

**ГОВАРД  
ПАЙЛ**

THE ROSE OF  
PARADISE

Говард Пайл

**The Rose of Paradise**

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**Пайл Г.**

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**Howard Pyle**  
**The Rose of Paradise Being a detailed**  
**account of certain adventures that happened**  
**to captain John Mackra, in connection**  
**with the famous pirate, Edward England,**  
**in the year 1720, off the Island of Juanna**  
**in the Mozambique Channel; writ by**  
**himself, and now for the first time published**

**I**

Although the account of the serious engagement betwixt the *Cassandra* and the two pirate vessels in the Mozambique Channel hath already been set to print, the publick have yet to know many lesser and more detailed circumstances concerning the matter;<sup>1</sup> and as the above-mentioned account hath caused much remark and comment, I shall take it upon me to give many incidents not yet known, seeking to render them neither in refined rhetorick nor with romantick circumstances such as are sometimes used by novel and story writers to catch the popular attention, but telling this history as directly, and with as little verbosity and circumlocution, as possible.

For the conveniency of the reader, I shall render this true and veracious account under sundry headings, marked I., II., III., &c., as seen above, which may assist him in separating the less from the more notable portions of the narrative.

According to my log – a diary or journal of circumstances appertaining to shipboard – it was the nineteenth day of April, 1720, when, I being in command of the East India Company's ship *Cassandra*, billed for Bombay and waiting for orders to sail, comes Mr. Evans, the Company's agent, aboard with certain sealed and important orders which he desired to deliver to me at the last minute.

After we had come to my cabin and were set down, Mr. Evans hands me two pacquets, one addressed to myself, the other superscribed to one Benjamin Longways.

He then proceeded to inform me that the Company had a matter of exceeding import and delicacy which they had no mind to intrust to any one but such, he was pleased to say, as was a tried and worthy servant, and that they had fixed upon me as the fitting one to undertake the commission, which was of such a nature as would involve the transfer of many thousand pounds. He furthermore informed me that a year or two before, the Company had rendered certain aid to the native King of Juanna, an island lying between Madagascar and the east coast of Africa, at a time when there was war betwixt him and the king of an island called Mohilla, which lyeth coadjacent to the other country; that I should make Juanna upon my voyage, and that I should there receive through Mr. Longways, who was the Company's agent at that place, a paquet of the greatest import, relating to the settlement of certain matters betwixt the East India Company and the king of that island. Concluding his discourse, he further said that he had no hesitation in telling me that the paquet which I would there receive

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<sup>1</sup> A brief narration of the naval engagement between Captain Mackra and the two pirate vessels was given in the Captain's official report made at Bombay. It appears in the life of the pirate England in Johnson's book: "A Genuine Account of the Voyages and Plunders of the Most Notorious Pyrates, &c." London, 1742.

from Mr. Longways concerned certain payments due the East India Company, and would, as he had said before, involve the transfer of many thousand pounds; from which I might see what need there was of great caution and circumspection in the transaction.

"But, sir," says I, "sure the Company is making a prodigious mistake in confiding a business of such vast importance as this to one so young and so inexperienced as I."

To this Mr. Evans only laughed, and was pleased to say that it was no concern of his, but from what he had observed he thought the honorable Company had made a good choice, and that of a keen tool, in my case. He furthermore said that in the packet which he had given to me, and which was addressed to me, I would find such detailed instructions as would be necessary, and that the other should be handed to Mr. Longways, and was an order for the transfer above spoken of.

Soon after this he left the ship, and was rowed ashore, after many kind and complacent wishes for a quick and prosperous voyage.

It may be as well to observe here as elsewhere within this narrative that the Company's written orders to me contained little that Mr. Evans had not told me, saving only certain details, and the further order that that which the agent at Juanna should transfer to me should be delivered to the Governor at Bombay, and that I should receive a written receipt from him for the same. Neither at that time did I know the nature of the trust that I was called upon to execute, save that it was of great import, and that it involved money to some mightily considerable amount.

The crew of the *Cassandra* consisted of fifty-one souls all told, officers and ordinary seamen. Besides these were six passengers, the list of whom I give below, it having been copied from my log-book journal:

Captain Edward Leach (of the East India Company's service).

Mr. Thomas Fellows (who was to take the newly established agency of the Company at Cuttapore).

Mr. John Williamson (a young cadet).

Mrs. Colonel Evans (a sister-in-law of the Company's agent spoken of above).

Mistress Pamela Boon (a niece of the Governor at Bombay).

Mistress Ann Hastings (the young lady's waiting-woman).

Of Mistress Pamela Boon I feel extreme delicacy in speaking, not caring to make publick matters of such a nature as our subsequent relations to one another. Yet this much I may say without indelicacy, that she was at that time a young lady of eighteen years of age, and that her father, who had been a clergyman, having died the year before, she was at that time upon her way to India to join her uncle, who, as said above, was Governor at Bombay, and had been left her guardian.

