

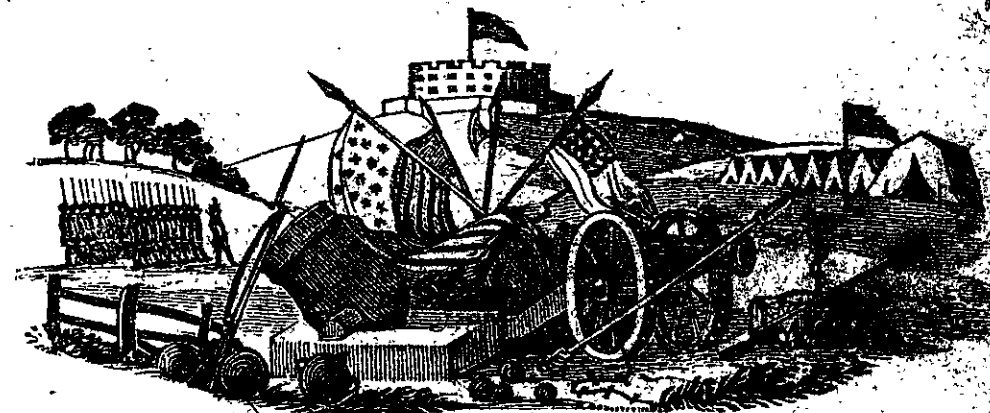
THE
OCEAN MARINER:

—OR, THE—

HUNTER SPY OF VIRGINIA.

A Revolutionary Story of Sea and Shore.

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BY AUSTIN C. BURDICK.  
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THE OCEAN MARTYR.

CHAPTER I.

THE BRIG.

OLD VIRGINIA—the home of noble, daring, and chivalrous souls—had thrown off the British yoke, and chosen her own mode of government. She had given her noblest sons to the cause of Freedom—her Washington she had given to be the torch-bearer in the world of liberty—her Jefferson she had given to illumine the brightest pages of our history, and her Patrick Henry, her Richard Lee, and her Madison, she had bestowed upon the country which needed their aid, and which has never forgotten to honor their illustrious memories. Yet Virginia was in deep trouble. At the time of which we write her southern borders were threatened by a powerful enemy, it being the flower of the English army led by Cornwallis; the coast was infested by marauding parties who destroyed everything that came in their way, and, more dangerous than all else, in her own bosom, among the homes of her children, there were secret enemies of American Freedom—the traitor tories. The British could be dealt with

openly; their errand was known, and they could be met upon their own terms; but the tory—he who darkened the threshold of the freeman's home under the garb of an American, but yet with an enemy's heart in his bosom—was not so easily dealt with. He smiled in the daylight, and threw his poisoned arrows in the dark.

It was on an afternoon in early spring. The day had been exceedingly fair and pleasant, but now the wind had chopped around to the northward and eastward, and the light clouds which had rested upon the bosom of the broad Atlantic were giving place to misty masses of a darker hue, and the air became more damp and cool. Upon the south-eastern coast of Virginia, some fifteen miles south of Cape Henry, in a small cove, protected on either side by the bold highland, lay a moderate sized brig. She was evidently intended, originally, for a merchantman, but her present appearance indicated pretty plainly that she was now intended for deeds of

a more sanguinary character, for upon her deck she bore a dozen well mounted guns, each carrying an eighteen-pound ball, and then her rigging was well guarded against other accidents than such as come from wind and storm. She was a pretty craft for the times, with clean bends and runs, tall and well-balanced masts, and ample room for all the canvass her hull could possibly bear. The owners of the brig had chosen a strange name for their vessel. They called her "THE OCEAN MARTYR;" but, strange as the name may have been, it had great significance, for her crew were men who had pledged their lives and their fortunes, their every hope and aspiration, upon the altar of their country's liberty.

Upon the brig's fore-castle, just by the star-board cathead, stood three individuals, and it would be hard to find three persons with hearts so near alike, and yet so dissimilar in form and feature. The most prominent in the group was an old, weather-beaten sailor, named Ben Walker. In all probability his parents had christened him with the good old Bible name of Benjamin, but since the days of early childhood, he had thrown off the last two syllables as not only useless appendages, but as really bad and ungrateful in sound. Ben was a noble specimen of the true sailor. His frame was exceedingly stout, being built after a sort of Herculean mould, with arms like trip-hammers, and a breast and shoulders wide and heavy enough for the depository of the sinewy strength of a lion. He was the very soul of wit and good humor, and when surrounded by his friends his broad, open countenance always wore a warm and genial smile. His garb consisted of a blue pea-jacket, beneath which he wore a thin buff vest; blue trousers, fashioned and made by his own hand, and a tarpaulin hat which set with a careless grace upon his well-moulded head. I said he was "an old sailor;" and so he was, but he was by no means an *old man*. Forty years had not left a mark of time upon the jetty blackness of his hair—they had only just fully developed the giant man, and written all his noble virtues upon his countenance. Ben

Walker was the boatswain of the brig by unanimous appointment, but no important expedition was ever planned without his advice and counsel.

At Ben's right hand stood a young man who was a general favorite of the brig's crew. His name was Loring Cleaveland. He had seen the dawning of some five-and-twenty years, and though his frame was slight when compared with that of his massive companion, yet he possessed more strength of sinew than is ordinarily allotted to man. His features were regular, and though marked by no very startling beauty, yet they were so noble and generous in their expression that they marked him as one to be loved and respected. His eyes were black and sparkling, and when he spoke they were sure to burn with the light of his real feelings. With him there could be no duplicity. His garb was that of a common seaman.

The third person in the group was a negro—a real, genuine son of Africa's burning shores. He was a protegee of Ben Walker's. Ben had found him, when a mere child, on the wreck of a South American slaver, and he had taken care of him up to the present time. Ben called him Gimbo, and as he had no recollection of any other name, he was satisfied with that simple cognomen. Gimbo had not a very deep intellect, but what he lacked in that quarter he more than made up in shrewdness and cunning. He was quick to appreciate a kindness, and his soul could not forget his friends; but woe to him who made the African his enemy. Gimbo loved young Cleaveland, and Ben Walker he really worshipped.

[SEE ENGRAVING.]

"So you think you'd like to fight the British, eh, Gimbo?" said Ben, seeming to allude to something which the negro had previously said.

"Yes, Massa Ben," returned Gimbo, with real spirit and determination in his manner; "I fight 'um wid good relish. Ah, Gimbo nebber 'fraid yet. Didn't Mas'r Cleaveland tell me 'at dey killed his farder? Gosh, I nebber had no farder for 'um to kill, but it's all de same when dey kill Mas'r Cleaveland's farder. Dey

might jus' as well kill me. Jus' wait till I hab a chance, dat's all I ask. But say, Mas'r Cleaveland, did dey really kill your poor farder when he couldn't help hisself?"

"Yes, Gimbo," replied the young man, while the trembling of his lips showed how deeply the recollection moved him. "It was two years ago, when the British attacked Portsmouth and Norfolk. They butchered my poor father, and burnt his house to ashes. But my father was not the only one who met that fate. I was away then—away at sea—and when I returned I found myself an orphan. But I have yet something to live for. My country is still alive, and she needs me."

"Well," said Gimbo, with a sort of controlled emotion, "I tink it's 'bout time dat dese fellers was druv off; and dey isn't all dat ought to be druv off, nudder. Dar's some folks as don't belong to England—folks as you call tory—eh, mas'r Ben?"

"Ay, Gimbo—they ought to be hung."

"Gosh—dat's jus' my mind. But I guess dar'd be some folks hung dat oder folks don't tink of."

There was something very mysterious in the manner and tone of the negro. He shook his head as he always did when he had vague suspicions, and his eyes twinkled with meaning light.

"How now, Gimbo?" said Ben, eyeing his dark-skinned protegee with an inquiring glance. "Do you suspect anybody?"

"A good many bodies, mas'r Ben; but den 'taint safe to tell all you 'spect, you know."

"But you've got your eyes on somebody in particular, haven't you?" persisted Ben.

"Yes, I hab; an' I mean to watch 'um, too. Don't ask me noff'n now; but when I find out de truf, I'll tell you."

Ben Walker knew the peculiarities of Gimbo, and without the least uneasiness he allowed the negro to keep his own secret. Not so with Loring Cleaveland, however. He felt a strong desire to know whom the negro meant by his dark hint. Nor was the young man's curiosity to be wondered at, for those were times when

suspicion was rife on all hands, and when a man hardly knew whom to trust. It was known that Cornwallis in the south had his spies in Virginia, and that the traitor Arnold, who was hovering near the coast, also had his villain hirelings creeping about through the country.

"Wont you tell me, Gimbo, where your suspicion rests?" he asked.

"You mustn't ask me, Mas'r Cleaveland. Jus' trust me, an' if dar's anything to be made I'll make it."

"Let him alone, Loring," said Ben. "If he's got an idea he'll be sure to follow it out. You needn't fear to trust my Gimbo."

The negro smiled with peculiar joy at his protector's flattering words, and without further remark the subject was dropped, and in a few moments afterwards the captain of the brig came forward.

"Ben," said the commander, as he stopped by the side of the stalwart boatswain, "you'd better have an eye to your sailing gear, for I think we'd better haul our wind out of this to-night."

"I thought you meant to stay here till to-morrow?" said Ben, with some surprise.

"So I did; but I'm afraid there's a plan on foot among the tories for our capture. There are a good many British soldiers lurking about the shores of the Chesapeake, and they are in full communion with the rascally tories. I don't want to be surprised by night, so we'd better be off."

"Very well," returned Ben. "I'll have everything ready."

Before dark everything was ready for getting underweigh, and the crew were stationed. In all, the brig's crew amounted to eighty men, full as many as could be well accommodated on board.

"I'm afraid you wont get off to-night, Captain Willis," remarked Ben, as the night began to set in. "It'll be nasty work outside."

"So I've been thinking," returned the captain. "I'm sorry this sort of weather has blown up, but it can't be helped now. We'll keep

everything in readiness, however, and in case the chance comes, we'll be off."

The clouds which had been rising in the northward and eastward had now spread over the whole heavens, and just at dark the rain began to fall in torrents, accompanied by fitful gusts of wind. Under such circumstances it was next to an impossibility to get the brig underweigh, and though Captain Willis disliked to remain in the cove another night, yet, as he had no other alternative, he was obliged to submit. He had warning of coming danger, however, and he prepared to guard against it.

At eight o'clock a full watch was set, with Ben Walker for its officer, the captain reserving the mid-watch for himself. The lieutenant of the brig was too weak from a recent illness to remain on deck through the storm, but Ben made good his place. The men were all armed with cutlasses, and the pistols were at hand so that they could be obtained if wanted. The rain continued to fall in torrents, and when the first watch was set, it was so dark that objects at the distance of two feet from the eye could not be distinguished.

CHAPTER II.

THE NIGHT BATTLE.

FOR two hours the rain continued to fall without ceasing, and what of wind there was seemed to blow from all points of the compass. The darkness grew more dense until it appeared to have reached that state of utter blackness beyond which darkness cannot go. Upon the bosom of the sea, however, there were faint glimmerings of light from the phosphorescence of the surge as it came breaking back from the shore, and this was all of light there was, for the heavens were as black as the dome of a sealed tomb.

At ten o'clock there seemed to be a slight slackening in the falling of the rain, but not enough to make the exposure to the storm any the less disagreeable, nor were there any indications of a clearing up of the weather.

"Gosh, Mas'r Ben," uttered Gimbo, as he reached the spot where the boatswain stood upon the quarter-deck, "aint dis a rain?"

"It is," was Ben's laconic reply.

"Tink de enemy cum such a night as dis, eh?"

"Would you go such a night as this, if you had anything in particular to do?"

"Yes. Sure I would."

"Then you'd better keep your eye open for them."

"I will," said Gimbo; and as he spoke he disappeared in the darkness.

In less than ten minutes the negro was again by the side of Ben.

"Mas'r Ben," he said, in a low tone, "did you hear a noise?"

"Only the rain and surge," returned the boatswain.

"I heard more 'n dat."

"Ah, Gimbo," uttered Ben, knowing that his faithful protege would have no idle fears, "what did you hear?"

"I heard somebody speak on de shore."

"You must have been mistaken, Gimbo."

"Gimbo aint mistaken so easy. I did for sartin hear de speech ob somebody. Jus' you trust me for dat."

Ben did trust his protege, and therefore he called the captain, to whom he communicated what Gimbo had said. Willis was about to call in question the correctness of the negro's statement, when he caught the flash of a light upon the beach.

"Dar! Did yer see dat?" uttered Gimbo, who had also seen the light.

"Yes," said the captain. "Ah, there it is again. By Jupiter, Ben, there's mischief brewing. Call all hands; but mind and be quiet about it."

In a few moments all hands were on deck, and a careful watch was kept upon the direction of the shore. Gimbo thought he could hear the tramp of feet upon the strand, but he was not sure; but he was sure that he could occasionally hear voices, and the previous appearance of the light gave weight to his assertion.

An hour had passed away since all hands had been called. There had been no more developments from the shore, but the rain had almost ceased falling, and along in the east there was a perceptible lightening up of the horizon. The wind, too, had come out of the northwest, and seemed inclined to blow steadily.

"Ben," said the captain, after he had studied these indications in the weather, "I have a mind to get underweigh at once. You are well enough acquainted with the place to work the brig out."

"Loring Cleaveland knows every inch of the soundings here," replied Ben; "and I would rather trust him to do it. I don't exactly know the lay of all these rocks off here under our stern, and I might back the old Martyr afoul of 'em. Cleaveland will do it, sir."

Captain Willis did not hardly dare to try the experiment himself, for he knew but little of the cove, save what he had seen as he entered it, having merely run his brig in there to obtain supplies from Norfolk, so he called young Cleaveland, and asked him if he felt confidence enough to work the brig out to sea.

"Yes, sir," said Loring. "A mile from here will place us in an open sea."

"And within that mile lays all our danger," resumed the captain.

"I can pilot the brig clear of it, sir," added the young man. "I used to play here when a boy, and I have run my father's vessel in and out of here many a time."

"Then you may run up the anchors, Ben;

and if we chance to have friends waiting for us on the shore we'll give them the slip."

Without noise the crew were called to the windlass, and the handspikes were just manned, when Gimbo, who had been perched upon the larboard cathead, leaped down upon the fore-castle and gave the alarm of danger. He said there were boats coming off, and ere many moments the truth of his statement was apparent, for the sound of oars could be heard in the water.

"We are to be attacked, as sure as fate," uttered the captain. "Drop your handspikes, my men, and secure your arms."

"Ay," added Ben Walker, as he moved nearer to the rail, "there are several boats coming off. I can hear 'em plain enough."

"But I don't see where the boats could come from," said Willis; "for surely there were none in the cove this afternoon."

"There is a deep creek makes up into the land around the southern bluff," remarked Loring Cleaveland. "There are most generally quite a number of fishing-boats laying up there, and in all probability these fellows are from the same quarter. The boats must have come down from there."

"That must be the secret," resumed Captain Willis. "But never mind; I think we may be a match for them now. This is the work of those rascally tories."

"O, how I should like to hang every mother's son of 'em," said Ben, with an emphasis that fully agreed with his words. "I'd willingly let the British escape if I could only overhaul the tories. I must say that it puzzles me to make out what kind of a heart a man must have to turn traitor to his country."

Whatever Ben might have said further touching the subject of his hatred it is impossible to say; for he was cut short by the captain's ordering up the gunner, and giving directions for casting loose and manning the larboard guns.

"Ben, you stand by with the port-fires," said Willis, "and as soon as I give the word be ready to light them. We can then see our enemy, and give them a welcome before they expect it."

Ben procured the port-fires, and having seen that the men were all ready at the guns, he took a lighted match and went forward. The match he was careful to keep below the bulwarks, so that it could not be seen from the shore. There was one thing of more than common importance, which, in the excitement of the occasion, none of the Martyr's crew noticed; and that was, that the eastern horizon had become quite clear, so much so that any one upon the shore must easily have seen the outlines of the brig against it—while, on the other hand, towards the beach all was as black and impenetrable as before. Had this fact been noticed much danger might have been guarded against.

"Dey's comin'," whispered Gimbo, who had placed himself close by the side of Ben.

The negro's quick ear had detected the coming of the boats, and as he spoke, Ben also heard them.

"Seems to me they've been long enough getting out here," said the boatswain.

And so it would seem, for certainly ten minutes had passed since Gimbo had detected the sound of oars at first. Captain Willis had arranged everything, and as soon as he judged that the boats were near enough, he gave orders for lighting the port-fires. In an instant the dull glare of the fires shot out into the darkness, and four boats were seen about a cable's length distant. The word was passed to fire, and as the guns belched forth their load of flame and smoke, one of the boats was seen to stagger for a moment and then go down.

"That's it, my boys," shouted Willis. "In with another charge, quick. Here, you Gimbo, hang these lanterns in their places."

The negro sprang to obey the order, and as the battle-lanterns were already lighted, it was but a few moments' work to hang them in their places.

The men at the guns had just got their pieces loaded when the brig's crew were thrown into a state of consternation, by a loud shout which came from the other side of the vessel, and on turning their gaze in that direction they saw that the starboard netting was lined with men!

While the crew had been anxiously turning their attention towards the nearest point of the shore, a part of the enemy, guided by the outlines of the vessel as she stood out against the eastern sky, had kept off under the stern, and thus come up unobserved on the starboard side.

"Fire! Fire!" shouted Ben Walker, as he noticed that the men at the guns were hesitating. "We can give 'em one more dose."

The broadside was discharged once more, but the boats had come too near to be harmed by it, and on the next instant the men were called to repel the boarders. Those who had come up on the starboard side were already upon the deck, and the contest began in right good earnest. The battle-lanterns gave light enough to distinguish friend from foe, and the brig's crew found that the enemy were likely to outnumber them if those upon the larboard side gained a footing upon the deck.

Ben Walker seized a handspike—one of the heaviest he could find, and while the greater part of the crew were engaged with those who had already boarded, he, with a few others, stood by to defend the larboard gangway. His handspike he used with a terrible effect, for with it he knocked back full a score of men before one of them gained the deck; but at length some of the new boarders gained a footing abaft the main rigging, and ere long Ben was obliged to turn his attention inboard.

Loring Cleaveland had stood by the side of the boatswain, and as the latter turned to where the enemy had begun to come over the netting, Loring was engaged with a stout fellow who had made his way up the fore chains. The young man drew one of his pistols and aimed it at the head of the invader, but the powder was too damp to explode, and throwing it quickly aside he resumed his cutlass. The movement, however, of drawing the useless pistol had lost him time, and before he could swing his cutlass his stout enemy had sprang upon the rail. Loring made a wild pass with his weapon, but his adversary parried the blow, and on the next instant the young man received a crashing stroke upon his head from behind. He reeled for a

moment, still sweeping the air with his cutlass, but before he could gather his energies for any further resistance, he felt himself seized by stout arms and lifted over the rail. He struck the water, and the chilly sensation somewhat aroused him; but when he struck out for the shore his reason had left him, and only a sort of wild instinct guided his motions.

"Ben! Ben! Mas'r Cleaveland hab gone. Dey's trowd him overboard!" exclaimed Gimbo, rushing to the boatswain's side.

The stalwart boatswain sprang to the spot where he had last seen Loring, but he was indeed gone. Others, too, had gone in the same way, for the enemy seemed to make it a point to throw overboard all they could. But Ben Walker thought only of Cleaveland. He loved the young man, and when he found that he was indeed missing, he became more furious than ever. With a wild cry of defiance he leaped in among the enemy, and death followed his strokes as falls the ripe grain before the hook of the reaper. Bodies of men who had stood up against a score of the brig's crew, fell back in alarm before the sweeping of that terrible arm. Louder and more loud sounded the shout of the boatswain's death charge, and under its magic influence the seamen sprang to the conflict with renewed vigor. The voice of their captain was hushed—they had seen him fall—and they had begun to falter, but the voice of Ben Walker aroused them again, and they were stronger than ever.

At length the enemy began to give way. Their number was frightfully reduced, and yet they continued to fall. The seamen were aroused to that point of desperation where all thoughts are gone save those of conquest, and

they fought like tigers. When the boatswain lowered his weapon he had struck down all before him, and he could see no enemy to strike. He gazed around upon the deck, but all the dusky forms that met his gaze were those of his own shipmates. There had been no cry for quarters, for in the imperfect light the last of the enemy who had fallen knew not that they were alone!

The battle-lanterns cast a dull, heavy glare over the deck, and even those men who had just ceased from the conflict shuddered as they saw the work they had done.

"Ben," said Gimbo, approaching his protector's side, "s'pose Mas'r Cleaveland dead?" "He must be."

