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sight of anything more than the flickering plumage of some strange bird here and there, wh on my left, just past a couple of trees whose trunks rose to their branches wi h a two in them which made one thi. k of a vair of petrified boa-constrictors I caught sight of a bell hanging from under a cover like the lid of a box, supported by two stout stanchions, the whole as green as the wooden piles of a pier washed by salt water. "That's it?" thought I. "Come? here is discovery number one. It is a real bell anyhow!" and somewhat marvelling at the sight of such a thing, I made for it. The frame that supported it must have been a hundred years old, and the bell itself twice as ancient as that. The metal was green and bronzed with time and weather I made out some faint lingerings of what had been an inscription upon it, but the characters were indecipherable. I opened my knife and put the blade of it into the wood of the frame, and it was like sticking a cheese, so damp and tinderous was the timber, like soaked matchwood. A piece of grass line was attached to the clapper, and hung a foot below the mouth of the bell. It looked rotten, though I gave it a tug without parting it. To make sure this was the same bell we had heard in the night, I struck it two or three times. The tone satisfied me. I also knew that Miss Grant, by hearing the notes would conclude that I had found the bell. But who on earth could have

It was clear enough that this bell was seated in the very heart of the little forest and as I resolved that my over-hauling of the place should be thorough, I pushed on to the western extremity of the trees.

rung it? I sent as penetrating a gaze as

all directions, but nothing approaching

human shape or signs of life was to be

I halted a little while to recover my breath and cleanse my face of the sweat that poured down it. I could no longer doubt that the wood was as untenented as the rest of the island. What hand, then, had rung the bell? There had been no draught of air to stir the weight of metal in the night.

I started to walk afresh to join Miss Grant, when, having made three or four steps, forgetful perhaps of preserving the shambling gait I had used in the high grass, the point of my boot struck something in the sand, and down I went, the full length of me, the pistol I grasped exploding as I fell. I jumped up not a little flurried at this unexpected capsizal, and on looking to see what I had kicked against, I observed a large iron ring lying black upon the sand. I thought to pick it up, but on grasping it I discovered that it was fixed to an eye screwed or bolted into either wood or masonry hidden by the sand. I was busy in scraping away the sand lying about the ring with the sharp of my foot when Miss Grant ar-

"What have you seen Mr. Musgrave?" she cried. "At whom or what have you

"Oh," said I, "I tripped over this ring just now and the pistol went off as I fell." She barely glanced at the ring; her thoughts were elsewhere.

"I heard the bell; did you ring it?"

"Yes," I replied. "What else did you see among the trees?"

she inquired.

"Nothing else. It is some old ship's bell," I replied, "hanging at a kind of a scaffold that might be a hundred years old, perhaps more."

" No man ?" she asked.

"Nothing in the faintest degree approaching one, black, white or yellow," "But, Mr. Musgrave, who could have

rung the bell then ?" "We may yet find out. At present

have not the faintest notion. But see here, Miss Grant; what it the meaning of this ring? It is a fixture. If I had but a spade now!" She looked again at the ring, and her

interest came to it. She stooped and pulled at it, and then finding it fixed recoiled a step or two and said :

"We had better not meddle with it. The bell is wretched enough as a puzzle. Don't let us seek fresh adventures, Mr. Musgrave."

I mused a bit. "At all events," said I, "no harm can attend our seeing to what sort of an arrangement the ring is secured."

There were shells of many kinds strewn about the beach, some of them as big as dishes, sharp-edged enough to cut a man's head off. I picked up three of four and brought them to where the ring was and fell to scratching and digging with then, Miss Grant helping me. The shells spooned up the sand plentifully, and after working a while we laid bare what had unquestionably been a small ship's hatchcover, about four feet square. On scooping up yet a little at the lap of the edges, it into the square to test the atmosphere I found that this cover rested upon a timber frame, which in its turn was doubtless steadied by piles driven into the earth under the surface of the sand. Miss Grant whose curiosity was now aroused, and who seemed willing that we should look a little further into this business, put her hands to the ring too, but our united efforts could do nothing with the cover. 1 had no mind, however, to be balked, and after considering a while what I should do to a slender passage, which, however, I pulled out my knife and opening the saw-blade swarmed up a tree to a stout, roof of which was about a head higher straight, marlin-spike-looking bough that than my full stature. had caught my eye, and, putting my knife

to it, worked away patiently till I had cut three-quarters through it, after which I sprung on the bough and came down with it in a fall to the ground. It was as good as a handspike. I reeved it through the ring, using it as a lever, and pressing it upward with my shoulder, I so jarred and shook the hatch-cover that it was presently loose enough to lift.

