

## CHAPTER XLVIII

### HOBART'S BODY STOLEN

JANUARY 19. -- All through the day the sky remained unclouded and the heat intense; and night came on without bringing much sensible moderation in the temperature. I was unable to get any sleep, and, toward morning, was disturbed by hearing an angry clamor going on outside the tent; it aroused M. Letourneur, Andre, and Miss Herbey, as much as myself, and we were anxious to ascertain the cause of the tumult.

The boatswain, Dowlas, and all the sailors were storming at each other in frightful rage; and Curtis, who had come forward from the stern, was endeavoring to pacify them.

"But who has done it? we must know who has done it," said Dowlas, scowling with vindictive passion on the group around him.

"There's a thief," howled out the boatswain, "and he shall be found! Let's know who has taken it."

"I haven't taken it!" "Nor I! Nor I!" cried the sailors one after another.

And then they set to work again to ransack every quarter of the raft; they rolled every spar aside, they overturned everything on board, and only grew more and more incensed with anger as their search proved fruitless."

"Can YOU tell us," said the boatswain, coming up to me, "who is the thief?"

"Thief!" I replied. "I don't know what you mean."

And while we were speaking the others all came up together, and told me that they had looked everywhere else, and that they were going now to search the tent.

"Shame!" I said. "You ought to allow those whom you know to be dying of hunger at least to die in peace. There is not one of us who has left the tent all night. Why suspect us?"

"Now just look here, Mr. Kazallon," said the boatswain, in a voice which he was endeavoring to calm down into moderation, "we are not accusing you of anything; we know well enough you, and all the rest of you, had a right to your shares as much as anybody; but that isn't it. It's all gone somewhere, every bit."

"Yes," said Sandon gruffly; "it's all gone somewheres, and we are going to search the tent."

Resistance was useless, and Miss Herbey, M. Letourneur, and Andre were all turned out.

I confess I was very fearful. I had a strong suspicion that for the sake of his son, for whom he was ready to venture anything, M. Letourneur had committed the theft; in that case I knew that nothing would have prevented the infuriated men from tearing the devoted father to pieces. I beckoned to Curtis for protection, and he came and stood beside me. He said nothing, but waited with his hands in his pockets, and I think I am not mistaken in my belief that there was some sort of a weapon in each.

To my great relief the search was ineffectual. There was no doubt that the carcass of the suicide had been thrown overboard, and the rage of the disappointed cannibals knew no bounds.

Yet who had ventured to do the deed? I looked at M. Letourneur and Miss Herbey; but their countenances at once betrayed their ignorance. Andre turned his face away, and his eyes did not meet my own. Probably it is he; but, if it be, I wonder whether he has reckoned up the consequences

of so rash an act.