

"Oh! I am sure I shall stick to this dirty floor!" said he picking his way on the somewhat adhesive planks of the drug-store.

"I could not help laughing as I thought of the delicate Bonito's future sufferings on the brig *Eclipse*. There was also a Swede, Ringstrom, a very different sort of man, who joined us. We three young men went aboard jolly enough, although the outlook was not very cheerful.

"We found that the captain of the *Eclipse* had died of yellow fever since we took our passage, and that the mate, Nickerson, was in command. He was not a strong-looking man, nor did we feel great confidence in his knowledge of this treacherous shore.

"However, we were determined to go, and so set off. The first six hours out showed us that our captain was inefficient and sick, and Ringstrom, who was very superstitious, came up to tell me that we were thirteen in all—captain, eight sailors, three passengers, and the black cook.

"A fatal number, Mr. Campbell," said the Swede, looking at me with cold blue eyes.

"Oh, I don't know, Mr. Ringstrom," said I, "but I know these waters pretty well; and if you say so, I'll have a talk with the captain."

"I found Nickerson sick, stupid, obstinate, but not unwilling to listen to my description of the reefs which we must avoid. However, that night a soft, low, sighing wind came up that foretold a storm. We went to bed with heavy hearts. The next day there was a gale, and we went on, pitching terribly. The third day about midnight, the man at the wheel gave the alarm, and I jumped from my bunk to see a long white line of breakers under our lee. They looked like sea-monsters with angry white teeth ready to devour us.

"It seemed scarcely a minute before we were grating on the rocks and our masts were falling. Our brig was going all to pieces. We faced death that day and night with awful form.

"But, the first shock over, we seemed to have been beaten up high on the reef, beyond the heaving breakers, and to have time given to us perhaps to save our lives.

"Our large boat was stove in. We had but our little boat left.

"A raft! a raft!" said the Swede; "we must make a raft." In five minutes we were all at work at a raft. The breakers waited for us as we hastily roped spars, oars, everything together; and under the pressure of a heavy sea the ship parting more and more every minute, we finally got the raft in shape, and with a vigorous plunge and pull, put the boat on the raft; for if we had launched the boat, the hungry rocks and angry waves would have gnawed her to pieces at once. We had barely time to throw on the raft a bag of biscuits, and a barrel of water, which had unfortunately to be put into an old molasses cask. This made it bad from the very first. A sailor pitched in a small anchor and a piece of sail-cloth.

"Money!" said Bonito. "Take some money, Archie."

"And here I must pause to say that from the moment we struck, the fop had become a hero. Cheerful, courageous, thoughtful, we all noticed how helpful he was. But I did not think that his present suggestion was a good one. What should we want of money? Could we eat and drink doubloons!

The shining gold pieces for which I had been working so hard seemed to mock me with their uselessness.

"We shall want them if we ever land," said the pale Swede, Ringstrom.

"I hastily tied up a few of the gold pieces in a small bag and dropped them into the pocket of my coat, leaving by far the greater number on the table.

"We must draw lots, boys for the boat," said the captain, staggering toward us as a fresh sea swept over us.

"We all tumbled over the side of the ship, on to the raft, which carried us safely over the breakers into the smooth water. Then casting lots as to which should have the raft, we slid the boat off the raft, and the captain, Bonito, Ringstrom, the black cook and four sailors and myself got into her. Our poor comrades on the raft were never heard of again: when we last saw them their chances were as good as ours—their sufferings, perhaps, were shorter.

"We started for Jamaica, rowing. Now Jamaica was, according to my calculations, forty miles distant; but we soon found that we could do nothing that way, as the currents and winds were against us. The captain had grown very ill, and lay useless in the bottom of the boat. We were wet all the time; the sun was hot by day, and the nights were cold. Our bag of sea biscuit was wet through with sea water. Our barrel of molasses water had fermented. We suffered horribly from hunger, thirst and cramps. We put up an oar and nailed it in its place as well as we could, rigged up a sort of sail from the piece of sail-cloth one of the men had thrown in. So we sailed away before the wind. Three days and nights passed. We saw nothing save a clearer sky, for the storm had lulled.

"By this time we got used to our cramped position, to dreadful food and drink, and to each other. Bonito was the life of the boat. He was cheerful, lively, helpful, uncomplaining. The Swede was calm and unmoved, and helped me to keep the log on the fly-leaf of Blunt's *Coast Pilot*. We made our reckoning by the stars and sun; and our coloured cook, whom we called the doctor, showed remarkable talent for measuring distance. He was a sort of untaught Bowditch and navigator by instinct.

"The captain was soon joined in the bottom by another sick man, who groaned and raved with incipient fever. To ease his pains I one night took off my coat, and, wrapping it around my bag, gave it to him for a pillow. Our little company had elected me captain, and I doled out the miserable water and the soaked biscuit to each man. Not a word of grumbling. Indeed, what good would that have done in our narrow quarters?

"We were now approaching Honduras, and the great reef which runs along in a parallel line sixty miles from the coast was just before us. A dark, rough night, a flying surf, and a general gloom settled upon us. We had now been out nine days. The lookout at the bow could see nothing, and asked leave to come in and huddle with the rest of us, a permission which was granted hopelessly and sadly.

