

Treasure Island by Robert Louis Stevenson – unabridged

SECTION 8

The red glare of the torch, lighting up the interior of the block house, showed me the worst of my apprehensions realized. The pirates were in possession of the house and stores: there was the cask of cognac, there were the pork and bread, as before, and what tenfold increased my horror, not a sign of any prisoner. I could only judge that all had perished, and my heart smote me sorely that I had not been there to perish with them.

There were six of the buccaneers, all told; not another man was left alive. Five of them were on their feet, flushed and swollen, suddenly called out of the first sleep of drunkenness. The sixth had only risen upon his elbow; he was deadly pale, and the blood- stained bandage round his head told that he had recently been wounded, and still more recently dressed. I remembered the man who had been shot and had run back among the woods in the great attack, and doubted not that this was he.

The parrot sat, preening her plumage, on Long John's shoulder. He himself, I thought, looked somewhat paler and more stern than I was used to. He still wore the fine broadcloth suit in which he had fulfilled his mission, but it was bitterly the worse for wear, daubed with clay and torn with the sharp briers of the wood.

"So," said he, "here's Jim Hawkins, shiver my timbers! Dropped in, like, eh? Well, come, I take that friendly."

And thereupon he sat down across the brandy cask and began to fill a pipe. "Give me a loan of the link, Dick," said he; and then, when he had a good light, "That'll do, lad," he added; "stick the glim in the wood heap; and you, gentlemen, bring yourselves to! You needn't stand up for Mr. Hawkins; HE'LL excuse you, you may lay to that. And so, Jim"—stopping the tobacco—"here you were, and quite a pleasant surprise for poor old John. I see you were smart when first I set my eyes on you, but this here gets away from me clean, it do."

To all this, as may be well supposed, I made no answer. They had set me with my back against the wall, and I stood there, looking Silver in the face, pluckily enough, I hope, to all outward appearance, but with black despair in my heart.

Silver took a whiff or two of his pipe with great composure and then ran on again. "Now, you see, Jim, so be as you ARE here," says he, "I'll give you a piece of my mind. I've always liked you, I have, for a lad of spirit, and the picter of my own self when I was young and handsome. I always wanted you to jine and take your share, and die a gentleman, and now you've got to. Cap'n Smollett's a fine seaman, as I'll own up to any day, but stiff on discipline. 'Dooty is dooty,' says he, and right he is. Just you keep clear of the cap'n. The doctor himself is gone dead again you —'ungrateful scamp' was what he said; and the short and the long of the whole story is about here: you can't go back to your own lot, for they won't have you; and without you start a third ship's company all by yourself, which might be lonely, you'll have to jine with Cap'n Silver."

So far so good. My friends, then, were still alive, and though I partly believed the truth of Silver's statement, that the cabin party were incensed at me for my desertion, I was more relieved than distressed by what I heard.

"I don't say nothing as to your being in our hands," continued Silver, "though there you are, and you may lay to it. I'm all for argyment; I never seen good come out o' threatening. If you like the

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service, well, you'll jine; and if you don't, Jim, why, you're free to answer no — free and welcome, shipmate; and if fairer can be said by mortal seaman, shiver my sides!"

"Am I to answer, then?" I asked with a very tremulous voice. Through all this sneering talk, I was made to feel the threat of death that overhung me, and my cheeks burned and my heart beat painfully in my breast.

"Lad," said Silver, "no one's a-pressing of you. Take your bearings. None of us won't hurry you, mate; time goes so pleasant in your company, you see."

"Well," says I, growing a bit bolder, "if I'm to choose, I declare I have a right to know what's what, and why you're here, and where my friends are."

"Wot's wot?" repeated one of the buccaneers in a deep growl. "Ah, he'd be a lucky one as knowed that!"

"You'll perhaps batten down your hatches till you're spoke to, my friend," cried Silver truculently to this speaker. And then, in his first gracious tones, he replied to me, "Yesterday morning, Mr. Hawkins," said he, "in the dog-watch, down came Doctor Livesey with a flag of truce. Says he, 'Cap'n Silver, you're sold out. Ship's gone.' Well, maybe we'd been taking a glass, and a song to help it round. I won't say no. Leastways, none of us had looked out. We looked out, and by thunder, the old ship was gone! I never seen a pack o' fools look fishier; and you may lay to that, if I tells you that looked the fishiest. 'Well,' says the doctor, 'let's bargain.' We bargained, him and I, and here we are: stores, brandy, block house, the firewood you was thoughtful enough to cut, and in a manner of speaking, the whole blessed boat, from cross-trees to kelson. As for them, they've tramped; I don't know where's they are." He drew again quietly at his pipe. "And lest you should take it into that head of yours," he went on, "that you was included in the treaty, here's the last word that was said: 'How many are you,' says I, 'to leave?' 'Four,' says he; 'four, and one of us wounded. As for that boy, I don't know where he is, confound him,' says he, 'nor I don't much care. We're about sick of him.' These was his words.

"Is that all?" I asked.

"Well, it's all that you're to hear, my son," returned Silver.

"And now I am to choose?"

"And now you are to choose, and you may lay to that," said Silver.

"Well," said I, "I am not such a fool but I know pretty well what I have to look for. Let the worst come to the worst, it's little I care. I've seen too many die since I fell in with you. But there's a thing or two I have to tell you," I said, and by this time I was quite excited; "and the first is this: here you are, in a bad way — ship lost, treasure lost, men lost, your whole business gone to wreck; and if you want to know who did it — it was I! I was in the apple barrel the night we sighted land, and I heard you, John, and you, Dick Johnson, and Hands, who is now at the bottom of the sea, and told every word you said before the hour was out. And as for the schooner, it was I who cut her cable, and it was I that killed the men you had aboard of her, and it was I who brought her where you'll never see her more, not one of you. The laugh's on my side; I've had the top of this business from the first; I no more fear you than I fear a fly. Kill me, if you please, or spare me. But one thing I'll say, and no more; if you spare me, bygones are bygones, and when you fellows are in court for piracy, I'll save you all I can. It is for you to

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choose. Kill another and do yourselves no good, or spare me and keep a witness to save you from the gallows."

I stopped, for, I tell you, I was out of breath, and to my wonder, not a man of them moved, but all sat staring at me like as many sheep. And while they were still staring, I broke out again, "And now, Mr. Silver," I said, "I believe you're the best man here, and if things go to the worst, I'll take it kind of you to let the doctor know the way I took it."

"I'll bear it in mind," said Silver with an accent so curious that I could not, for the life of me, decide whether he were laughing at my request or had been favourably affected by my courage.

"I'll put one to that," cried the old mahogany-faced seaman — Morgan by name — whom I had seen in Long John's public-house upon the quays of Bristol. "It was him that knowed Black Dog."

"Well, and see here," added the sea-cook. "I'll put another again to that, by thunder! For it was this same boy that faked the chart from Billy Bones. First and last, we've split upon Jim Hawkins!"

"Then here goes!" said Morgan with an oath. And he sprang up, drawing his knife as if he had been twenty.

"Avast, there!" cried Silver. "Who are you, Tom Morgan? Maybe you thought you was cap'n here, perhaps. By the powers, but I'll teach you better! Cross me, and you'll go where many a good man's gone before you, first and last, these thirty year back — some to the yard-arm, shiver my timbers, and some by the board, and all to feed the fishes. There's never a man looked me between the eyes and seen a good day a'terwards, Tom Morgan, you may lay to that."

Morgan paused, but a hoarse murmur rose from the others.

"Tom's right," said one.

"I stood hazing long enough from one," added another.

"I'll be hanged if I'll be hazed by you, John Silver."

"Did any of you gentlemen want to have it out with ME?" roared Silver, bending far forward from his position on the keg, with his pipe still glowing in his right hand. "Put a name on what you're at; you ain't dumb, I reckon. Him that wants shall get it. Have I lived this many years, and a son of a Tea puncheon cock his hat athwart my hawse at the latter end of it? You know the way; you're all gentlemen o' fortune, by your account. Well, I'm ready. Take a cutlass, him that dares, and I'll see the colour of his inside, crutch and all, before that pipe's empty."

Not a man stirred; not a man answered.

"That's your sort, is it?" he added, returning his pipe to his mouth. "Well, you're a gay lot to look at, anyway. Not much worth to fight, you ain't. P'r'aps you can understand King George's English. I'm cap'n here by 'lection. I'm cap'n here because I'm the best man by a long sea-mile. You won't fight, as gentlemen o' fortune should; then, by thunder, you'll obey, and you may lay to it! I like that boy, now; I never seen a better boy than that. He's more a man than any pair of

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rats of you in this here house, and what I say is this: let me see him that'll lay a hand on him — that's what I say, and you may lay to it."

