ROBERT MICHAEL BALLANTYNE

BLACK IVORY

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Содержание

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Preface

In writing this book, my aim has been to give a true picture in outline of the Slave Trade as it exists at the present time on the east coast of Africa.

In order to do this I have selected from the most trustworthy sources what I believe to be the most telling points of “the trade,” and have woven these together into a tale, the warp of which is composed of thick cords of fact; the woof of slight lines of fiction, just sufficient to hold the fabric together. Exaggeration has easily been avoided, because—as Dr Livingstone says in regard to the slave-trade—“exaggeration is impossible.”

If the reader’s taste should be offended by finding the tragic and comic elements in too close proximity I trust that he will bear in remembrance that “such is life,” and that the writer who would be true to life must follow, not lead, nature.

I have to acknowledge myself indebted to Dr Ryan, late Bishop of Mauritius; to the Rev. Charles New, interpreter to the Livingstone Search Expedition; to Edward Hutchinson, Esquire, Lay Secretary to the Church Missionary Society, and others, for kindly furnishing me with information in connexion with the slave trade.

Besides examining the Parliamentary Blue-books which treat of this subject, I have read or consulted, among others, the various authoritative works to which reference is made in the foot-notes sprinkled throughout this book,—all of which works bear the strongest possible testimony to the fact that the horrible traffic in human beings is in all respects as bad at the present time on the east coast of Africa as it ever was on the west coast in the days of Wilberforce.

I began my tale in the hope that I might produce something to interest the young (perchance, also, the old) in a most momentous cause,—the total abolition of the African slave-trade. I close it with the prayer that God may make it a tooth in the file which shall eventually cut the chains of slavery, and set the black man free.

R.M. Ballantyne.

1873

Chapter One.
Shows that a Good Beginning may Sometimes be Followed by a Bad Ending

"Six feet water in the hold, sir!"

That would not have been a pleasant announcement to the captain of the 'Aurora' at any time, but its unpleasantness was vastly increased by the fact that it greeted him near the termination of what had been, up to that point of time, an exceedingly prosperous voyage.

"Are you sure, Davis?" asked the captain; "try again."

He gave the order under the influence of that feeling which is styled "hoping against hope," and himself accompanied the ship's carpenter to see it obeyed.

"Six feet two inches," was the result of this investigation.

The vessel, a large English brig, had sprung a leak, and was rolling heavily in a somewhat rough sea off the east coast of Africa. It was no consolation to her captain that the shores of the great continent were visible on his lee, because a tremendous surf roared along the whole line of coast, threatening destruction to any vessel that should venture to approach, and there was no harbour of refuge nigh.

"She's sinking fast, Mr Seadrift," said the captain to a stout frank-looking youth of about twenty summers, who leant against the bulwarks and gazed wistfully at the land; "the carpenter cannot find the leak, and the rate at which the water is rising shows that she cannot float long."

"What then do you propose to do?" inquired young Seadrift, with a troubled expression of countenance.

"Abandon her," replied the captain.

"Well, *you* may do so, captain, but I shall not forsake my father's ship as long as she can float. Why not beach her somewhere on the coast? By so doing we might save part of the cargo, and, at all events, shall have done the utmost that lay in our power."

"Look at the coast," returned the captain; "where would you beach her? No doubt there is smooth water inside the reef, but the channels through it, if there be any here, are so narrow that it would be almost certain death to make the attempt."

The youth turned away without replying. He was sorely perplexed. Just before leaving England his father had said to him, "Harold, my boy, here's your chance for paying a visit to the land you've read and talked so much about, and wished so often to travel through. I have chartered a brig, and shall send her out to Zanzibar with a cargo of beads, cotton cloth, brass wire, and such like: what say you to go as supercargo? Of course you won't be able to follow in the steps of Livingstone or Mungo Park, but while the brig is at Zanzibar you will have an opportunity of running across the channel, the island being only a few miles from the main, and having a short run up-country to see the niggers, and perchance have a slap at a hippopotamus. I'll line your pockets, so that you won't lack the sinews of war, without which travel either at home or abroad is but sorry work, and I shall only expect you to give a good account of ship and cargo on your return.—Come, is it fixed?"

Need we say that Harold leaped joyfully at the proposal? And now, here he was, called on to abandon the 'Aurora' to her fate, as we have said, near the end of a prosperous voyage. No wonder that he was perplexed.

The crew were fully aware of the state of matters. By the captain's orders they stood ready to lower the two largest boats, into which they had put much of their worldly goods and provisions as they could hold with safety.

"Port, port your helm," said the captain to the man at the wheel.

"Port it is, sir," replied the man at the wheel, who was one of those broad-shouldered, big-chested, loose-garmented, wide-trousered, bare-necked, free-and-easy, off-hand jovial tars who have done so much, in years gone by, to increase the wealth and prosperity of the British Empire, and who, although confessedly scarce, are considerately allowed to perish in hundreds annually on our shores for want of a little reasonable legislation. But cheer up, ye jolly tars! There is a glimmer of sunrise on your political horizon. It really does seem as if, in regard to you, there were at last "a good time coming."

"Port, port," repeated the captain, with a glance at the compass and the sky.

"Port it is, sir," again replied the jovial one.

"Steady! Lower away the boat, lads.—Now, Mr Seadrift," said the captain, turning with an air of decision to the young supercargo, "the time has come for you to make up your mind. The water is rising in the hold, and the ship is, as you see, settling fast down. I need not say to you that it is with the utmost regret I find it necessary to abandon her; but self-preservation and the duty I owe to my men render the step absolutely necessary. Do you intend to go with us?"

"No, captain, I don't," replied Harold Seadrift firmly. "I do not blame you for consulting your own safety, and doing what you believe to be your duty, but I have already said that I shall stick by the ship as long as she can float."

"Well, sir, I regret it but you must do as you think best," replied the captain, turning away— "Now, lads, jump in."

The men obeyed, but several of those who were last to quit the ship looked back and called to the free-and-easy man who still stood at the wheel— "Come along, Disco; we'll have to shove off directly."

"Shove off w'en you please," replied the man at the wheel, in a deep rich voice, whose tones were indicative of a sort of good-humoured contempt; "wot I means for to do is to stop where I am. It'll never be said of Disco Lillihammer that he forsook the owner's son in distress."

"But you'll go to the bottom, man, if you don't come."

"Well, wot if I do? I'd raither go to the bottom with a brave man, than remain at the top with a set o' fine fellers like *you*!"

Some of the men received this reply with a laugh, others frowned, and a few swore, while some of them looked regretfully at their self-willed shipmate; for it must not be supposed that *all* the tars who float upon the sea are of the bold, candid, open-handed type, though we really believe that a large proportion of them are so.

Be this as it may, the boats left the brig, and were soon far astern.

"Thank you, Lillihammer," said Harold, going up and grasping the horny hand of the self-sacrificing sea-dog. "This is very kind of you, though I fear it may cost you your life. But it is too late to talk of that; we must fix on some plan, and act at once."

"The werry thing, sir," said Disco quietly, "that wos runnin' in my own mind, 'cos it's werry clear that we hain't got too many minits to spare in confabilation."

"Well, what do you suggest?"

"Arter you, sir," said Disco, pulling his forelock; "you are capting now, an' ought to give orders."

"Then I think the best thing we can do," rejoined Harold, "is to make straight for the shore, search for an opening in the reef, run through, and beach the vessel on the sand. What say you?"

"As there's nothin' else left for us to do," replied Disco, "that's 'zactly wot I think too, an' the sooner we does it the better."

"Down with the helm, then," cried Harold, springing forward, "and I'll ease off the sheets."

In a few minutes the 'Aurora' was surging before a stiff breeze towards the line of foam which indicated the outlying reef, and inside of which all was comparatively calm.

"If we only manage to get inside," said Harold, "we shall do well."

Disco made no reply. His whole attention was given to steering the brig, and running his eyes anxiously along the breakers, the sound of which increased to a thunderous roar as they drew near.

"There seems something like a channel yonder," said Harold, pointing anxiously to a particular spot in the reef.

"I see it, sir," was the curt reply.

A few minutes more of suspense, and the brig drove into the supposed channel, and struck with such violence that the foremast snapped off near the deck, and went over the side.

"God help us, we're lost!" exclaimed Harold, as a towering wave lifted the vessel up and hurled her like a plaything on the rocks.

"Stand by to jump, sir," cried Disco. Another breaker came roaring in at the moment, overwhelmed the brig, rolled her over on her beam-ends, and swept the two men out of her. They struggled gallantly to free themselves from the wreck, and, succeeding with difficulty, swam across the sheltered water to the shore, on which they finally landed.

Harold's first exclamation was one of thankfulness for their deliverance, to which Disco replied with a hearty "Amen!" and then turning round and surveying the coast, while he slowly thrust his hands into his wet trouser-pockets, wondered whereabouts in the world they had got to.

"To the east coast of Africa, to be sure," observed the young supercargo, with a slight smile, as he wrung the water out of the foot of his trousers, "the place we were bound for, you know."

"Werry good; so here we are—come to an anchor! Well, I only wish," he added, sitting down on a piece of driftwood, and rummaging in the pockets before referred to, as if in search of something —"I only wish I'd kep' on my weskit, 'cause all my 'baccy's there, and it would be a rael comfort to have a quid in the circumstances."

It was fortunate for the wrecked voyagers that the set of the current had carried portions of their vessel to the shore, at a considerable distance from the spot where they had landed, because a band of natives, armed with spears and bows and arrows, had watched the wreck from the neighbouring heights, and had hastened to that part of the coast on which they knew from experience the cargo would be likely to drift. The heads of the swimmers being but small specks in the distance, had escaped observation. Thus they had landed unseen. The spot was near the entrance to a small river or creek, which was partially concealed by the formation of the land and by mangrove trees.

Harold was the first to observe that they had not been cast on an uninhabited shore. While gazing round him, and casting about in his mind what was best to be done, he heard shouts, and hastening to a rocky point that hid part of the coast from his view looked cautiously over it and saw the natives. He beckoned to Disco, who joined him.

"They haven't a friendly look about 'em," observed the seaman, "and they're summat scant in the matter of clothin'."

"Appearances are often deceptive," returned his companion, "but I so far agree with you that I think our wisest course will be to retire into the woods, and there consult as to our future proceedings, for it is quite certain that as we cannot live on sand and salt water, neither can we safely sleep in wet clothes or on the bare ground in a climate like this."

Hastening towards the entrance to the creek, the unfortunate pair entered the bushes, through which they pushed with some difficulty, until they gained a spot sufficiently secluded for their purpose, when they observed that they had passed through a belt of underwood, beyond which there appeared to be an open space. A few steps further and they came out on a sort of natural basin formed by the creek, in which floated a large boat of a peculiar construction, with very piratical-looking lateen sails. Their astonishment at this unexpected sight was increased by the fact that on the opposite bank of the creek there stood several men armed with muskets, which latter were immediately pointed at their breasts.

The first impulse of the shipwrecked friends was to spring back into the bushes—the second to advance and hold up their empty hands to show that they were unarmed.

"Hold on," exclaimed Disco, in a free and easy confidential tone; "we're friends, we are; shipwrecked mariners we is, so ground arms, my lads, an' make your minds easy."

One of the men made some remark to another, who, from his Oriental dress, was easily recognised by Harold as one of the Arab traders of the coast. His men appeared to be half-castes.

The Arab nodded gravely, and said something which induced his men to lower their muskets. Then with a wave of his hand he invited the strangers to come over the creek to him.

This was rendered possible by the breadth of the boat already mentioned being so great that, while one side touched the right bank of the creek, the other was within four or five feet of the left.

Without hesitation Harold Seadrift bounded lightly from the bank to the half-deck of the boat, and, stepping ashore, walked up to the Arab, closely followed by his companion.

"Do you speak English?" asked Harold.

The Arab shook his head and said, "Arabic, Portuguese."

Harold therefore shook *his* head;—then, with a hopeful look, said "French?" interrogatively.

The Arab repeated the shake of his head, but after a moments' thought said, "I know littil Engleesh; speak, where comes you?"

"We have been wrecked," began Harold (the Arab glanced gravely at his dripping clothes, as if to say, I had guessed as much), "and this man and I are the only survivors of the crew of our ship —at least the only two who swam on shore, the others went off in a boat."

"Come you from man-of-war?" asked the Arab, with a keen glance at the candid countenance of the youth.

"No, our vessel was a trader bound for Zanzibar. She now lies in fragments on the shore, and we have escaped with nothing but the clothes on our backs. Can you tell us whether there is a town or a village in the neighbourhood? for, as you see, we stand sadly in need of clothing, food, and shelter. We have no money, but we have good muscles and stout hearts, and could work our way well enough, I doubt not."

Young Seadrift said this modestly, but the remark was unnecessary, for it would have been quite obvious to a man of much less intelligence than the Arab that a youth who, although just entering on the age of manhood, was six feet high, deep-chested, broad-shouldered, and as lithe as a kitten, could not find any difficulty in working his way, while his companion, though a little older, was evidently quite as capable.

