

The Sea Monarch

A Thrilling Tale of Adventure Under the Most Unusual Circumstances

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Synopsis.

GERALD TREGARTHEN, sub-lieutenant of H.M.S. *Calder*, being on leave, sails from Poole with his old school chum Jack Stockton on board the latter's yacht *Playmate*. In mid-Channel the yacht is run down; the two friends are rescued, and find themselves on board a mysterious cruiser—the *Olive Branch*—commanded by Captain Brookes. Finding that Tregarthen is a British naval officer, Captain Brookes announces his intention of keeping him on board, and, after due deliberation, Gerald decides to fall in with the captain's plans, as far as his sense of loyalty will permit.

Tregarthen is initiated into the secrets of the *Olive Branch*, including that of the deadly ZZ-rays—an irresistible charge of electricity whereby the destruction of a hostile ship can be made at will. Captain Brookes also explains that by the power at his command he hopes to make war so terrible that no nation will venture to declare war; thus universal peace will be assured.

During the voyage south Schneider, the ship's scientist, deserts, taking with him some important plans. He is found on board a German "tramp," and is brought back to the *Olive Branch*, which, when this action is reported, is branded as a pirate.

Hostilities break out between Chili and Peru, and Captain Brookes determines to intervene. The *Olive Branch* is damaged by a mine, and put into a Chilean harbor for repairs; but while in dock it is trapped by a British squadron demanding its surrender by daybreak. Captain Brookes is handicapped by a vow never to fire on a British vessel. At midnight when the damage to his ship has been repaired, he makes use of his ZZ-rays to extinguish the searchlights of the British squadron. Then the *Olive Branch* starts forward at full speed.

CHAPTER XV

A ONE-SIDED ENGAGEMENT

THRASHING through the chaos of broken water on the bar, the spindrift flying in blinding showers over her knife-like bows, the *Olive Branch* held swiftly yet steadily on her course, steered by her impassive, automaton-like captain.

Every man was at his post, for the cruiser was cleared for action, although it was an understood thing that not a shot would be fired under any circumstances. Yet Gerald wondered, as he stood in the darkened conning tower, whether the mental strain might prove too great, and whether the temptation to touch one of the deadly levers that were within arm's length might overcome the captain's iron nerve. Could any human being run the gauntlet, receive the fire of four cruisers armed with modern quick-firing guns, and yet withhold the means of offense at his command?

Not a word did Captain Brookes utter. With his hands steadily grasping the electrical steering gear, his eyes peering through the narrow slit in the armored walls into the intense blackness of the night, he stood as rigid as a marble statue, save for an occasional slight movement of his hand as he altered the vessel's helm.

To Tregarthen, looking through his aperture in the conning tower, the task of steering

through that mirk of blinding rain and spray seemed an impossibility; but, without a bearing to fix his course, and ignoring the presence of the compass, Captain Brookes seemed to feel his way by a supernatural instinct.

Exactly at four minutes from the time of getting under way a bright flash, followed almost instantaneously by a crash that out-voiced the roaring of the wind and sea, burst from the darkness away on the starboard bow. Then, with a long-drawn shriek, a 4.7-inch shell screamed overhead.

Then another missile, coming from right ahead, struck the sea a bare twenty yards to port, knocking up a cascade of spray that rose high above the foam-flecked waves as it ricocheted into the darkness astern.

Still the *Olive Branch* held on, steering straight for the yet invisible cruiser that had fired the second shot. The firing now became general from the British cruisers, for the luminosity of the spray churned up by the swiftly moving blockade runner gave the gunners some knowledge of the position of the oncoming craft.

Crash!

A 6-inch, striking the bow of the *Olive Branch* in an oblique direction, exploded with a deafening report, the flash throwing the outlines of the ship into strong relief.

Then, with a concussion that shook the mas-

sive conning tower to its foundations, a heavy missile landed fairly on the base of the armored citadel.

Gerald could not refrain from closing his eyes, though the danger of that particular shell had passed, yet he did not move from his position at the look-out slit. The experience gained in the action with the *Independencia* was beginning to assert itself.

Now the blows that ought to have been described as staggering redoubled as shell after shell struck the cruiser's armored plating, while to the louder detonations of the 6-inch and the 4.7-inch guns was added the sharp bark of the 6 and 12-pounders. The air that eddied furiously through the apertures in the conning tower was foul with acrid fumes, while fragments of glowering metal even found their way into the steel shell.

Suddenly one of the quartermasters who was standing in reserve at the after end of the tower spun round and, blindly fumbling with his outstretched hands, sank lifeless to the deck. As he did so he grasped one of the levers, thrusting it downward as he fell.

Instinctively Gerald turned, disengaged the man's grasp and replaced the lever, but the mischief was but partly averted. The funnel, windscreens and the sliding hatches that concealed the boats were beginning to raise themselves above the deck, and, caught by the withering blast, the thin steel plating was riddled like paper.

