(Continued From Last Tuesday

out, being the Eve in this garden, she continued—

"How did you find out? Is there anything—nasty—in there?"

"Yes, the remains of animals and other things. I would not have told you were it not imperative."

"Are you keeping other secrets from me?"

"Oh, quite a number."

He managed to conjure up a smile, and the ruse was effective. She applied the words to his past history.

"I hope they will not be revealed so dramatically," she said.

"You never can tell," he answered. They were in prophetic vein that morning. They returned in silence to the cave.

"I wish to go inside with a lamp. May I?" he asked.

"Certainly. Why not?"

He had an odd trick of blushing, this bronzed man with a gnarled soul. He could not frame a satisfactory reply, but busied himself in refilling the lamp.

"May I come, too?" she demanded.

He flung aside the temptation to answer her in kind, merely assenting, with an explanation of his design. When the lamp was in order, he held it close to the wall, and conducted a systematic survey. The geological fault which favored the construction of the tunnel seemed to diverge to the left at the further end. The "face" of the rock exhibited the marks of persistent labor. The stone had been hewn away by main force when the dislocation of strata ceased to be helpful.

His knowledge was limited on the subject, yet Jenks believed that the material here was a hard limestone, rather than the external basalt. Searching each inch with the feeble light, he paused once, with an exclamation.

"What is it?" cried Iris.

"I cannot be certain," he said doubtfully. "Would you mind holding the lamp whilst I use a crowbar?"

In the stone was visible a thin vein, bluish white in color. He managed to break off a fair-sized lump containing a well-defined specimen of the foreign metal.

They hurried into the open air and examined the fragment with curious eyes. The sailor picked it with his knife, and the substance in the vein came off in laminated layers, small, brittle scales.

"Is it silver?" Iris was almost excited.

"I do not think so. I am no expert, but I have a vague idea—I have seen—"

He wrinkled his brows and pressed away the furrows with his hand, that physical habit of his when perplexed!

"I have it," he cried. "It is antimony."

Miss Deane pursed her lips in disdain. Antimony! What was antimony?

"So much fuss for nothing," she said. "It is used in alloys and medicines," he explained. "To us it is useless."

He threw the piece of rock contemptuously among the bushes. But, being thorough in all that he undertook, he returned to the cave and again conducted an inquisition. The silver-hued vein became more strongly marked at the point where it disappeared downwards into a collection of rubble and sand. That was all. Did men give their toil, their lives for this? So it would appear. Be that as it might, he had a more pressing work. If the cave still held a secret it must remain there.

Iris had gone back to her sago-kneading. Necessity had made the lady a bread-maid.

Fifteen hundred years of philology bridged by circumstance," mused Jenks. "How Max Muller would have reveled in the incident!"

Shouldering the axe he walked to the beach. The tide was low and the circular sweep of the reef showed up irregularly, its black outlines sticking out of the vividly green water like jagged teeth.

Much debris from the steamer was lying high and dry. It was an easy task for an athletic man to reach the palm tree, yet the sailor hesitated, with almost imperceptible qualms.

"A baited rat-trap," he muttered. Then he quickened his pace. With the first active spring from rock to rock his unacknowledged doubts vanished. He might find stores of priceless utility. The reflection inspired him. Jumping and climbing like a cat, in two minutes he was near the tree.

He could now see the true explanation of its growth in a seemingly impossible place. Here the bed of the sea bulged upwards in a small sand bay, which silted round the base of a limestone rock, so different in color and formation from the coral reef. Nature, whose engineering contrivances can force springs to mountain tops, managed to deliver to this isolated refuge a sufficient supply of water to nourish the palm, and the roots, firmly lodged in deep crevices, were well protected from the waves.

Between the sailor and the tree intervened a small stretch of shallow water. Landward this submerged saddle shelved steeply into the lagoon. Although the water in the cove was twenty fathoms in depth, its crystal clearness was remarkable. The bottom, composed of marvelously white sand and broken coral, rendered other objects conspicuous. He could see plenty of fish, but not a single shark, whilst on the inner slope of the reef was plainly visible the destroyed fore part of the Sirdar, which had struck beyond the tree, relatively to his present standpoint. He had wondered why no boats were cast ashore. Now he saw the reason. Three of them were still fastened to the davits and carried down with the hull.

Seaward the water was not so clear. The waves created patches of foam, and long submarine plants swayed gently in the undercurrent.

To reach Palm-tree Rock—anticipating its subsequent name—he must cross a space of some thirty feet and wade up to his waist.

He made the passage with ease.

Pitched against the bole of the tree was a long narrow case, very heavy, iron-clamped, and marked with letters in black triangles and the broad arrow of the British Government.

"Rifles, by all the gods!" shouted the sailor. They were really by the Enfield Small Arms Manufactory, but his glee at this stroke of luck might be held to excuse a verbal inaccuracy.

