

# A Brave Coward.

By Robert Louis Stevenson.

CHAPTER VIII.—(Continued.)

A voice was now heard hailing us from the entrance. From the window we could see the figure of a man in the moonlight; he stood motionless, his face uplifted to ours, and a rag of something white on his extended arm; and as we looked right down upon him, though he was a good many yards distant on the links, we could see the moonlight glitter in his eyes.

He opened his lips again, and spoke for some minutes on end, in a key so loud that he might have been heard in every corner of the pavilion, and as far away as the borders of the wood. It was the same voice that had already shouted "Traditore!" through the shutters of the dining-room; this time it made a complete and clear statement. If the traitor "Oddlestone" were given up, all others should be spared; if not, no one should escape to tell the tale.

"Well, Huddleston, what do you say to that?" asked Northmour, turning to the bed.

Up to that moment the banker had given no sign of life, and I, at least, had supposed him to be still in a faint; but he replied at once, and in such tones as I have never heard elsewhere, save from a delirious patient, affixed and besought us not to desert him.

"Enough," cried Northmour, and then he threw open the window, leaned out into the night, and in a tone of exultation, and with a total forgetfulness of what was due to the presence of a lady, poured out upon the ambassador a string of the most abominable rallery, both in English and Italian, and bade him begone where he had come from.

Meantime the Italian put his flag of truce in his pocket, and disappeared, at a leisurely pace, among the sand-hills.

"They make honorable war," said Northmour. "They are all gentlemen and soldiers. For the credit of the thing, I wish we could change sides—you and I, Frank, and you too, Missy, my darling—and leave that being on the bed to some one else. Tut! Don't look shocked! We are all going post to what we call eternity, and may as well be above-board while there's time. As far as I'm concerned, if I could first strangle Huddleston and then get Clara in my arms, I could die with some pride and satisfaction. And as it is, by God, I'll have a kiss!"

Before I could do anything to interfere, he had rudely embraced and repeatedly kissed the resisting girl. Next moment I had pulled him away with fury, and flung him heavily against the wall. He laughed loud and long.

I turned from him with a feeling of contempt which I did not seek to disguise.

"As you please," said he. "You've been a prig in life; a prig you'll die."

And with that he sat down in a chair, a rifle over his knee, and amused himself with snapping the lock.

All this time our assailants might have been entering the house, and we been none the wiser; we had in truth almost forgotten the danger that so imminently overhung our days. But just then Mr. Huddleston uttered a cry, and leaped from the bed.

I asked him what was wrong.

"Fire!" he cried. "They have set the house on fire!"

Northmour was on his feet in an instant, and he and I ran through the door of communication with the study. The room was illuminated by a red and angry light. Almost at the moment of our entrance a tower of flame arose in front of the window, and, with a tingling report, a pane fell inward on the carpet. They had set fire to the lean-to outhouse, where Northmour used to nurse his negatives.

"Hot work!" said Northmour. "Let us try your old room."

We ran thither in a breath, threw up the casement and looked forth. Along the whole back wall of the pavilion piles of fuel had been arranged and kindled, and it is probable they had been drenched with mineral oil, for, in spite of the morning's rain, there had been a heavy dew.

He relinquished his grasp, and faced me in the broken moonlight.

"I had you under and let you go," said he; "and now you strike me! Coward!"

"You are the coward," I retorted. "Did she wish your kisses while she was still sensible of what she wanted? Not she! And now she may be dying; and you waste this precious time, and abuse her helplessness. Stand aside, and let me help her."

He confronted me for a moment, white and menacing; then suddenly he stepped aside.

"Help her, then," said he.

I threw myself on my knees beside her and loosened, as well as I was able, her dress and corset; but while I was thus engaged, a grasp descended on my shoulder.

"Keep your hands off her," said Northmour, fiercely. "Do you think I have no blood in my veins?"

"Northmour," I cried, "if you will neither help her yourself nor let me do so, do you know I shall have to kill you?"

"That is better!" he cried. "Let her die, also; where's the harm? Step aside from that girl and stand up to fight."

"You will observe," said I, half-ripping, "that I have not kissed her yet."

"I dare you to!" he cried.

I do not know what possessed me; it was one of the things I am most ashamed of in my life, though as my wife used to say, I knew that my kisses would be always welcome were she dead or living; down I fell again upon my knees, parted the hair from her

"So, if they fire a volley, she will be protected. And in the meantime stand behind me. I am the scapegoat; my sins have found me out."