"There be no town, no village, for fifty miles from where you stand," replied the Arab.

"Indeed!" exclaimed Harold in surprise, for he had always supposed the East African coast to be rather populous.

"That's a blue look-out anyhow," observed Disco, "for it necessitates starvation, unless this good gentleman will hire us to work his craft. It ain't very ship-shape to be sure, but anything of a seagoin' craft comes more or less handy to an old salt."

The trader listened with the politeness and profound gravity that seems to be characteristic of Orientals, but by no sign or expression showed whether he understood what was said.

"*I* go to Zanzibar," said he, turning to Harold, "and will take you,—so you wish."

There was something sinister in the man's manner which Harold did not like, but as he was destitute, besides being in the Arab's power, and utterly ignorant of the country, he thought it best to put a good face on matters, and therefore thanked him for his kind offer, and assured him that on reaching Zanzibar he would be in a position to pay for his passage as well as that of his friend.

"May I ask," continued Harold, "what your occupation is?"

"I am trader."

Harold thought he would venture another question:—

"In what sort of goods do you trade?"

"Ivory. Some be white, an' some be what your contrymans do call black."

"Black!" exclaimed Harold, in surprise.

"Yees, black," replied the trader. "White ivory do come from the elephant—hims tusk; Black Ivory do come,"—he smiled slightly at this point—"from the land everywheres. It bees our chef artikil of trade."

"Indeed! I never heard of it before."

"No?" replied the trader; "you shall see it much here. But I go talk with my mans. Wait."

Saying this, in a tone which savoured somewhat unpleasantly of command, the Arab went towards a small hut near to which his men were standing, and entered into conversation with them.

It was evident that they were ill pleased with what he said at first for there was a good deal of remonstrance in their tones, while they pointed frequently in a certain direction which seemed to indicate the coast-line; but by degrees their tones changed, and they laughed and chuckled a good deal, as if greatly tickled by the speech of the Arab, who, however, maintained a look of dignified gravity all the time.

"I don't like the looks o' them fellers," remarked Disco, after observing them in silence for some time. "They're a cut-throat set, I'm quite sure, an' if you'll take my advice, Mister Seadrift, we'll give 'em the slip, an' try to hunt up one o' the native villages. I shouldn't wonder, now, if that chap was a slave-trader."

"The same idea has occurred to myself, Disco," replied Harold, "and I would willingly leave him if I thought there was a town or village within twenty miles of us; but we are ignorant on that point and I have heard enough of the African climate to believe that it might cost us our lives if we were obliged to spend a night in the jungle without fire, food, or covering, and with nothing on but a wet flannel shirt and pair of canvas breeches. No, no, lad, we must not risk it. Besides, although some Arabs are slave-traders, it does not follow that all are. This fellow may turn out better than he looks."

Disco Lillihammer experienced some sensations of surprise on hearing his young friend's remarks on the climate, for he knew nothing whatever about that of Africa, having sailed chiefly in the Arctic Seas as a whaler,—and laboured under the delusion that no climate under the sun could in any degree affect his hardy and well-seasoned frame. He was too respectful, however, to let his thoughts be known.

Meanwhile the Arab returned.

"I sail this night," he said, "when moon go down. That not far before midnight. You mus keep by boat here—close. If you go this way or that the niggers kill you. They not come *here*; they know I is here. I go look after my goods and chattels—my Black Ivory."

"Mayn't we go with 'ee, mister—what's your name?"

"My name?—Yoosoof," replied the Arab, in a tone and with a look which were meant to command respect.

"Well, Mister Yoosoof," continued Disco, "if we may make bold to ax leave for to go with 'ee, we could lend 'ee a helpin' hand, d'ye see, to carry yer goods an' chattels down to the boat."

"There is no need," said Yoosoof, waving his hand, and pointing to the hut before mentioned. "Go; you can rest till we sail. Sleep; you will need it. There is littil rice in hut—eat that, and make fire, dry youselfs."

So saying, the Arab left them by a path leading into the woods, along which his men, who were Portuguese half-castes, had preceded him.

"Make fire indeed!" exclaimed Disco, as he walked with his companion to the hut; "one would think, from the free-and-easy way in which he tells us to make it, that he's in the habit himself of striking it out o' the point o' his own nose, or some such convenient fashion."

"More likely to flash it out of his eyes, I should think," said Harold; "but, see here, the fellow knew what he was talking about. There is fire among these embers on the hearth."

"That's true," replied Disco, going down on his knees, and blowing them carefully.

In a few minutes a spark leaped into a flame, wood was heaped on, and the flame speedily became a rousing fire, before which they dried their garments, while a pot of rice was put on to boil.

Scarcely had they proceeded thus far in their preparations, when two men, armed with muskets, were seen to approach, leading a negro girl between them. As they drew nearer, it was observable that the girl had a brass ring round her neck, to which a rope was attached.

"A slave!" exclaimed Disco vehemently, while the blood rushed to his face; "let's set her free!"

The indignant seaman had half sprung to his legs before Harold seized and pulled him forcibly back.

"Be quiet man," said Harold quickly. "If we *could* free her by fighting, I would help you, but we can't. Evidently we have got into a nest of slavers. Rashness will only bring about our own death. Be wise; bide your time, and we may live to do some good yet."

He stopped abruptly, for the new comers had reached the top of the winding path that led to the hut.

A look of intense surprise overspread the faces of the two men when they entered and saw the Englishmen sitting comfortably by the fire, and both, as if by instinct threw forward the muzzles of their muskets.

"Oh! come in, come in, make your minds easy," cried Disco, in a half-savage tone, despite the warning he had received; "we're all *friends* here—leastwise we can't help ourselves."

Fortunately for our mariner the men did not understand him, and before they could make up their minds what to think of it, or how to act Harold rose, and, with a polite bow, invited them to enter.

"Do you understand English?" he asked.

A frown, and a decided shake of the head from both men, was the reply. The poor negro girl cowered behind her keepers, as if she feared that violence were about to ensue.

Having tried French with a like result, Harold uttered the name, "Yoosoof," and pointed in the direction in which the trader had entered the woods.

The men looked intelligently at each other, and nodded.

Then Harold said "Zanzibar," and pointed in the direction in which he supposed that island lay.

Again the men glanced at each other, and nodded. Harold next said "Boat—dhow," and pointed towards the creek, which remark and sign were received as before.

"Good," he continued, slapping himself on the chest, and pointing to his companion, "*I* go to Zanzibar, *he* goes, *she* goes," (pointing to the girl), "*you* go, and Yoosoof goes—all in the dhow together to Zanzibar—to-night—when moon goes down. D'ee understand? Now then, come along and have some rice."

He finished up by slapping one of the men on the shoulder, and lifting the kettle off the fire, for the rice had already been cooked and only wanted warming.

The men looked once again at each other, nodded, laughed, and sat down on a log beside the fire, opposite to the Englishmen.

They were evidently much perplexed by the situation, and, not knowing what to make of it, were disposed in the meantime to be friendly.

While they were busy with the rice, Disco gazed in silent wonder, and with intense pity, at the slave-girl, who sat a little to one side of her guardians on a mat, her small hands folded together resting on one knee, her head drooping, and her eyes cast down. The enthusiastic tar found it very difficult to restrain his feelings. He had heard, of course, more or less about African slavery from shipmates, but he had never read about it, and had never seriously given his thoughts to it, although his native sense of freedom, justice, and fair-play had roused a feeling of indignation in his breast whenever the subject chanced to be discussed by him and his mates. But now, for the first time in his life, suddenly and unexpectedly, he was brought face to face with slavery. No wonder that he was deeply moved.

"Why, Mister Seadrift," he said, in the confidential tone of one who imparts a new discovery, "I do honestly confess to 'ee that I think that's a *pretty* girl!"

"I quite agree with you," replied Harold, smiling.

"Ay, but I mean *really* pretty, you know. I've always thought that all niggers had ugly flat noses an' thick blubber lips. But look at that one: her lips are scarce a bit thicker than those of many a good-looking lass in England, and they don't stick out at all, and her nose ain't flat a bit. It's quite as good as my Nancy's nose, an' that's sayin' a good deal, *I* tell 'ee. Moreover, she ain't black—she's brown."

It is but justice to Disco to say that he was right in his observations, and to explain that the various negro tribes in Africa differ very materially from each other; some of them, as we are told by Dr Livingstone, possessing little of what, in our eyes, seems the characteristic ugliness of the negro —such as thick lips, flat noses, protruding heels, etcetera,—but being in every sense handsome races of humanity.

The slave-girl whom Disco admired and pitied so much belonged to one of these tribes, and, as was afterwards ascertained, had been brought from the far interior. She appeared to be very young, nevertheless there was a settled expression of meek sorrow and suffering on her face; and though handsomely formed, she was extremely thin, no doubt from prolonged hardships on the journey down to the coast.

"Here, have somethin' to eat," exclaimed Disco, suddenly filling a tin plate with rice, and carrying it to the girl, who, however, shook her head without raising her eyes.

"You're not hungry, poor thing," said the seaman, in a disappointed tone; "you look as if you should be. Come, try it," he added, stooping, and patting her head.

The poor child looked up as if frightened, and shrank from the seaman's touch, but on glancing a second time in his honest face, she appeared to feel confidence in him. Nevertheless, she would not touch the rice until her guardians said something to her sternly, when she began to eat with an appetite that was eloquent.

"Come, now, tell us what your name is, lass," said Disco, when she had finished the rice.

Of course the girl shook her head, but appeared to wish to understand the question, while the Portuguese laughed and seemed amused with the Englishman's eccentricities.

"Look here, now," resumed the tar, slapping his own chest vigorously, "Disco, Disco, Disco, that's me—Disco. And this man," (patting his companion on the breast) "is Harold, Harold, that's him—Harold. Now, then," he added, pointing straight at the girl, "you—what's you name, eh?"

A gleam of intelligence shot from the girl's expressive eyes, and she displayed a double row of beautiful teeth as in a low soft voice she said— "Azinté."

"Azinté? come, that's not a bad name; why, it's a capital one. Just suited to 'ee. Well, Azinté, my poor girl," said Disco, with a fresh outburst of feeling, as he clenched his horny right hand and dashed it into the palm of his left, "if I only knew how to set you free just now, my dear, I'd do it—ay, if I was to be roasted alive for so doin'. I would!"

"You'll never set anybody free in this world," said Harold Seadrift, with some severity, "if you go on talking and acting as you have done to-day. If these men had not, by good fortune, been ignorant of our language, it's my opinion that they would have blown our brains out before this time. You should restrain yourself, man," he continued, gradually dropping into a remonstrative and then into an earnestly confidential tone; "we are utterly helpless just now. If you did succeed in freeing that girl at this moment, it would only be to let her fall into the hands of some other slave-owner. Besides, that would not set free all the other slaves, male and female, who are being dragged from the interior of Africa. You and I *may* perhaps do some small matter in the way of helping to free slaves, if we keep quiet and watch our opportunity, but we shall accomplish nothing if you give way to useless bursts of anger."

Poor Lillihammer was subdued.

"You're right Mister Seadrift, you're right, sir, and I'm a ass. I never *could* keep my feelings down. It's all along of my havin' bin made too much of by my mother, dear old woman, w'en I was a boy. But I'll make a effort, sir; I'll clap a stopper on 'em—bottle 'em up and screw 'em down tight, werry tight indeed."

Disco again sent his right fist into the palm of his left hand, with something like the sound of a pistol-shot to the no small surprise and alarm of the Portuguese, and, rising, went out to cool his heated brow in the open air.

Chapter Two.
Yoosoof's "Black Ivory."

When Yoosoof entered the woods, as before stated, for the purpose of looking after his property, he followed a narrow footpath for about half a mile, which led him to another part of the same creek, at the entrance of which we introduced him to the reader. Here, under the deep shadow of umbrageous trees, floated five large Arab boats, or dhows, similar to the one which has been already referred to. They were quite empty, and apparently unguarded, for when Yoosoof went down the bank and stood on a projecting rock which overlooked them, no one replied to his low-toned hail. Repeating it once, and still receiving no answer, he sat quietly down on the rocks, lighted a small pipe, and waited patiently.

The boats, as we have said, were empty, but there were some curious appliances in them, having the appearance of chains, and wristlets, and bars of iron running along and fixed to their decks, or rather to the flooring of their holds. Their long yards and sails were cleared and ready for hoisting.

After the lapse of ten or fifteen minutes, Yoosoof raised his head—for he had been meditating deeply, if one might judge from his attitude—and glanced in the direction of an opening in the bushes whence issued a silent and singular train of human beings. They were negroes, secured by the necks or wrists—men, women, and children,—and guarded by armed half-caste Portuguese. When a certain number of them, about a hundred or so, had issued from the wood, and crowded the banks of the creek, they were ordered to stand still, and the leader of the band advanced towards his master.

These were some of Yoosoof's "goods and chattels," his "cattle," his "black ivory."

"You have been long in coming, Moosa," said the Arab trader, as the man approached.