The Sirdar carried a consignment of arms and ammunition from Hong Kong to Singapore. Providence had decreed that a practically inexhaustible store of cartridges should be hurled across the lagoon to the island. And here were Lee-Metfords enough to equip half a company. He would not risk the precious axe in an attempt to open the case. He must go back for a crowbar.

What else was there in this storehouse, thrust by Neptune from the ocean bed? A chest of tea, seemingly undamaged. Three barrels of flour, utterly ruined. A saloon chair, smashed from its pivot. A battered chronometer. For the rest, fragments of timber intermingled with pulverized coral and broken crockery.

A little further on, the deep-water entrance to the lagoon curved between sunken rocks. On one of them rested the Sirdar's huge funnel. The northwest section of the reef was bare. Among the wreckage he found a coil of stout rope and a pulley. He instantly conceived the idea of constructing an aerial line to ferry the chest of tea across the channel he had forded.

He threaded the pulley with the rope and climbed the tree, adding a touch of artistic completeness to the ruin of his trousers by the operation. He had fastened the pulley high up the trunk before he realized how much more simple it would be to break open the chest, where it lay and transport its contents in small parcels.

He laughed lightly. "I am becoming addleheaded," he said to himself. "Anyhow, now the job is done I may as well make use of it."

Recoiling the rope-ends, he cast them across to the reef. In such small ways do men throw invisible dice with death. With those two lines he would, within a few fleeting seconds, drag himself back from eternity.

Picking up the axe, he carelessly stepped into the water, not knowing that Iris, having welded the incipient sago into a flat pancake, had strolled to the beach and was watching him.

The water was hardly above his knees when there came a swirling rush from the seaweed. A long tentacle shot out like a lasso and gripped his right leg. Another coiled round his waist.

"My God!" he gurgled, as a horrid sucker closed over his mouth and nose. He was in the grip of a devil-fish.

A deadly sensation of nausea almost overpowered him, but the love of life came to his aid, and he tore the suffocating feeler from his face. Then the axe whirled, and one of the eight arms of the octopus lost some of its length. Yet a fourth flung itself around his left ankle. A few feet away, out of range of the axe, and lifting itself bodily out of the water, was the dread form of the cuttle, apparently all head, with distended gills and monstrous eyes.

The sailor's feet were planted wide apart. With frenzied effort he hacked at the murderous tentacles, but the water hindered him, and he was forced to lean back, in superhuman strain, to avoid losing his balance. If once this terrible assailant got him down he knew he was lost. The very need to keep his feet prevented him from attempting to deal a mortal blow.

The cuttle was anchored by three of its tentacles. Its remaining arm darted with sinuous activity to again clutch the man's face or neck. With the axe he smote madly at the curling feeler, diverting its aim time and again, but failing to deliver an effective stroke.

With agonized prescience the sailor knew that he was yielding. Were the devil-fish a giant of its tribe he could not have held out so long. As it was, the creature could afford to wait, strengthening its grasp, tightening its coils, pulling and pumping at its prey with remorseless certainty.

He was nearly spent. In a paroxysm of despair he resolved to give way, and with one mad effort seek to bury the axe in the monster's brain. But ere he could execute this fatal project—for the cuttle would have instantly swept him into the trailing weeds—five revolver shots rang out in quick succession. Iris had reached the nearest rock.

The third bullet gave the octopus cause to reflect. It squirted forth a torrent of dark-colored fluid. Instantly the water became black, opaque. The tentacle flourishing in air thrashed the surface with impotent fury; that around Jenk's waist grew taut and rigid. The axe flashed with the inspiration of hope. Another arm was severed; the huge dismembered coil slackened and fell away.

Yet was he anchored immovably. He turned to look at Iris. She never forgot the fleeting expression of his face. So might Lazarus have looked from the tomb.

"The rope!" she screamed, dropping the revolver and seizing the loose ends lying at her feet.

She drew them tight and leaned back, pulling with all her strength. The sailor flung the axe to the rocks and grasped the two ropes. He raised himself and plunged wildly. He was free. With two convulsive strides he was at the girl's side.

He stumbled to a boulder and dropped in complete collapse. After a time he felt Iris' hand placed timidly on his shoulder. He raised his head and saw her eyes shining.

"Thank you," he said. "We are quits now."

CHAPTER VI

Some Explanations.

Fierce emotions are necessarily transient, but for the hour they exhaust the psychic capacity. The sailor had gone through such mental stress before it was yet noon that he was benumbed, wholly incapable of further sensation. Seneca tells how the island of Theresaea arose in a moment from the sea, thereby astounding ancient mariners, as well it might. Had this manifestation been repeated within a cable's length from the reef, Jenks was in mood to accept it as befitting the new order of things.

Being in good condition, he soon recovered his physical powers. He was outwardly little the worse for the encounter with the devil-fish. The skin around his mouth was sore. His waist and legs were bruised. One sweep of the axe had cut clean through the bulging leather of his left boot without touching the flesh. In a word, he was practically uninjured.

He had the doglike habit of shaking himself at the close of a fray. He did so now when he stood up. Iris showed clearer signs of the ordeal. Her face was drawn and haggard, the pupils of her eyes dilated. She was gazing into depths, illimitable, unexplored. Compassion awoke at sight of her.

