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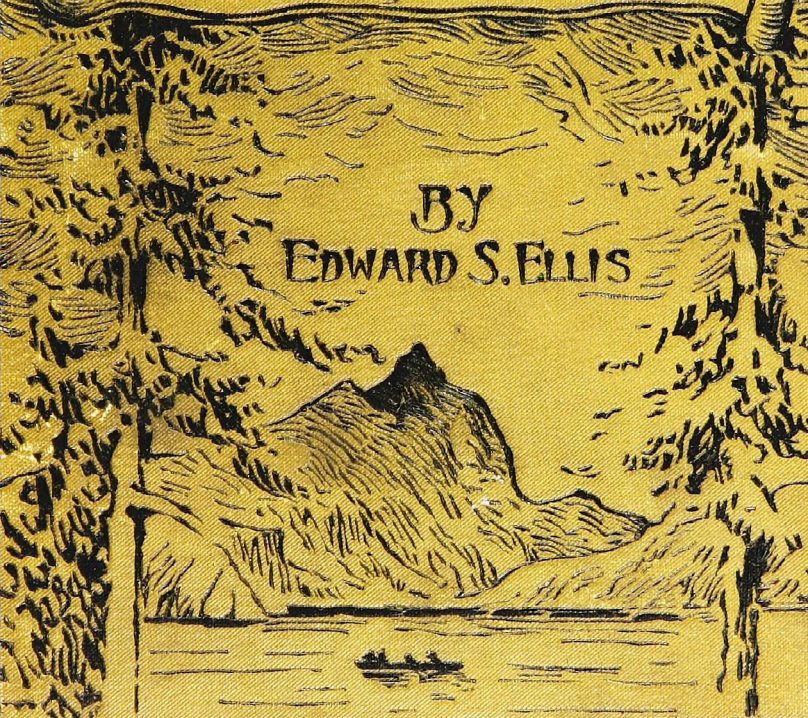
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UP THE TAPAJOS

BY
EDWARD S. ELLIS



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for the founding of a College in this Colony"*

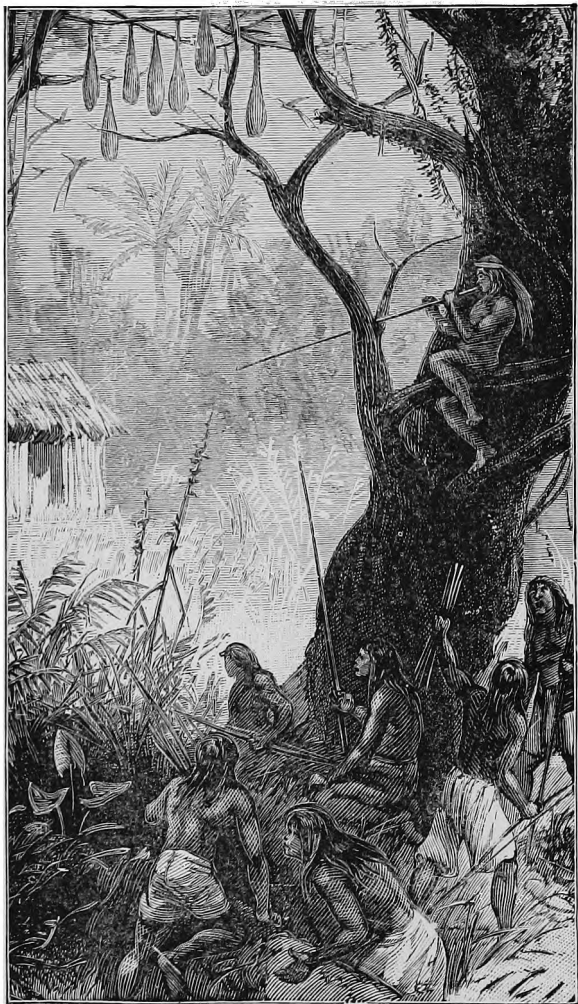


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"*GREAT RIVER SERIES.*"—No. 2.

UP THE TAPAJOS

OR

ADVENTURES IN BRAZIL

BY

EDWARD S. ELLIS

AUTHOR OF "THE YOUTHS' HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES,"

"YOUNG PIONEER SERIES," "LOG CABIN SERIES,"

"DEERFOOT SERIES," ETC., ETC.

CASSELL & COMPANY, LIMITED

739 & 741 BROADWAY, NEW YORK

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UP THE TAPAJOS.

CHAPTER I.

LOST IN THE WOODS.

“**H**ARRY, there is some animal following us.”

“What makes you think so?”

“I hear its footsteps on the leaves—*Hark!*”

The cousins stood still and listened for a full minute, without stirring or speaking. But the only sound was the dismal sighing of the autumn wind among the trees around them. Otherwise the stillness was like that of the tomb.

“You must be mistaken,” said Harry in a low voice, moving forward again; “but keep your ears and eyes open.”

The two boys were making their way through one of the wildest portions of Pike County, Pennsylvania, and night was closing in. They had started on a hunt, early that morning, and were now tramping back to the cabin of "Aunt Maggie."

Ned Livingston was a mild, scholarly lad of fifteen, while his cousin, Harry Norwood, was a year older. Their home was in Philadelphia, where their fathers were partners in business. They had gone on a hunting excursion to the rugged section of the state, though it must be said that the feelings of the lads were very different, when they left the Quaker City for the primitive section. Ned would have preferred to spend his time with his books, but Harry set out with the keen zest of an amateur sportsman, for no one enjoyed such jaunts more than he.

They went in the company of Jack Blockley, a rough, bearded and bronzed sailor, who had spent a score and a half years on the ocean. It must not be thought that the same errand took him into western Pennsylvania : far from it. He had no relish for such sports, but the

Aunt Maggie that I have referred to, was his aged mother, of whom Jack was very fond. Only at long intervals, could he gain the chance to spend a few days with her, but he never let that chance pass unimproved. He had returned a few days before from a voyage to China, and, as soon as he could do so, he started on his visit to his loved parent.

He had known Harry and Ned almost from infancy, and, on his urgent invitation, they went with him. They had already gone on several hunts among the wild solitudes of that section, and once or twice Jack kept them company; but, as I have said, there was nothing to his liking in such sport, and he preferred to stay with his mother and tell her about his many adventures since he had last seen her.

On the morning to which I specially refer, the lads had decided to engage in a more extended jaunt than any in which they had yet taken part. They were to start with Jack for home the next morning, and they meant that this should be a memorable tramp—as it indeed proved to be.

They took a substantial lunch with them,

for though a professional sportsman might have scorned to confess such distrust of his own skill with the gun, they knew that unless they did so, they were likely to go hungry.

It was a wise act, for they needed every mouthful of food that was eaten long before the sun sank in the horizon. They gained a shot at a deer, but the animal was so far off that it is not likely he received a scratch. At any rate, they saw nothing more of him.

Some time afterward, when the boys were separated by a hundred yards or more, Ned caught a glimpse of a bear, lumbering through the undergrowth, but, as the brute did not disturb him, Ned was equally chivalrous and let him alone. He thought it prudent to tell his cousin nothing of his unsportsmanlike behavior.

However, the keen, bracing air and the rugged exercise did them good, and the day was far spent before they noticed it. Then they set out for home with some dread that they would not be able to reach it before night set in. Furthermore, since they were following no path or trail, and amid the rocks, declivities, and dense woods, were unable to catch the

first sign of a settler's cabin, they were uneasy over the likelihood of spending the night away from home.

The prospect was certainly uninviting. The air was chilly, with promise of becoming colder, and one or two eddying flakes of snow suggested that they might be exposed to a danger before which many a strong man has been forced to succumb.

It was while they were pushing through the woods in the direction, as they hoped rather than believed, of Jack's home, that Ned Livingston, who was slightly in the rear, uttered the exclamation with which my story opens.

Now, if there is any thing more discomfiting than the well founded belief that a dangerous animal is stealthily following you in the dark, I am sure I can not imagine what it is. The fear that he will suddenly dart out of the gloom and pounce upon you unaware will cause you to glance around many times and to take all possible care to ward off the peril.

It certainly was not fancy that first awoke the suspicion of Ned ; for he was trudging along with no thought of any thing of the kind,

when the soft *pat, pat* on the leaves caused him to start and turn like a flash. He saw naught to explain the sound and said nothing to Harry, who was giving all his energies to the search for the right course back to the cabin of their friend.

But, as you may well suppose, Ned was now on the alert, and he paid far more attention to the rear than to the front. He knew that his cousin needed no aid from him, while, unless he was vigilant, the wild beast, or whatever it was, might make a fierce attack before any thing could be done to prevent.

The second time Ned caught the faint foot-fall, he uttered the alarming words and the two stopped and listened.

"I wonder whether it could be a man," said Harry, after they had walked a few rods beside each other. "*Halloo, there!*" he called out, looking back in the deepening gloom.

There was no answer, and they agreed that whatever creature it might be, it did not belong to their own species.

"I'll have to depend on you," added

Harry, "for I must look to where we are going. To tell the truth, I fear we shall have to spend the night in the woods—"

What other words he might have added were drowned by the resounding report of Ned's gun, whose flash was almost in Harry's eyes. The youth had caught sight of a dark body gliding toward them, with its belly close to the ground, and quickly bringing his gun to his shoulder, he let fly.

Not only that, but he hit the creature, which emitted a snarling screech and made a terrific bound from the earth straight at the lad that had wounded it. With a quickness that was surprising, Ned leaped back several steps. It was an instinctive effort on his part, and had he not made it, the brute would have landed on his shoulders and played sad havoc with him.

But as it left the ground and rose in the air, it was seen more distinctly. Harry Norwood had cocked his rifle, and he instantly raised it and fired at the brute, which resembled a lank, wiry dog.

This shot settled matters. The leaden missile bored its way through the tough skull of

the beast, which, falling to the ground, rolled over and over, snapping, snarling and scratching viciously. The leaves were scattered in all directions, but the boys were wise enough to keep out of reach of the fierce creature, whose struggles soon ceased.

"He's dead," said Harry, a minute later; "I wonder what sort of an animal he was."

"We can soon find out," replied Ned, drawing his small rubber safe from his pocket and striking a match. Holding the tiny twist of flame above their heads, they bent over the frightful beast, which lay flat on its back, with its legs upturned and its white, sharp teeth stained with its own life blood.

"A wild cat," remarked Harry, "and he's a big fellow, too."

"He is indeed; he would have made it lively for us if he had got the chance."

"He came mighty nigh getting the chance; I wonder whether his mate is near us."

The match went out, and standing motionless they again listened. Nothing, however, of an alarming nature was heard.

"The first thing that a wise hunter does after

firing his gun is to reload it," remarked Harry; "it isn't the handiest thing in the world to do just now, and if you will strike a match or two I'll be obliged."

By the help of the bits of burning pine, the lads soon had their weapons ready for use. Their rifles were excellent pieces, though not of the breech-loading pattern. They had used them many times before, and the skill of the lads was considerable.

"Well," said Harry, after picking their way fully a quarter of a mile further, "I would be mighty glad if I could believe we were not lost, but the only thing that will change my mind is the light in Aunt Maggie's window. Do you see any thing, Ned?"

"Nothing but blank darkness on every hand; we're lost as sure as a gun."

The night was cloudy and quite dark, though in the open places, where there were no trees, objects could be seen at a distance of perhaps a dozen yards. Now and then a snowflake fluttered against the cheek of one of the lads, but the particles were so few that none as yet showed on the ground. The storm still held

off, though it threatened to come at any moment.

The section through which the boys were making their way with so much toil was, as I have said, in the wildest part of Pike County, famous for its savage solitudes, deadly serpents and wild beasts. The neighborhood was not so mountainous as many others, but there were more abrupt slopes, craggy rocks, deep ravines, dense woods and undergrowth than was agreeable to the boys. They had labored hard during the day to make their way through the country, but when darkness came the difficulty was increased tenfold. In fact, nothing was clearer than that they were progressing at the risk of their lives. They were liable to fall over the precipices that more than once were not seen until they were on the very edge of them.

But their dread of staying in the wilds all night, and the hope that a little further advance would bring them in sight of the star-like twinkle of light from the window of Aunt Maggie's cabin, led them further than they at first meant to go. They had shouted and hal-

loosed and fired off their rifles in the hope of attracting the notice of their friend, Jack Blockley, who would be on the lookout for them as soon as the sun went down. But nothing in the way of reply greeted eye or ear, and at last the point was reached when they decided to push the search no further.

They did not forget to keep watch for the mate of the wild cat that had been shot, and indeed for all kinds of wild beasts found in that section, but after the affray that I have described, they were molested no more.

Although clothed in coarse, strong clothing and shoes, they had nothing in the way of extra covering. When they set out in the morning, nothing was further from their thoughts than that of camping out over night. An overcoat or blanket, therefore, would have been a burden to each, and indeed, during the day, would have become oppressive. With the increasing coldness of night, such clothing would have been more than welcome; but, having it not, they felt the need of making their quarters in some place that would give them shelter from the raw, cutting wind.

“There must be plenty of caves,” said Ned, who was tired and disgusted; “and we ought to be able to find one with little trouble.”

“That’s what I’ve been looking for ever since we shot that wild cat,” said Harry, “and if I ain’t mistaken, we have struck it at last.”

“How is that?”

He extended his arm to the left. In the gloom nothing could be seen except a dark towering mass that appeared to be overgrown with creeping vines, and could only be reached by picking their way through and around the rocks in front.

“Of course, I ain’t sure of any thing of the kind being there,” explained Harry, “but I’m hopeful that we shall find a place where we can kindle a fire and get through the night with something like comfort. Come on, we shall soon know.”

CHAPTER II.

DISPUTED QUARTERS.

THE best of fortune followed. The lads had not pressed far, when they came upon the very refuge for which they were looking with so much eagerness. An irregular opening some six feet in diameter at its largest part, yawned before them, and no doubt led to a cavern of greater or less extent beyond.

An exclamation of delight came from both, as they halted in front of the dark opening, which they wished to enter at once, though too wise to do so.

“I guess it’s just the place we want,” said Harry, “though we can’t be sure without an examination, and how are we going to make that?”

“I think I hear the sound of running water,” said Ned, standing close to the entrance and

leaning forward. After listening awhile, however, they decided that it was nothing more than the hollow roar which seems to come in a less degree from a sea-shell when held to the ear, and which in reality is, instead of a sound, the absence of sound.

The matches were once more called into use. Each lad ignited one and held it above his head, while he peered into the gloom that was partly lit up by the feeble glow. So far as they could make out, they stood in a cavern which may be roughly described as varying from five to twenty feet in height, with the same width. They were unable to see how far back it extended, but afterward learned that they could walk and creep for fully twenty yards from the mouth.

“This is lucky,” exclaimed Harry; “all we need is some wood for a fire.”

“We can soon gather that,” said Ned, turning about to leave the cavern, his cousin directly behind him.

On the outside, they set down their guns, so as to give them the free use of their arms, and then separated to gather the much-needed fuel.

There was an abundance of stunted pines near, and they collected from them. In addition to the dried and decayed branches, they broke off limbs and dragged them into the cavern, until it looked as if they had enough to last a week.

As soon as he could, Harry started a blaze a dozen feet or so from the mouth, but the smoke bothered them so much that he moved the burning wood nearer the opening. They were still coughing and rubbing their smarting eyes, when, to their delight, a draught started inward; the vapor cleared, and their situation became pleasant.

“I wonder whether we hadn’t better gather some more wood,” said Ned, looking doubtfully at the pile in the other part of the cavern; “that seems large, but I don’t believe it will last till morning.”

“I like the suggestion,” said Harry; “I’ve had a little doubt myself on that point; you will stay here and keep the blaze going, while I gather several armfuls more.”

The truth was Harry saw that his cousin was worn out. He was not as strong as himself, and he made this excuse so as not to disturb

his rest. Ned saw through the little subterfuge and did not object.

"This whole idiotic business is his idea," thought Ned, "and he ought to pay for it."

Harry brought in three armfuls, and in going for the fourth and last, he moved to the right, thereby following a slightly different course from that taken before. At the second step he was startled almost out of his senses. He placed his hand on the jagged side of a rock weighing many tons, in the instinctive effort to steady himself, and, as he did so, felt the solid mass move away from him !

"My gracious ! what can be the meaning of *that* ?" he gasped, leaping back as if from before another crouching wild cat ; "Ned, come here !"

His cousin hurried out, asking the cause of the excitement.

"There's something wrong ; I touched that rock and it moved back as if it wanted to get out of my way."

"Maybe it did," said Ned, with a laugh ; "but you and I ain't superstitious, and we'll soon find the explanation."

The mass of stone to which Harry alluded, towered above him, and was of a rough, irregular spherical shape. It was so close to the face of the stone pierced by the entrance to the cavern, that there was barely room for the lad to push his body between. It was while he was trying to do so, that he was startled by the moving of the enormous bulk.

Ned reached out his hand in a gingerly way and pressed at first gently and then more strongly against the solid body. To his surprise, it yielded to the extent of several inches, instantly returning and vibrating a number of times before it settled to rest.

The boys now understood that it was one of those curiosities found in different parts of the world and known as "Rocking Stones." The immense rock was so evenly poised, on its center of gravity, that a slight push set it oscillating like a pendulum.

"We have read of such things," said Ned; "they are singular, and it is hard to understand how they came to be balanced so evenly; but after all there is nothing so very wonderful about them."

They amused themselves for some minutes in rocking the huge boulder, which was made to sway several times to an extent that it seemed must end in its toppling over. It soon settled back, however, as before, and they returned to their place in the cavern.

“There is one thing certain,” remarked Harry, throwing himself down on the fragrant boughs of pine; “the inward draught shows that there is an opening somewhere in the rear for the smoke to escape. I have a mind to explore it further.”

“Oh, stay where you are,” said his wearied cousin; “after our long tramp, what can be more pleasant than to stretch out in this fashion and *rest*?”

“If you would not pore over your books so much, and would frolic out doors more than you do, you would be a great deal stronger, Ned, than you are, besides feeling much better.”

“I couldn’t feel any better than I do now,” replied his cousin, with a laugh, “unless I had some of Aunt Maggie’s short cake and maple syrup.”

“There isn’t much chance of our getting any

of that to-night ; I am just as hungry as I can be, but we shall have to stand it till morning. I am thankful that we were able to find such a good place to protect us from the cold."

"We were fortunate, indeed ; already the fire has made this part of the cave so warm that we shall be quite comfortable."

"Provided we don't let the fire go out, and the only way for us to do that is to take turns in watching."

"Why not sleep until awakened by the cold, when we can throw on more wood ?"

"That might do," remarked Harry thoughtfully ; "but, when we stood outside by the swinging rock, it struck me that I saw some kind of a path leading to the mouth of the cave."

"What of that ?"

"That makes it possible that we may have visitors in the night ; and, if so, it isn't best that they should find us asleep."

"Visitors," repeated Ned. "Who could they be ? There are no signs of anyone else having been here before us."

"There may be signs further back in the

cave. I am sure, too," added the elder lad ; "that there is a rank smell inside which the smoke doesn't carry off, that is caused by wild animals."

"*Bears*, for instance," suggested Ned, from his couch of pine boughs, on the other side of the fire.

"Exactly what I have been thinking ; you know that bruin is fond of making his home in hollow trees and caves, and it would be singular if one or more of them did not take possession of this place."

It was a rather alarming theory of Harry Norwood—so much so indeed that the two thought it best to investigate further. Each drew a piece of burning wood from the flames, and swinging it about his head, until it was fanned into a flaring blaze, walked slowly back toward the rear, peering into the gloom as they went.

The smoke from the fire annoyed them, but they pushed on, and did not need to go far before they saw evidences that at no remote date some wild animal had spent a good part of his time within the cavern. An examina-

tion of the long, black hairs that were quite abundant left no doubt that the former occupant belonged to the *Ursus* species. In the extreme rear, was a mass of dried leaves and twigs that had formed his couch ; and where probably he had slept not only at night but all through the long winter, his only nourishment being the store of fat in his system and that which he could get by sucking his fore paw.

The lads not only made this discovery but learned by what means the smoke from the fire reached the open air. A long ways above their heads, they saw a faintly marked and irregular circle, less than a foot in diameter. It was the dim light from the sky which revealed the opening of the chimney that carried off the vapor, which otherwise would have been more than the boys could stand. The draught upward was so strong that the torches crackled and blazed as though held in the throat of a powerfully drawing chimney.

They had learned all that they had set out to learn, and, assuring themselves that the cave reached no further back, they returned to the camp-fire, threw on more wood, and again

stretched out on the pleasant couches of pine boughs.

“What we have found settles one question,” said Harry decisively ; “it won’t do for us to get out of fuel, and we must not allow ourselves to sleep at the same time.”

“There’s no disputing that ; if you will go to sleep, I’ll agree to keep watch till midnight, when I’ll awake you and you can take my place as sentinel.”

“I would prefer the other arrangement, Ned ; I do not feel sleepy ; if you will take a nap, I’ll promise to wake you when I become drowsy.”

“Any thing to oblige you,” muttered the other, who was so wearied that his eyelids were already heavy ; “if I don’t wake when the night is half gone, be sure to rouse me.”

Harry smiled and said nothing. The eyes of his companion slowly closed and opened several times ; there was a weak smile ; some thickly muttered words without any meaning, and then Ned Livingston drifted into the land of dreams.

“Poor fellow,” said his cousin to himself,

“he can’t stand half as much as I; he is pale and soon gives out; a good many times I had to walk slower on his account than I wanted to, though I did not let him know it. He will study all day and all night, if he is allowed to, and he would not consent to take this excursion until his parents almost ordered him to do so. If he could stay in the woods a month or through the winter, it would make another fellow of him. His folks worry about him, and they will have to do something before long. I tried to get him to join our base ball nine, but he wouldn’t, and it was hard work to coax him out to see us play a game. He went one day and had hardly taken a seat, when a foul ball landed alongside his head, and he could never be persuaded to be a spectator again. I wonder how it looks outside.”

Throwing some wood on the flames, that really did not need it, Harry Norwood walked to the opening of the cave and peered out into the night. The picture was impressive, though there was little that could be seen. Only the nearest rocks, bowlders and stunted pines were visible. Not a star twinkled in the sky. Once

he thought he caught a glimmer in the valley below ; but though he waited and watched for a quarter of an hour, he did not see it again, and concluded that he was mistaken.

Something soft and cold touched his hand. Reaching out, he found it was snowing. No wind was blowing, but millions of flakes were falling without the least sound, and already a white thin mantle covered every thing.

“If this lasts long,” was his thought, “and we are very far from the house, we shall have a tough time getting back——”

Could he be mistaken? Something in front of him moved. The gloom was such that he could not make it out, though it was only a few yards distant. It was as if one of the rocks was rolled aside ; but, while he was peering as best he could into the obscurity, he saw it again. It was closer than before and was laboring toward him.

There was no doubt now in the mind of Harry Norwood ; the bear, that had probably left the cave some time during the day, was coming back. The youth tarried long enough to see that he was of enormous size, when he

hurriedly withdrew within the cavern to secure his rifle, as well as the protection of the fire.

His first purpose was to rouse his cousin, but when he saw how soundly he was sleeping, he changed his mind.

“It will be time enough to wake you, when I find myself unable to manage this fellow without help.”

CHAPTER III.

WALLED IN.

IF a big black bear can feel surprise, the huge fellow that was lumbering homeward that snowy night, through the mountains of Pike County, Pennsylvania, must have been astonished, when he waddled up to the entrance to his quarters and caught sight of the fire burning there, not to mention the two youngsters, one of whom was very sound asleep and the other very wide awake. He stopped short and stood a minute with his snout in the air, and his piggish eyes fixed on the amazing sight: "Well, if that don't beat all creation!" seemed to be the exclamation that was striving to escape him.

The next occurrence astonished him still more.

Harry Norwood knew there is no better pro-

tection against wild beasts than a blazing fire : it is something that will always keep the most courageous animal at bay. When, therefore, he looked across and over the crackling pieces of wood at the brute that seemed to fill the whole entrance, he did not feel any personal fear.

The sight, even under such circumstances, was not calculated to soothe the nerves of a timid person. The firelight falling on the animal showed him plainly. His shaggy coat glistened with the snowflakes it had caught, and which looked as though the beast had suddenly turned half gray in color, and his long claws rattled on the flinty floor, as he shifted his position. He did not rear on his hind legs, as his kind is inclined to do on slight provocation ; but he stood squarely on his feet, with his mouth open, so that his teeth showed. The eyes reflected the glow in a way that added to the fierceness of his looks, and the low, cavernous growl that came through the massive jaws was a fit accompaniment to his terrifying appearance.

It took Harry Norwood a very brief time to gather all these points. While doing so, he

slowly drew his rifle to his shoulder, aimed carefully at the huge head, and pulled the trigger. In the hollowness of the cavern, the report was deafening, and Ned Livingston sat bolt upright, stared wildly around, and gasped,

“What under the sun is the matter, Harry?”

“Oh, nothing; only a big bear wanted to chew you up, but before he could get your head in his mouth I plugged him; I think he has concluded to withdraw.”

“That was all, eh?” said Ned, quick to catch the point; “I thought maybe you had struck your toe against something and was calling out with pain? What was the use of waking me?”

The lads were now on their feet; Harry busy reloading his piece, while Ned looked for a chance to shoot at something. The elder had intended to give the intruder a second shot from his companion's rifle, but before he could do so, the owner himself grasped it.

Meanwhile the bear had retreated. Undoubtedly he was hit hard, for the space between himself and the young hunter was so short that

a miss was impossible. The bullet bored its way into his huge skull, and with a sniffing snort, he wheeled half way round and went tumbling, scrambling, rolling and clawing out of the cavern.

On the outside, his struggles became still more furious. The boys listened for a few seconds, and then Harry, who had finished reloading his gun, said,

“Let’s go out and give him the finishing touch.”

“I guess you have done it already,” was the truthful remark of Ned, as he walked by his side, toward the opening of the cavern, through which, it is safe to say, the brute withdrew in more of a hurry than ever before.

They lacked a step only of the opening when it seemed to them that half the mountain had fallen. A mass of rock came down with a crash that jarred the solid stone on which they stood, and almost lifted them from their feet. The concussion blew some of the smaller brands clean away from the rest of the fire, and caused a ringing in their ears for some minutes afterward.

Harry and Ned were startled, as they might well be. They stood bewildered for a few moments, and then Harry, whose high spirits led him at times to see humor where it was invisible to others, said :

“The bear has rolled that rocking stone over the mouth of the cave, so as to keep us here till he can get some one to come back and finish us.”

These words, uttered in jest, contained an alarming amount of fact. The huge beast, in his dying struggles, had managed to throw himself against the rocking stone with such violence that it was pushed beyond its center of gravity and toppled over in front of the entrance.

There might be something in the idea suggested by Harry to cause a smile, but when the lads came to investigate, they felt little inclination to laugh. The ponderous stone, in going over, had crashed down directly in front of the only way by which anyone could enter or leave the cavern. Harry Norwood and Ned Livingston were walled in as securely as if placed in the lowermost vaults of a prison cut into the solid rock.

It did not take them long to find out the fearful truth. They looked in each other's white faces and were speechless for a minute. Ned felt so faint that he sat down on the pile of boughs and held his head in his hands until he could recover his strength.

Convinced that there was no help, Harry could not do like his cousin ; he must keep to work in the effort to do something or to find some means of getting themselves out. Inasmuch as the rock had been poised so long on a point that allowed it to swing back and forth, he wondered whether it was not possible that it still rested on a new support in such a way that a strong effort would push it over.

He placed both hands against it and shoved gently, then harder, and then spitefully and with might and main. He might as well have sought to topple over one of the Pyramids of Egypt. Then he tried it from different points, but with the same result, or rather with no result at all.

The mass entirely blocked up the path. Of course the irregularities prevented the stoppage being air-tight. There were openings at the

sides, many of which were large enough for them to shove their hands through, and which admitted a strong current of air that kept up the draught over the fire and through the opening at the rear ; but there was none through which Tom Thumb (before the bloat and corpulency of his later days) could have squeezed his way.

By the time Harry had finished his brief but complete survey, Ned had rallied from his extreme dejection. He walked to where his cousin stood surveying the flinty bulk, as though he still hoped to find something in nature of an "Open Sesame," that would clear the passage for them to the outer world.

"Well, Harry," said he ; "it is a very strange scrape the bear has gotten us into ; I hear nothing more of him."

"No ; he must be dead ; I guess that was the last thing he did, when he gave the rock a push that brought it down in front of the passage. I don't see any way by which we can ever force ourselves through. Can it be that there is some opening in the back of the cavern that we did not discover ?"

“ I am afraid not, but let us find out ; any thing is better than to sit down in despair as we may have to do.”

Picking up a torch apiece they once more moved toward the other part of the cavern. They walked more quickly than before, because they had gained a fuller knowledge of the interior, and they were now impelled by a dread that crowded out all other emotions.

Back and forth they passed, swaying the flaming torches and examining every foot of the rocky sides, floor, and roof. They were able to swing the brands into such a flaring flame that no part of the interior escaped their scrutiny. Had the noonday sun lit up the gloomy recesses, the search could not have been more thorough. After making a complete survey, they turned about and went over it again, as a person will do when searching a room for some article that can not be found.

All in vain : the result was the same each time : there was no outlet to the cavern, nor could there be any until the stone which blocked the entrance was rolled aside. The conclusion was enough to overwhelm them with

despair, but in their case it did not do so. They were greatly depressed, as was inevitable; but a couple of lads of their age are the last ones to sit down, fold their hands, and sigh away their lives.

The time, however, came when both were worn out, and they seated themselves once more by the fire which had been kept burning brightly. They had said little, but they felt now as though it would be a relief to express their feelings, so far as it was possible to do so.

“ I tell you, Ned, it looks pretty rough and no mistake.”

“ So it does, indeed ; if I live to get out of this fix, you can make sure I shall never trouble this outlandish country again. But there is no use of thinking what we will do hereafter until we find the chance to do it.”

“ True; and I must own that I see no hope at all.”

“ It is a waste of time to look anywhere except there,” said Ned, pointing to the passage. “ If we ever escape from this cavern, it

must be by the same way that we entered. If we had a good strong lever, I wonder whether we could do any thing to help ourselves."

"Not unless it was that of Archimedes. When I tried to push the rock aside, it was under the foolish hope that it might be resting on a point similar to that on which it was poised before. You can see that it must weigh a good many tons."

"That goes to show that there is no help for us except it comes from the outside."

"And there is no man on the outside and within miles of us except Jack Blockley."

"Unless some hunter or settler may wander this way, and I suppose there is about one chance in ten thousand million of that coming to pass. Besides, we have no way of signaling to Jack, if he should approach within a hundred yards of the cave."

