*possess it: Fire shall be their portion and Blood their inherit-*
"*ance for ever.'*

"*This prophecy I had from an aged priest, whose bones lie*
"*beneath the Stone, and upon whose Sacred clasp is the Secret*
written. This and all else may God pardon. Amen.

"*A. T.*"

"*He visiteth the iniquity of the Fathers upon the Children*
"*unto the third and fourth*
"*generation.*"

[To this extraordinary document was appended a note in another handwriting.]

"*There is little doubt that the Ruby now in the possession of*
"*Mr. Amos Trenoweth is the veritable Great Ruby of which the*
"*traveller Marco Polo speaks. But, however this may be, I*
"*know from the testimony of my own eyes that the stone is of*
"*inestimable worth, being of the rarest colour, and in size*

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"greatly beyond any Ruby that ever I saw. The stone is spoken "of, in addition to such writers as Mr. Trenowcth quotes, by "Friar Jordanus (in the fourteenth century), who mentions it "as 'so large that it cannot be grasped in the closed hand'; and "Ibn Batuta reckons it as great as the palm of a man's hand. "Cosmas, as far back as 550, had heard tell of it from Sopater, "and its fame extended to the sixteenth century, wherein Corsali "wrote of 'two rubies so lustrous and shining that they seem a "flame of fire.' Also Hayton, in the thirteenth century, men- "tions it, telling much the same story as Sir John Maundevile, "to the effect that it was the especial symbol of sovereignty, and "when held in the hand of the newly-chosen king, enforced the "recognition of his majesty. But, whereas Hayton simply calls "it the greatest and finest Ruby in existence, Maundevile puts it "at a foot in length and five fingers in girth. Also—for I have "made much inquiry concerning this stone—it was well known "to the Chinese from the days of Hwen T'sang downward.

"Mr. Trenoweth has wisely forborne for safety from show- "ing it to any of the jewellers here; but on the one occasion "when I saw the gem I measured it, and found it to be, roughly, "some 3½ inches square and 2 inches in depth; of its weight I "cannot speak. But that it truly is the Great Ruby of Ceylon, "the account of the Buddhist priest from whom Mr. Trenoweth "got the stone puts out of all doubt.

"E. S."

"As I finished my reading, I looked up and saw Mr. Sanderson watching me across the table. 'Well?' said he.

"I pushed the parchment across to him, and filled a pipe. He read the whole through very slowly, and without the movement of a muscle; then handed it back, but said never a word.

"'Well,' I asked, after a pause; 'what do you think of it?'

"'Why, in the first place, that my father was a

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marvellously honest man, and yours, Mr. Trenoweth, a very indiscreet one. And secondly, that ye're just as indiscreet as he, and it will be lucky for ye if I'm as honest as my father.'

"I laughed.

"'Aye, ye may laugh; but mark my words, Mr. Trenoweth. Ye've a trustful way with ye that takes my liking; but it would surprise me very much, sir, did ye ever lay hands on that Ruby.'"

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CHAPTER IX.

CONTAINS THE SECOND PART OF MY FATHER'S JOURNAL: SETTING FORTH HIS ADVENTURES IN THE ISLAND OF CEYLON.

"Sept. 29th, 1848.—It is a strange thing that on the very next day after reading my father's message I should have been struck down and reduced to my present condition. But so it is, and now, four months after my first entry in this Journal, I am barely able to use the pen to add to my account. As far as I remember—for my head wanders sadly at times—it happened thus: On the 23rd of May last, after spending the greater part of the day in writing my Journal, and also my first letter to my dear wife, I walked down in the cool of the evening to the city, intending to post the latter; which I did, and was returning to Mr. Sanderson's house, when I stopped to watch the sun setting in this glorious Bay of Bengal. I was leaning over a low wall, looking out on the open sea with its palm-fringed shores, when suddenly the sun shot out a jagged flame; the sky heaved and turned to blood—and I knew no more. I had been murderously struck from behind. That I was found, lying to all appearance dead, with a hideous zig-zag wound upon the scalp; that my pockets had been

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to all appearance rifled (whether by the assassin or the natives that found me is uncertain); that I was finally claimed and carried home by Mr. Sanderson, who, growing uneasy at my absence, had set out to look for me; that for more than a month, and then again for almost two months, my life hung in the balance; and that I owe my recovery to Mr. Sanderson's unceasing kindness —all this I have learnt but lately. I can write no more at present.

