

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE ENEMY.

WALTER broke into a weak, hysterical laugh, "and I took that for a spirit," he exclaimed. "Well, our mystery is solved now."

"Yes," his chum admitted, looking down at the dead bell-ringer with a kind of regret, "still there are some points about it which still remain a mystery, and always will. There is no record of there ever being monkeys found in this state. It must have been brought here by one of the Spanish gentlemen as a pet and taught the trick of ringing the bell, and yet, that theory is unbelievable. Consider, Walter, if such is the case, this creature has reached an incredible age."

Walter bent down and flashed the torch in the monkey's face. "He looks as though he had lived for centuries," he exclaimed, "his face is like that of a shriveled mummy, and see, that look of cunning and aged-wisdom in his features. Charley," continued the tender-hearted boy with a break in his voice, "I feel as badly about it as I would if I had shot a

man. Think of the poor, harmless creature, remaining true year after year to the one task he knew how to perform, and then to be shot down at last while doing it."

"Nonsense, this is no time for sentiment. We must get back to our post, we have left it altogether too long. You will have to help me back, I guess, Walt," Charley said.

"How did you get here?" demanded his chum, the current of his thoughts suddenly changed. "Why, your trousers' leg is wet with blood and you are as pale as a ghost."

"I couldn't have walked a hundred feet under ordinary circumstances, but that scream brought me here on the run. Now that the excitement is over I feel weak as a kitten," Charley answered.

"You're going back to bed and stay there until that wound is completely healed," declared Walter as he put his arm around his chum and assisted him out of the chapel.

Before he could get the exhausted lad to the hut, he had become a dead weight in Walter's arms. Walter let him down gently upon the ground and ran to the hut where he aroused Chris and the captain, and the three bore Charley inside and laid him on his couch.

Captain Westfield bathed the wound and bandaged

it afresh. His face was very grave as he examined the unconscious lad's skin and pulse. "He has a high fever," he declared anxiously. "I thought yesterday from the way he was yawning and stretching that he was in for an attack of swamp fever. With a dose of it on top of this hole in his leg it is likely to go hard with the poor lad. I'd give a sight now for some brandy and quinine." He glanced up at Walter's haggard face. "You get to bed this minute or we will have two on our hands," he commanded. "Chris and I have had a good nap and we'll keep watch the balance of the night, though, I 'low, there ain't much use in doing it."

Walter was too near collapse, himself, to offer objections and dropping down on his couch was soon sleeping the sleep of exhaustion. He woke again just as the sun arose feeling rested and quite his old vigorous self, but his spirits soon fell as his chum's moanings fell upon his ears.

Charley was tossing restfully upon his couch in a high fever and the wounded leg was greatly swollen and flushed an angry red.

There was nothing he could do to relieve the sufferer, so Walter with a heavy heart stole out of the hut.

The captain and Chris were busy over the fire preparing breakfast. They greeted Walter with

grave faces for Charley's condition was resting heavily upon them.

"If I only had some quinine I could check that fever," sighed the old sailor. "He is healthy and clean-blooded and I reckon he'd get over that bad leg in time, but he can't fight them both. How in the world did he come to start the wound to bleeding again?"

Sadly Walter recounted the adventures of the night. He told of their previous discovery of the bell, their first fruitless search of the chapel, and of his venturing in alone and the shooting of the bell-ringer.

As he proceeded with his narrative the captain's face grew crimson with mortification and chagrin, as he saw his much-asserted ghostly theories shattered.

The effect on Chris' humorous nature was different. The first expression of relief on his little ebony face was succeeded by a broad grin.

"Golly," he giggled, "an' me an' Massa Capt was scart nigh to death by a poor ole harmless monkey."

Few men like to be placed in a ridiculous position and the captain turned on the little darky in a rage.

"Shut up, you grinning little imp," he shouted, "or I'll thrash you so you can't sit down for a week. What call have you got to be giggling over the death of one of your ancestors?"

Chris checked the flow of words on his tongue, but sat rocking back and forth in glee muttering, "Golly, only a monkey. A poor, old, he-monkey," until the irate captain chased him out of ear-shot.

Leaving the captain and Chris to the settlement of their trouble, Walter took one of the canoes' paddles and proceeded to the chapel. Just outside its wall he dug a deep grave, and carrying the faithful old monkey to it he lowered him gently to the bottom and filling up the grave again, heaped a little pile of stones on the mound.