"Come," said Jenks, gently. "Let us get back to the island."

He quietly resumed predominance, helping her over the rough pathway of the reef, almost lifting her when the difficulties were great.

He did not ask her how it happened that she came so speedily to his assistance. Enough that she had done it, daring all for his sake. She was weak and trembling. With the acute vision of the soul she saw again, and yet again, the deadly malice of the octopus, the divine despair of the man.

Reaching the firm sand, she could walk alone She limped. Instantly her companion's blunted emotions quickened into life. He caught her arm and said hoarsely:

"Are you hurt in any way?"

The question brought her back from dreamland. A waking nightmare was happily shattered into dim fragments. She even strove to smile unconcernedly.

"It is nothing," she murmured. "I stumbled on the rocks. There is no sprain. Merely a blow, a bit of skin rubbed off, above my ankle."

"Let me carry you."

"The idea! Carry me! I will race you to the cave."

It was no idle jest. She wanted to run—to get away from that inky blotch in the green water.

"You are sure it is a trifle?"

"Quite sure. My stocking chafes a little; that is all. See, I will show you."

She stooped, and with the quiet skill of woman, rolled down the stocking on her right leg. Modestly daring, she stretched out her foot and slightly lifted her dress. On the outer side of the tapering limb was an ugly bruise scratched deeply by the coral.

He exhibited due surgical interest. His manner, his words, became professional.

"We will soon put that right," he said. "A strip off your muslin dress soaked in brandy, will—"

"Brandy!" she exclaimed.

"Yes; we have some, you know. Brandy is a great tip for bruised wounds. It can be applied both ways, inside and out."

This was better. They were steadily drifting back to the commonplace. Whilst she stitched together some muslin strips he knocked the head off a bottle of brandy. They each drank a small quantity, and the generous spirit brought color to their wan cheeks. The sailor showed Iris how to fasten a bandage by twisting the muslin round the upper part of his boot. For the first time she saw the cut made by the axe.

"Did the thing grip you there?" she nervously inquired.

"There and elsewhere. All over at once, it felt like. The beast attacked me with five arms."

She shuddered. "I dont know how you could fight it," she said. "How strong, how brave you must be."

This amused him. "The veriest coward will try to save his own life," he answered. "If you use such adjectives to me, what words can I find to do justice to you, who dared to come close to such a vile-looking creature and kill it. I must thank my stars that you carried the revolver."

"Ah," she said, "that reminds me. You do not practice what you preach. I found your pistol lying on the stone in the cave. That is one reason why I followed you."

It was quite true. He laid the weapon aside when delving at the rock, and forgot to replace it in his belt.

"It was stupid of me," he admitted; "but I am not sorry."

"Why?"

"Because, as it is, I owe you my life."

"You owe me nothing," she snapped. "It is very thoughtless of you to run such risks. What will become of me if anything happens to you? My point of view is purely selfish, you see."

"Quite so. Purely selfish." He smiled sadly. "Selfish people of your type are somewhat rare, Miss Deane."

Not a conversation worth noting, perhaps, but so far as it is typical of the trite utterances of people striving to recover from some treacherous ordeal. Epigrams delivered at the foot of the scaffold have always been carefully prepared beforehand.

The bandage was ready; one end was well soaked in brandy. She moved towards the cave, but he cried—

"Wait one minute. I want to get a couple of crowbars."

"What for?"

"I must go back there." He jerked his head in the direction of the reef. She uttered a sob of dismay.

"I will incur no danger this time," he explained. "I have found a box of rifles there. We must have them; they may mean salvation."

When Iris was determined about anything, her chin dimpled. It puckered delightfully now.

"I will come with you," she announced.

"Very well. I will wait for you. The tide will serve for another hour."

He knew he had decided rightly. She could not bear to be alone yet. Soon the bandage was adjusted and they returned to the reef. Scrambling now with difficulty over the rough and dangerous track, Iris was secretly amazed by the remembrance of the daring activity she displayed during her earlier passage along the same precarious roadway.

Then she darted from rock to rock with the fearless certainty of a chamois. Her only stumble was caused, she recollected, by an absurd effort to avoid wetting her dress. She laughed nervously when they reached the place. This time Jenks lifted her across the intervening channel.

"Is this the spot where you fell?" he asked, tenderly.

"Yes; how did you guess it?"

"I read it in your eyes."

"Then please do not read my eyes, but look where you are going."

"Perhaps I was doing that too," he said.

They were standing on the landward side of the shallow water in which he fought the octopus.

Already the dark fluid emitted by his assailant in its final discomfiture was passing away, owing to the slight movement of the tide.

Iris was vaguely conscious of a double meaning in his words. She did not trouble to analyze them. All she knew was that the man's voice conveyed a subtle acknowledgment of her feminine divinity. The resultant thrill of happiness startled, even dismayed her. This incipient flirtation must be put a stop to instantly.

