

MUSING.

I think some time, grown old, I shall retract, In my sad thought, these days that are so fleet. As an old man will stay his tottering feet, And wistful gaze upon a glad young face That passes him upon the crowded street.

"LAL" RYDQUIST; A Story of the Land and Sea.

BY WALTER BESANT AND JAMES RICE, IN ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

CHAPTER VII.—CONTINUED.

"Coal trade," he replied promptly. "I took a passage, bargained to be disembarked and called for again in three weeks' time, and we set sail. Beautiful sailing it is in those seas, and one of these winter evenings, Lal, when you and me have got nothing to do, I will tell you such yarns of the islands as will make you long for to go there yourself. Our course was south of Borneo, and so into the narrow seas, through the Macassar Straits, north of Celebes and Gilolo, and so along the northwest of New Guinea, where I'd made up my mind to find Cap'n Armiger. If you've got a chart anywhere about, any of you, you might follow."

peared to consist of a million and a half of people, as near as I could learn. They go dressed in white cotton knee-breeches and turbans; they smoke cigarettes and drink Jamaica rum; their manners are pleasant and their ways hospitable. "As soon as they saw that a white man had arrived, they flocked round me and began to ask questions. These I satisfied to the best of my power and requested to be taken to the King. They led me, or rather carried me, shouting along the streets, to the Royal Palace, which is a tripe bigger than the Crystal Palace, and all made of solid gold. "The King is a young man who wears his crown both day and night. He is always surrounded by his guards, and has to be approached on bended knees. "After the usual compliments, he invited me to tell him what I came for. "I replied that I was sent by the most beautiful girl in Rotherhithe—at this he seemed pleased, and said he wished she had come herself—in order to discover what had become of her sweetheart, named Rex Armiger, wrecked upon his majesty's coast in the year 1876. "I confess that I felt sorry when I had put the question, but then I had come all the way on purpose to put it. For the King and all his courtiers immediately burst into tears. "I then learned the whole story. "Cap'n Armiger had, in fact, landed on this shore, as I expected and calculated. He had been separated from his steward Dick in a scuffle on the coast, and had been brought inland to be presented as a captive to the King. At the court he made himself at once a great favorite, being a good shot, which pleased his majesty, and a good dancer, which pleased the ladies. He lived three years with them in great favor with everybody, and at the end, though this you will hardly credit, engaged to be married to the King's sister, being by that time in despair of ever getting away. "Unfortunately, only the week before I arrived, he was killed and devoured by a lion, and the Princess was gone off her royal chump. "I am truly sorry to be the bearer of such bad news, Lal. You will own that I done my best. "The rest of my log, how I got away, and how I came here again, would not interest you now. You will, perhaps, like to hear them yarns in the long winter evenings when we have nothing else to do. "As for poor Cap'n Armiger, I brought away with me one relic of him—the last cap he ever wore. The King sent it to you by my hands. He said a great many civil things about my courage in coming all that way to find my friend, and I had to promise to go back again. However, that is nothing. Here, then, is Cap'n Armiger's cap—the cap of the Company. "He untied the handkerchief and took out a cap with a gold band and a couple of anchors in silver embroidery upon the front. It was a uniform cap, that of the Indian Peninsular Company. Lal received it and turned it over in her hand, but with some doubt, stimulated by Captain Zachariassen's grunts. The old man reached out his hand for the cap, examined it carefully, tried it on his own head, and grunted again. "What are you grunting for now?" asked Captain Borlinder in great uneasiness. "Gentlemen," said Captain Zachariassen to the other two, "tell me what you think?" Captain Holstius made answer, like the country gentleman who read Gulliver's Travels, that he did not believe a word of it. And why? Because, no one who had read accounts of those latitudes could reconcile Captain Borlinder's Narrative with the tales of other travelers. Captain Wattle's shook his head. "Coarse work," he said. "Very common, and coarse work." Upon this Captain Borlinder lost his temper, and behaved like an officer of his rank when in a rage upon his own quarter-deck. "You shouldn't ha' thought, brother," said the old man, holding out the cap and examining it with contempt, "that a man of fourscore and odd could be taken in by such a clumsy jerny as yours. I'd ha' spun a better yarn myself, by chalks. Two things shall set you right. First, my lad, this cap, which, I suppose, you bought on your way in Houndsditch, is the cap of a boy of thirteen, a midshipmite. Now, Cap'n Armiger, like me, had a big head. We may toss the cap into the fire, Lal, my pretty, because it isn't your sweetheart's cap, and never was." He did toss it into the fire, where it was immediately consumed, all except the gold lace which twisted into all shapes. "Look at him!" he added. "Sails in gayly with a boy's cap in one hand and a yard and a half of lies, made up Lord knows where, in the other. Another thing," Captain Borlinder at this juncture, because he had, in fact bought that cap in Houndsditch, presented every appearance of discomfiture. "When he landed among the blacks, all alone, what language did he talk with them? English? He knows no other. What do you say, Cap'n Wattle's?" "Coarse work. Coarse and clumsy work." Captain Borlinder replied in general terms, and endeavoring to bluster it out, that this was hard for a man to bear, this was, after going through all he had gone through. But here Captain Wattle's gave him the coup de grace. "I can tell all of you where that precious Narrative was written. For I made it my business to inquire at the London Docks. He has been all the time aboard his own ship, and he has made three voyages to Cadiz and back since January. If you doubt, go and ask his people." This was an unexpected one. Captain Borlinder recoiled. Then Lal rose in her wrath. "Go!" she cried. "You are not fit to be with the same roof with honest people. Go, impudent liar! Oh, that man can be so wicked. He has kept my Rex for six long months more in his captivity. Go! let us never see your face again." She clinched her hands and pointed to the door with as threatening a gesture as Medea might have employed. Captain Borlinder hastened to obey. He crammed the narrative in his pocket, and his fur cap upon his head, and walked forth, saying never a word. And although he has never since set foot upon the southern shores of the port of London, I think he still sometimes feels over again the humiliation of that moment. "And now," said Captain Wattle's, "it is my turn. We have lost more than six months, it is true. I have settled all my business, and I have got command of a ship which trades among the islands, a Sydney schooner. I meant to tell you this to-day, not expecting to find this—this lying lubber here. Why, there ain't a lad of ten in the States that wouldn't put together a better story than that. Coarse and clumsy work."