To the tender-hearted lad there was something pathetic and touching in the way the poor creature had met its death.

Charley's illness cast a gloom over even the irrepressible Chris, and breakfast was eaten in sad silence.

As soon as he had finished, Chris shouldered one of the rifles and headed for the landing to watch for the outlaws, while the captain and Walter repaired to the hut to attend to the stricken lad.

There was little they could do to relieve his sufferings beyond sponging his hot body with a wet cloth and giving him sparingly of the water that he called for incessantly. At last he sank into a kind of a stupor and the heavy-hearted watchers stole outside for a breath of fresh air.

Walter at last broke the silence that hung like a cloud upon them. "I've been thinking," he said, "that it might not be a bad plan to meet the outlaws at the landing. We could dispose of several before they could get on shore."

"No," said his companion decidedly, "they would only land in some other place and maybe cut us off from the hut. You mark my words, lad, Charley thought over every side of this question before he laid his plans an' we can't do better than follow them. The most we can hope to do is to hold this hut until Little Tiger comes with his people."

Their further discussion was cut short by the sudden appearance of Chris.

"Dey's comin', Massa, dey's comin'," shouted the excited little darky. "Dey ain't more dan a half mile away."

Gathering together the cooking utensils scattered around the fire, the three entered the hut and soon had the last post secured in its hole, effectually barring the doorway.

Through the cracks in the windows and door, the hunters watched for the appearance of the foe.

An hour of suspense passed slowly by, then suddenly there came the noise of a falling stone and an evil face peeped cautiously over the wall.

Walter fired quickly but missed, and the face disappeared with ludicrous haste.

For some minutes the outlaws remained quiet, no doubt conferring together, then a tiny square of white was hoisted above the wall, to be quickly followed by the youngest outlaw who dropped coolly down into the inclosure bearing the flag in his hand.

"We can't fire upon him," declared Walter as Chris raised his gun. "He bears a truce flag and is unarmed. You keep a sharp watch on the others and I will talk with this fellow. If I am not mistaken, it is the one Charley was so impressed by."

The young outlaw approached the hut at a careless sauntering walk, waving the flag jauntily in his hand. He noted the barred openings and protruding rifle barrel with a cool smile and strolled around to the door.

"Hallo in there," he called, cheerfully. "I want to talk to you."

"Go ahead," Walter answered grimly, "we're listening."

"Come now, that's no way to receive a visitor," said the young fellow, lightly. "I want to talk with that bright-eyed chap I talked with before."

"You can't," Walter said, sadly. "He's dying of fever."

"Why don't you cure him up?" demanded the

envoy, sharply, "the swamp fever is nothing if it's treated right."

"We haven't a grain of medicine," Walter replied. "But state your errand," he added sharply.

"Look here," said the young outlaw after a short pause. "I talked those fellows into this conference idea so as to get a good chance to speak with you fellows. I am sick of that gang. I am not as bad as they, and I am clean disgusted with them. I want to join forces with you fellows. I know they are bound to finish you sooner or later, but I would rather die with gentlemen than to live with murderers."

"We cannot afford to take any chances," Walter said decidedly.

"But you are taking chances, chances on the life of your friend," said the outlaw sharply. "I can cure him, I tell you. I studied medicine and I have a few things in my bag."

"Can we risk it?" said Walter, wavering, and turning to the captain for advice.

"We can risk anything for Charley's sake," said the old sailor, eagerly. "We can shoot him at the first sign of treachery. Let him in, Walt."

"I have got to go back for my things," interrupted the outlaw, whose keen ears had caught the low conversation. "I'll be back again in a minute. I'll fix up some excuse to return. I guess pretending that

you are considering surrendering will do as well as anything else."

Walter gazed after the young fellow's retreating form with reluctant admiration. "He moves like a trained athlete and he hasn't got a bad face," he admitted. "I pray he does not prove to be our undoing."

"We must take the chance, lad," said the captain. "Better remove the post so he can get inside quick."

In a few minutes the outlaw strolled carelessly back towards the hut. A yell of rage went up from the convicts behind the wall as he darted through the opening into the building.

Walter quickly replaced the post and turned to watch the newcomer.

Without a word, he had marched over to where Charley lay and knelt by his side with his finger on the lad's pulse and his keen eyes searching his face.

After a moment's examination he turned to face the others. "Your friend is nearly dead," he said quietly.