"Now that you have brought me here with so much difficulty, what are you going to do?" she said. "It will be madness for you to attempt to ford that passage again. Where there is one of those horrible things there are others, I suppose."

Jenks smiled. Somehow he knew that this strict adherence to business was a cloak for her real thoughts. Already these two were able to dispense with spoken words.

But he sedulously adopted her pretext. "That is one reason why I brought the crowbars," he explained. "If you will sit down for a little while I will have everything properly fixed."

He delved with one of the bars until it lodged in a crevice of the coral. Then a few powerful blows with the back of the axe wedged it firmly enough to bear any ordinary strain. The rope-ends reeved through the pulley on the tree were lying where they fell from the girl's hand at the close of the struggle. He deftly knotted them to the rigid bar, and a few rapid turns of a piece of wreckage passed between the two lines strung them into a tautness that could not be attained by any amount of pulling.

Iris watched the operation in silence. The sailor always looked at his best when hard at work. The half-sullen, wholly self-contained expression left his face, which lit up with enthusiasm and concentrated intelligence. That which he essayed he did with all his might. Will power and physical force worked harmoniously. She had never before seen such a man. At such moments her admiration of him was unbounded.

He toiling with steady persistence, felt not the inward spur which sought relief in speech, but Iris was compelled to say something.

"I suppose," she commented with an air of much wisdom, "you are contriving an overhead railway for the safe transit of yourself and the goods?"

"Y—yes."

"Why are you so doubtful about it?"

"Because I personally intend to walk across. The ropes will serve to convey the packages."

She rose imperiously. "I absolutely forbid you to enter the water again. Such a suggestion on your part is quite shameful. You are taking a great risk for no very great gain that I can see, and if anything happens to you I shall be left all alone in this awful place."

She could think of no better argument. Her only resource was a woman's expedient—a plea for protection against threatening ills.

The sailor seemed to be puzzled how best to act.

"Miss Deane," he said, "there is no such serious danger as you imagine. Last time the cuttle caught me napping. He will not do it again. Those fifteen I must have. If it will serve to reassure you, I will go along the line myself."

He made this concession grudgingly. In very truth, if danger still lurked in the neighboring sea, he would be far less able to avoid it while clinging to a rope that sagged with his weight, and thus working a slow progress across the channel, than if he were on his feet and prepared to make a rush backwards or forwards.

Not until Iris watched him swinging along with vigorous overhead clutches did this phase of the undertaking occur to her.

"Come!" she screamed.

He did not go and dropped into the water. Turning towards her.

"What is the matter now?" he said.

"Come back! Do!"

He stood meekly on the further side to listen to her rating.

"You knew all the time that it would be better to walk, yet to please me you adopted an absurdly difficult method. Why did you do it?"

"You have answered your own question."

"Well, I am very, very angry with you."

"I'll tell you what," he said, "if you will forgive me I will try and jump back. I once did nineteen feet three inches in—er—in a meadow, but it makes such a difference when you look at a stretch of water the same width."

"I wish you would not stand there talking nonsense. The tide will be over the reef in half an hour," she cried.

Without another word he commenced operations. There was plenty of rope, and the plan he adopted was simplicity itself. When each package was securely fastened he attached it to a loop that passed over the line stretched from the tree to the crowbar. To this loop he tied the lightest rope he could find and threw the other end to Iris. By pulling slightly she was able to land at her feet even the cumbrous rifle-chest, for the traveling angle was so acute that the heavier the article the more readily it sought the lower level.

They toiled in silence until Jenks could lay hands on nothing more of value. Then, observing due care, he quickly passed the channel. For an instant the girl gazed affrightedly at the sea until the sailor stood at her side again.

"You see," he said, "you have scared every cuttle within miles." And he thought that he would give many years of his life to be able to take her in his arms and kiss away her anxiety.

But the tide had turned; in a few minutes the reef would be partly submerged. To carry the case of rifles to the mainland was a manifestly impossible feat, so Jenks now did that which, done earlier, would have saved him some labor—he broke open the chest, and found that the weapons were apparently in excellent order.

He snapped the locks and squinted down the barrels of half a dozen to test them. These he laid on one side. Then he rapidly constructed a small raft from loose timbers, binding them roughly with rope, and to this argosy he fastened the box of tea, the barrels of flour, the broken saloon-chair, and other small articles which might be of use. He avoided any difficulty in launching the raft by building it close to the water's edge. When all was ready the rising tide floated it for him; he secured it to his longest rope, and gave it a vigorous push off into the lagoon. Then he slung four rifles across his shoulders, asked Iris to carry the remaining two in like manner, and began to manoeuvre the raft landwards.

"Whilst you land the goods I will prepare dinner," announced the girl.

"Please be careful not to slip again on the rocks," he said.

"Indeed I will. My ankle gives me a reminder at each step."

"I was more concerned about the rifles. If you fell you might damage them, and the incoming tide will so hopelessly rust those I leave behind that they will be useless."

She laughed. This assumption at brutality no longer deceived her.