"Oct. 3rd.—I am slightly better. My mental powers are slowly coming back after the fever that followed the wound. I pass my days mostly in speculating on the reason of this murderous attack, but am still unable to account for it. It cannot have been for plunder, for I do not look like a rich man. Mr. Sanderson has his theory, but I cannot agree with him, for nobody but ourselves knew of my father's manuscript. At any rate, it is fortunate that I left it in my chest, together with this Journal, before I went down to Bombay. Margery must have had my letter by this time; Mr. Sanderson very wisely decided to wait the result of my illness before troubling her. As it is she need know nothing about it until we meet.

"Oct. 14th.—Mr. Sanderson is everything that is good; indeed, had I been a brother he could not have shown me more solicitude. But he is obstinate in connecting my attack with the Great Ruby of Ceylon; it is certainly a curious coincidence that this dark chapter of my life should immediately follow my father's

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warning, but that is all one can say. I shall give up trying to convince him.

"Oct. 31st.—I am now considerably better. My strength is slowly returning, and with it, I am glad to say, my memory. At first it seemed as though I could remember nothing of my past life, but now my recollection is good on every point up to the moment of my attack. Since then, for at least the space of three months, I can recall nothing. I am able to creep about a little, and Mr. Sanderson has taken me for one or two excursions. Curiously enough, I thought I saw John Railton yesterday upon the Apollo Bund. I was probably mistaken, but at the time it caused me no surprise that he should still be here, since I forgot the interval of three months in my memory. If it were really Railton, he has, I suppose, found employment of some kind in Bombay; but it seems a cruel shame for him to desert his poor wife at home. I, alas! am doing little better, but God knows I am anxious to be gone; however, Mr. Sanderson will not hear a word on the subject at present. He has promised to find a ship for me as soon as he thinks I am able to continue my travels.

"Nov. 4th.—I was not mistaken. It was John Railton that I saw on the Apollo Bund. I met him hovering about the same spot to-day, and spoke to him; but apparently he did not hear me. I intended to ask him some news of my friend Colliver, but I daresay he knows as little of his doings as I do. Mr. Sanderson says that in a week's time I shall be recovered suf-

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ficiently to start. I hope so, indeed, for this delay is chafing me sorely.

"Nov. 21st.—Mr. Sanderson has found a ship for me at last. I am to sail in five days for Colombo in the schooner *Campaspe*, whose captain is a friend—a business friend, that is—of my host. I shall be the only passenger, and Mr. Sanderson has given Captain Dodge full instructions to take care of me. But I am feeling strong enough now, and fit for anything.

"Nov. 23rd.—I have been down to look at the vessel, and find that a most comfortable little cabin has been set apart for me. But the strangest thing is that I met Colliver also inspecting the ship. He was most surprised at seeing me, and evidently imagined me home in England by this time. I told him of my meeting with John Railton, and he replied—

"'Oh, yes; I have taken him into my service. We are going together to Ceylon, as I have travelled about India enough for the present. I went to visit my brother at Trichinopoly, and have only just returned to Bombay. Unfortunately the captain of the *Campaspe* declares he is unable to take me, so I shall have to wait.'

"I explained the reasons of the captain's reluctance, and offered him a share of my cabin if Captain Dodge would consent to be burdened with Railton's company.

"'Oh, for that matter,' replied he, 'Railton can follow; but he's a handy fellow, and I daresay would make himself useful without payment.'

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"We consulted Captain Dodge, who admitted himself ready to take another passenger, and even to accommodate Railton, if that were my wish. Only, he explained, Mr. Sanderson had especially told him that I should wish to be alone, being an invalid. So the bargain was struck.

"Mr. Sanderson did not seem altogether pleased when I informed him that I intended to take a companion. He asked many questions about Colliver, and was especially anxious to know if I had confided anything of my plans to him. So far was this from being the case that Colliver, as I informed my host, had never betrayed the least interest in my movements. At this Mr. Sanderson merely grunted, and asked me when I intended to learn prudence, adding that one crack in the head was enough for most men, but he supposed I wanted more. I admit that, pleasant companion as Colliver is, I should prefer to be entirely alone upon this adventure. But I could not deny the invitation without appearing unnecessarily rude, and I owe him much gratitude for having made the outward voyage so pleasant. Besides, we shall part at Colombo.