"I tink, p'raps he aint. I seed him swim arter he struck de water."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Sartin sure."

"Then I'll go on shore and search. There's a boat alongside. Jump into it, Gimbo, and take a lantern with you."

The negro quickly obeyed the order, and in a few moments Ben had got two more of his men into the boat, and then having leaped in himself, he put off for the shore. He found a number of corpses upon the strand—some of his own men, and some of the enemy, but he could find nothing of Loring Cleaveland. He continued the search till the labor seemed hopeless, and then he returned to the brig.

The heavens were now spangled with the freed stars—the storm had all passed away, and under the direction of the boatswain the men went at work to clear up the corse-laden deck.

CHAPTER III.

DAGON.

WHEN daylight broke over the scene of the last night's battle, the brig's crew had cleared up the deck as far as was possible, and separated the bodies of their shipmates from those of the enemy. Of the Martyr's crew there were twenty-two killed and missing, and of the enemy there were *sixty-four bodies* found on the deck. Truly the Americans had fought most desperately. Among the fallen was Captain Willis, and when it was known that he was really dead every eye was instinctively turned upon Ben Walker. He was marked as the most fitting man to command the brig.

After the bodies had been separated, Gimbo again sought the side of his master.

"Mas'r Ben," said he, with much earnestness in his manner, "I s'pose you like now to find Mas'r Cleaveland. Better go on shore once more."

"I will go, Gimbo. Perhaps we shall find him now that it is daylight. Poor Loring! I hope he may yet be alive."

Again Gimbo jumped into the boat, and Ben followed him, accompanied by two more of the

men. When they reached the beach they at once commenced the search after the young man. They found other bodies washed up on the strand, but Loring was not among them.

"You must have been mistaken, Gimbo," said Ben; after the search had been kept up for some half an hour.

"Mistaken 'bout what, mas'r?"

"About seeing Loring striking out for the shore."

"Gosh a'mighty, Mas'r Ben, Gimbo knows jus' what dese eyes saw. For sartin, Mas'r Cleaveland did come towards de shore. Now dar's no mistake 'bout dat."

As if to give his words more weight, the negro recommenced his search with renewed vigor. To the north there was a cluster of ragged rocks which made from the shore out some fathoms into the water. Gimbo worked his way out upon these, and he had not been there more than three minutes before he shouted for Ben to come out with the boat.

"I've found him," the negro cried, as he clapped his hands in wild anxiety. "Come quick, Mas'r Ben."

Ben made all haste with the boat, and when he reached the rocks Gimbo had succeeded in lifting the form of the young man to a sitting posture.

"Is he alive, Gimbo?" was Ben's first question, as he leaped upon the rocks.

"Gosh, Mas'r Ben, I don't know. He's cold as ice. I found him up here between dese two rocks, an' ob course he must a' crawled up dar hisself. Poor Mas'r Cleaveland—he's bad for sartin' sure, an' I spees he may be dead."

While Gimbo was speaking he was assisting Ben Walker to lift the young man's form down into the boat, and as soon as the task was performed they put back to the beach, where the other two men had been left. Here the form of the young man was taken out upon the sand, and Gimbo, who was used to such matters from having helped the surgeon on board the various ships in which he had sailed, went at work to see if he could find any signs of life. Loring was but little bruised, except where he had received the wound upon the head, but that wound was a deep and dangerous one.

"Do you find any signs of life?" asked Ben, as he got down upon his knees by the side of the body.

"Can't tell, Mas'r Ben. Looks kind o' skeerish like, don't it? He's cold and stiff."

Ben was about to make some further remark when he was aroused from his occupation by the sound of a strange voice at his side. He looked up and saw a man standing near him. He was a strange-looking man, habited in a quaint garb, and looking unlike anything Ben had ever before seen. He wore a pair of bear-skin leggings, a frock of coarse brown cloth fastened at the waist by a belt, in which was stuck a hunting-knife and a pair of pistols. His head was surmounted by a wide Scotch cap, in which he wore an eagle's feather. In his hand he held a long, heavy rifle, the butt of which rested upon the sand. The stranger's countenance could not be well studied, for a thick beard, almost black in its hue, covered the greater part of his face, and his waving hair, of the same color, swept off over his shoulders. His

eyes, however, were sharp and piercing, and his nose was prominent and well-formed. In age he seemed to have passed the vigor of full-toned manhood, but yet his frame was erect, and he exhibited much muscle and nerve. He was somewhat tall—taller than Ben Walker, and though he possessed hardly a moiety of Ben's massiveness of breast and shoulders, yet he lacked not for the strength one might expect to find in such a frame.

"You've had some tough work here, I take it?" said the stranger, as he gazed upon the form of young Cleaveland, and then run his eyes over the dead bodies that lay along upon the shore.

"Something of a work," laconically returned Ben, as he gazed up into the face of his interlocutor.

"Ay," continued the stranger, "these are times for tough work, and I wot that Ben Walker is just fitted for the occasion."

Ben started to hear his name so familiarly called by the strange man.

"You've got the vantage of me, sir," he said.

"You don't know Dagon, then?" returned the hunter, with a smile.

"Dagon? But you are not Dagon?"

"Most assuredly I am."

Ben started to his feet and extended his hand.

"Here," he uttered, with honest earnestness, "give us your hand, my old fellow. I have heard of you for a kind-hearted man; and some say you are a giant in strength, too; but since I aint afraid of your taking the palm of strength from me, I shan't be jealous."

The hunter smiled again as he returned Ben's grasp, and then he turned his attention towards the form of the young sailor that lay upon the sand.

There were few who lived near the Virginian coast that had not heard of Dagon, and yet none knew from whence he came, nor the place of his abode. He seemed to wander hither and thither, without any point in his mind, or any end to his journeyings. Some said he was a

tory, while others said he sympathized with the colonists and hated the British. In truth, his direct thoughts in the premises were not known, nor had any open act of his really betrayed him. In either party he would have made a powerful member, and the tories were anxious to secure him.

"If I am not mistaken," said Dagon, as he stooped down, "this is young Cleaveland."

"Yes. You know him, then?"

"Ay, I know him well. I saw his poor father shot down by the British soldiers, and I saw that father die, and now the son is to follow him."

"No, no, Mas'r Dagon," uttered Gimbo, who had been chafing Loring's temples; "I tink dar's life in him yet."

"The Lord grant it!" ejaculated Ben, at the same time stooping down again.

For some moments Ben and Gimbo continued their manipulations in silence, for Loring's flesh seemed much warmer than at first, and they could feel that there was an occasional involuntary movement of the muscles.

"You've had a battle here," at length remarked Dagon, after he had watched the brig for some moments.

"Slightly," said Ben, without looking up from his work.

"On board your vessel?" continued the hunter.

"Yes," said Ben.

"And of course you beat?"

"Beat!" iterated Ben, starting up like a shock from his task, and looking Dagon full in the face. "Beat, did you say? Last night, sir, there were fourscore men came to attack us. Most of them were tories, but there's not one of them alive now to tell the story of the battle. The deck of that brig is covered with their corpses!"

The old hunter clasped his hands together and, raised his eyes towards heaven. The movement was impulsive, and the emotion seemed soon to pass away.

"That was a great number to kill," he said.

"So it was," returned Ben; "but none of

them cried for quarters. It was dark when we fought, and when we stopped they had all gone."

"Gosh, Mas'r Ben, he's comin' to!" at this moment uttered Gimbo. "Jus' see his eyes. Bress de Lord, dar's life in him. I know'd dar was."

The faithful negro had raised the young man's head upon his knee, and the signs of returning life were now apparent; but there were no indications of returning consciousness.

"You may work as much as you please," said Dagon, "but you will not accomplish any more. That wound upon the head needs a skilful physician."

"So it strikes me," returned Ben; but, he added, in a sad tone, "we have none on board the brig."

"Then you must take him somewhere else," said the hunter. "There's Matthew Lincoln. He is a kind man, and a true patriot, and he is rich, withal. Carry him there, and I think Lincoln will call a doctor for him."

Ben held a conference with his two men, and the result was, that Loring should be taken up to Matthew Lincoln's. The distance was only a few miles, and the path led directly to the place.

"Will you accompany us?" asked Ben, of the old hunter.

"No. I have business in another direction. But you may rest assured that the young man will be cared for there. You cannot miss the way, and the sooner you get him there the better."

Ben appreciated the force of the hunter's last remark, and having bade the two men, who had accompanied him to the shore, to return to the brig and state the cause of his absence, he lifted the form of young Cleaveland easily in his arms, and set off up the steep path that led over the bluff, Gimbo leading the way.

Old Dagon watched the boatswain till he had passed from sight, and then he hurried off towards the mouth of the creek that emptied into the cove, and struck into the path that led along by the stream.

CHAPTER IV.

ELLA. THE NEW CAPTAIN.

MATTHEW LINCOLN was the last in the male line of one of those proud families which originally settled in Virginia. His mansion was the depository of all that wealth can give towards making life comfortable, and his broad lands gave evidence that he lacked not in taste and skill. He had lived just half a century, but years had not made his form weak, nor his heart cold. He had been a widower for eight years, and the only child he had was a daughter, whom he called Ella. She was nineteen years of age, and as beautiful as the fairest rose of summer. Matthew Lincoln loved that sweet child with the whole ardor of his strong soul; and well he might, for she was not only the living image of the departed wife and mother, but she was all that affection loves to cling to. She was one of those beings who seem to be sent on earth by God to see how deep a human love can be. Exercise and temperance had given health to Ella's frame, and her mind had been trained up in purity and virtue.

"Ella," said Mr. Lincoln, addressing his daughter; "do you remember Loring Cleaveland?"

"His father used to be a sea-captain?" said Ella.

"Yes."

"And Loring used to bring you up letters which his father brought from England?"

"Yes, the same."

"Yes, I remember him well. He was a noble little fellow."

"Not so very little, my child."

"He was a boy when I first knew him."

"So he was; but he is a man now, and he has just been brought here in a fearful state. He has been badly, dangerously wounded in an engagement with the tories, and some of his friends have brought him here to see if we will give him an asylum till he recovers. He has no home now, and on board his vessel there is no surgeon. What say you, my child?"

"O, of course you cannot refuse," returned the beautiful girl, while her eye brightened, and her cheeks were flushed. "Even were he a tory he should be saved in his need, but for one who suffers for his country I would give my all. Let me go and see him."

"Then come."

The girl followed her father down to the apartment within which Loring Cleaveland had been carried. Ben Walker and Gimbo were there, and upon a soft, thick mattress, which had been spread out upon the floor, lay the young man.

"He is insensible," murmured Ella, as she approached the side of the young man, and gazed down upon his pale face.

"Yes, my lady," returned Ben, gazing with wondering admiration upon the beautiful girl. "He's badly hurt; but I hope he will get well. He was a noble fellow, and a good sailor."

"We should send for the doctor at once," resumed Ella.

"He has already been sent for," said Mr. Lincoln.

"But how was he hurt?" asked the fair girl, as a slight tremor shook her frame. "Has there been fighting near us?"

"It was on board our vessel, ma'am," answered Ben. "Last night we had a hard time of it."

"You did not explain it all to me," said Mr. Lincoln.

Ben knew that Lincoln was a friend to the spirit of liberty, and he hesitated not to relate the whole affair, which he did in a very clear and comprehensive manner. For some time after he had closed his account of the battle, Mr. Lincoln remained silent, but at length he said, while his eyes flashed with a fierce fire:

"'Tis a pity you could not have swept off the whole pack of them. There is a nest of tories somewhere about here, but where they congregate I cannot tell. They are a villanous set, and shooting is too good for them. But were there not some others of your crew badly wounded?"

"Some of 'em are badly cut, sir," replied Ben; "but then we can see to all that. It's this cracking of the skull that puts young Cleaveland beyond our hands."

"Yes, just so. His wound is certainly a dangerous one, but then I think there are hopes for him."

"I hope he may recover," responded Ella,

who had been for some moments regarding the wounded man's pale features attentively. "At any rate, we will do all we can for him."

"God bless you, my fair young lady," ejaculated Ben.

"He is a relative of yours?" said Ella, regarding the stout sailor with a grateful look.

"Only such as friendship makes," returned Ben. "I used to sail with his father, and now that he has no home but his vessel, and no friends but his shipmates, I love him more than ever. I can't promise to pay you for all the trouble you may have with him, nor will he, poor boy, have anything but the blessings of his noble heart for you; but—"

"Stop," interrupted the maiden, while a tear sparkled in her eye. "We ask not for such pay as the world takes for its deeds of charity. What we do in kindness needs us but love. When you speak of Matthew Lincoln and his child, remember them as those who can prize gratitude more than money; for he that is really grateful must be in reality a friend."

"Right, my child," uttered the father, as he laid his hand upon his daughter's head. "I hope I may ever merit such exposition of my character." And then turning towards Ben, he continued: "You will leave your friend in the care of those who will be as anxious for his welfare as you could be yourself. I knew the young man's father well. He used to do a great deal of business for me with my correspondents in England."

"Yes, sir," said Ben; "I remember of your coming on board our ship at Portsmouth. Perhaps you have seen me there?"

"Yes, and when once seen you are not likely to be forgotten."

"Don't you 'member me, Mas'r Lincoln?" slyly inquired Gimbo, edging nearer to where the old gentleman stood. "Don't you 'member your hat blowed off once, an' I went in de boat and fetch it to yer?"

"Yes, yes," returned Mr. Lincoln, with a smile. "I remember your little black face very well."

Gimbo was highly gratified by the kind manner in which he was noticed, and he evinced his pleasure by several highly original gesticulations.

At this juncture the doctor arrived, and Ella retired from the room.

"Now, Thornton," said Mr. Lincoln, as the physician entered, "here is your patient. I am going to place him in your hands, and I want you to cure him."

"We'll see first if the thing is possible," returned the doctor, as he knelt down by the young man's side.

At first he shook his head with a dubious expression, but as his examination became more minute and thorough, his countenance assumed more of a satisfied air. It was a long while before the doctor arose to his feet, but when he did so there was a look of hope upon his features.

"Well, doctor," uttered Ben Walker, in a nervous, hesitating manner, "can he get well?"

"Yes," was Thornton's emphatic answer. "That is," he added, "unless he has some inward injury which I cannot now discover."

"Then the blow on the head wont kill him?"

"No."

The stout sailor leaned back against the casing of the high window, and gave vent to a long drawn, heavy breath.

"I can't stop to see him now," he continued, after he had somewhat recovered himself; "for my men want me. I leave him with those who I know will be kind to him; and here is my faithful Gimbo—he shall stay and nurse him. Gimbo may be rough, but you will find him faithful to a fault."

It was arranged that the negro should remain with Cleaveland, and Mr. Lincoln was glad that it was so—not that it would take any anxiety from his own shoulders, but he thought it would be pleasant to the invalid. After Ben had again been assured that every hope was well-founded for the young man's recovery, he took his leave. He stopped for some moments at the door, and when he turned away there

was a tear in his eye. That was a noble heart which beat in the bosom of the sailor.

The physician remained at Lincoln's house all that day. He found that the edge of the cutlass had penetrated through the young man's skull, but it had not cut the membranous covering of the brain. Towards night Cleaveland came back to physical life, but his mind was wandering and unsteady. He seemed to recognize Gimbo, but from no other hands would he receive assistance.

When Ben Walker reached the shore of the small cove he found a boat waiting for him. According to his advice, the dead bodies had all been sewed up in such pieces of canvass as could be spared, and when he reached the deck the burying of the dead was the only thing necessary to clear off all traces of the last night's conflict.

"Well, Mr. Stickney," said Ben, addressing the chief mate or lieutenant, of the brig, "I suppose the sooner we get out of this now, the better."

"I should think so," returned the mate.

"But you will act your own pleasure about it."

"My pleasure is your pleasure, sir," said Ben, not exactly comprehending the drift of the mate's manner.

"You don't understand the matter, Captain Walker."

Ben started, and trembled, for a glimpse of the truth flashed upon him.

"Since you have been gone," continued Stickney, "we have unanimously elected a commander to take the place made vacant by the death of Willis, and you are the man. Captain Walker, we are ready to obey you."

"Ay, ay," responded the old gunner; and on the next moment the men all joined in pledging allegiance to their newly chosen commander.

For a few seconds Ben was unable to speak, and when he did find words, his lips trembled, and his eyes were moistened.

"Well, boys," he said, removing his hat, and gazing proudly and gratefully around upon the crew, "I wont refuse your kindness. I

cept the office you have given me, and while hold it, I will do the best I can to honor it. But you have got to help me. We must all be equal in times of danger, for all have an equal duty to perform; so here's success to the OCEAN MARTYR, and God grant that we may tread beneath her flag till our country is free!"

It was such shouts as that which followed Ben's simple speech that told, more plainly than aught else, with what souls the British had to contend when they thought to fasten their king-master's yoke upon America.

As soon as the men were calm enough to return to their duties the brig's anchors were hove up, and she was soon standing out into the broad Atlantic. When at a proper distance

from the shore, the dead were religiously consigned to the ocean grave, and then the brig was headed up towards the entrance of the Chesapeake.

The Martyr had lost twenty-two men including young Cleaveland, and then the absence of Gimbo reduced the number of the crew to fifty-seven. Of this latter number nine were unable to do duty from the result of wounds, but they were none of them dangerously hurt. At any rate, the forty-eight men who were left for duty feared not to put forth in quest of the enemy, and with light hearts they assumed their respective stations after Ben Walker had taken the command.

CHAPTER V.

PHANTASY.

FOR four days Loring Cleaveland had laid in a state of mental derangement. He had raved but very little, most of his wanderings being of a melancholy character. Of his father he talked most of the time, and when he seemed to tire of that, he would mourn for his country, for the idea had possessed him that America was lost. When he raved, it was about the conflict in which he was wounded, and from this point every exertion was used to divert his mind. Sometimes, when Gimbo was called away, Ella would sit for awhile by the invalid's bed, and though he was often awake while she was there, yet he never raved in her presence. There seemed to be a holy calm waiting upon her which could even soothe the mind of the maniac.

On the evening of the fourth day, while Gimbo was gone to eat his supper, Ella sat by the invalid's side. Upon a table near her were the portions which the doctor had left, and having arranged them to suit her own taste, she opened a book which Gimbo had left behind him. She found it to be a Bible, and upon the fly-leaf was written the fact that the book was a present to the honest negro from Loring Cleaveland.

The last rays of the setting sun were shining softly in through the window, and their golden light rested upon the maiden's face. She had turned to one of her favorite chapters and was busily engaged in reading. The subject of her thoughts lent an additional charm to her features, and as the soft sunlight played in her golden hair and dwelt to kiss her flushed cheek, she seemed more beautiful than a mortal.

"Who are you?" suddenly came breaking upon her ear in a trembling whisper.

She looked quickly towards the bed, and found that the invalid was gazing earnestly upon her.

"Who are you?" Loring again asked, trying to raise himself upon his elbow.

"A friend who has come to care for you," returned Ella, closing the book, and laying it upon the table.

"So you are one of the spirits that minister to needing souls?" resumed the youth, in a calm, low tone, his gaze assuming more reverence and tenderness in its look. "When I dwelt on earth my father used to tell me about the angels of peace and love. I remember it well. Are you to stay with me always?"

Ella saw that the young man's mind still wandered, and she knew not what answer to make.

"Tell me," continued Loring, while his countenance grew brighter, "will you stay with me always? O, I should be happy then. Can I feel your touch? Let me take your hand. — There, O, you will stay with me. God has sent you to be my angel—to guide me through the walks of his eternal mansions. I am glad I died."

Ella Lincoln had mechanically extended her hand, and as it rested in the embrace of the invalid she could not think of withdrawing it. Loring's features were pale, but his eyes shone with a strange lustre, and the light of the joyous phantasy which had seized his mind made him look spiritually beautiful. The maiden's gaze was fixed upon him. To her it was a moment such as she had never before experienced. That voice—so sweetly soft—so plaintive in its phantasy—had touched strange cords in her soul, and she tried not to throw off the magic spell that bound her.

"You will always stay with me?" again fell in mournful, plaintive persuasion from the youth's lips.

Ella Lincoln knew that the young man's mind wandered, and she feared that to answer him with a decided negative, might operate unfavorably upon him, so she told him—"yes."

"Now I know that my heaven will be a happy one," murmured Loring, while he drew the small white hand he held more closely to him.

As he spoke, he closed his eyes, and ere long Ella felt his grasp upon her hand loosen. The sun had sunk from sight, and just as the shades of twilight began to creep over the scene, Gimbo softly entered the chamber. Loring had sank into a slumber, and without speaking to the negro Ella arose and left the room.