"I will preserve them at any cost, though with six in our possession there is a margin for accidents. However, to reassure you, I will go back quickly. If I fall a second time you will still be able to replace any deficiencies in our armament."

Before he could protest she started off at a run, jumping lightly from rock to rock, though the effort cost her a good deal of pain. Disregarding his shouts, she persevered until she stood safely on the sands. Then saucily waving a farewell, she set off towards the cave.

Had she seen the look of fierce despair that settled down upon Jenk's face as he turned to his task of guiding the raft ashore she might have wondered what it meant. In any case she would certainly have behaved differently.

By the time the sailor had safely landed his cargo Iris had cooked their midday meal. She achieved a fresh culinary triumph. The eggs were fried!

"I am seriously thinking of trying to boil a ham, she stated gravely. "Have you any idea how long it takes to cook one properly?"

"A quarter of an hour for each pound."

"Admirable! But we can measure neither hours nor pounds."

"I think we can do both. I will construct a balance of some kind. Then, with a ham slung to one end, and a rifle and some cartridges to the other, I will tell you the weight of the ham to an ounce. To ascertain the time, I have already determined to fashion a sun-dial. I remember the requisite divisions with reasonable accuracy, and a little observation will enable us to correct any mistake."

"You are really very clever, Mr. Jenks," said Iris, with childlike candor. "Have you spent several years of your life in preparing for residence on a desert island?"

"Something of the sort. I have led a queer kind of existence, full of useless purposes. Fate has driven me into a corner where my odds and ends of knowledge are actually valuable. Such accidents make men millionaires.

"Useless purposes!" she repeated. "I can hardly credit that. One uses such a phrase to describe fussy people, alive with foolish activity. Your worst enemy would not place you in such a category."

"My worst enemy made the phrase effective at any rate, Miss Deane."

"You mean that he ruined your career?"

"Well—er—yes. I suppose that describes the position with fair accuracy."

"Was he a very great scoundrel?"

"He was, and is."

Jenks spoke with quiet bitterness. The girl's words had evoked a sudden flood of recollection. For the moment he did not notice how he had been trapped into speaking of himself, nor did he see the quiet content on Iris's face when she elicited the information that his chief foe was a man. A certain tremulous hesitancy in her manner when she next spoke might have warned him, but his hungry soul caught only the warm sympathy of her words, which fell like rain on parched soil.

"You are tired," she said. "Won't you smoke for a little while, and talk to me?"

He produced his pipe and tobacco, but he used his right hand awkwardly. It was evident to her alert eyes that the torn quick on his injured finger was hurting him a great deal. The exciting events of the morning had caused him temporarily to forget his wound, and the rapid coursing of the blood through the veins was now causing him agonized throbs.

With a cry of distress she sprang to her feet and insisted upon washing the wound. Then she tenderly dressed it with a strip of linen well soaked in brandy, thinking the while, with a sudden rush of color to her face, that although he could suggest this remedy for her slight hurt, he gave no thought to his own serious injury. Finally she pounced upon his pipe and tobacco-box.

"Don't be alarmed," she laughed. "I have often filled my father's pipe for him. First, you put the tobacco in loosely, taking care not to use any that is too finely powdered. Then you pack the remainder quite tightly. But I was nearly forgetting. I haven't blown through the pipe to see if is clean."

She suited the action to the word, using much needless breath in the operation.

"That is a first-rate pipe," she declared. "My father always said that a straight stem, with the bowl at a right angle, was the correct shape. You evidently agree with him."

"Absolutely."

"You will like my father when you meet him. He is the very best man alive, I am sure."

"You two are great friends, then?"

"Great friends! He is the only friend I possess in the world."

"What! Is that quite accurate?"

"Oh, quite. Of course, Mr. Jenks, I can never forget how much I owe to you. I like you immensely, too, although you are so—so gruff to me at times. But—but—you see, my father and I have always been together. I have neither brother nor sister, not even a cousin. My dear mother died from some horrid fever when I was quite a little girl. My father is everything to me."

"Dear child!" he murmured, apparently uttering his thoughts aloud rather than addressing her directly. "So you find me gruff, eh!"

"A regular bear, when you lecture me. But that is only occasionally. You can be very nice when you like, when you forget your past troubles. And pray, why do you call me a child?"

"Have I done so?"

"Not a moment ago. How old are you, Mr. Jenks? I am twenty—twenty last December."

"And I," he said, "will be twenty-eight in August."

"Good gracious!" she gasped. "I am very sorry, but I really thought you were forty at least."

"I look it, no doubt. Let me be equally candid and admit that you, too, show your age markedly."

She smiled nervously. "What a lot of trouble you must have had to—to—to—to give you those little wrinkles in the corners of your mouth and eyes," she said.

"Wrinkles! How terrible!"

"I don't know. I think they rather suit you; besides, it was stupid of me to imagine you were so old. I suppose exposure to the sun creates wrinkles, and you must have lived much in the open air."

"Early rising and late going to bed are bad for the complexion," he declared solemnly.