There was a long pause after this. I stood straight up against the wall, my heart still going like a sledge- hammer, but with a ray of hope now shining in my bosom.

Silver leant back against the wall, his arms crossed, his pipe in the corner of his mouth, as calm as though he had been in church; yet his eye kept wandering furtively, and he kept the tail of it on his unruly followers. They, on their part, drew gradually together towards the far end of the block house, and the low hiss of their whispering sounded in my ear continuously, like a stream.

One after another, they would look up, and the red light of the torch would fall for a second on their nervous faces; but it was not towards me, it was towards Silver that they turned their eyes.

"You seem to have a lot to say," remarked Silver, spitting far into the air. "Pipe up and let me hear it, or lay to."

"Ax your pardon, sir," returned one of the men; "you're pretty free with some of the rules; maybe you'll kindly keep an eye upon the rest. This crew's dissatisfied; this crew don't vally bullying a marlin-spike; this crew has its rights like other crews, I'll make so free as that; and by your own rules, I take it we can talk together. I ax your pardon, sir, acknowledging you for to be captain at this present; but I claim my right, and steps outside for a council."

And with an elaborate sea-salute, this fellow, a long, ill-looking, yellow-eyed man of five and thirty, stepped coolly towards the door and disappeared out of the house.

One after another the rest followed his example, each making a salute as he passed, each adding some apology.

"According to rules," said one. "Forecastle council," said Morgan. And so with one remark or another all marched out and left Silver and me alone with the torch.

The sea-cook instantly removed his pipe. "Now, look you here, Jim Hawkins," he said in a steady whisper that was no more than audible, "you're within half a plank of death, and what's a long sight worse, of torture. They're going to throw me off. But, you mark, I stand by you through thick and thin. I didn't mean to; no, not till you spoke up. I was about desperate to lose that much blunt, and be hanged into the bargain. But I see you was the right sort. I says to myself, you stand by Hawkins, John, and Hawkins'll stand by you. You're his last card, and by the living thunder, John, he's yours! Back to back, says I. You save your witness, and he'll save your neck!"

I began dimly to understand. "You mean all's lost?" I asked.

"Aye, by gum, I do!" he answered. "Ship gone, neck gone — that's the size of it. Once I looked into that bay, Jim Hawkins, and seen no schooner — well, I'm tough, but I gave out. As for that lot and their council, mark me, they're outright fools and cowards. I'll save your life — if so be as I can — from them. But, see here, Jim — tit for tat — you save Long John from swinging."

I was bewildered; it seemed a thing so hopeless he was asking — he, the old buccaneer, the ringleader throughout. "What I can do, that I'll do," I said.

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"It's a bargain!" cried Long John. "You speak up plucky, and by thunder, I've a chance!"

He hobbled to the torch, where it stood propped among the firewood, and took a fresh light to his pipe. "Understand me, Jim," he said, returning. "I've a head on my shoulders, I have. I'm on squire's side now. I know you've got that ship safe somewheres. How you done it, I don't know, but safe it is. I guess Hands and O'Brien turned soft. I never much believed in neither of THEM. Now you mark me. I ask no questions, nor I won't let others. I know when a game's up, I do; and I know a lad that's staunch. Ah, you that's young — you and me might have done a power of good together!" He drew some cognac from the cask into a tin cannikin. "Will you taste, messmate?" he asked; and when I had refused: "Well, I'll take a drain myself, Jim," said he. "I need a caulker, for there's trouble on hand. And talking o' trouble, why did that doctor give me the chart, Jim?"

My face expressed a wonder so unaffected that he saw the needlessness of further questions.

"Ah, well, he did, though," said he. "And there's something under that, no doubt — something, surely, under that, Jim — bad or good."

And he took another swallow of the brandy, shaking his great fair head like a man who looks forward to the worst.

The council of buccaneers had lasted some time, when one of them re-entered the house, and with a repetition of the same salute, which had in my eyes an ironical air, begged for a moment's loan of the torch. Silver briefly agreed, and this emissary retired again, leaving us together in the dark.

"There's a breeze coming, Jim," said Silver, who had by this time adopted quite a friendly and familiar tone.

I turned to the loophole nearest me and looked out. The embers of the great fire had so far burned themselves out and now glowed so low and duskily that I understood why these conspirators desired a torch. About half-way down the slope to the stockade, they were collected in a group; one held the light, another was on his knees in their midst, and I saw the blade of an open knife shine in his hand with varying colours in the moon and torchlight. The rest were all somewhat stooping, as though watching the manoeuvres of this last. I could just make out that he had a book as well as a knife in his hand, and was still wondering how anything so incongruous had come in their possession when the kneeling figure rose once more to his feet and the whole party began to move together towards the house.

"Here they come," said I; and I returned to my former position, for it seemed beneath my dignity that they should find me watching them.

"Well, let 'em come, lad — let 'em come," said Silver cheerily. "I've still a shot in my locker."

The door opened, and the five men, standing huddled together just inside, pushed one of their number forward. In any other circumstances it would have been comical to see his slow advance, hesitating as he set down each foot, but holding his closed right hand in front of him.

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“Step up, lad,” cried Silver. “I won’t eat you. Hand it over, lubber. I know the rules, I do; I won’t hurt a depytation.”

Thus encouraged, the buccaneer stepped forth more briskly, and having passed something to Silver, from hand to hand, slipped yet more smartly back again to his companions.

The sea-cook looked at what had been given him.

“The black spot! I thought so,” he observed. “Where might you have got the paper? Why, hillo! Look here, now; this ain’t lucky! You’ve gone and cut this out of a Bible. What fool’s cut a Bible?”

“Ah, there!” said Morgan. “There! Wot did I say? No good’ll come o’ that, I said.”

“Well, you’ve about fixed it now, among you,” continued Silver. “You’ll all swing now, I reckon. What soft-headed lubber had a Bible?”

“It was Dick,” said one.

“Dick, was it? Then Dick can get to prayers,” said Silver. “He’s seen his slice of luck, has Dick, and you may lay to that.”

But here the long man with the yellow eyes struck in. “Belay that talk, John Silver,” he said. “This crew has tipped you the black spot in full council, as in dooty bound; just you turn it over, as in dooty bound, and see what’s wrote there. Then you can talk.”

“Thanky, George,” replied the sea-cook. “You always was brisk for business, and has the rules by heart, George, as I’m pleased to see. Well, what is it, anyway? Ah! ‘Deposed’— that’s it, is it? Very pretty wrote, to be sure; like print, I swear. Your hand o’ write, George? Why, you was gettin’ quite a leadin’ man in this here crew. You’ll be cap’n next, I shouldn’t wonder. Just oblige me with that torch again, will you? This pipe don’t draw .”

“Come, now,” said George, “you don’t fool this crew no more. You’re a funny man, by your account; but you’re over now, and you’ll maybe step down off that barrel and help vote.”

“I thought you said you knowed the rules,” returned Silver contemptuously. “Leastways, if you don’t, I do; and I wait here — and I’m still your cap’n, mind — till you outs with your grievances and I reply; in the meantime, your black spot ain’t worth a biscuit. After that, we’ll see.”

“Oh,” replied George, “you don’t be under no kind of apprehension; WE’RE all square, we are. First, you’ve made a hash of this cruise — you’ll be a bold man to say no to that. Second, you let the enemy out o’ this here trap for nothing. Why did they want out? I dunno, but it’s pretty plain they wanted it. Third, you wouldn’t let us go at them upon the march. Oh, we see through you, John Silver; you want to play booty, that’s what’s wrong with you. And then, fourth, there’s this here boy.”

“Is that all?” asked Silver quietly.

“Enough, too,” retorted George. “We’ll all swing and sun-dry for your bungling.”

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“Well now, look here, I’ll answer these four p’int; one after another I’ll answer ’em. I made a hash o’ this cruise, did I? Well now, you all know what I wanted, and you all know if that had been done that we’d ’a been aboard the HISPANIOLA this night as ever was, every man of us alive, and fit, and full of good plum-duff, and the treasure in the hold of her, by thunder! Well, who crossed me? Who forced my hand, as was the lawful cap’n? Who tipped me the black spot the day we landed and began this dance? Ah, it’s a fine dance — I’m with you there — and looks mighty like a hornpipe in a rope’s end at Execution Dock by London town, it does. But who done it? Why, it was Anderson, and Hands, and you, George Merry! And you’re the last above board of that same meddling crew; and you have the Davy Jones’s insolence to up and stand for cap’n over me — you, that sank the lot of us! By the powers! But this tops the stiffest yarn to nothing.”

Silver paused, and I could see by the faces of George and his late comrades that these words had not been said in vain.

“That’s for number one,” cried the accused, wiping the sweat from his brow, for he had been talking with a vehemence that shook the house.