For several hours the cousins reclined on the pine boughs, while they talked and talked in the vain effort to think of some method of freeing themselves from the prison in which they had become immured by one of the strangest accidents that imagination can con-

ceive. Finally they grew weary, and, ceasing their conversation, fell into a slumber which lasted until morning.

Ned was the first to awake, and the moment he stirred Harry rose to a sitting position, rubbed his eyes and looked around. The fire had smoldered to a few embers, and both were chilled. They gaped, stretched their arms, kicked, stamped and jumped about until their blood circulated again. The embers were heaped together, more wood was thrown on, and the crackling flames soon sent out a volume of grateful warmth in which it may be said the two (after a few minutes spent in devotions), bathed themselves.

They were hungry and thirsty. There was no means of satisfying the appetite, but there was a way of quenching their thirst. A small pile of snow lay under the chimney, through which it had sifted during the night. It generally increases one's thirst to take snow in the mouth, but the lads got enough to feel relieved. In addition, considerable had drifted through the crevices and openings around the "Rocking Stone," so that the cousins were not

likely for a considerable time to suffer from thirst.

Their hunger was not as ravening as on the evening before, but they felt weak. Besides, they missed their morning ablutions, the tooth brush, the comb, and the other little luxuries that had become a second nature to them. Altogether, their situation was uncomfortable, which is stating the case as mildly as possible.

Both peered out from the front. They saw the country everywhere, so far as their vision extended, covered with snow. The pine trees drooped with it, the rocks were hidden from sight, and not a sign of their own footprints was visible. Some three or four inches of the spotless mantle had fallen, but the sky had cleared and the sun was now shining brightly.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW IT ENDED.

THERE was one place between the Rocking Stone and the side of the entrance where each boy in turn could force his head a few inches further than at any other point. By doing so they were able to catch sight of the snout and a part of the two fore paws of the bear that had shut them in prison. They were coated with snow, and doubtless bruin had been stone dead for hours.

“Harry,” said Ned, when they had replaced their caps and stood erect again within the cavern, “have you thought of any means of helping ourselves?”

“I have tried to think of something, and have had all sorts of dreams, but I am just as much at a loss as I was last night; I suspect that *you* have something to propose.”

“There are one or two things that I have thought of, but I am afraid to name them.”

“Name one.”

“I have wondered whether we could use our knives to cut away enough of the rock to widen that passage into which we shoved our heads.”

“It isn’t likely, but we will soon find out.”

Both whipped out their jack-knives and went to work with a will. It was a painful discovery to make, but by the time they had worn the edges from all the blades they had not chipped off an ounce of stone between them. Its fiber, so to speak, was of the hardest kind, and fifty knives would have done them no good ; they sighed and gave it up.

“No use,” said Harry ; “we have simply ruined our knives—that’s all. Can’t you suggest something else, Ned, while the fit is on you ?”

“Have we enough powder between us to blast off any of the rock ?”

Harry started at the proposition, and was inclined to believe in it. Their powder-flasks were nearly full, and it would seem that with

its tremendous power the compound ought to be available.

Sad to say, however, it very soon became clear that gunpowder could not aid them in the slightest degree—that is, so long as they themselves were forced to apply it. There was no crevice into which the explosive could be poured, and they could not drill a hole.

“Another failure,” said Harry, with a half laugh; “you’ll have to do better than that, Ned; what is the next scheme?”

“You can beat the world at finding something to laugh at,” remarked his cousin impatiently; “I don’t see why you smile.”

“A fellow can’t cry all the time, any more than he can laugh all the time. I do feel blue, indeed, but I’m bound to seize every chance to grin when I feel like it. It struck me just then as rather odd that you should *think* of the schemes while I *tried* them. Come; I’m ready for the next; I can tell by your looks that it is something brilliant this time.”

Ned was thoughtful a minute, and then reaching down he drew out a piece of burning wood which he was about to circle around his

head, so as to increase its illuminating power, when he changed his mind and threw it back again.

“I forgot that the sun is shining outside and we don’t need it. Come along, Harry.”

They had to walk only a short distance, when they stood underneath the opening to which I have referred as the one through which the smoke left the cavern.

“I have asked myself once or twice,” said Ned in explanation, “whether it is possible to make use of *that*.”

Before replying, Harry stepped back several feet, so that he could look aloft without causing his neck to hurt him, and then folding his arms, he gazed upward. The blue patch of sky seen through the opening never looked so lovely to him, and alas, never was it so far away.

“Ned, I’m sorry to say that there are two fatal defects in that plan. So much sunlight finds its way through the opening that we have as fair a view of this part of the cavern as we had last night. You observe that in their irregular way the rough sides slope upward to-

ward the opening, after the fashion of the inside of a bottle, so that to reach that outlet, you would have to travel after the manner of a fly when he creeps along the ceiling.

“Then, again, the opening passes through several feet of rock, and is too narrow for the smallest child to force his way through. Having shown you, therefore, that it is absolutely impossible to reach that outlet, and that if we could succeed in reaching it, it is absolutely useless, you are prepared to admit that the scheme isn’t worth much.”

“I had very little faith in it myself, and, when we came out here, saw that there was nothing in it.”

“I am ready to test the next plan you have in mind.”

“I haven’t any more,” said Ned, sadly.

Harry was silent. He had no disposition now to laugh. By a common impulse, they walked back to the entrance and stopped in front of the cruel mass which stood immovably between them and freedom.

“Jack must have been worried, because we failed to get home last night,” said Harry; “I

don't believe he or Aunt Maggie has slept a wink, and he has been hunting for us from the first streak of daylight."

"There is no doubt of that, but what is there to guide him? Jack ran off to sea when he was a small boy, and he knows nothing about the woods. Even if he was able to follow a trail as well as an Indian, he could not do so now, because all this snow has fallen since we entered the cave."

"And he has no dog."

"If he had, it would be of no use, for the snow would hide our trail from him, unless he belonged to that wonderful breed I've read about in Georgia, which will stick to a man's foot-prints, when he uses the same kind of shoes that hundreds of others do, who have tramped over his trail before the dog set out to follow it. They don't have such dogs in Pike county, and I've sometimes wondered whether they have them in Georgia."

"Then it would seem that we must depend upon chance for Jack to find us."

"I can't see where there is any chance at all," replied Ned, with another long-drawn sigh

that showed that about every particle of hope had left him.

Strange that there was a method which never occurred to these two bright lads and by which their faithful friend might be depended upon to discover their prison.

“You speak, Ned, as though you had given up all hope,” said Harry deeply grieved by the despondent frame of his cousin. “We can fire off our guns at the opening and shout.”

“It will do no good ; I don’t believe we shall ever get out of this cave ; it may be that years from now some party may force away the stone from our sepulcher and find our bones, while no one will ever explain the mystery of our taking off ; for who can believe the story that we were imprisoned by a bear ? We shall never see home or friends again, but shall die the slow, dreadful death of starvation and thirst ; we may as well make up our minds—”

“*Helloa, you land lubbers ! are you in there ?*”

The broad, honest face of Jack Blockley appeared in front of the largest opening beside the Rocking Stone, as he squinted his eyes in

the vain effort to peer into the gloom of the cavern; "because if you are in there, say so, and if you ain't I'll be obleeged for the information. Helloa! why don't you answer, you lubbers? *Helloa!* HELLOA! HEL-L-O-A!"

"Yes; we're in here,—God be praised!" shouted back Ned Livingston, whose feelings, I need not say, had undergone a change within the last few seconds.

"I s'pose you like this place better than Aunt Maggie's," added the sailor, in a voice which it is safe to say could be heard a mile away on that crisp, autumn morning; "which is why you stayed here and let the one hundred and eighty-four short-cake biscuits that she had cooked for you sp'il; what the mischief do you think of yourselves?" roared Jack. "I was so distressed last night that I didn't gain more than 'leven hours sleep altogether; say, how do you get into this blamed thing? I don't see any door-bell or knocker, and this big b'ar looks as though he had butted out his brains while tryin' to push the door in; say, where is the door? Shiver my timbers! but I can't get any answer out of

you at all ; what's the matter and why don't you tell me what you think of yourselves ? ”

By and by, the jolly sailor gave them the chance, and the boys told their story. When they tried to explain that the wounded bear had rolled the enormous mass of stone in front of the entrance, Jack roared his disbelief ; but it so happened that he remembered this cave, which he had visited when a small boy, and as a consequence knew of the Rocking Stone that had played the lads such a trick.

“ Now, Jack,” said Harry, when at last he expressed a willingness to accept their statement ; “ tell us how it was you knew where to look for us ; Ned was in the act of declaring that there was not the slightest chance of our getting out alive, when we heard your voice. We were going to fire off our guns and shout through the entrance in the faint hope that somebody might hear us, but we hadn't done so yet.”

“ Why in the fust place,” said the sailor, “ you're about two hundred yards—mebbe not quite so much—from our house.”

“ Is it possible ! ” exclaimed Ned ; “ how

was it we didn't see the light from the window?"

"You would, if you had climbed up the ridge right back of the cave, which shuts it out; the candles was lit airly last night, for mother was afraid you had lost your way, and, if you had only given one of your yells we would have heard you."

"Strange, that after shouting and firing off our guns early in the evening, we forgot to do so, when we reached a point where you would have heard it. But you haven't told us how you came to look in the cave for us."

"Why the first thing that I seed this morning, when I come to the door and looked out, was the smoke curling up from the ridge; I knowed that nobody lived in there, though I've been inside a good may times; I said to mother, 'Do you know that them two lubberin' fools has crawled into that cave and built a fire? It must be them 'cause nobody else was in these parts last night, 'cause if they were they'd knowed enough to come to our house.' Well, mother came to the door, and shaded her eyes, and said she reckoned as how it was

you, and she hustled around to get some flap-jacks ready while I came here to hurry you to breakfast."

"That's all very well," said the happy Harry, "and we'll be there as quickly as we know, if you will show us some way of getting out of this prison."

The boys could feel no misgivings, now that their dilemma was known, but it was no easy matter to extricate them. After carefully examining the rock from the outside, Jack said he could do nothing without help, and in such a sparsely settled section it would take a number of hours to get it.

In the meantime, Aunt Maggie, when matters were explained to her, brought her flap-jacks, fried eggs and hot coffee to the lads and passed them through the openings to them. It certainly was a novel meal, but I am safe in saying they never enjoyed a feast more than that one.

It was not until the middle of the afternoon, that Jack Blockley, with the help of two settlers, was able after great labor to pry the Rocking Stone far enough to one side to allow

the lads to crawl out. It was done, however, at last, and two more delighted youngsters were never seen than they when they emerged into the bright sunshine and received the congratulations of their friends.

And now, having introduced Jack Blockley, Harry Norwood and Ned Livingston to you under somewhat peculiar circumstances, it becomes my duty to introduce them a second time, but in another part of the world, and amid a series of incidents whose narration I trust will not prove uninteresting to you.

CHAPTER V.

ADRIFT.

“YES, I’m free to own that this is the worst scrape of my life I’ve been caught in a cyclone in the Indian Ocean, was wrecked in the Pacific, and was on the *Sally Jane* of New Bedford when we were attacked by pirates in the Yellow Sea, and me and two others was all that got away with our lives. That was pretty rough, too, in Baffin Bay, when a whale towed us three miles, and night came on and we got lost from the ship, and wasn’t picked up for four days ; but this is worse than that.”

“That must have been a pretty strong whale, Jack, to drag you such a distance through the water.”

“There wasn’t any thing uncommonly strong about him ; leastways he didn’t serve us as bad

as *this* whale that was the means of getting us into this trouble."

"I agree with Jack as to the viciousness of this particular fish, or animal, as I believe it is proper to call a whale; I'm sure, Harry, you and I never saw any thing of the kind."

"We didn't see this one, Ned, you must remember, though he gave us a blow that must have been terrible. If there are such things as mad whales, I should say this was one of that kind."

"There *are* mad whales, boys, as almost any old whaler will tell you; more than one vessel has been sent to the bottom by these savage creatures. I've seen 'em myself. I don't know whether the one that got us into this fix was mad until we struck him, but he behaved very much like it. Howsumever, there ain't any use of talking of such things at this time; the question is whether we shall ever live to tell of this adventur'."

"When that bear imprisoned Ned and me in the cave last fall," said Harry, "we thought it was all over with us; but what is your belief, Jack?"

“I don’t like to say, but there’s no use of denyin’ that the chances are much agin it.”

The foregoing conversation took place one moonless night, in longitude 26 deg. 30 min. east from Washington, and latitude about one degree north. It will be a profitable and easy exercise for my readers to locate the spot on their maps.

The words which I have given were spoken by our three friends, whose acquaintance the reader made in the preceding pages:—Jack Blockley, the sailor, Ned Livingston and Harry Norwood. Jack had served as second and first mate, and had had more than one chance to act as captain ; but, like all of his class, he was superstitious, and it was this weakness that restrained him. When a young man, a fortune-teller, while scrutinizing the lines in the palm of his hand, told him that the first voyage on which he sailed in command of a ship would be his last. Jack could not rid himself of a belief in the idle words, and it was that cause alone, which prevented the promotion he had earned long before the time of which I speak.

You have already learned something about

the two boys, Ned Livingston and Harry Norwood, in the account given of their adventure in the wilds of western Pennsylvania. It was during the succeeding year that they and their sailor friend Jack Blockley were floating on a raft barely sufficient to hold their weight, with not the slightest idea of the direction they were drifting. They had not a particle of food or a drop of fresh water; there was not a star twinkling in the black vault overhead, nor could the straining eye, as it swept the inky horizon, catch the first sign of a point of light.

It was like the darkness of Egypt, above, below, and all around them; and the only sound that came to their ears was the hollow booming of the ocean, the wash of the waves against the frail craft, and the whistling of the wind that had been blowing almost a gale for hours.

How it was Jack Blockley and the two boys came to be placed in this dreadful situation, I shall tell in as few words as possible.

The schooner *Robinson Crusoe*, in the month of June, 1880, left the city of Philadelphia for

Para, which, all my readers know, is a large city some distance up the Para River, South America. She had been sent by several capitalists for a cargo of raw rubber, which is largely exported from that country.

One of the gentlemen who chartered the *Robinson Crusoe* was Russel Livingston, whose son Ned was in rather delicate health from long application to his books. Indeed, he had read and studied so much that he was far in advance of his class, and his father became alarmed.

He was growing hollow-chested; his cheeks were often flushed, and he complained of loss of appetite and frequent headache.

The family physician said the cause was plain: want of exercise and too much work of the brain.

“If he will throw away his books for the rest of the summer; join a base-ball club; row a shell up and down the Schuylkill an hour or two each day; go to Atlantic City and boat and fish in a coarse flannel suit, he will soon come all right. He is naturally strong and healthy, but he needs to keep this up only a year or two longer to die.”

The father and mother sighed, the former saying:

"It seems impossible to interest Ned in any thing except his books. If I would allow him, he would sit up every night until one or two o'clock over his geometry or history or Latin. He is obedient, and will do every thing that his parents wish, except play. Last fall I almost drove him from home, with his cousin Harry, who went on a hunting excursion into western Pennsylvania with a sailor friend. He had been there before, but this venture came near being his last. The boys were caught in a cave, from which they were rescued just in time to save their lives."

"Can't you interest him in the cultivation of fruit?" asked the medical man.

"I have tried it, but it is punishment."

"Don't he like to go out to the athletic grounds and look at the games of baseball?"

"He would rather be whipped."

"So would I, but some folks find enjoyment in it. I wonder——"

The physician stopped and thought a minute

or two. He was serious, for none appreciated more than he the gravity of the matter.

“Exercise does little good unless one is interested in it ; we must take radical measures with Ned ; you must send him on a sea voyage, where he will become delighted with what he sees ; he must be absent from home for weeks ; he must not be allowed any books or studies, and he will quickly build up. Let me see, Mr. Livingston, I believe you are part owner of a vessel going to South America for India-rubber.”

“I am.”

“That is providential ; send your boy on that ; secure a companion near his own age—one fond of play, and turn 'em loose for several months.”

The plan of the wise doctor was carried out in spirit and letter. The father of Harry Norwood was also interested in the rubber enterprise, and though there was no need for Harry to take a vacation, yet when the two boys and the parents of one pleaded with Mr. Norwood, he was obliged to give his consent.

There was no danger of Harry hurting him-

self with study. He belonged to two base-ball clubs, one cricket, and was captain of a boat club. He was fond of hunting and fishing, was a capital shot, could sail his yacht up and down Barnegat Bay as well as the old seamen who live in that neighborhood, and there was none of his age who could beat him in running, skating, wrestling, or any of the boyish sports.

It is more than likely that some parents will doubt me when I say Harry was an excellent scholar in school, but such was the fact. So long as a boy does not carry his outdoor sports too far, they are of vast benefit to him. Brain and muscle should be cultivated together, and "a sound mind in a sound body" is what the Creator intended each of us should have.

Thus it came about that Harry and Ned sailed from Philadelphia on the schooner *Robinson Crusoe*, under charge of skipper Dave Lamokin and eight seamen. The expectation was to be gone two or three months, and the captain understood that there was no call upon him to hurry matters at all.

Off Hatteras, the vessel was caught in a tempest, which wrenched her frightfully and

came near sending her to the bottom. The boys were never so terrified in all their lives, and wished themselves home a hundred times.

The schooner, however, pulled through all right, though she leaked pretty badly for several days. She would have reached her destination without further trouble but for a most remarkable accident, of which I have already hinted.

When near the equator, one night she struck an immense whale, that was probably sleeping near the surface. Maddened with pain the enormous animal retreated several hundred yards, then suddenly wheeled and rushed with full speed at the schooner.

The captain and crew saw their peril, but there was no escape. The side of the vessel was smashed in like that of the *Oregon* by the mysterious schooner, and the sea poured through. The greatest consternation prevailed, for it was certain the schooner must speedily sink. The captain lost his head, and, hastily lowering the boat, sprang in, followed by several of his crew, and pushed off.

CHAPTER VI.

THE POROROCA.

JACK BLOCKLEY could have made his escape with the others, but to do so would have compelled him to desert the two boys, who stood no chance in the fierce struggle of the sailors to leave the sinking ship. The honest fellow would have died before committing such a cowardly act, and he stayed behind, bestowing some vigorous language on Captain Lamokin and the others for their desertion of the boys.

But before the boat had pulled away in the darkness, Jack was working might and main at his raft, for he felt there was not a moment to lose. Indeed, he and his young friends would have been in a desperate strait had the *Robinson Crusoe* gone down as early as all believed it would do, a moment after the accident; but, providentially, the schooner set-

ted so slowly that plenty of time was given the deft Jack to finish the craft on which he and the boys were to trust themselves.

It was a rough structure of spars, hencoops, and whatever buoyant substance he could lay hands on. Ned and Harry did their utmost to help, but it was little. The sailor was an expert in tying knots, and in a short while he had the pieces lashed together, and, as the gun-wales of the schooner were very low, not a minute was lost in embarking.

Jack had his sheath-knife at his waist, and he caught up a gun, which was presented to him by Mr. Livingston before the sailor left Philadelphia. He had not used it as yet, but it was a valuable weapon, and naturally he was anxious to save it. Besides this, Jack tossed a bag of provisions and placed a jug of fresh water on the raft.

Ned and Harry each made sure he had his rifle and plenty of ammunition, though they might well doubt the use to which they could be put ; then the three carefully stepped on the raft, that sank quite low with their weight, and Jack pushed off with his improvised paddle.

“The schooner is ready to go down,” said the sailor, “and it won’t do for us to be too close.”

“Why not?”

“We may be drawn into the whirlpool and be pulled down with it.”

“There she goes!”

The vessel seemed to yield to the forces tugging at her vitals; she had sailed over many a sea, but the grim enemy, which is always reaching after every thing, had secured his death grip at last. The career of the *Robinson Crusoe* was ended.

Suddenly the bow rose, as if it felt the spur of the merciless rider—it remained motionless, as though glaring for one moment at the chasm into which it was about to plunge, and then it bounded forward and went down into the ocean caverns, which have received so many multitudes of human beings and such boundless treasures of wealth in the past, and which still yawn for more.

A peculiar swish and hiss followed, as the topmasts glided under and the waves rushed together over the grave of the vessel which, after

fighting the storms and tempests so gallantly, was destined to die such an unworthy death.

“Look out!”

The swirl made in the sea by such a sudden submergence struck the raft, on which all three were silently standing watching the impressive sight through the gloom, and the structure was tossed about with such force that both lads were thrown down. At the same instant the bag of provisions and the jug of water rolled over-board, and Harry Norwood narrowly missed losing his gun—a disaster that he would have mourned tenfold more than the loss of their stock of water and provisions.

Thus it came to pass that Jack Blockley and the boys were adrift in the starless night, with blank darkness above, below and on every hand. The wind was blowing strongly from the east, as it had been for a number of hours before, and about all the sailor knew was that the schooner was off the coast of South America at the time the whale stove in her side and sent her to the bottom.

It was known, too, that the vessel had been sailing for more than a day through the waters

that had come down the mighty Amazon ; for the muddy taint is often visible hundreds of miles out to sea, and Jack could form no definite idea of where they were.

“If we were drifting in the mouth of the Amazon,” said Harry, who, like Ned, had risen again to his feet and was peering around in the gloom, “it seems to me we ought to hear something of the *Pororoca*, though I don’t suppose we can drift *up* the river.”

“I s’pose you’ve spent a good deal of your time over your books,” said Jack Blockley, still standing erect and holding his paddle in hand, “but there is a good deal left for you to larn.”

“Thère can be no doubt of that, and so there would be after I had spent all my life in study,” was the meek answer of Ned Livingston, who was not vain of his knowledge. “I have never seen the *Pororoca*, Jack, because this is the first time I was ever in this latitude—that is, if we are in any latitude—but I have been told that the sight is a wonderful one, and I hoped to see it.”

“So it is—so it is,” said the sailor ; “I seen

it two years ago and it struck me all aback, for it was a long time before I could understand what made it."

"That is simple enough," struck in Harry, who was better informed than would be supposed from his fondness for athletic sports; "the waters of the Amazon rush out into the ocean with inconceivable force; there is a sea current that sweeps northward along the coast with great velocity, and these two meet at right angles, with a momentum that is terrific. A mountainous wall of tumbling, foaming water is raised like the whirlpool below Niagara. The sight must be a terrifying one."

"I have heard it described as a regular battle between the Amazon and the Atlantic," said Ned, "but, like many such battles, it ends in a draw or compromise, for the current keeps on to the northward by Guiana, while the sweep of the Amazon is perceptible five hundred miles out to sea."

"The Indians along the coast give this phenomenon the name of *Pororoca*," said Harry, "though I don't understand what it means."

“For the good reason that you don’t understand the Indian tongue ; but the noise of the *Pororoca* can be heard for miles, and we have noticed nothing of the kind.”

“If we are at the mouth of the Amazon,” said Harry, who was quick to form his conclusions, “and the current can be felt so far from the coast, it follows that we must be going out to sea with it.”

“That ere sounds natural and all right, but it’s likely to be just t’other way. The fact is, the Amazon doesn’t always run *down* stream.”

The boys would have believed the sailor was jesting had they not been aware of the remarkable fact that at certain seasons of the year a strong east wind at the lower Amazon, where the volume of water is so enormous, causes it to flow backward and overflow the adjoining country.

But it was not reasonable to expect such a result under the present circumstances, and the sailor shared the belief with the boys that they were being carried steadily out to sea, and at that moment were probably a long distance from the coast,

It would seem that their case was not so desperate after all, for they were in a portion of the ocean traversed not only by sailing vessels but by the steamers plying between Rio and other ports to the South and the United States. It was the time when such rapid strides were being made in the development of the mighty Amazon, whose resources constitute one of the wonders of the world. The raft was drifting over what may be called the great highway of nations, and many a poor sailor has been rescued from apparently more hopeless situations than that of Jack and his two young friends.

But from some cause, which the sailor did not choose to make known just then, he viewed their position as a desperate one. He had lashed the raft together so securely that he was hopeful it would hold together through severe weather; they could go without provisions and water for a day or two; and yet, for all that, he did not believe that one of the three would ever tell of the destruction of the *Robinson Crusoe* by the maddened whale.

CHAPTER VII.

“JACK IS GONE!”

NED LIVINGSTON had already received great benefit from his cruise on the schooner *Robinson Crusoe*; he was stronger in body and with a promise of soon being restored to rugged health. Had it been otherwise, he would have been exposed to additional danger in spending a night on a rickety raft in the open sea.

True, they were under the equator, where the mildest weather is supposed to prevail (though the hottest weather is not on the line of no latitude, as the coldest is not at the poles); but there was a penetrating dampness in the air, with every indication that a storm was soon to break upon them. If such should prove the case, the situation of the friends would become dismal beyond degree.

It was useless to keep their feet, so the three sat down near the middle of the raft near each other. Jack held to the long cumbersome paddle, while the boys made sure that their guns did not get lost. The strong east wind caused the ocean to form into small chopping waves, independent of the long sweep that raised the craft at times high in the air and then allowed it to sink far down in the yawning depths.

“We sailors get the credit of being pretty rough chaps,” said Jack, after they had sat some time in silence, with the spray occasionally flying over them, “and I don’t deny that we deserve it as a rule. If all the good and bad in my life was weighed agin each other, I’m much afeared the bad would go down like a thousand pound weight agin a feather; but I believe the One up yonder, who don’t let a sparrer fall to the ground without noticing it, won’t be so hard on Jack as a good many people are. I’ve got the little Bible my mother gave me, when she kissed me good-by a good many years ago, and there hasn’t been a night that has passed since then that I have not read something in

it. I mean, of course,” the honest sailor hastened to explain, “when I had the chance. When I was out in Baffin Bay, spinning along behind a cantankerous whale, or on the wreck in the Pacific, I had to omit it, as I shall have to do to-night.”

“Harry and I have followed the same rule,” said Ned, feeling drawn toward the sailor by his outspoken and creditable sentiments.

“Yes,” assented Harry, “if you will read three chapters every day and five on Sunday, you can go entirely through the whole Bible in about a year, and I follow that rule.”

“A good idee! a good idee!” exclaimed Jack, reaching his horny hand across and slapping the boys one after the other on the back; “stick to that, boys! never be afeard to show your colors and you’ll make port at last! I’ve been laughed at a good many times by reckless chaps, who axed me to pray for ’em when they found they was booked for Davy Jones’s locker dead sure; but I’ve never backed out. Nearly the fust words I stumbled onto in the Good Book was them where He says that them as is ashamed of Him in this world, why He’ll be

ashamed of when the end of all things comes. That settled me on the p'int that whatever come I would stick to my colors, and I've done it every time. I've never shet my eyes in sleep without first asking Him to forgive and take care of me. Sometimes the boys would pinch my legs so as to provoke me, but I never minded it; I jest got up and broke a stool or two over their heads, and arter that they would let me have my prayers in peace."

"As for me," remarked Harry Norwood, "there's one thing I've learned; a boy can be a Christian and have all the fun he can hold. I used to think a Christian must wear a long face, never smile, never have any sport, and be the most dismal fellow in creation; but I was soon taught differently. I've found out that I can please God just as well by laughing, running, shouting, and doing every thing that has any real fun in it, provided I mind the golden rule and do my best to please Him. I'm quick-tempered and get into trouble now and then, but I agree with Jack that God is kinder to us than our own parents, and is ready to give us credit for trying to do right, though we may miss it now and then."

“That’s it,” assented Ned, “we’ve got to keep at it, and we’ll come out all right in the end. I can’t tell how glad I am I started that way ; it’s at such a time as this a fellow feels that religion pays.”

“It pays *always*,” said Harry, earnestly ; “you’ve heard of atheists and infidels, and believers in false religions, who, when they came to die, have been tortured with remorse, and would have given worlds had they owned them, could they have lived long enough to make their peace with God ; but you have never read about, nor heard of, and you will never read or hear of a Christian who, in the pain of death, has not rejoiced that he lived in his belief, and who did not know that all would be well with him.”

Perhaps there was nothing singular that the conversation took this serious turn. The most reckless person must feel awed and serious in the presence of death, and Jack Blockley had impressed upon them the belief that they were doomed beyond all hope when they left the schooner. Each of the three in his own peculiar way had tried to please Him, to please whom

should be our chief aim ; and they felt the unspeakable happiness which comes with the absolute certainty that He would take them to Himself, in His own time ; though it was natural that the boys should experience in a more marked degree than Jack, the pang of bidding adieu to life in its very spring-time.

But while these words were passing between them, the seaman did not forget his surroundings. He had been taught years before, that the man who wins is the one who is vigilant and watchful for the main chances. Jack therefore listened and constantly peered into the blackness around him. The boys did the same, although only at intervals, but they neither heard nor saw any thing that could awaken the least hope.

But for half an hour Jack Blockley felt a growing suspicion that some object was near them. Once or twice he had heard a sound which he knew was not made by the waves, and very dimly, through the almost impenetrable gloom, he fancied he caught the faint outlines of something which he believed was not a part of the Atlantic itself.

Although his conviction was clear that all three were doomed, yet the sailor, with that peculiarity often seen in those of his class, felt it his duty to make the bravest fight possible to the very end. Thus it was he never relaxed his vigilance, and let slip no chance of befriending those whose lives he felt were placed in his hands.

“Take good care of my gun,” he said, as he crept close to the edge of the raft.

“I have it here,” replied Harry, “and will see that it is saved as long as we are ; but what are you doing, Jack?”

The sailor was in a crouching position, with his head at the very margin of the structure, where the mist and spray were dense enough to blind an ordinary person. He answered :

“Stay where you are ; there’s something out here that I must get a look at.”

“What is it?”

“I’ll tell you as soon as I can find out.”

The boys had all the curiosity natural to those of their age, and, when several minutes passed, during which nothing more was heard of their friend, they could hardly resist the

impulse to creep to where he was, that they might learn what his singular action meant.

But it was against his wishes, and they kept quiet several minutes longer. Then Harry called Jack three times, raising his voice each time, but there was no answer.

"My gracious!" exclaimed the boy. "Something is the matter with Jack."

"Maybe he was hurt and crept there to die," was the awful suggestion of Ned Livingston.

"I am afraid you are right," answered Harry; "wait one minute till I find out."

The gloom had become so impenetrable, that narrow as was the raft, the boys could not see across it, though Jack's vision was stronger; but it required only a brief time for Harry Norwood to crawl to the spot where Jack Blockley had preceded him. The structure twisted and creaked under the action of the waves, and great care was necessary to prevent himself being washed overboard.

One minute was enough for him to make the dreadful discovery that the sailor was nowhere on the raft!

In some unaccountable manner he had vanished as utterly as though drawn down in the maelstrom which is said to engulf whales and ships off the coast of Norway.