Then did Captain Brookes shift his position, but it was not on account of the damage caused by the lifeless quartermaster. The *Olive Branch* was drawing within the danger zone of her own Z-rays.

Separating the pointers and springing back to his post, the captain put the helm hard over. Round swung the *Olive Branch*, listing dangerously outwards as he described a short curve with undiminished speed; and at that moment the British cruisers, freed from the irritating influence of the Z-rays, threw their searchlights upon the daring fugitive.

Having gained an offing, Captain Brookes shaped a course to the southward, thus presenting the whole broadside as a tempting target to the *Niobe*. Eight of her 6-inch guns thundered on the irresistible *Olive Branch*, with but little effect, though she reeled as the missiles smashed against her lofty sides. A round from one of the latter's weapons could pulverize the 11,000-ton unarmored cruiser, yet even in the heat of this one-sided encounter Captain Brookes kept his word.

Then the running fight soon became a hopeless stern chase, and fifteen minutes after leaving Talcahuano Harbor the report of the last gun died away in long-drawn reverberations, like the growl of a beast of prey.

Giving the helm in charge of the remaining quartermaster, and ordering a lieutenant to take command of the conning tower, Captain Brookes began a tour of inspection. It was too dark to see the amount of damage done on deck, for the arc lamps had been totally destroyed, but below the glow of the incandescent lights showed that the *Olive Branch* had not come scathless out of the fray.

Aft, the lighter side armor, above the lower or turtle-backed steel deck, had not been able to resist the passage of four 6-inch shells. Three of the officers' cabins were completely wrecked, the fireproof furniture being shattered into fragments. The distilling plant and the bread room were also demolished, while forward the impact of two heavy projectiles on one spot had so weakened the armor plate that a third shell had burst under the fore'sle, the concussion injuring the delicate mechanism of the wireless gear.

Beyond the loss of the quartermaster the casualties were confined to minor contusions, though most of the crew complained of deafness for the next few days.

"This comes of adopting the principle of passive resistance," commented Captain Brookes. "There's a month's hard work to make all shipshape again."

"I must give the skipper due credit for his word," said Gerald to his chum as they turned in for the night. "I don't think I could have blamed him if he had kicked."

During the greater part of the following day the *Olive Branch* resumed her southerly flight, though for the space of one hour she was hove to. Daylight had revealed the extent of the damage done on decks. Practically everything that could be shot away had vanished; the two quarter boats had been swept from their davits, which were twisted into fantastic shapes; the stanchions and hand rails, though stowed flat on the deck, were torn like pack thread, while the steel decks were furrowed in all directions by the glancing blows of the projectiles. As for the conning tower, it seemed a marvel how any of its occupants could have escaped, for almost every square inch of its massive armor was dented by the heavy shells and pitted by the hail of the quick-firers.

"Well, Mr. Tregarthen, how do you think the *Olive Branch's* mission of universal peace is progressing?" asked Captain Brookes.

"Since you've asked me, sir, I am afraid that I cannot say it is a success. You see, sir, we fired the first shot in the Chilean and Peruvian set-to, and sent a cruiser to the bottom."

"That I admit. But see the result. By the sacrifice of the *Independencia* the two fleets were prevented from coming to blows. I know these fellows; they fight like tigers, so I can claim credit for saving twenty times the number of poor fellows lost in the Peruvian cruiser, while the war is stopped—that is, unless that British squadron, by driving us away, have encouraged the two republics to fly at each others' throats."

"That may be so," assented Gerald.

"Here comes Mr. Selkirk, with trouble written on every line of his face as plainly as A B C. Well, Mr. Selkirk, what's amiss now?"

Selkirk, the chief engineer, was a Scotsman whose whole existence seemed bound up in his beloved motors. He was a comparatively young man, with thin drawn features and a crop of sandy hair. When off duty he possessed a vein of dry humor that belied the oft-repeated statement that a man born north of the Tweed can never appreciate a joke; but while on duty his attention to his particular

work was beyond reproach.

"No. 3 propeller on port side, sir," he exclaimed. "Wurkin' a wee bit loose."

"Then disconnect the shafting," replied Captain Brookes.

"Will ye no stop the ship awhile, sir. Wi' the shaft at rest the propeller may haul on, but I ha' ma douts. An' ye'll call to mind we've no spare wan."

"In that case we'll haul it aboard. It's the best thing to be done, Mr. Selkirk. How long do you think it will take the divers to unkey it?"

"A matter of twa hoors, sir."

"Then carry on. I'll give orders to bring-to. Mr. Slade, tell the bo's'un's mate to warn the diving party for duty."

By this time the *Olive Branch* had outrun the storm, though by the erratic behavior of the mercury there was every reason to expect a repetition of the gale. Nevertheless, there was a long heavy sea on, so that the task of shipping the defective propeller was hazardous both to the divers and the working party on deck.

When at length the propeller was hoisted in over the side Selkirk was on the verge of despair; for one of the phosphor bronze fans was so badly fractured that it was a marvel how the greater part of the blade had not been torn away.