CHAPTER VIII. THE QUEST OF CAPTAIN WATTLE'S.

The next turn, therefore, fell to Captain Wattle's. He, for his part, took leave in a quiet and business-like manner, making no protestations. "It shall be," he said, "off and on about the Carolines, where we expect to find him. He is not in the regular track of the traders, else you would have heard from him. He is on none of the islands touched for pearls and beche de mer—that we may be quite certain of; therefore I shall try at those places which are seldom visited. If I find him, good; if not, I will let you know. I don't pretend to waste my time in looking for a man and nothing else; I am going to trade on my own account, and look about me the while. News runs from island to island in an astonishing way, and we shall be likely to hear about him. That's all I have to say, Miss Lal, and here's my hand upon it. Barnabas, the Son of Consolation, will act up to his name." So he, too, disappeared. Then, for a while, the house resumed its usual aspect, and things went on as before. A letter came in due course from Captain Wattle's. He had arrived at Sydney and was preparing for departure. Then no more letters. The time passed slowly. Captain Holstius went away with his ship. The life and light seemed to have gone from the girl. Only the old man was left to cheer her continually, and Dick to raise her courage. "I shall live, Lal, my dear," he said, "to see Cap'n Armiger come home again. I have no doubt of that; and, pretty, I've been thinking about the mummieker and the end of his story. Somehow, I doubt whether it wasn't him and not the Cap'n they took off to prison. I wish I could trust that Yankee chap; he's worse than the other one. Now, if the Norwegee could go—"