"I have," replied Moosa, somewhat gruffly, "but the road was rough and long, and the cattle were ill-conditioned, as you see."

The two men spoke in the Portuguese tongue, but as the natives and settlers on that coast speak a variety of languages and dialects, we have no alternative, good reader, but to render all into English.

"Make the more haste now," said Yoosoof; "get them shipped at once, for we sail when the moon goes down. Pick out the weakest among the lot, those most likely to die, and put them by themselves in the small dhow. If we *must* sacrifice some of our wares to these meddling dogs the English, we may as well give them the refuse."

Without remark, Moosa turned on his heel and proceeded to obey orders.

Truly, to one unaccustomed to such scenes, it would have appeared that all the negroes on the spot were "most likely to die," for a more wretched, starved set of human beings could scarcely be imagined. They had just terminated a journey on foot of several hundreds of miles, with insufficient food and under severe hardships. Nearly all of them were lean to a degree,—many so reduced that they resembled nothing but skeletons with a covering of black leather. Some of the children were very young, many of them mere infants, clinging to the backs of the poor mothers, who had carried them over mountain and plain, through swamp and jungle, in blistering sunshine and pelting rain for many weary days. But prolonged suffering had changed the nature of these little ones. They were as silent and almost as intelligently anxious as their seniors. There were no old pieces of merchandise there. Most were youthful or in the prime of life; a few were middle-aged.

Difficult though the task appeared to be, Moosa soon selected about fifty men and women and a few children, who were so fearfully emaciated that their chance of surviving appeared but small. These were cast loose and placed in a sitting posture in the hold of the smallest dhow, as close together as they could be packed.

Their removal from the bank made room for more to issue from the wood, which they did in a continuous stream. Batch after batch was cast loose and stowed away in the manner already

described, until the holds of two of the large boats were filled, each being capable of containing about two hundred souls. This was so far satisfactory to Yoosoof, who had expended a good deal of money on the venture—satisfactory, even although he had lost a large proportion of the goods—four-fifths at least if not more, by death and otherwise, on the way down to the coast; but that was a matter of little consequence. The price of black ivory was up in the market just at that time, and the worthy merchant could stand a good deal of loss.

The embarkation was effected with wonderful celerity, and in comparative silence. Only the stern voices of the half-caste Portuguese were heard as they ordered the slaves to move, mingled with the occasional clank of a chain, but no sounds proceeded from the thoroughly subdued and worn-out slaves louder than a sigh or a half-suppressed wail, with now and then a shriek of pain when some of the weaker among them were quickened into activity by the lash.

When all had been embarked, two of the five boats still remained empty, but Yoosoof had a pretty good idea of the particular points along the coast where more “cattle” of a similar kind could be purchased. Therefore, after stationing some of his men, armed with muskets, to guard the boats, he returned with the remainder of them to the hut in which the Englishmen had been left.

There he found Azinté and her guardians. He seemed angry with the latter at first, but after a few minutes’ thought appeared to recover his equanimity, and ordered the men to remove the ropes with which the girl was tethered; then bidding her follow him he left the hut without taking any notice of the Englishmen further than to say he would be back shortly before the time of sailing.

Yoosoof’s motions were usually slow and his mien somewhat dignified, but, when occasion required, he could throw off his Oriental dignity and step out with the activity of a monkey. It was so on this occasion, insomuch that Azinté was obliged occasionally to run in order to keep up with him. Proceeding about two miles in the woods along the shore without halt, he came out at length on the margin of a bay, at the head of which lay a small town. It was a sorry-looking place, composed of wretchedly built houses, most of which were thatched with the leaves of the cocoa-nut palm.

Nevertheless, such as it was, it possessed a mud fort, an army of about thirty soldiers, composed of Portuguese convicts who had been sent there as a punishment for many crimes, a Governor, who was understood to be honourable, having been placed there by his Excellency the Governor-General at Mozambique, who had been himself appointed by His Most Faithful Majesty the King of Portugal.

It was in quest of this Governor that Yoosoof bent his rapid steps. Besides all the advantages above enumerated, the town drove a small trade in ivory, ebony, indigo, orchella weed, gum copal, cocoa-nut oil, and other articles of native produce, and a very large (though secret) trade in human bodies and—we had almost written—souls, but the worthy people who dwelt there could not fetter souls, although they could, and very often did, set them free.

Senhor Francisco Alfonso Toledo Bignoso Letotti, the Governor, was seated at the open window of his parlour, just before Yoosoof made his appearance, conversing lightly with his only daughter, the Senhorina Maraquita, a beautiful brunette of about eighteen summers, who had been brought up and educated in Portugal.

The Governor’s wife had died a year before this time in Madrid, and the Senhorina had gone to live with her father on the east coast of Africa, at which place she had arrived just six weeks previous to the date of the opening of our tale.

Among the various boats and vessels at anchor in the bay, were seen the tapering masts of a British war-steamer. The Senhorina and her sire were engaged in a gossiping criticism of the officers of this vessel when Yoosoof was announced. Audience was immediately granted.

Entering the room, with Azinté close behind him, the Arab stopped abruptly on beholding Maraquita, and bowed gravely.

“Leave us, my child,” said the Governor, in Portuguese; “I have business to transact with this man.”

"And why may not I stay to assist you, father, in this wonderful man-mystery of transacting business?" asked Maraquita, with an arch smile.

"Whenever you men want to get rid of women you frighten them away with *business*! If you wish not to explain something to us, you shake your wise heads, and call it *business*! Is it not so?—Come, Arab," she added, turning with a sprightly air to Yoosoof, "you are a trader, I suppose; all Arabs are, I am told. Well, what sort of wares have you got to sell?"

Yoosoof smiled slightly as he stepped aside and pointed to Azinté.

The speaking countenance of the Portuguese girl changed as if by magic. She had seen little and thought little about slavery during the brief period of her residence on the coast, and had scarcely realised the fact that Sambo, with the thick lips—her father's gardener—or the black cook and housemaids, were slaves. It was the first entrance of a new idea with something like power into her mind when she saw a delicate, mild-looking, and pretty negro girl actually offered for sale.

Before she could bethink herself of any remark the door opened, and in walked, unannounced, a man on whose somewhat handsome countenance villainy was clearly stamped.

"Ha! Marizano," exclaimed Senhor Letotti, rising, "you have thought better of it, I presume?"

"I have, and I agree to your arrangement," replied Marizano, in an off-hand, surly tone.

"There is nothing like necessity," returned the Governor, with a laugh. "'Twere better to enjoy a roving life for a short time with a lightish purse in one's pocket, than to attempt to keep a heavy purse with the addition of several ounces of lead in one's breast! How say you?"

Marizano smiled and shrugged his broad shoulders, but made no reply, for just then his attention had been attracted to the slave-girl.

"For sale?" he inquired of the Arab carelessly.

Yoosoof bowed his head slightly.

"How much?"

"Come, come, gentlemen," interposed the Governor, with a laugh and a glance at his daughter, "you can settle this matter elsewhere. Yoosoof has come here to talk with me on other matters.—Now, Maraquita dear, you had better retire for a short time."

When the Senhorina had somewhat unwillingly obeyed, the Governor turned to Yoosoof: "I presume you have no objection to Marizano's presence during our interview, seeing that he is almost as well acquainted with your affairs as yourself?"

As Yoosoof expressed no objection, the three drew their chairs together and sat down to a prolonged private and very interesting palaver.

We do not mean to try the reader's patience by dragging him through the whole of it; nevertheless, a small portion of what was said is essential to the development of our tale.

"Well, then, be it as you wish, Yoosoof," said the Governor, folding up a fresh cigarette; "you are one of the most active traders on the coast, and never fail to keep correct accounts with your Governor. You deserve encouragement but I fear that you run considerable risk."

"I know that; but those who make much must risk much."

"Bravo!" exclaimed Marizano, with hearty approval; "nevertheless those who risk most do not always make most. Contrast yourself with me, now. You risk your boats and cattle, and become rich. I risk my life, and behold! I am fleeced. I have little or nothing left, barely enough to buy yonder girl from you—though I *think* I have enough for that."

He pointed as he spoke to Azinté, who still stood on the spot where she had been left near the door.

"Tell me," resumed Senhor Letotti, "how do you propose to elude the English cruiser? for I know that her captain has got wind of your whereabouts, and is determined to watch the coast closely—and let me tell you, he is a vigorous, intelligent man."

"You tell me he has a number of captured slaves already in his ship?" said Yoosoof.

"Yes, some hundreds, I believe."

"He must go somewhere to land these, I presume?" rejoined the Arab.

Yoosoof referred here to the fact that when a British cruiser engaged in the suppression of the slave-trade on the east coast of Africa has captured a number of slaves, she is under the necessity of running to the Seychelles Islands, Aden, or some other British port of discharge, to land them there as free men, because, were she to set them free on any part of the coast of Africa, belonging either to Portugal or the Sultan of Zanzibar, they would certainly be recaptured and again enslaved. When therefore the cruisers are absent—it may be two or three weeks on this duty, the traders in human flesh of course make the most of their opportunity to run cargoes of slaves to those ports in Arabia and Persia where they always find a ready market.

On the present occasion Yoosoof conceived that the captain of the 'Firefly' might be obliged to take this course to get rid of the negroes already on board, who were of course consuming his provisions, besides being an extremely disagreeable cargo, many of them being diseased and covered with sores, owing to their cruel treatment on board the slave-dhows.

"He won't go, however, till he has hunted the coast north and south for you, so he assures me," said the Governor, with a laugh.

"Well, I must start to-night, therefore I shall give him a small pill to swallow which will take him out of the way," said Yoosoof, rising to leave the room.

"I wish you both success," said the Governor, as Marizano also rose to depart, "but I fear that you will find the Englishman very troublesome.—Adieu."

The Arab and the half-caste went out talking earnestly together, and followed by Azinté, and immediately afterwards the Senhorina Maraquita entered hurriedly.

"Father, you must buy that slave-girl for me. I want a pretty slave all to myself," she said, with unwonted vehemence.

"Impossible, my child," replied the Governor kindly, for he was very fond as well as proud of his daughter.

"Why impossible? Have you not enough of money?"

"Oh yes, plenty of that, but I fear she is already bespoken, and I should not like to interfere—"

"Bespoken! do you mean sold?" cried Maraquita, seizing her father's hands, "not sold to that man Marizano?"

"I think she must be by this time, for he's a prompt man of business, and not easily thwarted when he sets his mind to a thing."

The Senhorina clasped her hands before her eyes, and stood for a moment motionless, then rushing wildly from the room she passed into another apartment the windows of which commanded a view of a considerable part of the road which led from the house along the shore. There she saw the Arab and his friend walking leisurely along as if in earnest converse, while Azinté followed meekly behind.

The Senhorina stood gazing at them with clenched hands, in an agony of uncertainty as to what course she ought to pursue, and so wrapt up in her thoughts that she failed to observe a strapping young lieutenant of H.M.S. steamer 'Firefly,' who had entered the room and stood close to her side.

Now this same lieutenant happened to be wildly in love with Senhorina Maraquita. He had met her frequently at her father's table, where, in company with his captain, he was entertained with great hospitality, and on which occasions the captain was assisted by the Governor in his investigations into the slave-trade.

Lieutenant Lindsay had taken the romantic plunge with all the charming enthusiasm of inexperienced youth, and entertained the firm conviction that, if Senhorina Maraquita did not become "his," life would thenceforth be altogether unworthy of consideration; happiness would be a thing of the past, with which he should have nothing more to do, and death at the cannon's mouth, or otherwise, would be the only remaining gleam of comfort in his dingy future.

"Something distresses you, I fear," began the lieutenant, not a little perplexed to find the young lady in such a peculiar mood.

Maraquita started, glanced at him a moment, and then, with flashing eyes and heightened colour, pointed at the three figures on the road.

"Yes, Senhor," she said; "I am distressed—deeply so. Look! do you see yonder two men, and the girl walking behind them?"

"I do."

"Quick! fly after them and bring them hither—the Arab and the girl I mean—not the other man. Oh, be quick, else they will be out of sight and then she will be lost; quick, if you—if—if you really mean what you have so often told me."

Poor Lindsay! It was rather a sudden and severe test of fidelity to be sent forth to lay violent hands on a man and woman and bring them forcibly to the Governor's house, without any better reason than that a self-willed girl ordered him so to do; at the same time, he perceived that, if he did not act promptly, the retreating figures would soon turn into the town, and be hopelessly beyond his power of recognition.

"But—but—" he stammered, "if they won't come—?"

"They *must* come. Threaten my father's high displeasure.—Quick, Senhor," cried the young lady in a commanding tone.

Lindsay flung open the casement and leapt through it as being the shortest way out of the house, rushed with undignified speed along the road, and overtook the Arab and his friend as they were about to turn into one of the narrow lanes of the town.

"Pardon me," said the lieutenant laying his hand on Yoosoof's shoulder in his anxiety to make sure of him, "will you be so good as to return with me to the Governor's residence?"

"By whose orders?" demanded Yoosoof with a look of surprise.