“Jack is gone!” called out the terrified lad, to his friend; “we are left alone; only God can save us!”

CHAPTER VIII.

A POINT OF LIGHT.

IT was a most alarming discovery, indeed, the boys made, while drifting helplessly on their frail raft in the darkness that brooded over the stormy Atlantic.

Ned Livingston would not believe it until he had crept entirely around the raft and made himself sure that he and Harry were the only ones left upon it. Then they came back to the middle of the structure and sat down close to each other, silent, awed and despairing.

Their hearts were too full to speak, and they could only sit and wait the will of Heaven as concerned themselves.

A minute or two went by when the float was shaken by some hard body which struck it.

"What's that?" exclaimed Harry, starting up. The answer was most astonishing:

“Easy there! Keep quiet: I’m all right!”

There was no mistaking the voice of Jack Blockley, who began carefully climbing upon the raft while the words were yet in his mouth. The lads, in the joyous reaction from despair, made their way toward him until they could dimly discern the outlines of his figure.

He was tugging at some heavy weight, that he wished to lift out of the water, but which caused him much trouble.

“What have you got, Jack?”

“Captain Lamokin—but it’s no use.”

As he uttered the last words he allowed the heavy body to slip back into the water, where it disappeared.

“Why did you do that?” asked the horrified Harry; “we would have helped you.”

“I could have managed it alone; but what’s the use, when he’s as dead as Christopher Columbus?”

“Why then did you undertake to get him aboard?”

“‘Cause he wasn’t dead when I started. You see, boys, the way of it was this: I

caught sight of something dark once or twice, though I don't s'pose either of you can see a foot before you, and I made up my mind that I would find out what it was that was hanging round this old craft."

"And it was the captain you saw?"

"No, it wasn't: it was the boat floating upside down with two of the men hanging on. Just the minute I came up one of 'em slipped off and sunk like lead. The captain was still alive or he wouldn't have held on in that style. I got hold of him and started to swim back to the raft; but he was just dying at that time, and when I got here it was all over; so I let him slide."

"What could have made the boat capsize?"

"It's hard to tell that; but I believe the Lord has a hand in it, on account of the way they treated you, when they found the *Robinson Crusoe* was going to Davy Jones's locker. Every one of 'em is lost."

"Suppose we had gone in the boat with them?"

"It wouldn't have upset," was the prompt response of the sailor; but both Harry and

Ned were more vigorous in their belief, and protested that it was idle to talk that way.

“Which reminds me,” said Ned, “that you have given us to understand more than once that, in your opinion, there is no hope of our getting ashore or being picked up. Now, I insist that you let us know your reason. I have read of persons in much worse situations than ours, who have lived many years after to tell about it.”

“Yes, you must let us know about it,” added Harry.

“I would rather not,” replied Jack, but the boys insisted, and he finally said :

“Just after Captain Lamokin put off with the sailors, and while I stood for a second, sort of stupefied, a sea-gull flew right past my face and knocked off my hat.”

“What of *that*?” asked Ned and Harry in the same breath.

“What of that? Why a good deal of it ; it’s a sure sign of death to me and whoever went with me.”

“How do you know it is ?” demanded Harry.

“Why—why—easy enough ; I’ve heerd that ever since I went to sea ; it must be true.”

“It’s nonsense ! I’m sorry you are so superstitious, Jack ; but since you are, I’m glad you told it, for Ned and I must feel more hope than before. If you will explain to me how it is that a sea-gull can know when a person is going to die, and why it is he lets him know by knocking off his hat, then I’ll believe it.”

“It’s wrong to talk in that style, boys, for there ain’t any thing in this world you can understand or explain.”

“But this is a superstition, Jack, that you ought to be ashamed of. Now the captain and the rest of the crew went off before we did, and there was no sea-gull in their case, and yet, sad to say, they are all lost, while we are yet alive.”

“But how long shall we stay alive ? ”
sturdily asked the sailor.

“No living person can answer that question about himself, and you can’t claim any thing on *that* score. Will you agree that if we all live safely through this that there is nothing in your superstition ? ”

“Well, yes, so far as this matter is concerned.”

“Very well; we will drop it now. But, Jack, since you are working so hard for us, why didn’t you bring the boat to the raft? It seems to me that would be much better than riding on this thing.”

“If it was right side up and had the oars it would have been; but we could do nothing with it in this sea. If we could have righted it, there would be no way to get the water out; and, if we could have done that, we would have been turned over the very minute we trusted ourselves to it in this sea, without any oars.”

“Poor Captain Lamokin!” sighed Ned, “I pity him and the rest, for some of them have families.”

“It must come sooner or later,” was the philosophic remark of the sailor; “they have only gone ahead of us by a little time—”

“Look!” broke in Harry with some excitement, half rising to his feet.

“What do you see?”

“A light right behind Jack.”

The sailor turned and peered through the

gloom, but his keen gray eyes were unable to detect any thing ; it had vanished as suddenly as it appeared.

“ What did it look like ? ” asked Ned.

“ A point of light ; what ought it look like ? ”

“ But did it seem to be moving ? ”

“ No, it shone just like a star, and then was gone quick as a flash.”

“ It may appear agin ; we’ll watch for it.”

The suggestion of the sailor was followed, the three scanning the inky horizon around them. Jack, knowing how liable the raft was to turn on its own center, stared toward every point of the compass. He suspected it was a lantern aboard ship, in which case it was likely to show itself again.

But the minutes wore on and the hollow night was unrelieved by the star-like twinkle across the wild waste of waters. They speculated eagerly as to the meaning of the sudden appearance and vanishment of the signal ; but it was all guess-work, and must remain such until morning.

One good effect was produced by this inci-

dent. It aroused a stronger feeling of hope on the part of the boys. It seemed to say they had neighbors, and all they had to do was to hold fast until daylight, when help would come.

The wind whistled over their heads and around them at a rate that almost indicated a gale. At intervals the top of the waves were blown off and carried almost horizontally over the raft, often striking the friends in the face. Despite their extremely low latitude, the weather continued almost chilly, and their clothing was saturated with the mist and spray flung over them, to say nothing of the plunge that Jack Blockley had taken in the ocean.

The greatest anxiety of the lads was on account of the wrenching of the raft, which it seemed must break it up into its original fragments; but the sailor assured them that, although he did the job in great haste, it was done well, and there was nothing to be feared on that account.

Good spirits are contagious, and the confident manner in which Harry and Ned spoke of the future was not without its effect on the

sailor. He lost a great deal of his gloominess and talked with something of his old-time cheerfulness.

After awhile, however, he would seem to awake to the fact that he was trifling in an unseemly way and he would become gloomy and dispirited again. Thus the almost endless hours dragged their weary length along.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SMOKE OF A STEAMER.

THE unspeakably dismal night at last came to an end. The storm which threatened during the darkness passed over. There was no lightning, the air became warmer, and, with a delight that can not be imagined, the young friends heard Jack declare that the gray lighting up of the horizon over the heaving ocean was caused by the approach of the sun.

When the illumination overspread the sea, the three were standing erect, shading their eyes and scanning the water in the hope of catching sight of some friendly sail, or possibly, of gaining some idea of where they were.

Gazing in the direction of the fiery orb, which soon appeared on the rim of the water, they knew they were looking off over the vast Atlantic, toward the coast of Africa, thousands of miles distant. It followed, therefore, that

the opposite direction must be toward South America, and thitherward, by one common impulse, they bent their eyes.

With sinking hearts the three saw the same billowy expanse stretching away, apparently, for hundreds of leagues.

Land ho ! ”

The thrilling cry was uttered by Jack Blockley, who was standing with one foot thrown forward, as if about to start on a race, while his left hand was pressed on the top of his tarpaulin, and his right arm was stretched with the finger extended toward the point where he had caught the most welcome sight that can come to the shipwrecked mariner.

Following the course indicated, a number of palm-trees were discerned, their bushy tops standing out in relief against the sky, while a glimpse was obtained of the broad, flat plains that spread many miles beyond.

But the location of the sun showed that the sailor was pointing due north. The boys were astonished beyond expression, for, if any one thing in navigation was clear to them, it was the absolute impossibility of reaching land by

sailing northward, anywhere off the coast of South America above Cape St. Roque.

What could this fact mean, which was too manifest to be disputed ?

All at once a light broke in upon Harry Norwood.

“We are not out on the ocean ; we are in the mouth of the Amazon, which is nearly two hundred miles wide at this point.”

“I believe you are right,” assented Ned, more thoughtfully, while he strained his eyes to catch the outlines of the shadowy palms that seemed to be beckoning a welcome to them across the waste of waters.

“Of course he’s right,” called out Jack Blockley ; “he’s hit it exactly. This strong, east wind has turned the current of the Amazon backward. It will flow westward for a good many miles, then, after a while, it will stand still, then the released waters will come pouring into the Atlantic with ten times their usual force, and *then* will be the time to see and hear the *Pororoca*.”

“But, Jack, how near are we to land ?”

“It must be a good ten miles away !”

“And how shall we get there?”

The sailor shrugged his shoulders.

“It would take a week to do so with the paddle, and that is the only way we have of gettin’ along. We have no means of riggin’ a sail, and the raft does not offer enough resistance to the wind to move very fast. Besides, the tide is likely to turn and bring us down the river with a rush.”

“But there ought to be a chance of being picked up before long by some steamer or vessel.”

“So there is, but the country is so overflowed that there must be several hundred miles between the eastern and western shores; we are out of the path of craft going up and down the Amazon, and we may be adrift for a week ——”

For several minutes Ned Livingston had been gazing, with shaded eyes, in a northwestern direction—that is to the westward of the point where the palm trees were first observed. He now exclaimed :

“Yonder is something which I don’t think is a cloud !”

Like a flash, the sailor wheeled and cast one sweeping glance toward the point.

"It is the smoke of a steamer!" he called out, with more excitement in his manner than he was accustomed to show. "By the great horned spoon! but things begin to look orspicious."

The sky was almost clear, and that upon which all eyes were now fixed, was a dark, almost horizontal line, resting seemingly motionless against the horizon, as though some giant had dipped his finger in soot and drawn it along the azure-tinted sky.

But, scanning it closely, the eastern end could be seen to be slightly higher than the western, which dipped downward, as though it rested on the water. Furthermore, a careful scrutiny revealed the fact that while the western portion was faint and shadowy, the opposite was darker, and was slowly and steadily creeping along the horizon in an easterly direction.

This proved that the steamer was coming down the Amazon, that is (paradoxical as it may sound), it was plowing its way against the current.

But it was so far to the northward that our friends might well give up all hope of receiving any benefit therefrom. Yet, they were jubilant over the discovery that they were really within what may be called the boundary line of South America.

The sailor who was trained to viewing objects at sea, did not require long before he announced another joyous fact: the steamer was, in reality, going almost south-east, a course which, if continued, would bring it close to the raft.

As there was little reason to believe she would make a radical change in her path, there was the more ground for hoping that she would pick up the companions in misfortune.

As the black smoke-stacks of the steamer rose to view, still creeping into more distinct sight, Harry and Ned almost danced with excitement. When the hull came up the elder did indulge in some boyish manifestations of delight.

“We ought to show some signal of distress,” said Ned, “although there isn’t much chance of doing so.”

“We can do it well enough, but I don’t think

there's any need," replied Jack Blockley ;
"but no harm can be done, and I'll try it."

He took off his jacket, placed it on the muzzle of his rifle, and, holding it high above his head, slowly swung it back and forth, his oscillations being as regular as those of a pendulum.

As the raft lay almost in the direct course of the steamer, the look-out on board could scarcely fail to discover the signal, if the float itself had not already been noted.

Soon the dark hull was in sight, and the foam could be seen curling away from the prow as she plowed her way through the water with great speed. She was heading so directly for the raft, that, unless she altered her course a point or two, she would run it down.

There could be no doubt that the steamer's captain had decided to pick up the castaways, as they may be called, and, judging according to human reasoning, the present peril of our friends was ended.

Suddenly, Jack Blockley sank down on his knees, and clasping his hands and looking reverently upward, murmured a prayer of

thankfulness to God. Instinctively the boys did the same, and those on the steamer who were watching the little party must have been touched by the impressive sight.

The three rose to their feet at the same moment, and Harry, who possessed a fine tenor voice, hummed a verse of the beautiful poem of J. T. Fields :

“So we shuddered there in silence,
For the stoutest held his breath,
While the angry sea was roaring.
And the breakers talked with Death.

“And thus we sat in darkness,
Each one busy in his prayers ;
‘We are lost !’ the captain shouted
And he staggered down the stairs,

“But his little daughter whispered,
As she took his icy hand,
‘Is not God upon the ocean
Just the same as on the land ?’”

Jack Blockley extended his horny palm in turn to the boys, who grasped it warmly, while the tears came to their eyes.

“Yes,” said the bronzed sailor, in a tremulous voice, “God has held us in His care as He has held us all ever since we was born.”

CHAPTER X.

THE EXPLORER.

WITHIN the next twenty minutes the steamer rounded to, a short distance away, lowered a small boat, and Jack Blockley, Harry Norwood and Ned Livingston were taken off the raft and transferred to the larger boat, where they received a warm welcome.

The steamer was the *Explorer*, of light draught and unusually short, so as to pass the abrupt turns in the rivers with greater facility. She had been originally intended for the exploration of the upper Amazon, and was built by a number of gentlemen in Belem, or Para. On her first voyage she was attacked by natives near the Ucayale in Peru and half her crew massacred. This gave a set back to the exploration schemes for a number of years, and she became a towing tug in Para.

She had been manned and provisioned again and placed under the charge of a competent captain and crew. The region around Para, to the eastward of the Xingu, as my readers doubtless know, is one of the most famous rubber districts in the world. The country between the Xingu and the Tapajos also abounds with rubber trees, but at the date of which I am speaking there was reason to believe the production was only a fractional part of what it could be made. The *Explorer*, it was intended, should be sent up the Tapajos, with a view of awakening the interest of the native Indians, and exciting their cupidity to that extent that a much larger yield of rubber would be secured. A great amount of gaudy finery, trinkets and gew-gaws were on board, which it was intended should be distributed among the savages, whose avarice could be easily excited by this means.

The captain of the *Explorer* was an American sailor named Dave Sprogell, who was one of the crew when the *Explorer* made her disastrous voyage to the Ucayale. He was fully competent for the position, although he was quick-tempered and at times addicted to drink.

His crew of nine men represented almost as many nationalities, including English, French, Portuguese, native Brazilian, Mameluco (the children of white and Indian parents), Cafuzo (those of white and negro parents), Cumboco (those of Cafuzo and negro parents), while one member claimed that he was born in the desolate and far-away regions of Patagonia.

"I'm mighty glad that it was my good luck to pick you up," said Captain Sprogell, after he had heard the story of the boys, and had done his best to make them and their friend comfortable; "and it was a curious thing that led us to run across you."

"I've been puzzled to understand it, ever since you told me you were from Para and on your way up the Amazon."

This remark was made by Jack Blockley, whose honest, sturdy appearance seemed to have impressed the captain favorably.

"We left Para last week, steamed northward by Marajo Island and reached the main stream without trouble. I was anxious to get a Portuguese sailor, who went with me up the Amazon two years ago, and who knows more about the

Tapajos than any man I ever met. His name is Ardara, and he went up the Amazon with Agassiz in 1865. He lives at Macapa, is highly educated, and I determined to go after him, especially as it was my duty to ascend the Tapajos as far as possible."

Macapa is a town of seven or eight thousand inhabitants, on the left bank of the Amazon, one hundred and thirty miles from its mouth. It has been a free port for nearly forty years, and sends out a great deal of rice, millet, cotton, fruits, and fine cabinet woods.

"But we are a long distance to the eastward of Macapa," suggested Jack Blockley to the captain, who had resigned his post to his pilot and was sitting in the handsome cabin talking with the three after they had finished their meal.

"True, for this reason : when I reached Macapa, I found the wife and little son of Ardara, who were delighted to meet me, but they said the husband and father had gone northward toward the Acaray Mountains on a hunt. There was a large party, and Ardara, as might be expected, was the leader and guide, which shows

how valuable he is. His wife said if he should come home and find he had missed the chance of going up the river with me, he would pine away and die of a broken heart."

"He must be very much attached to you," remarked Ned with a laugh.

"So he is indeed, and he is a good fellow. Still I couldn't afford to wait for Ardara, much as I needed him; but when his wife told me he had promised to be back precisely two weeks from the date of his departure, that he never failed to keep his promise, and that the fortnight would be up to-morrow, I made up my mind to wait. There isn't any thing very attractive in Macapa, so we took a turn down the river toward the Atlantic, with no other purpose than to pass away a part of the time, though I will say that three of my men are so inclined to get drunk and become quarrelsome that I wished to keep them from landing."

"You must have been on the point of turning back when you caught sight of us," observed Harry.

"I was standing in front of the wheel-house

with my binocular in hand, looking off over the expanse of water, and had given the orders to turn about, when I caught sight of your raft and yourselves ; you know the rest."

The story of Captain Sprogell brought up a serious question for the boys to decide. The master of the *Explorer* had been very kind, and he was ready to land them at Macapa, from which point they would be able very soon to secure a passage homeward, since the town is largely engaged in the export trade.

But he urged them to accompany him up the Tapajos. He was anxious to secure the services of such a good sailor as Jack Blockley, and he seemed to like the boys from the first. He assured them that it would be a regular holiday trip, attended by little, if any, danger, and, as one of the boys was in quest of health, he could do nothing better than make this voyage up the Amazon and the Tapajos, where the scenes were one constant panorama of delight.

The young friends were eager to go, but the question with them was whether it would be right to do so. No matter how great their

desire, nothing could induce them to do any thing that would grieve their parents.

Jack took no part in their consultation, as he felt that it was a matter that no one but themselves had a right to decide.

It is hardly necessary to say what conclusion was reached by the boys. There was really no reason for them to fear their parents' displeasure by accepting the invitation of Captain Sprogell; rather would their friends at home be glad to learn of the opportunity that had presented itself for seeing one of the most wonderful regions of the earth.

Accordingly, they informed the captain, with many thanks, that they would go with him on his voyage up the Amazon, and they hoped some day to be able to repay him for his great kindness.

Jack told his young friends, with a laugh, that he had already engaged himself for the voyage.

"Weren't you in a hurry," asked Harry, "when you agreed to stay by us until we got home?"

"I knowed well enough what your decision



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would be when the captain axed you to go with him.”

“While we are going back to Macapa,” said Ned, “with the captain’s permission we will write letters home, so that our folks need not be alarmed over our long absence.”

The steamer was already heading toward the town which it had left the day previous, and which it expected to reach that evening. Harry and Ned spent a couple of hours writing to their parents, intending to mail the letter at Macapa. They gave a full account of their voyage from Philadelphia, the strange accident by which the schooner was lost, and their own fortunate escape, ending with a glowing picture of what they expected to enjoy during the ascent of one of the mightiest rivers of the globe.

That evening the *Explorer* put into Macapa, and the boys landed, mailed their letters, and made some purchases. They would have felt no peace of mind had they failed to write their friends.

Captain Sprogell was pleased to find that his valued friend Ardara, the guide, was more

promised, he came back the evening before. He at once agreed to go with *El Americano*, and it was arranged that he should bid adieu to his family on the following morning.

On the next day, before it was fairly light, the *Explorer* headed up the stream, carrying, beside its regular crew, Jack Blockley, Harry Norwood and Ned Livingston.

It is safe to say that had these two American boys suspected what was awaiting them, they would have made all haste from the steamer and lost no time in returning to their distant homes far to the northward of the equator!

CHAPTER XI.

THE AMAZON.

THE Amazon is the mightiest river of the globe. The Mississippi and Nile are longer, but the Amazon is broader and deeper, and its volume of water exceeds that of both combined. With its side channel and enormous tributaries, it presents a greater navigable surface than either. The Mississippi has six tributaries, more than seven hundred miles in length ; the Nile has only three or four ; the Niger has no large branches at all ; the Yang-tse-Kiang has none as long as the Ohio, while the Amazon has at least sixteen affluents that measure more than seven hundred miles, and most of them exceed a thousand.

If Lake Lauricocha be accepted as its source, the length of the Amazon is two thousand seven hundred miles, but if the Ucayale is so

considered, then its extent is one-eighth of the circumference of the world.

If my young readers will open their atlases to the map of South America, they will notice that the Andes extend along the western coast; the mountains curve over to the eastward below Venezuela and Guiana, thus forming a solid wall to the north; several hundred miles to the south of the river are the high table lands of Brazil. Thus we have a prodigious valley open only on the eastward toward the Atlantic. Through this great opening sweep the moist winds of the ocean in the direction of the distant Andes. As every boy who has studied physical geography knows, a chain of mountains robs the ocean winds of their waters; thus it is that in some portions of the South American continent the land on the west of the Andes is dry and arid, and on the east is dripping with moisture. The valley of the Amazon receives more rain than any other region of the globe.

Yanez Pinzon was the first navigator who saw the mouth of the Amazon. This was in March, 1500, but its real discovery was made

by Francisco de Orellana, who, in 1541, started from Quito on the west coast of Ecuador and sailed down the Napo to the Amazon. He had fifty Spanish soldiers with him, and, after great suffering and hardship, they reached the mouth of the river seven months later. This navigator brought with him the legend of the female warriors along the banks, from which the present name is derived.

Lope de Aguirre made a somewhat similar journey in 1561. He was one of those who followed Pedro de Ursua in his vain search for Omagua and El Dorado. Aguirre was a treacherous wretch, who murdered their leader, elected a successor, and then murdered him. He formed his band into pirates, elected himself chief, and called themselves the "Maranones," from which the name of Maranon, sometimes applied to the Amazon, probably comes. He committed the most brutal crimes, and when about to be taken by the royal forces, slew his own daughter, "that she might not be pointed at with scorn as the daughter of a traitor."

"Will-o-the-wisp lights flicker on the llanos ; the country people cross themselves when they

see those reddish flames—the soul of the traitor Arguirre!” Two monks, who had been driven by Indians from the Peruvian missions, in 1616 floated down the river in a canoe to Para, whence they went to Maranha, where their representations induced the governor to explore the country and carry them back to Peru. Pedro Texeira commanded the expedition, which numbered over forty canoes, containing seventy Portuguese soldiers and twelve hundred Indians. They set out in 1637, and a year was passed before they reached Peru. Texeira was an admirable leader. He returned two years later, and the work of his chronicler is the first intelligible account of the Amazon.

In 1769 Madame Godin des Odonais became the heroine of one of the most marvelous experiences ever recorded. She had been separated for twenty years from her husband, his letters to her having been lost by a faithless messenger. She was in Quito, when word was brought to her that a Portuguese boat was waiting on the upper Amazon to convey her to her husband at Cheyenne.

Her father preceded her, to have canoes and

men ready at each station, and she followed down the Bobonassa in a boat with her two brothers, her nephew—who was a small boy—a French physician, and a negro man and three women as servants. As the dangers increased the natives deserted, but the others pushed on. In the rapids their boat was upset, and they narrowly escaped with their lives. Madame Godin and her brothers resolved to stay on the shore, while the physician and her negro slave tried to reach Andoas, he promising to send a properly manned canoe within a fortnight.

They waited more than three weeks, and then constructed a raft, that was hardly launched when it struck a sunken tree and they were thrown into the water. None was drowned, but all their effects were lost. Then they started on foot across the country, until, worn out with hunger and thirst, all lay down to die. One after another they perished miserably until only Madame Godin was left. She wandered off into the woods in a delirium. She found some eggs and water, that served to strengthen her ; and, after ten days of dreadful

wanderings, reached the river, where, providentially, she found two Indians who were on the point of embarking in a canoe for Andoas.

They carried her thither, thence to Tabatinga, where the Portuguese vessel took her to her husband.

In the years that have followed, the Amazon has been traversed from end to end by many adventurous travelers, explorers and scientists, all of whom have had their wonderful story to tell ; but, to-day, the face of the country has undergone scarcely a change. The forests are as exuberant, matted, and almost boundless as ever ; within them is the same overflowing wealth of animal and vegetable life, and the wilderness is still drenched by the same prodigious rainfall. Perhaps a few more villages may be found along the shores, and in some places the wild Indians have increased in number ; but in the interior are streams upon which no white man has ever looked ; in the inaccessible depths of the woods are savages unknown to the explorer. The hand of time has pressed

very lightly these magnificent solitudes, which teem with a wealth of production such as amazes the traveler who has visited other favored portions of the world.

CHAPTER XII.

ARDARA.

ANY one looking at the mighty Amazon, as shown on the map, would be likely to conclude that it is a broad stream flowing smoothly between its banks, like the majority of rivers in our country. Yet such an idea is wrong.

The Amazon abounds with islands, side channels, and thousands of square miles of swamps and lowlands, which at times are flooded and then for weeks are above water. There are hundreds of places where none but a skillful navigator can tell whether he is in the river proper or miles from the main channel. So vast and almost innumerable are these "side issues," that it requires years for the most skillful and observing navigator to acquire any thing like a tolerable knowledge of the stream, and many

scientific writers have given it a plural instead of a singular name—"the Amazons."

The little steamer *Explorer* headed up the river, and, as it passed between the widely separated banks, the panorama was an unceasing source of delight to Ned Livingston and Harry Norwood. They stood on the upper deck, pointing out the most interesting objects as they caught sight of them, like a couple of small children looking through a beautiful picture book. Captain Sprogell was in the wheelhouse, with his hand upon the wheel, guiding the steamer to the westward. Ardara, whose intimate knowledge of the Tapajos and the upper Amazon led to his engagement by Captain Sprogell, was lounging about the boat, smoking his pipe and talking to the members of the crew as he came in contact with them. He was a genial fellow, whom the boys fancied at once.

Jack Blockley was a favorite from the first. His quaint humor, his simplicity and honesty, were winning of themselves; and altogether the crew were more harmonious than would have been supposed when the different nationalities are remembered.

While Captain Sprogell was at the wheel, of course there was no conversation on his part. The boys knew better than to attempt to address him, and, for a time, therefore, they were left to themselves. Their hammocks were swung under the arched roof of the upper deck, where, when they chose, they could lounge to their hearts' content.

"It is the most wonderful sight I ever looked upon," said Ned, "it will be useless for me to attempt to write any account of this to our folks at home."

"Do you notice," said Harry, "that we don't see any ground at all! The trees and vegetation grow straight up from the water."

"Yes, it looks as though we were passing through a great channel cut in the woods."

"And such palm-trees! I thought they were found in all their glory in the East Indies, but surely there is none that can equal those yonder."

"Ardara told me that they are called the finest in the world by the scientific people who have explored the Amazon. He was on the steamer, you know, which took Prof. Agassiz

and his friends up the river some years ago, and he says the great naturalist expressed such an opinion."

The palm-trees were seen by the thousands ; some were feathery and drooped over the water, as though longing to bathe their locks in the yellow current ; others were of a paler green, and more erect, while still others reared their heads as proudly as the mountain oak, to a height scarcely less than a hundred feet. Sometimes they were the only kind of trees visible, then only a few were seen, then they vanished altogether, only to burst forth very soon in all their splendor and exuberance.

Innumerable vines and drooping masses of vegetation were always in sight, but the wonderful vines of Brazil are found in all their extraordinary development further inland and in the upper regions of the Amazon. There are some climbing vines in that part of the world that are more than three-quarters of a mile in length.

The boys would not have noticed the cacao plantations had not Ardara pointed them out. The dark-green of the foliage was so similar to

the forest that only the experienced eye was quick to catch the difference.

“There must be many wild animals and reptiles in those forests,” remarked Harry Norwood, pointing to the southern shore, which was a half mile away, while the northern was scarcely visible.

“Indeed there is,” said Ardara ; “all warm countries, I believe, abound with them, and it has always been a strange fact to me that in India and other parts of the world, where the natural advantages are not half as great as in Brazil, the largest and fiercest wild animals are found. We have the wild beast called the tiger, but he is no more than a domestic cat compared with the spotted terror that prowls in the Hindostani jungles.”

“That is the fact ; there is no such terrible creature anywhere else in the world,” said Ned.

“How about the lion, the king of beasts ?” asked Harry.

“It has been proven by tests that the tiger is one-fifth stronger than the lion, and every one knows he is ten times as courageous and fierce.

It is the truth, also, that the real tiger is found only in Asia, though many travelers speak of him as existing in Africa."

"We have many creatures that it wouldn't be pleasant to meet in the woods, even though they can't compare with those across the ocean. We have the great maneless lion, which is any thing but an agreeable neighbor."

"Is that the beast that is called the cougar and puma?"

"The same; then there is the jaguar, hardly less dangerous, besides the serpents which are everywhere."

"I dread them more than every thing else," said Harry, with a shudder of disgust; "the very sight of a snake sends the chills down my back."

"You will get over that after a while," said Ardara, with a laugh, "for many of our reptiles are not as deadly as those of other countries."

"Because a great many are constrictors," added Ned. "In India is found the cobra and other serpents, whose bite causes death in a few minutes. A constrictor winds around his prey

and crushes him, so you have a much better chance than if his bite were deadly.”

“The black-snake which we find at home is a constrictor,” said Harry, “and yet he is more than a match for the rattlesnake.”

“I have heard of the rattlesnake,” said Ardara, interested in what the boys were saying, “though I never saw one. They have a rattle on their tail, which I believe they sound before they strike any one.”

“Yes, and the blow at close quarters follows the rattle so quickly that you have to be very lively to avoid it.”

“That is very kind in the reptile to notify you ; but, if his bite is so deadly, how is it the black-snake, whose bite is not poisonous, or is only moderately so, masters him ?”

“It is by his greater agility ; I was once hunting up in Pike County, Pennsylvania, when I heard a thrashing in the bushes, and the next minute a rattlesnake and black-snake coiled around each other, rolled into the clearing. The rattler struck at the black fellow again and again, so rapidly that I could hardly see the movement of his head, but the black-snake

dodged him every time, and all the time he kept winding more tightly around him, until at last he squeezed the life out of him. I waited until the fight was finished, when the black-snake saw me, and I suppose he felt so proud over his victory that he started to serve me in the same fashion, but I raised my gun, and when I pulled the trigger, the head of the reptile was pretty well scattered over Pike County."

"That was very curious," said Ardara; "but the greatest region for snakes that I ever heard of is along the Orinoco. I once went up the Rio Negro with a party of English sportsmen, and kept on up until we got into the waters of the Orinoco—"

"How could you do that?" interrupted Harry.

"Very easily, for the two rivers are connected at their source, so that you can start up one, and keep going straight on until you come out of the mouth of the other."

"I have read of the bifurcation of the Orinoco," said Ned, "and that is what is meant. I have heard that at certain seasons the head-

waters of the Tapajos and the La Plata are connected in the same way, so that we can start at Para and go inland by water to Montevideo, more than two thousand miles distant along the sea coast.”