"Yes, it's a bad job," asserted Captain Brookes, "but it cannot be helped. There's only one thing to be done, and that is to make for some secluded creek, take the fan ashore, and weld it. I don't think we can do better than make for Desolation Inlet."

CHAPTER XVI.

IN THE CLUTCHES OF THE PATAGONIANS

Desolation inlet is an unfrequented creek on the northern or Patagonian shores of the Magellan Straits. Save for the occasional visit of a hardy whaler the harbor is rarely occupied. The inlet well deserves its name. Imagine a tortuous channel of deep water, surrounded by lofty snow-clad mountains that tower to the height of 7,000 ft., presenting the appearance of a Norwegian fjord without the beautifying effect of the foliage and pasture land in the intersecting valleys. For, with the exception of a few stunted pines and occasional patches of hardy, thorn-like scrub, vegetation does not exist.

It was early in September, or towards the end of the winter of the Southern Hemisphere, when the *Olive Branch* glided slowly up the placid waters of the creek. Although hardly a ripple disturbed the mirror-like surface, Desolation Inlet is subject to sudden storms that sweep down from the mountains with well-nigh irresistible force, so that their effect upon a slowly moving vessel was extremely dangerous.

Although the lead gave no depth at seventy fathoms during the first ten miles, Captain Brookes dared not proceed with more than a bare steerage way, owing to the extreme irregularity of the bottom of the badly charted harbor; and it was with undisguised relief that the order was given to let go in eight fathoms,

with the shore less than two cables' length away on either hand.

Hardly had the *Olive Branch* moored when a party of natives appeared on the beach, regarding the huge cruiser with obvious amazement and curiosity. They were tall, muscular men, wild and shaggy in appearance, and scantily clothed in spite of the severity of the weather. In their hands they carried long, slender spears, which they brandished menacingly when a white flag was waved on board the cruiser.

Having lost the small boats in action the only means of communicating with the shore was by the motor cutter and the barge. These two boats were hoisted out by the crane with comparative ease, and a party of men prepared to go ashore for the purpose of setting up a temporary forge for the repair of the propeller.

Gerald and Jack asked, and readily obtained, permission to go ashore, Captain Brookes cautioning them not to wander far from the boat, and not to give the savages any cause for offence; so buckling on their revolvers they took their place in the cutter.

On the approach of the boat, moving swiftly and noiselessly through the water under her well-silenced motors, the natives fled precipitately, till they gained the shelter of a cluster of pine trees.

At length, by dint of signs, one of the savages was induced to come down to the water's edge. This he did slowly, and with manifest hesitation and distrust, but the bait of a piece of copper proved irresistible. No sooner had he obtained possession of the metal than he bolted back to his companions. Two more followed his example, received various blankets, and as promptly fled. Then others summoned up courage, and soon the shore was lined with natives, with every symptom of good-will, who accepted the various presents with the greatest eagerness.

The savages having been pacified, steps were immediately taken to build a forge, and the damaged fan was laid upon a bed of sand so as to receive the molten metal. This work took two days to perform, some of the seamen being lodged in temporary shelters so as to prevent any attempt on the part of the savages to remove the metal under cover of darkness; but so docile did the Patagonians seem that there appeared no necessity for the precaution.

While the welding operations were in progress Gerald and Jack, accompanied by a party of armed men, made several short excursions into the interior. The snow-drifts made walking a difficult matter, while the air was so piercingly cold that the men were especially cautioned against sitting down to rest while on their expeditions, as the result would be fatal.

"I wonder where those poor brutes sleep?" remarked Jack, as the chums trudged wearily through the fleecy mantle that covered the ground to the depth of a foot.

"In caves or rough huts, I expect," replied Gerald. "They must be a wiry set. As far as I can make out their food consists wholly of shell-fish, yet they seem to thrive on it."

"What's that over there?" exclaimed Stockton, pointing to a series of snow-covered

mounds standing about a foot from the ground on the shores of a small cove or creek.

"Canoes, turned bottom upwards," replied Gerald, after making a lengthy examination through his field-glasses. "And on the other side of the inlet is a small village, though what those people are doing on this side I cannot make out."

"Perhaps they don't want us to know the position of their village," remarked Jack, as they resumed their way back to the boat, the rest of the party straggling in the rear.

On returning to the landing-place they found that the repairs to the propeller had been completed and the massive casting had already been placed on board the cutter.

"We've been waiting for you the last half hour," observed Mr. Slade, with asperity, for the coldness of the atmosphere and the tedious delay had not improved his temper. "Now then, men, fall in. Number."

On the landing-party "numbering-up" the astounding discovery was made that one man was missing, and further inquiries revealed the knowledge that the straggler was a petty officer named Black, who was known to have accompanied Gerald's party.

"He must have fallen out on the way back to the shore," exclaimed one of the men.