death; so anxious that he had grown perfectly certain that Rex was dead. It came to pass, however, after many days that he sighted an island, an outlying member of a group at which he knew traders never touch, because it was too small a place for trade and lay out of the usual track. It is very well known that a large number of the Caroline Islands are composed of certain coral formations called atolls. These consist of a round ring of rock just appearing above the surface, inclosing a shallow lagoon, whose diameter varies from a few yards to a hundred miles, in which lie islands, some of them large islands with hills, streams and splendid woods of cocoa-palm, bread fruit, durian and pandang, whose islanders lead, or would lead if they knew how, delightful lives in fishing in their smooth waters, eating the fruits which Heaven sends, and doing no kind of work. Others there are, small atolls with small lagoons, whose islets are mere rocks on which grow nothing but the universal pandang, the screw palm, which serves the people for everything. Such was this. It was too insignificant even to have a name; it was distant about two hundred miles from the group of which it might be supposed to be a member; it was simply laid down on the chart as a "shoal," and had, perhaps, never been visited by any ship since it first discovered. Moved by some impulse, perhaps, a mere curiosity as to the capabilities of trade and the possibility of pearls, Captain Wattle's steered toward this low lying land. When his boat lay upon the shallow waters within the reef he found a group of the inhabitants of the principal islet gathered upon the beach. They were of the brown Polynesian race, and were apparently preparing for a hostile reception. Among them stood, passive, a man almost as brown as themselves, but with fair hair and blue eyes. He was a white man; he was a young white man; he was evidently no common beach-comber; and Captain Wattle's immediately recognized, without any doubt, the man of whom he was in search. He was dressed in rags; the sleeves were torn from his jacket and his bare arms were tattooed; his trousers had lost most of their legs; he wore some kind of sandals made of the pandang leaf; his beard was long, his hair was hanging in an unkempt mass; his head was protected from the sun by an ingenious arrangement of another leaf of the same tree. It could be no other than Rex Armiger. A strange feeling, akin to pity, seized on Captain Wattle's. He repressed it, as unworthy of himself. But he did it first feel pity for him. The white man stood among the natives, afraid to excite their suspicion by running before them to meet the boat; yet his eagerness was visible in his attitude, in the trembling of his lips, in the way in which he looked upon the boat. He carried a short lance in his hand like all the rest. Captain Wattle's rowed to within hailing distance of the shore. Then he stood up. "White man ahoy!" The white man said something to his companions, and stepped forward, but in a leisurely manner, as if he was not at all anxious to speak the boat. He came to the water's edge and sat down. "I am an Englishman," he said, speaking slowly, because he was speaking a language he had not used for three years. "I am an Englishman. My name is Armiger. I was the Captain of the Indian Peninsular ship Philippine, wrecked on a shoal three years or so ago. I have been living since among these people." "Do you know their lingo?" "Yes." "Then tell them I am harmless and I want to row nearer land." Rex turned to the men and addressed them in their own language. They all sat down and waited. "You may come nearer," he said; "but make no movement that may alarm them, and do not attempt to land. They are suspicious since two years ago a ship came down from the Ladrone Islands and kidnapped twenty of them, including a Malay, cast away with me." Here then was the interpretation of Dick's second pantomimic flight. He did not escape, he was kidnapped. How he got away from the Ladrone Islands, how he found his way to England, remains a matter hitherto undiscovered. Captain Wattle's brought up his boat within a few yards of the beach, but in deep water, holding his men in readiness to give way. Sitting in the stern he was able to talk freely with Rex, who stood at the very edge of the water waiting for an opportunity to leap on board. "So," said Captain Wattle's, "you are Cap'n Armiger, are you?" Rex was astonished at the salutation. "Why? Do you know me?" "You see I know your name, stranger. I confess I am sorry to find you. I thought you were dead. I hardly calculated that I'd find you, though I certainly did promise to keep one eye open for you." "What promise?" asked Rex. "I promised— We'll come to that directly. Now, what are those black devils dancing about for?" The natives had jumped to their feet, and were now shaking clubs and spears in a threatening way. "They want my assurance," Rex said, "that you are not a black-birdler." "Honest trading-schooner," replied Captain Wattle's. "Tell them they may come aboard and see for themselves. What have they got to sell?"