CHAPTER XIII.

HARRY TAKES A SHOT.

“**B**ESIDES the animals I have named,” said Ardara, “you will find in Brazil the ocelot, tapir, sloth, paca, agouti, armadillo, capybara, ant-eater, coati, and over sixty species of monkeys. The boa constrictor and anaconda are the principal serpents, but we have plenty of poisonous ones, though they may not be as plentiful as in India. For instance there is the jararaca, the most dreaded of them all; the coral serpent, the liane snake, the cold snake and the rattlesnake, though I have never seen one of the last kind. But, as I said, the greatest region which I ever heard of for reptiles is along the Orinoco. In some parts of that river the fish are so plentiful they have retarded the movement of a vessel in sailing up stream. In the soft mud along the banks, immense snakes

imbed themselves and wait for their prey to come to the water to drink. I have seen a bull reach his nose down to quench his thirst, when, like a black streak of lightning, the head of one of those huge snakes would dart out and fasten itself in his nose. Then the snake would use all his strength to pull his prey to him, so as to wrap himself around his body. If the snake succeeds, it is all over with the bull or cow."

"Does the snake ever fail?"

"Very often; and then it is all day with *him*."

"How is that?"

"I once saw a bull struck in the way I have described, but the plucky fellow planted his fore feet in the mud and used all his power of resistance. He bellowed so you could hear him a mile, but he would not yield an inch. His fore feet sunk in the soft ground, and the snake pulled like a span of horses, but the bull was too strong."

"I suppose he drew the snake out?"

"Not a bit of it, for don't you see he then would have been in just as bad a fix? One of the most curious things about that business is

that the snake can never be drawn out of the mud, no matter what force is put forth. After a while the bull began to gain; he stepped carefully backward a few inches, his own neck drawn out in a straight line with the body of the snake, five or six feet of which projected from the mud. In a minute the bull moved back a little further and the neck of the snake became thinner, for, as I said, his body could not be stirred. The bull all the time bellowed with might and main, but he was gaining confidence. His own neck couldn't stretch to any extent, and it was stronger than the body of the snake. Back he kept going, inch by inch, the neck of the snake growing thinner and thinner under the fearful tension, until all at once it snapped in two and the bull galloped up the bank with the head and several feet of the body hanging to his nose. There it must have hung for several days, until it sloughed off."

"I hope we shall meet no such serpents as that," said Harry, with another shudder.

"We may and we may not; then you know we have plenty of alligators, which we don't mind so much."

“It was in this part of the world,” said Ned, “that Waterman, the traveler, sprang on the back of a cayman as they were drawing him from the water, turned his fore legs over his back and rode some distance before he leaped off.”

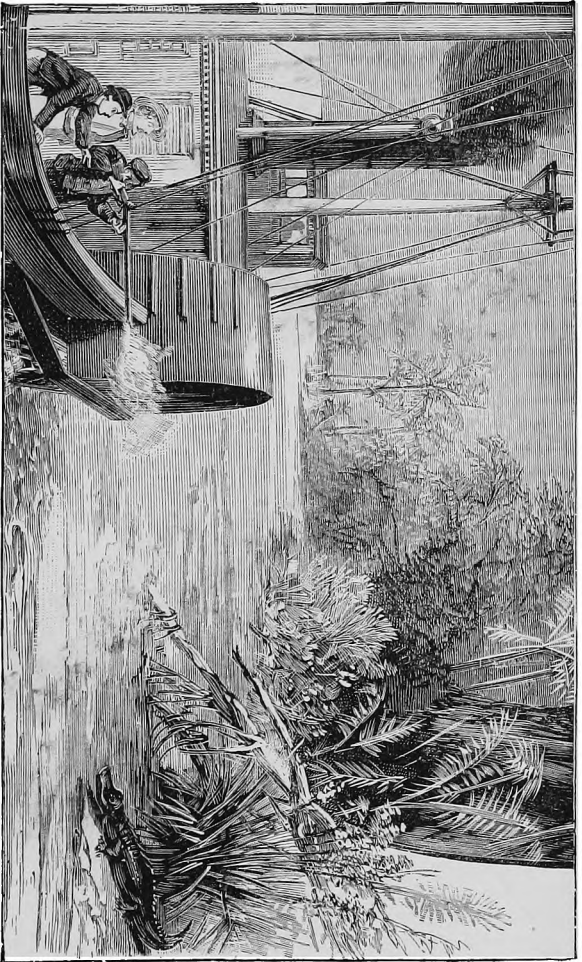
“When it comes to that, I prefer to walk.”

“Ah, look yonder !” exclaimed Ned, pointing to the edge of an island which they were passing. “What sort of a creature is that?”

The object indicated was in the act of climbing the bank, in a leisurely fashion, as though it had no fear of such a strange object as a steamer. It was long, round, fat and plump, its brown coat as smooth and shining as if it were oiled.

“That is the Amazonian otter,” replied Ardara, who seemed to be familiar with every thing they encountered. “You will find him in the side channels and sometimes a long distance inland. Hallo ! there is an alligator.”

They had already passed a large number, but the one pointed out by the guide was of extraordinary size, being fully twenty feet long. It lay close in shore, with its long, ugly head



HARRY TAKES A SHOT AT AN ALLIGATOR.

resting on the water, as though waiting for something to come down and pause within reach of its tremendous jaws.

"I'll give him a shot!" exclaimed Harry, running to the state-room that had been assigned him and Ned. In a minute he re-appeared with his rifle in hand. The steamer was rapidly leaving the reptile behind, but the distance was short when the boy brought his gun to his shoulder, took a quick aim, and fired.

"You never touched him!" laughed Ned, as his friend dropped his piece, and looked at the huge head with a dismayed expression that made the others laugh.

"I don't see how I missed him, for the shot was an easy one."

"You did not miss him," Ardara hastened to say; "the bullet struck the head and glanced off into the bushes. The alligator doesn't suspect he was fired at; he may have been jarred slightly, and I thought he winked his right eye, but he isn't hurt at all."

"I know they wear a sort of armor that is a pretty sure protector against a rifle bullet; but

my gun is a good one, and the distance is so short that he ought to have been wounded."

"You must send the ball in the eye or behind the fore leg, though if your gun is a powerful one you can sometimes pierce his thick hide ; but you struck him in a glancing direction, and it had no more effect than if you had hit an iron-clad."

By this time the island was left far astern, and the puffing steamer was out in the channel again. Thus far she had been kept well in toward the southern shore, but she now worked away until she was fully two miles distant. The other bank was so far off that it would have taken several hours to reach it, and Captain Sprogell had no intention of doing so.

The sun was low in the sky when the *Explorer* edged still closer to the bank. Ardara rose to his feet, looked carefully about him, and then said :

"The captain is going to make a landing."

CHAPTER XIV.

NIGHT ON THE AMAZON.

THE stock of fuel was running so low on the *Explorer* that Captain Sprogell had turned toward shore for the purpose of obtaining a new supply. It was a regular fazienda, where a lot of wood was gathered ready to be sold to the first steamer that might want it. Three dusky natives, whose muscular frames showed through their scanty clothing, were lolling at hand prepared to give their services to their master, who was leaning against the pile, with a broad sombrero on his head, while he lazily puffed his cigarette.

The boys noticed that he had a swarthy skin, long black hair and piercing dark eyes, which were fixed on them, and he seemed instinctively to know that they were strangers in that part of the world.

It required but a few minutes for the steamer

to make fast, when the three natives, assisted by the hands on the boat, began taking fuel aboard. Captain Sprogell invited the boys to go ashore with him and make the acquaintance of Señor Aguipa, who was an old friend of his. Harry and Ned were pleased to do so, and they were presented to the gentleman, who spoke poor English but was very courteous and hospitable. He urged them to go to his house and stay with him until the steamer should return.

“It would give us great pleasure, señor, to do so,” said Harry, “but we shall have to reserve the enjoyment of your hospitality for some future occasion.”

“It isn’t necessary to use such large words as those,” said Ned, in a low voice; “it won’t help him to understand you.”

“Señor Aguipa has a large cacao orchard,” said Captain Sprogell, “which is very valuable.”

“It is now doing quite well,” said the señor, speaking very slowly and with faulty accent, “but it was a long time before I gained much hope.”

Assisted by Ardara, who joined them presently, Señor Aguipa explained the system of cultivating this plant, which forms one of the leading industries in the lowlands of Brazil.

Good judgment must be used in the selection of the ground for an orchard, for it will be ruinous if it is so low as to be subject to long floods. The cutting for the plantation is done at the end of the rainy season, and the logs are left drying in the sun until they can be burned. Very little more is required in the way of preparation, and the seeds are placed in the shallow holes in rows separated by a dozen yards. The planter guards against the second growth, and by the fifth year the trees begin to bear quite well. They are crowned with a dense foliage, which gives a cool and most inviting shade to those who wish to wander beneath.

Señor Aguipa sent one of his men to his house, a short distance inland, and brought forth several of these cakes, which he presented to the captain and the boys with his compliments. Then, after an effusive parting, the price for the wood having been paid, the parties

separated, each expressing strong hope that they might soon see each other again.

It was now growing dark, and Ardara took his place at the wheel. The Amazon is such a broad river and the navigation so slight, that there was scarcely danger of a collision between craft on its waters ; but on the vast ocean there must always at all times be human eyes that are never closed. Death is always brooding over the mighty deep, and it comes like a thief of the night. The steamers that have started from opposite sides of the Atlantic are tossed about for days by tempests, they steal around icebergs, and plow through the foam and swirl of wild waters, with routes separated by hundred of leagues, yet continue to approach each other through the darkness of night, in the glare of sunshine, and while the mist and fog rests like a shroud on the ocean, until as if they were two immense magnets, they rush together with a crash that sends both to the bottom.

There is peril everywhere, and eternal vigilance is the only preventive of disaster.

The night was clear, but there was no moon.

The stars shone from a cloudless sky, and the Southern Cross beamed out in all its splendor with the other constellations that spangle the heavens when the atmosphere is free from mists and clouds.

Jack Blockley sat a long time talking with the boys, the captain joining them and doing every thing he could to make them feel at home on his boat. He told them a great deal of his adventures when on the head waters of the Amazon, and when he had awakened their wonder he coolly added :

“It is more than likely that when we return to Santarem from going up the Tapajos, we shall turn westward instead of toward the east.”

“What! do you mean you will go on *up* the Amazon?” asked Harry.

“It is probable, and I hope you will go with us.”

“Shiver my timbers!” laughed Jack Blockley, “if you may not count on them for passengers.”

“I don’t know about that,” replied Ned, in a voice which showed it was a very doubtful

point with him ; “ that is such an important step that Harry and I will have to think it over very seriously.”

“ You would like to go, wouldn’t you ? ” asked Captain Sprogell.

“ We would be delighted to do so.”

“ Let the matter rest then where it is,” remarked the captain, who proceeded to relight his pipe ; “ there will be abundance of time to think it over.”

When the hour grew late the boys withdrew to their hammocks, instead of the state-room assigned them. The weather was sultry, for it will be remembered they were under the equator, where such temperature is the rule. But the forward motion of the steamer, though much less than during the day, kept a continuous breeze sweeping over the deck, and showed the wisdom of the boys in swinging their hammocks where its benefit could be obtained.

The captain assured them that though some parts of Brazil are exceedingly unhealthy, in many other places the climate is salubrious, and the boys had nothing to fear from exposing themselves to the night air.

The pulsing of the engine, the soft wash of the water from the bow, and the churning of the wheels grew monotonous and faint on the ears of the drowsy lads. The vast solitudes on their right and left gave forth no sound, one of the most impressive characteristics of some of the Brazilian forests being their solemn stillness at night.

By and by all sounds died out, and Harry and Ned slumbered.

CHAPTER XV.

SANTAREM.

WHEN the boys awoke next morning the rain was falling in torrents. Huge drops struck the deck with a resounding report, and streams of water poured off into the river. The slanting columns looked like burnished spears, which fell so rapidly that neither shore could be seen.

At the end of a couple of hours the shower stopped as suddenly as it began. The sun came from behind a bank of clouds, and, though every thing was steaming with moisture, the contrast was a grateful one.

The experience of the first day was substantially repeated for the succeeding two days, the overwhelming vegetation of the forests, as shown on shore and the islands, becoming wearisome at times to the boys, who ceased

inspecting it. They stopped at intervals at the fazendas to wood up, as the Mississippi steamers do in going up and down stream. Many of the Indian settlements and small towns were watched with interest, but no stop of any length was made until the afternoon of the third day, when the *Explorer* reached the important town of Santarem, which stands at the junction of the Tapajos with the Amazon.

One of the noticeable accompaniments of their arrival at this city was the contrast between the yellow water of the Amazon and the inkish current of the Tapajos. White sand beaches greeted the eye, and the numerous tall, graceful, javary palms abounded. Far to the southward stretched a ridge of flat-topped hills, covered with the dense green of forest and vegetation which is always visible in this portion of the continent.

Looking at the city itself, our friends saw rows of whitewashed houses, one and two stories high, the large municipal building just below the main town, and a collection of palm-thatched huts close to the shore. The latter composed the original Indian settlement from

which the other and more modern portion has grown.

The *Explorer* anchored in front of the town, and a number of canoes instantly approached for passengers and freight.

“We are going to stay here till to-morrow,” said Jack Blockley to the boys, “and we may as well take a look around.”

A canoeman, who understood enough English to make his meaning known, agreed to take the party ashore for two hundred reis, which may seem a large amount, until I state that it was less than fifteen cents. The price was gladly given, and after a short row the little party landed.

As they neared the land they observed the remains of an old fort, the stones tumbled about and the vegetation growing over and around them. There was nothing to cause fear on the part of any man-of-war that might contemplate landing a force of marines to take possession.

Canoes were drawn up along the beach, people were passing to and fro, and several vessels of large size were riding at anchor in

the river. Little attention was paid to Jack and the two boys, though some of the native youngsters stared at them and indulged in observations when they passed.

“There is one remarkable fact about this town,” said Ned, before they had walked far, “and that is its cleanliness.”

The others had noticed this peculiarity, which is by no means common among the cities and villages of South America. Like every other place, the inhabitants were Roman Catholics, and the church, standing in an extensive grassy square, was large enough to hold fully a thousand people, crowded as they often are in such buildings.

The three sauntered along, inspecting every thing that fell under their eyes. From two until four o'clock little business is done in Santarem, on account of the heat. At those hours the merchants, and the population generally, indulge in the siesta, which is so common in hot countries. They were through with this refreshment when Jack Blockley and the boys landed, and the usual stir and bustle was going on again.

The boys strolled the length of the main street, and were well paid by the quaint and interesting scenes. As the afternoon advanced, the people seated themselves in front of their houses, where they smoked and gossiped and played checkers, apparently as happy as any whom a traveler will meet in a long time. It was noticeable that only at rare intervals was a lady seen in the group, for in Santarem prevails the old Brazilian fashion of keeping the ladies of a family out of sight.

The boys would have been glad to stay in Santarem over night and visit the Indian part of the town, but Captain Sprogell intended to start up the Tapajos in the morning, and it was only prudent that they should be rowed out to the *Explorer* again, and should tumble into their hammocks, where they slept soundly until morning.

“It is an interesting place,” said Ardara, as he and Jack Blockley smoked their pipes together on deck, “I have been there many times; the people are hospitable and delight in entertaining visitors. I have worshiped in the church, which has a beautiful tablet at one

side, placed there by Martius, scientific navigator and nobleman, sent to Brazil by Maximilian Joseph, king of Bavaria, a half century ago. He was saved from what seemed certain death in an awful storm up the river, and he placed the tablet in the church in 1846 to show his gratitude therefor."

"It was a creditable act in the nobleman," said Jack; "most men are in a hurry to make all sorts of vows when in danger, but are very quick to forget them when the skies become clear."

"Von Martius, the knight, I am glad to say, was not such an ingrate as all that. Not only is there a tablet in the church, but a gilded image of our blessed Saviour, of life size, on a cross of native itauba wood. The tablet is really an explanation of why the cross and image have been placed there."

"Is the city managed without trouble?"

"As well as such a city can be governed. They have a police force, with a justice of the peace in charge, who reports to the chief of police of Para, and there are sheriffs and constables and a regular court."

“How about the old Indian part of the town?”

“That lies over yonder where you see the lights twinkling across the water. The inhabitants are peaceable and good-natured, and I never knew of any trouble with them. If there should be, of course the authorities would take them in hand. They are poor, and their miserable huts would not be of much account in any other latitude.”

“Where did these Indians come from?”

“That no one can tell with any certainty, but I believe the Jesuit missionaries first gathered the Tapajos on the spot, and it is said that they are descendants of Indians who came from the far north, probably Venezuela. They were numerous and powerful, and all the other Indians were afraid of them. It is two centuries ago that the missionaries drew them to this spot, and the fort, whose ruins you saw, is nearly as old. In 1750 there were several hundred Indians, and Portuguese traders began arriving. They started cacao and coffee plantations, and four years after it was given its present name.”

“I’m astonished to find how much you know about your country and its people,” said the sailor, admiringly.

“During my leisure at home I have read a good deal, but no more than thousands of others. I take it every man ought to make himself acquainted with the history of his own country. This city of Santarem has had some pretty rough times. In 1773, the Mundurucus Indians swarmed down upon the villages and settlements, and sacked them all, except Santarem, where they had a terrific fight, lasting several days ; but they were driven off. A short time after they pledged themselves to eternal peace, and ever since have been the very best friends of the whites.”

“I s’pose the whites could get along without them ? ”

“Not very well ; in 1835 took place the great rebellion. Santarem surrendered, but the Mundurucus joined the loyal citizens and drove out the rebels. They stand to-day like a wall of iron between the settlers and the wild Indians, who would make raids on the outskirts and plantations but for the Mundurucus.

When I was in Santarem last, one of the Mundurucus chiefs, all tattooed and covered with paint and feathers, came into the town. He was treated like a prince, for all knew he was as good a friend as his forefathers had been to the settlers."

Thus the conversation went on between Ardara and the simple-hearted sailor until the hour was late, and they retired to their couches.

CHAPTER XVI.

UP THE TAPAJOS.

THE morning on which the little steamer *Explorer* moved up the dark, clear waters of the Tapajos was the finest that the boys had enjoyed since leaving Macapa. Not a cloud was visible, and the gentle breeze, created by the motion of the boat, prevented the heat from being oppressive.

“If this will only last,” said Harry, looking dubiously at the blue sky, “we could ask nothing finer.”

“I don’t think there will be any rain to-day,” remarked Ardara, who had been carefully studying the signs for several minutes; “but nothing in the way of weather is certain in this altitude, except its uncertainty.”

As the steamer advanced the river widened, only to narrow again further up. To the south

lay the misty hills of Diamantina and Panama, with Serra de Iruar against the azure sky. White clay-cliffs, sand beaches and rocks glide by on both sides, while the boat steadily plows her way through the Tapajos toward the dreamy, mysterious forests which close down upon the river as though they would shut out the explorers who were bold enough to enter in.

They passed a large stream that poured a current into the Tapajos as yellow as the Amazon. This river, known as the Furo de Arapichuna, descends directly from the north and is really the arm of the present stream, extending like a canal between it and the Tapajos. It brings such a vast amount of sediment that it has already built up a point of land that project far into the tributary.

“Will we keep running all night?” asked Ned Livingston, walking over to where Ardara and Jack Blockley were smoking their pipes like two brothers.

“We will not,” was the answer; “Captain Sprogell could do so with safety, for the river is deep and broad and will be so for a considerable distance, but, under the best circumstances,

there must be a greater degree of danger at night. We are in no hurry, and our rule is slow and sure. It may be months before we return to Para, and it will be rather a bad set-back to break down before we have more than fairly started."

This was only a simple matter of prudence, and Captain Sprogell would not have been justified in doing differently.

"If you wish it," said Ardara, "we will go ashore and camp to-night instead of staying aboard."

This project struck the boys as just the thing, for though nothing could be more pleasant than their quarters on the boat, yet they would welcome any kind of change, and there was just enough of the romantic in the plan to captivate their fancies.

The scenes through which they passed during the day were generally of the same character. The forests on the right and left were varied by the wooded hills, lowlands and sandy stretches of beach, but there was little if any thing of a striking nature.

Captain Sprogell ran the *Explorer* close to

shore, where she was made fast, his purpose being to lie there until the morrow. It was yet early in the afternoon, and the entire party took a bath in the cool, refreshing current of the Tapajos. They had a jolly time frolicking, diving, swimming and playing all sorts of tricks on each other. The sailor who claimed to have been born in Patagonia, Ardara the guide, and Jack Blockley, were the most expert swimmers, though the superior agility of Harry Norwood enabled him to get the best of them all in turn, when they made for him, as they frequently did.

An early meal was eaten, and before it was fairly dark the camp was located. The arrangement was that the boys and Ardara should sleep on shore, while Jack, like the rest, preferred his comfortable quarters on board.

“We must make our hammocks in the trees,” said their guide.

“And why?”

“We shall be out of the way of prowling animals and crawling things, though there isn’t much likelihood of any of them troubling us to-night.”

Accordingly the hammocks were swung in the trees, which grew close to the water. They were fully twenty feet above ground, high enough to be beyond the reach of any wild beast that might be drawn to the spot. The camp fire was kindled and burned brightly until the boys began to feel drowsy, when they climbed very carefully into their beds.

Harry and Ned felt just a little "ticklish" when they looked down at the camp fire so far below them. It appeared as if an incautious movement on their part would fling them from such a height as to cause their death. But, while they were considering the matter, both fell asleep.

Ardara spoke to them, but, receiving no answer, closed his eyes in slumber. All three were unconscious, and the boat, lying a short distance away, when the dark water flowed softly around her, seemed as if that too had lost the aggressive energy which had driven her so many miles against the current of the mighty rivers.

The camp fire was burning dimly, when suddenly a dark figure emerged from the deep

gloom of the wood. It moved as silently as a shadow around the camp, just beyond the circle of light thrown out by the smouldering fire. It seemed to be reconnoitering, to ascertain whether it was safe to venture to carry out some malignant design against the three sleepers in the trees.

A few minutes seemed to satisfy him that all was favorable, and he then began climbing the tree, and made directly for the hammock in which Harry Norwood was stretched unconscious.

CHAPTER XVII.

A MISHAP.

THERE are fully sixty varieties of monkeys in Brazil. They are all full of mischief, light-footed and nimble, and they sometimes render life a burden to the traveler who penetrates the immense forests of that country.

It was one of these creatures that came out of the woods along the Tapajos after Ardara, Harry Norwood and Ned Livingston were asleep in their hammocks. A number of them had been flitting among the trees, and the guide had called attention to them ; but they were so shy that only a glimpse was caught now and then of the lively quadrumana, and it was believed they would not show themselves at all.

But the particularly mischievous fellow of which we have spoken no sooner satisfied him-

self that all were asleep, than he began climbing one of the trees that supported the hammocks. While he was doing so some six or eight other monkeys came closer among the surrounding branches ; they were gathering to see the fun.

The leader in the mischief went noiselessly upward, until he was perched at the head of the hammock in which Harry Norwood was sleeping. Then, balancing himself, he reached forward and began gnawing at one of the small ropes which supported the hammock.

This cord, unfortunately, was at the head of Harry, and the sharp teeth had been working a short time only when it snapped in two. Harry, who was in the middle of a pleasant dream of home, was suddenly aroused by finding himself going downward, end-over-end, through the branches.

But for these interposing obstacles he must have been badly hurt ; but, as it was, they broke his fall, and, just before reaching the ground, he fell directly across a limb, where he hung suspended a minute like a clothes-pin, then dropped lightly on his feet, while the

hammock came sliding and tumbling after him.

“Ned, did you kick me out of my berth and——”

Harry had got thus far in his astounded query, when he understood like a flash what had happened.

The trees were full of monkeys, hopping about and chattering, as though they were ready to split their sides with mirth over the mishap of their victim.

The unusual racket awoke Ned and Ardara, who rose to the sitting position and looked down from their perches at the strange sight on the ground, wondering what it could mean. The fire was bright enough to reveal the figure of their companion, who was about as angry as a vigorous young American can be.

“What’s the matter, Harry?” called Ned.

“Matter enough,” he replied, rubbing the bruised portions of his body; “one of the plagued monkeys gnawed off the cord of my hammock, and I came tumbling heels-over-head through the limbs, with the hammock after me.”

“Did it hurt you?”

“It bruised me a little, but hurt my feelings more. I wish I knew which monkey did it, I would *raise* him.”

Ardara, who was laughing quietly to himself, called out:

“That’s the fellow on the other side of the fire; he’s chattering at you, and they are all laughing themselves to death.”

“That’s the scamp, is it?” demanded Harry, glaring at the animal; “well, I’ll give him a kick that will lift him up among the limbs again.”

As if to invite the punishment, the *Simiadae* at that moment turned his head, as though looking in the direction of the steamer. Harry saw his opportunity, and quickly leaping over the fire, drove his foot at the monkey, vigorously enough to raise him several feet from the ground. Had the kick reached its mark, the mischievous little fellow would have received the greatest “jarring” of his existence, but it looked as if he suspected what was intended, and did his utmost to urge the attempt.

Harry concentrated all his strength in that

tremendous kick, that just missed the monkey, and, lifted by his own momentum off his feet, the boy dropped flat on his back, while the object of his wrath hopped a few steps, and, turning about, chattered and danced harder than ever.

Ardara and Ned roared with laughter, while Harry was near losing his temper for the time. They had never seen any thing so funny, and the second discomfiture of the boy upset their gravity altogether.

“If there isn’t less levity up there,” said Harry, “some other monkey will get lifted.”

“If I ain’t lifted any more than *that* one was, you may lift all day—I can stand it. The next time, Harry, you had better get some one to hold the monkey while you take aim with your foot. I think that would be a good way to jump across a stream; you have only to give that sort of kick and it will lift you over.”

Harry had recovered his good nature while this little badinage was going on, and Ned and Ardara came down to the ground. The fire was stirred so that it threw out a broader circle of

illumination, and the party held what might be called a council of war.

“I don’t think they will disturb you again,” said Ardara.

“If I could only be certain they would go for you two next time, I would be glad to have them do it,” said Harry, “but I don’t mean to take any risk. I’ve got enough of camping out in this spot; I prefer the *Explorer*.”

Ned was of the same opinion, for it certainly is not conducive to pleasant dreams to know that you are likely to come tumbling downward in your sleep for fifteen or twenty feet.

Under the circumstances, Ardara agreed with them, and accordingly the three gathered up their luggage, and, making their way to the steamer, were received on board, where they slept soundly the rest of the night.

CHAPTER XVIII.

GATHERING WOOD.

IT seemed strange to observe that, as the steamer ascended the Tapajos, the stream steadily widened, but Ardara explained that this river is very broad for many miles, the narrow, neck-like portion being at the point where it empties into the Amazon, another, not so narrow, occurring some miles further up.

For some distance not a house or sail was visible. The solitude of this stream and wood was rendered only the more impressive by the sight of a small canoe, creeping along the northern shore, propelled by the paddle of a single Indian. When surveyed through the binocular glasses of Captain Sprogell, he could be seen attentively watching the boat, as though he meant to be in readiness to leap ashore and

run at the first demonstration on the part of the terrible monster.

With a view of testing him, the captain suddenly turned the prow of the steamer toward the canoe, while the whistle gave a blast that wakened the echoes for miles. The terror of the dusky warrior was as overwhelming as it was amusing. He made several furious plunges with his paddle, driving the nose of his canoe against the clayey bank with such force that its sudden stoppage toppled him over with his feet in the air.

But he was up again in a twinkling, and, leaping ashore, darted into the woods at the fiercest burst of speed possible. He must have run a long ways, and no doubt kept away from the river for a good while afterward.

Passing by the broad sweep of water that sets into the Tapajos from the north, and is the outlet of the Arapiuns, they came in sight of the little settlement of Alter do Chao, on the eastern shore of the Tapajos. It contains less than fifty palm-thatched houses, with a dilapidated church and about four hundred inhabitants. Our young friends surveyed it curiously

from the deck of the steamer as it glided by, while the Indians were seen standing on the bank watching the boat in turn. They would have been glad had Captain Sprogell and his passengers paid them a visit, for the natives are known as most inveterate beggars, and they would have been certain of a large addition to their stock, provided they had any stock to which it could be added.

"The place, like almost every one in any country, has an interesting history," said Ardara, as the three looked back at the queer-shaped huts fading from view; "I have stayed there several days and found the people very hospitable, but I was driven nearly frantic by the fire-ants."

"What are they?"

"One of the greatest pests of the country. They are large and tremendously powerful. When they bite you it is just the same as if some one shut a pair of pincers with your flesh between the jaws. I never jumped so high nor let out such a yell in all my life as I did when the first fire-ant paid his respects to me."

Only a short time after losing sight of Alter do Chao, the travelers came in view of another small village, where the people also stared curiously at them as they went by. The day was advancing, but Captain Sprogell determined to keep moving so long as it was prudent to do so. The weather, ever since the rising of the sun, was all the boys could wish, not a drop of rain falling, while the heat was not oppressive by any means.

When the short twilight ended, the *Explorer* approached close to shore where the water was very deep and made fast. A supply of wood was wanted, but the captain proposed to wait until morning before setting his men to cut it down and gather it. There were no supplies ready for delivery awaiting him, but in such a country it is an easy matter to secure all that can be needed.

There was no proposition to encamp on shore, although Harry and Ned would have been willing to try it had Ardara wished it. There is something wonderfully attractive in the idea of camping out to a lad, who thinks it is the highest kind of enjoyment to lie on the ground

a prey to insects, chilled on one side of the body and toasted on the other, with insufficient protection from the rain and a general upsetting and mixture of the supply of food.

The next morning was bright, sunshiny and clear, such a brisk breeze blowing that the Tapajos was whipped into foamy waves which broke on the beach with a splash like the ocean, and caused the steamer herself to move uneasily at her moorings.

All hands took a turn at chopping and gathering wood. This sort of work was anticipated and prepared for, and most of the men were skillful with the ax. The boys were unaccustomed to it, and Jack Blockley did not display much cleverness.

"I can't sit still and look on," said the sailor, swinging the implement over his shoulder and striding into the wood with the others.

"What can we do to help?" asked Ned, he and Harry following after their friend.

"You can do the heavy sitting around," replied Jack; "I don't think it is safe for you to go to swinging your axes; the first thing one of you will cut the head off the other."

“We can help carry the wood aboard anyway, after we have admired the style in which you use the ax.”

Jack, conscious of his own awkwardness, was anxious to get the boys away, so they would have no cause for laughing at him.