"When lo! a grating noise! the breakers—we had struck! and every man, by a sudden instinct, jumped into the water and held on to the boat. She beat over the reef—a tremendous thump. One knock more and she would have gone to pieces.

"Fortunately, our one sail was nailed to the mast. Could we have pulled it down we should have been lost; but now some power carried us over into smooth water. We scrambled into the boat, which shivered with our encounter with the rock, like a live creature.

"We anchored the boat and waited until morning, baled out the water with our tin pan, and believed ourselves to bear charmed lives.

"In the morning we saw an island, apparently about six miles off. We made our way thither as well as we could, to get food and water.

"When we reached the island, we pulled our boat ashore to find her very much damaged; her bottom looked like a nutmeg-grater.

"We sent the men up into the island to make discoveries. They found nothing but wild mangoes, and a few coconut trees, whose fruit afforded both food and drink. There were a few shell-fish, of which we eat sparingly, being afraid of them, and we had no means of cooking them.

"We now knew that we were across the great reef which guards Honduras; and entering our boat we set sail for the main shore.

"A trade-wind from the east helped us along, and we soon saw the mountains and the rock-bound coast of Honduras. But now came the difficulty of finding a landing. We had become famished for water. We must drink or die.

"Should we go north or south?

"We determined to go south. We coasted along another weary day. Hope began to die out, when lo! from behind a little inlet came out a long dug-out canoe, with one sail, manned by two little negroes just about the size of Jem and Giles. I have seen proud navies since; I have seen splendid men of war, I have seen great steamships; but I never saw any nautical craft look so handsome as that did!"

Here Uncle Archie paused. Perhaps the recollection affected him somewhat.

"We made for the dug-out, but the little fellows were afraid of us, and tried to get away. We had come from nowhere! we were pirates! we were everything that was dreadful—to them. However, we headed them off and caught them, and after a short explanation got from them the most precious of treasures, a jug of water. Then we made manifest one of the now useful doubloons, and asked them to take us to the nearest settlement. They spoke a broken patois of English and Spanish, and said that they came from Mullin's River, eighteen hours distant, and they finally took us into their dug-out, which seemed spacious after our boat.

"I shall never see any bit of scenery look so lovely as did Mullin's River, a pretty negro village with houses on piles, built at the mouth of a fresh river which emptied into the sea.

"Coconuts, palms, and all sorts of flowers, greeted us, and the dearest old negro *mauma*, who cooked for us, and gave us fresh sweet hammocks to sleep in.

"Land! land! what a good thing it is. Poor wretched objects that we were, not one of us could stand erect—we could only crawl. Even the negro boys almost cried when they saw what helpless and sorrowful creatures shipwreck had made of us.

"We had travelled, we found, one

thousand miles in that small, puny open boat!

"In all our pain and suffering I had not once seen that good fellow Bonito quail. He had shown the noblest self-devotion, the truest courage. The fop was a man, and a brave one; but safety overcame him, and the moment the dug-out reached the land, he cried and laughed like a baby.

"The Swede, Ringstrom, was calm and unmoved, but his strength was gone. He crawled to the negro cabin, and silently lay down on a pallet, from which he never rose again.

"I told you sir, that thirteen was an unlucky number," said he, as the next day, he calmly died.

"As for myself," said Uncle Archie, "I couldn't walk very well, but I got a good drink of water. The old negress gave us coffee and bread and eggs, but we could not eat much. Next day, however, we felt better.

"We slept in hammocks, and remained with those good negroes for three days. By that time we could walk and eat like men.

"We got the negroes to take us to Belize in the same dug-out which had saved our lives, and there we found an American consul who treated us very kindly, and who gave us a room in his house until we should find a vessel going home.

"Finally it was reported to us that the *Charles Hammond*, Captain Talbot, was in the harbour, and I took a small boat, and rowed out to see if he would take Bonito and myself to New York. The good captain asked me to come into his cabin; and just as I was sitting down, I looked up and saw—this cane.

"Yes, these eyes were looking at me, and my malacca joint and I, after the separation of a year and a half, after having each travelled some thousands of miles, met in one of the smallest places in the world, Belize.

"That's my cane," said I.

"I guess not," said the captain. "I got that from a man in New York, who said it was loaned to him by Capt. Avery, of the *Martin W. Brett*, of Copenhagen, one evening, and he forgot to return it, so brought it to New York. He handed it to me, and said if ever I saw Avery, I might give it back, as a passenger had left it with him at Carthage."

"Well, sir," said I, taking this old malacca in my hands, and looking into the pug's eyes, "this is my cane and I will prove it to you."

"So I whipped out this old weather-beaten diary, which I have carried for thirty years, and showed him this entry:

"*Carthage, June, 1862. Left my cane on the Martin W. Brett, Captain Avery. Wonder if I shall ever see it again!*"

"The captain smiled, and took up the cane once more.

"Do you know the pug's eye seemed to wink at him!

"Wal!" said the captain, "this feller seems as though he kinder recognized you. Guess you may take him!"

"This is a true story, boys, in every particular," added Uncle Archie.—*Wife Awake.*

For the distant still thou yearnest,
And behold the good so near,
If to use the good thou learnest
Thou wilt surely find it here.