I heard him, as I stood breathless by his shoulder, with my pistol ready, pattering off prayers in a tremulous, rapid whisper; and I confess, horrid as the thought may seem, I despised him for thinking of supplications in a moment so critical and thrilling. In the meantime Clara, who was dead white but still possessed of her faculties, had displaced the barricade from the front door. Another moment, and she had pulled it open. Firelight and moonlight illuminated the links with confused and changeable luster, and far away against the sky we could see a long trail of glowing smoke.

Mr. Huddleston, lifted for the moment with a strength greater than his own, struck Northmour and myself a back-hander in the chest, and while we were thus for the moment incapacitated from action, lifting his arms above his head like one about to dive, he ran straight forward out of the pavilion.

"Here am I!" he cried—"Huddleston! Kill me, and spare the others."

His sudden appearance daunted, I suppose, our hidden enemies; for Northmour and I had time to recover, to seize Clara between us one by each arm, and to rush forth to his assistance, ere anything further had taken place. But scarce had we passed the threshold when there came near a dozen reports and flashes from every direction among the hollows of the links.

Mr. Huddleston staggered, uttered a weird and freezing cry, threw up his arms over his head and fell backward on the turf.

"Traditore! Traditore!" cried the invisible avengers.

And just then a part of the roof of the pavilion fell in, so rapid was the progress of the fire. A loud, vague and horrible noise accompanied the collapse, and a vast volume of flame went soaring up to heaven. Huddleston, although God knows what were his obsequies, had a fine pyre at the moment of his death.

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CHAPTER IX.

I should have the greatest difficulty to tell you what followed next after this tragic circumstance. It is all to me, as I look back upon it, mixed, strenuous and ineffectual, like the struggles of a sleeper in a nightmare. Clara, I remember, uttered a broken sigh and would have fallen forward to earth had not Northmour and I supported her insensible body. I do not think we were attacked; I do not remember ever to have seen an assailant; and I believe we deserted Mr. Huddleston without a glance. I only remember running like a man in a panic, now carrying Clara altogether in my own arms, now sharing her weight with Northmour, now scuffling confusedly for the possession of that dear burden.

Why we should have made for my camp in the Hemlock Den, or how we reached it, are points lost forever to my recollection. The first moment at which I became definitely sure, Clara had been suffered to fall against the outside of my little tent, Northmour and I were tumbling together on the ground, and he, with continued ferocity, was striking for my head with the butt of his revolver. He had already twice wounded me on the scalp, and it is to the consequent loss of blood that I am tempted to attribute the sudden clearness of my mind.

I caught him by the wrist.

"Northmour," I remember saying, "you can kill me afterwards. Let us first attend to Clara."

He was at that moment uppermost. Scarcely had the words passed my lips, when he had leaped to his feet and ran toward the tent, and the next moment he was straining Clara to his heart and covering her unconscious hands and face with his caresses.

"Shame!" I cried. "Shame to you, Northmour!"

And, giddy though I still was, I struck him repeatedly upon the head and shoulders.

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## SCIENTIFIC TOPICS

### CURRENT NOTES OF DISCOVERY AND INVENTION.

A Study of the Heavens in Summer—A New Kind of Headgear—A Novel Twine Holder—Warship on a Trolley—Recent Inventions.

**Mighty Arcturus in June.**

At 9 p. m. in the middle of June the great star Arcturus is overhead, observed Garrett P. Serviss in the Scientific American. Even for those who know and care but little about astronomy it is worth while to look carefully at Arcturus, because Arcturus is the very mightiest sun that the heavens are known to contain. Its distance is about a thousand millions of millions of miles, or more than ten million times the distance of our own sun. Since the intensity of light decreases as the square of the distance increases, it is easy to show that if we are as near to Arcturus as we are to the sun, the earth would be vaporized by the blast of unimaginable heat which would smite it, for Arcturus must exceed the sun in light and heat-giving power in the ratio of 6,000 to 1. As to the actual size of Arcturus, it is not probable that its globe would more than fill the entire space that is belted by the orbit of the planet Mercury! Not to know Arcturus, then, is to be unacquainted with the most stupendous physical phenomenon within the range of human vision.

An easy way to make certain of the identification of Arcturus is this: Look for the Great Dipper, which will be found between the pole and the zenith, with its handle upward. Follow with the eye the bending line of the handle, beginning at the bowl, and continue it, beyond the last star in the end, to a distance about equal to the entire length of the Dipper, and thus the eye will be led to a bright yellowish star, which is Arcturus. Far southward shines the white star Spica, in Virgo, and farther west the planet Jupiter, the three—Arcturus, Spica and Jupiter—making the corners of a large triangle.