“I never could write a letter when anyone was looking over my shoulder, and I can’t acquit myself with skill when any body stands gaping at me and making remarks, so I will be obliged to you if you will cast your eyes some other way.”

And to give point to what he was saying, the sailor turned to the right, so as to move away from the rest of the men who were already swinging the glittering axes over their heads, and burying the keen blades in the hearts of the forest monarchs.

The boys laughed slyly at each other, and obliged their friend by moving off to the left, but all the same they meant to keep their eye on him. They allowed him to get a short distance ahead, when they followed after him.

A few steps only and the sailor paused before a tree which was some six or eight inches

through. It was almost smothered by a huge vine which, after winding several times around it, continued on among and around the adjoining trees, as far as the eye could reach.

“There’s consid’ble wood there,” he said loud enough to be heard by the boys, who laughingly watched him from behind adjacent trees. “I hear the other axes sounding, but it won’t take me long to fetch that ’ere timber down. I don’t care about them boys watching and laughing at me ; for between you and me, Jack, I don’t know as much about handling an ax as I do the windlass.”

He wore no coat, for the weather did not call for it, even when on the boat. He now spat on his hands, drew in a deep breath, and throwing the blade back over his shoulder, made a long sweep with it, aiming for the trunk a short distance from the ground. Very likely he would have struck it but for the vine of which we have spoken. Somehow or other that got in the way, and caught the ax where the handle was inserted, just as a clothes line will sometimes catch a boy under the chin while running across the yard at night when

he ought to be in bed. The unexpected check so disarranged things that the ax was jerked out of the grasp of the amazed sailor and went spinning twenty feet away among the trees.

“By the great horned spoon!” he gasped, staring after the implement as it went bounding end-over-end; “I was never more astonished in my life—who’s that laughing?”

He turned about and saw his young friends red in the face from their efforts to restrain their mirth. The good-natured fellow could not be angry with them, and he joined in their laughter, while he slowly walked to where his ax lay and picked it up again.

“I’ve cut the mainmast away more than once, when the gale had us,” said Jack, “but we didn’t have any such outlandish vines twisting around it, and almost as big as the mast itself. I’ll fetch the tree pretty soon.”

Taking lessons from his experience the sailor delivered the next blow with such care that it landed safely and inflicted a large gash on the trunk. He aimed to place the second blow in

the same place, but it struck several inches above ; the next was as much too low, and the fourth also missed the mark, so that Jack Blockley was certain to waste considerable strength.

But he had the virtue of perseverance, and he kept at it until the tree suddenly gave up the struggle, and would have gone over but for the encircling vine which held it in place. This was speedily chopped in two, and then the trunk lay prostrate.

“I will go over to Captain Sprogell and see whether I can’t get him to hold the boat several days.”

“Who for?” demanded Jack, red in the face and panting, as he glared at the boy.

“Your heart seems bent on getting that log cut in two again, and I would like to have him give you time to do it.”

“If I should stop to kick some monkey that had cut down my hammock I might need more time but I think I can work it through as soon as the rest.”

The boys laughed, and each took a turn with the ax while Jack sat down for a breathing

spell. There is scarcely a thing in this world which anyone can do well without practice, and the boys, as may well be supposed, made sorry work of chopping.

CHAPTER XIX.

FIRE-ANTS.

ARDARA smiled when he looked at the haggled trunk, and he and his companion set to work with such success that it was speedily cut into pieces of the proper length. By this time the wood was being carried on board from a dozen different directions, and in much less time than would be supposed, an abundance was on the boat, that was blowing off steam.

A long echoing blast sounded from the whistle, and a few minutes later the *Explorer* was steaming up the Tapajos, with the same delightful breeze sweeping across her decks.

Rain impended for an hour, but to the great relief of all the sky cleared again, and the upward voyage continued without any special incident until nightfall, when the little village of Aveiros was reached.

This is not quite four degrees south of the

equator, and stands on a high bank in a most picturesque situation. To day it wears a look of dilapidation, and its church seems ready to fall to pieces, if, indeed, it has not already done so.

As soon as the steamer was descried a number of the settlers came forth to stare at it, as people in the country do when the cars thunder by.

Captain Sprogell headed toward shore, and the citizens—Indian and white—hurried down to welcome him. They all seemed anxious to show their hospitality by helping to make fast, but their assistance was not needed.

Several of the crew sprang ashore to visit the village, Ardara, Jack Blockley and the boys doing the same. It was a laborious climb, the steep pathway to the village proper, but the natives seem to mind it no more than a schoolboy does in running up the steps before his own door.

When the visitors reached the top they found they had entered one of the ordinary Indian villages common in that part of the

world. As nearly as they could judge, about three hundred men, women and children occupied it. They stared at the visitors in a wondering fashion ; but they were kind-hearted and offered no rudeness.

Harry patted a dark-eyed little fellow on the head, stopping and addressing him a word in English. The native smiled, showing a handsome set of teeth, and Ardara who caught his words, said :

“He says he thanks you, but he does not understand your words.”

“I guess he will understand *this*,” laughed Harry, handing a nice pocket knife to him.

The lad thanked him more vigorously than before, and his playmates looked as if they would be delighted to have a chance to thank the stranger in a similar fashion. They did not crowd forward, however, nor make themselves disagreeable.

After walking to the other end of the village the party stopped and viewed the pleasant scene spread out before them. The river was perhaps two or three miles wide, and on the other shore could be seen the Indian village of

Santa Cruz, looking quaint and picturesque when studied through the clear atmosphere. There the Mundurucu tribes are found ; tall, strong fellows who are excellent friends of the whites.

To the right and left wound the broad Tapajos, while wooded hills and lowlands were around them. The wind had fallen, the air was warm, and the spirit of peace seemed to brood over the beauteous scene.

"This must be a healthful country," said Ned, when the little party had stood in silence some minutes.

"So it is, but I judge not the place where you would like to spend your days."

"Of course not, but—*murder!*"

Ned Livingston made a sudden leap in the air and clapped his hand on his leg, as though suffering intensely.

"I believe a serpent has bitten me!" he added, turning pale with alarm.

"It is only one of those fire-ants," said Ardara, laughing : "they are not worth minding."

"I wouldn't be such a ninny," remarked

Harry, with half disgusted expression ; “ what is there about the bite of an ant to make such a fuss about ? they ain’t—*O, murderation ! I’m bit ! I’m bit !*”

CHAPTER XX.

ABOVE CUPARAY.

NED LIVINGSTON was still rubbing his leg and dancing with pain from the bite of the fire-ant, when Harry Norwood was nipped in the same manner, while in the act of scolding Ned for his weakness in making such an ado about it.

Instantly Harry bounded in the air, kicking forth both legs with almost as much vigor as he displayed when trying to punish the monkey that gnawed off the cord of his hammock. Despite his own suffering, Ned broke into laughter over the ridiculous figure cut by his friend, who had been so impatient with him.

"My gracious !" exclaimed Harry, slapping the little tormentor, which had fastened itself on his thigh, "they have teeth like daggers."

"I wouldn't be such a ninny," called out

Ned ; “ what is there about the bite of an ant to make such a fuss about ! ”

Ardara was on the lookout for the tormentor and avoided being bit. The boys were so frightened by the taste they had had, or rather that the fire-ants had had, that they began to retreat to the steamer, the pilot following them.

“ I’ve been in a good many parts of the world,” said Jack Blockley, “ and have been bit by snakes and gnats, mosquitoes, and all sorts of things. Of course it ain’t very pleasant, but it always makes me mad to see anyone show himself such a calf over a little thing. I’ve seen chaps with their arms and legs broken or blowed off, and they never groaned. But if a boy is nat’rally a calf and lubber, why of course he’ll show it—Shiver my timbers! who *jabbed that cutlass in my leg?* ”

And Jack made the biggest jump of his life, and went tearing down the steep path so recklessly that he lost his balance, and bumped all the way to the bottom. Despite the sufferings of the three, they were all laughing heartily

when they went on board the steamer, as were those who were looking at them.

“Aveiros has been destroyed by fire-ants,” said Ardara, in talking the matter over with the party, later in the evening.

“How could they do that?” asked Ned, still nursing his wounded limb, while Harry and Jack were similarly occupied.

“The whole place was overrun with them; they were everywhere; they undermined the village, and men in walking along the street would break through and fall a dozen feet down in their galleries; they were on the tables, and would fight with the people for their food; they would bite—well, I guess you know how they bite. Every man, woman and child fled, and stayed away until the ants also went, when the people came back.”

“But the ants are there too.”

“Only a few of them; there isn’t a tenth of what there used to be. The people don’t mind them.”

“Talk about mosquitoes,” groaned Harry; “I would rather spend a week in the swamps of Jersey, without any thing to protect me,

than to face a dozen of these animated spear-points."

"We are not likely to be troubled again ; it is only here and there that they are found, just as it is with the mosquitoes. In some places you see nothing of them, while in others they will drive you mad."

In the morning the boys were desirous of visiting the Indian village across the river, but Captain Sprogell did not deem it worth while, and they once more resumed the voyage up the Tapajos.

There came a break in the beautiful weather, of which they had seen and enjoyed so much during the last three days. It began raining, and the showers continued, with slight intermission, the entire day. It seemed as if the Atlantic winds were surcharged with moisture with which they drenched and saturated the Amazonian valley until it steamed back the superabundant water which it was unable to hold.

The river narrowed until it was no more than three miles in width. Numerous islands were seen and passed, and it required much care to

avoid running on the sand banks ; but the experienced vision of Captain Sprogell and Ardara were sufficient to detect these perils in time to avoid them.

During the day they ascended above the Cuparay, a narrow but very deep stream which enters the Tapajos from the eastern side. Numerous dwellings of the native Indians were seen, and several canoes were passed on their way to the upper falls, for the purpose of barter and trade with the natives.

“How far are we from the Amazon?” asked Jack Blockley of Ardara toward the close of the afternoon.

“About a hundred and fifty miles ; we are near the end of our voyage with the steamer.”

“But we are to go still further up?”

“That is the purpose of the captain ; we shall go to Itaituba, which stands near the lower falls ; there the steamboat must stop, and we shall have to pass the rapids in canoes.”

“Is it difficult?”

Ardara shrugged his shoulders.

“We shall see some hard work and little danger, but not enough to frighten us.”

“I am ready to go anywhere if others will go with me ; but you see I have charge of these boys, and it won’t do to take them into any danger that we can keep out of.”

“Can there be any greater peril than that which they met before I had the pleasure of seeing them ?” asked Ardara, who, as a matter of course, knew of the accident to the schooner.

“No, indeed, Ardara, but that you know could not be helped. Their friends would never have allowed them to leave home had they known that the *Robinson Crusoe* was not to take them back again. Ned was sent that he might regain his health, which was bad, and Harry came as his companion and friend.”

“The boy has gained strength,” said Ardara, glancing at Ned, who was sitting some distance away chatting with Harry.

“So he has,” responded Jack ; “if he lives to get back, his parents will be delighted.”

“You may depend that I am as anxious as you are that no harm shall come to either of them.”

Then lowering his voice, so that no one but the sailor should hear him, Ardara added :

“I love the boys—both of them, and I will watch over them as though they were my own sons.”

CHAPTER XXI.

AT ITAITUBA.

THE voyage of the little steamer *Explorer* up the Tapajos River had come to an end. At the distance of one hundred and fifty miles from the junction of the stream with the Amazon, Captain Sprogell reached the town of Itaituba, above which no steam vessel has ever passed

Itaituba, in 1835, was selected as a rallying point for the loyal people and the Mundurucu Indians. At that time there was scarcely a hut in the place, but it received a village charter in 1856, and the municipality now includes all the Tapajos region above, to the confines of Matto Grosso. (This last term means "a great forest," and it is the name of the most western, and, after Para, the largest, province in Brazil. Its area is fifteen times as great as that of the State of New York.)

Itaituba contains perhaps two hundred and fifty inhabitants, part of the houses being made of adobe or sun-dried bricks, while the rest are palm-thatched huts. One third of the inhabitants are white, and there are a number of well filled shops. A dozen trading canoes are sent out at times, and quite a bustle in the way of trade is going on almost all the while. These canoes ascend the Tapajos and above the rapids, bartering with the Mundurucus for rubber and drugs.

It is manifest that myriads of rubber trees are growing around Itaituba, and that a lucrative trade can be developed. Captain Sprogell's instructions were to do what he could to secure a large portion of this trade for his employers, who owned the *Explorer*, and who intended also to send him many miles up the Amazon, in quest of new regions where the valuable tree grows.

The arrangements were that the *Explorer* should remain at Itaituba for a week or two—that is, until ready to return, during which time the engineer and fireman would carefully overhaul the furnaces and engine, while several

of the crew would do the same with the steamer itself, under the direction of the mate. The *Explorer* was a powerful tug, with strong engines, and there was no evidence that she had suffered in the least; but the prudent commander takes every precaution against danger.

While this general "tidying up" was going on, the plan was that Captain Sprogell, Ardara, and two powerful native Brazilians known as Pedro and Tomti, were to ascend the Tapajos in a single large canoe, in which was to be stored a large amount of trinkets and notions that were sure to please the Indians, and were to be given them for rubber. Ardara was able to converse with the people in their own lingua, and consequently would be valuable on that account, aside from his superior knowledge of the country.

It was believed that by such a course as this with the Indians, with whom they were sure to come in contact, they could rouse scores of them to extra exertion. They would bring double the quantities of rubber down to Itaituba, where an agent was to be established to

see that it was secured for the right parties in Para. This, in brief, was the business of the steamer *Explorer* up the Tapajos.

The only modification of the plan was one of detail, caused by the unexpected addition made to the party at the mouth of the Amazon. Jack Blockley and the two boys, as a matter of course, were to go with this exploring party, as it may be termed, though hundreds of people have made the same voyage they proposed making.

At Itaituba a large trading canoe was engaged, and the trinkets and notions were stowed forward, being covered with tarpaulin so as to protect them from rain, and the memorable canoe voyage was begun.

The large boat, that was abundantly able to carry the entire party and their luggage, had been over the same ground, or rather water, before, and was furnished with every thing indispensable. A canvas covering was arched over the latter portion, into which those of the crew not on duty could creep at any time, to avoid the sun or rain. It had, also, a goodly sized sail, which was hoisted, and, as there was

a strong breeze blowing, the craft bowled along at a rapid rate, without the assistance of oars or poles, that are often the only means of propulsion.

Our friends were fortunate, for the wind continued strong and favorable most of the day, so that long before the short twilight came they had reached the foot of the first falls, twenty miles above Itaituba. Here it was decided to go into camp, and make the ascent on the morrow.

“There are rubber gatherers not far from here,” said Ardara, while he and Jack Blockley sat smoking their pipes in the dusk of the early evening, “and, if you would like to see how it is gathered, I will take you to see it.”

“I’m obliged,” said Jack, “but I’ve observed the darkies collect the same sort of thing on the Guinea coast, where they cure it in the ground ; and I’ll take the occasion to do some patching of my clothing, if you will excuse me.”

The boys would have been glad to have the honest old sailor with them at all times, but there was no special cause for taking him along, and it was arranged that Ardara was to go along

with the boys, the party expecting to return when the sun was at meridian.

Captain Sprogell intended to ascend the rapids in the morning, when he would wait on shore for his guide and the boys, while he was hopeful of making his errand known to many of the Indians in the vicinity. Ardara was to do what he could in the same direction on the morrow, so it will be understood that it was not proposed to waste any time.

The camp-fire of the party must have been seen a long ways, for before long they were visited by two couples of Indians, who came from different points. They were treated with consideration and given a number of presents. Ardara conversed with them without trouble, and he explained the wishes of his employers.

The natives listened with interest, and when they went away, promised to bring some more of their people to meet the white friends, on the morrow, above the rapids. Every thing therefore looked promising when Ardara and the boys left the camp in the morning, and plunged into the dense forests which line both shores of the Tapajos.

CHAPTER XXII.

HOW RUBBER IS GATHERED.

AS the little party made their way through the woods they found the traveling any thing but agreeable. They waded to their knees in water, and the soil was yielding and spongy. The musquitoes buzzed about their ears, and presented their bills in the most exasperating fashion. At times, too, the vegetation was so luxuriant and the trees stood so close together, with the matted vines between, that it was hard work to push their way forward.

Each carried his gun and some ammunition, while Ardara had a pretty heavy pack of trinkets on his back. The boys began to suspect that the true reason why Jack Blockley stayed behind was to help force the canoe through the rapids ; that, at the worst, was pleasant amusement compared to this.

But Ardara took every thing as a matter of

course, and Harry and Ned resolved that they would never complain so long as they could keep moving.

Fortunately they were not forced to go far, when they came upon the information they were seeking. The first sign of it was a hut, which Ardara told them belonged to a native rubber gatherer. It was a wretched looking structure made of logs, with the crevices and chinks filled in with clay, and with vines growing all over it. The windows were simply openings cut through the logs, and there were only two. The floor within was earth, comparatively dry, the builder of the hut having been wise enough to secure high ground to protect his home from an ordinary flood, though there must have been times when he was washed out.

A tall, angular, Mameluca woman, the wife of the owner, sat on the bench at the door, smoking a pipe. She was slovenly in her dress, and her face and general appearance were any thing but prepossessing.

She was holding her pipe to her mouth with the fingers of her right hand, and, as she heard

the footsteps, she turned her eyes without moving her head. The three saluted her, and Ardara stepped forward and presented her with some tobacco, addressing her at the same time in her own tongue.

This gift brought a dim expression of pleasure to the swarthy countenance, and she muttered her thanks. When asked where her husband was, she pointed off in the woods with her pipe.

"I don't think he is far away," said Ardara; "come ahead, unless you are used up."

"We'll let you know when we want to stop," said the plucky Ned, splashing forward as though it was the finest kind of enjoyment. "I'm glad that woman has no children, for I would hate to see them in such a dreadful place as this."

"You will find plenty of them in just such bad places," replied Ardara, tramping ahead; "you have to see many sights in this country that will make you thankful that you were born in a more favored clime."

As the guide had declared would be the case, they had not penetrated far when they

came upon the rubber gatherer. He had gashed a large tree with a hatchet, cutting it in several places ; two other men had done the same, and probably one hundred different trunks had been wounded in the same fashion.

This had been done early in the morning, when small cups were fastened below the slashes, by means of clay, so as to catch all the milky fluid that exudes from beneath the bark. They begin by cutting the tree as high up as they can reach with their hatchets, gashing it all the way around. The next morning they repeat the process a little below, and keep it up until they have reached the ground.

Before noon the exudation has ceased, and the largest tree does not yield more than a gill. Then the *seringueiros* pass from tree to tree, with calabash jugs, into which the contents of the little cups are poured. At the moment of the boys' arrival, the three men had brought in all the sap of the rubber trees, and were preparing for the next step in the interesting process of making rubber.

If the milky fluid is left to itself, it coagulates after awhile, and forms a whitish gum of

poor quality. The black is the most valuable, and the men prepare that in the following manner :

A large, wide-mouthed, clay chimney is placed over a fire, which is allowed to smolder so as to give off a dense smoke. As this pours upward through the chimney, it comes in contact with a wooden mold, round, flat and fastened to the end of a long handle, like the nets with which young entomologists gather bugs. This mold is washed with the milk, and held in the smoke until the milk coagulates. Another coat is added, which also coagulates, and the process is kept up until a thick coat of dull white rubber covers the mold. This is then cut from the warm board, and is ready to be sold to the traders. After a while it turns a dark brown color, and finally becomes almost black.

One of the men made a rudely shaped bottle by spreading the fluid over a clay ball.

"When the coating is thick and hard enough," said Ardara, "he will press and work the sides, until the clay crumbles, and it can be shaken out. You are too young to

remember that that was the way in which rubber shoes were first made."

"When is the time for gathering rubber?" asked Ned Livingston.

"From February till June this land is entirely under water, and the trees are not disturbed. They need the time to recover from the drain they have suffered; the season begins in June and lasts about seven months. Then, over an immense area of country are scattered thousands of rubber gatherers, busy tapping tens of thousands of trees, whose product is soon to be sent to the four quarters of the globe."

Caoutchouc (koo-chook, accented on the last syllable) was first introduced from South America, which is still the great source of supply for the world, though it also obtained from the East Indies and Africa. The many uses to which India-rubber is put are too familiar to our readers for us to attempt to enumerate them. There seems to be no limit, and new fields are continually found for this most valuable article of commerce.

The boys watched the process of coagulating and smoking the rubber, and were soon ready

to return to the Tapajos, where their friends were awaiting them. Ardara went forward and held a lengthy conversation with the three men. As he presented each with a number of trinkets and they shook their heads in an affirmative way, as if much pleased with what was said, Harry and Ned were satisfied that he had made a good bargain for securing rubber.

The tramp back, as may well be supposed, was contemplated with any thing but pleasure. The rubber tree abounds in swampy and overflowed lands, and the gatherers, who make good wages during the busy season, are exposed to fevers and debilitating sickness.

But as Captain Sprogell was known to have ascended the rapids, Ardara slightly changed their course somewhat, so as to strike the stream at a point further up than the camp in the morning. To the surprise of even the guide himself, this speedily led them into dryer ground, where traveling was less difficult. The steamer, when she left Para, was fitted out with every thing in the way of guns, ammunition, shoes, and clothing, that the projectors of the expedition thought would be needed.

The elastic boots drawn above the knees of the party, were impervious to water, and kept them dry so long as they avoided sinking above their tops. Each, as we have already stated, carried his gun, the boys having such conception of danger of the Brazilian forests that they never felt safe without some weapon of the kind.

Tramping along in their usual fashion, Ardara, who was so much more familiar with the woods, gradually worked ahead, until he was more than a hundred feet in advance of Harry Norwood, while Ned Livingston was that far in the rear. They had seen nothing to cause alarm, the few aquatic serpents that glided away at their approach not being worth attention.

"I have seen how India-rubber is made," muttered Harry, toiling steadily forward, and heartily wishing the tramp was over; "but it costs a good deal more discomfort and work than I dreamed of, and more than it is worth. Jack was sensible enough to stay in camp and be comfortable."

On the whole, however, the youth could not

regret what had been done. True, he could have gained a good idea of how the milky juice is thickened into rubber, but he had seen it done, and that is always preferable to any account received from others.

“I wonder what father and the rest of the folks would say, if they could see us tramping through this swamp, on the other side of the equator. Some of the boys are fishing down at Barnegat or Atlantic City, or are bathing at Cape May or Long Branch, or they may be watching the base ball matches for the championship. I would much rather be there than in this hot, damp, nasty climate, but if I live to get back, I can tell bigger stories than they—”

Harry was suddenly roused from these reveries by a peculiar snarling, which apprised him that danger of some kind was at hand. He stopped, and looked quickly around him, but could see nothing to explain the sound.

He knew it was quite close, and he was alarmed lest the animal should make the leap before he could prepare for it. He had brought his rifle in front, carefully cocked it, and only paused to learn where to shoot.

All at once Ned called to him :

“Look out ! he’s going to jump !”

“Where is he, Ned ?”

“Right over your head !”

Harry looked up. On the branching limb of a large tree he saw an animal crouching and glaring at him, as if measuring the distance necessary to leap in order to land on his shoulders. The creature was not large, but it was fierce.

It resembled the ordinary domestic cat, but it had a much longer neck, body and tail. Its round, greenish eyes gave forth that phosphorescent gleam seen in the feline species, which makes it seem at times as if they emit fire.

This was the *felis eyra*, or tiger cat, that frequents the woods and thickets as far north as Mexico and Texas. It is a skillful climber, and is any thing but a pleasant stranger to men in the wilderness.

Believing he was in the very act of bounding from his perch, Harry Norwood raised his rifle and aimed more quickly than he would have done under other circumstances. A curious occurrence also interfered with the shot.

At the very moment of pulling the trigger, the gentle breeze swayed a twig about as thick as his finger, directly across the line, and the poorly-directed bullet impinged against this in mid air. The deflection was enough to cause the rifle-ball to strike the tiger cat in the neck instead of the brain, where it was intended to bury it.

Instead of inflicting a mortal wound, therefore, it simply maddened the creature, which emitted a spitting snarl, and the next instant made a leap from its perch, straight for the boy, who was without the means of defending himself.

CHAPTER XXIII.

IN THE WOODS.

HARRY NORWOOD carried no firearms beside his rifle. He had a large knife, such as hunters use, and dropping his gun, he whipped out this and braced himself for the attack of the tiger cat, whose rage had been roused by the wound just inflicted.

In obedience to instinct rather than reason, the boy, instead of standing perfectly motionless, made a leap backward of several feet. As a consequence, the beast struck the ground directly in front of the youth, who poised himself ready to receive the assault, which he knew was delayed only for the moment.

The snarling tiger cat whirled about with great quickness, its long sharp teeth displayed, its ears thrown back, and its eyes glaring. Its tail was flirting swiftly, and its retractile claws

protruded like needles to their fullest extent, eager to rend the flesh from the limbs of the young hunter.

But it was only in accordance with the nature of things that Ned Livingston, having been the first to discover the character of the danger that threatened his friend, should run forward to give what help he could. He saw that the shot of Harry, from some cause, was worse than a failure, and the tiger cat was making for him with the fury of the terrible inhabitant of the East Indian jungles.

Ned had not time to reach the spot, and coming to an abrupt halt, he hurriedly brought his rifle to his shoulder and pulled trigger. The bullet bored its way directly through the skull of the tiger cat, which made one frenzied leap straight up in air, and, falling on its side, rolled over and over, clutching at the leaves and flinging up the dirt, for an instant, when it expired.

"Well done, old boy!" exclaimed Harry, grasping the hand of his playmate and shaking it warmly; "I couldn't have done much better myself."

“You had the first chance, and it looks as though you did not do quite as well.”

“I was in too much of a hurry, and a limb swung in front of the muzzle just as I pulled trigger. The animal doesn’t look very terrible, but I guess he would have made a pretty savage fight.”

“Yes, you had him up to the fighting point,” remarked Ardara, who had hurried back on hearing the first shot. “They don’t generally attack hunters unless they are wounded. That is a large tiger cat, and he would have made it lively for you if Ned hadn’t fired just when he did.”

“Well, he seems to be about as dead as he can be,” observed Harry, kicking him with his foot, “and I am getting hungry.”

“We are not many miles from the Tapajos,” said Ardara, wheeling about and plunging forward again.

The walk continued for nearly a mile, when the boys, who were then traveling side by side, were startled to observe four Indians come out of the woods behind them. As soon as they caught sight of the youths they called out, as

if they wished them to halt, and began hastening their gait ; their manner left no doubt that they had been following their trail.

“Let’s run,” whispered Ned ; “they’re after our scalps, as sure as fate.”

Harry was frightened, and he hurried, although he did not break into a run. At the same moment, however, he shouted to Ardara, who, as usual, was a considerable distance in advance.

The Indians also called and broke into a loping trot, so that matters were in an interesting shape, when the guide ran back to learn what it all meant. The instant he caught sight of the Indians acting in such a threatening manner, he cocked his rifle and demanded the cause of their action. They also stopped abruptly and made a vigorous reply.

Ardara broke into laughter and lowered his gun.

“It is all right,” he said to the wondering and alarmed boys. “They joined the rubber gatherers after we left. When they heard my business, they made up their minds they wanted to talk with me on the same matter ; so they

took our trail, and their eagerness to hear what I would do was mistaken by you for hostility on their part."

It was a relief to learn the meaning of it all, and the young friends laughed with each other over their own fright, which was natural under the circumstances, for they knew that hostile Indians are sometimes encountered in these regions.

Ardara's interview with the aborigines was very satisfactory to all. He made a liberal distribution of presents among them, and they showed much gratitude therefor. They expressed their eagerness to devote themselves to gathering rubber more energetically than before, and pledged themselves to see that it reached the agent whom he named, and who would always be found in Itaituba. Altogether Ardara felt he had been successful in this excursion into the woods, and Captain Sprogell could not help being pleased with what had been done.

The four strangers took the back trail, with many expressions of good will. They grinned and gesticulated to the boys, who could not

help blushing to think what absurd figures they cut in hurrying away from the Indians, one only of whom carried a long gun, that must have been a relic of the revolutionary days of the country.

“It seems to me,” said Harry to Ardara, “that we have tramped far enough to reach the Tapajos.”

“Listen !”

They bent their heads and were silent. Standing thus, they distinctly heard a dull roar that came to their ears, through the forest, as the moaning sea reaches the lost traveler who is wandering in the solitudes along the shore.

“You know what that is, do you not?” asked the guide.

“The rapids.”

“Yes, they are not far off ; we shall soon be there.”

This fact was inspiring to the boys, who walked faster than before, and within the next fifteen minutes they emerged from the dense woods and approached the camp of Captain Sprogell and his men.

CHAPTER XXIV.

PUSHING THROUGH THE RAPIDS.

CAPTAIN SPROGELL had not wasted his time while in camp. Early that morning the men were aroused, and the work of forcing the large canoe through the rapids was begun with energy and skill. They were fully needed, for in many places the torrent was so swift and violent that less experienced toilers would have been swept out of the way like so many playthings. More than once the large boat swung around like a top ; men were sent sprawling in the current, and rolled over and over as if they were so many cockle-shells caught in an eddy. Every one got a good ducking.

But it was fun for all that. They laughed and shouted and blew the water from their mouths and went at it again, until, when each

was pretty well used up, they reached the still water above, where they could spread their sail and be wafted forward on their voyage.

But Captain Sprogell pulled the boat up the bank, kindled a large camp-fire, where all could dry their clothing, cooked breakfast, and decided to wait where he was until the return of Ardara and the boys. These reached camp just as dinner was ready, they having partaken of a little food in the morning, before starting, as the others waited until the rapids should be passed.

The smell of the steaming chocolate and broiling fish would have sharpened the appetite of an epicure. There was an abundance of food, and the company enjoyed it as only those can who are accustomed to such an active outdoor life.

The captain had been visited by a couple of Indians, with whom he had a satisfactory interview. They departed, and shortly after dinner reappeared with eight other rubber gatherers, with whom a long "pow-wow" was held. They were given many presents, and went away promising to do every thing in their

power in the way of procuring raw rubber for the agent in Itaituba.

When Ardara's story was added to this, the captain expressed himself highly pleased. He declared that the expedition had already been more successful than either he or the projectors anticipated; and, if equally good fortune attended the voyage up the Amazon, all the crew would be sure to receive a substantial remembrance on their return to Para.

"How much further are we to ascend the Tapajos?" asked Ned Livingston, when the entire party were lolling in camp after dinner.

"I have not decided as yet what I shall do," replied the captain, "for a great deal will depend on circumstances."

"How far up the river can we go?"

"To the sources in the Arinos and Juruana, in about fifteen degrees south latitude."