"Well, it's no use standing here—he must be found," said Slade. "As I am in charge of the landing-party, I'm held responsible. Look here, Mr. Tregarthen, will you take command of the cutter, and take the propeller off to the ship? I'll take half a dozen men and go and look for Black."

Jack Stockton also expressed his intention of forming one of the search-party, so leaving twelve men on the shore to stand by the launch. "Lieutenant Slade followed the well-defined footsteps through the snow, while Gerald undertook the duty of taking the cutter back to the ship.

Ere the little craft could accomplish her journey a squall swept down upon the harbor with its customary fierceness and intensity. In spite of the fact that the cruiser was riding to a strong ebb tide the strength of the icy blast caused her to swing broadside on and athwart the swirling stream. The motor craft, notwithstanding her comparatively high free-board, took in water on both sides, nor was Gerald able to bring her alongside the *Olive Branch* till she had gained the comparative shelter of the lee of the cruiser.

Somewhat to young Tregarthen's surprise no one was waiting to receive the boat and its weighty and important cargo, so having secured the cutter to the swinging boom her crew clambered up the wire rope ladders and gained the deck of the *Olive Branch*.

Here they found that, in spite of the hissing shower of hail and snow, the whole of the remaining crew of the cruiser were lining the weather-side of the deck and peering intently ashore.

It was a strange sight that met Gerald's gaze as he crossed the deck and looked in the direction of the landing-place.

Sheltering under the lee-side of the forge and the adjacent temporary buildings were the

men of the launch, quite oblivious of what was taking place a bare hundred yards from where they stood, while on the snow-covered plain betwixt the shore and the fringe of the pine trees a scene was being enacted in which those on board the *Olive Branch* were powerless to interfere.

Plunging and staggering across the snow was one of the seamen of the *Olive Branch*, at his heels a score or more of Patagonians, with their long spears poised ready to plunge into the fugitive's back, yet restraining themselves in order to prolong the savage delight of the chase. Against the fleet-footed natives, to whom the soft, yielding snow appeared to offer no obstacle to their speed, the sailor had no possible chance. Once he turned, raised his revolver, and fired, and one of the savages fell. But for the silencer the shot might have terrified his pursuers, but regarding the weapon merely as they would a piece of cold steel, the moral lesson was thrown away.

Evidently it was his last cartridge, for dashing the weapon in the face of the nearest native the man resumed his flight, till within twenty yards of the place where his unsuspecting comrades were sheltering he stumbled.

During his dash for safety the man gave vent to a warning shout; the men had just time to stand to their arms ere the Patagonians were upon them. The issue was not long at stake. The powerful yet silent weapons of the white men drove the savages back to the shelter of the forest.

"Hoist the signal for recall and clear away the forward turret," ordered Captain Brookes. "I'll shell the rest of those rascals into smithereens."

Muttering threats of vengeance against the treacherous natives the crew of the launch came over the side. Three of them had sustained slight wounds in the conflict on the shore that necessitated the attendance of the surgeon, though the wounded men submitted to his ministrations with a bad grace. As for the rest of the crew of the *Olive Branch* they besought their officers to lead them on an expedition to rescue or revenge their missing comrades.

To these entreaties Captain Brookes turned a deaf ear. "Too many risks have been taken already," he declared. What he meant to do was to inflict a stern punishment on the savages who had violated the hospitality of their visitors.

"One moment, sir," exclaimed Gerald. "If we open fire with the 6 in. guns we'll probably exterminate friend and foe; that is, if our comrades are still alive, as I think they are. I quite agree with you, however, on the impracticability of sending a punitive force ashore."

"By Jove! it's worth trying," cried Captain Brookes, after the young sub-lieutenant had unfolded his plan, and to the astonishment of the rest of the officers and crew orders were given for the *Olive Branch* to weigh and proceed to sea.

Twenty minutes later the cruiser had left her anchorage in the inhospitable waters of Desolation Inlet.

CHAPTER XVII.

GERALD'S RUSE

It will now be necessary to return to the events that befell the expedition.

Having followed the tracks across the open plain with comparative ease the party plunged into the sombre gloom of the forest, if forest it might be termed, for the trees grew in clumps with frequently a clearing of fifty to a hundred yards between.

"We'll strike an arm of the creek in a few minutes," observed Stockton.

"The sooner the better," replied Slade, shortly, for in the keen biting air talking could only be maintained by an effort. Every breath seemed to lacerate the lungs, while the wind was so bitter that the thick woolen garments worn by the men seemed totally insufficient to withstand the numbing effects of the intense cold.

"It's snowing, sir," exclaimed one of the men. "I've served in the Arctic, and I know what this means. Our tracks will be covered up in a few minutes."

"Well, what do you propose?" asked Slade. "We've no compass."

"Send a man back to blaze the trees before the track is wiped out, sir, then do the same as we advance."

"Very good. Roberts, you make your way back and slice a piece of bark off a tree now and again, so that each mark can be seen from the one nearest to it. Now, look sharp, you others, if we are to find Black alive."