Nor will it be necessary to tire the reader by any disquisition upon the other passengers, excepting Captain Leach, whom I shall have good cause to remember to the very last day of my life.

He was a tall, handsome fellow, of about eight-and-twenty years of age, of good natural parts, and of an old and honorable family of Hertfordshire. He was always exceedingly kind and pleasant to me, and treated me upon every occasion with the utmost complacency, and yet I conceived a most excessive dislike for his person from the very first time that I beheld him, nor, as events afterwards proved, were my instincts astray, or did they mislead me in my sentiments, as they are so apt to do upon similar occasions.

After a voyage somewhat longer than usual, and having stopped at St. Helena, which hath of late been one of our stations, we sighted the southern coast of Madagascar about the middle of July, and on the eighteenth dropped anchor in a little bay on the eastern side of the island of Juanna, not being able to enter into the harbor which lyeth before the king's town because of the shallowness of the water and the lack of a safe anchorage, which is mightily necessary along such a treacherous and dangerous coast. In the same harbor we found two other vessels – one the *Greenwich*, Captain Kirby, an English ship; the other an Ostender, a great, clumsy, tub-shaped craft.

I was much put about that I could get no nearer to the king's town than I then was, it being some seven or eight leagues away around the northern end of the island. I was the more vexed that we could not well come to it in boats, other than by a long reach around the cape to the northward, which would increase the journey to wellnigh thirty miles. Besides all this, I was further troubled upon learning from Captain Kirby of the *Greenwich* that the pirates had been very troublesome in these waters for some time past. He said that having been ashore soon after he had come to that place, in search of a convenient spot to take in water, he had found fourteen pirates that had come in their canoes from the Mayotta, where the pirate ship to which they belonged, viz., the *Indian Queen*, two hundred and fifty tons, twenty-eight guns, and ninety men, commanded by Captain Oliver de la Bouche, bound from the Guinea coast to the East Indies, had been bulged and lost.

I asked Captain Kirby what he had done with the rogues. He told me, nothing at all, and that the less one had to do with such fellows the better. At this I was vastly surprised, and that he had taken no steps to put an end to such a nest of vile, wicked, and bloody-minded wretches when he had it so clearly in his power to take fourteen of them at once; more especially as he should have known that if they got away from that place and to any of their companions they would bring the others not only about his ears, but of every other craft that might be lying in the harbor at the time. Something to this effect I said, whereat he flew into a mighty huff, and said that if I had seen half the experience that he had been through I would not be so free in my threats of doing this or that to a set of wretches no better than so many devils from hell, who would cut a man's throat without any scruples either of fear or remorse.

To all this I made no rejoinder, for the pirates were far enough away by this time, and I was willing to suppose that Captain Kirby had done what he judged to be best in the matter. Yet the getting away of those evil wretches brought more trouble upon me than had happened in all my life before.

But, as was said before, I was in a pretty tub of pickle with all those things; for I could not bring my ship to anchor in any reasonable distance of the king's town, nor could I leave her and go on such a journey as would take a day or more, lest the pirates should come along in my absence. Neither did I like to send any of the officers under me to execute the commission, it being one of such exceeding delicacy and secrecy. At this juncture, and all of my passengers knowing that we could not leave that place till I had communicated certain papers to the Company's agent at the king's town, comes Captain Leach to me and volunteers to deliver the packet addressed to Mr. Longways. At first I was but little inclined to accept of his complacency, but having a secret feeling that I might be wronging him by my prejudice against him, I determined to give second thought to the matter before I hastily declined his offer of aid. Indeed, I may truthfully say I would have felt more inclined to refuse his assistance if I had entertained a more high opinion of his person. As it was, I could see no reason for not accepting his offer; he was regarded everywhere as a man of rectitude and of honor, and I had no real grounds to impeach this opinion; so the end of the business was that I accepted his aid with the best face that I was able to command, though that was with no very good grace, and gave him leave to choose ten volunteers as a boat's crew for the expedition.

## II

(The reader will be pleased to observe that, in pursuance of the plan above indicated, I here begin a second part or chapter of my narrative, the first dealing with our voyage out as far as the island of Juanna, and matters of a kindred nature, whilst the following relates to an entirely different subject, namely, the nature of the trust imposed upon me, mention only of which has heretofore been made.)

I do not now nor ever have believed that Captain Leach had any other designs in offering to execute my commission than that of seizing so excellent an opportunity to see a strange country and people after a long and tiresome voyage upon the sea. Nevertheless, my allowing him to go was one of the greatest mistakes in all of my whole life, and cost me dearly enough before I had redeemed it.

The expedition under him was gone for three days, at the end of which time he returned, in company with a great canoe manned by a crew of about twenty tall, strapping black fellows, and with two or three sitting in the stern-sheets of the craft, bedecked with feathers and beads, whom I knew to be chiefs or warriors.