"Nov. 25th.—I make this entry (my last upon Indian soil) just before retiring to rest. To-morrow I sail for Colombo in the *Campaspe*. But I cannot leave Bombay without dwelling once more on Mr. Sanderson's great kindness. To-night, as we sat together for the last time upon the balcony of Craigie Cottage, I declare that my heart was too full for words.

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My host apparently was revolving other thoughts, for when he spoke it was to say—

"'Visited his brother in Trichinopoly, eh? Only just returned, too—h'm! What I want to know is, why the devil he returned at all? There are plenty of vessels at Madras.'

"'But Colliver is not the man who cares to follow the shortest distance between two points,' I answered. 'Why should he not return to Bombay?'

"'I'll beg ye to observe,' said Mr. Sanderson, 'that the question is not "why shouldn't he?" but "why should he?"'

"'At any rate,' said I, 'I'll be on my guard.'

"This suspicion on my behalf has become quite a mania with my host. I thought it best to let him grumble his fill, and then endeavoured to thank him for his great kindness.

"'Don't say another word,' he interrupted. 'I owe ye some reparation for being mixed up in this at all. It's a serious matter, mark ye, for a respectable clerk like myself to be aiding and abetting in this mad chase; and, to tell the truth, Trenoweth, I took a fancy to ye when first I set eyes on your face, and——Don't say another word, I'll ask ye.'

"My friend's eyes were full of tears. I arose, shook him silently by the hand, and went to my room.

"Nov. 26th.—I am off. I write this in my cabin, alone—Colliver having had another assigned to him by Mr. Sanderson's express wish. He saw Colliver for the

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first time to-day on the quay, and drew me aside at the last moment to warn me against 'that fellow with the devilish eyes.' As I stood on deck and watched his stiff little figure waving me farewell until it melted into the crowd, and Bombay sank behind me as the city of a dream, I wondered with sadness on the little chance we had of ever meeting on this earth again. Colliver's voice at my elbow aroused me.

"'Odd man, that friend of yours—made up of emotion, and afraid of his life to show it. Has he done you a favour?'

"'He has,' I replied, 'as great a favour as one man can do for another.'

"'Ah,' said he, 'I thought as much. That's why he is so full of gratitude.'

"Dec. 6th.—Never shall I forget the dawn out of which Ceylon, the land of my promise, arose into view. I was early on deck to catch the first sight of land. Very slowly, as I stood gazing into the east, the pitch-black darkness turned to a pale grey, and discovered a long, narrow streak, shaped like the shields one sees in Bible prints, and rising to a point in the centre. Then, as it seemed to me, in a moment, the sun was up and as if by magic the shield had changed into a coast fringed with palms and swelling upwards in green and gradual slopes to a chain of mighty hills. Around these some light, fleecy clouds had gathered, but sea and coast were radiant with summer. So clear was the air that I could distinguish the red sand of the beaches and the

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white trunks of the palms that crowded to the shore; and then before us arose Colombo, its white houses gleaming out one by one.

"The sun was high by the time our pilot came on board, and as we entered the harbour the town lay deep in the stillness of the afternoon. We had cast anchor, and I was reflecting on my next course of action when I heard my name called from under the ship's side. Looking down, I spied a tall, grave gentleman seated in a boat. I replied as well as I could for the noise, and presently the stranger clambered up on deck and announced himself as Mr. Eversleigh, to whom Mr. Sanderson had recommended me. I had no notion until this moment—and I state it in proof of Mr. Sanderson's kindness—that any arrangement had been made for entertaining me at Colombo. It is true that Mr. Sanderson had told me, on the night when our acquaintance began, to send this gentleman's address to Margery, that her letter might safely reach me; but beyond this I knew nothing. Mr. Eversleigh shook me by the hand, and, to my unspeakable joy, handed me my dear wife's letter.

"I say to my unspeakable joy, for no words can tell, dear wife, with what feelings I read your letter as the little boat carried me up to the quay. How often during the idle days of my recovery have I lain wondering how you and Jasper were passing this weary time, and cried out on the weakness that kept me so long dallying. Patience, dear heart, it is but a little time now.

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"I have forgotten to speak of Colliver. He has been as delightful and indifferent as ever throughout the voyage. Certainly I can find no reason for crediting Mr. Sanderson's suspicions. In the hurry of landing I missed him, not even having opportunity to ask about his plans. Doubtless I shall see him in a day or two.