Roberts set out on his return journey, while the rest of the expedition, bending low in order to force their way against the driving hail and snow, proceeded on their way.

Suddenly above the moaning of the wind a blood-curdling yell, issuing simultaneously from a hundred throats, burst upon the ears of the astonished party, and a shower of spears thrown with tremendous force came hurtling through the air.

Three men fell, badly wounded, while two more received slight flesh-wounds. Taken completely by surprise the survivors strove to draw their revolvers, but ere their benumbed hands—rendered additionally clumsy by reason of their thick woolen gloves—could perform their task, the savages were upon them.

Having all his work cut out to defend himself, Jack Stockton could pay no heed to his companions; it was a case of each man for his himself.

Contriving to obtain a grip at his revolver Jack fired, but the small-calibred nickel bullet with its high initial velocity, passed through the shoulder of his nearest opponent so cleanly that the muscular savage was unaware that he was hit. Even at that critical moment Stockton wondered whether the weapon had missed fire, till he remembered that it had "kicked," and quick as lightning the thought flashed through his mind that Captain Brooke's methods of exterminating war could not be favorably applied when opposed to savages.

The next instant Jack was grappling with the brawny Patagonian; and though the Eng-

lishman was powerfully built and "hard as nails," his strength was like that of a child compared with that of his antagonist.

He felt himself being forced backwards till it seemed as if his spine was on the point of snapping, jagged spear-heads were poised ready to be driven home, and ponderous clubs were whirled above his head.

Then a merciful unconsciousness came upon him and he remembered no more.

Meanwhile Slade, fighting right manfully, had succeeded in flooring three of his antagonists by well-directed blows of his fist; for, in spite of his gloves, the lieutenant's knuckles struck home with sledge-hammer force and precision. For a time it seemed as if he would be able to keep his foes at bay, till a wily savage, stealing up from behind, dealt him a crashing blow with a club. Slade possessed a thick skull in more sense than one, and on this occasion it served its purpose. Under the blow, that would have killed most men, Slade fell senseless in the snow.

When Stockton regained consciousness he found himself lying under the shelter of an overhanging rock, with Slade and one of the seamen lying close to him. Were it not for the actual contact all three would have been dead through exposure to the intense cold. At first he could hardly open his eyes, for the blood that had oozed from a gash in his forehead had congealed and had thus prevented a copious loss of the vital fluid.

Gathered around the prostrate forms of the survivors of the unfortunate expedition were nearly a hundred savages, some of whom were still squabbling over the distribution of their prisoners' effects, for every metal article had been unceremoniously taken from them.

Gradually the details of the surprise dawned upon the young Englishman, and he vaguely wondered why the Patagonians had not completed their murderous work. Perhaps he and his companions were being reserved for a lingering death.

After a while Slade began to stir, then, starting to his feet, he stumbled a few paces, and collapsed in the snow. A roar of derisive laughter from the savages greeted this performance, and a pair of dusky giants lifted the lieutenant and dropped him by the side of his comrade.

"Hello, Slade!" began Jack, wearily, but in reply came a torrent of inarticulate words. The lieutenant was in a delirium. Once he shouted that the men were shirking their task of holy-stoning the decks; then he craved for a cocktail; the next moment begging for a draught of water, till his exhausted body sank beneath the strain and he relapsed into unconsciousness.

Stockton, too, was on the verge of insensibility when a native came running with some news of more than ordinary interest. What the intelligence was Jack could not, of course, comprehend, but the outcome of it was that most of the savages made off, leaving barely a score to watch their helpless prisoners. One of the native scouts had brought word that the white men's floating village had gone, and the other savages, doubting (as uncivilized tribes invariably do) the word of one of their num-

ber, had gone to the shores of the creek to satisfy themselves on that point.

In less than an hour the main body of the natives returned. They were in a great state of joy and excitement, for the *Olive Branch* had sailed, and the creek was clear, and they could now ferry themselves across and regain their miserable village without fear of molestation. Three litters were hastily constructed by means of spears and lengths of undressed hide, skins being thrown upon them to complete these rough-and-ready contrivances. Upon them the white captives were unceremoniously deposited, and with a weird song of triumph the savages wended their way through the forest to the shore of the creek.

Here a score of muscular arms soon righted the upturned canoes, and on being launched the unstable, yet heavy, dug-outs were so crowded that their gunwales amidships were barely six inches above water.

Still scarcely alive to the hazardousness of his position, Stockton found himself lying at the bottom of one of the largest canoes, with Slade and the seaman beside him, both still unconscious and breathing heavily.

Well it was that the storm had abated as suddenly as it had sprung up, and that the ebb tide had now changed to the gentle flood, otherwise the canoes would have inevitably been swamped.

Urged by the powerful strokes of a score of paddles, the craft in which Jack lay shot ahead of the other canoes, its crew giving vent to a long-drawn song as they kept time with their quickly flashing blades.

