

doesn't believe in boys smoking, and has forbidden me to learn."

"Your father's a sensible man, my boy," said Ben; then added, "Well, you'd best stay about the hut to-day, since you feel so still. I've got to go off, but I'll be back by mid-day." He put on his hat and went away, leaving Eric and Prince in possession of the establishment.

Eric did not by any means like the idea of being left alone, but he naturally shrank from saying so. He went to the door and regretfully looked after the tall figure striding swiftly over the sand until it disappeared behind a hillock, beyond which he thought must be the ocean.

Now that he was left entirely to his own resources, Eric's curiosity began to assert itself. Had he but known in what direction to go, and he felt equal to the task, his first business would certainly have been to set forth in search of the wreck; if haply he might find traces of other survivors besides himself.

But neither could he tell where to go, nor was he fit to walk any great distance. For aught he knew, he might be miles from the beach where the *Francis* finally struck.

Anyway, Evil-Eye was certain to be there, hunting for more prizes, and he had no wish

that gave him an electric thrill, and sent the blood bounding wildly through his veins.

What if that port-hole were the repulsive countenance of Evil-Eye, and they were alone together? Would he be able to resist the impulse to give with his forefinger the slight pressure upon the finely-balanced trigger that would send a bullet crashing into the ruffian's brain? So intense was his excitement that he almost staggered under its influence. For the first time in his life an overwhelming passion for revenge, for retribution, took possession of him, and carried him out of himself. Smooth, clear, and as bright as the lovely stream that watered the Oakdene meadows, had been the current of his life hitherto. To few boys had the lines fallen in pleasant places.

Yet this happy fortune had not rendered him unmanly or irresolute. He was capable of conceiving and carrying out any purpose that lay within the range of a boy's powers. The Copeland courage and the Copeland determination were his inheritance.

Now never before had he been brought into contact with anyone who had so roused his repulsion or hatred as Evil-Eye. Not only because of his hideous appearance and threatened violence, but because of Ben's dark hints and his own suspicions as to Evil-

Eye's part there, have you? Well, put it back in its place, and don't touch it again."

Foiling very confused, Eric replaced the pistols carefully, their owner watching him with a malign glare which boded him no good. Its meaning was not lost upon observant Ben.

"Come, my lad," said he; "a bit of an airing will do you good. Put on your cap, and come out with me."

Only too glad to obey, Eric picked up his cap, and calling to Prince, followed Ben out

don't leave that boy alone, I'll break every bone in your body."

As if that boy were so completely taken aback by this unexpected interference, that he seemed dazed for a moment. Then his hand went again to his belt, as though he would turn his bodily fury upon Ben. But evidently a wiser second thought prevailed, and clucking down his wrath, he growled out, contemptuously:

"Don't be in such a stew. I'm not going to hurt your baby. I was only teaching him manners, and not to meddle with other people's belongings without first asking their leave."

This speech drew Ben's attention to the pistol Eric still held in his hand.

"Ah," said he; "you've got one of Evil-Eye's parts there, have you? Well, put it back in its place, and don't touch it again."

Upon the crest of a sand-hill, a hundred feet or more in height, which sloped to the beach, upon whose glistening sands the great billows were breaking, although the day was clear and calm. Far out beyond the serrated lines of white-maned sea-couriers, the ocean could be seen sleeping peacefully.

Here and there, upon the sandbars, the hulls of vessels in varying stages of destruction, told plainly how common was the fate which had befallen the *Francis*, and how rich a field the wreckers had chosen for their dreadful business.

Turning to his right, Eric saw a long narrow lake in the middle of the island, its banks densely grown with rushes and lilies. Upon its placid surface flocks of ducks were paddling, white snipe and sand-pipe hopped along the margin. The valley of the lake presented a curious contrast to those portions of the island that faced seaward, for it was thickly carpeted with coarse grass and wild vines, which were still green enough to be grateful to the eye weary of the monotony of sand and sea.

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"You're feeling tired," Eric was tired, and very glad indeed to

into the open air, leaving Evil-Eye alone in the hut.

The sun was high in the heavens, the sky almost cloudless, and the wind blew as softly and innocently from the south as though it had not roared with fatal fury but a few hours before. Eric's spirits, which had been woefully depressed by the events of the past two days, began to rise a little; and he looked about him with much interest, as he trudged along, through the deep sand.

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