In the *Cassandra's* boat was a stranger who sat beside Captain Leach, talking very gayly, and who I knew could be none other than Mr. Longways, the Company's agent.

So soon as the *Cassandra's* boat had come alongside he skipped up the side like a monkey, and gave me a very civil bow immediately his feet touched the deck, which I returned with all the gravity I was able to command.

Mr. Longways was a lean, slim little man, and was dressed with great care, and in the very latest fashion that he could obtain; from which, and his polite, affected manners and grimaces, I perceived that he rarely had the opportunity of coming upon board of a craft where there were ladies as passengers.

After Mr. Longways came Captain Leach, and after him the three great, tall, native chiefs, half naked, and with hair dressed after a most strange, curious fashion. At first they would have prostrated themselves at my feet, but I prevented them; whereupon they took my hand and set it upon their heads, which was anything but pleasant, their hair being thick with gums and greases.

I presently led the way to my cabin, the chiefs following close at our heels, and Mr. Longways walking beside me, grimacing like a little old monkey in a vastly affected manner. Nor could I forbear smiling to see how he directed his observations towards the ladies, and more especially Mistress Pamela, who stood at the rail of the deck above. Mr. Longways carried in his hand a strong iron despatch-box, about the bigness of those used by the runners at the Bank, and so soon as we had come into my cabin he clapped it down upon the table with a great noise.

"There!" says he, fetching a deep sigh; "I, for one, am glad to be quit of it."

"Why," says I, "Mr. Longways, is there then so much in the little compass of that box?"

"Indeed yes," says he; "enough to make you and me rich men for our lives."

"I wonder, then," says I, laughing, "that you should bring it so easily to me, when you might have made off with it yourself, and no one the wiser."

"No, no," says he, quite seriously, without taking my jest, and jerking his head towards the black chiefs, who had squatted down upon their hams nigh to the table – "No, no. Our friends yonder have had their eyes on me sharply enough, though they do not understand one single word that we are saying to one another."

While we had been conversing I had fetched out a decanter of port and five glasses, and had poured out wine for all hands, which the black men drank with as great pleasure as Mr. Longways and myself.

After Mr. Longways had finished, he smacked his lips and set down his glass with a great air. "And now," says he, with a comical grimace of vanity and self-importance, "let us to business without loss of more time. First of all, I have to ask you, sir, do you know what all this treasure is for?"

I told him yes; that Mr. Evans had informed me that it was as payment for certain aid which the East India Company had rendered to the king of that country.

"And how," says he, very slowly, and cocking his head upon one side – "and how do you think our King Coffee is to make such payments? By bills upon the Bank of Africa? No, no. The treasure is all in this box, every farthing of it; and I, sir, have been chosen by the honorable East India Company to have sole and entire charge of it for more than two weeks past." Here he looked at me very hard, as though he thought I would have made some remark upon what he had told me; but as I said nothing he presently resumed his discourse, after his own fashion. "I see," says he, "that you do not appreciate the magnitude of the trust that hath been imposed upon me. I shall show you, sir." And without more ado he fetched up a bunch of keys out of his pocket. He looked at them one after another until he found one somewhat smaller than the rest, and with very curiously wrought guards. "Look at this," says he; "there are only three in the world like it. I hold one, King Coffee the other, and the Governor of Bombay the third." So saying, he thrust the key into the lock of the despatch-box. "Stop a bit, sir," said I, very seriously, and laying my hand on his arm. "Have you very well considered what you are doing? Mr. Evans, the Company's agent, said nothing to me concerning the nature of the trust that was to be imposed upon me further than it was of very great value; and without you have received instructions to tell me further concerning this business, I much misdoubt that the Company intended me to be further informed as to its nature."

"Why, look'ee, Captain Mackra," says he, testily, "Tom Evans is one man and I am another, and I tell you further that I am as important an agent as he, even though he does live in London and I in this outrageous heathen country. Even if I had not intended showing you this treasure before, I would show it to you now, for I do not choose that anybody should think that Tom Evans is a man of more importance than I." So saying, and without more ado, he gave a quick turn to the key, and flung back the lid of the box. I happened just then to glance at the three chiefs, and saw that they were watching us as a cat watches at a mouse-hole; but so soon as they saw me observing them they turned their eyes away so quickly that I hardly felt sure that I had seen them.

Inside of the box was a great lot of dried palm-leaf fibre wrapped around a ball of cotton, which Mr. Longways lifted very carefully and gently. Opening this, he came upon a little roll of dressed skin like the chamois-leather such as the jewellers and watch-makers use, and which was tied all about very carefully with a stout cord of palm fibre. Mr. Longways began laboriously to untie the knot in this cord, and, though I cannot tell why, there was something about the whole business that set my heart to beating very thickly and heavily within my breast.

Mr. Longways looked up under his brows at me with a very curious leer. "Did you ever hear," says he, "of The Rose of Paradise?"