Suddenly the song of the savages gave place to a yell of terror. They dropped their paddles, stood upright in their fragile craft as if paralyzed by a nameless horror; then, overcoming their immobility, they plunged over the side. Relieved of their weight the canoe rocked violently, while a cascade of splashes from the agitated water descended upon the bodies of the three white men.

Then to Stockton's utter astonishment he heard a hearty voice exclaim, "Here they are, by Jove!" and three brawny seamen took a flying leap from somewhere fair into the bottom of the canoe.

"Be sharp! Pass them out!" ordered a voice that Jack knew so well, and the next moment he found himself being carefully, but swiftly, lifted from the canoe on to the narrow platform of the *Olive Branch's* submarine.

"Thank goodness you're saved!" muttered Gerald, fervently.

The survivors of the unfortunate expedition were carefully passed through the narrow fore-hatchway, then, scorning to take shelter, Gerald steered the submarine from the skeleton platform surrounding the outside of the conning tower.

There was no need for the vessel to plunge; her sudden appearance from beneath the waters of Desolation Inlet had struck panic into the hearts of the savages, and now, like a terrier let loose amidst a swarm of rats, the submarine dashed towards the remaining canoes.

Some of the natives let fly a shower of spears

in a half-hearted manner. Most of the weapons fell short, while a few glanced harmlessly from the rounded plating of the avenging craft.

Crash! The snout of the steel monster caught the nearest canoe a formidable blow amidships, the dug-out being lifted clear of the water by the impact. The next instant it fell, cut completely in two, and those of its occupants who were not killed or stunned by the concussion were swimming for their lives.

Gerald, in his lust for revenge, resolved to sink the remaining canoes. In their flight the savages lost all sense of strategy and kept together as if seeking comfort in companionship. Thus the submarine's work was rendered still more easy.

Just as the avenger reached the last of the native craft, a savage, in the courage of despair, took a flying leap upon the tapering bows of the submarine. Then, as agile as a cat, he ran along the narrow, sloping deck-plating, and, ere Gerald could avoid the unexpected attack, the muscular Patagonian grasped the sub-lieutenant round the waist.

Gerald's shout for aid was drowned by the crash of the shattered timbers of the canoe, and ere he could repeat the cry the native had shifted the grip of his right hand to his antagonist's throat, while with his left he strove to wrench Tregarthen from the narrow platform.

Realizing that the moment he relaxed his grasp of the iron rail he was a lost man, Gerald contrived to strike out with his left. Handicapped by the fact that his hands were encased in thick woolen gloves, and that his reach was limited, the blow fell comparatively light. Then he tried to kick his antagonist clear, but at the first attempt the agile black, intent only on encompassing his enemy's destruction, twisted his legs in a crushing embrace round Gerald's waist, while both his sinewy hands were engaged in squeezing the sub-lieutenant's throat.

Tregarthen felt his strength was ebbing, his breath came in quick gasps, and he gurgled in the throat under the relentless pressure. Even in those few moments of peril Gerald realized that once he fell into the sea the submarine would leave him to his fate, plunging onwards till those below could see that by her erratic course she lacked a guiding hand at the helm. By that time it would be too late.

Held in the merciless grip, Gerald's range of vision was limited to the grey steel walls of the conning-tower two feet from his face. Even in the fierce, yet silent, struggle a slight dent in the metal wall exercised an unaccountable fascination till everything grew white and a filmy mist swam before his eyes.

His hands were relaxing their hold, stronger came the succession of heaves as the savage sought to hasten the end. Flesh and blood could stand the strain no longer; the rail seemed to slip from his grasp, and with his antagonist still locked in an unyielding embrace he fell backwards.

Weakened as he was Gerald braced himself to meet the shock of the icy-cold water, but with a jerk that almost broke his ankle he found his leg seized in a vice-like grip, while

simultaneously the tenacious hold of the Patagonian was relaxed. He was dimly conscious of being unceremoniously hauled back to the platform of the submarine, and of Watson, one of the mechanics, making a sudden dart for the steering gear, a heavy spanner still grasped in his hand. Then everything became a blank.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE CAPTAIN'S REVENGE.

Gerald's ruse had been successful. Knowing that the Indians of Patagonia frequently take prisoners any small parties of the crews of whaling vessels who allow themselves to be treacherously surprised, so as to plunder and afterwards hold them to ransom, he reasoned that the savages would remove their captives to their village directly the *Olive Branch* had left the anchorage. Evidently the natives wished to keep the locality of their village a secret, and only Tregarthen's scouting instincts had given him the clue.

So the submarine, in which were Lieutenant Palmer and the usual crew of that craft, was submersed in mid-channel till the canoes attempted the passage, the result of which was fatal to the savages and nearly so to the originator of the enterprise.

When Gerald came to himself he found himself lying in the fore part of the submarine in the company of the still unconscious members of Slade's force. The fore-hatch had been uncovered to admit the air, for 'tween decks the atmosphere was almost stifling.

"Well, old fellow, how goes it?" asked Mr. Palmer.