**A New Kind of Headgear.**

A gentleman who went out with Stanley to Africa took with him a number of bird cages, in which he hoped to bring back some specimens of the rarer birds of the interior. Owing to the death of one of his carriers he was obliged to throw away the bird cages, with a number of other articles. These were seized by the natives in great glee, though they did not know what to do with them, but they eventually decided that the small circular cages were a kind of headgear, and, knocking off the bottom, the chiefs strutted about in them with evident pride. One chief, thinking himself more wise than the others, and having seen the white men eat at table out of dishes, thought they were receptacles for food, and took his meals from one, ceremoniously opening and shutting the door between mouthfuls.

**Novel Twine Holder.**

An invention which is an improvement upon that form of twine-holding devices in which means are provided whereby a certain amount of the free end of the string is retracted, has been patented by Frederick W. Copcutt of Brooklyn. It will be seen that the moving parts of the device are mounted on a frame consisting of a board or back plate provided at top and bottom with projecting ledges, says the Scientific American. Near the upper end of the board a clamping lever is pivoted, secured to one end of which is a cord guide. The other end of the lever is provided with a plate adapted to engage with a stop fixed to the under side of the upper ledge. An inclosure on the lower shelf contains the ball of twine. Adjacent to that end of the lever carrying the cord guide and connecting the upper and lower ledges run guide wires, which are embraced by two side extending arms attached to a sliding weight. The upper end of the

weight is provided with upwardly extending arms, to one of which a pulley is journaled. The other arm may be swung aside so as to permit the cord to be placed conveniently around the pulley. The manner in which the cord is rove through the several guides and pulley will be clear from the drawing. In using the twine-holder, when the free end of the cord is pulled down, the vertically sliding weight is first raised until the pulley is nearly upon a level with the adjacent end of the lever. At this point the weight to a large degree ceases to act upon the lever.

**Recent Inventions.**

Acetylene is used in a new French searchlight, which is designed to have the generating apparatus mounted below the deck with a pipe running up by the mast to the burner.

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## OIL IS EXPENSIVE.

### BEST KINDS HAVE A MARKET VALUE OF \$60 A GALLON.

Refining is a Secret in Part—Metal Disks Are Used to Determine the Purity of the Refined Liqueur—A Test That is Always Infallible.

The general impression is that oil is cheap stuff. But do you know that a tiny half-ounce vial of the lubricant which the watchmaker or repairer applies to the delicate mechanism of a pocket timepiece is worth a quarter of a dollar? True, a gallon of kerosene can be bought for ten cents; on the other hand, this finer oil, which must remain unchanged in character amid all the changes of temperature, has a market value of \$60 a gallon, says the Philadelphia Inquirer. The engineer sitting in the cab of his locomotive, ever glancing at the dial of his watch, knowing that it never makes mistakes, is confident of the safety of his train. For this he and the passengers should give thanks to the blackfish and the porpoise that once swam in the sea off the coast of New England. These marine animals furnish what is known as "head" oil, a product which in very small quantities is extracted solely from the under paw and the peculiar fatty growth on the rostrum of the skull in front of the blow hole. Blackfish "head" oil has almost tripled in value, in the crude state, at Provincetown, down in Cape Cod, where the bulk of it is landed, within the short period of seven years. That brought in whaling in 1899 was sold to refiners for \$3.50 a gallon, and in 1897 the price had advanced to \$10 a gallon. No single ship arrived with more than twelve gallons on board as the result of a season's work, although, of course, there were other trophies of the voyages to be disposed of for cash. The present scarcity of blackfish admits of but one explanation—to wit, the almost complete extermination of the species, the result of a terrific slaughter along the coast in the past. Provincetown is the greatest "head" oil emporium of this country. Of the total quantity produced in the United States during the last fifty years seven-eighths were contributed by that cape town, where a limited quantity, mellowed and bleached to a purity and a whiteness that are marvelous during its long period of storage, remains a provision to be relied upon to an extent in time of need. A visit to the factory of a refiner, whose products are furnished to the leading watch manufacturers and repairers of this country and Europe, elicited the fact that the work of refining is a secret in part. This gentleman has no assistant who might discover and perchance reveal the exact nature of the art. To determine the purity of the refined liquid metal disks are used at this factory. These are of brass, apparently, about the size of an old-time copper cent. Oil dropped upon these disks will reveal its impurity, if there be any, in the deposit or formation of a corrosive substance of a greenish hue not unlike the color of salt-corroded copper. This, although but one of several methods used at various stages of the work, is an infallible test and the oil which does not tarnish the brass detector is indubitably up to standard and equally certain to pass on its merits. To successfully undergo all tests, to fully win the favor of the exacting watch, clock and chronometer makers and rejuvenators, the refined product of the factory must be entirely devoid of acidulous properties, absolutely gumless, be "free," have ability to withstand the rigors of the coldest climate without congealing, be able to maintain its "body," or stability in a high temperature, and last, but not least, it must be of uniform quality. One other requirement—imperative—is the production of an oil, the hue of which is exactly to the liking of the purchaser. Of the two "head" oils, blackfish and porpoise, the former is the favorite by a slight margin, it having a trifle heavier "body" than the latter, but the porpoise oil is a very close second in point of favor. The "melon" and jaw of the blackfish yield a fair quantity of oil, three gallons being the medium product. The porpoise gives but little "head" oil, say one-half pint, and one pint from the jaw and "melon" of average specimens of harbor and sea porpoises, respectively.—Chicago Daily News.