"The orders of the Senhorina Maraquita."

The Arab hesitated, looked somewhat perplexed, and said something in Portuguese to Marizano, who pointed to the slave-girl, and spoke with considerable vehemence.

Lindsay did not understand what was said, but, conjecturing that the half-caste was proposing that Azinté should remain with him, he said:– "The girl must return with you—if you would not incur the Governor's displeasure."

Marizano, on having this explained to him, looked with much ferocity at the lieutenant and spoke to Yoosoof in wrathful tones, but the latter shook his head, and the former, who disliked Marizano's appearance excessively, took not the least notice of him.

"I do go," said Yoosoof, turning back. Motioning to Azinté to follow, he retraced his steps with the lieutenant and the slave—while Marizano strode into the town in a towering rage.

We need scarcely say that Maraquita, having got possession of Azinté, did not find it impossible to persuade her father to purchase her, and that Yoosoof, although sorry to disappoint Marizano, who was an important ally and assistant in the slave-trade, did not see his way to thwart the wishes of the Governor, whose power to interfere with his trade was very great indeed, and to whom he was under the necessity of paying head-money for every slave that was exported by him from that part of the coast.

Soon after Azinté had been thus happily rescued from the clutches of two of the greatest villains on the East African coast—where villains of the deepest dye are by no means uncommon—Lindsay met Captain Romer of the 'Firefly' on the beach, with his first lieutenant Mr Small, who, by the way, happened to be one of the largest men in his ship. The three officers had been invited to dine that day with the Governor, and as there seemed no particular occasion for their putting to sea that night, and a fresh supply of water had to be taken on board, the invitation had been accepted, all the more readily, too, that Captain Romer thought it afforded an opportunity for obtaining further information as to the movements of certain notorious slavers who were said to be thereabouts at that time. Lieutenant

Lindsay had been sent ashore at an earlier part of the day, accompanied by one of the sailors who understood Portuguese, and who, being a remarkably intelligent man, might, it was thought, acquire some useful information from some of the people of the town.

"Well, Mr Lindsay, has Jackson been of any use to you?" inquired the captain.

"Not yet," replied the lieutenant; "at least I know not what he may have done, not having met him since we parted on landing; but I have myself been so fortunate as to rescue a slave-girl under somewhat peculiar circumstances."

"Truly, a most romantic and gallant affair," said the captain, laughing, when Lindsay had related the incident, "and worthy of being mentioned in despatches; but I suspect, considering the part that the Senhorina Maraquita played in it and the fact that you only rescued the girl from one slaveholder in order to hand her over to another, the less that is said about the subject the better!—But here comes Jackson. Perhaps he may have learned something about the scoundrels we are in search of."

The seaman referred to approached and touched his cap.

"What news?" demanded the captain, who knew by the twinkle in Jack's eye that he had something interesting to report.

"I've diskivered all about it sir," replied the man, with an ill-suppressed chuckle.

"Indeed! come this way. Now, let's hear what you have to tell," said the captain, when at a sufficient distance from his boat to render the conversation quite private.

"Well, sir," began Jackson, "w'en I got up into the town, arter leavin' Mr Lindsay, who should I meet but a man as had bin a messmate o' mine aboard of that there Portuguese ship w'ere I picked up a smatterin' o' the lingo? Of course we hailed each other and hove-to for a spell, and then we made sail for a grog-shop, where we spliced the main-brace. After a deal o' tackin' and beatin' about, which enabled me to find out that he'd left the sea an' taken to business on his own account, which in them parts seems to mean loafin' about doin' little or nothin', I went slap into the subject that was uppermost in my mind, and says I to him, says I, they does a deal o' slavin' on this here coast, it appears —Black Ivory is a profitable trade, ain't it? W'y, sir, you should have seen the way he grinned and winked, and opened out on 'em.—'Black Ivory!' says he, 'w'y, Jackson, there's more slaves exported from these here parts annooally than would fill a good-sized city. I could tell you—but,' says he, pullin' up sudden, 'you won't split on me, messmate?' 'Honour bright,' says I, 'if ye don't call tellin' my captain splittin'.' 'Oh no,' says he, with a laugh, 'it's little I care what *he* knows, or does to the pirates —for that's their true name, and murderers to boot—but don't let it come to the Governor's ears, else I'm a ruined man.' I says I wouldn't and then he goes on to tell me all sorts of hanecdots about their doin's—that they does it with the full consent of the Governor, who gets head-money for every slave exported; that nearly all the Governors on the coast are birds of the same feather, and that the Governor-General himself, (See Consul McLeod's *Travels in Eastern Africa*, volume one page 306.) at Mozambique, winks at it and makes the subordinate Governors pay him tribute. Then he goes on to tell me more about the Governor of this here town, an' says that, though a kind-hearted man in the main, and very good to his domestic slaves, he encourages the export trade, because it brings him in a splendid revenue, which he has much need of, poor man, for like most, if not all, of the Governors on the coast, he do receive nothin' like a respectible salary from the Portuguese Government at home, and has to make it up by slave-tradin'." (See McLeod's *Travels*, volume one page 293.)

It must be explained here that British cruisers were, and still are, kept on the east coast of Africa, for the purpose of crushing only the *export* slave-trade. They claim no right to interfere with "domestic slavery," an institution which is still legal in the dominions of the Sultan of Zanzibar and in the so-called colonies of Portugal on that coast.

"But that is not the best of it, sir," continued Jackson, with a respectful smile, "after we'd had our jaw out I goes off along the road by the beach to think a bit what I'd best do, an' have a smoke —for that's wot usually sets my brain to work full-swing. Bein' hot I lay down in the lee of a bush to excogitate. You see, sir, my old messmate told me that there are two men here, the worst characters

he ever know'd—ashore or afloat. One they calls Yoosoof—an Arab he is; the other Marizano—he's a slave-catcher, and an outlaw just now, havin' taken up arms and rebelled against the Portuguese authorities. Nevertheless these two men are secretly hand and glove with the Governor here, and at this moment there are said to be a lot o' slaves ready for shipment and only waitin' till the 'Firefly' is out of the way. More than this my friend could not tell, so that's w'y I went to excogitate.—I beg parding, sir, for being so long wi' my yarn, but I ain't got the knack o' cuttin' it short, sir, that's w'ere it is."

"Never mind, lad; go on to the end of it," replied the captain. "Did you excogitate anything more?"

"I can't say as I did, sir, but it was cooriously enough excogitated *for* me. W'en I was lying there looking through the bush at the bay, I sees two men comin' along, arm in arm. One of 'em was an Arab. W'en they was near I saw the Arab start; I thought he'd seen me, and didn't like me. No more did I like him or his comrade. However, I was wrong, for after whisperin' somethin' very earnest-like to his friend, who laughed very much; but said nothin', they came and sat down not far from the bush where I lay. Now, thinks I, it ain't pleasant to be an eavesdropper, but as I'm here to find out the secrets of villains, and as these two look uncommon like villains, I'll wait a bit; if they broach business as don't consarn me or her Majesty the Queen, I'll sneeze an' let 'em know I'm here, before they're properly under weigh; but if they speaks of wot I wants to know, I'll keep quiet. Well, sir, to my surprise, the Arab—he speaks in bad English, whereby I came to suppose the other was an Englishman, but, if he is, the climate must have spoiled him badly, for I never did see such a ruffian to look at. But he only laughed, and didn't speak, so I couldn't be sure. Well, to come to the pint, sir, the Arab said he'd got hold of two shipwrecked Englishmen, whom he meant to put on board of his dhow, at that time lyin' up a river not three miles off, and full of slaves, take 'em off the coast, seize 'em when asleep, and heave 'em overboard; the reason bein' that he was afraid, if they was left ashore here, they'd discover the town, which they are ignorant of at present, and give the alarm to our ship, sir, an' so prevent him gettin' clear off, which he means to attempt about midnight just after the moon goes down."

This unexpected information was very gratifying to Captain Romer, who immediately gave orders to get steam up and have everything in readiness to start the moment he should make his appearance on board, at the same time enjoining absolute silence on his lieutenants and Jackson, who all returned to the 'Firefly,' chuckling inwardly.

If they had known that the Arab's information, though partly true, was a *ruse*; that Jackson had indeed been observed by the keen-eyed Oriental, who had thereupon sat down purposely within earshot, and after a whispered hint to his companion, gave forth such information as would be likely to lead the British cruiser into his snares—speaking in bad English, under the natural impression that the sailor did not understand Portuguese, to the immense amusement of Marizano, who understood the *ruse*, though he did not understand a single word of what his companion said—had they known all this, we say, it is probable that they would have chuckled less, and—but why indulge in probabilities when facts are before us? The sequel will show that the best-laid plans may fail.

Chapter Three. Relates the Further Adventures of Harold and Disco, and Lifts the Curtain a Little Higher in Regard to the Slave-Trade

So Captain Romer and his lieutenants went to dine with the worthy Governor Senhor Francisco Alfonso Toledo Bignoso Letotti, while Yoosoof returned to the creek to carry out his deep-laid plans.

In regard to the dinner, let it suffice to observe that it was good, and that the Governor was urbane, hospitable, communicative, and every way agreeable. It is probable that if he had been trained in another sphere and in different circumstances he might have been a better man. As things stood, he was unquestionably a pleasant one, and Captain Romer found it hard to believe that he was an underhand schemer.

Nothing could exceed the open way in which Senhor Letotti condemned the slave-trade, praised the English for their zeal in attempting to suppress it, explained that the King of Portugal and the Sultan of Zanzibar were equally anxious for its total extinction, and assured his guests that he would do everything that lay in his power to further their efforts to capture the guilty kidnappers, and to free the poor slaves!

"But, my dear sir," said he, at the conclusion of an emphatic declaration of sympathy, "the thing is exceedingly difficult. You are aware that Arab traders swarm upon the coast, that they are reckless men, who possess boats and money in abundance, that the trade is very profitable, and that, being to some extent real traders in ivory, palm-oil, indigo, and other kinds of native produce, these men have many *ruses* and methods—what you English call dodges—whereby they can deceive even the most sharp-sighted and energetic. The Arabs are smart smugglers of negroes—very much as your people who live in the Scottish land are smart smugglers of the dew of the mountain—what your great poet Burns speaks much of—I forget its name—it is not easy to put them down."

After dinner, Senhor Letotti led the officers into his garden, and showed them his fruit-trees and offices, also his domestic slaves, who looked healthy, well cared for, and really in some degree happy.

He did not, however, tell his guests that being naturally a humane man, his slaves were better treated than any other slaves in the town. He did not remind them that, being slaves, they were his property, his goods and chattels, and that he possessed the right and the power to flay them alive if so disposed. He did not explain that many in the town *were* so disposed; that cruelty grows and feeds upon itself; that there were ladies and gentlemen there who flogged their slaves—men, women, and children—nearly to the death; that one gentleman of an irascible disposition, when irritated by some slight oversight on the part of the unfortunate boy who acted as his valet, could find no relief to his feelings until he had welted him first into a condition of unutterable terror, and then into a state of insensibility. Neither did he inform them that a certain lady in the town, who seemed at most times to be possessed of a reasonably quiet spirit, was roused once to such a degree by a female slave that she caused her to be forcibly held, thrust a boiling hot egg into her mouth, skewered her lips together with a sail-needle, and then striking her cheeks, burst the egg, and let the scalding contents run down her throat.

No, nothing of all this did the amiable Governor Letotti so much as hint at. He would not for the world have shocked the sensibilities of his guests by the recital of such cruelties. To say truth, the worthy man himself did not like to speak or think of them. In this respect he resembled a certain class among ourselves, who, rather than submit to a little probing of their feelings for a few minutes, would prefer to miss the chance of making an intelligently indignant protest against slavery, and would allow the bodies and souls of their fellow-men to continue writhing in agony through all time.

It was much more gratifying to the feelings of Senhor Letotti to convey his guests to the drawing-room, and there gratify their palates with excellent coffee, while the graceful, and now clothed, Azinté brought a Spanish guitar to the Senhorina Maraquita, whose sweet voice soon charmed away all thoughts of the cruel side of slavery. But duty ere long stepped in to call the guests to other scenes.

"What a sweet girl the Senhorina is!" remarked Captain Romer, while on his way to the beach.

"Ay, and what a pretty girl Azinté is, black though she be," observed Lieutenant Small.

"Call her not black; she is brown—a brunette," said the captain.

"I wonder how *we* should feel," said Lindsay, "if the tables were turned, and *our* women and children, with our stoutest young men, were forcibly taken from us by thousands every year, and imported into Africa to grind the corn and hoe the fields of the black man. Poor Azinté!"

"Do you know anything of her history?" inquired Mr Small.

"A little. I had some conversation in French with the Senhorina just before we left—"

"Yes, I observed that," interrupted the captain, with a quiet smile.

"And," continued Lindsay, "she told me that she had discovered, through an interpreter, that the poor girl is married, and that her home is far away in the interior. She was caught, with many others, while out working in the fields one day several months ago, by a party of slave-traders, under an Arab named Yoosoof and carried off. Her husband was absent at the time; her infant boy was with its grandmother in their village, and she thinks may have escaped into the woods, but she has not seen any of them again since the day of her capture."