"I feel a bit rocky, but I shall be all right in a minute or two."

"Case for the sick bay, eh?"

"No fear; but it was a narrow squeak. I wonder how I managed to shake that brute off my back."

"You didn't. If it had not been for Watson noticing that the boat's head was pointing dead on shore you would not be here. He managed the rascal very neatly by a tap with a spanner, and grabbed you as you were on the point of disappearing overboard."

"Where are we now?"

"Brought up at the anchorage. We've telephoned to the *Olive Branch*, and she's on her way back."

Ten minutes later the cruiser appeared round a bend in the channel, and without undue delay the submarine was made fast alongside her parent ship. Stockton and Slade and the surviving seaman were hoisted over the side and sent below to the sick bay, while Gerald, still feeling the ill effects of his encounter, hastened to make his report to Captain Brookes.

"Excellent," was the captain's comment. "By the bye, you appear to have thoroughly adapted yourself to my views. This is a practical instance of the extermination of war. But we haven't done yet; I'm going to send a charge of dynamite ashore, stow it in the centre of their village, and blow the place to bits."

"Haven't we done enough, sir?" asked Gerald, for, now the excitement of the struggle was over, the appalling nature of the business was beginning to assert itself.

"Enough? No thorough—that's my motto. Look here, Mr. Tregarthen, can you give me one good reason why I should withhold my hand when dealing with these rascals?"

"Suppose the whole tribe be wiped out—where does the warning to the others come in? They won't know who is responsible for the act, neither will they be able to understand why it was done. On the other hand, if we give these rascals a thundering good fright, they will have good cause to remember us, and behave better in the future."

Captain Brookes frowned. For the space of a minute he remained gazing in the direction of the inhospitable shore, then, wheeling swiftly, looked Gerald squarely in the face.

"Mr. Tregarthen, I don't know why it is, but you are the only man on the ship that dares to thwart my purpose. Nevertheless, I like you for your outspoken manner. Now carry on, and let me know what is your alternative."

"We have not as yet given the ZZ-rays a practical test," remarked Gerald, tentatively.

"Good gracious! The ZZ-rays!" exclaimed the captain, with astonishment. "The only argument in favor of the ZZ-rays in preference to a bombardment is that their action is instantaneous and consequently painless. Is that your idea of mercy?"

"No, sir. In any case we must land a party to search for our missing comrades. No doubt we can also 'round up' the savages, since they won't be in a state to offer much resistance."

"And then?"

"We can land a hundredweight of explosive, place it on yonder rock, which I believe is plainly visible from the village, and take the *Olive Branch* down to the mouth of Desolation Inlet, whence she can explode the stuff by means of the ZZ-rays."

"In the meantime what will the natives be doing?"

"We can leave a party to keep them under guard. I will undertake that task if required, sir."

"You have more faith in the infallibility of my invention than I have," observed Captain Brookes, with a grim smile. "What if I miscalculated the distance and wiped you out instead?"

"With due precautions there is no risk, sir."

"All right, Mr. Tregarthen. Since you are willing I make no objection. Only remember, the men required to guard the prisoners—if we succeed in taking any—must be volunteers, duly warned for the service."

Meanwhile the submarine had been submerged and housed in its accustomed berth; the divers had made rapid progress towards replacing the repaired propeller, and preparations were in hand for the proposed visit to the native village.

At sunrise on the following morning the launch, with the explosive safely stowed on board, lay alongside the cruiser. Captain Brookes signified his intention of heading the landing party, which consisted of eighty well-armed men.

"I am going to land on the eastern side of

the inlet first," said the captain. "I mean to visit the site of the ambushade. This done, we will cross to the other side and make a survey of the village."

It was some time before the track of the unfortunate expedition could be picked up, since the snow had obliterated the footprints, and none of the survivors were sufficiently recovered to accompany the landing-party. At length a "blaze" was found, and from that point the direction taken by the former expedition was followed with little trouble.

Although it was practically certain that all the natives who had taken part in the treacherous attack had been completely demoralized, Captain Brookes took no risks. Advanced and rear guards were told off, the men keeping their arms ready for instant use. In addition, the silencers had been removed from the rifles.

"Why are those men halting?" demanded Captain Brookes, as the advance guard came to an abrupt stop.

"They've found something, I think, sir," replied Lieutenant Sinclair.

"Then tell them to continue the advance."

By this means the gap between the three divisions being maintained, the main body arrived at the spot where their comrades had halted; then exclamations of rage burst from the lips of the infuriated seamen, for lying, half covered by a mantle of snow, were the bodies of the victims of the savages' treachery.

"Isn't that enough to knock the sickly sentimentality out of the most case-hardened humanitarian?" asked Captain Brookes. "I may be wrong in my opinion, but with the experience of not only to-day, but of years past, I feel convinced that fear is the only means of keeping these savages in order, and, by Jove, I'll teach them a lesson!"