During the night, young Cleaveland slept soundly. It was the first night he had passed without one or more hours of disquiet. It was nearly ten o'clock in the forenoon of the next day when he awoke. He opened his eyes, and

then closed them again, and for some ten or fifteen minutes he remained still and silent. Gimbo could see that he was awake, and that his lips occasionally moved, but he did not speak, nor did he show any signs of consciousness. At length, however, he turned in his bed and gazed upon the faithful watcher.

"Gimbo," he said, "is this you?"

"Yes, Mas'r Cleaveland, it am for sartin' me," quickly returned Gimbo, rising from his chair and leaning over the bed.

"And where am I, Gimbo?"

"You is safe. Gimbo is here to watch you, and you hab odder friends here, too."

It was some minutes before Loring spoke again. His mind seemed busy with heavy thoughts, and when he again looked up the happy conviction struck Gimbo, that the young man had come back to reason.

"I am not on board the brig?" said Loring.

"No, no, Mas'r Cleaveland; you is in de house ob Mas'r Lincoln."

By degrees Gimbo gave Loring a clear account of all that had transpired, and when the youth understood it all he murmured his thanks to the faithful negro. Ere long the doctor came. He spent half an hour with the invalid, and when he descended to the sitting-room, he gave Mr. Lincoln and his daughter the pleasing intelligence that Cleaveland was out of danger.

After the doctor had gone, Cleaveland slept again, and he did not wake till near the middle of the afternoon.

"Gimbo," he said, after he had gazed some minutes upon his watcher, "I have had a strange dream since I have been here in this place."

"Gosh, mas'r, I habn't the least doubt ob it."

"I have seen one of the sweetest beings that can be conceived of."

"What did it look like, Mas'r Cleaveland?"

"It was a female, Gimbo; but not such an one as you ever saw."

"Gorry, mas'r, I don't know 'bout dat. I hab seen sumefin' dat's beautiful."

"But this was an angel, Gimbo."

"So hab I seen an angel."

"Ah—where?"

"In dis berry room."

"In my room, Gimbo?"

"Yes, Mas'r Cleaveland—for sartin' sure I did."

"What do you mean?" asked Loring, betraying a deep interest in what Gimbo had said.

"Well, I'll jus' tell yer. Mas'r Lincoln's darter's been here sometimes to watch wid yer when I'se been away; and for sartin' she's jus' de most handsome, good, lubly, kind-hearted ting I ebber seed. Gosh, Mas'r Cleaveland, I'b seed de tears in her great blue eyes when she stood here and seed yer sufferin'."

"It was Ella Lincoln?" murmured Loring, thoughtfully.

"Yes," returned Gimbo.

"And she has watched here with me, sometimes?"

"Yes."

"And have I ever been awake when she was here?"

"Yes, an' you hab talk wid her good deal. You wouldn't be kind wid nobody else only her an' me."

"Can it be possible that she is the spirit of my dreams?"

"Jus' likely as not."

"Perhaps so."

Loring remained silent after this, and his thoughts ran upon the theme of which he had spoken. He was not long in making up his mind that Ella Lincoln was the object of his pleasant dreams, but when this conclusion was arrived at he was far from being at ease on the subject. His mind was very busy, and busy, too, without any defined thought. He was thus engaged when the door of his room was opened,

and on turning he beheld the giant form of Ben Walker.

"God be praised!" was the first ejaculation of the old sailor, as he took Loring's hand within his own. "They tell me, my dear boy, that you are going to get well again."

"I hope so, Ben," returned the young man, with a brightened expression.

"But the doctor says he is sure of it," continued Ben. "I couldn't set sail for a cruise till I had seen you, and now that I know you are on the mending hand, I shall be happy."

"I thank you, Ben," murmured our hero, while the grateful moisture gathered in his eyes. "This is worth all the medicine in the world, and I hope I may recover, if it is only to let you know how grateful I can be for your kindness."

"Don't say anything about that, Loring. You know it does me good to help you."

"I know—I know," said Loring. "But tell me about the brig, and all the noble shipmates there."

"Well, Loring, I am captain."

"So you ought to be. Poor Willis was a noble fellow, though, and a good sailor. Peace be with him."

"I took the old Martyr around to Norfolk, and shipped twenty more good hands," continued Ben; "and now we are ready for a cruise. I am going to run down to the southward, for some of the enemy's cruisers are down there."

Ben described to the young man more minutely than there is any need of transcribing, all the affairs of the brig and its crew, and when his visit had extended to an hour's time he arose to take his leave, promising that on the first opportunity he would come again. His visit was a blessing to the invalid, and when he had gone Loring felt stronger and more happy.

CHAPTER VI.

REJECTED.

WHEN Ben Walker passed out from the entry he met Ella Lincoln upon the broad piazza. He stopped and took the fair hand which she proffered, and a noble expression of heart-felt admiration overspread his features as he met her beautiful eyes beaming upon him.

"We will take good care of your young friend, sir," she said.

"I aint afraid of that, Miss Lincoln. I know your father is a good, kind-hearted man. Old Dagon assured me that Cleaveland would be taken care of here."

"Then you know Dagon?" said the maiden, with a slight degree of uneasiness in her manner.

"I never saw him before that morning I first came here; but at Norfolk, and at Portsmouth I have heard him spoken of. They say he is a kind-hearted man."

"I hope he is," said Ella.

"But do you know him?" asked Ben.

"I have seen him," returned the maiden; "but I believe no one knows him. He has

been here often, and I have allowed the thought to creep into my mind that he might be a tory. But perhaps I may be mistaken. At least, I hope I am."

"I can't think Dagon is a tory. He seems too kind-hearted for that."

"O, sir," impulsively exclaimed Ella, "you must not form a suspicion of the man from what I have said. I know nothing of him, save that he is a strange and unaccountable man."

"I understand you," returned Ben. "I know nothing of the man, save that he did me a kindness, and till I know something more of him, I shall remember him kindly for that."

Shortly afterwards, Ben Walker turned away from the piazza and hurried off towards the road that led to Norfolk. Ella had stepped down into the garden, and had taken a few turns in one of the flowery walks, when the sound of a horse's footfall aroused her from the reverie into which she had fallen. She re-ascended the piazza, where she was soon joined by a young man who came up from the park. He was dressed in a gay, flaunting manner, displaying a

great profusion of jewelry and daintily arranged ruffles.

"Ah, Ella," he uttered, as he reached the maiden's side, "did you think I was never coming to see you again?"

"To tell the truth, sir, I have not thought much about it; only I knew you would come at some time."

"Now you are pleased to be humorous," said the young man, not wholly able to conceal his vexation. "I know you have thought of me."

"O, of course I have, for my thoughts take to themselves wild flights sometimes."

Now this retort was more effective still upon the sensibilities of the new comer, for he regarded himself as an accepted lover of Ella Lincoln. His name was Abner Dodwell. His father, Mr. Reuben Dodwell, was a descendant from a noble family, and he was reputed to be rich. His estate was only a few miles from Matthew Lincoln's, their lands joining each other. Between the elder Dodwell and Mr. Lincoln, there had long existed a friendly intimacy; but on Lincoln's part the friendship had been kept up more for the sake of being on good terms with his neighbor, than from any appreciation of that neighbor's good qualities. Lincoln had allowed Abner Dodwell to visit his house, and to associate with his daughter, and he had even told him that if he could win his daughter's love, he might marry her.

Abner never doubted his ability to chain the affections of the lovely Ella, for he considered himself a paragon of beauty. And by some others he might have been considered so; but what he had of beauty was of a rakish cast; and what of real manhood there was in his features was of rather a suspicious character. His face was not such an one as the practised physiognomist would have trusted on the ground of honor.

"By the way," said young Dodwell, after he had swallowed the chagrin which resulted from the maiden's last remark; "who was that uncouth looking fellow I saw going out of the park just as I came through the gate?"

"That was Captain Walker."

"Captain Walker, eh? And pray, what was Captain Walker doing here?"

"He came to see one of his men who has been dangerously ill here."

"Ill, eh? What sort of a man?"

"A sailor-man."

"So I suppose. An old man?"

"No, a very young man."

"So, so," uttered Dodwell, with a slight compression of the lips. "And may I ask how he got sick?"

Ella explained to him the circumstances under which young Cleaveland had been brought to her father's mansion, and when she had concluded, Abner Dodwell seemed a little uneasy.

"What is he—a kind of ignorant fellow?" he asked.

"On the contrary, sir, he is very intelligent."

"O, bother upon the fellow. I suppose your father means to make his house a regular hospital?"

"He means to be kind to those who are in distress, Mr. Dodwell. I do not know but that he might even suffer you to find an asylum here if you were in a dying condition."

The young man colored beneath the effects of this severity, and it was some moments before he could regain his equanimity. When he did at length master his feelings there was a spark in his eye which told of a spirit far from lovely. Ella did not notice it. She did not notice the peculiar curling of his nether lip, nor the revengeful look that swept across his features.

"Come, Ella," he said, forcing a smile to his face, "let us walk in the garden. I wish to speak with you upon a very important matter."

"Can we not converse here as well?"

"O, certainly; but then the garden is more pleasant. Come."

The maiden at length consented to go, but it was with evident reluctance. When they reached the main walk of the garden, young Dodwell took his companion's hand in his own. There was no trembling in his grasp—no development of any deep emotion. He was moved by a spirit of eagerness, and that was all.

"Now, Ella," he said, walking more slowly, "you must certainly have some idea of what I am going to say."

"I am sure I have not," said the maiden.

"Then I will tell you. Some time ago, your father told me that I might marry you if I could win your love. Did he not speak to you about it?"

"Yes. He told me of it at the time."

"I thought so," said Dodwell, "for I supposed he would not leave you ignorant of so important an affair. And now, Ella, when shall the marriage take place?"

"Marriage, sir?"

"Yes, Ella."

"Really, Mr. Dodwell, you are begging the question now."

"Do not trifle with me," urged the young man, betraying considerable uneasiness. "You know my meaning. I wish to make you my wife, and I certainly hope that you are not going to refuse my hand. I know that you love me."

"You must have a very curious fount from whence to draw your knowledge," said Ella, with a slight touch of irony in her tone.

"Perhaps I draw it from my own love," returned the young man. "I have loved you for a long while, and is it any wonder that I should suppose myself beloved in return? You have received my visits, accepted my companionship, and walked and rode with me. What more could I ask, except your own avowal by word of mouth?"

"I have received your visits because I could not do otherwise; I have accepted your companionship because you would force it upon me, and I have walked and rode with you because you insisted upon it, and I did not wish to be rude to you by refusing."

"And do you mean to say that you do not love me?"

"I do not love you well enough to be your wife."

"This is trifling, Ella," said the young man, with an effort.

"No, Mr. Dodwell, I am in earnest. I may

as well tell you the truth at once. I cannot be your wife."

"Cannot?" gasped Dodwell, losing for the moment all his self-control.

"No," answered the maiden, gently withdrawing her hand. "Your wife I can never be."

For some moments the young man was unable to speak, but it was not from emotions of such anguish as the true lover feels at disappointment; it was anger that moved him—and yet there was a crushing of hopes, too; but they were all selfish hopes.

"Come, Mr. Dodwell let us return to the house now," said Ella, noticing with some apprehension the effect which her words had produced.

"Not yet, lady," responded Abner, throwing off the tie from his tongue. "I would ask you one more question. You say you do not *now* love me well enough to become my wife; but will you *ever* do it?"

"That is a question I am not prepared to answer," replied the maiden, trembling.

"Yes, yes, you can answer it now as well as ever. Let me hear your answer *now*?"

"No, no, not now."

"But I say—*now*. This is the most fitting time for the settlement of this affair. You shall not trifle with me further."

"Trifle with you, sir?" uttered Ella, now really frightened by her companion's strange manner. "You know I have not trifled with you at all. Let me go now?"

"Not yet, lady," cried Dodwell, seizing her by the arm. "You must answer my question before you go. I must know what hope I have. Now tell me if you ever will become my wife?"

"I do not think I ever shall."

Ella spoke the words as calmly as she could, but they had a fearful effect upon young Dodwell. He at first turned pale as death, and then his face grew purple with rage. He tightened his grasp upon the maiden's arm, and his lips quivered with the passion that moved him. It was plainly to be seen that within his bosom there had been a terrible crashing of selfish hopes and plans.

"Lady," he gasped, "you know not what you have said. Recall that refusal—recall it now. Tell me that you will at some time be my wife?"

"I cannot, sir," firmly returned Ella.

"Then, by the powers of life, I'll make you!" exclaimed Dodwell, forgetting all else in the height of his passion. "You must, and shall, be mine. O, you cannot escape me. Promise me—promise me, that you will be my wife. If you hope for peace hereafter—if you would live—promise to be mine."

"Never! never!" shrieked Ella, struggling to free herself from Dodwell's grasp. "I cannot be your wife."

"I said you *should* be. Tell me—tell me, that you will be mine. If you would live, tell me so!"

As these words came hissing from the madman's lips, he seized the frightened girl with a fiercer grip, and began to drag her further away from the house. She screamed in her fright, and struggled with all her power to free herself; but Abner was strong, and he held her with a grip from which she could not break.

"Help! help! O, mercy!" cried Ella.

"There's no help here for you, unless you promise to be mine."

"Yes, dar be help, too. Take dat, you villain!"

Abner turned to see who had come to thwart him, and as he made the motion, he received a blow from Gimbo's fist that laid him sprawling upon the ground.

"Is you hurt, missus?" tenderly inquired the faithful negro, as he laid his hand upon Ella's arm, and moved her gently back from the spot where the villain lay.

The maiden made no reply, for at that moment Abner sprang to his feet. His eyes flashed for an instant upon the negro, and then he drew a pistol from his bosom. Gimbo was used to all such work as that, and with a cat-like spring he leaped upon the villain and wrenched the pistol from his grasp.

"Gosh a'mighty, Mas'r Dodwell, you'd better make you'self scarce," uttered Gimbo, as he

held the fellow by the throat. "I'se know'd yer dis long time. I'se 'spected yer. How d'ye like dat—an' dat—an' dat, eh?"

While Gimbo spoke he gave a succession of very impressive grips upon Abner's neck—so impressive that the villain began to grow purple in the face. Abner was now in the hands of one whose physical strength as far exceeded his as his had exceeded the maiden's.

"Dar, take dat," uttered Gimbo, as he loosened his grip and gave the fellow a powerful blow upon the side of the head. "Dis pistol I guess I'll keep myself."

Abner Dodwell sank upon the ground like a stricken ox, and then Gimbo turned to the maiden.

"Come, missus," he said, extending his hand. "You'd better go wid me to de house."

"I hope you have not killed him," murmured Ella, gazing upon the prostrate form of the man who had proved himself such a villain.

"No, don't be 'fraid ob dat. You can't kill 'um so easy. Gosh, his head's as hard as a rock. I tell yer, missus, you'd better hab noff'n' to do wid dat feller. I'specs he aint jus' what he ought to be."

Ella turned away, and allowed her hand to rest upon the negro's arm as she moved towards the house. Her soul was too deeply moved for speech, for the scene through which she had just passed had produced a stunning effect upon her nerves; but she failed not to show the gratitude which she felt towards her protector, and the negro's quick eye detected the look.

"My day will come yet!" uttered Abner Dodwell, as he arose once more to his feet.

Ella heard the words, and she turned her gaze towards the point from whence they came. She met the look of Abner, and she shuddered as she noticed its demoniac meaning.

When she reached the house she resolved that she would not tell her father what had happened; or, at least, that she would wait until she had overcome her fright, for the whole affair was so strangely unaccountable, that she knew not how to broach it. She had yet to realize its full import.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DISASTER.

TOWARDS the middle of the forenoon on the following day, Ella Lincoln walked out upon the piazza. She was somewhat pale, for the circumstances of the preceding day had not yet ceased to haunt her mind with vague imageries of evil. She never liked Abner Dodwell, but she had never before suspected that he could be so much of the villain as she now knew him to be; but her uneasiness was not all the result of what had occurred; she feared that Abner had some terrible revenge in store for her; his words—his looks—gave weight to such a fear, and now that she had gained so palpable an insight into his character, she hesitated not to believe that he could be capable of anything vile and wicked.

The maiden was pondering in this wise, when she was aroused by the rattling of carriage wheels coming up through the park. She saw that it was Doctor Thornton's carriage, but she wondered why he should drive so rapidly. When the carriage reached the steps of the piazza, the doctor leaped out, and then for the first time Ella noticed that there was a human form lying upon the foot-rug within the vehicle.

"Call some one to assist me," said Thornton, as he threw the reins over his horse's back.

Ella ran into the house, and Gimbo being the first person she met, she called upon him. The negro hastened to the carriage.

"Lord a' mercy!" cried Gimbo, "if 'tis n't Mas'r Lincoln, hisself."

"My father!" shrieked Ella, springing forward.

"Be not alarmed," said Thornton, gently moving the maiden away from the carriage. "He may not be much injured. Do not get in the way."

The poor girl stood on one side and saw her father lifted out. She saw his face, and it looked pale and deathlike. The eyes were closed, and the long gray hair was wet and dishevelled.

"O, doctor, is he dead? For the love of heaven, tell me?"

"No, no, Ella, he is not dead—perhaps not much hurt. But do not stop me now. I will let you know all about it as soon as I find out myself."

The doctor bade Gimbo to help him bear Mr.

Lincoln to his chamber, and Ella would have followed, but Thornton motioned her back. She saw her father borne up the great stairway, and when they had carried him from her sight, she sank upon one of the long settees, and clasped her hands upon her bosom. In a few moments, Gimbo came down, and the maiden sprang towards him.

"Tell me, good Gimbo—how is my father?"

"I can't tell zaetly, missus. De doctor wouldn't let me stay."

"But he is not dead?"

"O, no. He's only got a fall some way. His head be hurt, I 'spees."

Gimbo could communicate no more, and Ella awaited the appearance of the doctor in painful anxiety. Her mind was the seat of a thousand vague images of ill, and the most fearful doubts came to trouble her. At length—it seemed an hour to her—the doctor came. Ella tremblingly approached him, and laid her hand upon his arm.

"My father, sir," she murmured. "How is he?"

"He is badly hurt, Ella, but I think there is no danger."

"I may go and see him?"

"No, not now. He is sleeping, and it will not be well to disturb him. Do not think of seeing him before to-morrow."

"But how happened it? How is he injured? O, sir, tell me the truth at once. Let me know the worst. Now I am tortured by the worst of fears."

"He fell from his horse, Ella, and his fall has injured him considerably. I cannot tell exactly how much he is injured; but it will be well that he should remain quiet during the remainder of the day. I shall remain here until to-morrow, and if there should be any unfavorable symptoms I will call you at once. You will not wish to see him till I think proper?"

"O, no, sir. Of course I am willing to be governed by your judgment. But you do not think there is a mortal danger?"

"No, I do not."

This assurance put Ella's worst fears at rest, for she knew that the doctor told the truth.

"Do you think my father will be long confined?" she asked.

"I cannot tell; but my belief is, that he will be obliged to keep his room for some time—perhaps a month, and it may be more."

"Well," said the maiden, in a tone of resignation, "I may bless God that it is no worse."

"Indeed you may, Ella, for there were nine chances in ten that death would have been the result of such a fall as he had. Rest easy, my fair child, for you may take my word that your father shall not die from this accident. But if you would know the worst, I will tell you. His leg is broken."

"And that is the worst?"

"Yes."

An hour before this intelligence would have been received by Ella with horror, but now it was more of a consolation than a source of grief, and she felt more reconciled to the disaster than she could have been had her first fears not been so dreadful. In fact, the idea had become developed in the maiden's mind that the choice of fates for her father had rested between death and a fractured limb, and since the latter had been the portion, she almost felt thankful.

Thornton soon went back to Mr. Lincoln's room, and shortly after he had gone, Ella was joined by the faithful Gimbo.

"Misse Ella," said he, "Mas'r Cleaveland wants to see you."

"Wants to see me?" repeated the maiden, with a slight flush of her countenance.

"Yes. I tink he's kind o' melancholy like, an' he said you would p'raps be willin' to come an' see him."

"Certainly I will go," returned the maiden, as she turned towards the stairway.

She felt no hesitation in obeying the call, and when she entered the room where Loring was confined, her only feelings were, that she was performing a mission of good-will. She found the invalid bolstered up with pillows, and when she first saw him he was gazing out through the window. Gimbo had shaved him that morning, and his countenance plainly showed the symp-

toms of returning strength. The youth turned his head as he heard the light footfall by his bedside, and for a few moments he seemed lost in a sort of wandering maze as he gazed upon the lovely form before him.

"Your faithful Gimbo told me that you were lonesome," said Ella.

"I have been lonesome," whispered Loring, still gazing into the beautiful features before him.