I shook my head.

"Then I'll show her to you," said he; and he began unwinding the cord from about the roll of soft leather, the folds of which he presently opened. Then, as I looked down into his hand and saw what lay within the dressed skin, I was so struck with amazement that I could not find either breath or tongue to utter one single word.

### III

*It was a ruby, the most beautiful I had ever seen, and about the bigness of a pigeon's egg.*

At the sight of this prodigious jewel I was so disturbed in my spirits that I trembled as though with an ague, while the sweat started out of my forehead in great drops. "For the love of the Lord, put it up, man!" I cried, so soon as I could find breath and wits.

There was something in my voice that must have frightened Mr. Longways, for he looked mightily disturbed and taken aback; but he presently tried to pass it off for a jest. "Come, come," says he, as he wrapped up the stone in the soft leather again – "come, come; it's all between friend and friend, and no harm done." But to this I answered not a word, but began walking up and down the cabin, so affected by what I had seen that I could neither recover my spirits nor regain my composure. The more I thought over the business the less I liked it; for if anything should now happen to the stone, and it should be lost, every suspicion would fall upon me, since I was possessed of the knowledge of the value of that which was given into my charge. I could not but marvel at the foolish and magpie vanity of Mr. Longways that should thus lead him to betray to an unknown stranger what even I, though so ignorant of the value of such gems, could easily perceive was a vast incalculable treasure such as would make any one man rich for a whole lifetime; and even to this very day it is a matter of admiration to me why the East India Company should have put such a man in a place of important trust, the only reason that I can assign being that no better man could be found to take the agency in that place.

"Look 'ee," said I, turning to him suddenly, "have you told of this jewel, this Rose of Paradise, to any one else?"

"Why – " says he; and then he stopped, and began gnawing his nether lip in a peevish fashion.

"Come, come," says I, "speak out plain, Master Longways, for this is no time for dilly-dallying."

"Well," says he, blurting out his words, "I did say something of it to Captain Leach, who, I would have you know, is a gentleman, and a man of honor into the bargain."

"And tell me," said I, paying no attention to his braggadocio air, "did you show the stone to him also?"

He looked up and down, as though not knowing what to say.

"Come, come, sir," said I, sternly, after waiting for a moment or two and he not answering me – "come, come, sir, I should like to have an answer, if you please. You will recollect that this trust now concerns not only you, but also myself, and if anything happens to the jewel I will be called upon to answer for it as well as yourself; so, as I said, you will answer my question."

"Why," says he, "Master Captain, and what if I did? Do you mean to impeach the honor of Captain Leach? I did show it to him one day when we stopped along the beach for water, if you must be told; but I can promise you that not another soul but yourself has seen it since I gave King Coffee my written receipt for it."

I made no more comment, but began again to walk up and down the cabin, vastly disturbed in my mind by all that I heard. Nothing could be gained by blaming the poor fool, who all this time sat watching me with a mightily troubled and disquieted face. "Sir," said I, at last, turning to him – "sir, I do not believe that you know what a serious piece of folly you have committed in this business. By rights I should have nothing more to do with the matter, but should leave you to settle it with the Company as you choose; but my instructions were to deliver the stone at Bombay, and I will undertake to do my part to the best of my power. I have nothing of blame to say to you, but I must tell you plain that I cannot have you longer about my ship; I do not wish to order you to leave, but I will be vastly obliged to you if you can return to the king's town without longer stay."

At this address Mr. Longways grew very red in the face. "Sir! sir!" he cried, "do you dare to order me, an agent of the East India Company, to leave one of that Company's own ships?"

"That," said I, "you must salt to suit your own taste."

"Very well!" cried he; "give me a receipt for the stone and I'll go, though I tell you plain that the Company shall hear of the fashion in which you have been pleased to treat me."

I made no further answer to his words, but sat down and wrote out the receipt, specifying, however, the manner in which The Rose of Paradise had been shown both to Captain Leach and to myself.

For a while Mr. Longways hotly refused to accept it in the form in which it was writ; but finding that he could get no better, and that he would either have to accept of it or retain the stone in his own keeping until some further opportunity offered for consigning it to Bombay, he was finally fain to take what he could get, whereupon he folded up the paper and thrust it into his pocket, and then left the cabin with a vast show of dignity, and without so much as looking at me or saying a word to me.

He and the chiefs got into the great canoe, and rowed away whence they had come, and I saw no more of him until above a week afterwards, of which I shall have more to say further on in my narration.

## IV

I did not go upon deck immediately after Mr. Longways had left the cabin, but sat there concerned with a great multitude of thoughts, and gazing absently at the box that held the treasure, and at the empty glasses with the dregs of the wine in the bottom.

Just in front of me was a small looking-glass fastened against the port side of the cabin in such position that by merely raising my eyes I could see the cabin door from where I sat.