Having made this unpleasant discovery, Captain Brookes led his men back to the shore, whence they were transferred to the opposite bank of the inlet. Here they again formed up and marched towards the village, which was cunningly concealed save from one particular direction—namely, from where Gerald had noticed it from the eastern shore of the creek.

Detaching a party of twenty men under Lieutenant Sinclair, with instructions to make a detour to the opposite side of the village, so that the savages' retreat would be cut off, Captain Brookes halted the main body till a pre-arranged signal was given to show that arrangements for surprise were complete.

"Now, forward, my lads!" exclaimed the captain, as the report of a rifle was heard in the distance.

At the double the seamen rushed towards the collection of hovels that formed the Patagonian village. A few of the natives showed fight, but the majority fled, yelling with terror, in the direction of the narrow defile held by Sinclair and his men.

Soon the fugitives were driven back; men, women, and children bolted to their huts, and the work of capturing the natives began.

The savages offered but little resistance as they were seized and securely bound. As for the women and children, they stoically remained with their men-folk and finding that they were not to be put to death—as they fully

expected to be—the savages began to lose their sullen manner and to take a faint interest in the seamen's preparations.

On an open space in front of the village the natives were placed—the men, individually bound and roped together as an additional safeguard, sitting on the ground in a circle, with the women and children in the centre.

Meanwhile another party of seamen had carried seven tins of dynamite, each containing 16½ lbs., to the base of the crag that Gerald had indicated—at a distance of a mile and a half from the village—and separated from it by the main channel of Desolation Inlet.

Gerald had detailed his volunteers for the task of guarding the prisoners, and all the preliminary preparations were now complete.

"Now for a practical test of the ZZ-rays, Mr. Tregarthen," exclaimed Captain Brookes, as he bade Gerald farewell. "It is now 10:30 A. M. At noon punctually I shall liberate the electric current from the *Olive Branch*, at a distance of nine sea miles from-yonder crag. You will please remain here, and on no account release the prisoners till my return, which, I hope, will be at 1:30 P. M."

"Very good, sir," replied Gerald, with a salute, as the captain ordered the remainder of the landing-party to fall in.

Meanwhile the divers had been working incessantly, and the propeller was again fit for its task; the anchor was weighed, and the *Olive Branch* once more glided down the waters of Desolation Inlet.

Left in charge of the prisoners Gerald had ample time to reflect upon the action he had taken. In his anxiety to save the savages from extermination he had made a somewhat hasty proposal; and now, with the execution of his plan in progress, the force of Captain Brookes' objections came home to him.

The hitherto untried ZZ-rays might prove themselves far more destructive than their inventor claimed; their radius of action might overlap the area governed by those sinister checkers on the indicator; the distance and direction of the pinnacle from the *Olive Branch* might be misjudged—and then?

Tregarthen glanced at his watch. It was a quarter to twelve.

"Smith!" he called out, addressing one of the petty officers.

"Sir?"

"Pass the word for the men to take off their bandoliers, empty the magazines of their rifles, and stow the cartridges under yonder tree."

Without betraying his surprise at the unusual order the man hurried off to communicate Gerald's instructions. Implicit obedience was Smith's sheet anchor.

"There, I've taken every possible precaution," mused the young officer. "Now things must take their course."

As the minutes slowly sped the tension amongst the seamen increased. Even the savages seemed to have an inkling that something extraordinary was afoot.

Watch in hand Gerald waited till the long hand pointed at a minute to the hour.

"Look!" he shouted, pointing to the distant crag.

The natives, although they did not under-

stand the word, followed the direction indicated, and a tense deathly silence seemed to fill the air.

Precisely at noon a terrific detonation shook the ground, and a thick cloud of dust and smoke obscured the view of the pinnacle. When the cloud had dispersed the rock had completely vanished, only a heap of boulders marking its position.

The effect upon the natives was astonishing. In an agony of fear they threw themselves face downwards in the dust, shrieking and moaning in a most dismal manner. By a pure coincidence the rock that Gerald had selected for destruction had been regarded by the savages as the home of the tutelary god of war, and its disintegration had appalled the superstitious savages far more than any personal chastisement. They realized that the power of the white man was greater than that of the deity whom they regarded as their protector in their treacherous attacks upon harmless trading and fishing vessels that stress of

weather had driven into their harbors.

Punctually at the time stated Captain Brookes returned with the rest of the landing-party. By means of signs the savages were told that they were spared on condition that they refrained from molesting the crews of any ships that might at some future time visit Desolation Inlet. This they seemed to understand, and by gesticulations promised to conform to their captors' commands.

"Cast them adrift," ordered Captain Brookes, then turning to Gerald he continued: "Well that's done with. There's not much doubt as to the efficacy of the ZZ-rays. But the wireless is now in working order once more, and the first message that I received is one that requires our urgent presence in the Mediterranean Sea. Until I hear further details I had better not say any more, but, rest assured, Mr. Tregarthen, that compared with our next venture, recent events are mere child's play."

(To be continued.)