"And you wished that I would come and see you?" said the fair girl, with a smile.

Loring blushed and stammered.

"I did tell Gimbo that I wished you would come and see me," he said at length; "but I knew not that he would tell you. I surely gave him no—"

"I understand what you would say," interrupted Ella, as she noticed the young man's hesitation. "You must be lonesome here, and it will give me pleasure to bear you company if I can serve to lighten any of your cares or pains."

"I know not how I can thank you, lady, for your kindness," murmured Loring. "But I do thank you, nevertheless."

"Kindness is a duty, and they who are truly kind make thanks for themselves," said the maiden.

"Ay, but there are few who can be so kind to strangers."

"But then we are not entirely strangers," continued Ella. "You are one of the very few whom I knew in childhood. To be sure years have passed away since I saw you in childhood, but yet the memories of those bright days are not easily effaced."

"Alas!" said Loring, "I should be miserable indeed could the memories of my childhood

be blotted out from my mind, for it is there that all the joys of my life are painted. It was in childhood that my mother smiled upon me and blessed me—and there lay the young hopes which used to make my heart glad—hopes which manhood may never realize, but which nevertheless, have given joy to the child. I remember well the little blue-eyed, golden-haired angel who used to smile upon me here."

The young man stopped, for he had said more than he had intended to have said; and he noticed, too, that Ella was trembling.

"Forgive me," he added, fearing that he might have said more than he ought—fearing that his words might be construed wrongly. "I am weak now, and I may have said more than strict etiquette allows."

"You have surely said nothing out of the way," quickly returned Ella, while the flush upon her cheek grew deeper.

"I am glad of that, for I love to speak my thoughts freely. I never learned, lady, to hide my real feelings when among my friends. But tell me of your father. Gimbo says he is hurt."

"Yes," returned the maiden, "he has met with a severe injury."

This turned the tide of the conversation, and for nearly half an hour longer, Ella remained with the invalid. When she arose to leave the room she promised to come again, and there was a smile upon her countenance as she spoke.

Surely this was a ray of sunshine that had shot athwart that sick bed. It was a long time after she had gone before Loring came fully back to the reality of his situation. His eyes were fixed vacantly upon the spot where he had last seen the lovely presence, and when he was called to himself, it was by the entrance of Gimbo.

CHAPTER VIII.

CONFERENCES.

THE mansion of Mr. Reuben Dodwell had once been as sumptuous in its appearance as that of his neighbor, Matthew Lincoln, but at the present time there was a vast difference in the appearance of the two homes. Dodwell's house had begun to show signs of decay, and the most casual observer could not have failed to read therefrom the character of the owner. The great chestnut trees in the park were disfigured with dead limbs, the paling of the fence was shattered, the gravelled walk and carriage path were grown up with weeds, and the house itself was sadly in want of repair.

In one of the great rooms of the mansion sat Mr. Reuben Dodwell. He was a man not far from fifty years of age. His hair seemed prematurely gray, and his features were marked with lines of care and anxiety which bore a hard, thankless cast. His lips were thin and ashy, his nose sharp and prominent, his eyes quick and unsteady, and his brow deeply contracted. His hands were resting nervously upon his knees, while he regarded with a vacant look the pages of a letter which lay open upon the table before him.

Presently footsteps were heard in the entry, and soon afterwards the latch of the door was raised.

"Who's there?" asked Dodwell, rising from his chair.

"Abner," replied the applicant.

Mr. Dodwell hastily folded up the letter which had been lying open before him, and having placed it in his pocket he went and unlocked the door.

"What's to pay now?" was Abner's first exclamation, as he entered the room.

"Only business," answered the old man, seeming greatly relieved at finding that it was only his son who had come.

"Important, eh?"

"Somewhat."

"Have you heard from —"

"—sh!" interrupted the old man, trembling with apprehension. "Do not speak that name too freely."

"But where's the harm? There's no one here to hear."

"And when there chances to be eaves-droppers they cannot hear if we do not speak,"

logically replied the old gentleman. "I have heard from our correspondent, and all is so far right."

"Good," said Abner; and as he gave utterance to the word he sat down, which example his father followed.

"Now, my son," said the old man, "how comes on your match with Ella Lincoln? That thing should be done up soon."

"O, curse the girl, she refuses me!" returned Abner, with a tremor of passion.

"Refuses you?" iterated the old man, in blank astonishment. "When did you see her?"

"Yesterday. I went to her father's house. I asked her the question plainly, and she plainly told me that she would not be my wife."

"But that was only the first offshoot of maidenly modesty. You must try her again."

"You mistake, father. I know her meaning, and I know that she means just what she said. The amount of the question is, she dislikes me. Confounded odd taste she must have, surely. For some time back she has sought every opportunity to show her feelings by making light of me."

"This won't do," muttered the old man, with a troubled expression of countenance. And after he had thus spoken he sat for a few moments in a pondering study. "Abner," he continued, at length, "there will be forty thousand dollars in immediate cash go with the hand of that girl—forty thousand dollars, in her own right, that will be available as soon as she is married. We need that money."

"I know it," said Abner.

"And I had been allotting upon it," continued the other.

"I suppose so," added Abner.

There was another silence extending to some minutes, during which the father and son cast furtive glances at each other, as if each would read the other's thoughts.

"Abner," said the old man, in a low, trembling tone, "the girl must not escape us. She has no business to refuse you now, after suffering you to visit her so long. Mr. Lincoln said

he was willing she should be your wife, and upon that ground I have based important plans. She must be your wife!"

"Ah," uttered Abner, showing by his countenance that what he was about to utter was the truth, "I am glad you have said that, for out of revenge I had sworn that I would have the maiden's hand. By the mass, she shall be mine if you will but help me. We'll see whether she can be so sarcastic after her wings are clipped."

"I will help you, my son."

"Then the thing can be easily done; and now will be a good time to do it, for Lincoln is laid up with the worst kind of a broken leg."

"A broken leg?" repeated the old man, with inquisitive surprise.

"Yes. He was thrown from his horse this morning, and carried home insensible. His leg is broken in two places, and Doctor Thornton told me that he would be laid up two or three months at least."

"Then," said the old man, "our game is easy. By heavens, the girl shall be yours, notwithstanding her refusal. But let that part of the business rest for the present. We will study up some plan for carrying it out before long. We have one or two faithful men whom we may trust to help you if you need them."

"She is safe," responded Abner, with a look of savage satisfaction. "Let her rest in her oddities till we want her."

"But we shall want her soon. We must have the money."

"Ay," added the son, "and I hope we shall get better interest for it than we did for the last sum we laid out. By Jupiter, governor, our investment against the rebel brig was a hard pull upon our pockets."

A dark shade passed over the old man's face as his son spoke.

"I know, I know," he said; "but then we shall get our money back. It was no fault of ours that the brig's crew beat."

"No, it was no fault; but 'twas a terrible misfortune; and a misfortune, too, not easily repaired. There's over sixty of our best men killed outright, and but faint hopes of filling their places up again."

"I know all that," returned the old man, with a desperate effort to appear reconciled; "but we have one hope that may help make up for what we have lost. I am sure that Dagon will join us."

"Sure?" iterated Abner.

"Yes. Some of my men have been sounding him, and he is ready to join us as soon as he can be assured that his pay shall be forthcoming."

"Well," resumed the young man, "if Dagon will really join us he will make a valuable acquisition. By the saints, I hope it is so."

"O, I feel sure of it," added the father. "He will be here to day, to see me."

"Then let me give you one word of advice. It may be that you are better able to judge for yourself than I am to judge for you; but yet let me advise you to be cautious. Dagon is not a man to be easily swerved, and unless he really is willing to join in our cause, no amount of money would induce him to do it. He may profess to join us, but be wary how you trust him."

"Never fear, Abner; I will understand him thoroughly before I trust him with any secret. I know he is a strange, subtle man, and one that needs to be watched. At any rate, I will handle him. I have letters to write now, and you had better go and hunt up Varnum and Danton. They may be trusted with any kind of secret or work, and if force is needed to get Ella Lincoln within your power, they will be just the men to help you."

The young man's eyes sparkled as he heard his father's words, and merely signifying his intention of following the recommendation, he arose and left the room. After he had gone the old man turned to his table, and having arranged his implements he commenced writing. He sat there and wrote till dark, and then he went and got his supper. After this he returned again to his room, and there he remained alone until after ten o'clock. He had grown uneasy, and occasionally he would start up from his chair and commence pacing the room. It was while he was thus engaged that the door of

his room was opened without noise, and before he knew of the fact, he was startled by beholding the strange presence of Dagon standing near him.

"Good evening," said the hunter, setting his long rifle against the window-casing as he spoke.

"You choose an uncereemonious way of making yourself visible, at all events," returned Dodwell, as he extended his hand.

"Because I suppose the less ceremony we have, the better," answered the old hunter. "These are times when men who know each other shouldn't stand much upon ceremony, especially if there is business before them."

Dagon took a seat as he spoke, and Dodwell regarded him with a wavering look for some moments. The hunter did look strange enough to fasten the attention of any man. By the light of the great oil lamp, his features assumed a sort of wild, haggard look, and his eyes seemed to glare with a fiercer fire than ever.

"Now, sir," continued Dagon, as soon as Dodwell had resumed his seat; "let us turn to our business at once. You wished me to come, and here I am."

"Of course you are aware of the nature of the business upon which I wished to see you," said Dodwell, with some hesitation.

"Perhaps so," returned the hunter, with something which looked like a curl of contempt about his lips; "but if you state the case plainly now, then there can be no mistake."

"Very well," resumed Dodwell, endeavoring to assume a very stern look, but which only amounted to a shrinking from his companion's steady gaze, "I do not think you will betray me, even if you do not accede to my proposals. Your own safety would lead you to beware of that."

"Stop, stop, my dear sir," interrupted Dagon, with a meaning smile, "you do not know me if you base your conclusions thus. You had better not build any hopes upon my fear. I take the trouble to enlighten you on that point now, so that you may labor under no misunderstanding hereafter. Now go on and state your business."

"You very well know my business, sir."

"Perhaps I do."

"Of course you do. The nature of the case certainly implies that."

"Then," said Dagon with a smile, "there is no need of my remaining here longer. I had supposed that there was something for me to learn."

"Ahem—yes—so there is."

"Then, my dear fellow, out with it at once. If you are going to trust me with any of your business let's have it, for it is getting late."

This seemed to bring Mr. Dodwell to his senses, for after meditating for a few moments he said:

"First of all, I wish to know if, for a reasonable reward, you are willing to serve the king?"

"Certainly I am. If I had not been I should not have come here."

"Then you felt sure that I was attached to the interests of the royal cause?"

"Yes."

"How did you know it?"

"Never mind. I know a great many things that other people don't dream of, so you need have no uneasiness."

At length the lips of Dodwell became opened, and after, as he thought, testing the trustworthiness of his visitor, he began to unfold such of his plans as he wished the hunter to assist him in carrying out. Those plans embraced a variety of nefarious schemes, but Dodwell heard them without the least change of countenance, save that once in a while his eyes would sparkle with a more intense brilliancy, and the black beard about the mouth moved as though the lips were curling.

"And now," added Dodwell, after he had opened his plans, "if you will help us in these,

you shall be paid beyond your expectations; but, though you may not fear, yet you had better beware of treason, for the movements of every man in our party are watched, and the death-stroke is ready, at an instant's warning, for him who would betray us."

"I understand," calmly replied Dagon; "and I shall be governed by what I think the most expedient. If I attempt to betray you, you are at liberty to shoot me as soon as you like. In the meantime I shall hasten to carry out the plans you have entrusted to me."

"The meeting of our band will take place at the great barn back of my park in one week from next Saturday night, at twelve o'clock," said Dodwell.

"At your barn?" repeated the hunter, with some surprise. "That is a strange place in which to meet."

"It is nevertheless an excellent place," returned Dodwell, with a complaisant shake of the head; "an excellent place, as you shall acknowledge when you see it. Our countersign is—'In the South.' You will remember that, for you cannot gain admittance without it. However, you will be expected there."

"I shall be on hand," said the old hunter, as he arose from his chair; "and if I can gain any intelligence for you before that time you shall have it."

Again Dodwell bade the hunter to beware of treason, and after this Dagon took his rifle and left the room.

"I think I may trust that fellow," muttered the old tory to himself, after his visitor had gone. "At least, he can be watched."

Dodwell thought as he spoke; but had he known the hunter-spy more thoroughly he might have rested less easily after he had confided to him his secrets.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ABDUCTION.

It was four days after Mr. Lincoln had been brought home by Doctor Thornton. During those four days many of the old gentleman's friends had been to see him, but only a few of them were admitted to his presence. The physician had been in attendance upon him most of the time, and one of the servants, an old negro named Quash, had been appointed as Lincoln's watcher and nurse, Ella not having strength enough to move the invalid when necessary.

It was towards the close of the day that Ella was admitted to see her father. She had applied several times during the afternoon, but as Quash told her that he was sleeping she had refrained from seeing him. When she entered the chamber she found her father looking very pale and haggard, but he smiled upon her and extended his hand. She sat down by the bedside, and tenderly inquired after his health.

"You will recover, father," she murmured, as she gazed tearfully into her parent's face.

"O, yes, Ella. You need have no fears about that—not the least. It may be one or two months before I shall be able to be with

you in your rambles, but Thornton assures me that there is no ultimate danger."

"Of course, the doctor would not tell you that merely to ease your mind," half doubtingly suggested Ella.

"No," decisively answered Lincoln. "I know that he told me what he knew to be the truth. If I fail to recover it will be from some other cause than the injuries I have already received. But, as I before said, it may be a month or two before I can be with you as has been my wont, and during that time you will have to take care of yourself."

"I shall make myself comfortable, and if I suffer it will only be on account of your misfortune."

"Let not that throw a cloud over your happiness, my child. There are other things that you need to look to. Now I wish you to tell me plainly what is the state of your feelings towards Abner Dodwell."

The maiden hesitated. She thought of what had transpired when last she saw young Dodwell, and she trembled. She was trying to make up her mind whether to tell it to her father now.

"Do not be afraid to tell me just how you feel," continued the parent.

Ella had made up her mind not now to tell of Abner's villany; but she knew not what her father might think, so she spoke with some hesitation.

"I can never marry with Abner Dodwell," she said.

"Then you do not love him?"

"No."

"But do you dislike him?"

"Yes, father, I do."

"I am glad of it, Ella—I am glad of it," uttered the old man, with much emphasis. "I do not think young Dodwell is what an honest man ought to be. I may be wrong, but that is my impression, and I hope you will have nothing more to do with him. If he comes here again let him understand that his company is not agreeable to you. If he has the least of manly feeling, that will be enough for him."

"I will do so, father. I should have done so long ago, only I knew not your feelings in regard to the matter."

"My wishes are ever for your best good, my child."

"I know it—I know it," murmured the fair girl, bending forward and kissing her parent.

For half an hour longer Ella remained with her father, and when she left the room the shades of twilight were beginning to settle down upon the earth. She ate her supper, and then she walked out into the garden. As she passed the primrose hedge that flanked the carriage-path in front of the house, she thought she heard the movement of some one upon the other side. She hesitated a moment, but as she thought there could be no occasion for fear, she kept on. It was her habit to walk in the garden in the evening, and the custom gave her an assurance which she might not otherwise have had.

In the centre of the garden there was an artificial pond, near which, and beneath a great elm, was a seat. Towards this spot the maiden took her way, and when she reached it she sat down. She had been in this position some

minutes when she was startled by the sound of steps near her, and just as she was upon the point of rising she found a man in her presence. She looked up, but in the dim light she could not make out the countenance.

"Stop a moment, lady," said the stranger, as Ella started to move away. "I would speak with you."

Ella trembled violently. She saw that her interlocutor was a powerful man, and his voice sounded rough.

"You are Ella Lincoln?" said the man.

"Yes, sir," returned the maiden, again turning to go.

"One moment," resumed the man, laying his heavy hand upon Ella's arm. "Is there a young man by the name of Cleaveland at your house?"

"Yes, sir, there is."

"Ah, I had heard so."

"If you wish to speak with me further, you can do so at the house, sir," said the fair girl, summoning what energy she could command.

"I can listen to no more here."

"You will at least bear a message to young Cleaveland from me?"

"Certainly, sir."

The man placed his hand in his pocket, and the seeming honesty of his movements momentarily allayed the maiden's fears. Suddenly the man sprang forward, and before Ella could evade his grasp he had seized her and pressed his hand upon her mouth. She struggled with all her might, and tried to call out for help, but she could neither free herself from the powerful grasp that held her, nor make her danger known to those who might succor her.

"Bill, Bill," cried the villain, in a subdued tone, "I've got her. Come to my aid, quick."

In obedience to this call another man sprang forth from the shrubbery, and, as Ella still continued her struggles, she was bound and gagged.

"Now let's be off," said the first villain.

"O, don't fret yourself, my lady, for you can't get away. You might just as well be easy about it, for you've got to go with us. Come, push along, Bill. Hurry up out of this, or we may get taken with our prize."

"No danger of that," returned the other, as he pushed aside the bushes and held them for his companion to pass through. "The old 'un's laid up in bed, and the rest of 'em are far enough out of the way, I'll warrant."

"Keep to the left. We'll climb the garden fence and cross the field," added the first speaker.

Without further remark the two ruffians kept on. When they reached the fence one of them climbed over first, and took the maiden from the hands of his companion, after which the other followed. They were now in a large field, and the direction which they took led off towards the sea-coast. Of course the poor girl's suspicions were from the first fastened upon Abner Dodwell. She felt sure that no one else in all the country could be guilty of such outrage. The suddenness of the transaction had at first so shocked her, that she had little power of thought; but now that she felt herself borne along further away from home she began to collect her senses, and when they were collected she could only realize the terror of her position, and fall back again into the sea of wild surmise.

The handkerchief which had been bound over Ella's mouth was still in its place, and the sensation which it produced was becoming suffocating and painful in the extreme. She signified her suffering to the captors, and they at length understood what she meant.

"Guess we'd better take it off, now," said the leader.

"It might be as well," returned the other. "She can't make noise enough to do any hurt now."

The handkerchief was removed, and so great was the sense of relief, that the maiden at first felt a sensation of gratitude, but this could not last long.

"For mercy's sake, sirs, tell me whither you are carrying me?" uttered Ella, making a motion as if to stop.

"Never mind," returned one of the villains, forcing her on. "We shall carry you where you will be safe."

"O, let me go—let me go. I have done

you no wrong, I have never harmed you. If you have the hearts of men you will let me go."

"Couldn't think of it, lady."

"But why am I here? For what have you thus dragged me from my home?"

"Never mind. You mustn't ask too many questions, or we'll put the gag over your mouth again."

This threat had the effect of causing Ella to remain silent for a while, for she feared the pain of the gag. The party had now reached the further side of the field, and just as they were turning an angle made by the fence, Ella thought she saw the figure of a man at a short distance off. Hoping that it might be some one who could render her assistance she cried out with all her strength. The villains clapped their hands over her mouth, but they were not in season to prevent her cries from reaching the individual for whom they were meant, for with the quickness of thought he sprang forward and intercepted the ruffians before they could get over the fence.

"Hold, there, villains!" he shouted, at the same time drawing a pistol from his bosom. "Move another inch, and I'll shoot you both."

It was not light enough to distinctly recognize the countenance of the new-comer, but Ella knew by the voice that it must be none other than Abner Dodwell, and when he came a little nearer she saw that she was correct. The poor girl forgot the part young Dodwell had played in the former scene, for she thought he had come to rescue her from the hands of her villainous captors.

"Back, I say!" shouted Dodwell, advancing still nearer, and presenting his pistol. "Leave this poor girl alone, or I'll shoot you down like dogs!"

"You back yourself," returned one of the villains, also producing a pistol. "Go about your own business, and we'll take care of ours. Look out. If you come one step nearer I'll fire."

No sooner had this threat left the villain's mouth than Dodwell fired. The man who held Ella uttered a low cry and sank to the ground,

and as Dodwell produced another pistol the second villain fled.

"By heavens! Ella, is this you?" exclaimed Abner, as he took her by the arm.

"Yes, yes, Mr. Dodwell," murmured the affrighted girl.

"And who were those villains? What were they doing? Where were they going to carry you?"

"O, sir, I do not know. They dragged me from my father's garden, and they would not tell me whither they were carrying me."

"Never mind. I hope they have not harmed you."

"Only frightened me, sir."

"The villains! I think I've killed one of them, and the other should have followed him but for his running away. But come, this is no place for you."

"Let us go to my own home, sir," said Ella.

"My house is nearer," replied Dodwell, assuming a kind tone. "We will go there first, and then, if you wish, I will take the carriage and convey you home this evening. Come, you will not surely object to that?"