"I often wonder how many officers manage to exist," she said. "They never seem to get enough sleep, in the East, at any rate. I have seen them dancing four hours after midnight, and heard of them pig-sticking or schooling hunters at five o'clock next morning."

"So you assume I have been in the army?"

"I am quite sure of it."

"May I ask why?"

"Your manner, your voice, your quiet air of authority, the very way you walk, all betray you."

"Then," he said sady, "I will not attempt to deny the fact. I held a commission in the Indian Staff Corps for nine years. It was a hobby of mine, Miss Deane, to make myself acquainted with the best means of victualing my men and keeping them in good health under all sorts of fanciful conditions, and in every kind of climate, especially under circumstances when ordinary stores were not available. With that object in view I read up every possible country in which my regiment might be engaged, learnt the local names of common articles of food, and ascertained particularly what provision nature made to sustain life. The study interested me. Once, during the Soudan campaign, it was really useful, and procured me promotion."

"Tell me about it."

"During some operations in the desert it was necessary for my troop to follow up a small party of rebels mounted on camels, which, as you probably know, can go without water much longer than horses. We were almost within striking distance, when our horses completely gave out, but I luckily noticed indications which showed that there was water beneath a portion of the plain much below the general level. Half an hour's spade work proved that I was right. We took up the pursuit again, and ran the quarry to earth, and I got my captaincy."

"Was there no fight?"

He paused an appreciable time before replying. Then he evidently made up his mind to perform some disagreeable task. The watching girl could see the change in his face, the sharp transition from eager interest to angry resentment.

"Yes," he went on at last, "there was a fight. It was a rather stiff affair, because a troop of British cavalry which should have supported me had turned back, owing to the want of water already mentioned. But that did not save the officer in charge of the 24th Lancers from being severely reprimanded."

"The 24th Lancers!" cried Iris. "Lord Ventnor's regiment!"

"Lord Ventnor was the officer in question."

Her face crimsoned. "Then you know him!" she said.

"I do."

"Is he your enemy?"

"Yes."

"And that is why you were so agitated when you saw the Sirdar, when poor Lady Tozer asked me if I were engaged to him?"

"Yes."

"How could it affect you? You did not even know my name then?"

Poor Iris! She did not stop to ask herself why she framed her question in such manner, but the sailor was now too profoundly moved to heed the slip. She could not tell how he was fighting with himself, fiercely beating down the inner barriers of self-love, sternly determined, once and for all, to reveal himself in such light to this beautiful and bewitching woman that in future she would learn to regard him only as an outcast whose company she must perforce tolerate until relief came.

"It affected me because the sudden mention of his name recalled my own disgrace. I quitted the army six months ago, Miss Deane, under very painful circumstances. A general court-martial found me guilty of conduct unbbecoming an officer and a gentleman. I was not even given the chance to resign. I was cashiered."

He pretended to speak with cool truculence. He thought to compel her into shrinking contempt. Yet his face blanched somewhat, and though he steadily kept the pipe between his teeth, and smoked with studied unconcern, his lips twitched a little.

And he dared not look at her, for the girl's wondering eyes were fixed upon him, and the blush had disappeared as quickly as it came.

"I remember something of this," she said slowly, never once averting her gaze. "There was some gossip concerning it when I first came to Hong Kong. You are Captain Robert Anstruther!"

"I am."

"And you publicly thrashed Lord Ventnor as the result of a quarrel about a woman?"

"Your recollection is quite accurate."

"Who was to blame?"

"The lady said that I was."

"Was it true?"

Robert Anstruther, late captain of Bengal Cavalry, rose to his feet. He preferred to take his punishment standing.

"The court-martial agreed with her, Miss Deane, and I am a prejudiced witness," he replied.

"Who was the—lady?"

"The wife of my colonel, Mrs. Costobell."

"Oh!"

Long afterwards he remembered the agony of that moment, and winced even at the remembrance. But he had decided upon a fixed policy, and he was a man to flinch from consequences. Miss Deane must be taught to despise him, else, God help them both, she might learn to love him as he now loved her. So, blundering towards his goal as men always blunder where a woman's heart is concerned, he blindly persisted in allowing her to make such false deductions as she chose from his words.

Iris was the first to regain some measure of self-control.

"I am glad you have been so candid, Captain Anstruther," she commenced, but he broke in abruptly—

"Jenks, if you please, Miss Deane. Robert Jenks."

There was a curious light in her eyes, but he did not see it, and her voice was marvelously subdued as she continued:

"Certainly, Mr. Jenks. Let me be equally explicit before we quit the subject. I have met Mrs. Costobell. I do not like her. I consider her a deceitful woman. Your court-martial might have found a different verdict had its members been of her sex. As for Lord Ventnor, he is nothing to me. It is true he asked my father to be permitted to pay his addresses to me, but my dear old dad left the matter wholly to my decision, and I certainly never gave Lord Ventnor any encouragement. I believe now that Mrs. Costobell lied, and that Lord Ventnor lied, when they attributed any dishonorable action to you, and I am glad that you beat him in the Club. I am quite sure he deserved it."