The captain looked to Ardara, as if inviting him to speak, and the guide, who knew so much of his country, added, in his pleasant way:

"The Rio de la Plata takes its rise in the same place; you can throw a stone from one to

the other when there is a large rise of water ; but one goes north and the other south, and they reach the Atlantic at points on the coast more than three thousand miles apart."

"We have the same curious fact in our country," said Ned ; "the Columbia and the Missouri have their sources in the Rocky Mountains, almost side by side ; one winds along over prairie, through forest and mountain gorges, until it reaches the Gulf of Mexico ; while the other pours its current into the Pacific, the outlets being more than four thousand miles apart."

As a smart breeze was blowing, and the weather was delightful, the canoe was soon launched, the crew seated themselves, and the heavy craft moved along the stretch of still water at a rate that was the very poetry of motion.

"This won't last long," said Ardara, "so we may as well enjoy it while we have the chance. There are other rapids not far away, where plenty of hard work awaits us."

The guide was right, for the delightful sail was no more than fairly under way, when they

rounded a bend in the river and caught sight of the rapids above them. The water could be seen dashing over the rocks in foam, and running with great velocity. It looked impossible for a boat to force its way through them, but strong arms, well directed, can accomplish a great deal, and Captain Sprogell went at the task with his accustomed intelligence.

The cargo was removed and the men sprang out, with the single exception of Jack Blockley, who took the helm. He had proven himself much the best sailor in the party. A long rope extended to the shore, and the rest of the company, including the boys, caught hold of this and applied their united strength to pulling against the current. Several of the rear men were forced at times to wade through the water, and more than once they were thrown on their knees by the spiteful resistance of the almost unmanageable canoe.

It seemed again and again that they must fail. Pulling altogether they would drag the boat several feet, when a sudden plunge of the torrent would force it backward with such momentum that the toilers would be almost

flung on their back. Captain Sprogell was at the head, and he shouted "Yee-ho" and other encouraging cries, in a voice that was heard above the roar of the rapids.

Harry Norwood was thrown flat, but he held fast to the rope, and brought Pedro down on top of him. They instantly scrambled to their feet, and were at it again; the downward plunging of the canoe was checked, and in its "tug of war" with the men, it began slowly to yield.

Much credit was due Jack Blockley, who, though he had never been in this section, used the best judgment in guiding the boat into those passages which his experienced eye told him were less difficult to encounter.

Thus the cumbersome boat fought its way steadily upward, until once more the still water was reached, the cargo reloaded, the sail hoisted and all scrambled aboard. The same favoring breeze carried them slowly through the dark, clear waters, and, as the sun was sinking behind the western wilderness, they approached another series of rapids, of such a difficult character that it was clearly impossible to force the canoe through them.

What was to be done ?

These, in fact, were falls instead of rapids, and the only way to get the canoe above them was by land. Accordingly the cargo was taken out, and then the boat was pulled upon some poles stretched across the path. The ascent was steep, and the labor great ; but all worked with a will, and the task was done.

The crew had accomplished enough to entitle them to a good rest, and it was agreed that nothing more should be done until the morrow. The falls were hardly passed, when six Mundurucu Indians appeared, eager to offer their services in forcing the boat up stream. The perspiring crew only regretted that they had not put in an appearance an hour sooner, so as to relieve them of the exhausting labor. But, as there were other falls within half a mile, they were invited to come around in the morning and lend a hand. They promised to do so, and went away as happy as little children, over the few trinkets given them.

Abundance of fish were found in the Tapajos, and the supply of coffee and chocolate was

sufficient, so that the evening camp was of the most enjoyable character.

At this point the woods came close to the water, so there was little more than sufficient room for a comfortable camp ; but the remarkably fine weather continued, and the air was so mild that no one needed any covering.

"We are on pretty high land, too," said Ardara, "and you have nothing to fear from the night air. We are in a salubrious climate."

"How is it in the swamps where they gather rubber?"

Ardara shook his head.

"It is very sickly ; they have wasting fevers, and do not live long. Nowhere in the world can you find more horrible diseases than in Brazil ; we have thousands suffering from goitre in its most frightful form, and along the Amazon abounds a disease which, I have been told, is unknown in your country—that is leprosy."

"It is found to the north of us ; but I believe it is not met with in the United States," said Harry.

“Have we any thing to fear in the way of wild animals?” asked Ned, recalling their adventures of a few nights previous.

“Nothing that occurs to me ; there are not many in Brazil that need cause you any uneasiness.”

“How about the monkeys?” asked Harry.

“If any of them come prowling about the camp, kick them out,” replied Ardara, with a laugh ; “but they will not disturb you this evening ; they keep pretty closely to the woods.”

The fire was allowed to smolder, for the weather was too mild to need any additional heat, and the company stretched out near each other, tired and weary enough to sleep, if undisturbed, until the rising of the morrow’s sun.

The scene became solemn and impressive as the night advanced. The fire-light flickered against the tree trunks and branches; now and then a small fish leaped from the water, falling back again with a faint splash, the dull roar of the falls being faint enough to permit even this slight sound to be heard. In some portions of the forest the night is filled with the music of insect and animal life, but here a strange stillness

rests upon nature. The weird moths floated about the smoldering fire-light, many getting their wings scorched and falling among the embers. The stealthy tread of some animal might have been heard rustling over the leaves, but none of them came forth from the darkness.

Harry Norwood was sinking into the deep slumber which rested on the others, when he heard the most peculiar sound that had ever fallen upon his ears. It was a long tremulous whistle, as mournful as the cry of a person sinking in death. It was the note made by that wonderful soul-bird, which no one can hear without being strangely affected.

The boy listened, but it was not repeated, and finally his eyes closed and his senses left him.

He had slept perhaps an hour, when he awoke with a most singular sensation. At first he thought a gentle breeze was blowing through the camp, then it seemed as if some one was softly fanning his face. That passed, and then a peculiar discomfort was transferred to his right foot. He had removed his heavy boots, and was in his stocking-feet.

"I guess my foot is asleep," he thought, drawing up the right leg so as to test the muscles. As he did so, he became aware that something was clinging to it. He heard it flap, and, with a shudder, he rose to a sitting position, and gave his foot a vigorous kick. The same dull flapping was repeated, but whatever was clinging to it remained fast.

He knew it was not a serpent, and, reaching down, he caught hold of a flabby skinny object, which he jerked loose, and flung it so violently on the ground that it fluttered once or twice, and then lay dead.

"What in the name of the seven wonders can that be?" he muttered, springing up, and stirring the fire so that it gave out a bright glow, which showed the object distinctly.

It proved to be a hideous vampire-bat, which had fastened itself while he lay asleep, and was quietly sucking the blood from his limb.

This repulsive creature is as large as a magpie, and of a reddish brown color. It is known in zoology as the *Phyllostoma spectrum*, and, although fond of insects, seems still fonder of blood. In some parts of Brazil, it is impossible

to rear calves on account of these pests. It does not inflict any wound on a person, but draws the blood from the capillaries without causing pain. It has two large, projecting, approximate, upper incisors, and similar lancet-shaped canines, all sharp-pointed, and so arranged as to make a triple puncture like that of the leech. A more repulsive object, and a more disagreeable companion, it would be hard to imagine.

CHAPTER XXV.

STRANGE INDIANS.

DESPITE the disagreeable experience of Harry Norwood, he soon fell asleep again and did not open his eyes until the sun was shining, and others of the party were stirring.

When he told about the vampire, Ardara said they were not worth minding. He had often flung them from his body when he awoke in the night. It was remarked as curious that although Ned and several others had removed the outer coverings of their feet, they were not disturbed by any of the creatures.

A substantial meal was eaten, and the canoe was propelled up stream to the next series of rapids, through which it was dragged and forced as before. Then Captain Sprogell announced that they would ascend no further. They had reached a point beyond which the labor of forcing the boat was too great. The

falls and rapids came too close together, and it would have been easier to load themselves down with the luggage, and toil upward along the shore.

“We will go into camp,” said the captain, “and we may stay three or four days ; we will make excursions through the surrounding country among the Indians, and in that way will soon have our business known, and do as much as if we went up to the headwaters of the Tapajos.”

Such being the plan of the commander of the enterprise, it only remained to arrange the details.

It would have been poor policy for the party to go in company, as they would miss many of those whom they wished to meet. So it was arranged that the captain and Ardara should travel together, Pedro and Tomti were to take another direction, while Jack Blockley, Harry Norwood and Ned Livingston were to follow a third route, different from each of the others.

This insured three parties of exploration, so to speak. Each was to carry a considerable number of trinkets and presents, besides their

own weapons, and were to return to camp at the close of the second day. It was reasonable to believe that they would accomplish all that was hoped by that time, and then the return voyage down the Tapajos would begin.

As a matter of course, it was expected that the captain and Ardara would do most of the negotiating, for not only was the guide able to converse fluently in the lingua of the country, but it was the intention of himself and the captain to reach one of the Mundurucu villages, known to be less than ten miles distant from camp.

Pedro and Tomti were both intelligent, and, under ordinary circumstances, could make themselves understood by the natives of this section. There was reason to hope they would not return from a bootless errand.

Respecting Jack and the boys, much less was expected. They knew nothing of the language of the Indians, and would be obliged to depend upon gesture when they sought to express their sentiments ; but it was not to be supposed that they could content themselves in camp for two whole days while the others were

exploring the surrounding country. They were not asked to conduct any negotiations in rubber, but were to spend the time in sight-seeing and enjoying themselves after their own fancy.

Jack had a small pocket-compass which he always carried with him, and which had helped him out of many dangerous dilemmas. Knowing the exact course of the Tapajos, which is north-east, and, fully resolved not to penetrate the forests to any great distance, there was no cause for fearing that he and his friends would lose themselves.

The course taken by the party, whose strange fortunes it is my duty to chronicle, was south-east, and very nearly at right angles to the course of the river. The ground was comparatively dry, and it was their purpose to keep out of the swamps altogether. If they should strike them, they would return to the camp and take another route.

Jack Blockley took his bearings very carefully, called a good-by to his friends, and, an hour later, was well into the dense forest, among the climbing vines and super-abundant

vegetation, which more than once compelled them to change the course they had started upon. Still, the general direction was south-east, as they intended it should be. When suspicious they were astray, the sailor consulted the compass, and had no trouble in placing himself right.

They had brought some chocolate and coffee with them, but relied mainly on their guns to secure such food as they would need before returning to camp. It would seem that the last place where a person was likely to die with hunger would be in a South American forest, and yet hundreds have perished thus miserably.

“Halloo! here’s something unexpected!” called out Harry, whose impatience had placed him a little in advance of the others.

They saw what it was to which he referred without any word of explanation from him. He had stopped on the shore of a small lake, perhaps a hundred yards long, and one-third as wide. The water seemed to be very deep, and quite clear. Its source was a series of springs at the bottom, and its outlet was a

small, winding stream, that probably found its way to the Tapajos, as it ran in that direction.

When they placed their hands in it, the water was cold, but there was so much vegetable matter floating about that they feared to drink it, though they were quite thirsty.

“There’s something else too!” added Ned, pointing to the opposite side of the lake, where they were not a little astonished to observe a camp-fire burning, around which some eight or ten Indians were gathered, some smoking, some lolling on the ground, while two were busy preparing the mid-day meal.

“Let’s be sociable,” said Jack, starting around the lake to call on them. The boys followed, and the three had nearly reached the camp, when Jack suddenly paused.

“What’s the matter?” asked Ned.

“I never have seen any such Injuns as them, and I must say I don’t like their looks.”

“I don’t either,” whispered Harry; “let’s go back.”

They were on the point of retreating, when they saw it was too late.

CHAPTER XXVI.

HOWLY DAO, BRUDDER?

UP to the present time Harry Norwood and Ned Livingston had not come in contact with a hostile white man or Indian. There had not been so much as an unkind word said to them ; and now, when they discovered a party of red men encamped on the banks of the lake, near the head waters of the Tapajos, they were warranted in believing they were as friendly as those whom they had already encountered.

The boys, including their friend Jack Blockley, the sailor, therefore walked unhesitatingly toward the group, who were lolling on the ground, most of them smoking, while two were busy cooking some kind of meat over the fire.

The first thing that caused a misgiving in the mind of Jack Blockley was the appearance of the Indians. He scrutinized them as he

advanced, and noticed they were larger, and physically finer than any whom he had seen. All had long black hair, that dangled about their necks and shoulders; their ugly faces were tattooed with grotesque imitations of birds and reptiles, as were their breasts, that were bare to the waist. They wore a slouchy style of trowsers, descending a little below their knees, the feet being encased in strong moccasins, plentifully ornamented with beads. This constituted their dress, unless some bone ornaments on their wrists can be considered as part of their attire.

The sailor was still some distance away, when he observed, further, that they were armed with bows and arrows, and there was not a single firearm among them. Besides, several carried long slim reeds, whose use none of the whites suspected.

These signs convinced Jack Blockley that the red men were not those who dwell along the rivers, and hang on the outskirts of civilization. They were from the interior, and avoided all contact with white men. They had probably come down on some marauding

expedition, and were now spying through the country for some chance to steal or commit murder, without too much risk to themselves. Wherever they should find a party weaker than themselves, they would not hesitate to attack him, after which they would hurry back into the wilderness, where they would be secure against any who might pursue them.

When Jack noticed the fine, physical appearance of the Indians, their bows and arrows, their tattooed faces, and general strange character, he became suspicious, and felt he had been too hasty in approaching them.

He expressed his fears to his friends, and their answer showed they shared his misgivings. They were on the point of retreating, when two of the savages sprang up and walked toward them.

“Be on the watch,” said Jack; “don’t let them get hold of your guns.”

“Let’s fire on them, if they don’t keep their distance,” added Ned, trembling with excitement; “I tell you they are ugly fellows.”

He would have raised his piece, and leveled it at the nearest Indian, had not Jack ordered

him to conceal any suspicion he might feel of the strangers.

The two swarthy fellows had laid aside their weapons, and walked so directly up to the whites, smiling, at the same time, in such an effusive fashion, that Harry said :

“I believe they are friendly, after all ; but don’t forget to keep your powder dry.”

The warriors came forward, one of them slightly in advance of the other, both showing their white teeth. Almost at the same moment they extended their hands, and asked :

“Howly dao, brudder ?”

This friendly inquiry was repeated by both at the same moment, and, as may be supposed, astonished the whites, who might well wonder where so much, or rather little, English had been learned by these people, who had spent their lives in the depths of the Brazilian wilderness.

Jack Blockley and Harry Norwood crossed palms with the swarthy strangers, whom they still eyed with suspicion, and the sailor answered :

“We are well—how are you ?”

The reply to this was a jumble of gibberish, in which not one of the whites could recognize any resemblance to an English word. The broken query given, undoubtedly included the entire knowledge the Indians possessed of the tongue of the strangers.

However, what was wanting in the way of words was more than supplied by gesture. There could be no mistaking their anxiety to have the whites go forward and join their camp, and, while our friends much preferred to decline, they doubted the prudence of doing so.

“I wouldn’t go,” protested Ned ; “we’ve got our guns, and they have nothing but their bows and arrows ; we are more than equal to them, and have a better chance by keeping away from them.”

“If they see we suspect them, they will be apt to attack us,” said Hary ; “it’s best to disarm them by kindness.”

“It’s too late to turn back,” added Jack ; “we’ll go on, and act as though it is all right, but will keep our eyes open.”

It was rather curious that in this crisis Ned Livingston, the youngest member of the party,

showed more wisdom than the others; but, seeing that he was "out-voted," and no time was left for discussion, he went forward with them.

The other Indians had risen to their feet, and were looking at the whites with no little curiosity. Ned Livingston counted them over several times, during the few seconds occupied in approaching them. There were just nine, and unquestionably they formed a fine group of savages, who would prove themselves dangerous antagonists in an attack or repulse.

"They have bows and arrows and we have guns," reflected Ned, his heart heavy with misgiving; "and in colonial times, one Englishman with his musket was considered the equal of six Indians with bows and arrows. Figuring things out by that rule, we ought to be able to hold our own against twice as many as are in this camp; but it will be different when we allow them to surround us; then every advantage will be on *their* side.

CHAPTER XXVII.

JACK AS A MUSICIAN.

HAVING accepted the invitation of the two Indians, it was clearly the part of wisdom to lay aside all appearance of distrust. This impressed itself on Ned as much as upon the others. Accordingly, all three walked forward with every appearance of pleasure, and shook hands with the entire party. At the same time, while the right hand was thus employed the left held fast to the loaded gun.

The cooks of the party had just finished dressing the bodies of three birds, about the size of mallard ducks. They were cooked well, indeed, having been suspended over the coals on skewers of green wood until they were browned to a turn.

It lacked considerable of noon ; but when the Indians invited the boys to partake, they did so with a good appetite. The savages each carried

a keen knife with a horn handle. With these they cut such portions as they wished from the fowls, using no other implement with which to handle the food. When they were through they wiped their greasy hands on their hair, as many a white person in our country does to-day; then each one plucked a large leaf from the branches near at hand, deftly folded it so that it would hold a gill of water, dipped it in the lake and quenched his thirst.

“That is ingenious,” said Harry.

“And easy, too; I’ve done it many a time.”

Jack proved his dexterity by imitating the Indians with fully equal skill, the boys slaking their thirst from the same cup. The Indians having drank the water, the others could feel no misgivings as to any noxious element it might contain.

It was a hard task for the three to keep their guns within immediate reach, and at the same time avoid the appearance of distrusting the savages. They did succeed in the first respect, but whether in the second remained to be seen.

About the only consolation in the peculiar situation of our friends, lay in the fact that

they could talk freely with each other without their meaning being known to the others. Jack had loosened the small pack on his back as he advanced, and it was now on the ground beside him.

“They have been looking at that a good deal of the time,” said Ned, “and I’m sure are curious to know what it contains.”

“I’ve noticed them,” said Jack; “if it was only a bomb-shell we could touch off I would let them set fire to it. I don’t believe these fellows are in the rubber business, and it wont pay to try and hire them to begin. There ain’t any way of making them understand our propositions, and we couldn’t depend on their carrying out their part of it if they did. Captain Sprogell won’t consider our negotiations of much account.”

“It may win their good will to make them presents,” said Harry, “and I am in favor of getting out of here as soon as we can.”

While conversing the three were sitting apart, close to the lake, while the savages were still grouped about the camp fire, most of them smoking their pipes. There could be no

doubt, from their looks and manner, that they were talking about their visitors, and doubtless discussing some scheme concerning them.

“We speak as though it is a proven fact that they are enemies,” said Harry, “when it may be we are off altogether, as we were yesterday when those rubber gatherers were trying to talk with us. We can soon learn how the case stands by making a start to leave them.”

“Let’s do it,” exclaimed Ned, springing to his feet and starting along the edge of the lake at a rapid pace.

The essay settled the question more speedily than any of the party anticipated.

Ned had not taken five steps, when a brawny Indian leaped directly in front, and motioned him back with vigorous gesture, and still more vigorous though less comprehensible words.

Ned, who was quick tempered, stopped abruptly and his face reddened with anger.

“Get out of my path,” he shouted, “or I will shoot you !”

He drew his gun part way to his shoulder, when Harry sprang forward and caught his arm,

“Are you crazy, Ned?” he demanded; “if you harm him we will be massacred the next minute.”

“We’ve got to make a fight for it, and we may as well do so now as after a half hour.

The others moved slightly forward and fixed their eyes on the boys with an expression of the deepest interest. Jack Blockley, as a matter of course, was no less moved.

“Harry is right,” he said to his friend; “come back here and see how *I* will manage them.”

This was said in such a self-confident tone, that both moved over to the sailor. He stood by his bundle of trinkets, and now stooped down and began untying the rubber sack in which they were wrapped.

This action made him the center of interest and the rest of the party crowded around him, the Indians showing as much pleasure in the gew-gaws, as if they were so many toddling children.

Jack Blockley now displayed a readiness of resource that did him great credit. While his fingers were dallying with the fastenings of

the bundle, he looked up in the faces of the the savages, who were watching his actions. He began speaking, his manner and looks leading all to believe he was addressing his words to those who could not catch the meaning of a single syllable.

The truth was the sailor was speaking to the boys, although he never glanced at them. He was in earnest, and these were his words.

“It’s no use, boys ; these Injuns are hostile, and, if we don’t get away pretty soon, we shall have the hottest kind of fight, and then may make a failure. Listen to what I say : Don’t answer me, and do just what I tell you. When I get these trinkets out, they will become so charmed with ’em they won’t know any thing else and won’t see any thing else for a few minutes. When I spread these on the ground and they gather round, you must slip away.”

It was on the tip of Harry’s tongue to declare that they would not desert him in his extremity, as he proposed, when Jack, suspecting their thoughts, added :

“It’s the only chance we have ; I’ll try and follow you as soon as the way opens, and you

can help me more if you are off at a little distance than if we are all surrounded."

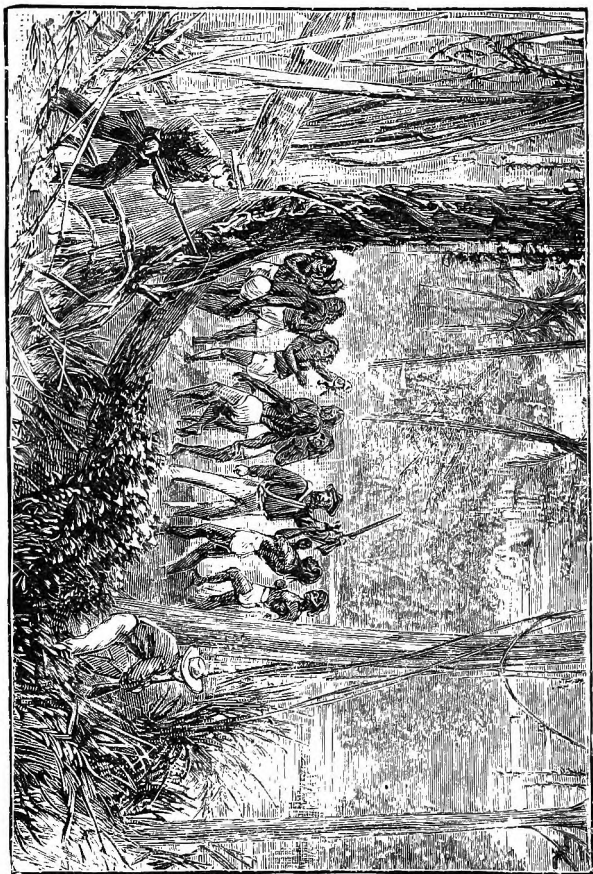
This settled the matter, so far as the boys were concerned, and Harry whispered to Ned :

"It's the right plan ; we'll do it."

At that moment the bundle was unfastened, and its wealth of contents was outspread before the eyes of the Indians. They stood one instant as if transfixed, then a general "Wa-oo-ah !" expressive of unbounded wonder, escaped their lips, and they stooped over and feasted their vision on the ravishing treasures.

There were gaudy beads, crimson daubs of cheap prints, hand-mirrors, toys, and a small mouth-organ. There were enough of the red-hued prints to go around, and Jack Blockley immediately distributed them among the savages, who, of course, were delighted.

When they had inspected them a brief while, he set them frantic by the display of a toy, such as every reader of this has seen many a time. It was a wooden man, with joints at the knees, hips, elbows and neck. Its face was black, and the eyes and enormous mouth were well painted. Down the back ran a string,



JACK DISPLAYS HIS TOYS.

which, being jerked by the sailor, the legs and arms immediately flew out and up and down in the most ridiculous fashion.

The spectators broke into uproarious laughter. One of them was so overcome with mirth he dropped on the ground and rolled over, with his legs kicking the air. Several others looked as if they were on the point of choking to death.

Jack kept the show going several minutes, and then supplied each one with a similar image. Then the fun became furious. Instantly every red man was yanking the string so vigorously that the legs and arms threatened to fly off altogether. Several broke the strings, but were supplied with new toys, and straightway became more careful of their prizes.

Like children again, they had enjoyed this toy only a few minutes when they ceased, and crowded forward to inspect the other wonders. The sailor handed out the beads and trinkets, and then picked up the mouth-organ. He regretted that Captain Sprogell had given him but a single one, but he made the best use of it.

When every black eye was fixed on him, Jack put the instrument between his lips and began blowing. He was unable to attain the slightest resemblance to a tune, but that was immaterial, as his audience would not have appreciated the skill had it been displayed. All that they wanted was the musical noise, as it may be called.

They were given plenty of that, the sailor blowing until his cheeks bulged and his eyes seemed to protude from his head.

The scene that followed was the most ludicrous of all. The savages stood as if entranced for several minutes, and then began dancing with uncontrollable delight. They leaped into the air, clapped their hands, and capered like so many madmen. They whooped and shouted and bumped against each other, they laughed and yelled and ran back and forth, with their eyes fastened on the man who was furnishing all this wonderful amusement, as though they considered him something more than mortal.

Jack Blockley puffed and blew, until the wonder was how he could keep it up so long. The toe of his right foot kept empathic time

with his locomotive-like blasts on the musical instrument, and, had he been able to laugh and play at the same time, his mirth would have been as overflowing as that of the Indians around him.

But there was a serious side to all this ; and, while Jack was playing the organ to the highest pitch, he was busy debating with himself what was best to do.

Harry and Ned were not in sight ; they had taken his advice, and quietly withdrew while the red men were pre-occupied with their own entertainment. The sailor saw that he was not likely to have a better chance to follow them than the present. He determined to do so.

Suddenly he stopped his music, and handed the organ to one of the red men who stood near him. The savage took it rather gingerly, but put it in his mouth and gave a blast. The jingling notes that followed filled his soul with ecstasy, and he struck in with more fury than the owner of the instrument had shown.

Jack, holding his rifle in his left hand, began dancing with the rest. He executed the "Sailor's Hornpipe" with no little skill, but,

while doing so, began edging away from the rest, who paid little heed to his movements.

When the seaman found himself on the outer verge of the circle, he suddenly wheeled and made a break for the woods.

He had gained a fair start and the way seemed clear, when, to his surprise, one of the Indians, who was further from the camp-fire than himself, sprang in front of him, and raised his hand as a signal for him to stop. The natives had all thrown down their weapons while dancing, so this one was unarmed.

“ Jack Blockley don’t propose to stay in this company any longer,” muttered the sailor, delivering a blow with his fist straight in the face of the savage, that sent him sprawling on his back. Leaping over his prostrate and somewhat demoralized enemy, Jack made for the wood with all the speed at his command.

A sailor, as a rule, is not fleet of foot, and Jack was no exception to the rule. Both the boys could easily outrun him, and in a contest simply of speed with these denizens of the woods, it will be readily understood that he was no match for them,

No one could have been more convinced of the fact than Jack himself ; but while it may have caused him some misgiving it did not lessen his determination, now that he had started, never to allow himself to be taken prisoner by these dusky wretches, who unquestionably meant ill to him and the boys.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A BREAK FOR LIBERTY.

IN the mean time, Harry Norwood and Ned Livingston had made the best possible use of the diversion created in their favor by the ingenuity of Jack Blockley.

At the opportune moment they withdrew, unnoticed, from the Indian party, and reached the shelter of the wood without attracting attention to themselves. They were still hurrying along, when Harry suddenly stopped, with the abrupt question :

“ What are we doing, Ned ? ”

“ Trying to get away from the Indians.”

“ And leaving Jack alone ; he will not have the ghost of a chance ; it will never do.”

“ Of course it won't ; we go no further until he joins us. It is no use of talking, Harry ; there's got to be a fight and we are in the best situation to make it now.”

“I agree with you ; we’ll walk back to where we can have a good view of every thing that’s going on, and be ready to help Jack the minute it is necessary.”

This resolution was carried out, even though they knew it was against the wishes of the individual concerned. The boys came back to the edge of the wood, and each stationed himself behind the trunk of a tree with his loaded rifle in hand, and intently watched the proceedings.

Harry Norwood counted it an odd circumstance that the shelter selected by him happened to be a rubber tree, and, furthermore, it had been tapped in several places. The little cup was plastered with clay just above his head, and the milky fluid, slowly dropping into the receptacle, had filled it about half full.

This proved that the rubber gatherers were near, and awakened a hope that they might give some help in extricating the party from its danger. But there were no signs of such assistance, and they could not wait. The caoutchouc tree is generally slender, so that Harry found

it impossible to hide his entire body ; but he did not care to do so, as he felt less fear of the bows and arrows than he really ought to have felt.

Ned was better protected, and from their position they viewed the performances that we have already described. The sight of the dusky simpletons playing antics with the jumping-jacks, and dancing grotesquely to the music of the mouth-organ, made the boys laugh in spite of themselves.

“Did you ever see any thing so ridiculous ?” asked Ned.

“It’s ahead of any thing I ever heard of.”

“Look at Jack’s cheeks ; they are swelled out so that his face looks like a pumpkin.”

“And his eyes are bulging from his head ; he has had to shove his hat off his forehead, so as to give them room.”

When the sailor “took the floor,” and began disporting himself in the same outlandish fashion, the lads stopped laughing, for they suspected what it meant. Jack was not doing it for the fun of the thing.

The youths were not surprised, therefore,

when their friend made his sudden break for freedom, and the overturning of the Indian who threw himself across the path, followed as a matter of course.

Just as Jack reached the wood, Harry shouted :

“Keep cool ; we are here.”

The fugitive glanced around, and catching sight of his young friends, called back :

“Why didn’t you do as I told you ? We mustn’t wait here ; come on !”

And he resumed his flight with the same impetuosity as before. The boys could do nothing less than imitate him, and immediately all three were tearing through the forest with the utmost strength at their command.

The Indians recovered from the delirium caused by the music much sooner than would have been supposed. The sight of the warrior as he went over on his back, with his legs pointing upward, was due notice that all sport was ended and the serious business had begun.

The Indians were ugly customers, who meant to slay every one of the three, even after receiving such choice presents from them.

They immediately scattered, caught up their bows and arrows, and made ready to pursue the fugitives. Three had the long hollow reeds already referred to, in addition to their bows, and these were also seized with equal eagerness.

These were the reeds of which all my readers have heard, as being used by some Indian tribes in South America. The savages blow with great force in one end, and drive out a long, thin arrow, that will go a good distance, with the accuracy of a rifle ball.

These, of themselves, would not be so dangerous but for the fact that the Indians frequently use poisoned missiles, that have only to puncture the skin to cause death as quickly as does the bite of the cobra of India.

They sometimes used poisoned arrows with their bows, but did not in the present instance. It was only the reeds that carried such terrible missiles.

Within a half minute after Jack Blockley bounded off, the eight Indians (it took the one on the ground a little time to shake himself together), were in pursuit of the three fugitives,

whose speed through the tangled forest was scarcely half as great as that of the savage enemies.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A FORLORN REFUGE.