Ella Lincoln could not rid herself of doubt with regard to the young man's well-meaning, but she saw at once that it would be of no use for her to resist; and, besides, she was so weak

from the excitement through which she had passed, that she had not the power to hold out against the young man's persuasions. She would much rather have gone directly to her own home, but upon Dodwell's solemnly promising that he would carry her to her father's house in his carriage, she at length consented to accompany him, though she had many misgivings.

As soon as Abner Dodwell had passed out from sight, the villain who had fled over the fence crept cautiously back again, and having assured himself that all was safe, he went and aroused his companion.

"Come, Varnum," he said, "all's clear."

"Eh?" uttered the other, springing up.

"Is Dodwell gone?"

"Yes."

"Egad, Danton, that's what I call doing it up systematic. Now this is kind o' pleasant like—this bein' shot without a bullet. A fellow can get back to life again just when he pleases. O, it takes Abner to plan things."

Danton agreed with Varnum on that particular philosophical point, and with a hearty laugh at the success of the ruse which they had practised, and in which Dodwell had been made to act the hero, they started off towards Dodwell's house, but by a different direction from that which Abner had taken.

CHAPTER X.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

IT was nearly ten o'clock when Abner Dodwell reached home, and though Ella was almost ready to faint from fatigue, yet she tried to appear strong. She was conducted to one of the sitting-rooms, and the young man was about to leave her, when she called him back.

"You will take me home, to-night, Mr. Dodwell?" she said.

"Do you feel strong enough to go now, Ella?"

"O, yes."

"I'm afraid the jaunt would be too much for you," returned Dodwell, with well assumed solicitude. "Would it not be better for you to remain here, to-night, and go home in the morning? You will be stronger then."

"O, no, no. Let me go to-night. I am strong enough," exclaimed the maiden, beginning to have vague apprehensions of evil. "You promised me I should go to-night."

"I know I did," said Dodwell, "and if you are determined to go, I will see what can be done. Wait a few moments, and I will return."

As the young man spoke, he turned and left the room. He was not gone over ten minutes,

and when he returned he had put on a look of great concern.

"Miss Lincoln," he said, "I am sorry that you cannot be accommodated as I had hoped, but my father is away with the carriage, and I do not see how you will be able to get home before morning, at least."

"O, sir," exclaimed the maiden, "I cannot remain away from home over night. If you have no carriage, I can walk."

"That would be folly, my dear lady," replied Abner. "You know you are not able to walk home. Upon my soul, I could not be guilty of so unjust an act as to allow you thus to expose yourself. Wait until morning, and then you shall go."

"But my father, sir," cried the poor girl, trembling with fear and ill-defined apprehension, "what will he think? O, I cannot leave him to suffer this whole night long on my account."

"Better that he should suffer to-night than that you should destroy yourself. Be quieted. Miss Lincoln. You shall rest safely here till morning, and then—"

"Stop, stop, sir," interrupted Ella, with an

earnestness that required all her strength to summon; "I must go home to-night. If you do not wish to go with me, I can go alone."

"Perhaps you would *rather* go alone?" said Abner, for the first time exhibiting anything of his real feelings.

"I would rather go alone than to remain here," returned Ella, not noticing the young man's tone.

"Then I shall be under the necessity of restraining you against your will," said Abner, with decision. "Stop, you need not oppose me, for I am acting for your good. The distance to your home is much too far for you to walk, to-night, and I am not willing that you should go. And now," he added, with a look that conveyed more meaning than did his words, "you will be wise to remain quietly."

Ella Lincoln looked up into the face of the young man, and she well knew that he meant just what he had said. She knew that he meant that she should stay where she was—she knew that he had the power to make her do so, and she knew, also, that he had the heart to be impervious to any plea she could make. She was thinking how she should next speak—whether she should still entreat—or cry out—or spurn him as a villain, when the idea of escape flashed through her mind.

"If I must remain here," she said, "I hope you will allow me to retire at once."

"Certainly," returned Abner, arising from the seat he had taken and taking the lamp. "Follow me."

Thus speaking, he turned towards the door, and Ella followed him. She trembled violently as she ascended the stairs, for at every step she seemed to see a phantom of ill; but she uttered a silent prayer to him who is able to save, and with fresh courage she followed on. At length the young man stopped and opened a door.

"Here," he said, "is your room. In there you shall not be disturbed. Take the lamp and go in. Good-night."

Ella Lincoln murmured a good-night, in return as she took the lamp, and then she en-

tered the room and closed the door after her. With a trembling hand she set the light down upon a table which stood against the partition, and then she tottered towards the bed and sank down upon it. She heard the step of young Dodwell as he descended the stairs, and when she thought that she was alone, she arose and gazed about her. The idea of escape was still uppermost in her mind, and she summoned the strength to examine the place in which she had been left.

The chamber was large and high, and had been once handsome, but time and neglect had left it now in rather a poor condition. The finish was of oak and very heavy. She moved towards the windows, but she found that they were shielded by heavy shutters, and that the shutters were fastened. There were only two windows, and it took but a few moments' examination to satisfy herself that she could find no means of egress that way. Then she moved towards the door. She meant to open it softly and look out into the entry beyond; but she found that the door was fastened upon the outside!

The lamp fell from the poor girl's hand as she fully realized that she was really a prisoner, and on the next instant she was in total darkness. A few moments she stood there by the bolted door, and then she turned and groped her way towards the bed. She found it at length, and with a deep groan she sank down upon it.

It was a long time before Ella Lincoln slept. Her mind was busy with a thousand vague fears and emotions, and for the hundredth time she went over the scenes of the last few days. She connected her former interview with Abner in the garden with the present affair, and there rested not a doubt in her mind that the whole belonged together—that it was all of a piece; and if such was the case, then what could be the end of her present misfortune? This was a question she asked herself till her soul was all worked up in terror, and then she gave way to the fatigue that bore her down.

The maiden did not sleep, but she rather lay in a sort of stupor. Yet her senses were not

much blunted, for she heard the clock in the hall below strike the hour of midnight, and about half an hour afterwards she was startled by hearing a soft step near her door. She started up to a sitting posture and listened, but she could hear nothing. She was just beginning to think that she might have been deceived when she was sure she heard some one moving just outside the door. Before she could settle her mind upon any thought on the subject she heard a key turn, and in a moment more, the latch was lifted. She would have cried out, but her terror completely paralyzed her tongue.

Slowly and noiselessly the door was opened, and the rays of a lamp shone into the apartment. A low cry escaped from the frightened girl's lips, and instinctively she slid from the bed and stood upon her feet. Broader and broader grew the circumference of the light upon the wall, until it at length rested upon the maiden's form. She cast her eyes towards the door, and saw that the light came from a small lantern, the beams from which shot only ahead, so that she could not make out even the form of the person who held it.

"God have mercy!" groaned Ella, as the door opened wider, and a step sounded upon the threshold.

"—sh!"

There was magic in that little hissing noise. All the words in our language could not have conveyed more at that moment than did that simple sound convey to Ella Lincoln. A human voice would have frightened her, but as that note of warning came breaking upon her ear, she hushed her beating heart, and strained eagerly forward to catch the form that was coming upon her.

"—sh!" again came upon her ear; and the person who bore the lantern entered the room.

Ella again became lost in terror, and in a moment more she would have shrieked, but the intruder spoke to her.

"Is this Ella Lincoln?"

"Yes," murmured the maiden. The voice sounded strangely familiar in her ear.

"Make no noise," whispered the man—for

his voice betrayed his sex—"let not a cry of alarm betray you, for I have come to save you. You know me, do you not?"

He softly closed the door behind him as he spoke, and then removed the lamp from the lantern, and when he again turned towards the maiden she at once recognized the form and features of Dagon. She could see that there was a kind smile in his eyes, and if she had any lingering fears they all vanished now.

"Make no noise," he continued, in a low whisper, "but prepare at once to follow me; that is—if you wish."

"O, I do wish to go," said Ella.

"I thought so," returned the hunter, "and hence I came. Draw your shawl over your head, and follow me. Be careful how you tread, for the least noise may arouse an enemy."

Ella needed no second bidding, and when Dagon turned towards the door she was ready to follow him. As soon as she reached the entry Dagon took her arm and led her towards the stairs. These they descended without noise. The door that opened upon the piazza was unlocked, and without having given the least alarm they passed out into the yard. Here the old hunter made Ella take his arm, and thus supporting her he moved off towards the road. Not a word was spoken till they reached the highway. The air was soft and agreeable, and the stars were all out in their brightness. Ella was somewhat weak, but the strange and unexpected suddenness of her deliverance gave energy to her system, and she thought not of the weakness.

"Miss Lincoln," said Dagon, as soon as they were safely away from Dodwell's house, "I wish to know how you came to be in Dodwell's house. I have a reason for asking the question."

Ella did not hesitate a moment. Strange as was the hunter's character she felt easy in his presence. To be sure she had entertained suspicions not very flattering to Dagon's reputation, but they were all gone now. Whether, or not, she had good reason for her sudden change of opinion may be a matter of doubt; but her's was a heart that could not hold evil suspicions

in the face of kindness such as Dagon was now showing. She was impulsive, and her impulse was now all in favor of the man who was leading her from danger; so she related to him the whole story of her abduction by the two villains, and of her subsequent rescue by Abner Dodwell.

"Yes, yes," muttered Dagon, after she had told her story. "I understand all that. Those two men were accomplices of Bodwell's."

"But he killed one of them, sir."

"Not quite, my lady. There was no bullet in that pistol. That was all for effect. Now I chanced to be near the hedge when the man who was killed came to life again, and I overheard enough to convince me that Dodwell was at the bottom of whatever villany had transpired, so I made up my mind that you should be rescued."

"You were kind—very kind," said the fair girl. "O, I could not have believed that Abner Dodwell was such a wicked man."

"We can't always read the human heart, lady."

"No," answered Ella, with a slight tremulousness in her tone, "but there are many hearts which we can read at once. I have known hearts that could not put on the garb of deception."

"True, lady, for so have I; but nevertheless those instances are rare. The human heart is somewhat like a sword. It may be all encrusted with moth and rust, and yet be most excellently tempered; and it may be bright as crystal and yet be brittle and false. In either case it requires some hard blows to test its worth. I once had a sword that shone like the face of the sun. Its grain was fine and subtle, and I trusted it; but when I came to need it in rough work it snapped in sunder and left me almost defenceless. At home I have an old weapon which looks most uncomely—its blade is dim and rust-eaten, but it never proved false—no blow can break it. There are few men living who have not trusted in a heart that was false."

"Perhaps you are right," murmured Ella.

"O, I know I am right. Now I think you have trusted in the heart of young Dodwell."

"No—never!" quickly answered the maiden. "O, I never placed confidence in him."

"Excuse me. I knew that the young man had been intimate at your father's."

But little more was said until they reached the park of Lincoln's house. Here Dagon stopped, and laid his hand upon Ella's shoulder.

"You are now safe, lady," he said, "and I must leave you; but before I go I wish to extract a promise from you. Your father has been kind to me—very kind, and now that he is unable to assist you, I have lent you my care; but it will not be well for others to know of this, therefore I wish you to keep our meeting to night a secret within your own bosom. You may tell that you escaped from the power of Dodwell if you choose, but do not tell that Dagon was with you. May I trust you in this?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then farewell till we meet again."

Ella Lincoln murmured her thanks, but the hunter stopped not to hear them. She gazed after him till his tall form became lost in the gloom, and then she turned towards her home. She saw lights flashing to and fro about the house, and she heard her name pronounced in eager, anxious tones. She hurried on, and when the servants saw her they shouted with joy. They crowded about her, but she only told them that she was safe and well.

"Does my father know that I have been gone?" she asked.

"No—Quash wouldn't let us tell him," answered one of them.

"I am glad of that, for I am well, and it might have frightened him."

As soon as possible, Ella gained her own chamber, and when she laid her head upon her pillow she murmured a prayer of thanks to God. She did feel thankful, but yet she had thoughts that made her far from happy.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CORVETTE.

LET us now look for awhile after the Ocean Martyr. It was a very pleasant morning, on the morning previous to the events recorded in the last chapter. The wind was moderate, blowing steadily from the westward, and the brig was under full sail, standing a little to the eastward of south. Upon the starboard bow, Cape Hatteras was just in sight. Ben Walker was upon the quarter-deck, pacing to and fro, with a glass under his arm, with which he would ever and anon stop and sweep the horizon. Mr. Stickney, the mate, had recovered from his illness, and he, too, was upon deck. The men were all up from below, and from the anxiety which rested upon their countenances, one could easily have seen that some exciting circumstance was on the topic.

"I think she's an Englishman, sir," said Stickney, speaking to the captain, as he came aft.

"I hope so," was Ben's reply; and as he spoke, he again swept the horizon with his glass. "And yet," he continued, "she cannot be the fellow we are after, for she is surely alone."

"There may be some vessels to the leeward of her which we cannot see," resumed Stickney.

"Perhaps so. We will wait and see, at all events."

The object of this conversation was a ship which had been in sight, for about half an hour, to the eastward. They could just make out enough of her top hamper to know that she was a ship, and that was all. Walker had run down with the intention of cutting out some store-ships which he believed were running for Charleston, and he had at first thought that the ship he had discovered might be a consort, but as yet he had been able to discover no accompanying sail. The strange ship appeared to be standing nearly south, though it was evident that her course was rather to the west of that, for she certainly was coming nearer.

In half an hour longer the ship's topsails could be seen, and when, soon afterwards, her lower yards were up, Walker knew that she must be an English man-of-war.

"She can have nothing to do with the store-ships," he said, as he swept the horizon for the

hundredth time without making out anything. "No, she's probably some cruiser out on her own hook," returned Stickney. "What do you mean to do?"

"I do not think she's a frigate," said Ben, without answering the question of his mate.

"Not quite heavy enough for that," was Stickney's answer.

"Certainly not. She's only a corvette at the outside."

As Ben said this he walked down to the main five-rail and back again. His step was quick and nervous, and his great fists were working as though they grasped a serpent. When he came up opposite to his mate again he stopped.

"Stickney," said he, "it isn't best to lose our trip."

The mate looked into the face of his stalwart captain, but made no reply.

"It's no use to run clear down here, and then run back empty-handed," continued Ben. "Do you suppose the men would flinch before that fellow's guns?"

"I should hope not."

"I've a notion to try them."

Stickney started, and gazed more intently into Walker's face. The idea of attacking a corvette had not entered his mind, but he was not the man to flinch.

"What do you think about it?" asked the captain, in an earnest whisper.

"Just as you think, sir. You may be sure that Adam Stickney won't flinch."

"Right, Stickney, right," uttered Ben, with a beaming face. "Wait till we bring the fellow's hull up, and then if he proves to be a corvette, I'll try what our men are made of."

The men noticed the movements of their commander, and they knew enough of his character to guess pretty nearly what his present intentions were. They noticed his looks as he cast his eyes off towards the ship, and they marked the fire that burned in his eyes when he turned to pace the deck.

Ere long the ship was hull up, and she was found to be a corvette carrying twenty-two guns. She sat deep in the water, like a heavy ship,

but yet she sailed well. While all hands were gazing upon her she fired a gun, and run up the British flag.

"Show our bunting," said Ben, turning to his quarter-master.

As the Yankee flag floated out from the brig's peak, Ben Walker turned towards his men. He gazed upon them a few moments as though he would read the thoughts of every man. Every eye was fixed upon him, and his thoughts were known before he spoke them.

"Well, boys," he said, in a very low, guttural tone, "there is the enemy. Shall we run away from them?"

No one spoke—not a word was uttered in reply.

"Shall we fight 'em?" continued Ben, raising his voice to a higher key, and bringing his fists together like two sledge-hammers.

Perhaps, had any other man have asked them that the question, men might have hesitated, but as they saw the giant form of their commander ready to lead them on they felt all assurance, and as one man, they shouted—"Yes!"

"I thought so, my boys. I did not believe you would turn your backs. Now get up your arms. I want every man ready to board."

The men moved quickly and cheerfully to obey the order, and then the captain walked aft to the wheel. The brig was heading south by east, and there Ben concluded to let her remain for the present. The ship had been heading about south by west, but it could be seen that she had hauled further to the westward, and shortly afterwards she run up her starboard studdingsails.

"He means to overhaul us," said Stickney.

"Yes," returned Ben, "and we'll leave that part of the game to him entirely. We'll keep directly on our course till he hails us."

Ben went below as he spoke, and when he returned he had his cutlass in his hand. That cutlass was a strange-looking weapon, being one that he had had made after his own order and directions. The hilt and guard were of solid iron, the former being tightly seized with stout

marine stuff, and the blade was welded from half-a-dozen long Hessian swords. It was so heavy that no other man on board the brig could wield it, but in Ben's hands it became a mere plaything. Its temper he had tried, and he knew that nothing could stand before it. He cast his eyes about the deck as he buckled his massive weapon about him, and a smile lit up his features as he noticed that his men had all secured their arms.

At ten o'clock the ship had come so near that her officers could be seen upon her poop, and ere long after that she fired a gun.

"We'll take no notice of that," said Ben. "Keep her just as she is."

The two vessels were now nearly abreast of each other with their sides at an angle of about twenty degrees, but the ship soon began to range ahead and luff, and again she fired a gun. This time the ball came whizzing along under the Martyr's bows.

"You may cast loose the guns on both sides, Mr. Stickney, and light the matches," said the captain. "We may want to use them. "But," he added, "don't fire a gun unless I give the word."

As soon as the guns were cast loose the men gathered to their stations, and the mate reported the fact to the captain. Ben took a few turns up and down the quarter-deck, and when he again stopped he had made up his mind how he would act. By the Englishman's luffing he had brought himself a little astern, from having been obliged to take in his studding sails, and as Ben saw the state of things, his broad countenance glowed with satisfaction.

Another gun was fired by the Englishman, and the ball struck the brig's bulwarks just abaft the gangway and killed one of the men who was engaged in loosening a gun-breeching

The smile faded away from Ben Walker's face, and his lips were drawn tightly over his teeth.

"Stand by, my men," he shouted, as he leaped to the trunk that covered the cabin companion-way. "I am going to up helm and run down upon that fellow's bows. I won't cross his bows, for I want to run him on board as soon as possible. Now's the time for every man to work. The starboard watch at the sails, and the larboard watch at the guns."

In a moment the men stationed themselves accordingly, and when all was ready the captain gave his orders. The helm was put up and the yards were squared, and in a moment more the Ocean Martyr was dashing down like a mad monster directly upon the ship's course. The order was passed on board the Englishman to up helm and keep away, but he was too late to avoid the catastrophe the Yankee commander had planned for him, for the Martyr's broadside was opened upon the ship's bows, and in a voice of thunder, Walker gave the order to fire.

The brig reeled like a drunken man beneath the concussion, and on the next moment the helm was put hard a starboard and the yards rounded in on the larboard tack. The broadside had done some execution on board the enemy, though not much that could be seen from the deck of the brig; but the Americans had no time to notice that, for hardly had the smoke fairly cleared away, before they found themselves hard and fast upon the ship's weather bow. The shock was severe, but the men quickly recovered from it, and as soon as the grapplings could be thrown, Ben Walker gave the order to board. His gigantic form was the first to rise upon the enemy's netting, but he was not long alone, for his brave men re-echoed his shout, and with swelling hearts they leaped wildly after their powerful leader.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PRISONER.

THE crew of the corvette were all at their quarters when the two vessels came in contact, and though their commander immediately called them to repel boarders, yet they were in too much confusion to obey the order promptly. When the brig first put up her helm the Englishman thought that her only aim was to obtain a raking shot, and so he had his men at the larboard battery ready to take her as she crossed his bows; but he had found his mistake, and he strove to rectify it as soon as possible. Most of the brig's crew were upon the ship's nettings before the crew of the latter could seize their spikes.

Ben Walker was the first to gain the enemy's deck, and as he leaped down into the gangway, with his shout of defiance thundering from his lips, the ship's men instinctively gave way before him. He went crashing on towards the quarter-deck, sweeping down every one who opposed him, and when he reached the spot where stood the English commander he allowed the point of his massive sword to drop. His men had all gained the deck, and they were pushing the battle with vigor.

"Are you the commander of this ship, sir?" asked Ben Walker.

"Yes," returned the Englishman, regarding his interlocutor's massive frame with a dubious look.

"Then I want you to surrender: I demand your ship in the name of a nation struggling for liberty."

"Then take it," cried the Englishman, springing back and placing himself upon his guard.

"I mean to take it," was Ben's cool reply, as he swept his huge cutlass about his head. The blow was not meant for a death-stroke, for Ben struck flatwise at the commander's head. His adversary endeavored to parry the stroke, but he could not, and he sank senseless upon the deck beneath it.