"Dec. 10th.—What an entrancing country is this Ceylon! The monsoon is upon us, and hinders my journey: indeed, Mr. Eversleigh advises me not to start for some weeks. He promises to accompany me to the Peak if I can wait, but the suspense is hard to bear. Meantime I am drinking in the marvels of Colombo. The quaint names over the shops, the bright dresses of white and red, the priests with their robes of flaming yellow—all these are diverting enough, but words cannot tell of the beauty of the country here. The roads are all of some strange red soil, and run for miles beneath the most beautiful trees imaginable—bamboos, palms, and others unknown to me, but covered with crimson and yellow blossom. Then the long stretches of rice fields, and again more avenues of palms, with here and there a lovely pool by the wayside—all this I cannot here describe. But most wonderful of all is the monsoon which rages over the country, wrapping the earth sometimes in sheets of lightning which turn sea, sky and earth to one vivid world of flame. The wind is dry and parching, so that all windows are kept carefully closed at night; but, indeed, the mosquitoes are sufficient excuse for that. I have seen nothing of Colliver and Railton.

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"Dec. 31st.—New Year's Eve, and, as I hope, the dawn of brighter days for us, dear wife. Mr. Eversleigh has to-night been describing Adam's Peak to me. Truly this is a most marvellous mountain, and its effect upon me I find hard to put into words. To-day I watched it standing solitary and royal from the low hills that surround it. At its feet waved a very sea of green forest, around its summit were gathered black clouds charged with lightning. Mr. Eversleigh tells me of the worship here paid to it, and the thousands of pilgrims that wear its crags with their patient feet. Can I hope to succeed when so many with prayers so much more holy have failed? Even as I write, its unmoved face is mocking the fire of heaven. I dream of the mountain; night and day it has come to fill my life with dark terror. I am not by nature timid or despondent, but it is hard to have to wait here day after day and watch this goal of my hopes—so near, yet seemingly so forbidding of access.

"On looking back I find I have said nothing about the house where I am now staying. It lies in the Kolpetty suburb, in the midst of most lovely gardens, and is called Blue Bungalow, from the colour in which it is painted. I have made many excursions with Mr. Eversleigh on the lagoon; but for me the only object in this land of beauty is the great Peak. I cannot endure this idleness much longer. Colliver seems to have vanished: at least, I have not seen him.

"Jan. 25th, 1849.—I have been in no mood lately

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to make any fresh entry in my Journal. But to-morrow I start for Adam's Peak. At the last moment my host finds himself unable to go with me, much as he protests he desires it; but two of his servants will act as my guides. It is about sixty miles from Colombo to the foot of the Peak, so that in four days from this time I hope to lay my hand upon the secret. The two natives (their real names I do not know, but Mr. Eversleigh has christened them Peter and Paul, which I shall doubtless find more easy of mastery than their true outlandish titles) are, as I am assured, trusty, and have visited the mountain before. We take little baggage beyond the necessary food and one of my host's guns. I cannot tell how impatient I am feeling.

"Feb. 1st. — My journey to the Peak is over. Whether from fatigue or excitement I am feeling strangely light-headed to-day; but let me attempt to describe as briefly as I can my adventure. We set out from Colombo in the early morning of Jan. 26th. For about two-thirds of our journey the road lies along the coast, stretching through swampy rice-fields and interminable cocoanut avenues until Ratnapoora is reached. So far the scenery does not greatly differ from that of Colombo. But it was after we left Ratnapoora that I first realised the true wonders of this land. Our road rose almost continuously by narrow tracks, which in some places, owing to the late heavy rains, were almost impassable; but Peter and Paul worked hard, and so reduced the delay. We had not left Ratnapoora far

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behind when we plunged into a tangled forest, so dense as almost to blot out the light of day. On either hand deep ravines plunged precipitately down, or giant trees enclosed us in black shadow. Where the sun's rays penetrated, myriads of brilliant insects flashed like jewels; yellow butterflies, beetles with wings of ruby-red or gold, and dragonflies that picked out the under-growth with fire. In the shadow overhead flew and chattered crowds of green paroquets and glossy crows, while here and there we could see a Bird of Paradise drooping its smart tail-feathers amid the foliage. A little further, and deep in the forest the ear caught the busy tap-tap of the woodpecker, the snap of the toucan's beak, or far away the deep trumpeting of the elephant. Once we startled a leopard that gazed a moment at us with flaming eyes, and then was gone with a wild bound into the thicket. From tree to tree trailed hosts of gorgeous creepers, blossoming in orange, white and crimson, or wreathing round some hapless monarch of the forest and strangling it with their rank growth. Still we climbed.

