By John A. Steuart.

"And do you really mean to say there's danger?"

"That's just as you look at it. If the risk of being killed without prayers is danger, then we are not in the safest place on earth. That's a good one, Mr. Kilgour; take it with you."

I stowed the weapon away while he rummaged in the box.

"Here, will you have one of these?"
he asked, a moment later, holding up a sheaf of daggers. But they were too suggestive, and I declined the offer.

Well, well, so be it," he remarked, putting back daggers and pistols into their place. "Since you won't have a dagger, I suppose it's no use offering you a sword. No, I thought so. Well, now for the copestone of the counsel," now for the copestone of the counsel,"
he continued, standing erect and looking me straigst in the eyes. "Don't
let anyone get too familiar. The moment you smell trouble, draw and
blaze away. If you don't kill, you will
be respected; if you do kill, it's but
justice anyway. If you deliberate,
you're lost. And, now, lest they
should suspect a plot, let's go out,"
saying which he opened the door and
we went on deck. saying which he opened the door and we went on deck.

For the rest of that day I was hot, nervous, depressed, and ill at ease, yet with a certain feeling of consequence. Firearms give courage as the saddle confers authority. The touch of my pistol hilt thrilled me, and many a time did I surreptitiously slip in my hand just to gain assurance by grasping it.

ing it. I kept, as you may think, a keen eye on the crew, for though there was not a whit more danger now than there had been from the beginning, I detected treachery and a murderous intent in every act and look of the men. I expected bloodshed, and tried to convince myself I was prepared for it. expected bloodshed, and tried to convince myself I was prepared for it.

But indeed it was to matter little to me whether I were armed or not. The feeling of heat and debression grew upon me hour by hour. At first I naturally referred it to my conversation with Mr. Watson. But in this I was mistaken. I went to bed deadly sick, to toss in feverish paroxysms through the long night, and next morning I was so giddy that on attempting to rise I staggered and sank to the fioor. When I gathered myself together, the room was whirling like a huge spinning-wheel, carrying me with it in its gyrations. Steadying myself a little, I managed to crawl back to my berth on hands and knees, my eyes well-nigh eightless and my brows throbbing as if there were steam machinery inside. My skin burned with a prickly heat, and my throat and tongue were parched, sore, and swollen.

"I am in for it," I groaned. "God in heaven, and in such a hole as this!"

And presently when Mr. Watson looked in to see why I was not getting up my worst fears were confirmed.

"I'm devilish sorry to see this," ahe

ed.

"I'm devilish sorry to see this," he said, after examining me and hearing my symptoms. "You've got the fever that Portuguese chap died of. You brought it on board with you. It was raging in some quarters of the city. I'm devilish sorry, we're so ill off for medicine, or indeed, for anything that a sick body needs. But we'll do our best. I'll make you comfortable, and then I'll send the captain to see you."

In the course of helf an hour or so the captain came in, looked at me for a moment as he would at a sick beast, asked some perfunctory questions, and

callousness.

"There's no saying how this may go, you know, Mr. Kilgour," he said, after lying in his throat by saying he was sorry for me. "Fevers on board ship are bad at any time. They're doubly bad on East India traders. There's little room, evil smells, no resources, and the devil for a physician. If you have any message you would like delivered to your friends or anything to return to Scotland. I am at

first time in my existence I appreciated the boon of life, of the simple privilege of continuing to be and of the sovereign balm of sympathy. I shook with fright, and great beads broke out on my brow. Yet neither sickness nor fear could keep off anger. To die with fortitude, to renounce hopes, schemes, ambitions, to lay down life in its rosy morning hours, when the world is full of promise of bliss—to do this at a moment's notice and with resignation is possible, but it is not in human nature to be grateful for cruelty. The disease had not yet wholly mastered my spirit. There was one fierce spark left, and so, rising on my elbow and speaking in a voice that trembled and quivered, I ordered the man off.

man off.
"Go," I said. "Let me never look
on your face again. And when you
come to die pray you have a better He went without a sign of compas-He went without a sign of compassion or contrition, indeed, with a smirk of disdain, and I, falling back with a feeling of being forsaken by God and man, lost heart, and a scalding torrent soaked the coarse blankets. And in that moment of dire punishment, as if present evils were not enough, there smote upon my conscience the lightning-like stroke of an accusing memory. The thwarted plans of my father, the unheeded sorrow of my mother, were as arrows of fire in my soul. Fate had indeed permitted me to please myself, but she was now exacting payment, and the payment was my life.

he was dissembling his real oughts, and so I determined if pos-"You have seen cases of this sort before," I said. "Is it serious? Be plain, and tell me if you think I have a chance to pull through."