Japan is now building a great steel plant. The works will cost \$10,000,000, and will be put into operation within three years. The product of the plant for the first year will be almost exclusively steel rails, and probably some steel plates for ships. Boiler plates, bar steel and structural iron will follow in order. This steel plant, which will be situated at Yawatamura, a town of about 10,000 inhabitants, is on the extreme northern end of the island of Kushiu. This island, according to reports, is rich in coal.

**The Bolometer.**

Professor S. P. Langley has now carried his delicate heat-measuring apparatus, the bolometer, to such a degree of perfection that it will register a ten-millionth of a degree, Centigrade. In a recent description of this device he says that for a certain part of it, the dampening mechanism of the galvanometer, he uses a dragon-fly's wing, on account of its lightness and rigidity.

**A Musical Bicycle.**

A German inventor has contrived an attachment to a bicycle, whereby the rider, without extra effort, may set a musical box in motion and thus solace himself with popular or classic airs while traversing lonely stretches of road. Possibly such a contrivance would find more admirers in Germany than in this country.

**Test of a Persian Carpet.**

The test of a true Persian carpet—that used by the natives themselves—is to drop a piece of red-hot charcoal upon it, which leaves a singed round spot. If the carpet is one of the best quality the singed wool can be brushed off with the hand without the least trace of the burn being afterward discernible.

**The Dragon Fly can outstrip the swallow.** It can fly backward and sidelong, to right and left, as well as forward, and can alter its course on the instant without turning. It makes twenty-eight beats per second with its wings, while the bee makes 190 and the horse fly 300.

**Produces a Black Rose.**

The Gardeners' Chronicle, of London, announces that Mr. Fetisoff, an amateur horticulturist at Veronezh, Russia, has achieved what was believed to be impossible—the production of jet black roses. No details of the process have been received.

**Building the Jungfrau Railway.**

Swiss papers announce that the Jungfrau railway will be completed as far as the Eiger glacier by July 1. Eighty men are constantly at work, and \$300,000 has already been spent. So far there has been no serious accident.

**Measuring a Train's Speed.**

The click of car wheels on the rails, counted, 176 to the mile, will give you the rate of speed of the train in which you travel. Rails are thirty feet in length.

**Supposed Temperature of Comets.**

As far as calculations can decide the temperature of comets it is believed to be 2,000 times fiercer than that of red hot iron.

**Where Prayer Was Needed.**

Mrs. Slimon—"My little boy has been very wicked today. He got into a fight and got a black eye." The Rev. Dr. Drowsie—"So I perceive. Willie, come into the other room and I will wrestle in prayer for you." Willie—"You'd better go home and wrestle in prayer for your own little boy. He's got two very black eyes."

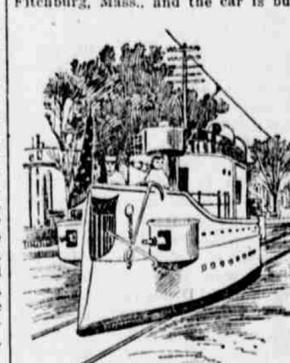
**A Genius.**

Mrs. Wickwire—"Why don't you exercise the talents the Lord has bestowed on you, instead of begging? Dismal Dawson—Lady, the Lord has given me the best beggin' talents in the profession."

**Johnnie's Own Interpretation.**

Sunday School Teacher (saddy)—"I'm afraid, Johnnie, that I will never meet you in heaven." Johnnie—"Why? What have you been doing now?"

**For a Murder Committed Years Ago.**



Here is a photographic view of the first warship on wheels to run on an electric road. The picture was taken at Fitchburg, Mass., and the car is built as nearly as possible in imitation of the battleship Brooklyn and is named the McKinley.

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