AS I have stated, there are many places in the South American forests where the trees stand so near together, and the vines are so closely matted, that it is almost impossible to make one's way between and through them. Those who do attempt it are obliged to cut paths, and progress is as slow as it is laborious.

The wilderness through which Jack Blockley, Harry Norwood, and Ned Livingston were fleeing for life, was not so interwoven with running vines as to impede them to the extent named, but it caused much trouble all the same.

The sailor had not gone far when he caught his foot, and went sprawling on his hands and knees. He was up again the next moment, and Harry caught a vine under his chin, that almost lifted him off of his feet. Nevertheless

they struggled on, and progressed better than they would have believed possible.

The Indians gained rapidly, for they were accustomed to such traveling, besides being much fleeter of foot. At the moment of starting, they launched a shower of arrows, that whizzed all around the heads of the three, without injuring them. To show how providential seeming misfortunes are, it may be stated, that at the instant Jack fell prostrate, a well-aimed missile flashed over his head, his fall saving him from being struck.

The circumstances being as they are, it will be seen that there could be but one termination to the chase; the Indians must overtake the fugitives before they could penetrate a furlong into the woods. Was it wise, therefore, to flee, when they might throw themselves behind the trees, and fight on something like equal terms?

All three must have been considering the question, for nothing was more natural, when running with a speed which could not compare with that of their pursuers.

“I’m not going to tire myself to death, when

there's no chance of making any thing by it!" exclaimed Ned, pausing and bringing his gun to his shoulder.

Neither Jack nor Harry objected this time, for they felt the necessity that was upon them: it was to kill those who were seeking their lives, or submit to losing their own.

Ned had scarcely brought his gun to his shoulder, when he pulled trigger. His excitement and severe exertion led him to fire sooner than was intended, and he did not kill the savage, who was in the act of drawing his bow to launch an arrow after him.

But he struck him, nevertheless, the bullet entering his shoulder, and inflicting a bad wound. The savage uttered an ear-splitting screech, sprang several feet in air, and, dropping his bow, ran like a deer directly back among his companions.

"We must aim better than that," said Jack, who stood behind a tree, carefully selecting his victim; "it isn't enough to wound the lubbers; you must wipe 'em out altogether."

The sailor was as cool as when standing on the deck of the *Robinson Crusoe*; Ned was

hardly less self-possessed, and was hurriedly reloading his gun, while Harry was also hastily deciding which was the proper target for him, when, to their consternation, they heard a cry directly behind them.

“They have surrounded us!” shouted Harry; “look out that you are not shot in the back!”

For one instant there was danger that the three would be thrown into a panic, which could not but have been fatal; but Harry, who had been so quick to detect the peril, instantly saw his mistake as to the meaning of the cry.

It was not made by an enemy, but by a friend, in the person of a rubber gatherer, who had become aware of the presence of the hostiles, and who dreaded them as much as did the whites. His hut was close at hand, and his cry was intended to make known the refuge that was at the command of the hard-pressed fugitives.

When the latter glanced in the direction whence came the sound, they caught sight of the rubber gatherer, leaping about, and making frantic gestures. A portion of these con-

sisted of pointing his finger at some spot further in the woods, as if he wished to direct their attention to it.

There was so much force in this sign language, that all three caught his meaning at once. Following the direction indicated, they saw the outlines of a tumble-down hut, that was undoubtedly his home.

“That’s the place for us!” shouted Harry.

“And now’s the time to make a dash for it!”

“Here we go, then!” added Jack, who saw that no more opportune moment could come than that in which the Indians were thrown into momentary confusion by the shot of Ned.

The words were yet in the mouths of the three, when all were tumbling, scrambling, running, and fighting their way through the tangled undergrowth, like fugitives who knew their lives hung on the passing of a few seconds.

The Indians recovered quicker than would be supposed, and were in pursuit almost instantly.

The rubber gatherer, who was a Mundurucu,

screeched with delight when he saw he was understood, and, placing himself in advance, danced and ran, and beckoned the others to hasten, an unnecessary appeal, since they were doing the utmost they could do in that line.

Fortunately, the distance was short, and, within a very few minutes, Harry Norwood went stumbling through the open door, closely followed by Ned, while Jack brought up the rear, the Mundurucu having preceded them to this place of safety.

The instant all were within, the owner of the hut hastily shut the door and fastened it by means of a heavy bar, stretched across. There was but the single room, and the only windows were two, that were simply openings cut in the logs, through which sunlight or rain could come at will.

A more forlorn refuge it would be impossible to conceive, and yet no king ever entered his own palace with more joyousness and hope than did the three fugitives rush into this shelter in the Brazilian woods.

CHAPTER XXX.

BESIEGED.

AS this structure was supposed to be the home of the rubber-gatherer, Jack and the boys naturally expected to find his family within. It was fortunate, therefore, that no women or children were visible, for they could have been no more than incumbrances in the crisis that was at hand.

The expectation was that the Indians who had shown so much fury in attacking and following up the whites, would make a rush into the cabin. The rubber-gatherer placed himself beside the door, in position to bring down the long-handled hatchet that he caught up the instant he fastened themselves within. He had no fire-arm, but the weapon would have been a formidable one in his hands, in case the rush should come.

He gesticulated and chattered, and pointed to the open spaces ; but the instant he saw them guarded, he nodded his head, with such an appearance of satisfaction, that there could be no doubt of his meaning.

The assailants, however, were too prudent to charge upon the defenders, when they knew such an advantage was on the side of the latter, who had guns with which to defend themselves. While their fierceness was not diminished in the least, yet they knew too well the effectiveness of gunpowder and ball to place themselves in such peril as a rush was certain to bring.

When several minutes had passed, without a single Indian showing himself, the whites understood the cause of the hesitancy.

“Your shot did much good,” said Harry to his friend, “even though you managed to wound him only, for you see the others are afraid to show themselves.”

“They’re out there, all the same,” remarked Jack Blockley, “You can see the scamps dodging among the trees, and they’ll fire at us when they get the chance.

“But their bows and arrows ain’t half as good as our guns,” said Harry, peeping cautiously through the window, as though looking for a chance to send a shot after the dusky enemies.

“Don’t you think so, my boy ;” said Jack ; “I’ve seen the negroes of Africa and the Pacific Islands throw their spears and shoot their arrows with as much effect as you can use your guns.”

“Of course, it won’t be pleasant—”

At that instant, Harry jerked back his head with a gasp. Something like the shadow of a bird flitted before his eyes, and a dull “*zip*” was heard by all. On the opposite side of the room was seen an arrow sticking in the logs, with a feathered barb pointing toward the opening at the side of young Norwood. It had come through, and had been aimed at the face of the boy, missing its mark by the narrowest line conceivable.

“My gracious,” said he ; “I felt that touch my cheek ; it couldn’t come any closer without doing damage.”

As it was, he rubbed his hand against his face expecting to see blood on it.

“That would have been just as good as a rifle ball had it struck you,” said Jack ; “you can tell from the way that iron head is buried in the wood over there.”

As may well be supposed, the defenders took good care to guard against similar peril, from their vigilant enemies on the outside. In fact it was impossible to be too careful in watching every point.

The rubber-gatherer, as I have stated, was a Mundurucu, who had appeared so opportunely for the whites. The assailants belonged to one of the interior tribes, and were as eager to kill a member of their own race as they were to slay the Caucasians.

The fellow showed how great was his terror and haste by the figure he cut, when he turned about after fastening the door. His hat was gone, and he was without clothing above his waist, and with very little below. He had on one rubber shoe, while the other foot was uncovered. The mud and water had splashed all over him, and his face was of an ashen hue.

He was able to make his meaning known in most instances, by gesture, inasmuch as he had

little to say, and that was always of such an important nature that it seemed to speak for itself.

When further time had passed without anything being heard from the assailants, and, when the cautious peeps from within showed only partial glimpses of them, the three friends dared converse without restraint.

“Well,” said Jack Blockley, with the nearest approach to a laugh that any one had shown, since entering the hut, “I wonder whether Captain Sprogell and the rest have done as well as we in opening up the rubber trade with the Injuns.”

“I don’t see how they could have done worse ; they have got us hemmed in, without any chance of getting out until they are ready to let us out.”

And Harry Norwood shook his head in a disconsolate way, as though he saw little hope for himself and companions.

“What do you suppose they mean to do?” asked Ned of the sailor, whose glimpses of savage life in other parts of the world seemed to give him the right to speak with authority.

"My belief is that they intend to hold us here until we must give up and fall into their power without any danger to them."

"What do you mean, Harry?"

"Why don't you see it will never do for one of us to show his head so long as they keep such a watch on us? Well, suppose they just stay where they are for several days, won't we have to give up because we have neither food nor water?"

Harry had referred to a terrible probability that the others knew was before them. It required but a glance around the small apartment that was flooded with sunshine, despite the wood that grew so close at hand, to discover there was not a particle of food nor a drop of water within reach.

How long could four men hold out against more than double their number, when the latter had thirst and hunger as their allies?

This was a serious question, indeed, to which all were forced to give much the same answer. In such a warm climate, thirst is the most fearful enemy that confronts man.

"But it seems to me," said Ned, "that Cap-

tain Sprogell will miss us before many hours, and will set out to hunt for us."

"How can he tell where we are?"

"He can track us through the forest, can't he?"

"He has Ardara with him," said Jack, "and he is the smartest chap I ever saw. The North American Indians will trail a man for miles through the woods and over the prairies; but I don't believe it can be done in this country, 'cause the bushes and vines are so thick and close they shut in behind you after you have passed."

"That may all be," replied Ned, "but it ought not to be hard to follow the trail made by three persons traveling as we did; but I can see there isn't much chance there. Captain Sprogell will conclude that, if we don't know enough to take care of ourselves we must get along without help from him."

"It isn't that exactly," observed Harry, who seemed to take a reasonable view of the situation, "but it is the fact that no one of his company—not even Ardara—is likely to suspect the dreadful scrape in which we are caught.

Although these savages come at times from somewhere in the backwoods and kill all they can, yet, as I have understood from Ardara, it is done so rarely that it is not reckoned among the ordinary dangers of hunting. There is twice as much to fear from the serpents and wild animals, and you know that, short as is the time we have spent here, we hardly think about them."

"I believe you are right," added Ned, while Jack signified that he agreed with them. "There isn't one of the party who will dream we are shut up in a hut by a lot of savages from the interior of the country."

"Consequently we shall have to fight it out with no help but from heaven."

"That's it exactly," observed Jack; "it would be a handy thing if we could talk with this chap here who has done us such a good turn, for we might fix up some plan between us; but he only talks with his hands and feet and I don't understand that language."

"The only hope I see," added Harry, who occasionally peeped through the opening, and then turned to speak, "is that these Indians

won't keep up the siege for three or four days. They must soon find they can't take us without a long wait, and they will conclude that will hardly pay."

"I don't know about that," replied Ned, with a shake of his head ; "some of the mission houses in Texas were besieged by the Comanches and Apaches for more than six months. There is a statement that one of them, within a few miles of San Antonio, kept the Indians at bay for a year and a half."

"When was that?"

"More than a century ago."

"Well, this siege won't be quite as long as that—"

This time it was Ned Livingston who started as something whisked by the face. Every eye was fixed on the opposite side the room where, as before, an arrow was buried fully an inch in the hard wood.

This arrow, however, was without any barb, being a long, smooth reed, with a sharp point, and without any projection at the sides near the head, as is seen in the spear and ordinary arrow.

“Ah! that explains it,” exclaimed Harry Norwood; “those are the missiles which they blow through the hollow reeds that we noticed.”

“Of course, we knew that; and you can see they are driven with a good deal of force from the way that is sunk in the wood.”

The rubber gatherer had turned like a flash from watching, when he heard the dull *zip* of the missile, and he now seemed impressed by something, for he uttered several exclamations and then began some grotesque gesticulations. Ordinarily, he would have compelled the others to laugh, but he was too deeply in earnest for them to smile over his actions.

But, anxious as all were to understand him, not one of three could fix upon his meaning. They watched him, and then shook their heads, to signify they were all at sea as concerned what he wished to make known to them.

The Mundurucu now reached up to draw out the arrow, that had entered the window but a minute before.

It required considerable effort to do so, and the others wondered at the power with which

the South American Indians use the blow-gun.

As soon as the Mundurucu had freed the missile from the log, he held the point toward the whites, and chattered with more impetuosity, if possible, than before.

“What can he be driving at?” asked Ned.

“He’s trying to show us the *p’int* of the bus’ness,” said Jack, with a grin.

The Indian held his finger on the sharp tip of the arrow a moment, then jerked it away as though he was hurt. This he repeated several times, and then held up the point before the eyes of the others.

“He means it is very sharp,” said Ned; “but we can see that without his going to the trouble to explain.”

Harry Norwood took the missile in his hand and carefully examined it. On the point he noticed something that looked like dried mucilage, except it was of a yellow color.

Suddenly the boy’s eyes expanded.

“I know what he means; the *tip of the arrow is poisoned!*”

“That’s it, sure enough,” added Jack; “he’s been trying to make us understand there

is more danger from these arrers than from them that they fire with their bows.”

“Do you know any thing about them?” asked Ned of the sailor.

“I’ve seen the same things in the South Sea Islands, and they make the p’intz so p’isoned that it’s all day with a chap if he gets his hide pricked by one of ’em.”

At this juncture the Mundurucu placed his hand on the gun of Ned, asking, by his gestures and manner, the privilege of holding it in his grasp for a minute. Permission to do so, was readily granted.

CHAPTER XXXI.

POISONED ARROWS.

IT was evident at once, to all three, that this was not the first time the Mundurucu had held a rifle in his hand. He examined the lock, ornaments, and points of the weapon, in the style of a veteran hunter, his dusky face showing he was pleased with the piece, that was certainly a beautiful one.

Suddenly he stepped to the opening through which the poisoned missile had come, and peered cautiously out.

"He's going to try your gun," said Harry.

"He's welcome to try it all he wants to, provided he doesn't throw any shots away."

"He's an old hand at the bus'ness," said Jack; "when he pulls the trigger, it's more than likely something 'll drop."

"Sh! he's caught sight of one of them?"

Just then the Mundurucu brought the gun to his shoulder and pointed the muzzle through the window. Harry Norwood happened to stand almost in a line with him, and, bending slightly forward, he was able to look over his shoulder and catch sight of his target.

There could be no mistaking what it was. An Indian, grown reckless by his immunity from danger, was standing beside the trunk of a large tree, in such a position that his body was not screened. He was looking intently toward the hut, and held a long reed in his hand, his fingers grasping the end nearest him in a way that showed he was also keeping the poisoned arrow in place, ready to raise the gun to his mouth, and blow the missile at the mark, the very second the chance should present itself.

There were signs of the other Indians, but they kept themselves well concealed. The one with the blow-gun was not a hundred feet distant.

“The rubber gatherer couldn’t have a better chance.”

Harry had got thus far in his remark, when the trigger was pulled. The flash and report

were accompanied by the screech of the savage, who leaped high in the air and fell prostrate, killed instantly by the bullet of the Mundurucu.

The latter was so exultant over his success that he placed his face close to the opening and emitted a peculiar yell, expressive of his feelings. Then he stepped back with a grin that spoke eloquently of his delight.

“It’s a bad thing to kill a man,” said Harry, with a shudder; “but it isn’t so bad as being killed by him. Those savages are determined to slay every one of us. The sooner we can convince them that it is too dangerous a sport to follow up, the more lives will there be saved.”

“There ain’t any doubt of that, even if we have to shoot ’em all to do it,” added Jack Blockley.

The shot of the Mundurucu spread consternation, for the moment, among the savages on the outside. Had it been followed up by the discharge of the other two guns, with equal or partial effect, there can be little doubt that the whole party would have withdrawn, but the

whites could hardly be expected to understand the peculiar turn of affairs, and they held the arrows and poisoned missiles in too great terror to run any more risk than was necessary.

The failure of the defenders to follow up their advantage gave the assailants time to rally, so to speak. In the first place, they were incited by a native viciousness, which had led them to shed blood without provocation ; *now* they had the strongest incentive of all—revenge—to incite them. One of their number had been killed, and another wounded ; there was reason to believe the savages could overcome the offenders by bravery and patience.

Thus it was, that, when half an hour went by, and the defenders peeped forth, they saw that the cabin was surrounded by the savages, who now and then sent an arrow through the windows, as if to apprise the whites that their enemies were vigilant.

“I don’t know as I would feel very thirsty if we were tramping through the woods,” said Harry Norwood, with a grim smile ; “but now that no water can be had, it seems to me I never wanted it so bad in all my life.”

"I feel the same way," added Ned. "I'm a little hungry, too ; but I can stand that better than the thirst."

"Don't talk about thirst," interposed Jack Blockley ; "no boys like you ever understood what thirst is. Wait till you have been adrift in an open boat, as I have, with half a dozen others, under a blistering sun, that just peeled the skin off your faces ; wait till you have stood that for four days, and seen the men drink the sea-water, go crazy, and jump overboard ; wait till you have chawed up all the pewter buttons on your clothes, till your mouth got as dry as a pine stick, and you couldn't taste the difference between a bit of 'backer and a ham-sandwich ; till your head was ringin' and lights dancin' afore your eyes, and you seen fountains and waterfalls just beyond your reach all the time ; wait till you've had some 'sperience like that afore you talk 'bout being thirsty."

Meanwhile, Ned Livingston was busy reloading his gun. He did it deliberately and carefully, for the ammunition was too precious for any to be thrown away.

All the time the Mundurucu stood looking

so wistfully at the boy, that the latter once more handed the weapon to him.

“ You did so well before that you can try it again.”

The Indian eagerly took the rifle, and went to the opening, his enthusiasm leading him to be more reckless than was prudent.

The savages on the outside had not lost the lesson of the shot a short time before, and were more guarded. The Mundurucu peered through, and began pushing his head and shoulders forward in a dangerous manner.

Harry was about to reach out and draw him back, when the three heard a slight rustle of the leaves, and, looking up in the branches of a tree close at hand, saw the outlines of an Indian among the limbs.

At the same moment they also observed he had one of the reeds to his lips. The next instant was heard the dull “ *whisht!* ” made by the expulsion of the arrow, which darted through the opening and buried itself in the shoulder of the unsuspecting Mundurucu.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE LAST CHANCE.

THE whole thing was done so quickly that not the slightest precaution could be taken against it. At the very instant Harry Norwood caught a glimpse of the Indian in the branches of the tree, the blow-gun was placed at his lips, and the poisoned arrow entered the window like a flash of lightning.

The rubber gatherer never suspected his danger until the pointed missile was buried in his shoulder. Then, with a muttered exclamation, he recoiled a couple of steps, reached up his hand and drew out the weapon. He coolly looked at the bloody point a moment, flung it aside, and then deliberately stretched out upon the ground, as though about to enjoy a quiet sleep.

A half hour later he was dead.

Jack Blockley saw the missile wound their

friend, but was not stricken speechless for the moment, as the boys were by the occurrence. He sprang across the floor, and, catching sight of the dark figure among the branches, striving to conceal itself, fired directly at it. The savage was hit fairly, and was dead long before the victim of his treacherous shot.

The boys were terrified, and gained a more impressive idea of the frightful results of man's unreasoning hatred than they had ever known before. They had been thrown into the company of the rubber gatherer by an extraordinary combination of circumstances. Not one intelligible word had passed between them, and yet he had proved himself a friend in need.

They felt strong gratitude toward him, and there was nothing which they would not have been eager to do that could help him in his dire extremity, but, alas ! they were powerless, and he expired before their eyes, fortunately, with little evidence of suffering. He seemed to sink into a stupor, in which he quietly passed away, without a struggle or a murmur.

"Poor fellow," murmured Ned, looking down on the inanimate form ; " he may have

a wife and children, and they shall never see him again.”

“Let us hope that in the great hereafter they will be united ; God’s ways are not our ways,” said Harry.

“I once read in the Bible that He doeth all things well,” added Jack Blockley ; “and I have found out that truer words were never spoke. I’ve thought things were pretty rough with me more than once, but I can see now that every thing was ordered for the best.”

“I wish we could give him burial, but that is out of the question,” remarked Harry.

“What difference does it make where he lies?” asked Ned. “At the Last Great Day, he will hear the trumpet sound as well from this humble cabin as though he lay in Westminster or Greenwood, with a magnificent monument over him.”

“It strikes me,” said Jack, “that this is the best place for him, though he isn’t the most pleasant companion one could have——”

“Look out!” shouted Ned, leaping to one side.

A barbed arrow whizzed through the opening

behind them, passing several inches from the sailor. It struck the opposite side, stuck a second, and then dropped to the floor.

“That was fired by guess,” said Jack, looking at the window behind him; “they meant that we should understand they are still on the watch.”

The three took a position where it was impossible for them to be struck by any stray missiles that might come through either opening, and, sitting on the ground, anxiously discussed what they should do.

“Suppose they make a rush,” said Ned; “do you think they could overcome us?”

“No,” the sailor answered; “they are not strong enough to beat that door down without working a long time. Then, as they attempted to dash through, we could use our guns and the long-handled hatchet. There’s not enough of ’em for a chance of winning by doing that.”

“It seems to me,” remarked Harry, “that there are a dozen different ways by which they could conquer us.”

“Let us hear one or two,” asked Ned.

“I judge from what I have read about the

Indians on our frontier. They have been known to get a big tree, and used it as a battering ram ; seven or eight of them could break in any door."

"But what were the inmates of the house doing all that time?"

"Their utmost to prevent the Indians succeeding."

"And so would we ; that opening over there is on the same side with the door. They couldn't carry out such a plan without placing themselves in range, and none knows it better than they."

"Then they could heap up brush and wood on either of the sides which we can't command, and burn down the building about our heads."

"That's what I fear more than any thing else," said Jack, with a serious face ; "if they should take it into their heads to burn this old shell, it would be all up with us ; we'd go to Davy Jones locker before you could say Jack Robinson."

Harry Norwood turned about, and, with his knife, cut into the wood in several places.

"These logs are green, I don't believe they would burn."

“I hope not, but they ain’t likely to be so green on the roof and sides, where the weather affects them.”

“I don’t see how any wood ever can become dry enough to burn in this part of the country,” said Ned; “there is so much rain falling that every thing is soaked.”

“But the sun is hot and dries it out in a short time; howsumever, we ain’t going to tell the savages any thing about it, if they don’t think of it themselves.”

“Jack,” said Harry, “I’m sure you are of the opinion that we must get away to-night, or not at all.”

“That’s exactly what I think; it’s no use to try and do any thing during the daytime, when they keep such a close watch that we dare not show ourselves at either of the windows.”

“There is no moon, I believe.”

“It will be as black as Egypt. If we can only get a start, we shall be out of the reach of those savages, but the trouble will be to get the start. They will be watching closer than ever, and, I tell you, boys, it looks as bad as it did when we left the *Robinson Crusoe* on the raft.”

“We must have an understanding on several things,” said Harry, glancing around him as if afraid of being overheard.

“What are they?”

“I can see that after we get outside the hut, (that is if we succeed in doing so), it won’t do to speak, for they will hear the slightest whisper.”

“Of course not; each must attend to business, which is to get away from this place as silently as a snake would crawl through the undergrowth; you musn’t undertake to whisper to each other, nor even to whistle, for it will be the death of you.”

“After getting away from the hut, what then?” asked Ned.

“Each one must make for the river; think of nothing else, but do every thing you can to reach that. As soon as that is found, start right down stream, until you reach the camp. The first one there must tell Captain Sprogell what has taken place, and get him and his men to go to the rescue of the others.”

“I have been thinking of one thing,” remarked Ned Livingston, after several minutes,

silence ; “ suppose Jack should manage to steal through the lines without being seen ; he could find Captain Sprogell, or some of the others, in a few hours, and bring them back here. Why, then, would it not be more prudent for Harry and me to wait until assistance can reach us ? ”

“ There’s some sense in that,” replied the sailor, “ but it won’t work. In the first place, I think the chances of you two getting through, without the Indians knowing it, are a good deal better than mine.”

“ I hardly look at it in that way,” said Harry, in much surprise.

“ It is true, nevertheless ; you are younger, and can handle yourselves much better than me ; I’m not used to picking my way through the woods, and I don’t believe I can do it in the dark without their hearing me. They will come for me at once, and there’ll be the biggest row you ever heard tell of. While some of ’em are paying their respects to me, others will bounce into the hut to larn whether you have left. If you undertake to stay behind and keep house, you can see what a rumpus

there'll be. There won't be any more chance for you than if you was dropped into the middle of the Atlantic, without a plank to float you."

"Then we must all try together?"

"Exactly, and take different routes, for that will give us the best chance."

"They'll be expecting it, won't they?"

"Of course; and you can see how narrow a chance it is for us arter all," answered Jack Blockley with a sigh.

"I have a strong hope that one or two, or all of us, will be able to pull through——"

Just then Ned Livingston caught the arm of Harry and pointed toward the door.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE CLOSE OF DAY.

LOOKING at the structure on which the eyes of Ned Livingston happened to be fixed at that moment, all three saw it bend inward slightly as if yielding to a severe, but cautious pressure from the outside.

There did not appear to be any danger of its giving away, but clearly, some one was pushing against it, as if to test its power of resistance.

The door was made of roughly hewn pieces of wood, trimmed so that they fitted quite well together. These were firmly secured on the inside by braces and spikes, for the man that built the hut evidently meant that it should be strong enough to keep all sorts of enemies from entering against his wishes.

But there were several places where the timbers, joined at their edges, were thin, and

glimpses of daylight could be seen through the crevices.

“Mebbe I can reach ’em,” whispered Jack Blockley, bringing his gun to his shoulder, taking a quick aim, and firing through one of these weak points.

What he accomplished could not be known, but the sound of hurried scrambling on the outside, showed that those who were prowling there, had been frightened away, and were not likely to venture upon any further experiments with the door, at least so long as daylight lasted.

Both Harry and Ned carried watches, that were carefully regulated before leaving home. They had accommodated them to the change of latitude, but the rough usage to which they were subjected had stopped their running, and they had not recorded the hours for nearly a week.

It was impossible, therefore, to fix on the right time, but the three agreed that the afternoon was at least half gone, and that before long the darkness around them would be impenetrable. They were anxious for night to come,

for they were agreed that inasmuch as they had decided on making this last, desperate attempt to save themselves, it should be done at the very first opportunity.

In fact, it was good reasoning to suppose that the Indians who were besieging them would not look for any such effort until the night was well along, and what little chance there was of success would be increased by such a prompt course.

"I wish it would rain," suddenly exclaimed Jack Blockley, after reloading his gun.

"Do you believe that would aid us?"

"It will be sure to do so; the noise of the falling drops on the leaves and against the hut and tree trunks, will drown the noise we make in moving; it will sort of mix up things, as you can see, and all that will help."

This wish, to the delight of all, was granted. The short twilight had scarcely begun, when it suddenly became darker, and they heard the soft patter of rain drops among the leaves of the forest. Naturally enough, it caused an increase of hope and spirits on the part of each.

Many a time they had heard the fall of the

drenching showers with feelings of impatience, but now they only wished the rain would fall faster ; it was music in their ears.

Before long the darkness of night began stealing through the small cabin in which they had taken shelter. The figure of the poor rubber gatherer grew shadowy and indistinct, and the outlines of the structure within became indistinct.

“Let us make sure we understand each other,” said Harry Norwood, in a guarded voice ; “you have given us your plan, Jack, but let us hear it again.”

“It’s simple, my dear boys ; when the time comes (and it is now close at hand), we will unfasten the door and I’ll go out first. Five minutes later, unless you hear a noise, you will follow as closely as you can. The minute you are clear of the hut, Harry will turn to the right and Ned to the left. I needn’t tell you how necessary it is for you to travel as quiet as you can. If you are caught you are dead boys, as sure as you’re born.”

“How far would you advise us to crawl on the different routes you name ?”

“Harry is the only one who need change, for the course Ned takes is toward the Tapajos, and you must stick to it, unless you are caught, till you reach the river. But Harry, if he finds the road clear, had better keep it up until he has crept a hundred feet or so ; by that time he will be beyond the savages, according as I look at it, and he can begin to work off to the left, not stopping till he gets to the river, which each of you is to follow till you find the camp of Captain Sprogell.”

“You have no objection to our undertaking to signal to each other after we reach the river ? ”

“No ; if you are careful. By that time you will be so far from the hut that you’ll be safe enough.”

“It will be what we have used before,” said Harry, “a soft whistle, such as we have heard from some kind of bird in these forests.”

“I will know it the minute it reaches my ears,” was the assuring response ; “but I may as well say, boys, that I don’t believe there will be any use for your signals.”

“Why not ? ”

“It will be a miracle if all three of us reach the stream.”

“We shall need to call to each other, if but two succeed,” said Harry, who saw that their good friend was oppressed by a great fear.

“You were in the dumps when we were afloat off the Amazon on the raft,” said young Norwood, with a laugh; “and, though I can not but see that we are in a most dangerous position, I shan’t allow you to make me despair.”

“I shall do every thing I can,” said the sailor; “if you hear any thing from me after I get out, you’ll hear it very loud—if I run against any of ’em, I’ll kick up a rumpus which will speak of lively times. I’ll draw ’em around me and then’s the minute (if you haven’t already done so) to ‘light out’ as quick as you can.”

CHAPTER XXXIV.

“GOOD BY !”

BEFORE darkness finally enveloped the forest, Jack crept softly to one of the openings, Harry doing the same to the other, and peeped forth. Each did it with the utmost caution, for they knew too well the consequences of discovery by the besieging savages.

Somewhat to their surprise, neither was able to detect the least sign of their foes. The trees and the ground, so far as they could judge, were free from Indians.

“It can’t be that they have gone away,” whispered Ned, when the unexpected fact was discussed among them.

Jack Blockley shook his head.

“Don’t flatter yourself that they would do any thing so foolish as that. They may try to give us the idea they have moved, so as to draw us forth, but it’s no more than that.”

They then patiently listened, but the patter of the rain and the soft sighing of the wind were all they could detect. Hours had gone by since eye or ear had been able to make sure their enemies were on the watch.

“Let’s try the old trick that we’ve read about,” said Ned, in some excitement.

“What’s that?”

“I’ll show you.”

He placed his hat on the end of his gun, and held it up, so as to show above the window, taking care that the deception should not be manifest to any one on the watch. He adjusted it very carefully, and a person, looking at the opening in the hut, would have been sure a human head was immediately below, and partly within, the covering.

It was believed hardly possible that it could escape attention if held there a minute or so; but, though the boy moved it about, and then sustained it stationary for fully five minutes, not the slightest demonstration was made against it.

Finally he lowered it again and placed it on his head, asking:

“What do you think of *that* !”