"The bridle-track now skirted a torrent, now wound dizzily round the edge of a stupendous cliff, and again plunged into obscurity. Here and there the ruins of some ancient and abandoned shrine confronted us, its graceful columns entwined and matted with vegetation; or, again, where the forest broke off and allowed our eyes to sweep over the far prospect, the guides would point to the place where stood, hardly to

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be descried, the relics of some dead city, desolate and shrined in desolation. Even I, who knew nothing of the past glories of Ceylon, could not help being possessed with melancholy thoughts as I passed now a mass of deserted masonry, now a broken column, the sole witnesses of generations gone for ever. Some were very richly carved, but Nature's tracery was rapidly blotting out the handiwork of man, the twining convolvulus usurping the glories of the patient chisel. Still up we climbed, where hosts of chattering monkeys swung from branch to branch, or poised screaming overhead, or a frightened serpent rose with hissing mouth, and then glided in a flash back through the undergrowth. One, that seemed to me of a pure silver-white, started almost from under my feet, and darted away before I could recover myself. We hardly spoke; the vastness of Nature hushed our tongues. It seemed presumption to raise my gun against any of the inhabitants of this spot where man seemed so mean, so strangely out of place. Once I paused to cut back with my knife the creepers that hid in inextricable tangle a solitary and exquisitely carved archway. But the archway led nowhere, its god and temple alike had perished, and already the plants have begun their tireless work again.

"Between the stretches of wilderness our road often led us across rushing streams, difficult to ford at this season, or up rocky ravines, that shut in with their towering walls all but a patch of blue overhead. Emerging from these we would find ourselves on naked ledges

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where the sun's rays beat until the air seemed that of an oven. At such spots the plain below spread itself out as a crumpled chart, whilst always above us, domed in the blue of a sapphire-stone, towered the goal of our hopes, serene and relentless. But such places were not many. More often a threatening cliff faced us, or an endless slope closed in the view, only to give way to another and yet another as we climbed their weary length.

"Yet our speed was not trifling. We had passed a train of white-clothed pilgrims in the morning soon after leaving Ratnapoora. Since then we had seen no man except one poor old priest at the ruined resting-house where we ate our mid-day meal. The shadow of the forest allowed us to travel through the heat of the day, and the thirst of discovery would have hurried me on even had the guides protested. But they were both sturdy, well-built men, and suffered from the heat far less than I did. So we hardly paused until, in the first swift gloom of sunset, we emerged on the grassy lawn of Diabetne, beneath the very face of the cone.

"We had to rest for the night in the ruined *Ambulam*, as it is called; and here, thoroughly tired but sleepless, I lay for some hours and watched the innumerable stars creep out and crown that sublime head which rose at first into a fathomless blue that was almost black, and then as the moon swept up, flashed into unutterable radiance. Nothing, I am told, can compare with the moonlight of Ceylon, and I can

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well believe it. That night I read clearly once again by the light of its rays my father's manuscript, that no point in it should escape my memory; then sank down upon my rugs and slept an uneasy sleep.

"In an hour or two, as it seemed, I was awakened by Peter, who shook me and proclaimed it time to be stirring if we meant to see the sunrise from the summit. The moon was still resplendent as we started across the three miles or 'league of heaven' that still lay between us and the actual cone. This league traversed, we plunged down a gully and crossed a stream whose waters danced in the silver moonlight until the eyes were dazzled, then swept in a pearly shower down numberless ledges of rock. After this the climb began in good earnest. After a stretch of black forest, we issued on a narrow track that grew steeper at every step. The moon presently ceased to help us here, so that my guides lit torches, which flared and cast long shadows on the rocky wall. By degrees the track became a mere watercourse, up which we could only scramble one by one. So narrow was it that two men could scarcely pass, yet so richly clothed in vegetation that our torches scorched the overhanging ferns. Peter led the way, and I followed close at his heels, for fear of loose stones; but every now and then a crash and a startled cry from Paul behind us told us that we had sent a boulder flying down into the depths. Beyond this and the noise of our footsteps there was no sound. We went but slowly, for the labour of the day before had nearly exhausted

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us, but at length we scrambled out into the moonlight again upon a rocky ledge half-way up the mountain-side.