"It is a sad case," said the captain, "and yet bad though it be, it might be far worse, for Azinté's master and mistress are very kind, which is more than can be said of most slave-owners in this region."

In a few minutes the captain's gig was alongside the "Firefly," and soon afterwards that vessel quietly put to sea. Of course it was impossible that she should depart unobserved, but her commander took the precaution to run due south at first, exactly opposite to the direction of his true course, intending to make a wide sweep out to sea, and thus get unobserved to the northward of the place where the slaver's dhow was supposed to be lying, in time to intercept it.

Yoosoof, from a neighbouring height watched the manoeuvre, and thoroughly understood it. When the vessel had disappeared into the shades of night that brooded over the sea, he smiled calmly, and in a placid frame of mind betook himself to his lair in the creek beside the mangrove trees.

He found Harold Seadrift and Disco Lillihammer in the hut, somewhat impatient of his prolonged absence, and a dozen of his men looking rather suspiciously at the strangers.

"Is all ready, Moosa?" he inquired of a powerful man, half-Portuguese, half-negro in appearance, who met him outside the door of the hut.

"All ready," replied the half-caste, in a gruff tone of voice, "but what are you going to do with these English brutes?"

"Take them with us, of course," replied Yoosoof.

"For what end?"

"For our own safety. Why, don't you see, Moosa, that if we had set them free, they might have discovered the town and given information to the cruiser about us, which would have been awkward? We might now, indeed, set them free, for the cruiser is gone, but I still have good reason for wishing to take them with me. They think that we have but *one* boat in this creek, and I should like to make use of them for the purpose of propagating that false idea. I have had the good luck while in the town to find an opportunity of giving one of the sailors of the cruiser a little information as to my movements—some of it true, some of it false—which will perhaps do us a service."

The Arab smiled slightly as he said this.

"Do these men know our trade?" asked Moosa.

"I think they suspect it," answered Yoosoof.

"And what if they be not willing to go with us?" demanded Moosa.

"Can twelve men not manage two?" asked the Arab. Dark though the night had become by that time, there was sufficient light to gleam on the teeth that Moosa exposed on receiving this reply.

"Now, Moosa, we must be prompt," continued Yoosoof; "let some of you get round behind the Englishmen, and have the slave-chains handy. Keep your eye on me while I talk with them; if they are refractory, a nod shall be the signal."

Entering the hut Yoosoof informed Harold that it was now time to set sail.

"Good, we are ready," said Harold, rising, "but tell me one thing before my comrade and I agree to go with you,—tell us honestly if you are engaged in the slave-trade."

A slight smile curled the Arab's thin lip as he replied—"If I be a slave-trader, I cannot speak honestly, so you Engleesh think. But I do tell you—yes, I am."

"Then, I tell *you* honestly," said Harold, "that I won't go with you. I'll have nothing to do with slavers."

"Them's my sentiments to a tee," said Disco, with emphasis, thumping his left palm as usual with his right fist, by way of sheating his remark home—to use his own words.

"But you will both perish on this uninhabited coast," said Yoosoof.

"So be it," replied Harold; "I had rather run the risk of starving than travel in company with slave-traders. Besides, I doubt the truth of what you say. There must be several villages not very far off, if my information in regard to the coast be not altogether wrong."

Yoosoof waited for no more. He nodded to Moosa, who instantly threw a noose round Harold's arms, and drew it tight. The same operation was performed for Disco, by a stout fellow who stood behind him, and almost before they realised what had occurred, they were seized by a number of men.

It must not be supposed that two able-bodied Englishmen quietly submitted at once to this sort of treatment. On the contrary, a struggle ensued that shook the walls of the little hut so violently as almost to bring it down upon the heads of the combatants. The instant that Harold felt the rough clasp of Moosa's arms, he bent himself forward with such force as to fling that worthy completely over his head, and lay him flat on the floor, but two of the other slavers seized Harold's arms, a third grasped him round the waist, and a fourth rapidly secured the ropes that had been thrown around him. Disco's mode of action, although somewhat different was quite as vigorous. On being grasped he uttered a deep roar of surprise and rage, and, raising his foot, struck out therewith at a man who advanced to seize him in front. The kick not only tumbled the man over a low bench and drove his head against the wall, but it caused the kicker himself to recoil on his foes behind with such force that they all fell on the floor together, when by their united weight the slavers managed to crush the unfortunate Disco, not, indeed, into submission, but into inaction.

His tongue, however, not being tied, continued to pour forth somewhat powerful epithets, until Harold very strongly advised him to cease.

"If you want to retain a whole skin," he said, "you had better keep a quiet tongue."

"P'raps you're right sir," said Disco, after a moment's consideration, "but it ain't easy to shut up in the succumstances."

After they had thoroughly secured the Englishmen, the traders led them down the bank of the creek to the spot where the dhow was moored. In the dark it appeared to Harold and his companion to be the same dhow, but this was not so. The boat by which they had crossed the creek had been removed up the water, and its place was now occupied by the dhow into which had been put the maimed and worn-out slaves of the band whose arrival we have described. The hold of the little vessel was very dark, nevertheless there was light enough to enable the Englishmen to guess that the rows of black objects just perceptible within it were slaves. If they had entertained any uncertainty on this point, the odour that saluted them as they passed to the stern would have quickly dispelled their doubts.

It was evident from the manner of the slavers that they did not now fear discovery, because they talked loudly as they pushed off and rowed away. Soon they were out of the creek, and the roar of

breakers was heard. Much caution was displayed in guiding the dhow through these, for the channel was narrow, and darkness rendered its position almost indiscernible. At last the sail was hoisted, the boat bent over to a smart breeze, and held away in a north-easterly direction. As the night wore on this breeze became lighter, and, most of the crew being asleep, deep silence prevailed on board the slave-dhow, save that, ever and anon, a pitiful wail, as of a sick child, or a convulsive sob, issued from the hold.

Harold and Disco sat beside each other in the stern, with an armed half-caste on each side, and Yoosoof in front. Their thoughts were busy enough at first, but neither spoke to the other. As the night advanced both fell into an uneasy slumber.

When Harold awoke, the grey dawn was beginning to break in the east and there was sufficient light to render objects dimly visible. At first he scarcely recollected where he was, but the pain caused by the ropes that bound him soon refreshed his memory. Casting his eyes quickly towards the hold, his heart sank within him at the sight he there beheld. Yoosoof's Black Ivory was not of the best quality, but there was a good deal of it, which rendered judicious packing necessary. So many of his gang had become worthless as an article of trade, through suffering on the way down to the coast, that the boat could scarce contain them all. They were packed sitting on their haunches in rows each with his knees close to his chin, and all jammed so tightly together that none could rise up or lie down. Men, women, and little children sat in this position with an expression of indescribable hopelessness and apathy on their faces. The infants, of which there were several, lay motionless on their mothers' shrunken breasts. God help them! they were indeed utterly worthless as pieces of merchandise. The long journey and hard treatment had worn all of them to mere skin and bone, and many were suffering from bad sores caused by the slave-irons and the unmerciful application of the lash. No one knew better than Yoosoof that this was his "damaged stock"—hopelessly damaged, and he meant to make the best use he could of it.

The sun arose in all its splendour, and revealed more clearly to the horrified Englishmen all the wretchedness of the hold, but for a considerable time they did not speak. The circumstances in which they found themselves seemed to have bereft them of the faculty of speech. The morning advanced, and Yoosoof with his men, took a frugal breakfast, but they did not offer any to Harold or Disco. As these unfortunates had, however, supped heartily, they did not mind that. So much could not have been said for the slaves. They had received their last meal of uncooked rice and water, a very insufficient one, about thirty-six hours before, and as they watched the traders at breakfast, their glaring eyes told eloquently of their sufferings.

Had these been Yoosoof's valuable stock, his undamaged goods, he would have given them a sufficiency of food to have kept them up to condition as long as he possessed them; but being what they were, a very little drop of water and a few grains of raw rice at noon was deemed sufficient to prevent absolute starvation.

"How can you have the heart," said Harold at last turning to Yoosoof, "to treat these poor creatures so cruelly?"

Yoosoof shrugged his shoulders.

"My fader treat them so; I follow my fader's footsteps."

"But have you no pity for them? Don't you think they have hearts and feelings like ourselves?" returned Harold earnestly.

"No," replied the Arab coldly. "They have no feelings. Hard as the stone. They care not for mother, or child, or husband. Only brutes—cattle."

Harold was so disgusted with this reply that he relapsed into silence.

Towards the afternoon, while the dhow was running close in-shore, a vessel hove in sight on the horizon. A few minutes sufficed to show that it was a steamer. It was of course observed and closely watched by the slave-dealers as well as by Harold Seadrift and Disco Lillihammer, who became sanguinely hopeful that it might turn out to be a British man-of-war. Had they known that Yoosoof

was equally anxious and hopeful on that point they would have been much surprised; but the wily Arab pretended to be greatly alarmed, and when the Union Jack became clearly visible his excitement increased. He gave some hurried orders to his men, who laughed sarcastically as they obeyed them.

"Yoosoof," said Harold, with a slight feeling of exultation, "your plans seem about to miscarry!"

"No, they not miscarry yet," replied the Arab, with a grim smile.

"Tell me, Yoosoof," resumed Harold, prompted by strong curiosity, "why have you carried us off bound in this fashion?"

Another smile, more grim than the former, crossed the Arab's visage as he replied—"Me carry you off 'cause that sheep," pointing to the steamer, "lie not two mile off, near to town of Governor Letotti, when I first met you. We not want you to let thems know 'bout us, so I carry you off, and I bind you 'cause you strong."

"Ha! that's plain and reasonable," returned Harold, scarce able to restrain a laugh at the man's cool impudence. "But it would appear that some one else has carried the news; so, you see, you have been outwitted after all."

"Perhaps. We shall see," replied the Arab, with something approaching to a chuckle.

Altering the course of the boat, Yoosoof now ran her somewhat off the shore, as if with a view to get round a headland that lay to the northward. This evidently drew the attention of the steamer —which was none other than the "Firefly"—for she at once altered her course and ran in-shore, so as to intercept the dhow. Seeing this, Yoosoof turned back and made for the land at a place where there was a long line of breakers close to the shore. To run amongst these seemed to be equivalent to running on certain destruction, nevertheless the Arab held on, with compressed lips and a frowning brow. Yoosoof looked quite like a man who would rather throw away his life than gratify his enemy, and the Englishmen, who were fully alive to their danger, began to feel rather uneasy—which was a very pardonable sensation, when it is remembered that their arms being fast bound, rendered them utterly unable to help themselves in case of the boat capsizing.

The "Firefly" was by this time near enough to hold converse with the dhow through the medium of artillery. Soon a puff of white smoke burst from her bow, and a round-shot dropped a few yards astern of the boat.

"That's a broad hint, my lad, so you'd better give in," said Lillihammer, scarce able to suppress a look of triumph.

Yoosoof paid not the slightest attention to the remark, but held on his course.

"Surely you don't intend to risk the lives of these poor creatures in such a surf?" said Harold anxiously; "weak and worn as they are, their doom is sealed if we capsize."

Still the Arab paid no attention, but continued to gaze steadily at the breakers.

Harold, turning his eyes in the same direction, observed something like a narrow channel running through them. He was enough of a seaman to understand that only one who was skilled in such navigation could pass in safety.

"They're lowering a boat," said Disco, whose attention was engrossed by the manoeuvres of the "Firefly."

Soon the boat left the side of the vessel, which was compelled to check her speed for fear of running on the reef. Another gun was fired as she came round, and the shot dropped right in front of the dhow, sending a column of water high into the air. Still Yoosoof held on until close to the breakers, when, to the surprise of the Englishmen, he suddenly threw the boat's head into the wind.

"You can steer," he said sternly to Disco. "Come, take the helm an' go to your ship; or, if you choose, go on the breakers."

He laughed fiercely as he said this, and next moment plunged into the sea, followed by his crew.

Disco, speechless with amazement, rose up and sprang to the helm. Of course he could not use his bound hands, but one of his legs answered almost as well. He allowed the boat to come round until the sail filled on the other tack, and then looking back, saw the heads of the Arabs as they swam

through the channel and made for the shore. In a few minutes they gained it, and, after uttering a shout of defiance, ran up into the bushes and disappeared.

Meanwhile the "Firefly's" boat made straight for the dhow, and was soon near enough to hail.

"Heave-to," cried an interpreter in Arabic.

"Speak your own mother tongue and I'll answer ye," replied Disco.

"Heave-to, or I'll sink you," shouted Mr Small, who was in charge.

"I'm just agoin' to do it, sir," replied Disco, running the dhow into the wind until the sail shook.

Another moment and the boat was alongside. "Jump aboard and handle the sail, lads; I can't help 'ee no further," said Disco.

The invitation was unnecessary. The moment the two boats touched, the blue-jackets swarmed on board, cutlass in hand, and took possession.