The two crews were pretty equally matched forward, for although the Englishmen outnumbered the Americans nearly two to one, yet not more than half of them could fight to advantage. As soon as the captain had fallen, Ben Walker sprang forward. All who have seen a conflict of any kind, must know how much decisive pow-

er there is in one gigantic, leading spirit. There may be an hundred opposers whose united strength could hurl him to atoms, but as individuals they each one fear him. So the Englishmen shrank away from the towering presence of the Yankee captain. His sword carried death in every stroke, and ere long the enemy cried for quarters. In a moment the conflict was stayed. The enemy laid down their arms, and the British flag was hauled down, and the flag of the colonies run up in its place.

Walker's first movement, after the flags had been changed, was to take care of the wounded; next he hand-cuffed the prisoners, and then he went at work to count the dead. Fifteen of his own men had fallen, and about twice that number of the enemy. Half of the prisoners, among whom were the captain and a gentleman passenger, were conveyed on board the brig, the former individual having recovered from the effects of the stunning blow he had received.

It took but a short time to repair the damages on board the prize, and when this was effected, Ben put a competent crew on board of her, with Stickney in command, and, with the corvette upon her lee-quarter, the Ocean Martyr was headed for the Chesapeake.

The English captain was insolent and unruly, and Walker kept him in irons, but the passenger who has already been spoken of, was allowed the freedom of the deck. He was a middle-aged man, very kind and intellectual in his appearance, and Ben knew that he had taken no part in the conflict. He had been allowed to bring his baggage on board the brig, which consisted of two very heavy chests, and a number of boxes and bundles. His name was Allen Lyon, as could be seen by the labelling of his luggage.

It was just at dusk that Ben had seen the last stroke performed that cleared away the disorder resulting from the battle, and as he came aft he sat down upon the quarter-rail.

"Would you have the kindness to tell me where you are bound?" said Mr. Lyon, approaching the Yankee captain.

"Certainly," returned Ben, being very favor-

ably struck with the man's tone and manner. "We are going into the Chesapeake, if possible, and I should like to land at Norfolk."

"And do you mean to give me up as a prisoner?"

"Well, I don't know about that." You were taken on board an enemy's ship."

"True," returned Lyon, in a tone of depression. "I was on board the ship of your enemy, but yet I had no hand or heart in their work. I wished to come to America, and I had to take such passage as I could find. But you will do as you choose. I do not wish to profess friendship for the cause in which you are engaged just for the sake of my own liberty; but I speak the truth when I say that I have no heart for the tyrant who would oppress the American people."

"I don't doubt your word, sir," said Ben—for he felt sure that the man spoke the truth.

"You of course know that these are times when every man distrusts a stranger, and when every American who hopes for liberty for his country should be on the watch. But when we run into port I'll consider your case. I won't give you up with the rest, at any rate."

"I thank you, sir—I thank you kindly," uttered Lyon, "for I do not want to be cast in prison. My only object in coming to America was to find a home. I have friends in the colonies somewhere, and I hope to find them. They are patriots, I know—else their blood is false."

"I hope, for your sake, you may find them so," returned Ben, and as he spoke he went to the wheel to answer a question which the helmsman had asked him.

When he returned to the rail again, the Englishman resumed the conversation.

"What is the present aspect of affairs in the colonies?" he asked.

"In what respect?" said Ben.

"I mean in respect to the war. Can the colonies hope to gain the freedom they are fighting for?"

"Ay," uttered Ben, while his eye brightened, and his great breast heaved with a swelling

emotion. "By heavens, sir, the snows of another winter shall not bear the footprints of the British foe upon our soil. We will either be free, or else be dead!"

"'Tis hard to break such a nation," murmured Lyon. "King George might as well give it up first as last. I tell you, captain, the great mass of the English people are sick of this war, and even among the lords, the king has but little sympathy save such as is excited by fear. It seems to me that the Almighty made America for a nation of freemen, and if they be not free, then they refuse their destiny."

Ben Walker gazed kindly, fondly, into the speaker's face. The words he had uttered struck nobly upon the old sailor's heart, and from that moment he resolved that Allen Lyon should be no prisoner.

"It does seem," he at length said, "that your saying is true; and if it is, you may be sure that America will not stop short of her destiny. We haven't got much money to spend, but we've got what's better—strong arms and noble hearts. Our country is full of 'em, sir."

"Then you must succeed, for God is surely with the right, and human freedom must be right."

"Yes," added Ben, "you're right there. It must be so."

"Are you acquainted in the southern part of Virginia?" asked Lyon, at the end of a silence of several minutes, during which each had been busy with his own reflections.

"Yes, some."

"Perhaps you know a Mr Cleaveland?"

"Only one by that name."

"An oldish man?"

"No, a young man."

"That cannot be the one. I think I have heard that he used to sail out from the Chesapeake. He was a sea-captain."

"Do you mean Captain Russell Cleaveland?" asked Ben.

"Yes, yes. Do you know him?"

"I sailed with him many years; but," said Ben, as he drew his finger across his eye, "he is dead now—God rest him."

"Dead? How—when?"

"The British soldiers shot him like a dog in the streets, and then they burned his house down. He had done going to sea. O, sir," added Ben, while his lip quivered, "it is such scenes as that which makes my arm strong when I see a British sword. I have struck many a blow that fell heavier because I thought of poor Cleaveland when I struck."

Mr. Lyon clasped his hands together, and gazed for some time into the face of Ben without speaking.

"Dead!" he at length murmured, in tones of deep pathos. "Poor Russell! His wife was dead before."

"Yes," said Ben.

"So I have heard. But you spoke of a young man."

"Yes. Loring Cleaveland was the captain's son—his only child."

"And what is he?" asked Lyon, with unusual earnestness.

"As noble a youth as ever handled canvass," returned Ben, with enthusiasm.

"Can you tell me where he is?"

"Yes."

"Thank God, I shall find one of them left," ejaculated the old gentleman.

"Hallo! Port your helm! Hard a-port. Starboard braces—quick!" And as Captain Walker gave these orders he sprang to the wheel. The brig had been taken aback.

As soon as the brig was got off, Ben Walker returned to the quarter-rail to seek Mr. Lyon, but the old gentleman had gone below.

CHAPTER XIII.

A LOVE PASSAGE.

It was towards evening on the last day in the week. Loring Cleaveland had been gradually gaining strength, and he was now able to walk out. In fact, he had been for several days able to walk out upon the piazza, and the bright hues of health were once more coming back to his face. Just at sunset he had come down upon the piazza with Gimbo, and while he stood there Ella Lincoln came out from the house.

"How now, sir?" she playfully said. "Are you going to run away?"

"Not far," returned the youth. "I thought of going as far as the lakelet in the garden."

"Then I have a great notion to bear you company."

"It will give me the greatest pleasure," said Loring, with a beaming countenance.

"Den you wont want me, Mas'r Cleaveland," said Gimbo, with a slight grin; but, slight as it was, that grin had a great deal of meaning in it.

"You can go, or not, just as you like, Gimbo."

"Guess I better stay here. I'd ruv'r misse 'd go, 'cause she'll 'joy it."

Laura smiled as the honest negro spoke, and she blushed while she smiled; but she drew her light scarf up over her head, and that helped hide the color that had sprung to her cheeks. She had walked and talked considerable with the young man since he had become convalescent, and more than she would had she not now been deprived of the wonted company of her father.

Loring Cleaveland offered the fair girl his arm, she took it without hesitation, and then they started for the garden. They walked slowly, and they also talked very slowly. Words had never been so scarce, or so hard to be got at, as at the present time. At length they reached the seat beneath the great elm, and here they sat down. The sunlight had gone, and in its place the soft tints of twilight dwelt upon the shrub and flower—upon the lawn and the lakelet. There was a movement in the bushes near them, but they heard it not. A fiery eye was peering forth upon them, but they felt not its glances.

The conversation had been flagging for some time, and now a dead silence succeeded it.

"Well, lady," said the young man, as the continued silence began to grow painful, "we shall not linger over these lovely scenes much more. Perhaps this may be the last time."

"This—the last time?" uttered Ella, looking up in surprise.

"Yes, for I am quite strong now, and I should be at my post."

"You are not strong enough to leave us yet, Mr. Cleaveland. Indeed you are not. Why, you must be wild to think of such a thing."

"It may be wildness," returned Loring, with a faint smile, "but yet it comes to me with a wonderful force of reason. I ought not to be idle here, while my shipmates are at work for their country. This afternoon I heard that my brig had entered the Chesapeake with an English sloop-of-war as a prize. To-morrow, Captain Walker will be here, and I must return with him. Both Gimbo and myself are needed on board."

"Let Gimbo go—let Gimbo go, sir; but you must not go. You are not strong enough."

"I am strong enough to do part of my duty, lady. They depend upon me to pilot the brig along the coast, and I am surely well enough to do that."

"Then you will go, and leave me here all alone."

Loring Cleaveland started as he heard those words. At first he was not sure that he had heard them aright; but he soon convinced himself that his ears had not deceived him, and with an earnest look he gazed into the face of the fair speaker. Could it be possible that his society was agreeable to her? He ran over the scenes of his meetings with her, and he was bold enough to think that she had taken pleasure in his company.

"I know not which of us will feel the greater sense of loneliness," he said, in a tone which bore a slight tremulousness. "Were I left to my own individual choice, I would rather stay here."

"Then stay," said Ella, without hesitation. "My poor father is sick, and they will not let me talk with him because he is so weak; and if you were to go I should be all alone."

"And what if I should stay?" asked Loring. "Then I should have your company," frankly returned the maiden.

Loring Cleaveland was standing on dangerous ground. He had loved Ella Lincoln from the moment when first he saw her in his dreamy phantasy, and the sentiment had grown stronger as he knew her better. The thought of cherishing a hope to favor his love had not entered his mind till the present moment. The thought now came with a whelming force, and beneath its strange weight his heart was almost still.

"Miss Lincoln," he said, in a very low tone, "I wish I could be ever kind to you—that I could grant your every wish; but I fear this cannot be."

"Then you cannot stay with me?" murmured Ella, looking up into her companion's face with a faint smile.

"How can I?" uttered Loring, in a forced tone. "I am not invulnerable, nor yet heartless. You have already made too deep an impression on my soul. Could I but hope—"

"Speak on," whispered the maiden.

"Surely you are not trifling with me, Miss Lincoln. You must have sight enough to know my heart."

"I am not blind," said she, "nor am I in the habit of trifling. I have spoken plainly. I have asked you to stay with me, at least till by father recovers."

"And then I might go?"

"If you wished—certainly."

"But I should not wish to go then. I could not then go, unless I was told that I might come back and stay with you forever."

"That would be a long while," said Ella.

"Ay," resumed the youth, "but my heart would not tire of its companionship."

"Are you sure of that, sir?"

"Sure of it? O, heaven, yes; for then I should be with what I loved; and love—if it be true love—never tires the heart that gives it a home. Now you know my secret, Ella; I have told you all."

"And yet I think you are not strong enough to return to your vessel," whispered the maiden.

"And yet you would ask me to stay?" uttered Loring, placing his trembling hand upon the fair girl's shoulder.

"Yes."

"And you love me?"

"Yes."

As Loring Cleaveland heard that simple word his arm entwined the light form by his side and as he drew the lovely being towards him he gently murmured:

"God be blessed for this moment! O, it is the happiest of my life. But," he added, while his voice trembled, "your father—what will he say?"

"He told me to-day that I might love you," answered the noble girl. "He said he hoped you would stay till he had recovered."

"Then he will not reject me—he will not look upon my poverty with scorn?"

"He looks upon the heart—not the purse. He knows you well, and he knows you to be noble, generous, and virtuous. I ask no more, nor does he."

Is it a wonder that for some time Loring Cleaveland sat there without words to express his feelings? His arm was still about the form of the being he wildly loved, and his brain was almost turned by the emotions that came crowding upon him as he realized that the priceless jewel was his. He strained her to his bosom, and at length, while the tears started from his eyes, he murmured:

"O, what joy—what bliss is mine. Now is the story of my phantasy become true. You will indeed stay with me always, and be my angel of love and peace. O, Ella, how happy we will be."

"I hope so," returned the maiden, reclining her head upon her lover's shoulder, as she spoke. "But," she added, again raising her head and

gazing into the young man's face, "our happiness is in our own keeping, and we shall be the possessors of it just so far as we are governed by reason and integrity."

"And yet I will trust it all in your love," returned Loring.

At that moment there was another movement in the bushes, but if the lovers heard it they did not notice it, or if they did, they thought it was only the effect of the breeze. They did not see the dusky form that moved away upon the other side of the hedge, nor did they hear the fearful oath which came from the lips of a rejected suitor. Abner Dodwell had been a listener to all that had passed!

For nearly an hour after this the young man and maiden remained there beneath the great elm, and during that time they talked a great deal—and they talked, too, strange as it may appear, a great deal of sense. Loring was just painting one of his pictures of the future, when something which sounded like a low cry of alarm broke upon his ear.

"Did you hear that?" he asked.

"Yes," returned Ella, drawing more closely to her lover and trembling.

"It certainly sounded like a cry of distress."

Just as Loring spoke the sound came again, but this time it was more sharp and agonizing.

"Heavens! Loring, what is that?" cried Ella, springing to her feet and gazing towards a spot in the shrubbery where a bright light had just flashed.

Again there came a sound, wild and fearful in its thrilling notes, and with a quake of horror young Cleaveland sprang up and caught Ella in his arms. The noise grew louder and louder—the light flashed more brightly through the foliage, and as soon as the young man could recover from the shock which a terrible fear had given to his weakened frame, he caught the maiden in his arms and hurried to the house.

CHAPTER XIV.

A TERRIBLE CALAMITY.

WITH swift steps Loring Cleaveland hurried on, and by his side clung the frightened girl. The air was filled with smoke, and sharp cries came piercing upon their ears. They reached the carriage-path, and for an instant they were paralyzed with horror. The great house was all in flames! From the upper windows the fiery demon was leaping forth in wild fury, and the black smoke was rolling up in massive clouds.

"O, my father! my father!" shrieked Ella, as she sprang wildly forward towards the piazza. "Save him! save him!"

"Hold back, misse," said Gimbo, at the same time grasping the maiden by the arm. "Dar's folks around on de oder side tryin' to git up to his room."

"O, let me go! He will be lost! Save him—save him!"

"My gracious, Misse Ella, you must n't do so. You'll be surely lost;" and as the negro spoke he drew the maiden further back from the burning mass.

"But how did this happen, Gimbo? How came the fire?" hurriedly asked Loring, as he came up.

"Gosh, mas'r I don't know. I was out in de garden waitin' for you and misse to come along, when I saw sumfin' 'at looked light, an' when I look at de house, I see the fire a bustin' out trough de chamber winders. I run wid all my might an' start up de folks, but de fire was berry bad."

At this moment those of the servants who had been around at the back of the building came back, and in their arms they bore the form of Quash.

"We can't get up there," said one of them. "Here's poor Quash, he jumped out the window."

"But my father! my father!" wildly shrieked Ella.

"We can't get him there. We must make the trial in front."

"But where is he? Quash, Quash, where is my father?"

"Quash can't speak, Miss Ella; he's hurt bad. He jumped—"

The servants' explanation was cut short by a movement of Loring Cleaveland, who had sprung towards the house. He had gained the

piazza when Gimbo leaped upon him and pulled him back.

"Where's you goin', mas'r?"

"To save Mr. Lincoln."

"Gosh a'mighty, mas'r what you be tinkin' ob', eh?"

"Let me go—let me go," cried Loring, struggling to free himself from the grasp of the negro.

"No you don't go, 'less you stronger dan I."

"Let me go, I say. By heavens, Gimbo, if you hold me longer, I'll—"

"Stop, stop, mas'r. You may kill poor Gimbo if you like, but you shant trow your life away up dar. Golly, you ain't strong enough to save a mouse."

Cleaveland said no more, and with but little resistance he was dragged back from the house. He knew that his strength was already failing him, and as he was loosed from Gimbo's grasp he hastened to the side of Ella.

"O, Loring," she cried, "can they not save him?"

"I don't know. They are making another attempt at the stairs. Perhaps they may reach him."

"Alas! he cannot help himself!" groaned the poor girl.

"Do not despair yet. See! see! they have reached the stairs!"

Two stout men—yeomen who lived near—had entered the lower hall, and their forms could be seen dimly through the smoke. The forked flames darted and hissed at them as they struggled to gain the stairs, and for a moment they were lost to sight amid the dense smoke. All eyes were strained anxiously towards the spot—all hearts were painfully still, and each human form was bent eagerly forward as if to catch the man if he should be rescued.

It was but a moment—and then the two men were seen to back slowly away from the stairs with the mad flames licking furiously about them. On the next instant there was a low, rumbling noise in the building—the two adventurers leaped forth upon the piazza—and on the next instant there came a long, loud, thundering crash.

The black smoke rolled up in great, mountain masses—the wild sparks and glistening cinders leaped out like infinite worlds of blazing meteors from the Tartarian mass; and then, again, the bright flames shot up high into the air, each serpent-like tongue of fire leaping and springing in wild, fantastic terror. The stairs had gone, the whole of the upper part of the building had fallen, and the bare walls were now left alone for the flames to cling to!

"Lost! lost!" groaned Ella, as she sank upon her lover's bosom.

Loring could speak no word to soothe her. The thing was too terrible to be argued or smoothed down, and he could only clasp the maiden in his supporting embrace. He spoke to her but she did not answer him. He raised her head and gazed into her face, but she returned him no look. She had swooned in his arms.

"Ah, Ella," he murmured, "you have forgotten for the while the terrible blow that has fallen upon you."

"Mas'r Cleaveland, what's the matter?" asked Gimbo, as he saw that the young man had begun to stagger beneath the weight that rested upon him.

"I am weak, Gimbo. Here, take Miss Lincoln and support her. She has fainted."

The negro took the insensible form into his arms, and then he offered to assist Loring; but being relieved of the burden of the maiden the young man felt stronger, and he assured his faithful attendant that he could take care of himself. By this time some of the female servants had found out the whereabouts of their young mistress, and they came to offer their assistance.

"Mr. Jones will take her right down to his house," said one of them, as soon as she discovered the situation of her mistress.

Mr. Jones, a kind old farmer, who lived only a short distance from the spot, came forward at this juncture, and looked into the pale face of the maiden, upon the rigid lineaments of which the light of the fire was resting.

"My wagon is here," said he, "and I will take her right down to my house. Poor thing!"

she needs looking to. And you, too, Mr. Cleaveland—you had better jump in. You can be of no use here. Everything is going."

"No, sir," returned Loring. "I thank you for your kindness, but I must remain here awhile longer. Take Miss Lincoln, sir, and be careful of her. I will claim your hospitality in a few hours, at least."

"Well, whenever you come you shall be welcome," said the old farmer; "and in the meantime, you may rest assured that Ella shall have the best of care. Poor thing! I pity her!"

As the farmer spoke he took the form of the maiden from Gimbo's arms, and, accompanied by three of her female attendants, he bore her to his wagon, which stood only a short distance off. Loring saw her safely started for the kind farmer's home, and then taking Gimbo's arm he went back to the scene of the conflagration, where hundreds of people were now collected.

The walls of the building had all gone—the stables were wrapped in flames, and no effort on the part of the people there collected could for a moment stay the progress of the fire. But there was one spot amid that mass of ruin which almost alone fastened the attention of the lookers on. It was the place where it was thought that Mr. Lincoln must have fallen. Deep down into the cellar, where the fire raged as it did in the fabled pit of Tartarus, they gazed, and every countenance looked sad. Mr. Lincoln had been beloved by all the honest men who knew him, and they were now stricken with a mingled sensation of horror and pity as they gazed upon the fiery grave.

Loring had lingered behind with a faint hope that he might find some traces of Ella's father, but he soon found that the case was as impossible as it was hopeless, and with a heavy heart he turned away from the dreadful scene.

"It's horrible, aint it, mas'r?" murmured Gimbo, as he assisted the young man away towards the road.

"Terrible," responded Loring, with a cold, fearful shudder.

Gimbo spoke again, but the young man did not answer him, and after this they kept on in

silence. When they reached the road they found a crowd collected about something near the gate, and upon inquiring what was the matter, the young man learned that old Quash was there, and that he had revived. In a moment Loring made his way to the spot where the old negro lay, and kneeling down by his side he took his hand. There were two men engaged in bathing the old servant with spirits, but they stopped as the youth approached.

"Quash—Quash," uttered Loring, "don't you know me?"

"Mas'r Cleaveland," groaned the old man, opening his eyes, and faintly moving his head.