In the upper part of the door was a little window of two panes of glass, which opened out under the overhang of the poop-deck.

Though I do not know what it was, something led me to glance up from where I sat, and in the glass I saw Captain Leach looking in at that window with a mightily strange expression on his face. He was not looking at me, but at the iron despatch-box upon the table, and I sat gazing at him for about the space of eight or ten seconds, in which time he moved neither his glance nor his person. Suddenly he lifted his eyes and looked directly into the glass, and his gaze met mine. I had thought that he would have been struck with confusion, and for a moment it did seem as though his look faltered, but he instantly recovered himself, and tapped lightly upon the door, and I bade him come in without moving where I sat.

He did as he was told, and sat down upon the chair which Mr. Longways had occupied only a few moments before. I confess that I was both frightened and angry at finding him thus, as it were, spying upon me, so that it was a moment or two before I trusted myself to speak.

"Sir," said I at last, "sure this voyage hath been long enough for you to know that the courtesies of shipboard require you to send a message to the captain to find whether he be disengaged or no."

Captain Leach showed no emotion at my reproof. "Captain Mackra," said he, quietly, "I do not know what that gabbling fool of an agent has or has not said to you, but I tell you plain he hath chosen to betray to me certain important matters concerning the East India Company, and that in yonder despatch-box is a large ruby, valued at nigh three hundred and fifty thousand pounds sterling."

I may confess that I was vastly amazed at the value of the stone, which was far greater than I had conceived a notion of, but I strove to show nothing of my sentiments to my interlocutor.

"Well, sir?" said I, looking him straight in the face.

He seemed somewhat struck aback at my manner, but he presently laughed lightly. "You take the matter with most admirable coolness," said he; "far more than I would do were I in your place. But at least you will now perceive why I chose rather to come to you of myself than to send a messenger to you where a matter of such delicacy was concerned."

"Well, sir?" said I.

Captain Leach looked for a moment or two as though at a loss what next to say, but he presently spoke again. "I came to you," said he, "not knowing, as I said before, whether or no Mr. Longways had betrayed to you, as he has to me, the value of the trust imposed upon you; and as I myself am now unfortunately concerned in the knowledge of this treasure, and so share in your responsibility, I come hither to discover what steps you propose taking to insure the safety of the stone."

Now it hath come under my observation that if a man be permitted to talk without let or stay, he will sooner or later betray that which lieth upon his mind. So from the very moment that Captain Leach uttered his last speech I conceived the darkest and most sinister suspicions of his purposes; nor from that time did I trust one single word that he said, or repose confidence in any of his actions, but was ready to see in everything something to awaken my doubts of his rectitude. Nor did these sentiments arise entirely from his words, but equally as much from my having discovered him, as it were, so prying upon my privacy.

"Sir," said I, rising from my seat, "I am infinitely obliged to you for your kindness in this affair, but as I have at present matters of considerable import that demand my closest attention, I must beg you to excuse me."

Captain Leach looked at me for a moment or two as though he had it upon his mind to say something further. However, he did not speak, but rising, delivered a very profound bow, and left the cabin without another word. But there was no gainsaying the wisdom of the advice which he had given me as to concealing the treasure. Accordingly I obtained from the carpenter a basket of tools, and, bearing in mind the late visit with which he had favored me, having shaded the little window in the door of my cabin, I stripped off my coat and waistcoat, and after an hour or so of work, made shift to rig up a very snug little closet with a hinged door, in the bottom of my berth and below the mattress, wherein I hid the jewel. After that I breathed more freely, for I felt that the treasure could not be discovered without a long and careful search, the opportunities for which were not likely to occur.

Although my interview with Captain Leach might seem of small and inconsiderable moment to any one coolly reading this narrative in the privacy of his closet, yet coming to me as it did upon the heels of my other interview with Mr. Longways, it cast me into such disquietude of spirit as I had not felt for a long time. I would have heaved anchor and away, without losing one single minute of delay, had it been possible for me to have done so; but not a breath of air was stirring, and there was nothing for it but to ride at anchor where we were, though, what with the heat and delay, it was all that I could do not to chafe myself into a fume of impatience.

So passed the day until about four o'clock in the afternoon, when there happened a certain thing that, had thunder and lightning burst from a clear sky, it could not have amazed me more. I being in my cabin at the time, comes Mr. Langely, my first mate, with the strange news that the lookout had sighted a vessel over the point of land to the southward. I could hardly accredit what he said, for, as above stated, not a breath of air was going. I hurried out of my cabin and upon deck, where I found Mr. White, the second mate, standing at the port side of the ship, with a glass in his hand directed a few points west of south, and over a spit of land which ran out in the channel towards that quarter, at which place the cape was covered by a mightily thick growth of scrub-bushes, with here and there a tall palm-tree rising from the midst of the thickets. Over beyond these I could see the thin white masts of the vessel that the lookout had sighted. There was no need of the glass, for I could see her plain enough, though not of what nature she might be. However, I took the telescope from Mr. White's hands, and made a long and careful survey of the stranger, but as much to hide my thoughts as for any satisfaction that I could gain; for what confounded me beyond measure was that a vessel should be sighted so suddenly, and in a dead calm, where I felt well assured no craft had been for days past. Nor was I less amazed to find, as I held the stranger steadfastly in the circle of the object-glass, a tall palm-tree being almost betwixt the *Cassandra* and her, and almost directly in my line of sight, that she was slowly and steadily making way towards the northward, and at a very considerable angle with the Gulf current, which there had a set more to the westward than where we lay at anchor.