"Why, what!—where did *you* come from?" asked the lieutenant, looking in profound astonishment at Harold and his companion.

"We are Englishmen, as you see," replied Harold, unable to restrain a smile; "we have been wrecked and caught by the villains who have just escaped you."

"I see—well, no time for talking just now; cut them loose, Jackson. Make fast the sheet—now then."

In a few minutes the dhow ranged up alongside the "Firefly," and our heroes, with the poor slaves, were quickly transferred to the man-of-war's deck, where Harold told his tale to Captain Romer.

As we have already stated, there were a number of slaves on board the "Firefly," which had been rescued from various Arab dhows. The gang now received on board made their numbers so great that it became absolutely necessary to run to the nearest port to discharge them.

We have already remarked on the necessity that lies on our cruisers, when overladen with rescued slaves, to run to a distant port of discharge to land them; and on the readiness of the slave-traders to take advantage of their opportunity, and run north with full cargoes with impunity when some of the cruisers are absent; for it is not possible for a small fleet to guard upwards of a thousand miles of coast effectually, or even, in any degree, usefully. If we possessed a port of discharge—a British station and settlement—on the mainland of the east coast of Africa, this difficulty would not exist. As it is, although we place several men-of-war on a station, the evil will not be cured, for just in proportion as these are successful in making captures, will arise the necessity of their leaving the station for weeks at a time unguarded.

Thus it fell out on the occasion of which we write. The presence of the large slave-freight on board the man-of-war was intolerable. Captain Romer was compelled to hurry off to the Seychelles Islands. He sailed with the monsoon, but had to steam back against it. During this period another vessel, similarly freighted, had to run to discharge at Aden. The seas were thus comparatively clear of cruisers. The Arabs seized their opportunity, and a stream of dhows and larger vessels swept out from the various creeks and ports all along the East African coast, filled to overflowing with slaves.

Among these were the four large dhows of our friend Yoosoof. Having, as we have seen, made a slight sacrifice of damaged and unsaleable goods and chattels, in order to clear the way, he proceeded north, touching at various ports where he filled up his living cargo, and finally got clear off, not with goods damaged beyond repair, but with thousands of the sons and daughters of Africa in their youthful prime.

In the interior each man cost him about four yards of cotton cloth, worth a few pence; each woman three yards, and each child two yards, and of course in cases where he stole them, they cost him nothing. On the coast these would sell at from 8 pounds to 12 pounds each, and in Arabia at from 20 pounds to 40 pounds.

We mention this to show what strong inducement there was for Yoosoof to run a good deal of risk in carrying on this profitable and accursed traffic.

But you must not fancy, good reader, that what we have described is given as a specimen of the *extent* to which the slave-trade on that coast is carried. It is but as a specimen of the *manner* thereof. It is certainly within the mark to say that at least thirty thousand natives are annually carried away as slaves from the east coast of Africa.

Sir Bartle Frere, in addressing a meeting of the chief native inhabitants of Bombay in April 1873, said,—"Let me assure you, in conclusion, that what you have heard of the horrors of the slave-trade is in no way exaggerated. We have seen so much of the horrors which were going on that we can have no doubt that what you read in books, which are so often spoken of as containing exaggerations, is exaggerated in no respect. The evil is much greater than anything you can conceive. Among the poorer class of Africans there is nothing like security from fathers and mothers being put to death in order that their children may be captured;"—and, referring to the *east coast alone*, he says that —"thirty thousand, or more, human beings, are exported every year from Africa."

Dr Livingstone tells us that, on the average, about one out of every five captured human beings reaches the coast alive. The other four perish or are murdered on the way, so that the thirty thousand annually exported, as stated by Sir Bartle Frere, represents a loss of 150,000 human beings *annually* from the east coast alone, altogether irrespective of the enormous and constant flow of slaves to the north by way of the White Nile and Egypt.

Yoosoof's venture was therefore but a drop in the vast river of blood which is drained annually from poor Africa's veins—blood which flows at the present time as copiously and constantly as it ever did in the days of old—blood which cries aloud to God for vengeance, and for the flow of which *we*, as a nation, are far from blameless.

Chapter Four.
In Which Our Heroes See Strange Sights at Zanzibar, and Resolve Upon Taking a Bold Step

Before proceeding to the Seychelles, the 'Firefly' touched at the island of Zanzibar, and there landed our hero Harold Seadrift and his comrade in misfortune, Disco Lillihammer.

Here, one brilliant afternoon, the two friends sat down under a palm-tree to hold what Disco called a palaver. The spot commanded a fine view of the town and harbour of Zanzibar.

We repeat that the afternoon was brilliant, but it is right to add that it required an African body and mind fully to appreciate the pleasures of it. The sun's rays were blistering, the heat was intense, and the air was stifling. Harold lay down and gasped, Disco followed his example, and sighed. After a few minutes spent in a species of imbecile contemplation of things in general, the latter raised himself to a sitting posture, and proceeded slowly to fill and light his pipe. Harold was no smoker, but he derived a certain dreamy enjoyment from gazing at Disco, and wondering how he could smoke in such hot weather.

"We'll get used to it I s'pose, like the eels," observed Disco, when the pipe was in full blast.

"Of course we shall," replied Harold; "and now that we have come to an anchor, let me explain the project which has been for some days maturing in my mind."

"All right; fire away, sir," said the sailor, blowing a long thin cloud from his lips.

"You are aware," said Harold, "that I came out here as supercargo of my father's vessel," (Disco nodded), "but you are not aware that my chief object in coming was to see a little of the world in general, and of the African part of it in particular. Since my arrival you and I have seen a few things, which have opened up my mind in regard to slavery; we have now been a fortnight in this town, and my father's agent has enlightened me still further on the subject, insomuch that I now feel within me an intense desire to make an excursion into the interior of Africa; indeed, I have resolved to do so, for the purpose of seeing its capabilities in a commercial point of view, of observing how the slave-trade is conducted at its fountain-head, and of enjoying a little of the scenery and the sport peculiar to this land of Ham."

"W'y, you speaks like a book, sir," said Disco, emitting a prolonged puff, "an' it ain't for the likes me to give an opinion on that there; but if I may make bold to ax, sir, how do you mean to travel —on the back of a elephant or a ry-noceris?—for it seems to me that there ain't much in the shape o' locomotives or 'busses hereabouts—not even cabs."

"I shall go in a canoe," replied Harold; "but my reason for broaching the subject just now is, that I may ask if you are willing to go with me."

"There's no occasion to ax that sir; I'm your man—north or south, east or west, it's all the same to me. I've bin born to roll about the world, and it matters little whether I rolls ashore or afloat—though I prefers the latter."

"Well, then, that's settled," said Harold, with a look of satisfaction; "I have already arranged with our agent here to advance me what I require in the way of funds, and shall hire men and canoes when we get down to the Zambesi—"

"The Zam-wot, sir?"

"The Zambesi; did you never hear of it before?"

"Never, nor don't know wot it is, sir."

"It is a river; one of the largest on the east coast, which has been well described by Dr Livingstone, that greatest of travellers, whose chief object in travelling is, as he himself says, to raise the negroes out of their present degraded condition, and free them from the curse of slavery."

"That's the man to *my* mind," said Disco emphatically; "good luck to him.—But w'en d'you mean to start for the Zambizzy, sir?"

"In a few days. It will take that time to get everything ready, and our money packed."

"Our money packed!" echoed the sailor, with a look of surprise, "w'y, wot d'ye mean!"

"Just what I say. The money current in the interior of Africa is rather cumbrous, being neither more nor less than goods. You'll never guess what sort—try."

"Rum," said Disco.

"No."

"Pipes and 'baccy."

Harold shook his head.

"Never could guess nothin'," said Disco, replacing the pipe, which he had removed for a few moments from his lips; "I gives it up."

"What would you say to cotton cloth, and thick brass wire, and glass beads, being the chief currency in Central Africa?" said Harold.

"You don't mean it, sir?"

"Indeed I do, and as these articles must be carried in large quantities, if we mean to travel far into the land, there will be more bales and coils than you and I could well carry in our waistcoat pockets."

"That's true, sir," replied Disco, looking earnestly at a couple of negro slaves who chanced to pass along the neighbouring footpath at that moment, singing carelessly. "Them poor critters don't seem to be so miserable after all."

"That is because the nigger is naturally a jolly, light-hearted fellow," said Harold, "and when his immediate and more pressing troubles are removed he accommodates himself to circumstances, and sings, as you hear. If these fellows were to annoy their masters and get a thrashing, you'd hear them sing in another key. The evils of most things don't show on the surface. You must get behind the scenes to understand them. You and I have already had one or two peeps behind the scenes."

"We have indeed, sir," replied Disco, frowning, and closing his fists involuntarily, as he thought of Yoosoof and the dhow.

"Now, then," said Harold, rising, as Disco shook the ashes out of his little black pipe, and placed that beloved implement in the pocket of his coat, "let us return to the harbour, and see what chance there is of getting a passage to the Zambesi, in an honest trading dhow—if there is such a thing in Zanzibar."

On their way to the harbour they had to pass through the slave-market. This was not the first time they had visited the scene of this iniquitous traffic, but neither Harold nor Disco could accustom themselves to it. Every time they entered the market their feelings of indignation became so intense that it was with the utmost difficulty they could control them. When Disco saw handsome negro men and good-looking girls put up for public sale,—their mouths rudely opened, and their teeth examined by cool, calculating Arabs, just as if they had been domestic cattle—his spirit boiled within him, his fingers tingled, and he felt a terrible inclination to make a wild attack, single-handed, on the entire population of Zanzibar, though he might perish in the execution of vengeance and the relief of his feelings! We need scarcely add that his discretion saved him. They soon reached the small square in which the market was held. Here they saw a fine-looking young woman sold to a grave elderly Arab for a sum equal to about eight pounds sterling. Passing hastily on, they observed another "lot," a tall stalwart man, having his various "points" examined, and stopped to see the result. His owner, thinking, perhaps, that he seemed a little sluggish in his movements, raised his whip and caused it to fall upon his flank with such vigour that the poor fellow, taken by surprise, leaped high into the air, and uttered a yell of pain. The strength and activity of the man were unquestionable, and he soon found a purchaser.

But all the slaves were not fine-looking or stalwart like the two just referred to. Many of them were most miserable objects. Some stood, others were seated as if incapable of standing, so emaciated were they. Not a few were mere skeletons, with life and skin. Near the middle of the square, groups of children were arranged—some standing up to be inspected, others sitting down. These ranged from five years and upwards, but there was not one that betrayed the slightest tendency to mirth, and Disco came to the conclusion that negro children do not play, but afterwards discovered his mistake, finding that their exuberant jollity "at home" was not less than that of the children of other lands. These little slaves had long ago been terrified, and beaten, and starved into listless, apathetic and silent creatures.

Further on, a row of young women attracted their attention. They were ranged in a semicircle, all nearly in a state of nudity, waiting to be sold. A group of Arabs stood in front of them, conversing. One of these women looked such a picture of woe that Disco felt irresistibly impelled to stop. There were no tears in her eyes; the fountain appeared to have been dried up, but, apparently, without abating the grief which was stamped in deep lines on her young countenance, and which burst frequently from her breast in convulsive sobs. Our Englishmen were not only shocked but surprised at this woman's aspect, for their experience had hitherto gone to show that the slaves usually became callous under their sufferings. Whatever of humanity might have originally belonged to them seemed to have been entirely driven out of them by the cruelties and indignities they had so long suffered at the hands of their captors. (See Captain Sulivan's *Dhow-chasing in Zanzibar Waters*, page 252.)

"Wot's the matter with her, poor thing?" asked Disco of a half-caste Portuguese, dressed in something like the garb of a sailor.

"Oh, notting," answered the man in broken English, with a look of indifference, "she have lose her chile, dat all."

"Lost her child? how—wot d'ee mean?"

"Dey hab sole de chile," replied the man; "was good fat boy, 'bout two-yer ole. S'pose she hab carry him for months troo de woods, an' over de hills down to coast, an' tink she keep him altogether. But she mistake. One trader come here 'bout one hour past. He want boy—not want modder; so he buy de chile. Modder fight a littil at first, but de owner soon make her quiet. Oh, it notting at all. She cry a littil—soon forget her chile, an' get all right."

"Come, I can't stand this," exclaimed Harold, hastening away.

Disco said nothing, but to the amazement of the half-caste, he grasped him by the collar, and hurled him aside with a degree of force that caused him to stagger and fall with stunning violence to the ground. Disco then strode away after his friend, his face and eyes blazing with various emotions, among which towering indignation predominated.

In a few minutes they reached the harbour, and, while making inquiries as to the starting of trading dhows for the south, they succeeded in calming their feelings down to something like their ordinary condition.

The harbour was crowded with dhows of all shapes and sizes, most of them laden with slaves, some discharging cargoes for the Zanzibar market, others preparing to sail, under protection of a pass from the Sultan, for Lamoo, which is the northern limit of the Zanzibar dominions, and, therefore, of the so-called "domestic" slave-trade.