Not one word did this strange man vouchsafe in reply. He started violently, seized the axe lying at his feet, and went straight among the trees, keeping his face turned from Iris so that she might not see the tears in his eyes.

As for the girl, she began to scour her cooking utensils with much energy, and soon commenced a song. Considering that she was compelled to constantly endure the company of a degraded officer, who had been expelled from the service with ignominy, she was absurdly contented. Indeed, with the happy inconsequence of youth, she quickly threw all care to the winds, and devoted her thoughts to planning a surprise for the next day by preparing some tea, provided she could surreptitiously open the chest.

CHAPTER VII.

Surprises.

Before night closed their third day on the island Jenks managed to construct a roomy tent-house, with a framework of sturdy trees selected on account of their location. To these he nailed or tied crossbeams of felled saplings; and the tarpaulins dragged from the beach supplied roof and walls. It required the united strength of Iris and himself to haul into position the heavy sheet that topped the structure, whilst he was compelled to desist from active building operations in order to fashion a rough ladder. Without some such contrivance he could not get the topmost supports adjusted at a sufficient height.

Although the edifice required at least two more days of hard work before it would be fit for habitation Iris wished to take up her quarters there immediately. This the sailor would not hear of.

"In the cave," he said, "you are absolutely sheltered from all the winds that blow or rain that falls. Our villa, however, is painfully leaky and draughty at present. When asleep, the whole body is relaxed, and you are then most open to the attacks of cold or fever, in which case, Miss Deane, I shall be reluctantly obliged to dose you with a concoction of that tree there."

He pointed to a neighboring cinchona, and Iris naturally asked why he selected that particular brand.

"Because it is quinine, not made up in nice little tabloids, but au naturel. It will not be a bad plan if we prepare a strong infusion, and take a small quantity every morning on the excellent principle that prevention is better than cure."

The girl laughed.

"Good gracious!" she said; "that reminds me——"

But the words died away on her lips in sudden fright. They were standing on the level plateau in front of the cave, well removed from the trees, and they could see distinctly on all sides, for the sun was sinking in a cloudless sky and the air was preternaturally clear, being free now from the tremulous haze of the hot hours.

Across the smooth expanse of sandy ground came the agonized shriek of a startled bird—a large bird, it would seem—winging its way towards them with incredible swift[illegible]

cession of loud full-voiced notes of alarm.

Yet the strange thing was that not a bird was to be seen. At that hour the ordinary feathered inhabitants of the island were quietly nestling among the branches preparatory to making a final selection of the night's resting place. None of them would stir unless actually disturbed.

Iris drew near to the sailor. Involuntarily she caught his arm. He stepped a half-pace in front of her forward off any danger that might be heralded by this new and uncanny phenomenon. Together they strained their eyes in the direction of the approaching sound, but apparently their sight was bewitched, as nothing whatever was visible.

"Oh, what is it?" wailed Iris, who now clung to Jenks in a state of great apprehension.

The clucking noise came nearer, passed them within a yard, and was already some distance away towards the reef when the sailor burst into a hearty laugh, none the less genuine because of the relief it gave to his bewildered senses.

Reassured, but still white with fear, Iris cried: "Do speak, please, Mr. Jenks. What was it?"

"A beetle!" he managed to gasp.

"A beetle?"

"Yes, a small, insignificant-looking fellow too—so small that I did not see him until he was almost out of range. He has the loudest voice for his size in the whole of creation. A man able to shout on the same scale could easily make himself heard for twenty miles."

"Then I do not like such beetles; I always hated them but this latest variety is positively detestable. Such nasty things ought to be kept in zoological gardens and not turned loose. Moreover my tea will be boiled into spinach."

Nevertheless the tea though minus sugar or milk was grateful enough and particularly acceptable to the sailor, who entertained Iris with a disquisition on the many virtues of that marvelous beverage. Curiously enough, the lifting of the veil upon the man's earlier history made these two much better friends. With more complete acquaintance there was far less tendency towards certain passages which, under ordinary conditions could be construed as nothing else than downright flirtation.

They made the pleasing discovery that they could both sing. There was hardly an opera in vogue that one or other did not know sufficiently well to be able to recall the chief musical numbers. Iris had a sweet and sympathetic mezzo-soprano voice, Jenks an excellent baritone, and to the secret amazement of the girl, he rendered one or two well-known Anglo-Indian barrack-room ditties with much humor.

This, then, was the mise-en-scene.

Iris, seated in the broken saloon-chair, which the sailor had firmly wedged into the sand for her accommodation, was attired in a close-fitting costume, selected from the small store of garments so wisely preserved by Jenks. She wore a pair of clumsy men's boots, several sizes too large for her. Her hair was tied up in a gypsy knot on the back of her head, and the light of a cheerful log fire danced in her blue eyes.