I think that all, or nearly all, of my passengers were upon the poop-deck at that time, Captain Leach with a pocket field-glass which he had fetched with him from England, and with which he was directing Mistress Pamela's observation to the strange craft. Nearly all the crew were also watching her by this time, and in a little while they perceived, what I had seen from the first, that the vessel was by some contrivance making head without a breath of wind, and nearly against the Gulf current.

As for the stranger herself, so far as I could judge, seeing nothing of her hull, she was a bark of somewhat less tonnage than the *Cassandra*; and the masts, which we could perceive very clearly against the clear sky, had a greater rake than any I had ever before seen.

I do not know whether or not it was because my mind was running so much upon the pirates and upon the great treasure which I had in my keeping, but I am free to say that I liked the looks of the strange craft as little as any I had ever beheld in my life, and would have given a hundred guineas to be

safe away from where I was, and with no more favor than a good open sea and a smart breeze, for the *Cassandra* was a first-rate sailer, and as good a ship as any the East India Company had at their docks.

As it was, we were cooped up in what was little more than a pond, and I did not like the looks of the business at all.

"What do you make her out to be, Mr. Langely?" said I, after a bit, handing him the glass.

He took a long and careful look at the stranger without speaking for a while. By-and-by he said, without taking his eye from the glass, and as though speaking half to himself, "She's making way against the current somehow or other."

"Yes," said I; "I saw that from the first. But what do you make of her?"

"I can make nothing of her," says he, after a little while.

"Neither can I," I said; "and I like her none the better for that."

Mr. Langely took his eye from the glass, and gave me a very significant look, whereby I saw that he had very much the same notion concerning the stranger that I myself entertained.

By this time there was considerable bustle aboard the *Greenwich*, which rode at anchor not more than a furlong or two from where we lay, and by the gathering of the men on the fore-castle I could see that they had sighted the craft, as we had already done.

So the afternoon passed until six o'clock had come, against which time the stranger had almost come into open sight beyond the cape to the south, the hull alone being hidden by the low spit of sand which formed the extremity of the point.

That evening I took my supper along with the passengers, as I had been used to do, for I wished to appear unconcerned, as, after all, my suspicions might be altogether groundless. Nevertheless, I came upon deck again as soon as I was able, and found that the stranger was now so far come into sight as to show a part of her hull, which was low, and painted black, and was of such an appearance as rather to increase than to lessen my serious suspicions of her nature.

I could see there were two whale-boats ahead of her, and it was very plain to me that it was by means of these that the bark was making head against the current. At first I was more than ever amazed at this, seeing that the current at that point could not run at less than the rate of two or three knots an hour, against which two boats could not hope to tow a craft of her size without some contrivance to aid their efforts. Every now and then I could hear the clicking of the capstan, as though the vessel was heaving anchor, and led by this sound, I after a while perceived how she was making way, though if I had not seen the same plan used in the Strait of Malacca by the *City of Worcester*, when I was there in the year '17, I much misdoubt whether I could have so readily discovered the design which they were in this instance using. As it was, I was not long in finding out what they were about.

The two boats ahead of the strange craft were towing a square sail through the water by a line fastened to the middle of the same. From all four corners of this sail ran good stout ropes, which were made fast to the anchor cable of the bark. The two boats might tow this square through the water easily enough by that one line fastened to the middle, because the sail would then close and so slip easily through the water; but so soon as the bark began to haul upon it from all four corners it spread out as though filled with wind, and so offered a vast resistance to the water. By this contrivance the bark was making headway at about the rate of a knot an hour against the current, so that by seven o'clock she was clear out beyond the cape and into the open water beyond.

At that time the sun had not yet gone down, and the distant vessel stood out against the reddish-gray sky to the eastward, with all the cordage and the masts as sharp as so many hairs and straws in the red light of the setting sun.

I was standing just under the poop-deck at the time, with the glass to my eye, when, of a sudden, I saw something black begin rising from the deck to the fore. There was not enough breeze going to spread it, but I knew as well as anything in all of my life that it was the "Black Roger," and that the white that I could see among the folds was the wicked sign of the "skull and crossbones," which those bloody and cruel wretches are pleased to adopt as the ensign of their trade. Nor were we long

in doubt as to their design, for even as I watched I saw a sudden puff of white smoke go up from her side and hang motionlessly in the still air, whilst a second or two later sounded the dull and heavy boom of the distant cannon, and a round shot came skipping across the water from wave to wave, though too far away and with too poor aim to do any damage from that distance, which could not have been less than two miles.