"Here a strong breeze was blowing, that made our heated bodies shiver until we were fain to go on. Casting one look into the gulf below, deepened without limit in the moonlight, we lit fresh torches and again took to the path. Before we had scrambled, now we climbed. We had left vegetation behind us, and were face to face with the naked rock that forms the actual Peak. At the foot of this Peter called a halt, and pointed out the first set of chains. Without these, in my weak state I could never have attempted the ascent. Even as it was, my eye was dazed and my head swam and reeled as I hung like a fly upon the dizzy side. But clutching with desperation the chains riveted in the living rock, I hauled myself up after Peter, and sank down thoroughly worn out upon the brink.

"It now wanted but little before daybreak would be upon us. As I gathered myself up for a last effort, I remembered that amid the growth into which we were now to plunge, stood the tree of seven trunks which was to be my mark. But my chance was small of noting it by the light of these flaring torches that distorted every object, and wreathed each tree into a thousand fantastic shapes. Plainly I must stake my hopes on the descent next day; at any rate, I would scale the summit before I began my search.

"We had plunged into the thicket of rhododendrons,

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whose crimson flowers showed oddly against the torches' gleam, and I was busy with these thoughts, when suddenly my ankle gave way, and I fell heavily forward. My two guides were beside me in an instant, and had me on my feet again.

"'All's good,' said Peter, 'but lucky it not happen otherwhere. Only take care for last chain. But what bad with him?'

"He might well ask; for there, full in front of my eyes that strained and doubted, glimmered a huge trunk cleft into seven—yes, seven—branches that met again and disappeared in a mass of black foliage. It was my father's tree.

"So far then the parchment had not lied. Here was the tree, 'noticeable and not to be missed,' and barely thirty-two paces from the spot where I was standing lay the key to the treasure which I had travelled this weary distance to seek. But the time for search had not yet come. By the clear light of day and alone I must explore the secret. It would keep for a few hours longer.

"Dismissing my pre-occupied manner which had caused no small astonishment to Peter and Paul, I fixed the position of the tree as firmly as I could in my mind, and gave the word to advance.

"We then continued in the same order as before, whilst, to make matters sure, I counted our steps. I had reached six hundred and twenty—though when I considered the darkness and the rough path I reflected that

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this was but little help—when we arrived at the second set of chains. My foot was already beginning to give me pain, but under any circumstances this would have been by far the worst of the ascent. All around us stretched darkness void and horrible, leading, for all that we could see, down through veils of curling mist into illimitable depths. In front the rock was almost perpendicular. The fascination of gazing down was wellnigh resistless, but Peter ahead continually cried 'Hurry!' and the voice of Paul behind repeated 'Hurry!' so that panting, gasping, and fit to faint, with fingers clinging to the chain until the skin was blistered, with every nerve throbbing and every muscle strained to its utmost tension, I clambered, clambered, until with one supreme effort I swung myself up to the brink, staggered rather than ran up the last few feet of rock, and as my guides bent and with outstretched palms raised the cry '*Saadoo! Saadoo!*' I fell exhausted before the very steps of Buddha's shrine.

"When I recovered, I saw just above me the open shrine perched on a tiny terrace and surrounded by low walls of stone; a yard or two from me the tiny hut in which its guardians live; and all around the expanse of sky. Dawn was stealing on; already its pale light was creeping up the east, and a bar or two of vivid fire proclaimed the coming of the sun. The priests were astir to receive the early pilgrims, and as Paul led me to the edge of the parapet I could see far away below the torches of the new-comers dotted in thin lines of fire

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down the mountain-side. Some pilgrims had arrived before us, and stood shivering in their thin white garments about the summit.

"Presently the distant sound of measured chanting came floating up on the tranquil air, sank and died away, and rose again more loudly. Paler and paler grew the heavens, nearer and nearer swept the chanting; and now the first pilgrim swung himself up into our view, quenched his torch and bowed in homage. Others following did the same, all adoring, until the terrace was crowded with worshippers gazing eager and breathless into the far east, where brighter and brighter the crimson bars of morning were widening.

