

It was I that told the ropemakers, and sent Pete there."

Sotheran ground his teeth. He held his pistol in his hand, and was pointing it where he supposed the boy to be.

"For God's sake!" stammered Brush. But he dared not interfere, lest the frightful rage should be turned on him.

"A single moment!" whispered Alice to the boy.

"Captain," said Roger, "will this pay——"

Sotheran fired. Right in Roger's face the splinters flew as the ball crashed downward through the panel. But the captain heard him laugh.

"Missed!" cried the boy.

"By God!" cried Sotheran, whirling upon Brush. "Give me the hatchet!"

He snatched it, and struck once upon the door. Within Roger raised his knife, and kneeling in the bunk prepared to strike. And Alice rose from her seat, her pistol ready. But she was listening for other sounds.

There came trampling on the deck, the pounding of heavy feet, and the sound of shots. Loud voices shouted, there were screams of terror, all in one startling burst. There was a heavy fall directly overhead.

"My God!" cried Brush, "what's that?"

He started with alarm, turning toward the companionway. As he looked, the light was obscured, and the sailing master shouted: "Brush! Captain! Privateers! For God's sake, help!"

Then he was gone. Brush, turning to the captain, saw him with his hand already on his sword. As Brush stooped to seize the fallen hatchet, Sotheran leaped past him, and drawing his weapon, rushed up on deck.

The deck was a mass of fighters; but the issue was determined. Struggling at the bulwarks, at bay against