"What does that mean, captain?" said Mistress Pamela, who stood with the other passengers observing the bark from the poop-deck above.

"A salute, madam," said I, and so shut my glass and went into my cabin, where Mr. Langely presently joined me at my request, and where we talked over this very ugly piece of business at our leisure.

## V

In those hot latitudes, such as Madagascar, the darkness cometh very sudden after sunset, and with no long twilights such as we have in England, so that within half an hour after the pirate had saluted us with a round shot, as told above, it had passed from daylight to night-time, and there being no moon until about four o'clock in the morning, it was very dark, with an infinite quantity of stars shining most beautifully in the sky.

I ordered my gig to be made ready, and went aboard the *Greenwich*, where I found Captain Kirby suffering under the utmost consternation of spirits. He took me straight to his cabin, where, when we were set down, he fell to blaming himself most severely for not having clapped chains upon the fourteen pirates whom he had found on the island upon his arrival at that place, and who, it was very plain to see, had given such information to their fellows as had brought a great number of them down upon us.

So soon as I was able I checked him in his self-reproaches. "Come, come, Captain Kirby," says I, "'tis no time for vain regrets, but rather to be thinking to protect ourselves and those things that we have in trust from these bloody wretches, who would strip us of all."

So, after a while, he quieted in some measure, and the captain of the *Ostender* coming aboard about this time, we made shift betwixt us to settle some sort of a plan for mutual protection.

According to my suggestions it was determined to get out warps upon the port side of all three crafts, which now lay heading towards the south, because of the set of the current. By means of these warps the vessels might be brought to lie athwart the channel, which was so narrow at this place that, should the pirate craft venture into the harbor, she would be raked by all three in turn. These matters being settled, I returned to the *Cassandra* again.

That night I had but little sleep, but was in and out of my cabin continually. Whenever I was upon the deck I could hear the "click, click, click" of the capstan aboard the pirate vessel, sounding more clearly through the dampness of the night than in the daytime. There was still not a breath of air going, and I thought it likely that the pirate intended making her way into the harbor that night, but about three o'clock in the morning the noise of working the capstan ceased, and I fancied that I heard a sound as of dropping anchor, though I could make out nothing through the darkness, even with the night-glass.

Nor was I mistaken in my surmise that the pirate craft had come to anchor, for when the day broke I perceived that she lay between two and three miles away, just outside of the capes, and directly athwart the channel, being stayed by warps, broadside on, as we ourselves were in the harbor, so as to rake any vessel that should endeavor to come out, as we might rake any that would endeavor to come in.

As this day also was very quiet, with not a breath of wind stirring, I expected that the pirate would open fire, though at such a long range. However, this she did not do, but lay there as though watching us, and as though to hold us where we were until some opportunity or other had ripened. And so came the night again, with nothing more of note having happened than the day before.

Ever since we had lain at this spot native canoes (called by the sailors bumboats) had come from the shore from day to day, laden with fruit and fresh provisions, which are most delicious, refreshing luxuries after a prolonged sea-voyage, such as ours had been. That day they had come as usual, though there was little humor for bartering with them upon such a serious occasion.

However, I had observed, and not without surprise, that Captain Leach, though he knew the nature of the pirate craft, and the serious situation in our affairs, appeared so little affected by the danger which threatened us that he bought a lot of fresh fruit, as usual, and held a great deal of conversation with one of the natives, who spoke a sort of English which he had picked up from our traders.

I had not thought much of this at the time, although, as I had observed before, it was not without surprise that I beheld what he did; beyond this I reckoned nothing of it, nor would have done so had not matters of the utmost importance afterwards recalled it to my attention.

That night I had no more appetite for sleep than the night before, and finding little rest or ease in my cabin, was up upon deck for most of the time. Though I did not choose just then to hold conversation with my passengers, I noticed that they were all upon deck, where they sat talking together in low tones. As the night advanced, however, they betook themselves to their cabins, one after another, until only Captain Leach was left sitting alone.

He remained there for maybe the space of half an hour, without moving a hair's-breadth, so far as I could see. At the end of about that length of time, being in a mightily anxious state, I stepped forward to see for myself that the watch was keeping a sharp lookout. I was not gone for more than a minute or two, but when I came back I saw that Captain Leach was no longer where he had been before; yet although I noticed this circumstance at the time, I gave no more thought to it than I would upon an ordinary occasion.

As there was no one on the poop, I myself went up upon that deck, it being so much cooler there than on the quarter-deck below. I took out my pipe and filled it, thinking to have a quiet smoke, which is a most efficacious manner of soothing any perturbation or fermentation of spirits. Just as I was about to strike my flint for a light, I heard a noise under the stern-sheets, as of some one stepping into a boat, and almost immediately afterwards a slight splash, as of an oar or a paddle dipped into the water. I ran hastily to the side of the vessel, and looked astern and into the water below.