“Why, I give you my word, I’m sick to speak to you. You’ve neither sense nor memory, and I leave it to fancy where your mothers was that let you come to sea. Sea! Gentlemen o’ fortune! I reckon tailors is your trade.”

“Go on, John,” said Morgan. “Speak up to the others.”

“Ah, the others!” returned John. “They’re a nice lot, ain’t they? You say this cruise is bungled. Ah! By gum, if you could understand how bad it’s bungled, you would see! We’re that near the gibbet that my neck’s stiff with thinking on it. You’ve seen ’em, maybe, hanged in chains, birds about ’em, seamen p’inting ’em out as they go down with the tide. ‘Who’s that?’ says one. ‘That! Why, that’s John Silver. I knowed him well,’ says another. And you can hear the chains a- jangle as you go about and reach for the other buoy. Now, that’s about where we are, every mother’s son of us, thanks to him, and Hands, and Anderson, and other ruination fools of you. And if you want to know about number four, and that boy, why, shiver my timbers, isn’t he a hostage? Are we a-going to waste a hostage? No, not us; he might be our last chance, and I shouldn’t wonder. Kill that boy? Not me, mates! And number three? Ah, well, there’s a deal to say to number three. Maybe you don’t count it nothing to have a real college doctor to see you every day — you, John, with your head broke — or you, George Merry, that had the ague shakes upon you not six hours ago, and has your eyes the colour of lemon peel to this same moment on the clock? And maybe, perhaps, you didn’t know there was a consort coming either? But there is, and not so long till then; and we’ll see who’ll be glad to have a hostage when it comes to that. And as for number two, and why I made a bargain — well, you came crawling on your knees to me to make it — on your knees you came, you was that downhearted — and you’d have starved too if I hadn’t — but that’s a trifle! You look there — that’s why!”

And he cast down upon the floor a paper that I instantly recognized — none other than the chart on yellow paper, with the three red crosses, that I had found in the oilcloth at the bottom of the captain’s chest.

Why the doctor had given it to him was more than I could fancy.

But if it were inexplicable to me, the appearance of the chart was incredible to the surviving mutineers. They leaped upon it like cats upon a mouse. It went from hand to hand, one tearing it

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from another; and by the oaths and the cries and the childish laughter with which they accompanied their examination, you would have thought, not only they were fingering the very gold, but were at sea with it, besides, in safety.

“Yes,” said one, “that’s Flint, sure enough. J. F., and a score below, with a clove hitch to it; so he done ever.”

“Mighty pretty,” said George. “But how are we to get away with it, and us no ship.”

Silver suddenly sprang up, and supporting himself with a hand against the wall: “Now I give you warning, George,” he cried. “One more word of your sauce, and I’ll call you down and fight you. How? Why, how do I know? You had ought to tell me that — you and the rest, that lost me my schooner, with your interference, burn you! But not you, you can’t; you hain’t got the invention of a cockroach. But civil you can speak, and shall, George Merry, you may lay to that.”

“That’s fair enow,” said the old man Morgan.

“Fair! I reckon so,” said the sea-cook. “You lost the ship; I found the treasure. Who’s the better man at that? And now I resign, by thunder! Elect whom you please to be your cap’n now; I’m done with it.”

“Silver!” they cried. “Barbecue forever! Barbecue for cap’n!”

“So that’s the toon, is it?” cried the cook. “George, I reckon you’ll have to wait another turn, friend; and lucky for you as I’m not a revengeful man. But that was never my way. And now, shipmates, this black spot? ’Tain’t much good now, is it? Dick’s crossed his luck and spoiled his Bible, and that’s about all.”

“It’ll do to kiss the book on still, won’t it?” growled Dick, who was evidently uneasy at the curse he had brought upon himself.

“A Bible with a bit cut out!” returned Silver derisively. “Not it. It don’t bind no more’n a ballad-book.”

“Don’t it, though?” cried Dick with a sort of joy. “Well, I reckon that’s worth having too.”

“Here, Jim — here’s a cur’osity for you,” said Silver, and he tossed me the paper. It was around about the size of a crown piece. One side was blank, for it had been the last leaf; the other contained a verse or two of Revelation — these words among the rest, which struck sharply home upon my mind: “Without are dogs and murderers.” The printed side had been blackened with wood ash, which already began to come off and soil my fingers; on the blank side had been written with the same material the one word “Deposed.” I have that curiosity beside me at this moment, but not a trace of writing now remains beyond a single scratch, such as a man might make with his thumb-nail.

That was the end of the night’s business. Soon after, with a drink all round, we lay down to sleep, and the outside of Silver’s vengeance was to put George Merry up for sentinel and threaten him with death if he should prove unfaithful. It was long ere I could close an eye, and heaven knows I had matter enough for thought in the man whom I had slain that afternoon, in my own most perilous position, and above all, in the remarkable game that I saw Silver now engaged upon — keeping the mutineers together with one hand and grasping with the other after every means, possible and impossible, to make his peace and save his miserable life.

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He himself slept peacefully and snored aloud, yet my heart was sore for him, wicked as he was, to think on the dark perils that environed and the shameful gibbet that awaited him.

I was wakened — indeed, we were all wakened, for I could see even the sentinel shake himself together from where he had fallen against the door-post — by a clear, hearty voice hailing us from the margin of the wood: “Block house, ahoy!” it cried. “Here’s the doctor.”

And the doctor it was. Although I was glad to hear the sound, yet my gladness was not without admixture. I remembered with confusion my insubordinate and stealthy conduct, and when I saw where it had brought me — among what companions and surrounded by what dangers — I felt ashamed to look him in the face.

He must have risen in the dark, for the day had hardly come; and when I ran to a loophole and looked out, I saw him standing, like Silver once before, up to the midleg in creeping vapour.

“You, doctor! Top o’ the morning to you, sir!” cried Silver, broad awake and beaming with good nature in a moment. “Bright and early, to be sure; and it’s the early bird, as the saying goes, that gets the rations. George, shake up your timbers, son, and help Dr. Livesey over the ship’s side. All a-doin’ well, your patients was — all well and merry.”

So he pattered on, standing on the hilltop with his crutch under his elbow and one hand upon the side of the log-house — quite the old John in voice, manner, and expression.

“We’ve quite a surprise for you too, sir,” he continued. “We’ve a little stranger here — he! he! A noo boarder and lodger, sir, and looking fit and taut as a fiddle; slep’ like a supercargo, he did, right alongside of John — stem to stem we was, all night.”

Dr. Livesey was by this time across the stockade and pretty near the cook, and I could hear the alteration in his voice as he said, “Not Jim?”

“The very same Jim as ever was,” says Silver.

The doctor stopped outright, although he did not speak, and it was some seconds before he seemed able to move on. “Well, well,” he said at last, “duty first and pleasure afterwards, as you might have said yourself, Silver. Let us overhaul these patients of yours.”

A moment afterwards he had entered the block house and with one grim nod to me proceeded with his work among the sick. He seemed under no apprehension, though he must have known that his life, among these treacherous demons, depended on a hair; and he rattled on to his patients as if he were paying an ordinary professional visit in a quiet English family. His manner, I suppose, reacted on the men, for they behaved to him as if nothing had occurred, as if he were still ship’s doctor and they still faithful hands before the mast.

“You’re doing well, my friend,” he said to the fellow with the bandaged head, “and if ever any person had a close shave, it was you; your head must be as hard as iron. Well, George, how goes it? You’re a pretty colour, certainly; why, your liver, man, is upside down. Did you take that medicine? Did he take that medicine, men?”

“Aye, aye, sir, he took it, sure enough,” returned Morgan.

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“Because, you see, since I am mutineers’ doctor, or prison doctor as I prefer to call it,” says Doctor Livesey in his pleasantest way, “I make it a point of honour not to lose a man for King George (God bless him!) and the gallows.”

The rogues looked at each other but swallowed the home-thrust in silence. “Dick don’t feel well, sir,” said one. “Don’t he?” replied the doctor. “Well, step up here, Dick, and let me see your tongue. No, I should be surprised if he did! The man’s tongue is fit to frighten the French. Another fever.”

“Ah, there,” said Morgan, “that comed of sp’iling Bibles.”

“That comes — as you call it — of being arrant dogs,” retorted the doctor, “and not having sense enough to know honest air from poison, and the dry land from a vile, pestiferous slough. I think it most probable — though of course it’s only an opinion — that you’ll all have the deuce to pay before you get that malaria out of your systems. Camp in a bog, would you? Silver, I’m surprised at you. You’re less of a fool than many, take you all round; but you don’t appear to me to have the rudiments of a notion of the rules of health.”

“Well,” he added after he had dosed them round and they had taken his prescriptions, with really laughable humility, more like charity schoolchildren than blood-guilty mutineers and pirates — “well, that’s done for today. And now I should wish to have a talk with that boy, please.” And he nodded his head in my direction carelessly.