"Yes, yes, Quash, 'tis Cleaveland," nervously returned the youth, bending his lips nearer. "Can't you tell me something of Mr. Lincoln?"

"O, mas'r gone!"

"But where? How did you leave him?"

"In bed. He couldn't move."

"And couldn't you have helped him?"

"Helped him!" iterated the old negro, almost raising himself upon his elbow. "O, mercy, Mas'r Lincoln, poor Quash didn't for sartin mean to leave his mas'r all alone to die. No, I tink I jump out de winder an' fetch a ladder an' sabe my mas'r. But I couldn't do it. 'Twan't poor Quash's fault. Poor mas'r's gone!"

The old man sank back upon the greensward perfectly exhausted, and the two attendants commenced bathing him again. One of them was a man who lived near, and he having promised that Quash should be taken care of, Loring resumed his way towards the house of farmer Jones.

When he reached the farm-house he was kindly greeted by the good yeoman, who told him that Ella had come back to reason, and that she had been inquiring for him. He followed Mr. Jones at once to the apartment where the maiden was, and as she saw him she sprang forward to meet him.

"Well, well, Loring," she whispered, "what of my father?"

"Let us sit down," said the young man, as he gently led her back to her seat.

"Now of my father?" urged the poor girl.

"Not to-night, Ella."

"Yes, yes, tell me all. Have they found him?"

"No, not yet."

"Ah, Loring, your tone—your look—tell me that he will never be found on earth. Is it not so? Tell me, for I would know the worst."

For some moments the young man hesitated. He knew that he should have to tell her that she had guessed the truth, and yet he had not the heart to do it.

"Speak—speak Loring. Your silence is more dreadful than the truth."

"Then I must tell you that you yourself have already spoken it," said the youth, as he laid his hand tenderly upon the maiden's brow.

"Bear up against the blow if you can."

"Gone! gone!" fell in a faint whisper from

Ella's lips, and on the next moment her head was pillowed upon her lover's bosom. "God have mercy upon him! O, Loring, this is dreadful!"

The great tears started to Loring Cleaveland's eyes, and the old farmer, who stood by, wept like a child.

"Ella, Ella," uttered the youth.

"Poor thing! She's fainted again," said the old man. "Here, here, mother, you must take care of her now."

The good man's wife came forward and helped support the insensible form of the poor sufferer, and, with the assistance of the women who had come with her, she was carried to a chamber and placed upon a bed.

The honest farmer who wept for the sorrows of the unfortunate girl did not know how deep was the suffering of the youth who stood by his side.

CHAPTER XV.

THE TORY MEETING.

THE once magnificent house of Matthew Lincoln lay in a heap of smoking ruins. Hundreds of people had collected about the spot, and there they stood and gazed upon the midnight scene. Among them was old Dagon. His long, heavy rifle was upon his shoulder, and his pistols glistened in the flickering light of the fire. By his side stood Reuben Dodwell. They had been both of them looking for some time upon the spot where the great chimney stood up like a spectre Phoenix.

"This is rather bad work," said Mr. Dodwell, in a tone which had little of sympathy in its composition.

"Yes," was the hunter's brief response.

"Have they any idea how the fire originated?" resumed Dodwell.

"Whom do you mean by 'they'?"

"Why—any one," returned old Dodwell, casting an uneasy glance upon his companion.

"That is more than I can tell. I speak only for myself."

"Ah—and have you an idea?"

"Why, yes," answered Dagon, in a low tone, and regarding Dodwell with a fixed look.

Dodwell waited some moments for the hunter to continue, but he only gave the simple affirmative, and then remained silent, and after a while the old tory asked:

"What is your opinion, Dagon?"

"O, nothing to speak of now."

Dodwell seemed a little angry at the coolness of Dagon, and a little uneasy, too, but he kept his feelings to himself, and shortly afterwards he pulled out his watch and held it down so that the light of the now dim fire might fall upon its dial.

"It's nearly midnight," he said, as he returned the watch to its fob. "Come, we had better start for our meeting. Our men are all there by this time."

"We should not be behind," added Dagon, as he turned away from the scene upon which he had been gazing.

"There's one of our most powerful enemies gone," said Dodwell, in a kind of hesitating tone, after they had reached the road.

"Ah," uttered the hunter, looking into his companion's face.

"Yes. I mean Matthew Lincoln. He was

one of the most influential among the rebels. But he'll work for them no more."

"And yet Matthew Lincoln was a good man," half soliloquized Dagon.

"Good as the world goes," returned Dodwell, "but he was an enemy to his king."

"Was he?"

"Certainly."

"Alas! what a villain he must have been to think of loving his country. What do you suppose God thinks of those wretched men who are fighting and praying for liberty?"

Reuben Dodwell gazed into the hunter's face, but it was too dark to see the features plainly. Yet he could detect the tone of sarcasm with which Dagon spoke, and he was not a little moved by it.

"I think you do not speak honestly now," he said.

"Ah, how so?"

"You speak as though you loved not the king."

"Did I? I thought I called those men wretches who fought against him."

"So you may have called them so; but your tone betrayed that you meant not what you said."

"Well, and suppose it did?"

"Then I might fear to trust you. If your heart is not with us, you might betray us."

"Hark ye, Reuben Dodwell," quickly returned the old hunter, in a stern, meaning tone, "I know the spring of action that lies in your heart—I can read your motives as well as you can yourself. You hope to make more gold by serving the king, for you know that the colonies are poor. I do not work with you because I love you, but because I hope to be rewarded for my work. We had better understand each other, sir, and then there will be no occasion for doubt hereafter."

Mr. Dodwell bit his fingers as the hunter spoke, and his silence plainly showed that he could not deny what had been said.

At length they reached the great barn, within which Dodwell had told Dagon the meeting would be held. One of the small doors was

open, and faint rays of light were shining out. Dodwell entered first, and Dagon followed. There was a lantern hanging down by a cord from one of the beams, and one of Dodwell's men was at work by its light at braiding a mat from corn-husks. There was no other person to be seen about the barn, and the man already alluded to seemed to take no notice of anything but the work upon which he was engaged, merely looking up as Dodwell entered, and then, as he noticed Dagon, resumed his occupation again.

To the right, as the two men entered, was a long row of stalls where the cattle stood, and to the left was a deep bay entirely filled with hay, or, at least, having that appearance. The hay was piled up to the beams, and smoothly raked down upon the outside, giving an appearance which every farmer likes to observe in his hay-mow.

Mr. Dodwell went up to the mat-weaver and whispered in his ear, and then turning to the hunter, he said:

"This is our sentinel, sir."

Dagon understood, and following the example of his conductor, he went up and whispered the words—"In the South," into the sentry's ear.

"All's right," said the weaver; and as he resumed his work Mr. Dodwell becked Dagon to follow him.

The tory led the way to the extremity of the mow, and, having waited till the hunter came up, he removed a lock of hay beneath which appeared part of a door. He hoisted a latch, pushed open the door, which had been so concealed by the hay that no eye could detect it, and thus opened an aperture large enough to admit a man. For a few moments after the hunter had passed through, he was lost in admiration of the curiously contrived retreat, but he appeared very cool and unconcerned.

"Now what do you think of my barn?" triumphantly asked Dodwell.

"It's a strange place," coolly replied the hunter. "'Twas considerable of a head that contrived this."

"Ay, that was my head," resumed the old

tory, in an exulting tone. "I tell you, my dear sir, the friends of the king are awake."

A slight curl of scorn played about the hunter's bearded lips, but he gave utterance to none of his peculiar ideas, and, as Dodwell turned to speak with another person, he looked about him to examine more thoroughly the characteristics of the place and the company.

The apartment thus formed in the bowels of Dodwell's hay-mow was large enough to accommodate two hundred persons, and on the present occasion it was lighted by three large lanterns which were suspended from the roof. There were about fifty people present, most of whom the hunter knew by sight, and they were most of them, too, just such men as he had expected to find there. There was only one man entered after Dagon came in, and that was Abner Dodwell. The young man went up to his father and conversed with him apart for a few moments, and after this the meeting was called to order by the elder Dodwell.

For nearly half an hour, old Dagon stood one side, leaning upon his rifle, and listening to the proceedings. Occasionally a strange spark would flash in his dark eyes, and the muscles of his hands would work with strong emotion. At length he was called forward. He approached the seat of Mr. Dodwell, and with a calm look he awaited further orders.

"Dagon," said the chairman, "we have a particular work which we wish you to do. The rebel brig, now commanded by one Ben Walker, arrived at Norfolk this afternoon with a British ship in charge. That brig must be destroyed. Here are Varnum and Danton, two of our best men, who will assist you in the work. Are you willing to undertake the job?"

"Anything, sir," returned the hunter.

"Then," resumed Dodwell, "the work will be left with you three. The best mode of destroying the brig will be to set her on fire."

"Ay," added the hunter, with a sudden impulse which he could not repress, "fire works well, and it saves us the trouble of a vast deal of courage."

His eye wandered to the spot where stood

Abner Dodwell as he spoke, and the young man trembled as he met the keen glance of the stalwart old hunter. The elder Dodwell, too, exhibited some uneasiness, but he soon controlled himself.

"Fire is a sure exterminator," he said, as he looked sternly at Dagon, "and if it but sweeps away the enemies of our king it does well."

A murmur of applause followed this loyal speech, and as soon as all was still again, the chairman resumed his recital of what was to be done.

Before the meeting adjourned a vast deal of work had been laid out, and it was done, too, systematically.

"Now, Dagon," said Dodwell, after all else had been disposed of, "we must have your part well understood. When will you make the attempt upon the brig?"

"At any time, sir."

"Then let it be to-morrow night. I will procure the necessary implements for setting the fire, and Varnum and Danton shall join you in the city. Will that answer?"

"Yes."

"And will you plan for the setting of the fire?"

"Perhaps there are others present more used to the business, but yet I will undertake it."

"Be careful, Dagon," uttered Dodwell, showing a quick spark of temper.

"O, I'll be careful, sir. Never fear on that account," coolly returned the hunter.

Dodwell bit his fingers as the hunter thus twisted his warning from its intended meaning, but he deemed it policy to let the matter drop where it was. He knew that Dagon was a plain spoken, blunt man, but he did not really think that he would be false to them, so he put up with the sarcasm, though it cost him an effort.

It was near morning when the tory meeting broke up, and having promised to meet Varnum and Danton at a given point in Norfolk on the next night, the old hunter took his way back towards the spot where the ruins of Matthew Lincoln's house were still smouldering.

CHAPTER XVI.

MORE OF THE HUNTER.

ON the morning following the conflagration, it was Sabbath morn—Ella Lincoln came down from the chamber where she had passed the night, and in the small sitting-room she met Loring Cleaveland. The poor girl was very pale, and her eyes were red and swollen with weeping. A faint smile of recognition dwelt for a moment upon her features as she met the sympathizing look of the young man, and she advanced and took his hand. He tenderly kissed her, and having placed his arm about her neck, he said:

"Come, Ella, let us walk out into the open air. It will revive you."

The maiden gave her assent, and having put on her scarf she took the arm of her lover and went out upon the smooth green that lay spread out in front of the kind farmer's residence.

"Loring," she said, in a faint, trembling tone, "is all this a reality, or have I had a terrible dream mixed up with the horrors of last night?"

"You can have dreamt little to make the disaster more fearful than it really is," was Loring's reply.

"Then my father is lost!" The maiden spoke with a degree of anguish that made her lover start with a deeper sense of her suffering than he had yet conceived of.

"Yes, Ella," returned the loving youth, as he wound his arm about her fair form to support her, "it is a terrible truth; but you must strive to bear up against it."

"Alas!" she murmured in reply, "I can bear all now. If it be God's will that I be thus orphaned in my youth, I will strive to support the burden of sorrow. Have you seen old Quash?"

"Yes. I saw him last night."

"And is he alive?"

"Yes—he spoke to me."

"And could not he have saved him?"

"No, Ella. The poor fellow did all he could. He leaped from the window in hopes that he could find a ladder, and thus rescue his master, but he was not able to carry out his intention."

"I knew Quash would not willingly have deserted him," said Ella. "I hope he will recover."

"I think he will. He was evidently only stunned by the fall."

"Ah, Loring, look there!"

The young man looked in the direction pointed out, and he saw the dark smoke curling up beyond the tree-tops.

"That is the smoke of my lost home," uttered the unfortunate girl. "My earthly all is gone now!"

"Not *all*," said the youth.

Ella looked up into his face, and a faint smile—a sort of grateful look—broke over her features.

"I think you will not leave me now?" she murmured.

"Leave you? No, not while life is mine. I will let Gimbo go on board the brig, but I will stay with you."

"I thank you, Loring. Ah," she added, as she looked up into his face, "it is I who am poverty-stricken now."

"But rich in all that is of any worth," quickly returned the young man.

Ella was upon the point of making some reply, when they were aroused by the sound of an approaching footstep, and on turning they saw Dagon coming towards them. The old hunter hastened up to where the young couple stood, and with an earnest movement he held out both his hands, allowing his rifle to rest upon the inner part of his arm.

"And how fares my young lady, this morning?" he asked, in a voice so soft and tender that it made Ella start.

"Alas! kind sir, I cannot tell you. If you know my loss, then you must know all."

"Yes, I know. But, after all, the loss is not so great. It is the manner of the loss that makes it terrible."

"Ah, sir, and what loss could have been greater?" asked Ella, looking with surprise into the hunter's face. "You do not know *all* that I have lost."

"Ah? And what have you lost that I do not know of?"

"My father, sir—he—he—was burned! He is—O, God!"

The poor girl could say no more. The recital opened anew the terrible fountain of her sorrow, and her utterance was choked.

"Yes, I knew of that," calmly replied Dagon; but yet with a calmness that was full of strong sympathy. "And yet I say, it is the manner of the loss that makes it terrible. In a moment like this we should look upon the most favorable side of the picture. How many disasters that are occurring every day about you are worse than this—how many there are who have lost more than you have."

Both Ella and Loring regarded the old hunter with strange interest.

"O," the maiden uttered, "the heart cannot be schooled to reason under such blows as this."

"But it should be, nevertheless," resumed Dagon. "There are those at this moment, who may be jesting and trifling in idle ease, with whom you would not change places. Look at poor Ada Lee. Her father is a felon. Would you change places with her?"

"No," said Ella, with a shudder.

"Or would you call your father back to life, and have him be a traitor to his country?"

"O, no," quickly replied the fair girl.

"And yet there are many such about you. Ah, my fair maiden, you have in reality lost but little save the mere mass of worldly wealth. Your father is still with you in happy memory, and you can yet bask in the bright sunshine of the virtues he has left for you to imitate. When you would recall some memory of your father, look not upon the smouldering ashes of his funeral pyre, but look up—look up to where his virtues are recorded—where heaven smiles upon those who turn their hearts thitherward."

"I know you speak truly, sir," said Ella, in a calmer tone than before; "but yet I cannot forget the dreadfulness of this calamity. It will cling to my heart like a fire-bolt, and my soul must long dwell in anguish."

"Ah, Ella," resumed the old hunter, a serene smile resting in his eyes as he spoke, "even now you are less sorrowful than when I came. I have cause for weeping as well as

you. I loved your father, maiden, and for many years have I bathed in the stream of his bounty. You know that you may look to me for aid whenever you need it."

"Dagon, I know I may rely upon you for help, for my heart tells me that you are to be trusted; but yet I would like to know something more of you."

The maiden looked anxiously up into the old hunter's face as she spoke, and her curiosity was blended with an earnestness that lay deeper than mere idle whim.

"Your father knew me well."

"I know he did," murmured Ella; and as she spoke, she thought of the doubts she had previously entertained with regard to the hunter—doubts, however, which were now all gone. "And yet, sir," she continued, "he never told me who or what you were."

"That was because he promised me that he would not reveal my secret to a living soul."

This was spoken in a tone which plainly gave the maiden to understand that she must ask no further questions upon the subject she had broached, and she had penetration enough to translate it. Yet she wished that she could have known more. She had often seen the hunter at her father's house, and she had often heard her father speak of him as of one whom he feared not to trust with business; but the idea had crept into her mind that he was rather the paid hireling than the confidential friend. Her parent's own words had often seemed to imply that. Then, too, she had heard others speak of the hunter in terms of dubiousness, though she had never heard a word that could directly implicate him.

In truth old Dagon was a strange man, and so thought every one who knew him. He had been known in Virginia for years, and yet he was only known as a wandering, homeless man. If he had business, no one knew its import, and if he had a habitation, no one knew its whereabouts.

Both Loring and Ella had been regarding the hunter for some time in silence. His words had struck them both with admiration, and they

believed that there was a fount of pure and holy feeling in his soul which raised him above what he seemed.

"Have you been over to the scene of the fire this morning?" asked Loring.

"Yes. I came from there but a short time since," returned Dagon.

"Do you know if any one has an idea of how the fire caught?"

"It is possible that such ideas may exist," said Dagon, while his eyes beamed with a strange light.

"And have you heard any of them expressed?" asked Loring, with a newly awakened interest, for he had noticed the hunter's look.

"Only such as I have expressed myself."

"Ah, and have you any idea of how the thing happened?"

"Yes, and a very strong one, too."

"What—how—could it have been?"

"It *could* have been in various ways, but there is one very simple method to which I attribute it. I think there were no fires burning in the house at the time?"

"No," said Ella, to whom the last sentence seemed to be addressed.

"Nor could it have caught from the lamps, for the servants had but one lighted, and that was in the kitchen."

"I left one burning in the large drawing-room," said the maiden, with a slight show of alarm.

"It could not have caught from that," returned Dagon, "for the fire did not commence there. It commenced, as nearly as can be ascertained, in three separate places—in the north wing, in the west parlor, and in the eastern store-room."

"How, Dagon!" uttered Loring, seizing the hunter by the arm; "do you mean that it was set on fire? that it was the work of an incendiary?"

"So it would seem," calmly returned the old man.

"And who—who could have done it?"

"Ah, now you ask me too much."

"But you have suspicions, for your looks show it."

"And if I have I ought not to speak them. It would be a wanton wickedness to blast a human character by the breathing of such a suspicion, when facts have not yet proved it. If I have a suspicion, Mr. Cleaveland, you may rest assured that I will follow it up; and if I find the real culprit, you may also be equally assured that he shall be brought to justice."

Loring would have asked more, but at that moment Ben Walker approached the spot where the trio were standing. Gimbo was with him, and the faithful negro was exhibiting the wildest delight at once more meeting with his generous protector. Young Cleaveland hastened forward and grasped Ben's hand, and as he did so he could not repress the tear of love that welled up into his eye.

"God bless you, Ben;" he ejaculated, as he felt his hand clasped in the old sailor's embrace. "Your coming is like a ray of sunshine."

"I hope it will ever be so, Loring," the giant man returned. "And here is our fair lady, too," he continued, as Ella approached him.

"Was not that old Dagon who stood here with you?" Ben asked, after he had shaken hands with Ella.

"Ah, yes. You must speak with him. Dagon—"

Loring turned towards the spot where he had left the hunter, but the strange man had gone.

"Has he gone?"

"Yes," said Gimbo. "I seed him slip away jus' as Mas'r Ben came up."

"Why should he have gone because I was coming?" queried Ben.

But that was a question none of them could answer, and after expressing their wonder at the movement, they adjourned to the house, where Ben was introduced to Mr. Jones, and where he related the adventures of his last cruise.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE KING.

THE Yankee captain's recital of the events connected with the capture of the enemy's ship filled the old farmer with a perfect wildness of patriotic pride and delight. At short intervals he would clap his hands, shout with joy, and then stamp his feet. These demonstrations were pleasing to Ben, for they were more flattering to his story than any amount of spoken language could possibly have been.

"By the great Continental Congress!" cried Jones, after Ben had concluded, "that was capital. You give it to 'em, didn't ye? O, how I should liked to have just been there. Talk to me about the Britishers whipping us! It's no such thing—it don't lay in their tarnal old breeches to do it—and all the bloody old tories to back 'em, too. But what did ye do with the prisoners, capt'n?"

"They are all safely stowed away in jail, and there they'll lay for a spell."

"Sartin'. They ought to," responded the old farmer. "By George, I should liked to 'ave seen 'em when they marched up."

Loring Cleaveland had not as yet spoken since Ben began his story, but his looks show-

ed that he was deeply interested. His hands would clutch with a nervous grip when Ben came to some thrilling passage, and his eyes flashed with an unwonted fire. At length he turned to the maiden who sat by his side.

Ella," he said, in a low, trembling tone, "I must go to sea once more. Mr. Jones will protect you, and so will Dagon. I cannot remain inactive here while my old shipmates are fighting for their country. It may be but a short time that I shall be gone, for something tells me that this war cannot last much longer."