There would be something particularly humorous in the barefacedness of this august Sultan of Zanzibar, if it were connected with anything less horrible than slavery. For instance, there is something almost amusing in the fact that dhows were sailing every day for Lamoo with hundreds of slaves, although that small town was known to be very much overstocked at the time. It was also quite entertaining to know that the commanders of the French and English war-vessels lying in the harbour at the time were aware of this, and that the Sultan knew it, and that, in short, everybody knew it, but that nobody appeared to have the power to prevent it! Even the Sultan who granted the permits or passes to the owners of the dhows, although he *professed* to wish to check the slave-trade, could not prevent it. Wasn't that strange—wasn't it curious? The Sultan derived by far the largest portion

of his revenue from the tax levied on the export of slaves—amounting to somewhere about 10,000 pounds a year—but *that* had nothing to do with it of course not, oh dear no! Then there was another very ludicrous phase of this oriental, not to say transcendental, potentate's barefacedness. He knew, and probably admitted, that about 2000, some say 4000, slaves a year were sufficient to meet the home-consumption of that commodity, and he also knew, but probably did not admit, that not fewer than 30,000 slaves were annually exported from Zanzibar to meet this requirement of 4000! These are very curious specimens of miscalculation which this barefaced Sultan seems to have fallen into. Perhaps he was a bad arithmetician. (See Captain Sulivan's *Dhow-chasing in Zanzibar Water*; page 111.) We have said that this state of things *was* so at the time of our story, but we may now add that it still *is* so in this year of grace 1873. Whether it shall continue to be so remains to be seen!

Having spent some time in fruitless inquiry, Harold and Disco at last to their satisfaction, discovered an Arab dhow of known good character, which was on the point of starting for the Zambesi in the course of a few days, for the purpose of legitimate traffic. It therefore became necessary that our hero should make his purchases and preparations with all possible speed. In this he was entirely guided by his father's agent, a merchant of the town, who understood thoroughly what was necessary for the intended journey.

It is not needful here to enter into full details, suffice it to say that among the things purchased by Harold, and packed up in portable form, were a number of bales of common unbleached cotton, which is esteemed above everything by the natives of Africa as an article of dress—if we may dignify by the name of dress the little piece, about the size of a moderate petticoat, which is the only clothing of some, or the small scrap round the loins which is the sole covering of other, natives of the interior! There were also several coils of thick brass wire, which is much esteemed by them for making bracelets and anklets; and a large quantity of beads of various colours, shapes, and sizes. Of beads, we are told, between five and six hundred tons are annually manufactured in Great Britain for export to Africa.

Thus supplied, our two friends embarked in the dhow and set sail. Wind and weather were propitious. In few days they reached the mouths of the great river Zambesi, and landed at the port of Quillimane.

Only once on the voyage did they fall in with a British cruiser, which ordered them to lay-to and overhauled them, but on the papers and everything being found correct, they were permitted to pursue their voyage.

The mouths of the river Zambesi are numerous; extending over more than ninety miles of the coast. On the banks of the northern mouth stands—it would be more appropriate to say festers—the dirty little Portuguese town of Quillimane. Its site is low, muddy, fever-haunted, and swarming with mosquitoes. No man in his senses would have built a village thereon were it not for the facilities afforded for slaving. At spring or flood tides the bar may be safely crossed by sailing vessels, but, being far from land, it is always dangerous for boats.

Here, then, Harold and Disco landed, and remained for some time for the purpose of engaging men. Appearing in the character of independent travellers, they were received with some degree of hospitality by the principal inhabitants. Had they gone there as simple and legitimate traders, every possible difficulty would have been thrown in their way, because the worthy people, from the Governor downwards, flourished,—or festered,—by means of the slave-trade, and legitimate commerce is everywhere found to be destructive to the slave-trade.

Dr Livingstone and others tell us that thousands upon thousands of negroes have, of late years, gone out from Quillimane into slavery under the convenient title of "free emigrants," their freedom being not quite equal to that of a carter's horse, for while that animal, although enslaved, is usually well fed, the human animal is kept on rather low diet lest his spirit should rouse him to deeds of desperate violence against his masters. All agricultural enterprise is also effectually discouraged here. When a man wants to visit his country farm he has to purchase a permit from the Governor. If he

wishes to go up the river to the Portuguese towns of Senna or Tette, a pass must be purchased from the Governor. In fact it would weary the reader were we to enumerate the various modes in which every effort of man to act naturally, legitimately, or progressively, is hampered, unless his business be the buying and selling of human beings.

At first Harold experienced great difficulty in procuring men. The master of the trading dhow in which he sailed from Zanzibar intended to remain as short a time as possible at Quillimane, purposing to visit ports further south, and as Harold had made up his mind not to enter the Zambesi by the Quillimane mouth, but to proceed in the dhow to one of the southern mouths, he felt tempted to give up the idea of procuring men until he had gone further south.

"You see, Disco," said he, in a somewhat disconsolate tone, "it won't do to let this dhow start without us, because I want to get down to the East Luavo mouth of this river, that being the mouth which was lately discovered and entered by Dr Livingstone; but I'm not sure that we can procure men or canoes there, and our Arab skipper either can't or won't enlighten me."

"Ah!" observed Disco, with a knowing look, "he won't—that's where it is, sir. I've not a spark o' belief in that man, or in any Arab on the coast. He's a slaver in disguise, he is, an' so's every mother's son of 'em."

"Well," continued Harold, "if we must start without them and take our chance, we must; there is no escaping from the inevitable; nevertheless we must exert ourselves *to-day*, because the dhow does not sail till to-morrow evening, and there is no saying what luck may attend our efforts before that time. Perseverance, you know, is the only sure method of conquering difficulties."

"That's so," said Disco; "them's my sentiments 'xactly. Never say die—Stick at nothing—Nail yer colours to the mast: them's the mottoes that I goes in for—always s'posin' that you're in the right."

"But what if you're in the wrong, and the colours are nailed?" asked Harold, with a smile.

"W'y then, sir, of course I'd have to tear 'em down."

"So that perhaps, it would be better not to nail them at all, unless you're very sure—eh?"

"Oh, of *course*, sir," replied Disco, with solemn emphasis. "You don't suppose, sir, that I would nail 'em to the mast except I was sure, wery sure, that I wos right? But, as you wos a sayin', sir, about the gittin' of them 'ere men."

Disco had an easy way of changing a subject when he felt that he was getting out of his depth.

"Well, to return to that. The fact is, I would not mind the men, for it's likely that men of some sort will turn up somewhere, but I am very anxious about an interpreter. Without an interpreter we shall get on badly, I fear, for I can only speak French, besides a very little Latin and Greek, none of which languages will avail much among niggers."

Disco assumed a severely thoughtful expression of countenance.

"That's true," he said, placing his right fist argumentatively in his left palm, "and I'm afeard I can't help you there, sir. If it wos to steer a ship or pull a oar or man the fore-tops'l yard in a gale o' wind, or anything else in the seafarin' line, Disco Lillihammer's your man, but I couldn't come a furrin' lingo at no price. I knows nothin' but my mother tongue,—nevertheless, though I says it that shouldn't, I does profess to be somewhat of a dab at that. Once upon a time I spent six weeks in Dublin, an' havin' a quick ear for moosic, I soon managed to get up a strong dash o' the brogue; but p'raps that wouldn't go far with the niggers."

About two hours after the above conversation, while Harold Seadrift was walking on the beach, he observed his faithful ally in the distance grasping a short thickset man by the arm, and endeavouring to induce him to accompany him, with a degree of energy that fell little short of main force. The man was evidently unwilling.

As the pair drew nearer, Harold overheard Disco's persuasive voice:– "Come now, Antonio, don't be a fool; it's the best service you could enter. Good pay and hard work, and all the grub that's goin'—what could a man want more? It's true there's no grog, but we don't need that in a climate

where you've only got to go out in the sun without yer hat an' you'll be as good as drunk in ten minutes, any day."

"No, no, not possibil," remonstrated the man, whose swarthy visage betrayed a mixture of cunning, fun, and annoyance. He was obviously a half-caste of the lowest type, but with more pretensions to wealth than many of his fellows, inasmuch as he wore, besides his loin-cloth, a white cotton shooting-coat, very much soiled, beneath the tails of which his thin black legs protruded ridiculously.

"Here you are, sir," cried Disco, as he came up; "here's the man for lingo: knows the native talkee, as well as Portuguese, English, Arabic, and anything else you like, as far as I know. Antonio's his name. Come, sir, try him with Greek, or somethin' o' that sort!"

Harold had much ado to restrain a smile, but, assuming a grave aspect, he addressed the man in French, while Disco listened with a look of profound respect and admiration.

"W'y, wot's wrong with 'ee, man," exclaimed Disco, on observing the blank look of Antonio's countenance; "don't 'ee savay that?"

"I thought you understood Portuguese?" said Harold in English.

"So me do," replied Antonio quickly; "but dat no Portigeese—dat Spanaish, me 'spose."

"What *can* you speak, then?" demanded Harold sternly.

"Portigeese, Arbik, Fengleesh, an' two, tree, four, nigger lungwiches."

It was very obvious that, whatever Antonio spoke, he spoke nothing correctly, but that was of no importance so long as the man could make himself understood. Harold therefore asked if he would join his party as interpreter, but Antonio shook his head.

"Why not man—why not?" asked Harold impatiently, for he became anxious to secure him, just in proportion as he evinced disinclination to engage.

"Speak up, Antonio, don't be ashamed; you've no need to," said Disco. "The fact is, sir, Antonio tells me that he has just bin married, an' he don't want to leave his wife."

"Very natural," observed Harold. "How long is it since you were married?"

"Von veek since I did bought her."

"Bought her!" exclaimed Disco, with a broad grin; "may I ax wot ye paid for her?"

"Paid!" exclaimed the man, starting and opening his eyes very wide, as if the contemplation of the vast sum were too much for him; "lat me zee—me pay me vife's pairyints sixteen yard ob cottin clothe, an' for me's hut four yard morer."

"Ye don't say that?" exclaimed Disco, with an extended grin. "Is she young an' good-lookin'?"

"Yonge!" replied Antonio; "yis, ver' yonge; not mush more dan baby, an' exiquitely bootiful."

"Then, my good feller," said Disco, with a laugh, "the sooner you leave her the better. A week is a long time, an' absence, you know, as the old song says, makes the heart grow fonder; besides, Mr Seadrift will give you enough to buy a dozen wives, if 'ee want 'em."

"Yes, I'll pay you well," said Harold; "that is, if you prove to be a good interpreter."

Antonio pricked up his ears at this.

"How mush vill 'oo gif?" he asked.

"Well, let me think; I shall probably be away three or four months. What would you say, Antonio, to twenty yards of cotton cloth a month, and a gun into the bargain at the end, if you do your work well?"

The pleased expression of Antonio's face could not have been greater had he been offered twenty pounds sterling a month. The reader may estimate the value of this magnificent offer when we say that a yard of cotton cloth was at that time sevenpence-halfpenny, so that Antonio's valuable services were obtained for about 12 shillings, 6 pence a month, and a gun which cost Harold less than twenty shillings in Zanzibar.

We may remark here that Antonio afterwards proved to be a stout, able, willing man, and a faithful servant, although a most arrant coward.

From this time Harold's difficulties in regard to men vanished. With Antonio's able assistance nine were procured, stout, young, able-bodied fellows they were, and all more or less naked. Two of these were half-caste brothers, named respectively José and Oliveira; two were half-wild negroes of the Somali tribe named Nakoda and Conda; three were negroes of the Makololo tribe, who had accompanied Dr Livingstone on his journey from the far interior of Africa to the East Coast, and were named respectively Jumbo, Zombo, and Masiko; and finally two, named Songolo and Mabruki, were free negroes of Quillimane. Thus the whole band, including Disco and the leader, formed a goodly company of twelve stout men.

Of course Harold armed them all with guns and knives. Himself and Disco carried Enfield rifles; besides which, Harold took with him a spare rifle of heavy calibre, carrying large balls, mingled with tin to harden them. This latter was intended for large game. Landing near the East Luavo mouth of the Zambesi, our hero was fortunate enough to procure two serviceable canoes, into which he transferred himself, his men, and his goods, and, bidding adieu to the Arab skipper of the dhow, commenced his journey into the interior of Africa.

Chapter Five.
In which the Travellers Enjoy Themselves Extremely, and Disco Lillihammer Sees Several Astonishing Sights

Behold our travellers, then, fairly embarked on the waters of the great African river Zambesi, in two canoes, one of which is commanded by Harold Seadrift, the other by Disco Lillihammer.

Of course these enterprising chiefs were modest enough at first to allow two of the Makololo men, Jumbo and Zombo, to wield the steering-oars, but after a few days' practice they became sufficiently expert, as Disco said, to take the helm, except when strong currents rendered the navigation difficult, or when the weather became so "piping hot" that none but men clad in black skins could work.