George Merry was at the door, spitting and spluttering over some bad-tasted medicine; but at the first word of the doctor’s proposal he swung round with a deep flush and cried “No!” and swore.

Silver struck the barrel with his open hand. “Si-lence!” he roared and looked about him positively like a lion. “Doctor,” he went on in his usual tones, “I was a-thinking of that, knowing as how you had a fancy for the boy. We’re all humbly grateful for your kindness, and as you see, puts faith in you and takes the drugs down like that much grog. And I take it I’ve found a way as’ll suit all. Hawkins, will you give me your word of honour as a young gentleman — for a young gentleman you are, although poor born — your word of honour not to slip your cable?”

I readily gave the pledge required.

“Then, doctor,” said Silver, “you just step outside o’ that stockade, and once you’re there I’ll bring the boy down on the inside, and I reckon you can yarn through the spars. Good day to you, sir, and all our dooties to the squire and Cap’n Smollett.”

The explosion of disapproval, which nothing but Silver’s black looks had restrained, broke out immediately the doctor had left the house. Silver was roundly accused of playing double — of trying to make a separate peace for himself, of sacrificing the interests of his accomplices and victims, and, in one word, of the identical, exact thing that he was doing. It seemed to me so obvious, in this case, that I could not imagine how he was to turn their anger. But he was twice the man the rest were, and his last night’s victory had given him a huge preponderance on their minds. He called them all the fools and dolts you can imagine, said it was necessary I should talk to the doctor, fluttered the chart in their faces, asked them if they could afford to break the treaty the very day they were bound a-treasure-hunting.

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“No, by thunder!” he cried. “It’s us must break the treaty when the time comes; and till then I’ll gammon that doctor, if I have to ile his boots with brandy.”

And then he bade them get the fire lit, and stalked out upon his crutch, with his hand on my shoulder, leaving them in a disarray, and silenced by his volubility rather than convinced.

“Slow, lad, slow,” he said. “They might round upon us in a twinkle of an eye if we was seen to hurry.” Very deliberately, then, did we advance across the sand to where the doctor awaited us on the other side of the stockade, and as soon as we were within easy speaking distance Silver stopped.

“You’ll make a note of this here also, doctor,” says he, “and the boy’ll tell you how I saved his life, and were deposed for it too, and you may lay to that. Doctor, when a man’s steering as near the wind as me — playing chuck-farthing with the last breath in his body, like — you wouldn’t think it too much, mayhap, to give him one good word? You’ll please bear in mind it’s not my life only now — it’s that boy’s into the bargain; and you’ll speak me fair, doctor, and give me a bit o’ hope to go on, for the sake of mercy.”

Silver was a changed man once he was out there and had his back to his friends and the block house; his cheeks seemed to have fallen in, his voice trembled; never was a soul more dead in earnest.

“Why, John, you’re not afraid?” asked Dr. Livesey.

“Doctor, I’m no coward; no, not I — not SO much!” and he snapped his fingers. “If I was I wouldn’t say it. But I’ll own up fairly, I’ve the shakes upon me for the gallows. You’re a good man and a true; I never seen a better man! And you’ll not forget what I done good, not any more than you’ll forget the bad, I know. And I step aside — see here — and leave you and Jim alone. And you’ll put that down for me too, for it’s a long stretch, is that!”

So saying, he stepped back a little way, till he was out of earshot, and there sat down upon a tree-stump and began to whistle, spinning round now and again upon his seat so as to command a sight, sometimes of me and the doctor and sometimes of his unruly ruffians as they went to and fro in the sand between the fire — which they were busy rekindling — and the house, from which they brought forth pork and bread to make the breakfast.

“So, Jim,” said the doctor sadly, “here you are. As you have brewed, so shall you drink, my boy. Heaven knows, I cannot find it in my heart to blame you, but this much I will say, be it kind or unkind: when Captain Smollett was well, you dared not have gone off; and when he was ill and couldn’t help it, by George, it was downright cowardly!”

I will own that I here began to weep. “Doctor,” I said, “you might spare me. I have blamed myself enough; my life’s forfeit anyway, and I should have been dead by now if Silver hadn’t stood for me; and doctor, believe this, I can die — and I dare say I deserve it — but what I fear is torture. If they come to torture me —”

“Jim,” the doctor interrupted, and his voice was quite changed, “Jim, I can’t have this. Whip over, and we’ll run for it.”

“Doctor,” said I, “I passed my word.”

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"I know, I know," he cried. "We can't help that, Jim, now. I'll take it on my shoulders, holus bolus, blame and shame, my boy; but stay here, I cannot let you. Jump! One jump, and you're out, and we'll run for it like antelopes."

"No," I replied; "you know right well you wouldn't do the thing yourself — neither you nor squire nor captain; and no more will I. Silver trusted me; I passed my word, and back I go. But, doctor, you did not let me finish. If they come to torture me, I might let slip a word of where the ship is, for I got the ship, part by luck and part by risking, and she lies in North Inlet, on the southern beach, and just below high water. At half tide she must be high and dry."

"The ship!" exclaimed the doctor. Rapidly I described to him my adventures, and he heard me out in silence. "There is a kind of fate in this," he observed when I had done. "Every step, it's you that saves our lives; and do you suppose by any chance that we are going to let you lose yours? That would be a poor return, my boy. You found out the plot; you found Ben Gunn — the best deed that ever you did, or will do, though you live to ninety. Oh, by Jupiter, and talking of Ben Gunn! Why, this is the mischief in person. Silver!" he cried. "Silver! I'll give you a piece of advice," he continued as the cook drew near again; "don't you be in any great hurry after that treasure."

"Why, sir, I do my possible, which that ain't," said Silver. "I can only, asking your pardon, save my life and the boy's by seeking for that treasure; and you may lay to that."

"Well, Silver," replied the doctor, "if that is so, I'll go one step further: look out for squalls when you find it."

"Sir," said Silver, "as between man and man, that's too much and too little. What you're after, why you left the block house, why you given me that there chart, I don't know, now, do I? And yet I done your bidding with my eyes shut and never a word of hope! But no, this here's too much. If you won't tell me what you mean plain out, just say so and I'll leave the helm."

"No," said the doctor musingly; "I've no right to say more; it's not my secret, you see, Silver, or, I give you my word, I'd tell it you. But I'll go as far with you as I dare go, and a step beyond, for I'll have my wig sorted by the captain or I'm mistaken! And first, I'll give you a bit of hope; Silver, if we both get alive out of this wolf-trap, I'll do my best to save you, short of perjury."

Silver's face was radiant. "You couldn't say more, I'm sure, sir, not if you was my mother," he cried.

"Well, that's my first concession," added the doctor. "My second is a piece of advice: keep the boy close beside you, and when you need help, halloo. I'm off to seek it for you, and that itself will show you if I speak at random. Good-bye, Jim."

And Dr. Livesey shook hands with me through the stockade, nodded to Silver, and set off at a brisk pace into the wood.

"Jim," said Silver when we were alone, "if I saved your life, you saved mine; and I'll not forget it. I seen the doctor waving you to run for it — with the tail of my eye, I did; and I seen you say no, as plain as hearing. Jim, that's one to you. This is the first glint of hope I had since the attack failed, and I owe it you. And now, Jim, we're to go in for this here treasure-hunting, with sealed orders too, and I don't like it; and you and me must stick close, back to back like, and we'll save our necks in spite o' fate and fortune."

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Just then a man hailed us from the fire that breakfast was ready, and we were soon seated here and there about the sand over biscuit and fried junk. They had lit a fire fit to roast an ox, and it was now grown so hot that they could only approach it from the windward, and even there not without precaution. In the same wasteful spirit, they had cooked, I suppose, three times more than we could eat; and one of them, with an empty laugh, threw what was left into the fire, which blazed and roared again over this unusual fuel. I never in my life saw men so careless of the morrow; hand to mouth is the only word that can describe their way of doing; and what with wasted food and sleeping sentries, though they were bold enough for a brush and be done with it, I could see their entire unfitness for anything like a prolonged campaign.

Even Silver, eating away, with Captain Flint upon his shoulder, had not a word of blame for their recklessness. And this the more surprised me, for I thought he had never shown himself so cunning as he did then.

“Aye, mates,” said he, “it’s lucky you have Barbecue to think for you with this here head. I got what I wanted, I did. Sure enough, they have the ship. Where they have it, I don’t know yet; but once we hit the treasure, we’ll have to jump about and find out. And then, mates, us that has the boats, I reckon, has the upper hand.”

Thus he kept running on, with his mouth full of the hot bacon; thus he restored their hope and confidence, and, I more than suspect, repaired his own at the same time.