"Then with a leap flashed up the sun, the dazzling centre of a flood of golden light. Godlike and resplendent he rode up on wreaths of twirling mist, and with one stroke sent the shadows quivering back to the very corners of heaven. As the blazing orb topped the horizon, every head bent in worship, every hand arose in welcome, every voice broke out in trembling adoration, '*Saadoo! Saadoo!*' Even I, the only European there, could not forbear from bowing my head and lifting up my hands, so carried away was I with the aching fervour of this crowd. There they stood and bent until the whole fiery ball was clear, then turning, paced to the sound of chanting up the rough steps and laid their offerings on the shrine. Thrice at each new offering rang out a clattering gong, and the worshipper stepped reverently back to make way for another; while all the

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time the newly-risen sun blazed aslant on their robes of dazzling whiteness.

"As I stood watching this strange scene, Peter plucked me by the sleeve and pointed westward. I looked, and all the wonders I had yet viewed became as nothing. For there, disregarded by the crowd, but plain and manifest, rose another Peak, graven in shadow upon the western sky. Bold and confronting, it soared into heaven and, whilst I gazed in silent awe, came striding nearer through the void air, until it seemed to sweep down upon me—and was gone! For many a day had the shadow of this mighty cone lain upon my soul; here, on the very summit, that shadow took visible form and shape, then paled into the clear blue. Has its invisible horror left me now at last? I doubt it.

But by this time the sun was high, and the last pilgrim with a lingering cry of '*Saadoo!*' was leaving the summit. So, although my ankle was now beginning to give me exquisite pain, I gave the order to return. Before leaving, however, I looked for a moment at the sacred footprint, to my mind the least of the wonders of the Peak, and resembling no foot that ever I saw. We had gone but a few steps when I plainly guessed from the state of my ankle that our descent would be full of danger, but the guides assured me of their carefulness; so once more we attacked the chains.

"How we got down I shall never fully know; but at last and after infinite pain we stood at the foot of the cliff and entered the forest of rhododendrons. And

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here, to the wild astonishment of my guides who plainly thought me mad, I bade them leave me and proceed ahead, remaining within call. They were full of protestations and dismay, but I was firm. Trusty they might be, but it was well in this matter to distrust everything and everybody. Finally, therefore, they obeyed, and I sat watching until their white-clad forms disappeared in the thicket.

"As soon as I judged them to have gone a sufficient distance, I arose and followed, cautiously counting my footsteps. But this was needless; my father had described the tree as 'noticeable and not to be missed,' nor was he wrong. Barely had I counted five hundred paces when it rose into view, uncouth and monstrous. All around it spread the crimson blossoms of huge rhododendrons; but this strange tree was at once unlike any of its fellows and of a kind altogether unknown to me. Its roots were partly bare, and writhed in fantastic coils across the track. Above these rose and spread its seven trunks matted with creepers, and then united about four feet below the point where the branches began. Its foliage was of a dark, glossy green, particularly dense, and its height, as I should judge, some sixty feet.

"Taking out my compass, I started from the left-hand side of the narrow track, and at a right angle to it. The undergrowth gave me much trouble, and once I had to make a circuit round a huge rhododendron; but I fought my way through, and after going, as I

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reckoned, thirty-two paces, pulled up full in front of—another rhododendron.

"There must be some mistake. My father had spoken of a 'stone shaped like a man's head,' but said nothing of a rhododendron tree, and indeed this particular tree was in nowise different from its companions. I looked around; took a few steps to the right, then to the left; went round the tree; walked back a few paces; returned to the tree to see if it concealed anything; then sought the track to begin my measurement afresh.

"I was just starting again in a very discomposed mood, when a thought struck me. I had been behaving like a fool. The parchment said 'at a right angle to the left-hand edge of the track.' I had started from my left hand, but I was descending the mountain, whereas the directions of course supposed the explorer to be ascending. Almost ready to laugh at my stupidity, I tried again.

"Facing round, I got the needle at an angle of ninety degrees, and once more began counting. My heart was beginning to beat quickly by this time, and I felt myself trembling with excitement. The course was now more easily followed. True, the growth was as thick as ever, but no rhododendrons blocked my passage. Beating down the creepers that swung across my face, twined around my legs, and caught at my cap, I measured thirty-two paces as nearly as I could, and then stopped.

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