On removing it, I found that it had concealed a tunnel which vanished after a gradual slope of a few feet into utter blackness. Three or four rude steps fell in a flight to where the slope began, so that on descending a man needed to but stoop his head to move clear of the roof of this strange cellar. I knelt down to peer sideways into the obscurity, but saw nothing for the blackness there. An old, faint, damp sort of smell arose.

"We had better put the cover on and go away," said Miss Grant; "there may be something horrible hidden in that

"Nothing living, at all events," said I "it is some old freebooter's lair, some ancient piratical hiding-place, or I am very much mistaken. That secreted bell yonder is a part of the equipment-set up to serve as an alarm, and to signal with, and perhaps to tell the hours, too. I must probe that hole; there may be a discovery under our feet worth making."

"Mr. Musgrave, you will not be so rash. What can you hope to discover-that car be. I mean, of the least use to us?" the twilight of the forest would permit in

The sense of our hopelessness seemed on a sudden to smite her as a shock; she drew a quick breath, and sent a yearning glance along the ocean line almost unconsciously, as one looks up to heaven a prayer. I thought to rally her with a stroke or two of idle fancy, and said, "Time was when many of these Laran an Cays were the haunts of picaroots; swift and tidy little schooners, leaded to their ways with the treasure of puncered galleons, came ratching to these secret verdant islands; the treasure was brought ashore by the beauties who had stolen it. and buried. Occasionally a black man wa murdered, that his ghost might have hauned the sepulchre in which the booty lav, and sentinel it against other marauders. May be it was the ghost of a murdered black man who rung the bell last night. Miss Grant, I give you my word, I am speaking the truth. The Goodwin Sands themselves have scarce gorged more wealth in their time than the pirates and buccaneers have buried in the islands and costa firme of these waters, though I don't say there," said I, pointing to the square hole that looked like the mouth of a well. "Yet when we have made our escape from this place, and are saferand snug in civilized quarters, should I on recalling this secret vault, endure to think that I wanted spirit enough to explore it? Conceive of our coming across several chests down there crammed to the lids with golden doubloous, crucifixes of the precious metal sparkling with gems, chalices which might make a Jew kneel to the sacrament for love of the beautiful workmanship." She smiled; I burst into a laugh. "No," said I, "my expect-

ior." "Mr. Musgrave," she exclaimed, with a little pout and some warmth of feeling in the look she shot at me, with a droop of the lids instantly afterward—the most womanly touch that could be imagined, with its flash of reproach and the pleading of the averted eve that followed, "pray do not forget that if anything should happen to you, I am alone."

ations are not so high pitched. Never-

theless, I must take a view of that inter-

I hung in the wind, for it grieved me to give her a moment's anxiety. But unless a ship took us off, it was certain that we must regard ourselves as prisoners for life, if we failed to devise some fabric for making our escape in. It was impossible to know but that we might discover something in this cave which should prove of inestimable value to us, even as a step toward our deliverance, and on my dwelling upon this and assuring her that I could not imagine there should be any risk in my taking a view of the interior, her face cleared and she seemed to agree with me; but I could read in her that, though she had the heart of a lioness, it fell short of prompting her to accompany me. I doubt if there was ever yet a woman who could have found courage to have entered that black hole, even though her refusal should have cost her lover. For my part, I felt no reluctance whatever, and yet Miss Grant was so much more heroical than I, in the truest sense of the word, that recollection of the disparity tempts me almost into egotism in recollection of my own humble doings.

I had a parcel of sperm candles in my portmanteau-useful articles to carry to sea in those, perhaps in these, days. I fetched and lighted one of these, and swinging it by a length of tape, lowered below. It burned brightly. Indeed my nose would have given me sufficient assurance that there was nothing wrong in that way. Then bidding Miss Grant to remain where she was, and not to feel uneasy, I descended the steps, and holding the candle up, took a look ahead. I found myself on a shelving floor of hard sand and mold, walled on either side with stanchions and pieces of timber, running athwart in-

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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