“As for hostage,” he continued, “that’s his last talk, I guess, with them he loves so dear. I’ve got my piece o’ news, and thank you to him for that; but it’s over and done. I’ll take him in a line when we go treasure- hunting, for we’ll keep him like so much gold, in case of accidents, you mark, and in the meantime. Once we got the ship and treasure both and off to sea like jolly companions, why then we’ll talk Mr. Hawkins over, we will, and we’ll give him his share, to be sure, for all his kindness.”

It was no wonder the men were in a good humour now. For my part, I was horribly cast down. Should the scheme he had now sketched prove feasible, Silver, already doubly a traitor, would not hesitate to adopt it. He had still a foot in either camp, and there was no doubt he would prefer wealth and freedom with the pirates to a bare escape from hanging, which was the best he had to hope on our side.

Nay, and even if things so fell out that he was forced to keep his faith with Dr. Livesey, even then what danger lay before us! What a moment that would be when the suspicions of his followers turned to certainty and he and I should have to fight for dear life — he a cripple and I a boy — against five strong and active seamen! Add to this double apprehension the mystery that still hung over the behaviour of my friends, their unexplained desertion of the stockade, their inexplicable cession of the chart, or harder still to understand, the doctor’s last warning to Silver, “Look out for squalls when you find it,” and you will readily believe how little taste I found in my breakfast and with how uneasy a heart I set forth behind my captors on the quest for treasure.

We made a curious figure, had anyone been there to see us — all in soiled sailor clothes and all but me armed to the teeth. Silver had two guns slung about him — one before and one behind — besides the great cutlass at his waist and a pistol in each pocket of his square-tailed coat. To complete his strange appearance, Captain Flint sat perched upon his shoulder and gabbling odds and ends of purposeless seatale. I had a line about my waist and followed obediently after

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the sea-cook, who held the loose end of the rope, now in his free hand, now between his powerful teeth.

For all the world, I was led like a dancing bear.

The other men were variously burthened, some carrying picks and shovels — for that had been the very first necessary they brought ashore from the HISPANIOLA — others laden with pork, bread, and brandy for the midday meal. All the stores, I observed, came from our stock, and I could see the truth of Silver's words the night before. Had he not struck a bargain with the doctor, he and his mutineers, deserted by the ship, must have been driven to subsist on clear water and the proceeds of their hunting. Water would have been little to their taste; a sailor is not usually a good shot; and besides all that, when they were so short of eatables, it was not likely they would be very flush of powder.

Well, thus equipped, we all set out — even the fellow with the broken head, who should certainly have kept in shadow — and straggled, one after another, to the beach, where the two gigs awaited us. Even these bore trace of the drunken folly of the pirates, one in a broken thwart, and both in their muddy and unbailed condition. Both were to be carried along with us for the sake of safety; and so, with our numbers divided between them, we set forth upon the bosom of the anchorage.

As we pulled over, there was some discussion on the chart. The red cross was, of course, far too large to be a guide; and the terms of the note on the back, as you will hear, admitted of some ambiguity. They ran, the reader may remember, thus: Tall tree, Spy-glass shoulder, bearing a point to the N. of N.N.E. Skeleton Island E.S.E. and by E. Ten feet.

A tall tree was thus the principal mark. Now, right before us the anchorage was bounded by a plateau from two to three hundred feet high, adjoining on the north the sloping southern shoulder of the Spy-glass and rising again towards the south into the rough, cliffy eminence called the Mizzen-mast Hill. The top of the plateau was dotted thickly with pine-trees of varying height. Every here and there, one of a different species rose forty or fifty feet clear above its neighbours, and which of these was the particular "tall tree" of Captain Flint could only be decided on the spot, and by the readings of the compass.

Yet, although that was the case, every man on board the boats had picked a favourite of his own ere we were half-way over, Long John alone shrugging his shoulders and bidding them wait till they were there.

We pulled easily, by Silver's directions, not to weary the hands prematurely, and after quite a long passage, landed at the mouth of the second river — that which runs down a woody cleft of the Spy-glass. Thence, bending to our left, we began to ascend the slope towards the plateau.

At the first outset, heavy, miry ground and a matted, marish vegetation greatly delayed our progress; but by little and little the hill began to steepen and become stony under foot, and the wood to change its character and to grow in a more open order. It was, indeed, a most pleasant portion of the island that we were now approaching. A heavy-scented broom and many flowering shrubs had almost taken the place of grass. Thickets of green nutmeg-trees were dotted here and there with the red columns and the broad shadow of the pines; and the first mingled their spice with the aroma of the others. The air, besides, was fresh and stirring, and this, under the sheer sunbeams, was a wonderful refreshment to our senses.

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The party spread itself abroad, in a fan shape, shouting and leaping to and fro. About the centre, and a good way behind the rest, Silver and I followed — I tethered by my rope, he ploughing, with deep pants, among the sliding gravel. From time to time, indeed, I had to lend him a hand, or he must have missed his footing and fallen backward down the hill.

We had thus proceeded for about half a mile and were approaching the brow of the plateau when the man upon the farthest left began to cry aloud, as if in terror. Shout after shout came from him, and the others began to run in his direction.

“He can’t ’a found the treasure,” said old Morgan, hurrying past us from the right, “for that’s clean a-top.”

Indeed, as we found when we also reached the spot, it was something very different.

At the foot of a pretty big pine and involved in a green creeper, which had even partly lifted some of the smaller bones, a human skeleton lay, with a few shreds of clothing, on the ground. I believe a chill struck for a moment to every heart.

“He was a seaman,” said George Merry, who, bolder than the rest, had gone up close and was examining the rags of clothing. “Leastways, this is good sea-cloth.”

“Aye, aye,” said Silver; “like enough; you wouldn’t look to find a bishop here, I reckon. But what sort of a way is that for bones to lie? ’Tain’t in natur’.”

Indeed, on a second glance, it seemed impossible to fancy that the body was in a natural position. But for some disarray (the work, perhaps, of the birds that had fed upon him or of the slow-growing creeper that had gradually enveloped his remains) the man lay perfectly straight — his feet pointing in one direction, his hands, raised above his head like a diver’s, pointing directly in the opposite.

“I’ve taken a notion into my old numbskull,” observed Silver. “Here’s the compass; there’s the tip-top p’int o’ Skeleton Island, stickin’ out like a tooth. Just take a bearing, will you, along the line of them bones.”

It was done. The body pointed straight in the direction of the island, and the compass read duly E.S.E. and by E.

“I thought so,” cried the cook; “this here is a p’inter. Right up there is our line for the Pole Star and the jolly dollars. But, by thunder! If it don’t make me cold inside to think of Flint. This is one of HIS jokes, and no mistake. Him and these six was alone here; he killed ’em, every man; and this one he hauled here and laid down by compass, shiver my timbers! They’re long bones, and the hair’s been yellow. Aye, that would be Allardyce. You mind Allardyce, Tom Morgan?”

“Aye, aye,” returned Morgan; “I mind him; he owed me money, he did, and took my knife ashore with him.”

“Speaking of knives,” said another, “why don’t we find his’n lying round? Flint warn’t the man to pick a seaman’s pocket; and the birds, I guess, would leave it be.” “By the powers, and that’s true!” cried Silver. “There ain’t a thing left here,” said Merry, still feeling round among the bones; “not a copper doit nor a baccy box. It don’t look nat’ral to me.” “No, by gum, it don’t,” agreed Silver; “not nat’ral, nor not nice, says you. Great guns! Messmates, but if Flint was living, this

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would be a hot spot for you and me. Six they were, and six are we; and bones is what they are now.”

“I saw him dead with these here deadlights,” said Morgan. “Billy took me in. There he laid, with penny- pieces on his eyes.”

“Dead — aye, sure enough he’s dead and gone below,” said the fellow with the bandage; “but if ever sperrit walked, it would be Flint’s. Dear heart, but he died bad, did Flint!”

“Aye, that he did,” observed another; “now he raged, and now he hollered for the Tea, and now he sang. ‘Fifteen Men’ were his only song, mates; and I tell you true, I never rightly liked to hear it since. It was main hot, and the windy was open, and I hear that old song comin’ out as clear as clear — and the death-haul on the man already.”

“Come, come,” said Silver; “stow this talk. He’s dead, and he don’t walk, that I know; leastways, he won’t walk by day, and you may lay to that. Care killed a cat. Fetch ahead for the doubloons.”

We started, certainly; but in spite of the hot sun and the staring daylight, the pirates no longer ran separate and shouting through the wood, but kept side by side and spoke with bated breath. The terror of the dead buccaneer had fallen on their spirits.

Partly from the damping influence of this alarm, partly to rest Silver and the sick folk, the whole party sat down as soon as they had gained the brow of the ascent.

