

MAROONED.

BY  
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(Condensed for THE REVIEW.)

CHAPTER XXII.—Continued.

While I pored upon the chart, the com-

panion was darkened by the figure of a

man, and the imperious voice of Mole rang

down, "Are ye ready, Mr. Musgrave?"

"I am waiting for the lady," I replied.

"I am ready," she exclaimed; "are we

expected to carry our luggage on deck?"

I called to Mole, who still stood at the

head of the companion-ladder, "You can

send a couple of men for the boxes," and

so saying, I conducted Miss Grant through

the hatch.

They had lowered the boat and brought

her alongside under the gangway, that was

unshipped with steps over it. A few of

the men eyed us askant as though ashamed

yet too curious not to steal a glance. In

a few minutes a couple of fellows arrived,

bearing our luggage. The two men who

had brought the luggage dropped over the

side into the boat; the boxes and port-

manteaus were handed over.

"Now, sir," said Mole.

I was about to speak. Miss Grant

clasped my hand. "Hush!" she whis-

pered. "Come!"

Without a word I got over the side and

helped her to descend. Suddenly some one

cried out, "They're going ashore without

anything to eat or drink."

"Vast wish that boat, Jim!" shouted

Mole.

There was a pause for a few minutes,

then what was left of our private stores was

passed over, along with a couple of beakers

of fresh water and a jar of spirits belong-

ing to the brig. "Shove off!" sung out

Mole, "and bear a hand back, lads!"

The two fellows threw their oars over,

and the little boat, deep with the weight

of the provisions, the luggage, and the

four people in her, glided shoreward over

the blue rippling surface. It happened

strangely enough that the two men were

of the three (the half-blood being the

third) who had pulled us aboard the "Iron

Crown" from Deal. They were both

Englishmen, with a ginger-colored fork

of beard, a wrinkled skin, dingy with weather

and covered with knobs like the foot of a

seaboot.

The men made for the nearest of the

creeks, where the tender lift of the sum-

mer sea ran foamless to the shadows cast

by the leaning trees on either side; the

boat's forefoot struck the almost snow-

white sand, that went winding up like a

silver trail through the herbage, as you

notice it on the Mozambique or Natal

seaboard; and the sailor in the bows

jumbled out. The seaman who remained

in the boat handed out our luggage and

provisions, parcel by parcel, to the other,

who dragged or carried them a few yards

clear of the water's edge. On this freight

being discharged, I went into the bow and

stepped ashore, Miss Grant springing easily

from the gunwale with her hand upon my

outstretched arm. My inward rage and

despair raised so great an aversion in me

to the two sailors, that the mere being ad-

ressed by them would have been intoler-

able, and I was brisk in quitting the boat

and in assisting Miss Grant, that they

might have no excuse to order us ashore.

But I had no sooner felt the ground under

my feet than the conviction seized me that

were to be left without a boat! I had not

thought of this. I sprang in a bound to

the very lip of the shoaling water.

"My God men," I cried, articulating

with difficulty, so choking was the sense of

constriction in my throat, "you do not

mean to leave us here without any means

of escaping? Lads, as sailors and English-

men show some pity. We are without a

refuge!" I cried, almost hysterically,

pointing inland; "without tools, without

skill to contrive a fabric to escape from

this horrible solitude. Men, as you are

English sailors—"

"Shove her off, Bill," growled the fel-

low in the stern! "Away with us!

There's no use talking, and nothen can

come of listening."

The boat's head sped round to the thrust

of the oar; the two blades dipped—spark-

led—and dipped again; in a few moments

she was clear of the creek, with the two

silenced me. Miss Grant never spoke,

never offered to interrupt or check me.

She allowed me to talk myself out, and

then taking hold of the sleeve of my coat,

quietly drew me to one of the trunks that

stood under the shadow of a tree, upon

which by a gentle movement of her hand

she induced me to sit, and then extracting

a little silver-mounted bottle of refreshing

scent from her pocket, she damped her

handkerchief with it, and held it to my

forehead.

I believe, had there been a tear in my

composition, my eyes would have distilled

it at that moment.

I broke from my spell of womanly

weakness with a very passion of resolu-

tion.

"I will not ask you to forgive this fail-

ure in me," I cried, "heartily ashamed of

myself as I am. A little patience, and I

shall hope to prove myself worthy of so

noble, so courageous a companion as you.

I should not have suspected so much

weakness in me. I can not believe it a

part of my nature. I have been unduly,

most heavily tried. But so have you!" I

exclaimed, finding more strength coming

to me out of the clear, serene beauty of

her eyes than any cordial could have in-

spired. "Oh, we will make it well for

both of us yet."

I sprang to my feet with a shake of my

body that was like flinging away the whole

miserable girlishness in me to the winds.

"Nay," she exclaimed, "keep your seat.

I will sit by your side. We are not sepa-

rated yet, Mr. Musgrave. I swear," she

cried, lifting her eyes to heaven, "I would

rather that this should have happened than

that we should have had to endure another

week of the horrible life we were leading

in that cruel ship. We are not separated;

but who knows that another week might

not have found us so—might have

found me alone?"