Jenks, unshaven and ragged, squatted tailorwise near her. Close at hand, on two sides, the shaggy walls of rock rose in solemn grandeur. The neighboring trees, decked now in the sable livery of night, were dimly outlined against the deep misty blue of sea and sky or wholly merged in the shadow of the cliffs.

They lost themselves in the peaceful influences of the hour. Shipwrecked, remote from human kind, environed by dangers known or only conjectured, two solitary beings on a tiny island, thrown haphazard from the depths of the China Sea, this young couple, after passing unscathed through perils unknown even to the writers of melodrama, lifted up their voices in the sheer exuberance of good spirits and abounding vitality.

The girl was specially attracted by "The Buffalo Battery," a rollicking lyric known to all Anglo-India from Peshawur to Tuticorin. The air is the familiar one of the "Hen Convention," and the opening verse runs in this wise:

I love to hear the Sepoy with his bold
and martial tread,
And the thud of the galloping cavalry
re-echoes through my head;
But sweeter far than any sound by
mortal ever made,
Is the tramp of the Buffalo Battery a-
going to parade.

Chorus:

For it's "Hainya! hainya! hainya!
hainya!"
Twist their tails and go.
With a "Hathi! hathi! hathi!" elephant and buffalo.
"Teri-ma!" "Chel-lo!"
Oh, that's the way they shout all day,
and drive the buffalo.

Iris would not be satisfied until she understood the meaning of the Hindustani phrases, mastered the nasal pronunciation of "hainya," and placed the artificial accent on phant and lo in the second line of the chorus.

Jenks was concluding the last verse when there came, hurtling through the air, the weird cries of the singing beetle returning, perchance, from successful foray on the palm-tree Rock. This second advent of the insect put an end to the concert. Within a quarter of an hour they were asleep.

Thenceforth, for ten days, they labored unceasingly, starting work at daybreak and stopping only when the light failed, finding the long hours of sunshine all too short for the manifold tasks demanded of them, yet thankful that the night brought rest. The sailor made out a programme to which he rigidly adhered. In the first place, he completed the house, which had two compartments, an inner room in which Iris slept, and an outer, which served as a shelter for their meals and provided a bedroom for the man.

Then he constructed a gigantic sign on Summit Rock, the small plateau of boulders on top of the cliff. His chief difficulty was to hoist into place the tall poles he needed, and for this purpose he had to again visit Palm tree Rock in order to secure the pulley. By exercising much ingenuity in devising shear-legs, he at last succeeded in lifting the masts into their allotted receptacles, where they were firmly secured. Finally he was able to swing into air, high above the tops of the neighboring trees, the loftiest of which he failed in order to clear the view on all sides, the name of the ship Sirdar, fashioned in six-foot letters nailed and spiked together in sections and made from the timbers of that ill-fated vessel.

Meanwhile he taught Iris how to weave a net out of the strands of unraveled cordage. With this, weighted by bullets, he contrived a casting-net and caught a lot of small fish in the lagoon. At first they were unable to decide which varities were edible, until a happy expedient occurred and the seabirds can

(Continued Next Tuesday.)

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Needs of The Na

Lord Selborne Explains Large Expenditure Is Rea Required.

Warmly Defends Outlay and cessity of Having Large Ships.

Great Britain Ready to Other Nations in Curtail-ing Construction.

London, Aug. 9.—Replying to the cism of the naval expenditure in House of Lords today, Lord Selb First Lord of the Admiralty, warmly fended the outlay. He said it was important than ever before that the fleetships should be of the largest and type.

Referring to submarine boats, Selborne said their value for defe purposes had been abundantly pr They were a great addition to the tional strength. He did not be submarine boats had reached their of improvement or usefulness. The sons from the war in the Far East the importance of the personnel, the cessity for having a margin of stre and the fact that without battleship power could hold or win comma the sea.

Lord Selborne said the offer of Godden made when he was first lor the admiralty, that if other nations w agree to diminish their rate of shipb ing, Great Britain would not be slo join the movement, had not been Crewdson, but the conditions now were complicated. A few years ago it w have sufficed if France and Great Br had agreed to diminish their shipbuil but now there was almost half a d great naval powers and if Great Br and France must consider the expend of other powers. The two powers' dard was convenient as regards he ships, but had never had its applica to cruisers or torpedo boats.

Continuing, Lord Selborne referred the newspaper comparisons of the mery and strength of the German ves which recently had visited England, pointed out that the German ships car eighteen six-inch guns, compared twelve on the ships of the British C nell Bell. But the British ships car ten-inch, twelve-inch and thirteen an half-inch guns, while there was not a gle gun on the German visiting fleet w a calibre over 9.4-inch.

RUSSIAN AUXILIARY CRUISE

Lisbon, Portugal, Aug. 10.—The R sian auxiliary cruiser Ural, which off this port yesterday, has proced It is supposed that she is bound for Mediterranean. Presumably the Ura the vessel which recently held up British steamer Manora, off Cape Fi turve.

HIS MAJESTY FOR MARIENBA

London, Aug. 10.—King Edward st Marienb