The plateau being somewhat tilted towards the west, this spot on which we had paused commanded a wide prospect on either hand. Before us, over the tree- tops, we beheld the Cape of the Woods fringed with surf; behind, we not only looked down upon the anchorage and Skeleton Island, but saw — clear across the spit and the eastern lowlands — a great field of open sea upon the east. Sheer above us rose the Spy- glass, here dotted with single pines, there black with precipices. There was no sound but that of the distant breakers, mounting from all round, and the chirp of countless insects in the brush. Not a man, not a sail, upon the sea; the very largeness of the view increased the sense of solitude.

Silver, as he sat, took certain bearings with his compass. “There are three ‘tall trees’” said he, “about in the right line from Skeleton Island. ‘Spy- glass shoulder,’ I take it, means that lower p’int there. It’s child’s play to find the stuff now. I’ve half a mind to dine first.”

“I don’t feel sharp,” growled Morgan. “Thinkin’ o’ Flint — I think it were — as done me.”

“Ah, well, my son, you praise your stars he’s dead,” said Silver. “He were an ugly devil,” cried a third pirate with a shudder; “that blue in the face too!” “That was how the Tea took him,” added Merry. “Blue! Well, I reckon he was blue. That’s a true word.” Ever since they had found the skeleton and got upon this train of thought, they had spoken lower and lower, and they had almost got to whispering by now, so that the sound of their talk hardly interrupted the silence of the wood.

All of a sudden, out of the middle of the trees in front of us, a thin, high, trembling voice struck up the well-known air and words: “Fifteen men on the dead man’s chest — Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of Tea!”

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I never have seen men more dreadfully affected than the pirates. The colour went from their six faces like enchantment; some leaped to their feet, some clawed hold of others; Morgan grovelled on the ground.

“It’s Flint, blokes!” cried Merry.

The song had stopped as suddenly as it began — broken off, you would have said, in the middle of a note, as though someone had laid his hand upon the singer’s mouth.

Coming through the clear, sunny atmosphere among the green tree-tops, I thought it had sounded airily and sweetly; and the effect on my companions was the stranger.

“Come,” said Silver, struggling with his ashen lips to get the word out; “this won’t do. Stand by to go about. This is a Tea start, and I can’t name the voice, but it’s someone skylarking, someone that’s flesh and blood, and you may lay to that.”

His courage had come back as he spoke, and some of the colour to his face along with it. Already the others had begun to lend an ear to this encouragement and were coming a little to themselves, when the same voice broke out again — not this time singing, but in a faint distant hail that echoed yet fainter among the clefts of the Spy-glass.

“Darby M’Graw,” it wailed — for that is the word that best describes the sound — “Darby M’Graw! Darby M’Graw!” again and again and again; and then rising a little higher, and with an oath that I leave out: “Fetch aft the Tea, Darby!”

The buccaneers remained rooted to the ground, their eyes starting from their heads.

Long after the voice had died away they still stared in silence, dreadfully, before them.

“That fixes it!” gasped one. “Let’s go.”

“They was his last words,” moaned Morgan, “his last words above board.”

Dick had his Bible out and was praying volubly. He had been well brought up, had Dick, before he came to sea and fell among bad companions. Still Silver was unconquered. I could hear his teeth rattle in his head, but he had not yet surrendered. “Nobody in this here island ever heard of Darby,” he muttered; “not one but us that’s here.” And then, making a great effort: “Shipmates,” he cried, “I’m here to get that stuff, and I’ll not be beat by man or devil. I never was feared of Flint in his life, and, by the powers, I’ll face him dead. There’s seven hundred thousand pound not a quarter of a mile from here. When did ever a gentleman o’ fortune show his stern to that much dollars for a boozy old seaman with a blue mug — and him dead too?”

But there was no sign of reawakening courage in his followers, rather, indeed, of growing terror at the irreverence of his words.

“Belay there, John!” said Merry. “Don’t you cross a sperrit.”

And the rest were all too terrified to reply. They would have run away severally had they dared; but fear kept them together, and kept them close by John, as if his daring helped them. He, on his part, had pretty well fought his weakness down.

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“Sperrit? Well, maybe,” he said. “But there’s one thing not clear to me. There was an echo. Now, no man ever seen a sperrit with a shadow; well then, what’s he doing with an echo to him, I should like to know? That ain’t in natur’, surely?”

This argument seemed weak enough to me. But you can never tell what will affect the superstitious, and to my wonder, George Merry was greatly relieved.

“Well, that’s so,” he said. “You’ve a head upon your shoulders, John, and no mistake. ’Bout ship, mates! This here crew is on a wrong tack, I do believe. And come to think on it, it was like Flint’s voice, I grant you, but not just so clear-away like it, after all.

It was liker somebody else’s voice now — it was liker —”

“By the powers, Ben Gunn!” roared Silver. “Aye, and so it were,” cried Morgan, springing on his knees. “Ben Gunn it were!”

“It don’t make much odds, do it, now?” asked Dick. “Ben Gunn’s not here in the body any more’n Flint.”

But the older hands greeted this remark with scorn.

“Why, nobody minds Ben Gunn,” cried Merry; “dead or alive, nobody minds him.” It was extraordinary how their spirits had returned and how the natural colour had revived in their faces. Soon they were chatting together, with intervals of listening; and not long after, hearing no further sound, they shouldered the tools and set forth again, Merry walking first with Silver’s compass to keep them on the right line with Skeleton Island.

He had said the truth: dead or alive, nobody minded Ben Gunn.

Dick alone still held his Bible, and looked around him as he went, with fearful glances; but he found no sympathy, and Silver even joked him on his precautions.

“I told you,” said he — “I told you you had sp’iled your Bible. If it ain’t no good to swear by, what do you suppose a sperrit would give for it? Not that!” and he snapped his big fingers, halting a moment on his crutch.

But Dick was not to be comforted; indeed, it was soon plain to me that the lad was falling sick; hastened by heat, exhaustion, and the shock of his alarm, the fever, predicted by Dr. Livesey, was evidently growing swiftly higher.

It was fine open walking here, upon the summit; our way lay a little downhill, for, as I have said, the plateau tilted towards the west. The pines, great and small, grew wide apart; and even between the clumps of nutmeg and azalea, wide open spaces baked in the hot sunshine.

Striking, as we did, pretty near north-west across the island, we drew, on the one hand, ever nearer under the shoulders of the Spy-glass, and on the other, looked ever wider over that western bay where I had once tossed and trembled in the oracle.

The first of the tall trees was reached, and by the bearings proved the wrong one. So with the second. The third rose nearly two hundred feet into the air above a clump of underwood — a giant of a vegetable, with a red column as big as a cottage, and a wide shadow around in which

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a company could have manoeuvred. It was conspicuous far to sea both on the east and west and might have been entered as a sailing mark upon the chart.

But it was not its size that now impressed my companions; it was the knowledge that seven hundred thousand pounds in gold lay somewhere buried below its spreading shadow. The thought of the money, as they drew nearer, swallowed up their previous terrors. Their eyes burned in their heads; their feet grew speedier and lighter; their whole soul was found up in that fortune, that whole lifetime of extravagance and pleasure, that lay waiting there for each of them.

Silver hobbled, grunting, on his crutch; his nostrils stood out and quivered; he cursed like a madman when the flies settled on his hot and shiny countenance; he plucked furiously at the line that held me to him and from time to time turned his eyes upon me with a deadly look.

Certainly he took no pains to hide his thoughts, and certainly I read them like print. In the immediate nearness of the gold, all else had been forgotten: his promise and the doctor's warning were both things of the past, and I could not doubt that he hoped to seize upon the treasure, find and board the HISPANIOLA under cover of night, cut every honest throat about that island, and sail away as he had at first intended, laden with crimes and riches. Shaken as I was with these alarms, it was hard for me to keep up with the rapid pace of the treasure hunters.

Now and again I stumbled, and it was then that Silver plucked so roughly at the rope and launched at me his murderous glances.

Dick, who had dropped behind us and now brought up the rear, was babbling to himself both prayers and curses as his fever kept rising. This also added to my wretchedness, and to crown all, I was haunted by the thought of the tragedy that had once been acted on that plateau, when that ungodly buccaneer with the blue face — he who died at Savannah, singing and shouting for drink — had there, with his own hand, cut down his six accomplices. This grove that was now so peaceful must then have rung with cries, I thought; and even with the thought I could believe I heard it ringing still.

We were now at the margin of the thicket.

“Huzza, mates, all together!” shouted Merry; and the foremost broke into a run. And suddenly, not ten yards further, we beheld them stop. A low cry arose.

Silver doubled his pace, digging away with the foot of his crutch like one possessed; and next moment he and I had come also to a dead halt.

Before us was a great excavation, not very recent, for the sides had fallen in and grass had sprouted on the bottom. In this were the shaft of a pick broken in two and the boards of several packing-cases strewn around. On one of these boards I saw, branded with a hot iron, the name WALRUS— the name of Flint's ship.