Although the sky was clear, the night was excessively dark, as one may often see it in those tropical latitudes; yet I was as well assured that a boat of some sort had left the ship as if I had seen it in broad daylight, because of the phosphorescent trail which it left behind it in its wake.

I had slipped a pistol into my belt before quitting my cabin, and as I hailed the boat I drew it and cocked it, for I thought that the whole occurrence was of a mightily suspicious nature. As I more than half expected, I got no answer. "Boat, ahoy!" I cried out a second time, and then, almost immediately, levelled my pistol and fired, for I saw that whoever the stranger was, he had no mind to give me an answer.

At the report of the pistol both Mr. Langely and Mr. White came running to where I was, and I explained the suspicious circumstances to them, whereupon Mr. Langely suggested that it might have been a shark that I had seen, vast quantities of which voracious animals dwell in those and the neighboring waters. I did not controvert what he said, although I knew beyond a doubt that it was a craft of some sort which I had discovered – possibly a canoe, for the dip of the paddle, which I had distinctly seen in the phosphorescence of the water, appeared first upon the one side of the wake and then upon the other, as the blade was dipped into the water from side to side; so although, as I said, I did not undertake to controvert Mr. Langely's opinion, I was mightily discomposed in my own mind concerning the business.

At this time there was a vast deal of disturbance aboard the *Greenwich* and the *Ostender* because of my hail and the discharge of the pistol, which, however, soon quieted down when they found that nothing further followed upon the alarm.

I walked up and down the poop-deck for a great while, endeavoring to conceive what could be the meaning of the boat, which had most undoubtedly been lying under the stern of the *Cassandra*, and how it came that the watch had failed so entirely to discover its arrival. It would not have been possible for an ordinary ship's boat to come upon us so undiscovered, for, as I myself knew, the watch were keeping a sharper lookout than usual; therefore this circumstance, together with that which I had above observed concerning my opinion that the craft had been rowed with a paddle, led me to conclude that it was one of the native canoes, though I was as far as ever from guessing what the object of the visit had been, or what it portended. As I sat ruminating upon this subject, looking straight ahead of me, without thinking whither my observation was directed, I presently perceived that I was

looking absently at the spot where Captain Leach had been sitting a little while before. This led me to think of him, and from him of the jewel that was in my keeping, and of its excessive value. Of a sudden it flashed into my mind, as quick as lightning, what if Captain Leach should have it in his mind to practice some treachery upon us all?

I may truly say that this thought would never have entered my brains had not the circumstance of Captain Leach's conversation with me in my cabin tended to set it there. But no sooner had this gloomy suspicion found place in my mind than it and those troubles which had beset me of late, and the loss of that sleep which I had failed to enjoy the night before, together cast me into such a ferment of spirits as I hope I may never again experience. Nor could I reason my mind out of what I could not but feel might be insane and unreasonable fancyings.

At last I could bear my uncertainties no longer, but went down into the great cabin, and so to the door of the berth which Captain Leach occupied. I knocked softly upon the door, and then waited a while, but received no answer. After that I knocked again, and louder, but with no better success than before. Finding I was like to have no answer to my knocking, I tried the door, and found that it was locked.

My heart began to beat at a great rate at all this; but I suddenly bethought me that perhaps the captain was a sound sleeper and not easily roused. If this were so, and he were in his cabin, and had locked the door upon himself, I could easily convince myself of the fact, for it hardly could be doubted but that the key would be in the key-hole. I drew out my pocket-knife, opened a small blade which it contained, and thrust it into the key-hole. There was no key there!

This discovery acted upon my spirits in such a manner that a douse of water could not have cooled me quicker; for now that my worst suspicions were so far confirmed – for I felt well assured that Captain Leach was nowhere aboard the ship – my perturbation left me, and I grew of a sudden as calm as I am at this very moment. However, to make matters more assured, I rapped again upon the door of the cabin, and this time with more vigor than before; but although I repeated the knocking four or five times, I received no answer, and so went upon deck to consider the matter at my leisure.

My first thought was of the jewel in my keeping, and that Captain Leach had made off with it. My cooler reason told me that this could not be, I having taken such effectual means to hide it, as before stated. Nevertheless, I went to my cabin and examined my hiding-place to set my mind at rest, finding, as might be expected, that the jewel was safely there.

My first impulse was to tell Mr. Langely of my suspicions, but in digesting the matter it appeared to me best to keep them to myself for the present; for if I should, after all, prove wrong in my surmise, it would only add to the entanglement to have another involved in the business before anything certain had been discovered; moreover, should I observe sufficient cause for using extreme measures against Captain Leach, I might easily arrest him at any time, having him entirely in my power.

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