

## CHAPTER XIII

### The Metal Box

Night passing, day broke amidst the last calls of the night birds and the first songs of the day ones. Soon the sun rose in all its tropical glory and flooded the island with joy and jubilation.

While sniffing the fresh odors of the morning jessamine and listening to the hum of ten thousand bees, I picked up the diary we had found under the rock and began to flip through the book, leaf by leaf. But just before I finished I came to a new chapter that I had overlooked—a chapter in English. Great was my joy!

“Dave, Dave, here is a chapter in English.”

“What can it be?” said Dave anxiously.

“Read it, read it.”

“Well, be quiet and I will.”

“My name is John McFall. I was born in Glasgow, Scotland on May 7th, 1620. I had a Christian mother but, falling into bad company, I finally became a Captain of the pirates.

“One stormy night in 1645 my boat lay anchored in Tampa Bay, and hearing my men call for help, I rushed out upon the deck and fell unconscious.

“Several days later I awoke, half dazed, in what seemed to be a box the shape and size of a coffin.

‘Help, help,’ I cried, and instantly I fell to sleep again. The next time I woke I was lying in a bed of moss in a little cedar log cabin near this place; starved for food and famished for water.

“Looking up I saw a man in dim outline, ten or twelve feet high with a bushy head and tangled beard, at my door, and he said:

‘You are my captive and slave. Here is

some food and water; eat and drink. Tomorrow go to work in the garden and keep it clean. Do not leave your cabin more than a mile, and if you see anyone do not speak, but run. Now, if you disobey my orders I will set your lungs on fire, beat and burn you at the stake.'

"This said Tanglebeard, the devil of devils and demon of demons, and stepping back vanished into the darkness.

"Now and then he comes to my cabin, on dark nights, to give orders and to get vegetables, but I have really never seen him for I only caught a glimpse of him one time."

"Great stars, Bill. The mystery is solved, sure enough."

"Yes, Tanglebeard, the arch kidnapper," I said, "explains all things. He solves the riddle entire. The Coat Man was smuggled to the Snakenose in that big black coffin, from which he was taken out, put into a boat and brought to this island."

"And in a fight on the Snakenose with Tanglebeard he lost his coat and metal box," said Dave.

"Exactly so," I said.

"The Princess and the Pink Spring woman," said Dave, "are all slaves right now."

"And the little castle girl," I said, "lately kidnapped, is now being raised for a slave to do this Hell cat's work."

"But wait, Dave, let's read more of the Mc-Fall diary, for it may give us valuable information."

"Yes, read it Bill."

So I read the following:

"I live on cow cocoanuts and vegetables, but Tanglebeard brings seed, tools and clothing and, putting them on my doorsteps, vanishes unseen and unheard.

"One day I went a little beyond a mile from my cabin and that night Tanglebeard came, sprayed my room and set my lungs on fire. And oh, how I suffered for fourteen days! It seemed to me my lungs were

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really burning, and I know they could not have pained me more if they had been on fire. I prayed to die but, dying not, the pain left me on the fourteenth day, and I have never disobeyed an order since.

“When I first came here I found the fresh charred and burned body of a man at the foot of a stake in the edge of the yard. I am sure the poor creature was burned for disobedience, and that I was brought to take his place as a slave and to work in the garden.

“Soon after my arrival here I visited the circular fort within which I saw two-thousand, two hundred and twenty-three petrified human skulls. I am confident some general and his army had invaded the island to kill Tanglebeard and to rescue a friend, but that the old outlaw met them at the fort, set their lungs on fire and killed them all.

“He never comes in daytime and seems to

dread the human eye. From this fact I believe that he, while exposed to view, is himself simply human, but the instant he escapes it, he is human and something more, though not divine.

“He is shrewd and cunning and seems to know what goes on in his absence. However, sometimes the captives fool him by talking a little when they meet by accident, but to talk and be caught is death horrible, sure and certain.

“I have heard that many captives have tried to escape, but that Tanglebeard caught each and all, beat and burned them, except a few daring sea pirates who, by marvelous gifts, made their escapes to the outer world and left the demon raging.

“I am writing this in the diary of a former slave, hoping this little book may fall into friendly hands and lead to the destruction of this Hell hound.

“I have been bitten by a rattle snake and

am in declining health, so, after I bury this little book under the rock, I shall be ready to welcome death.

"If I had the paper I would tell of the vast hidden treasures of Tanglebeard, the kidnapper, robber and sea-rover.

This May 21st, 1725.

John McFall."

"What a wonderful story!" Dave exclaimed.

"Now I should like to know what is in the little metal box, but I am afraid to open it. It may be an infernal machine left on the Snake-nose by Tanblebeard to blow us up," Dave said.

"Let's lay it down on a flat rock," I said, "and then throw another rock on it, and before the rock lights, jump behind this old shaggy live oak and see what happens."

"All right, Bill," said Dave.

Then we placed the box on a rock and, casting another towards it, jumped behind the live oak, but the stone made a dead crash. Then I picked the box up and opened it. I removed

some cotton and discovered a photograph.

"Whose picture is that, Bill?" Dave asked.

"It is the miniature photograph," I answered, "of Lord Kitchenor, he is on this island right now!"

"Great stars, Bill! Is it possible? The English people think him dead. And he is the Coat Man too, beyond a doubt!" Dave exclaimed.

"Yes, you are right," I replied.

Then we sat down to meditate.