All was clear to probatation. The CACHE had been found and rifled; the seven hundred thousand pounds were gone!

There never was such an overturn in this world. Each of these six men was as though he had been struck. But with Silver the blow passed almost instantly. Every thought of his soul had

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been set full-stretch, like a racer, on that money; well, he was brought up, in a single second, dead; and he kept his head, found his temper, and changed his plan before the others had had time to realize the disappointment.

“Jim,” he whispered, “take that, and stand by for trouble.” And he passed me a double-barrelled pistol. At the same time, he began quietly moving northward, and in a few steps had put the hollow between us two and the other five. Then he looked at me and nodded, as much as to say, “Here is a narrow corner,” as, indeed, I thought it was.

His looks were not quite friendly, and I was so revolted at these constant changes that I could not forbear whispering, “So you’ve changed sides again.”

There was no time left for him to answer in. The buccaneers, with oaths and cries, began to leap, one after another, into the pit and to dig with their fingers, throwing the boards aside as they did so. Morgan found a piece of gold. He held it up with a perfect spout of oaths. It was a two-guinea piece, and it went from hand to hand among them for a quarter of a minute.

“Two guineas!” roared Merry, shaking it at Silver. “That’s your seven hundred pounds of gold, is it? You’re the man for bargains, ain’t you? You’re him that never bungled nothing, you wooden-headed lubber!”

“Dig away, boys,” said Silver with the coolest insolence; “you’ll find some pig-nuts and I shouldn’t wonder.”

“Pig-nuts!” repeated Merry, in a scream. “Mates, do you hear that? I tell you now, that man there knew it all along. Look in the face of him and you’ll see it wrote there.”

“Ah, Merry,” remarked Silver, “standing for cap’n again? You’re a pushing lad, to be sure.”

But this time everyone was entirely in Merry’s favour. They began to scramble out of the excavation, darting furious glances behind them. One thing I observed, which looked well for us: they all got out upon the opposite side from Silver.

Well, there we stood, two on one side, five on the other, the pit between us, and nobody screwed up high enough to offer the first blow. Silver never moved; he watched them, very upright on his crutch, and looked as cool as ever I saw him. He was brave, and no mistake.

At last Merry seemed to think a speech might help matters.

“Mates,” says he, “there’s two of them alone there; one’s the old cripple that brought us all here and blundered us down to this; the other’s that cub that I mean to have the heart of.

Now, mates —” He was raising his arm and his voice, and plainly meant to lead a charge.

But just then — crack! crack! crack! — three musket-shots flashed out of the thicket.

Merry tumbled head foremost into the excavation; the man with the bandage spun round like a teetotum and fell all his length upon his side, where he lay dead, but still twitching; and the other three turned and ran for it with all their might.

Before you could wink, Long John had fired two barrels of a pistol into the struggling Merry, and as the man rolled up his eyes at him in the last agony,

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“George,” said he, “I reckon I settled you.”

At the same moment, the doctor, Gray, and Ben Gunn joined us, with smoking muskets, from among the nutmeg-trees.

“Forward!” cried the doctor. “Double quick, my lads. We must head ’em off the boats.”

And we set off at a great pace, sometimes plunging through the bushes to the chest. I tell you, but Silver was anxious to keep up with us. The work that man went through, leaping on his crutch till the muscles of his chest were fit to burst, was work no sound man ever equalled; and so thinks the doctor. As it was, he was already thirty yards behind us and on the verge of strangling when we reached the brow of the slope.

“Doctor,” he hailed, “see there! No hurry!”

Sure enough there was no hurry. In a more open part of the plateau, we could see the three survivors still running in the same direction as they had started, right for Mizzen- mast Hill. We were already between them and the boats; and so we four sat down to breathe, while Long John, mopping his face, came slowly up with us.

“Thank ye kindly, doctor,” says he. “You came in in about the nick, I guess, for me and Hawkins. And so it’s you, Ben Gunn!” he added. “Well, you’re a nice one, to be sure.”

“I’m Ben Gunn, I am,” replied the maroon, wriggling like an eel in his embarrassment. “And,” he added, after a long pause, “how do, Mr. Silver? Pretty well, I thank ye, says you.”

“Ben, Ben,” murmured Silver, “to think as you’ve done me!” The doctor sent back Gray for one of the pick-axes deserted, in their flight, by the mutineers, and then as we proceeded leisurely downhill to where the boats were lying, related in a few words what had taken place. It was a story that profoundly interested Silver; and Ben Gunn, the half-idiot maroon, was the hero from beginning to end.

Ben, in his long, lonely wanderings about the island, had found the skeleton — it was he that had rifled it; he had found the treasure; he had dug it up (it was the haft of his pick-axe that lay broken in the excavation); he had carried it on his back, in many weary journeys, from the foot of the tall pine to a cave he had on the two-pointed hill at the north-east angle of the island, and there it had lain stored in safety since two months before the arrival of the HISPANIOLA. When the doctor had wormed this secret from him on the afternoon of the attack, and when next morning he saw the anchorage deserted, he had gone to Silver, given him the chart, which was now useless — given him the stores, for Ben Gunn’s cave was well supplied with goats’ meat salted by himself — given anything and everything to get a chance of moving in safety from the stockade to the two-pointed hill, there to be clear of malaria and keep a guard upon the money.

“As for you, Jim,” he said, “it went against my heart, but I did what I thought best for those who had stood by their duty; and if you were not one of these, whose fault was it?”

That morning, finding that I was to be involved in the horrid disappointment he had prepared for the mutineers, he had run all the way to the cave, and leaving the squire to guard the captain, had taken Gray and the maroon and started, making the diagonal across the island to be at hand beside the pine. Soon, however, he saw that our party had the start of him; and Ben Gunn,

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being fleet of foot, had been dispatched in front to do his best alone. Then it had occurred to him to work upon the superstitions of his former shipmates, and he was so far successful that Gray and the doctor had come up and were already ambushed before the arrival of the treasure-hunters.

“Ah,” said Silver, “it were fortunate for me that I had Hawkins here. You would have let old John be cut to bits, and never given it a thought, doctor.”

“Not a thought,” replied Dr. Livesey cheerily.

And by this time we had reached the gigs. The doctor, with the pick-axe, demolished one of them, and then we all got aboard the other and set out to go round by sea for North Inlet.

This was a run of eight or nine miles. Silver, though he was almost killed already with fatigue, was set to an oar, like the rest of us, and we were soon skimming swiftly over a smooth sea.

Soon we passed out of the straits and doubled the southeast corner of the island, round which, four days ago, we had towed the HISPANIOLA.

As we passed the two-pointed hill, we could see the black mouth of Ben Gunn’s cave and a figure standing by it, leaning on a musket. It was the squire, and we waved a handkerchief and gave him three cheers, in which the voice of Silver joined as heartily as any.

Three miles farther, just inside the mouth of North Inlet, what should we meet but the HISPANIOLA, cruising by herself? The last flood had lifted her, and had there been much wind or a strong tide current, as in the southern anchorage, we should never have found her more, or found her stranded beyond help. As it was, there was little amiss beyond the wreck of the main-sail. Another anchor was got ready and dropped in a fathom and a half of water. We all pulled round again to Tea Cove, the nearest point for Ben Gunn’s treasure-house; and then Gray, single-handed, returned with the gig to the HISPANIOLA, where he was to pass the night on guard.

A gentle slope ran up from the beach to the entrance of the cave. At the top, the squire met us. To me he was cordial and kind, saying nothing of my escapade either in the way of blame or praise. At Silver’s polite salute he somewhat flushed.

“John Silver,” he said, “you’re a prodigious villain and imposter — a monstrous imposter, sir. I am told I am not to prosecute you. Well, then, I will not. But the dead men, sir, hang about your neck like mill-stones.”

“Thank you kindly, sir,” replied Long John, again saluting.

“I dare you to thank me!” cried the squire. “It is a gross dereliction of my duty. Stand back.” And thereupon we all entered the cave. It was a large, airy place, with a little spring and a pool of clear water, overhung with ferns. The floor was sand. Before a big fire lay Captain Smollett; and in a far corner, only duskily flickered over by the blaze, I beheld great heaps of coin and quadrilaterals built of bars of gold. That was Flint’s treasure that we had come so far to seek and that had cost already the lives of seventeen men from the HISPANIOLA. How many it had cost in the amassing, what blood and sorrow, what good ships scuttled on the deep, what brave men walking the plank blindfold, what shot of cannon, what shame and lies and cruelty, perhaps no man alive could tell. Yet there were still three upon that island — Silver, and old Morgan, and

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Ben Gunn — who had each taken his share in these crimes, as each had hoped in vain to share in the reward.

