

CHAPTER XV.

"Ex nihilo nihil jit."

MR. Jerry Elwood, brother of the young ladies who dwelt there, was playing solitaire in the dining room of the old house. Like most people who have a passion for gambling and kindred vices, the instrument of his indulgence was never out of his reach. Sitting there, quietly amusing himself, his outward appearance gave no evidence of the turmoil within.

"What a fool I was," he thought, "not to have taken care that none of them got hurt when I fired those shots. I only wanted to scare them off. I wonder if Desmond has given up the idea of there being a treasure on that island. Astute as he is, he must have been surprised to find bones where he expected to find a treasure. Now I am sure those skeletons occupied the place of the treasure, which has doubtless been removed to a safer spot or away altogether, as witness the doubloons found in the hole by the sailors. What a blessing that half-breed is to me! He is a regular news bureau! But I must be wary. 'Doctor,' as they call him here, has neatly done me out of a chance of seeing those diamonds, but I will get my hands on them before long. Of what use are such things to a parcel of lubberly Johnny Crapauds, who don't know anything of life!"

"Ruminating thus, he did not at first hear my knock at the door. I had walked the three miles between our house and the old Elwood house, carrying lobsters and fresh eggs for the young ladies, which they had bought from my mother.. I found nobody at home but Mr. Elwood, who, at my second knock, threw the door wide open..

"Walk in sonny," said he, genially. "I suppose you are tired?" I answered truthfully that I was, and I gladly accepted the refreshment he gave me. He was a very pleasant spoken gentleman, and when I left him, by his kindly interest in my affairs he had learned from me all the history of our home life, and he knew that the diamonds (for I had told him what Doctor had called them) were very valuable, and that