“There’s nothing wonderful about that,” answered Jack, “for, if they have set out to make us believe they have left, of course they ain’t going to pay attention to a boy’s hat.”

“I can understand why they wouldn’t do so, provided nothing could be seen of any of us ; but, if they should be sure of a chance to kill one, would they wait till that chance became less ?”

“It’s likely they look upon it as I do,” said the sailor ; “that is, the prospect of getting us when we come out is so good that it can’t be any better. You can guess some of the reasons why they want to catch us alive, after shooting two or three of their number.”

“I do,” replied Harry, with a shudder.

“It’s possible, too,” ventured Ned, “that they may not have seen it, even after you gave the chance. I can see that they would not be likely to keep their eyes fixed on that one opening all the time, even if they are ready to fire away the very instant there’s a chance of doing us any harm.”

It was idle to discuss that which must remain

unexplained for a while to come. The three began to feel so oppressed with the solemnity of the hour, that they ceased conversing, and, with rapidly beating hearts, waited for the night to advance far enough to make the attempt that must decide their fate.

It would not be hard to guess the thoughts of the group as they sat in the rear of the hut, silent, grim, and listening, while the heavy darkness gradually closed around them. Jack Blockley was serious, as any one would have been in such an hour, but he had faced death many times; he was without any living kindred except his mother, and he cared very little when the summons came for him to go. His anxiety was for the two boys, for whose safety he considered himself in a measure responsible. If Heaven would only grant that they might pass through the fiery line encircling them, he himself would be willing to fall by the way.

The boys thought of their homes thousands of miles distant, with ocean, river, and wilderness stretching between. What were loved parents and friends doing at that moment?

Did they dream of the danger that hung over the heads of the boys, whom they were likely never to see again?

These, and hundreds of similar questions, rushed through their brains, for it is at such times that one thinks with wonderful rapidity. More than once the hand of Ned was lifted to his face and held there a moment, and Harry made the same movement fully as often. There can be little doubt that the hand was employed to brush away the gathering tears.

But the mind could not be given over to such gloomy meditations. The boys were not ready to despair, and it was necessary to brace themselves to the desperate task before them.

Ned was the first to awake to the fact that the night had fully come. Laying his hand on the arm of Jack at his side, he asked, in the same guarded voice :

“Isn’t it time for us to try it?”

“Yes.”

It was literally “pitch dark” around them. They could not see each other, and only in a dim, faint way could they perceive the open-

ings that answered for windows. It was fully as dark as it would be at midnight.

There was no call for listening before essaying to escape, for they had done nothing but listen for the last hour or so. Jack was heard to stir, and he whispered :

“ *Follow me.*”

As they moved across the hard ground, they turned a little to the right, so as to avoid the inanimate figure stretched there. In a few minutes the hands of the seaman rested on the heavy bar that held the door against yielding to the savages on the outside.

Jack Blockley paused a minute when the bar was partly moved from its position. Another effort and it would be gone altogether ; if the Indians chose to make a rush within, there was nothing to prevent them from entering.

He softly raised the bar and carefully set it down on the ground, where it was not likely to be in the way. Once more he listened, but only for a second : the pattering of the rain, was all that struck his ears.

Reaching out his hand, he touched each of his young friends in turn. Drawing them

close to him, he said, in the same guarded manner :

“ Wait five minutes—no more and no less—that is as near as you can guess it, and then follow, Harry to the right, Ned to the left ; make for the river and then for the camp. Good-by ; God be with you ! ”

He grasped the hand of each in turn and pressed it warmly. Their hearts were full, but there was no time to say any thing more. The next moment Jack had gone and the boys were alone.

It would be impossible to picture the anxiety of Harry and Ned, while they waited for the passage of the five minutes which their friend had prescribed for them. Every second they expected to hear the sound of the collision between him and the Indians, and they were prepared to take instant advantage of it. Both knew that the grand-hearted sailor had gone first, because he believed it the most dangerous venture of the three. If necessary, he was ready to draw the entire peril upon himself, so as to give them a chance to reach the depth of the wood undetected.

They would not have consented to this sacrifice for their sakes had it been in their power to prevent it ; but they knew it was vain to seek to dissuade Jack, and they refrained from the attempt.

It is impossible to measure the lapse of time on such a trying occasion. When one minute had passed, they were quite sure it was five, and when another rolled around, they had no earthly doubt of the full passage of more than the twelfth of an hour.

Nothing had been heard of Jack, and the sound of the pattering leaves was all that fell upon their ears as they breathlessly listened.

They grasped hands and, with full hearts, tenderly murmured :

“ Good-by.”

“ Good-by.”

The next minute they were outside the hut, and were immediately lost to each other.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THROUGH THE WOODS.

AS I have stated, Harry Norwood and Ned Livingston meant to follow the directions of Jack Blockley, and wait five minutes in the hut after the departure of the sailor. They supposed they had done so, but no more than half that period had gone by when they crept through the open door in the darkness.

The rain was descending in that copious, easy style, peculiar to the low latitudes, and fortunate, indeed, was it that such was the fact. Had it been otherwise, beyond a doubt all three would have fallen into the hands of those South American Indians before going twenty feet from the building.

Each boy held his rifle in his left hand, as he crawled softly forth, eyes and ears strained to the highest tension, though the faculty of vision could be of no use at such a time.

Ned Livingston was on his hands and knees. In a few minutes the drenching shower soaked every particle of clothing on him. He cared nothing for that, for the weather was warm and little discomfort went with it. As a matter of course, he was proceeding by guess-work, and, now that he had started, could only trust to Providence to help him through.

Suddenly he placed his hand in water several inches deep. He was startled, and, reaching his gun forward in the darkness, poked the region immediately surrounding him, fearing he was on the border of some stream, or, possibly, the lake. But investigation proved that it was simply a puddle, created by the rain that was then falling.

Bending still lower, Ned applied his lips to the fluid, and took a long, refreshing draught. He had suffered from thirst during the afternoon, and the water infused new life into him.

As there could be no choice of routes, so to speak, the boy kept on directly through the pool, and was soon crawling over the wet leaves on the other side. It was at this juncture he heard a noise, which convinced him that some-

thing was amiss, either with Jack or Harry. He could not define it distinctly, but it was as if one or more bodies had fallen on the ground and were struggling together.

"It can't be Jack," thought Ned, "for he said if he ran against any body he would make a racket, that would be heard a good ways."

While this was in the mind of Ned, he caught the voice of the sailor :

"Get out out of my road, you lubber ! You're all a pack of cowards, with your p'izened arrers ! Take *that* ! and *THAT* !"

The sound of struggling continued a few seconds longer and then ceased.

Ned had stopped creeping forward, and was listening. All was profoundly still, but it could only be conjectured what it meant.

"Either they have overcome Jack, and he is no more, or he has flung them aside and got away. I don't see how he could have got by them, if he was attacked."

There was a terrible sinking of the heart when the boy resumed his cautious withdrawal from the vicinity of the hut, for he could not make himself believe that all three were to

creep through the enviroing lines without detection. If Ned should succeed and either of the others fail, the calamity would be a crushing one to him.

“How is it *I* have got this far,” he asked himself, “when the Indians must be expecting the attempt, and doing all they can to prevent it?”

As if to reprove him for his exultation, if such it may be called, his heart almost stood still at the sound of somebody moving at his elbow. It must have been close enough for him to touch by reaching out his hand.

“It is one of the Indians hunting for *me*,” was the conclusion of Ned, who stopped and placed his hand on his knife, determined to use it the very moment his enemy discovered him.

How it happened that he escaped detection, was more than Ned Livingston ever could explain. Inasmuch as he clearly caught the sound of the savage above the pattering of the rain, it showed that he must be close at hand, and would seem to prove in turn that the Indian must have detected the presence of the youth so near him.

But he failed to do so, possibly because Ned happened to be motionless at the instant he heard his enemy. It was not impossible that he presented the extraordinary scene of a boy moving more quietly, for the moment, through the wood, than the Indian who was hunting for him.

Be that as it may, Ned did not wait longer than he believed unavoidable. When his listening ear could detect nothing but the pattering of the rain, he resumed his advance, and continued it until fully a hundred feet were passed.

He now began to breathe freely.

“I really believe I have escaped them,” he murmured, rising to his feet and listening. “There were not enough of them to keep any kind of guard over the building, if they stayed that far off ; it would need a hundred to protect it. I only pray that Harry and Jack have been equally fortunate.”

The rain was still falling, but not so freely as earlier in the evening. As Ned could not carry any more moisture in his garments, it was a matter of indifference to him whether it

ceased altogether or poured down more violently than ever.

“Jack told us to make for the river,” he reflected, standing a minute or two to collect his thoughts, “and he was wise in doing so, though it is not an easy job when it is so dark.”

It is almost impossible to understand the difficulty of picking one's way through the dense Brazilian woods at night. It was easier to crawl than to walk, for less of the body was presented for resistance. Ned extended his arms forward, like a person groping across a dark room, and literally felt every inch of the way.

Sometimes his hand would miss a wet branch that would sweep across his face ; sometimes a wiry vine would cut athwart his eyes, and then another one, or a root, would seemingly catch hold of his foot and hold on, until he was thrown forward on his face. Again and again was his gun knocked from his grasp, and he often paused, wondering whether it was worth his while to keep up the struggle ; but, when he came to think of his extreme good fortune

thus far, and the fact that the deadly enemies of him and his friends were close at hand, he pressed forward.

“The river—the Tapajos!” he said to himself, “that’s the only guide I can have, but how shall I find that?”

The fall of the rain had almost entirely ceased, and he soon assured himself that he heard a dull, faint roar, that must be caused by the flow of the upper Tapajos over the rocky bed.

The only difficulty about the matter lay in the fact that the sound of the stream came from a point opposite that which he was convinced was the right one.

“It can’t be there,” he said to himself again and again. “The Tapajos lies over yonder.”

Fortunately, Ned had the good sense to know that he must be mistaken. The easiest thing in the world is for a person to get lost when traveling through a forest.

“It is the Tapajos, or a tributary, which I can follow down to it, and that will be as well.”

Like a wise boy, Ned Livingston acted on

this decision. He pushed on, keeping his face toward the roaring sound, that grew more and more distinct. At last it burst upon his ears with startling suddenness, as he emerged from the wood and stood on the bank of the rushing stream, which, in point of fact, was the Tapajos.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE SIGNAL.

HAVING reached the river, he was warranted in believing the worst part of his journey was ended. He had safely made his way through the lines of the enemy, when there was little hope of success. He returned thanks to Heaven, that had befriended and sustained him thus far.

And in his prayers he never forgot his dear friends, Harry Norwood and Jack Blockley.

“Heaven grant they may be as fortunate as I; we have been placed in peril such as we never dreamed of, but God has brought His children through more fiery ordeals than this.”

“Now that this is the Tapajos,” he continued, “and as it is certain I am above the camp, all I have to do is to follow the stream down until it is reached. The points of the compass seemed turned around to me, but they can’t make any blunder : it must be myself.”

And, he began tramping forward as best he could through the pitchy darkness. It was a dismal and laborious task, and, could he have found any sort of shelter, he would have stopped until morning. Often he fancied he heard serpents crawling along the ground near his feet, or rustling among the branches overhead. The sensation was of the most dreadful character, when he shrank back, half expecting they were about to strike at him, while he held up his gun before him as a partial shield against the blow.

Again he was certain he detected the stealthy tread of some wild beast stealing up behind him, ready to pounce upon his shoulders and rend him with his needle-like claws. And yet, when this frightful trial had lasted an hour or two, it may be said Ned became, to a certain extent, accustomed to it, and he plodded forward, in his determined way, until he was sure he had placed several miles behind him.

"I can't understand that there is any thing to fear from the Indians," he said to himself; this rain must have washed out all signs of my

footprints, and they will not be able to follow me when daylight comes."

It was not long after that he felt some degree of thirst again, and approached the edge of the river to drink. When he lay down on his face and carefully reached forward, he made the astounding discovery that the current was flowing in precisely the opposite direction from that which he supposed.

He had really been going up stream instead of down, as he intended to go.

For the moment he was completely staggered unable to comprehend how he had committed such a blunder. It was not all unreasonable that he should fancy the river lay in a different direction than it did, but how, after reaching its bank, he should mistake its course, was singular indeed.

"Well, well," he muttered, with a sigh, "all this time has been lost, and I am further away from camp than I was an hour ago. It is discouraging, but, when I reflect on what has taken place, I should be the last one to complain."

And, plucking up courage, he turned around

and began toiling downward in the direction of the camp, cheered by the thought that, though he might have a long distance to walk, yet every step he took carried him so much nearer home.

But Ned was tired. His nerves had been on a painful tension for many hours, and he had walked and toiled long enough to exhaust the most vigorous and rugged hunter. He needed rest. There was no possibility of finding any shelter, and, finally, he threw himself down on the wet leaves, murmured a few words of prayer, and dropped asleep.

It was just growing light, when he opened his eyes and looked around. Several minutes were required before he could recall what had taken place, and how it was he came to occupy such a strange bed.

"I wonder where Harry and Jack are?" he exclaimed, springing to his feet, stiffened and lame from his severe exertion and his exposure.

Looking at the Tapajos, he saw it flowing swiftly by him, this time in the proper direction, the current somewhat roiled from the recent rain. Even here it was a broad, rapid

stream, capable of floating a large craft, though the falls and rapids above and below rendered such navigation impossible.

Now that Ned Livingston felt little, if any, anxiety on his own account, his thoughts turned to his friends. Where were Harry and Jack? Had they been equally fortunate with himself? Had they succeeded in making their way through the hostile circle that was spread around the rubber gatherer's hut, in which they took refuge?

These were the questions which he continually asked himself, and which from the nature of things, it was impossible to answer, until he should go further and learn more.

There was little likelihood that a boy, placed in his situation, would suffer from thirst, but he did feel the need of food. His gun, despite the heavy fall of rain, was ready for use at any time, the charge being preserved dry, but he saw nothing in the way of game, and, had he been able to bring it down, he was without the means of kindling a fire.

The fact was, he had not gone long enough really to suffer, and it was not his purpose to

attempt to procure any food, even if it should present itself. He observed several times a tree whose vegetation was of a peculiar, reddish green, which bore a fruit resembling the American apple. It looked tempting, but, fortunately, Ned refrained from eating it.

“Likely as not they are poison,” he thought ; “Ardara told Harry and me never to taste any thing in the way of fruit, unless we knew what it was, for death lurks in many of the most tempting productions of the tropical regions.”

It could not be many miles to the camp of Captain Sprogell, and at every step, the lad grew more hopeful. If he could only have relieved his mind of the anxiety about his friends he would have been in high spirits.

Somehow the conviction was growing on him, despite himself, that something had gone wrong with Harry Norwood. He had heard nothing to indicate it, and really, there was no ground for such strong misgivings as took possession of him. It would seem that Jack Blockley was the one about whom he should have worried himself, but the boy felt little

anxiety on account of the sailor who had gone through so many thrilling experiences of his own.

“All three of us agreed to use every effort to reach the Tapajos, as soon as we were clear of the Indians, and, if nothing has happened, Jack and Harry ought to be somewhere in this neighborhood,” he said to himself.

He remembered that they might have reached the stream at nearly the same time with himself, and could have traveled far enough in the right direction, to be a long way from him; but both would be on the lookout for each other, and for him.

He reflected further, that Jack had told him there could be little risk in signaling, after reaching the Tapajos. It was not likely the Indians would follow them to that point, and there was no reason to fear they would understand the peculiar whistle, even if it should be heard by them.

The sun was up, and the sky, for the time, was as clear and beautiful as any he had ever seen in his own native land. Placing his fingers to his mouth, he emitted a gentle, tremulous

whistle, that might have been heard several hundred yards away.

To his surprise and delight, the sound had scarcely left his lips, when it was answered from a point down stream, near at hand. He instantly repeated the call, and ran forward, his heart overflowing with thankfulness, exclaiming :

“ It’s Harry or Jack, and, may be it’s both.”

CHAPTER XXXVII.

MISSING.

GOING back a few hours in the narration of the incidents I have set out to give, it is necessary that reference should be made to the singular experience of Jack Blockley, the sailor.

His purpose in leaving the hut first, was suspected by the boys. It was because he believed that whoever preceded the others would incur the greatest danger, and, by drawing the attention of the Indians to himself, would lessen, to that degree, the peril of those who followed.

There was reason to think the savages were expecting such an attempt on the part of the besieged, and they made every preparation to defeat it.

They were all close to the hut, and, but for the pattering rain and the Egyptian darkness, not one of the three could have gone a dozen feet without detection. As it was, although for a time Jack used all the precaution and skill of

which he was master, he had stolen his way a short distance only, when the enemy learned he was on the outside of the structure.

He was not crawling on his hands and knees, as the boys did, but was in a crouching posture, carefully shoving the branches apart in front, and feeling every inch of the way.

Suddenly his outstretched hand touched the figure of a person directly in his path. As quick as a flash he drew back his clenched fist, and struck with all his might. It was a blow given at random, but it could not have been more effectual had the sun, or an electric light been shining overhead.

He landed his fist directly in the face of the savage, who went over like a ten-pin. It was at that juncture that Jack gave utterance to the expressions which I have recorded, and which were plainly heard by Ned Livingston a short distance off.

The intense darkness favored the sailor in a remarkable manner. He knew there were others near him, and he sprang to one side, rapidly pushed his way for a rod, then made another sharp angle, and suddenly stopped.

The whole movement was the very best thing he could have made under the circumstances. A Comanche Indian could not have shown more woodcraft. Had he kept on moving, the rustling would have betrayed him to the savages, near by, but when he stopped so abruptly, they were at a loss what to do.

They listened, and then began a careful circling about the immediate neighborhood. Jack also listened, and knew the peril in which he was placed. He soon found that more than one of them was gradually, but certainly, nearing the spot where he was crouching, and, if he remained, discovery was inevitable. He must make a change of base.

With extreme care, he began stealing his way along, often compelled to stop and fairly hold his breath, until it seemed impossible to escape discovery. But Providence helped, and, at the end of half an hour, he felt certain he was beyond all danger from the Indians, who were seeking to encompass his death.

“Ah, if *they* have only done as well,” sighed the honest sailor, “it will be more than we

have a right to expect. I tried to draw the lubbers to me, and I guess I did for the time. If Harry and Ned were sharp enough to take advantage, they may have got a start that will help them out; but, poor fellows, they ain't used to this kind of business. I would give my life to be sartin both got out of this scrape; but there ain't any way to make such an arrangement."

Remembering the instruction he had given the boys, he refrained from signaling to them, but bent his energies toward reaching the Tapajos with the least possible delay. He was able to detect the faint roar, which served as a guide to Ned Livingston, almost at the same moment, and the sailor never ceased pushing forward, until he arrived on the bank of the stream. He kept his reckoning better, so that, when he stood beside the rushing waters, he did not turn the wrong way.

Without doubt, Jack Blockley could have reached the camp of Captain Sprogell before daylight had he pressed onward, but he could not do any thing that looked like deserting his young friends. They must be somewhere

behind him, and would not arrive on the bank of the Tapajos until considerably later.

Accordingly, he sat down where he was, and waited until daylight, when he rose to his feet to decide what should be done. As he did so, he caught the signal of Ned, and answered it. Within the next three minutes the two met and grasped hands.

“Where’s Harry?”

The question was asked by both on the instant, and the answer was the same. Neither had any news to tell. They knew nothing of the boy after he crept out of the hut in the darkness and the rain.

“He may have got to the stream ahead of us,” suggested Jack.

“Let’s try the signal.”

They whistled again and again, but there was not the least response. The conclusion was inevitable that, wherever Harry Norwood might be, he was beyond the hearing of his friends.

“I have some hope that he has reached the river, and has gone to Captain Sprogell’s camp,” said Ned, as the two began picking their way along the shore.

“I hope the same, but the hope don’t amount to much. It’s a wonder how you and me got through the lines, for I can tell you them Injins were waiting for us. If it turns out that Harry done jist as well, why then we can set it down as a miracle.”

“I wonder whether any of the Indians are near,” ventured Ned, looking furtively around him ; “if there are, they may make trouble for us.”

“They ain’t worth thinking about,” replied the sailor, contemptuously ; “I only hope they haven’t gone back to their homes again.”

Ned Livingston caught the meaning of this. The sailor thought it more than likely that Harry Norwood had fallen into the hands of the Indians, and he wished to secure help to recover him, before they should return to their inaccessible homes in the depths of the Brazilian wilderness.

As the two hurried down stream, they sent long resounding whistles through the woods, but the listening ear failed to catch any response.

By and by the increasing roar and the sight

of the agitated water showed they were approaching the falls or rapids.

"Look!" called out Ned, catching the arm of Jack.

Following the direction indicated, the sailor saw a thin blue wreath of smoke ascending from the wood, on the same side of the Tapajos and just below the rapids.

"That's our camp!" exclaimed Jack,

"It may be the Indians," observed Ned, who shuddered when he recalled the exertions of the previous evening.

"We'll soon find out."

Jack Blockley started off with a rapid stride, for it was useless to attempt to hide his solicitude. Ned kept close at his elbow, warning him to be careful, for, since what they had passed through, the commonest prudence demanded that they should use the utmost precaution.

Jack was not the one to throw away all his chances by any such recklessness as Ned feared. The smoke showed that the camp was below the rapids and among the trees, where the men themselves were not visible. But our friends

had gone only a short distance, when they caught sight of the large canoe drawn up against the bank.

That decided the matter, and Jack and Ned hurried forward without misgiving. They were not mistaken : it was the camp of Captain Sprogell and his party, and it so happened that the captain, Ardara the guide, and the others were present, having just finished a rather late breakfast.

“Is Harry here!” called out Jack, the instant he recognized the party, and he and Ned held their breath for the answer.

“We haven’t seen him since he went away with you yesterday morning,” answered Captain Sprogell ; “any thing wrong?”

“I am afraid every thing is wrong,” said Jack, turning pale, and reaching out his hand to support himself against a tree.

Ned Livingston sat down on a log and covered his face with his hands, moaning—

“Poor Harry ! poor Harry ! we shall never see him again.”

Ardara, scarcely less excited, asked that the story be told, and Jack complied, with as much

succinctness as possible. The guide was attentive, thoughtful, and serious. When the narrative was ended he asked a question or two, and then said :

“Those Indians are among the fiercest in Brazil ; they have come a long distance, and the case looks very dark for the boy who is missing.”

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

CONCLUSION.

IT must not be supposed from these words, however, that the guide meant it was idle to make any attempt to recover the boy. His purpose was to declare that the case was a desperate one, and all the chances were against ever seeing young Norwood again.

But the brave and sagacious Portugese meant that every possible effort should be made without an hour or a minute's unnecessary delay.

"It may seem incredible to you, but from the description given of those Indians," said Ar-dara, "I believe they have come from the northwest."

"From how far?"

"Well up toward the Amazon."

"What should bring them so far away from their villages?"

“That’s a hard question to answer,” said Ardara ; “I know it is a rare thing for the Brazilian Indians to go such a distance from their homes, and there are few who do it. But these (if they belong to the tribe I suspect), are exceptionally powerful and brave. There are legends of their having gone several hundred miles straight into the woods—something unheard of as concerns other tribes.”

“Ardara,” said Ned, rising from his seat, and walking toward the man ; “we look to you for guidance ; where do you think Harry is ?”

“There is hardly room for doubt that he has fallen into the hands of those Indians, who have come from the northwest, through the country of the Tapajos, to reach this place.”

“Do you think they have killed him ?”

“In my judgment, the chances of his having been killed or taken prisoner are about equal. As he is a handsome and prepossessing boy, they may consider him quite a prize, and, wishing to carry back home with them some trophy of what they have done, what would be a more striking one than a prisoner like him ?”

“I hope they have taken poor Harry, that is if it is a choice between that and death.”

“Alas, I am afraid there is little choice between the two fates,” said Ardara; “but we must not lose a minute,” he added, rousing himself; “we must be off at once.”

He quickly explained that the only thing to do was to visit the vicinity of the hut. If Harry Norwood had been killed, his body would be found there; if he had been taken away, most probably some evidences of the fact would also be discovered.

“He may be lost in the woods,” suggested Ned, “and, if we all go away, and he should come to the camp, what would he do?”

“Pin a notice of some kind on a tree, where he will see it,” said Ardara, addressing Ned Livingston. “Tell him we will be back in a few hours, and he is to wait for us.”

The captain was the only one who had pencil and paper in his possession. He said he never was without it, as his memory was so defective that his note-book was indispensable. With the materials thus furnished, Ned wrote in large letters, the following :

“NOTICE !

“Harry Norwood is hereby informed that his friends are gone on a hunt in the woods, but they expect to be back in a few hours. Mr. Norwood is requested not to leave camp until we return, but will make himself at home so long as he is alone.

“ EDWARD LIVINGSTON,
“*Committee.*”

This was pinned fast to the bark of a tree, where Harry could not fail to see it if he should return to camp, in the absence of the others. Nothing more remained to do, and, within the five succeeding minutes, the entire party, consisting of Captain Sprogell, Ardara, Jack Blockley, Ned Livingston, Pedro and Tomti, were forcing their way through the woods, in the direction of the lake, on whose shore the strange incidents I have described took place.

The sailor was able to locate the body of water quite accurately with the help of his pocket-compass, and a brief time only passed, when they stood where Jack and his young

friends first caught sight of the party of strange Indians.

The day was warm again, but it was clear, and the heat was not oppressive. All drank heartily from the cold, crystalline water, and then moved around to the other side. The ground was found somewhat broken, where the savages had danced so vigorously, but nothing of account was noted. Accordingly, they walked through the wood, and in a few minutes, reached the hut in which the fugitives had taken such hasty refuge, when hard pressed by the Indians.

The body of the rubber gatherer lay just where it had fallen ; the poisoned arrow was beside it, but the body had not been molested by those who had besieged the cabin. The door was wide open, and a minute examination of the ground showed that the Indians had been inside.

“When they found that Jack was on the outside,” said Ardara, “they made a rush, but you and Harry had left, so they had to scatter, and hunt for you both. You eluded them, but your friend was not so fortunate.”

The Indians had also removed their fallen comrades, so that Ardara could not satisfy himself as to what particular tribe they belonged to.

It being clearly established that Harry Norwood had been made a prisoner by these savages, the only thing to do was to pursue them at once, and with the utmost vigor.

The party was so large that it was easy to follow their trail. The fall of rain had ceased before daybreak, so that their footprints were made since then, and were discernible at different points.

All doubt that might have remained as to the fate of Harry Norwood were removed when within a hundred yards of the rubber gatherer's hut, whose door had been closed and the windows barred, so as to keep the body from being disturbed by wild animals.

In crossing a muddy tract, where the imprints of the Indians' moccasins were visible, the impression made by the rubber boot of Harry Norwood was discovered. The boy had a small foot, and he and Ned were the only ones who wore foot gear of that precise size and shape, so there could be no mistake on that point.

The question was settled, and the company pressed forward with all the energy at their command.

It will be seen that the Indians had half a day's start, and, if they chose to exert themselves, could travel faster than their pursuers ; but the hope was that they would believe there was no cause for thus exerting themselves.

Every one of the party felt that the life of Harry Norwood was at stake. So long as he was a prisoner among the Indians he could not raise his hand to help himself. No doubt he was disarmed, and his captors would keep such a close watch on him that he would never gain the slightest chance to escape. The further the Indians penetrated the woods with him, the greater would his peril become.

It looked as if Ardara was right in his theory of the captors of the boy. Their trail led toward the north for several miles, and they would not have been likely to take that course unless their villages lay in that direction.

But at the end of the distance named it came down to the edge of the water where it ended.

"Here they took to their canoes," said Ar-

dara ; “they have reached the woods over yonder and pushed on.”

“Are we gaining or losing?”

“It is impossible for me to do more than guess ; but I believe they suspect we are following them, and have increased their gait.”

“What is your reason for believing that?”

“It is mainly guess work ; but it seems to me, where I have examined the trail, that it looks as if they took longer steps than at the beginning—”

At that moment a faint shout was heard. The Tapajos, at that point, was some two hundred yards wide. On the other side the bank rose in a steep, wooded ridge. In some spots the crest of this elevation was bare, and rocks projected to view in other places.

On the largest rock, three Indians were seen standing and looking at the whites. It was one of these savages who had given utterance to the shout. They had discovered they were pursued, and they meant the cry as one of defiance. The whites were invited to overtake them if they could.

Ardara produced his binocle, and leveled it

at the group. One searching glance was enough.

“It’s the very tribe I supposed !” he exclaimed, with more excitement than he had shown since the expedition started. “Their regular hunting-grounds are a long distance to the northwest, near the Madeira and Amazon ; when I went up the last river, with Professor Agassiz, we saw them. They are a dangerous people.”

Just then all three of the savages whooped and swung their arms about their heads in a tantalizing fashion. Then they turned, ran among the trees, and vanished.

“What shall be done,” asked Captain Sproggell ; “I am eager to put forth every effort at my command to save that poor boy, but I see no hope. The river flows between us and them, and their canoes are on the other side.”

“If that were the only obstacle, it would be a slight one,” said Ardara. “They can travel faster than we through these Brazilian forests. If we could come upon their camp by surprise we would have a chance.

“You offer, then, no hope?”

The Portuguese was silent. He knew every eye was fixed upon him, and he dared not answer yes or no. His own belief was that it was vain to expect any thing could be done for the hapless lad, but he dreaded the effect of such an announcement upon his friends.

“I will not answer your question just yet,” he said, with a sigh. “Let us go back to camp.”

With sorrowing hearts the company made their way up the river to the camp, which they left a few hours before. Ned Livingston tore down the notice he had pinned to the tree, and, covering his face with his hands, moaned :

“Oh, that I had never seen this hateful country! I can never go back home to Harry’s folks with the news that is breaking my heart.”

Still Ardara held his peace. He was debating the momentous question with himself, and had not yet reached a conclusion. Finally he spoke of other matters, and then, with that strange aimlessness which cool-headed men often show in such crises, he moved back in the direction of the river, which they had left but a brief while before.

Reaching the point where they stood, when the last glimpse of Harry Norwood's captors was obtained, they halted once more. The day was far advanced, and the hour had come when the question must be answered :

“ WHAT CAN BE DONE ? ”

The face of the guide showed that his mental struggle was at an end. He had reached a conclusion, and all waited, with an intensity of interest beyond repression, for him to make it known.

“ We cannot leave the boy to his fate,” said he, “ we will follow after him. *Let us make ready !* ”

NOTE.—Those who are interested in the adventures of Harry Norwood among the wild Indians that carried him off captive, will find a full account in No. 3 of the *Great River Series*, under the title of “ *Lost in the Wilds : A Sequel to ‘ Up the Tapajos.’* ”