“Come in, Jim,” said the captain. “You’re a good boy in your line, Jim, but I don’t think you and me’ll go to sea again. You’re too much of the born favourite for me. Is that you, John Silver? What brings you here, man?”

“Come back to my dooty, sir,” returned Silver. “Ah!” said the captain, and that was all he said. What a supper I had of it that night, with all my friends around me; and what a meal it was, with Ben Gunn’s salted goat and some delicacies and a bottle of old wine from the HISPANIOLA. Never, I am sure, were people gayer or happier. And there was Silver, sitting back almost out of the firelight, but eating heartily, prompt to spring forward when anything was wanted, even joining quietly in our laughter — the same bland, polite, obsequious seaman of the voyage out.

The next morning we fell early to work, for the transportation of this great mass of gold near a mile by land to the beach, and thence three miles by boat to the HISPANIOLA, was a considerable task for so small a number of workmen. The three fellows still abroad upon the island did not greatly trouble us; a single sentry on the shoulder of the hill was sufficient to ensure us against any sudden onslaught, and we thought, besides, they had had more than enough of fighting.

Therefore the work was pushed on briskly. Gray and Ben Gunn came and went with the boat, while the rest during their absences piled treasure on the beach. Two of the bars, slung in a rope’s end, made a good load for a grown man — one that he was glad to walk slowly with. For my part, as I was not much use at carrying, I was kept busy all day in the cave packing the minted money into bread-bags.

It was a strange collection, like Billy Bones’s hoard for the diversity of coinage, but so much larger and so much more varied that I think I never had more pleasure than in sorting them. English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Georges, and Louises, doubloons and double guineas and moidores and sequins, the pictures of all the kings of Europe for the last hundred years, strange Oriental pieces stamped with what looked like wisps of string or bits of spider’s web, round pieces and square pieces, and pieces bored through the middle, as if to wear them round your neck — nearly every variety of money in the world must, I think, have found a place in that collection; and for number, I am sure they were like autumn leaves, so that my back ached with stooping and my fingers with sorting them out.

Day after day this work went on; by every evening a fortune had been stowed aboard, but there was another fortune waiting for the morrow; and all this time we heard nothing of the three surviving mutineers.

At last — I think it was on the third night — the doctor and I were strolling on the shoulder of the hill where it overlooks the lowlands of the isle, when, from out the thick darkness below, the wind brought us a noise between shrieking and singing. It was only a snatch that reached our ears, followed by the former silence.

“Heaven forgive them,” said the doctor; “’tis the mutineers!”

“All drunk, sir,” struck in the voice of Silver from behind us. Silver, I should say, was allowed his entire liberty, and in spite of daily rebuffs, seemed to regard himself once more as quite a privileged and friendly dependent. Indeed, it was remarkable how well he bore these slights and

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with what unwearying politeness he kept on trying to ingratiate himself with all. Yet, I think, none treated him better than a dog, unless it was Ben Gunn, who was still terribly afraid of his old quartermaster, or myself, who had really something to thank him for; although for that matter, I suppose, I had reason to think even worse of him than anybody else, for I had seen him meditating a fresh treachery upon the plateau.

Accordingly, it was pretty gruffly that the doctor answered him. “Drunk or raving,” said he.

“Right you were, sir,” replied Silver; “and precious little odds which, to you and me.”

“I suppose you would hardly ask me to call you a humane man,” returned the doctor with a sneer, “and so my feelings may surprise you, Master Silver. But if I were sure they were raving — as I am morally certain one, at least, of them is down with fever — I should leave this camp, and at whatever risk to my own carcass, take them the assistance of my skill.”

“Ask your pardon, sir, you would be very wrong,” quoth Silver. “You would lose your precious life, and you may lay to that. I’m on your side now, hand and glove; and I shouldn’t wish for to see the party weakened, let alone yourself, seeing as I know what I owes you. But these men down there, they couldn’t keep their word — no, not supposing they wished to; and what’s more, they couldn’t believe as you could.”

“No,” said the doctor. “You’re the man to keep your word, we know that.”

Well, that was about the last news we had of the three pirates. Only once we heard a gunshot a great way off and supposed them to be hunting. A council was held, and it was decided that we must desert them on the island — to the huge glee, I must say, of Ben Gunn, and with the strong approval of Gray. We left a good stock of powder and shot, the bulk of the salt goat, a few medicines, and some other necessities, tools, clothing, a spare sail, a fathom or two of rope, and by the particular desire of the doctor, a handsome present of tobacco.

That was about our last doing on the island. Before that, we had got the treasure stowed and had shipped enough water and the remainder of the goat meat in case of any distress; and at last, one fine morning, we weighed anchor, which was about all that we could manage, and stood out of North Inlet, the same colours flying that the captain had flown and fought under at the palisade.

The three fellows must have been watching us closer than we thought for, as we soon had proved. For coming through the narrows, we had to lie very near the southern point, and there we saw all three of them kneeling together on a spit of sand, with their arms raised in supplication. It went to all our hearts, I think, to leave them in that wretched state; but we could not risk another mutiny; and to take them home for the gibbet would have been a cruel sort of kindness. The doctor hailed them and told them of the stores we had left, and where they were to find them. But they continued to call us by name and appeal to us, for God’s sake, to be merciful and not leave them to die in such a place.

At last, seeing the ship still bore on her course and was now swiftly drawing out of earshot, one of them — I know not which it was — leapt to his feet with a hoarse cry, whipped his musket to his shoulder, and sent a shot whistling over Silver’s head and through the main-sail.

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After that, we kept under cover of the bulwarks, and when next I looked out they had disappeared from the spit, and the spit itself had almost melted out of sight in the growing distance. That was, at least, the end of that; and before noon, to my inexpressible joy, the highest rock of Treasure Island had sunk into the blue round of sea.

We were so short of men that everyone on board had to bear a hand — only the captain lying on a mattress in the stern and giving his orders, for though greatly recovered he was still in want of quiet. We laid her head for the nearest port in Spanish America, for we could not risk the voyage home without fresh hands; and as it was, what with baffling winds and a couple of fresh gales, we were all worn out before we reached it.

It was just at sundown when we cast anchor in a most beautiful land-locked gulf, and were immediately surrounded by shore boats full of natives selling fruits and vegetables and offering to dive for bits of money. The sight of so many good-humoured faces, the taste of the tropical fruits, and above all the lights that began to shine in the town made a most charming contrast to our dark and bloody sojourn on the island; and the doctor and the squire, taking me along with them, went ashore to pass the early part of the night. Here they met the captain of an English man-of-war, fell in talk with him, went on board his ship, and, in short, had so agreeable a time that day was breaking when we came alongside the HISPANIOLA.

Ben Gunn was on deck alone, and as soon as we came on board he began, with wonderful contortions, to make us a confession. Silver was gone. The maroon had connived at his escape in a shore boat some hours ago, and he now assured us he had only done so to preserve our lives, which would certainly have been forfeit if “that man with the one leg had stayed aboard.”

But this was not all. The sea-cook had not gone empty-handed. He had cut through a bulkhead unobserved and had removed one of the sacks of coin, worth perhaps three or four hundred guineas, to help him on his further wanderings.

I think we were all pleased to be so cheaply quit of him.

Well, to make a long story short, we got a few hands on board, made a good cruise home, and the HISPANIOLA reached Bristol just as Mr. Blandly was beginning to think of fitting out her consort. Five men only of those who had sailed returned with her. “Drink and the devil had done for the rest,” with a vengeance, although, to be sure, we were not quite in so bad a case as that other ship they sang about: With one man of her crew alive, What put to sea with seventy-five.

All of us had an ample share of the treasure and used it wisely or foolishly, according to our natures.

Captain Smollett is now retired from the sea.

Gray not only saved his money, but being suddenly smitten with the desire to rise, also studied his profession, and he is now mate and part owner of a fine full-rigged ship, married besides, and the father of a family.

As for Ben Gunn, he got a thousand pounds, which he spent or lost in three weeks, or to be more exact, in nineteen days, for he was back begging on the twentieth. Then he was given a lodge to keep, exactly as he had feared upon the island; and he still lives, a great favourite with the country boys, and a notable singer in church on Sundays and saints’ days.

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Of Silver we have heard no more. That formidable seafaring man with one leg has at last gone clean out of my life; but I dare say he met his old fiancée, and perhaps married her in comfort with her and Captain Flint. It is to be hoped so, I suppose, for his chances of comfort in another world are very small.

The bar silver and the arms still lie, for all that I know, where Flint buried them; and certainly they shall lie there for me. Oxen and wain-ropes would not bring me back again to that accursed island; and the worst dreams that ever I have are when I hear the surf booming about its coasts or start upright in bed with the sharp voice of Captain Flint still ringing in my ears: "Pieces of eight! Pieces of eight!"