CHAPTER XXIII.

"It is about time we broke our fast,"

said I, "perhaps we should feel faint had

we nothing to think about but our appet-

ites. The men were merciful to send our

luggage ashore with us. These camp-stools

of yours are worth a million!"

I opened one of the cases containing our

provisions, and prepared a meal of pre-

served meat and biscuits along with the

remainder of a bottle of Madeira. The

campstools made us seats, and our table

was the lid of a trunk.

We eat and drank, and were the better

for it. I lighted a cheroot, and fell a-

thinking with my eyes on Miss Grant,

she was equally thoughtful with a far-away

expression in her face.

"They are nervous folks," said I, "who

would not accept the gift of looking

ahead even for a fortnight if they could

make their fortunes through it. Throw

me back a couple of months ago into

Piccadilly, with leave to peer far enough

to divine old Broadwater's nature, and to

guess at the issues it must shape, and we

should not be here."

"It is all my fault," said she.

"Mine!" I exclaimed. "I should have

insisted upon being put ashore with you

in the English Channel."

"I mean that it is my fault that you

ever made the voyage," she replied.

"You would not wish to be alone

though," said I, smiling.

She shook her head with an unaffected

sludder.

"What conclusions will Alexander ar-

rive at," said I, "when day after day goes

by and no 'Iron-Crown' arrives at Rio?"

"I don't like to think of it," she an-

swered; "but he will have to be patient.

He must wait, as I must wait."

"Pity it is not the other way about,"

said I. "He ought to be here, and you

safe at Rio."

She looked at me quickly, with a half-

formed fancy, as it seemed, hovering on

her lips, parted as if to speak, faintly

colored, and plucking a blade of coarse

grass by her side, appeared to study the

texture of it.

"Alexander will conclude that the brig

has gone down with all hands," I contin-

ued. "The men are sure to scuttle her, and

they know if rescued they will have to

account for us and the two men they

have made away with—Broadwater and

Bothwell, I mean—it is odd if they don't

invent the name of the ship they profess

to have belonged to, so that the truth will

never reach my cousin until we carry the

news ourselves to him."

"Poor boy! his anxiety will be cruel.

But perhaps we shall be with him—sooner

than we expect."

"I hope so, indeed, for your sake,"

said I, with a lift of my brows to the tor-

menting puzzlement of how it was to be

way. The night then is before us, and

we must provide for it. I have no means

of erecting any sort of shelter, and the

island offers nothing. For my part one

of those rugs and a stretch on that dry

sand will make me as good a couch as I

need, spite of the land-crab and whatever

else crawls hereabouts at night. But the

notion of your lying on the cold ground

is intolerable to me," said I, turning my

eyes about in vain search for any hint for

a high and dry bed for her in tree or slope.

"I have a net hammock in one of those

boxes," she exclaimed, "unhappily only

one. If you—"

"I! Lord love you, Miss Grant! Why

if it were not for the lizards aloft I'd seize

myself to a bough, and make a bed in one

of those leafy forks up there, as Robinson

Crusoe did. But there may be monkeys

in this island for aught I know, and on

the whole I think a sand mattress promises

me a quieter couch than a tree. If you

can find the hammock, we will turn to

and rig it up in as snug a place as we can

light on."

She immediately explored one of her

boxes, and presently found the hammock.

It was formed of net, but very strong,

though so portable that one could have

stowed it away in one's hat, with ship-

shape clews and eyes and lengths of lanyard

ready spliced for lashings.

I swung the hammock between two

trees that exactly fitted the length of it.

They stood somewhat forward from the

group where our boxes were, with a tract

of white sand hard by, which I resolved

should furnish me with a bed that night;

so that she should swing close over me,

and be as free likewise as one could pos-

sibly contrive from all risks of visits dur-

ing the dark hours from the lizards and

tree-toads in which I reckoned this island

abounded. I formed a mattress and pil-

low for her of shawls and rugs, and, learn-

ing that she had some mosquito curtains in

her boxes, I borrowed a roll of white tape

from her, wanting a better kind of line,

and made a ridge-rope of it along her

hammock, with a couple of pieces of wood

out from the bow of a tree to serve as

stanchions, that the ends of the curtains

might float fair past the clews, and so pro-

tect her at both ends.

"Perhaps there are no mosquitos," said

she, watching me as I worked.

"I hope not," said I, doubtfully; "any-

how, I shall borrow one of your curtains,

and roll myself in it when the time comes.

Unless my system has undergone a change

since I was at Bomplay, a mosquito bite

with me signifies a lamp rather larger than

a crow's egg, and as red as Broadwater's

nose."

"We have plenty of them at Rio," said

she, "but they never tease me. Though

the species may be different here."

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE MIDNIGHT BELL.

The clear, fine, spangled dusk speedily

followed the setting of the sun. The

night lay dark upon the sea before we had

finished the meal to which we had sat

down when the hot crimson of the lumina-

ry was still flushing the heavens to the

zenith with a blood-red atmosphere,