We must however guard the reader here from supposing that it is always piping hot in Africa. There are occasional days when the air may be styled lukewarm, when the sky is serene, and when all nature seems joyful and enjoyable,—days in which a man opens his mouth wide and swallows down the atmosphere; when he *feels* his health and strength, and rejoices in them, and when, if he be not an infidel, he also feels a sensation of gratitude to the Giver of all good.

On such a day, soon after entering the East Luavo mouth of the Zambesi, the explorers, for such we may almost venture to style them, ascended the smooth stream close to the left bank, Harold leading, Disco following closely in his wake.

The men rowed gently, as if they enjoyed the sweet calm of early morning, and were unwilling to disturb the innumerable flocks of wild-fowl that chuckled among the reeds and sedges everywhere. Harold sat in the stern, leaning back, and only dipping the steering-oar lazily now and then to keep the canoe from running on the bank, or plunging into a forest of gigantic rushes. Disco, having resolved to solace himself with a whiff of his darling pipe, had resigned "the helm" to Jumbo, and laid himself in a position of comfort which admitted of his resting his head on the gunwale in such a manner that, out of the corners of his eyes, he could gaze down into the water.

The part of the river they had reached was so perfectly still that every cloud in the sky, every mangrove, root and spray, and every bending bulrush, was perfectly reproduced in the reflected world below. Plaintive cries of wild-fowl formed appropriate melody, to which chattering groups of monkeys and croaking bull-frogs contributed a fine tenor and bass.

"Hallo, Disco!" exclaimed Harold in a subdued key, looking over his shoulder.

"Ay, ay, sir?" sighed the seaman, without moving his position.

"Range up alongside; I want to speak to you."

"Ay, ay, sir.—Jumbo, you black-faced villain, d'ee hear that? give way and go 'longside."

Good-humoured Jumbo *spoke* very little English, but had come to understand a good deal during his travels with Dr Livingstone. He wrinkled his visage and showed his brilliant teeth on receiving the order. Muttering a word to the men, and giving a vigorous stroke, he shot up alongside of the leader's canoe.

"You seem comfortable," said Harold, with a laugh, as Disco's vast visage appeared at his elbow.

"I is."

"Isn't this jolly?" continued Harold.

"No, sir, 'taint."

"Why, what d'you mean?"

"I means that jolly ain't the word, by a long way, for to express the natur' o' my feelin's. There ain't no word as I knows on as 'ud come up to it. If I wor a fylosipher, now, I'd coin a word for the occasion. P'raps," continued Disco, drawing an unusually long whiff from his pipe, "p'raps, not bein' a fylosipher, I might nevertheless try to coin one. Wot's the Latin, now, for heaven?"

"Caelum," replied Harold.

"Sailum, eh? An' wot's the 'arth?"

"Terra."

"Terra? well now, wot rediklous names to give to 'em," said Disco, shaking his head gravely, "I can't see why the ancients couldn't ha' bin satisfied with the names that *we'd* given 'em. Hows'ever, that's neither here nor there. My notion o' the state o' things that we've got into here, as they now stand, is, that they are sailumterracious, which means heaven-upon-earth, d'ee see?"

As Disco pronounced the word with a powerful emphasis on the *u-m* part of it the sound was rather effective, and seemed to please him.

"Right; you're right, or nearly so," replied Harold; "but don't you think the word savours too much of perfection, seeing that breakfast would add to the pleasure of the present delightful state of things, and make them even more sailumterracious than they are?"

"No, sir, no; the word ain't too parfect," replied Disco, with a look of critical severity; "part of it is 'arth, and 'arth is imparfect, bein' susceptible of a many improvements, among which undoubtedly is breakfast, likewise dinner an' supper, to say nothin' of lunch an' tea, which is suitable only for babbies an' wimen; so I agrees with you, sir, that the state o' things will be sailumterraciouser if we goes ashore an' has breakfast."

He tapped the head of his very black little pipe on the edge of the canoe, and heaved a sigh of contentment as he watched the ash-ball that floated away on the stream; then, rousing himself, he seized the steering-oar and followed Harold into a small creek, which was pleasantly overshadowed by the rich tropical foliage of that region.

While breakfast was being prepared by Antonio, whose talents as *chef-de-cuisine* were of the highest order, Harold took his rifle and rambled into the bush in search of game—any kind of game, for at that time he had had no experience whatever of the sport afforded by the woods of tropical Africa, and, having gathered only a few vague ideas from books, he went forth with all the pleasurable excitement and expectation that we may suppose peculiar to discoverers.

Disco Lillihammer having only consumed his first pipe of tobacco, and holding it to be a duty which he owed to himself to consume two before breakfast, remained at the camp-fire to smoke and chaff Antonio, whose good-nature was only equalled by his activity.

"Wot have 'ee got there?" inquired Disco, as Antonio poured a quantity of seed into a large pot.

"Dis? vy, hims be mapira," replied the interpreter, with a benignant smile. "Hims de cheef food ob dis konterie."

It must be remarked here that Antonio's English, having been acquired from all sorts of persons, in nearly every tropical part of the globe, was somewhat of a jumble, being a compound of the broken English spoken by individuals among the Germans, French, Portuguese, Arabs, and Negroes, with whom he had at various times associated, modified by his own ignorance, and seasoned with a dash of his own inventive fancy.

"Is it good?" asked Disco.

"Goot!" exclaimed Antonio. Being unable to find words to express himself, the enthusiastic cook placed his hand on the region which was destined ere long to become a receptacle for the mapira, and rolled his eyes upwards in rapture. "Hah! oo sall see behind long."

"Before long, you mean," observed the seaman.

"Dat all same ting, s'long's you onerstand him," replied Antonio complacently.—"Bring vatter now, Jumbo. Put him in careful. Not spill on de fire—zo—goot."

Jumbo filled up the kettle carefully, and a broad grin overspread his black visage, partly because he was easily tickled into a condition of risibility by the cool off-hand remarks of Disco Lillihammer, and partly because, having acquired his own small smattering of English from Dr Livingstone, he was intelligent enough to perceive that in regard to Antonio's language there was something peculiar.

"Now, go fitch noder kittle—queek."

"*Yis*, sar—zo—goot," replied Jumbo, mimicking the interpreter, and going off with a vociferous laugh at his little joke, in which he was joined by his sable clansmen, Masiko and Zombo.

"Hims got 'nuff of impoodidence," said the interpreter, as he bustled about his avocations.

"He's not the only one that's got more than enough impoodidence," said Disco, pushing a fine straw down the stem of his "cutty," to make it draw better. "I say, Tony," (our regardless seaman had already thus mutilated his name), "you seem to have plenty live stock in them parts."

"Plenty vat?" inquired the interpreter, with a perplexed expression.

"Why, plenty birds and beasts,—live stock we calls it, meanin' thereby livin' creeturs." He pointed towards an opening in the mangroves, through which were visible the neighbouring mud and sand flats, swarming with wild-fowl, and conspicuous among which were large flocks of pelicans, who seemed to be gorging themselves comfortably from an apparently inexhaustible supply of fish in the pools left by the receding tide.

"Ho, yis, me perceive; yis, plenty bird and beast—fishes too, and crawbs—look dare."

He pointed to a part of the sands nearest to their encampment which appeared to be alive with some small creatures.

"That's coorious," said Disco, removing his pipe, and regarding the phenomenon with some interest.

"No, 'taint koorous, it's crawbs," replied Antonio.

"Crabs, is it?" said Disco, rising and sauntering down to the sands; for he possessed an inquiring mind, with a special tendency to investigate the habits (pranks, as he called them) of the lower animals, which, in other circumstances, might have made him a naturalist.

Muttering to himself—he was fond of muttering to himself, it felt companionable,—"coorious, very coorious, quite 'stroanary," he crept stealthily to the edge of the mangroves, and there discovered that the sands were literally alive with myriads of minute crabs, which were actively engaged—it was supposed by those who ought to know best—in gathering their food. The moment the tide ebbed from any part of the sands, out came these crablets in swarms, and set to work, busy as bees, ploughing up the sand, and sifting it, apparently for food, until the whole flat was rendered rough by their incessant labours. Approaching cautiously, Disco observed that each crab, as he went along sidewise, gathered a round bit of moist sand at his mouth, which was quickly brushed away by one of his claws, and replaced by another, and another, as fast as they could be brushed aside.

"Eatin' sand they are!" muttered Disco in surprise; but presently the improbability of sand being very nutritious food, even for crabs, forced itself on him, and he muttered his conviction that they "was scrapin' for wittles."

Having watched the crabs a considerable time, and observed that they frequently interrupted their labours to dart suddenly into their holes and out again—for the purpose, he conjectured, of "havin' a drop o' summat to wet their whistles,"—Disco thrust the cutty into his vest pocket, and walked a little further out on the flat in the hope of discovering some new objects of interest. Nor was he disappointed. Besides finding that the pools left by the tide swarmed with varieties of little fish—many of them being "coorious,"—he was fortunate enough to witness a most surprising combat.

It happened thus:– Perceiving, a little to his right, some small creature hopping about on the sand near to a little pool, he turned aside to observe it more closely. On his drawing near, the creature jumped into the pool. Disco advanced to the edge, gazed intently into the water, and saw nothing except his own reflected image at the bottom. Presently the creature reappeared. It was a small fish —a familiar fish, too—which he had known in the pools of his native land by the name of blenny. As the blenny appeared to wish to approach the edge of the pool, Disco retired, and, placing a hand on each knee, stooped, in order to make himself as small as possible. He failed, the diminution in his height being fully counterbalanced by the latitudinal extension of his elbows!

Presently the blenny put its head out of the water, and looked about. We speak advisedly. The blenny is altogether a singular, an exceptional fish. It can, and does, look sidewise, upwards and

downwards, with its protruding eyes, as knowingly, and with as much vivacity, as if it were a human being. This power in a fish has something of the same awesome effect on an observer that might possibly result were a horse to raise its head and smile at him.

Seeing that the coast was clear, for Disco stood as motionless as a mangrove tree, blenny hopped upon the dry land. The African blenny is a sort of amphibious animal, living nearly as much out of the water as in it. Indeed its busiest time, we are told, (*See Dr Livingstone's Zambesi and its Tributaries*, page 843.) is at low water, when, by means of its pectoral fins it crawls out on the sand and raises itself into something of a standing attitude, with its bright eyes keeping a sharp look-out for the light-coloured flies on which it feeds.

For several seconds Disco gazed at the fish, and the fish gazed around, even turning its head a little, as well as its eyes, on this side and on that. Presently a small fly, with that giddy heedlessness which characterises the race, alighted about two inches in front of blenny's nose. Instantly the fish leaped that vast space, alighted with its underset mouth just over the fly, which immediately rose into it and was entombed.

"Brayvo!" passed through Disco's brain, but no sound issued from his lips.

Presently another of the giddy ones alighted in front of blenny about a foot distant. This appeared to be much beyond his leaping powers, for, with a slow, stealthy motion, like a cat, he began deliberately to stalk his victim. The victim appeared to be blind, for it took no notice of the approaching monster. Blenny displayed marvellous powers of self-control, for he moved on steadily without accelerating his speed until within about two inches of his prey—then he leapt as before, and another fly was entombed.

"Well done!" exclaimed Disco, mentally, but still his lips and body were motionless as before.

At this point an enemy, in the shape of another blenny, appeared on the scene. It came up out of a small pool close at hand, and seemed to covet the first blenny's pool, and to set about taking possession of it as naturally as if it had been a human being; for, observing, no doubt, that its neighbour was busily engaged, it moved quietly in the direction of the coveted pool. Being a very little fish, it was not observed by Disco, but it was instantly noticed by the first blenny, which, being rather the smaller of the two, we shall style the Little one.

Suddenly Big Blenny threw off all disguise, bounded towards the pool, which was about a foot square, and plunged in. No mortal blenny could witness this unwarrantable invasion of its hearth and home without being stirred to indignant wrath. With eyes that seemed to flash fire, and dorsal fin bristling up with rage, Little Blenny made five tremendous leaps of full three inches each, and disappeared. Another moment and a miniature storm ruffled the pool: for a few seconds the heavings of the deep were awful; then, out jumped Big Blenny and tried to flee, but out jumped Little Blenny and caught him by the tail; round turned the big one and caught the other by the jaw.

"Hallo, Disco! breakfast's ready—where are you?" shouted Harold from the woods.

Disco replied not. It is a question whether he heard the hail at all, so engrossed was he in this remarkable fight.

"Brayvo!" he exclaimed aloud, when Little Blenny shook his big enemy off and rolled over him.

"Cleverly done!" he shouted, when Big Blenny with a dart took refuge in the pool.

"I knowed it," he cried approvingly, when Little Blenny forced him a second time to evacuate the premises, "Go in an' win, little 'un," thought Disco.

Thus the battle raged furiously, now in the water, now on the sand, while the excited seaman danced round the combatants—both of whom appeared to have become deaf and blind with rage—and gave them strong encouragement, mingled with appropriate advice and applause. In fact Disco's delight would have been perfect, had the size of the belligerents admitted of his patting the little blenny on the back; but this of course was out of the question!

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