FACTS AND FIGURES. —We remind the man who complains of a lack of interesting reading that there are published in this country, apart from books, 10,611 periodicals.—Christian Union. —The only railroad in Yucatan, Mexico, charges ten cents per ton per mile for carrying freight, and is said to be earning about fifty per cent. per annum on its entire cost. —American shoe manufacturers can thank their lucky stars that they are not doing business in Spain. Within the past year the tax on the shoe trade of that country has been increased 300 per cent. —Los Angeles County, California, produced last year 2,118,500 gallons of wine, and 282,250 of brandy. As it takes five gallons of wine to make a gallon of brandy, the total wine production would be 3,529,750.—Chicago Times. —Pure alcohol is now prescribed by many physicians in preference to whisky, wine, beer, etc. To use a standard alcohol is believed to insure an accuracy of treatment which cannot be had with articles which contain the spirit in uncertain quantities. It is thought important not to disguise the taste of the alcohol in any way, in order that the patient may feel that he is taking it as a medicine and not as a beverage.—N. Y. Sun. —The spring clip of California wool is now coming forward quite freely, and a large business is anticipated. The product for the last twelve years is given at 466,906,700 pounds, showing a value of \$86,861,700. The largest product was in 1876, aggregating 66,550,000 pounds. Two years later it was only 41,402,000. It was then 46,000,000 pounds for two years, and last year it was 43,000,000 pounds. —The recent census of Canada shows the nativity of its population as follows: Born in Ontario, 1,467,988; in Quebec, 1,327,809; in Nova Scotia, 420,088; in New Brunswick, 288,265; in Prince Edward Island, 101,017; in the territories, 58,430; in British Columbia, 32,275; in Manitoba, 19,590. The total Canadian born is thus shown to be 3,715,492. The foreign born number 609,318, including 185,526 from Ireland, 169,504 from England and Wales, and 145,162 from Scotland. The United States is credited with 77,753, and Germany with 25,328. WIT AND WISDOM. —The Youkers (N. Y.) Statesman discusses "Women as Wives." The idea seems very feasible.—Norristown Herald. —The song, "Bring Me the Paragoric, Baby's Cross," is having a great run in the royal family of England.—N. Y. Commercial. —Vassar girls eat milk with potatoes. If this valuable information doesn't interest you, nothing but an attack of delirium tremens would.—Boston Post. —Chicago girls have discovered, it is said, that by keeping five or six beans in the mouth the voice is given an "aristocratic family accent."—Boston Advertiser. —"And now," shouts an excited exchange, "where shall we look for independence?" There's your mother-in-law and the palace-car porter, sir.—Boston Post. —To a poetess the Chicago Tribune writes: "It will be impossible to print your poem about the roses true and the violets blue that bloom in the grassy dell, and the little birds that sweetest words of love in their chirpings tell. We have a large line of dell and bluebird poetry on hand this spring that was carried over from last year." —A Western editor offered a prize of \$50 and a year's subscription for the best written proposal of marriage from a lady. He picked out a nice proposal from a beautiful and wealthy widow, answered it accepting the proposal, and, with the threat of a breach of promise suit, actually captured her. Editors may not acquire wealth by writing twenty-three hours a day, but when their genius takes the right shoot they procure the persimmons.—Boomerang. —Henry Watterson of the Louisville Courier-Journal understands that this isn't the age of either Washington, Jefferson or Jackson. It is the age of the present. We are glad that Hen has enlightened us upon this subject. We got the idea in our head somehow that this was an age of "cheek," where merit must take a back seat and lunch on the cold leavings of the brass-plated frauds. If this is an age of the present, we are thankful to know it, and as much more as Mr. Watterson can spare without discommoding himself.—Bloomington Eye. So Did He. In the office of a Boston hotel two men, living 4,000 miles apart, met the other day by accident, and one of them observed: "Weren't you in the oil regions in 1867?" "I was." "So was I. Did you speculate?" "I did." "So did I. Did you strike anything big?" "Yes." "So did I. Did you get out before the crash?" "Yes." "So did I." Then came a long pause, in which they carefully surveyed each other. The first finally braced himself and continued: "You don't want to borrow \$10 to pay your fare home, do you?" "I do." "So do I. I'll be hanged if I ain't flat broke for a dollar!"—Wall Street Daily News. [TO BE CONTINUED.]