He seemed unwilling to answer the question, which, of course, was an inentive to me to press him.
If you don't answer," I said, "I'll know it's because you're afraid to tell

know it's because you're afraid to tell me the worst."

"You know the old proverb, Mr. Kilgour," he returned, slowly, "that while there's life there's hope."

"Just so," I said, "and that in cases like mine doesn't mean much, or, rather, it means a great deal."

"I will not mislead you, Mr. Kilgour," he rejoined, shifting about uneasily on his feet. "I think you have a bad attack, and this is a foul hole, and we are without proper remedies. But then you are young and have a good constitution, and that, as any doctor will tell you, is worth gallons of drugs."

"Thank you," I said. "I wanted your candid opinion."

And now, when I thought there was no chance of life, I grew calmer. Indeed, my fear almost vanished, for, as the wind is tempered to the shorn lamb, there is hardly an evil but brings its anodyne with it. its anodyne with it.

Mr. Watson left me abruptly, but presently he came back, carrying a book in his hand. It happened to be Sunday evening, and I fancied he was going to empley his leisure in reading a story to me. But it was a Bible, not a story-book, that the good soul held in his hand.

"I have been a good many years

held in his hand.

"I have been a good manv vears away from Scotland, Mr. Kilgour," he said, rather sheepishly, sidling up to my bed, "but I haven't quite forgotten the training of my youth nor the customs of my native land, and I am going to do now what, I think, your mother would be well pleased with." and, sitting down on the edge of my berth, he began to read. His voice was not very steady, and he coughed a good deal more than seemed at all meessary.

a good deal more than seemed at all meessary.

As for me, I listened in a dreamy, half-conscious state, feeling no fear, only dimly pitying the reader, whose smotion was so keen. When he had finished reading, he bent over me, stroking back my hair. "It's got the golden glint of boyhood in it yet," he murmured, and then, lower and very huskily, "Would you like me to pray?" It was a trouble to speak, so I held out my hand, caught his, and pressed it by way of answer. He retufned the pressure, looking down upon my hand and caressing it for a moment, then, holding it softly but firmly be-

tor a minute or so, then cast a shame-faced, side-long glance at me.

"Damme, if I've played the parson for years before," he laughed, furtively drawing the back of his hand across his eyes, then, as if fearing an answer, he hurried away.

It might be that same evening, or it might be some days or even a week later, for I have but a dim and confused memory of that period, that he came to me with a terrified face, saying the ship was in imminent peril. His speech was not immediately intelligible, for I seemed to be recovering from a stupor, but at length I caught the word "waterspout," and even to my dull sense it sounded ominous. Hardly had the word passed his lips when the brig shook to her centre as a cannon was fired on deck.

"That's to try to break it," he said. "Good God," he cried, in the same breath, but in a tone that was startlingly different, "it's tpon us! Mate, this treams hell and destruction."

Instantaneously there was a great rash, as if a sudden blow had rent this recans hell and destruction."

Instantaneously there was a great crash, as if a sudden blow had rent our timbers, and the brig flew up at the bows like a fisherman's punt when a heavy weight is swung on behind. I had my sconce dented in the bunk, and Mr. Watson swept the floor with his back like a kind of incontinent besom. When in the rebound the stern went up in turn, I fell back to my place breathless and helpless, and the supercargo, scrambling to his feet with the cat-like agility of a sallor, made desperately for the companion-way.

Way.

Then for an instant the vessel seem Then for an instant the vessel seemed to lie still, but the next she was reeling and dancing like an eggshell in a boiling caldron. Now she would rear from the bows, now from the stern, then tumble on her beam ends, careening till mast and keel must have been level, then rebound, then spring, shaking herself like a thing demented with pain, and all the while she cried and groaned in every timber with a terrorizing, human-like sense of the pangs of dissolution. I clung to my bunk with all my feeble might, unable to discern anything clearly, yet conscious in spite of darkness and terror of the swish of water rushing through the open door.

seas, yet frantically straining to hold on and to hail the quickly vanishing boats.

Every fibre in mv body shook with a mortal weakness and terror. My fingers were getting cramped and palsied; my breath was gone to a gásp, yet ever as mv strength waned the desire to shout for succour became the more desperate. Have you ever seen a spent animal panting with open mouth for a little aid in its extremity? Even so I panted then with distended but voiceless lips. I would have given a million worlds, had I owned them, for the return of my voice just for an instant to make one last appeal for help that would rise above the voice of the storm. But my weakness crowned me to silence.

In a sudden darkness the shock of a tremendous broadside hurled me back



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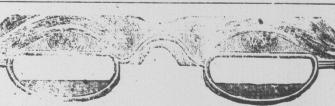
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