"I should be very lonesome," murmured the fair girl.

"Ay; but you would know that I was doing my duty."

"And suppose you should be killed? O, I should be—"

"—sh! When such a duty calls for freedom's sons, death should not be thought of. But I will come back to you—I know I shall."

Ella Lincoln struggled hard, and in those struggles she told the silent tale of a stronger love than words could have painted. She knew her lover's character, and she saw that in his

desire to rejoin his vessel he was actuated by the very principle that made him noble and lovely. She knew the deep fount of holy patriotism that lay in his heart, and she knew how eagerly that heart yearned to be engaged in the noble work of redemption for his country. At length she laid her hand upon her lover's arm, and gazing mildly into his face, she said:

"Go, Loring. Your country calls, and I am willing."

"You will not be lonesome while I am gone?"

"If I am, I can afford to sacrifice something for my country. Go, Loring, and do your duty."

"Bless you, bless you, Ella. I will do my duty, and when I return to your side once more, you shall be proud that I have done it."

Ben Walker had overheard the whole of this conversation, and as the last words fell from Ella's lips, he moved his chair nearer to the young couple. He saw in a moment how matters stood between them, and his bosom heaved with a feeling of new pride as he realized that the beautiful girl really loved his young friend. He looked upon it as a sort of honor to his profession, and from that moment Ella Lincoln held a place in his heart from which nothing could have torn her image.

"Ben," said the young man, "I must go with you next time."

"But are you strong enough?"

"O, yes. A few days of rest will give me back my strength. I must go."

"Well, well, Loring, I should like to have you with us, for there seems to be a hole in our crew without you."

Ella leaned over and laid her hand upon Ben's shoulder, and with a tremulous voice she whispered:

"You will be careful of him, captain. O, do not let him be in danger while his frame is weaker than his heart."

"Bless you, sweet girl, for your kindness," murmured Ben, as he drew the back of his hand across his eye. "No, no, he shall not be exposed needlessly. I understand you."

Loring heard the maiden's speech, and he wished that he could have clasped her to his bosom and told her how he loved her; but the presence of others restrained him, and he could only clasp her hand and tell his love in his beaming looks.

"You shall go on board the brig this evening," said Ben, "for our boys are anxious to see you."

"So I will," returned Loring.

After this the conversation took a turn upon the subject of the fire, and all the particulars, as far as they were understood, were explained to the old sailor. During the forenoon, Ben, Loring and Gimbo went over to the scene of the conflagration. No search had yet been made for the remains of Mr. Lincoln, for the cellar was full of burning coals, and the heat was intense.

There were many people collected about the place, and as they saw young Cleaveland they crowded about him to learn from him the particulars of the disaster. He told in as few words as possible all he knew; but as the inquiries became more irksome and clamorous, the young man tired of the questioning, and, with Ben in his company, he turned away from the place.

In the evening, Ben Walker and Loring started for the brig. When they reached the city of Norfolk they found the whole place in a state of excitement consequent upon the burning of Matthew Lincoln's house, and the terrible death of its owner.

"It has made a thundering blow upon the people," said Ben, as they walked along the street. "Matthew Lincoln was a man that everybody respected."

"I had no idea it could create such excitement, though," returned Loring.

"It does, though," resumed Ben; "but it does not all seem to come from the mere fact that Lincoln's house was burned, or that Lincoln was killed. There is a whisper in every mouth that the Tories had a hand in it."

"Ah!" uttered the young man, with a quick start. "Then Dagon may have some know-

ledge of the affair. He spoke this morning as though he suspected the person, or persons, who did the deed. I think he knows more of this matter than he will tell."

"If there is a secret here," said Ben, "then no man will be more likely to know it than Dagon; and if he knows anything, then no man will discover the whole affair quicker than he."

"Then you think Dagon is to be trusted?" remarked Loring.

"Trusted? Ay. There is no man in the colonies I would trust quicker."

Loring was made more comfortable by this assurance, for he felt that Ella would be safe now.

"If you know the hunter so well," he said, "then perhaps you can tell me who and what he is?"

"Ah," muttered Ben, with a dubious shake of the head, "you're diving too deep for me now. I've known old Dagon these six years, or more, and I know that he is a patriot to the backbone; but I know no more."

"And yet there is more, I am confident," added the young man.

"Yes, I s'pose there is," meditatively replied Ben; "but then there's no use in trying to pump a secret out of him. What he's got he'll keep. I've never been very intimate with him, but yet I know his character. You remember when I first saw him down in the cove I didn't know him. Seems to me as though he'd altered some."

By this time they had reached the wharf where the brig's boat was in waiting, and having entered it, they were rowed towards the vessel. When Loring reached the deck of the Ocean Martyr, those of the old crew who were left, crowded about him, and his heart swelled with joy as he received the warm greetings of his friends. He felt strong once more as he trod the old, familiar deck, and for the moment he almost forgot that he had ever had another home.

"Come, Loring," said Ben, after our hero had shaken hands with his old shipmates, "there

is some one in the cabin who would like to see you."

"Ah, yes—Mr. Stickney. I forgot him," returned the young man, as he turned to follow the captain.

The cabin was lighted by a large lamp which was suspended from one of the beams, for the evening was well advanced. Loring did find Stickney there, and after he had shaken hands with him he took a seat. It was not until he was seated, that he noticed the presence of a stranger.

"This is the prisoner I spoke to you about," said Ben.

Loring nodded to the man, and would have then turned towards the captain, but something peculiar in the countenance of the stranger arrested his attention. The man sat so that the rays of the lamp fell full upon his face, and Loring started with a strange emotion as he gazed upon it.

"Ah, do you recognize him?" asked Ben, with a playful smile, after he had allowed the young man to gaze some moments in silence.

Loring made no answer to the captain, but he slowly arose to his feet and approached the stranger.

"I know you, sir," he said. "I know your countenance. It is familiar as the themes of childhood. Do you know me?"

"Yes, Loring, I know you well."

Again the youth started at the sound of that voice.

"Surely I know you," he said, as he stood there and gazed upon the stranger. "I know that voice—and that face. Who are you, sir?"

"You used to sit in my lap when you were a child," said the man. "You used to tell me you loved me then."

"Yet I do not know you," murmured Loring.

"You remember your mother?"

"God rest her pure soul. Yes."

"And do you see her semblance here?"

"Ah, now I know you," cried the young man, springing forward. "You are my mother's brother—my Uncle Allen?"

"Yes," murmured Allen Lyon, as he received the embrace of his nephew. "I have come over to America to find my relatives, but I find you are the only one God has spared to me."

"And have you come to make America your home?" asked Loring.

"Yes," returned the old man, in a tone colored somewhat with sadness. "There are none of my kin in England. Your mother and myself were the last of our family—my wife and only child are gone, and you are the only being of kindred blood I know. I had hoped to find your father alive, but that is denied me."

"Yes, yes," added Loring, while he wiped a tear from his cheek, "my poor father has gone. Have you heard how?"

"Captain Walker told me of it," replied Lyon, with a shudder. And then, as if to avoid the subject which affected the youth so deeply, he added: "But I will find a home with you. I have brought enough of this world's goods to support me comfortably through life, if I use economy, and all I want more is the society of something to love—something to which my heart can cling as has been its wont in days gone by."

"You shall find a home with me, my uncle," said Loring, as he resumed his seat, "and so long as I have my strength you shall not want."

Old Allen Lyon shed tears as he expressed his gratitude for his nephew's kindness, and then he told how he had become sick of living in England after his friends had all gone—how he had settled up his narrow business—and how he had set sail for America.

For the information of the reader we will state that Captain Russell Cleaveland married his wife in Bristol, England, and that she accompanied him to his home in America. Once afterwards, while Loring was a child, she went back to England with her husband to visit her brother; and that was the time to which Lyon had alluded.

Until near ten o'clock, the party sat there in the cabin and talked. Mr. Lyon relating many an incident of interest to his hearers, and in turn listening to the stirring recitals of the captain. It was just as Lyon had closed a narrative in which King George was made to figure to rather a disadvantage, when one of the men came down from the deck and reported that a suspicious-looking boat was hovering about the brig.

Ben Walker sprang at once for the deck, and the others immediately followed him.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SPY'S STRATAGEM.

AS Captain Walker reached the starboard gangway, and caught the outlines of a boat at a short distance off, he shouted, "Boat ahoy!"

There was no reply to the captain's hail, and the boat soon moved out of sight ahead.

"How long has that fellow been fooling about here?" Ben asked, as soon as the boat had gone.

"As much as half an hour," answered the man who had come to the cabin to report her.

"Then she must be up to mischief of some sort," resumed Ben; "so you had better keep a good lookout, and if she fools around much more, we'll just send a boat after her and scrape an acquaintance."

"What can you have to fear in such a place as this?" asked Mr. Lyon, who had been gazing off through the darkness towards the point where the boat had disappeared.

"Ah, my dear sir," returned Ben, "these are times when we look for danger in almost everything. There is no knowing what these infernal tories may cook up. I wouldn't trust

'em as far as I could throw an ox by the tail."

"Neither would I," assented Lyon. "I'd much rather trust an open enemy than to trust a villain who can turn traitor to his country. But do you think tories would venture out here in a small open boat?"

"There's no knowing what they might do, sir."

After this, Captain Walker gave the watch particular instructions about keeping a good lookout, and then he went below again, followed by the company who had thus far spent the evening with him.

The crew of the brig had been very much fatigued by their exertions and over-watching since the capture of the corvette, and the captain only kept an anchor-watch, composed of four men, upon the deck through the night; but care was taken to have things so arranged, that the crew could be aroused at a moment's warning.

Walker and his friends had not been below more than fifteen minutes when one of the watch came down and informed the captain that the

strange boat was again near the brig. Ben reached over into his berth and took his pistols, and then followed the man to the deck. The rest of those in the cabin also went up to see what was the matter.

The outlines of the boat could just be distinguished upon the starboard bow, and she seemed to be approaching the brig.

"Boat ahoy!" shouted Ben.

"Hallo!" returned some one from the boat.

"Who are you?"

"Friends."

"Curious friends!" growled the old quarter-master, who had the watch, applying a verbal handle to his remark, which we will not transcribe.

"We'll wait and see," said Ben.

Pretty soon the boat had come so near that the forms of three men could be seen upon her thwarts.

"What do you want?" asked the captain.

"We're coming on board," returned a voice which sounded somewhat familiar. "We've got news for you."

"They may be friends, after all," said Stickney.

"Perhaps so," returned Ben. "At any rate we'll let 'em come aboard, for if they mean mischief, they won't be able to do much here."

In a few moments the boat was alongside, and shortly afterwards old Dagon came up over the gangway.

"What! Dagon?" uttered Ben, as soon as he recognized the old hunter.

"Yes, Captain Walker," returned he. "Ah, and Cleaveland, too. You're getting strong, my young friend."

"By my soul, I know that voice," uttered Mr. Lyon.

At that moment one of the crew came up with a lantern, and as its rays fell upon the faces of the party, the old hunter started, and a perceptible tremor shook his frame; but he soon recovered his wonted composure.

"Allen Lyon," he said, in a very low tone, "you had better not try to call me to your memory."

"Heavens! who are you, sir?" exclaimed Mr. Lyon, bending forward and gazing into the strange man's face.

"One whom it would not be for your benefit to recognize at present. At some time, sir, if we both live, you shall sit down with me as you please. There—don't fret your memory now."

Allen Lyon looked like one half stupified. He gazed eagerly into the hunter's face, but he could not spur up his memory to the desired point. The circumstance had given food for wonder to the others, too. Ben Walker looked curiously upon the strange being, and he showed by his countenance that his curiosity was strong. But Loring Cleaveland felt the strangeness of the incident more than did his commander. He had before this had his mind wrought up with anxiety to know the real character of the hunter, for he felt a strange presentiment that in some way their fortunes lay together—that Dagon was to have an influence over him, either for weal or woe.

"Uncle, can you not solve the mystery?" asked the youth, laying his hand upon Lyon's arm.

"No, not now," murmured the old gentleman.

"Hark ye, my friends," interrupted Dagon. "You are just entering upon a wild goose chase. It matters not a whit to you who I am, so long as you have my friendship, and to convince you that I am your friend, I have come out here to-night to warn you of danger."

"Ha!" uttered Walker. "Danger, did you say?"

"Yes, Ben Walker, danger; and a danger, too, from which you could not be saved were I your enemy."

"Just tell us what kind of danger it is?"

"Well, then—there is simply a plan on foot for the destruction of your brig."

"By my tarry old toplights, let 'em try it!" cried the Yankee captain, as he instinctively laid his hand upon one of his pistols.

"O, it could be done," said Dagon.

"Perhaps it might; but 'twould prove a sore job for them that tried it."

"It might," said the hunter, in a tone that sounded very dubious; "but you might need help to keep your promise. It is in my power to destroy your vessel in ten minutes."

Ben Walker started.

"Now hark ye," continued Dagon, moving nearer to the giant captain, and lowering his voice. "Be not alarmed at what I am about to communicate; but be cool and calm. Swear to me, now, that you will never lisp my name in connection with what may happen to-night."

Ben Walker looked half stupified into the hunter's face, for he knew that there was something deep in the background.

"Come, come, swear to me."

"That I won't lisp your name—"

"In connection with anything that may occur to-night," added Dagon, helping Ben out with the sentence.

"Well," tremblingly returned Ben, "I give you my pledge of honor that I will not."

"And will you be bondsman for the rest of your crew?"

"Yes, yes," answered Ben, now fairly excited.

"Then listen to me. The entrance to your magazine is through the cabin?"

"Yes."

"Now go down to your cabin, and see what you find there. Be cool, and step lightly."

Ben Walker started for the cabin, but with regard to stepping lightly, it cannot be said that he was very particular. He took but two steps from the deck to the cabin floor, and when he arrived there he found two men just picking the lock of the outer door of the magazine.

"Who are you?" he yelled, as he stopped in the centre of the cabin, utterly astounded by the scene.

The two men made no answer, but they both drew their pistols. Ben was not an instant behind them in this sort of movement, and quick as thought he aimed his own pistol and fired. One of the men fell against the bulkhead with a deep groan, and the other levelled his weapon and pulled the trigger, but the powder would not explode, and before he could draw another

weapon, Ben sprang upon him, and dealt him a blow upon the head with the butt of the heavy boarding-pistol which he had just fired. The pistol-stock was shattered in pieces, and the villain's head had to all appearances met with the same disaster, for he sank down upon the floor without life or motion.

On the next moment those whom Ben had left behind him upon the deck came rushing into the cabin. By the light of the hanging lamp they could see the bodies of the two men which lay upon the floor, and they found Ben Walker standing over them like a Hercules for stature.

"Well," said Dagon, who was the last to come down, "what did you find?"

"Look at that," was Ben's reply, as he pointed to the two bodies.

"And do you know them?"

"No."

"I know 'em, though," said one of the men of the watch who had come down. He was one of the new men who had last shipped. "Them's a couple of men as lives with old Reuben Dodwell. They are Varnum an' Dapton. I know 'em right well."

"By heavens, Dagon, how came those two men here?" uttered Ben, turning towards the old hunter.

"Don't you see that one of your cabin windows is open?" calmly replied Dagon.

"And were they in the boat with you?" asked Walker.

"I rather think you'll find that boat under the stern at this moment."

"Look here," said Loring, who had picked something up from the floor. "Here is a piece of fuse. See—a piece long enough to burn ten or fifteen minutes!"

"Ay," added Ben. "That was meant to blow us up with. What does this mean, Dagon? By the holy cross, you know more of this than—"

"Stop, stop, my dear fellow," interrupted the hunter. "Can't you see a hole through a ladder?"

"But you brought those two men out here?"

"Yes."

"And you knew what they came for?"

"Yes," returned the hunter, with a peculiar smile; "and *I was one of the party*. Can you understand now?"

Ben gazed for a moment vacantly into the hunter's face, and then he started with a sudden flash of thought. His countenance was lighted by a gleam of intelligence. He had recalled the suspicions which he had heard breathed against the strange man, and the truth came upon him.

"You are a patriot spy!" he whispered, as he laid his brawny hand upon the hunter's shoulder.

"—sh! Be careful how you speak that word. Let it not pass your lips again."

Ben Walker now understood the character of the man whom he had sometimes almost been inclined to doubt. He knew that he was engaged in a most dangerous undertaking, and that he must be a cool, brave man to follow it out. With a generous movement he extended his hand, and as the hunter took it, he said:

"I know all now, sir; and I hope God will protect you."

"Thank you," returned Dagon, wiping a tear from his eye. "But I must go now. Are both my companions dead?"

"Yes," said one of the men, who had been examining them.

"Then you must bury them as best you can," said Dagon, as he turned towards the ladder. "They won't be much loss to anybody that you would care for helping."

"Wait a moment," uttered Ben, starting to move after the hunter. "You will want your boat."

"No, no. *In my hurry to escape, it can't be supposed I should wait for a boat*. A piece of plank will serve me better."

A spare royal-yard was given to the hunter-

spy, and having thrown it overboard, he turned to the Yankee captain.

"Remember your promise," he said. "If ever you speak of this, mention not my name. You may say that there was a third man, but *he escaped*."

"I will not betray you, Dagon, nor shall any of my men."

"Then God speed the cause in which we are both engaged," uttered the old hunter, and as he spoke, he leaped into the sea.

Those who stood upon the deck saw Dagon catch the floating spar, and after he had swam from their sight they turned once more towards the cabin.

"Uncle," said Loring Cleaveland, "what do you know of that strange man?"

"Indeed, Loring, I cannot tell. His voice is familiar, and so is the flashing of his dark eyes, but I cannot call him to my memory."

"Let him be as he wishes for the present," interposed Captain Walker. "He surely has the very best of reasons for keeping himself covered."

"Ay, so he has," added Stickney.

"His is a dangerous business," resumed Ben; "for he has to work in the dark, and run the risk of being shot by either friend or foe."

"He is a brave man, at all events," said Lyon, "and a mysterious one, too."

"Come," interrupted Walker, "let's have these two carcasses out of the cabin. Zounds! it's a lucky thing for me that that fellow's pistol missed fire, for he had a fair aim at my head."

"No wonder it missed," cried Loring, who had picked up the weapons which the tories had dropped. "The priming is wet!"

"Wet?" iterated Ben, moving forward and taking the pistols to examine them. "Ah, that was Dagon's work. God bless him!"

CHAPTER XIX.

AN ENCOUNTER.

REUBEN DODWELL and his son, and one or two others of the tories, stood upon the shore and waited for the return of those who had gone to blow up the rebel brig. They had expected ere this, to have seen the vessel blown into fragments, but as eleven o'clock came, and passed, they began to grow nervous and uneasy. At length they heard a noise in the water, and they all strained their eyes towards the point from whence it proceeded.

"What in the name of wonder can it be?" uttered old Dodwell, as he saw a dark mass paddling in the water. "'Taint a boat, surely?"

"No," said Abner, "it's somebody swimming."

"'Tis, upon my soul," added the father, as he took a step nearer to the water's edge.

The tories gathered about the point towards which the object was moving, and at length it came to the shore.

"Dagon?" cried old Dodwell, inquisitively.

"Yes," answered the hunter, as he climbed up upon the shore and shook the water from his arms. "By my soul's hopes, Reuben Dodwell, this is a thankless job."

"But where are the others? Varnum and Danton—where are they?"

"Where you will never see them again," returned Dagon, continuing to shake the water from his clothes.

"You don't mean that they are dead?" uttered Dodwell, in alarm.

"But I do mean so. The rebels were too keen for them."

"O, what a blunder!" groaned the old tory, clenching his hands in anger. "There's two of my best men gone."

"Ay," added Dagon; "regular bull-dogs. 'Twas a pity to lose them; but it is too late to cry now. They're gone, and nothing short of Gabriel's last trump can wake them."

"But how was it, Dagon? You must have been careless. You said you could keep the rebels on deck while Varnum and Danton got into the magazine."

"So I could have done it if there hadn't have been a man sent down into the cabin on an errand. Varnum and Danton had made their way into the cabin, and had got the lock of the magazine door just picked, when a man

was sent into the cabin on an errand! Of course that was the end of our scheme. I sprang towards the cabin, and was just in time to see both my companions killed. I could do nothing, so I just popped myself overboard, and here I am."

"And you left the boat, too."

"Of course I did. I fancied just at that moment that my neck was worth more than the boat."

"Well, I suppose it was," said Dodwell, in a sort of low growl. "And so here's the end of that scheme. But, by the powers, they shall pay dearly for this. That rebel brig shall not swim forever."

As old Dodwell thus spoke, he turned up towards the town, and the others followed him.

It was on the next day that Loring Cleaveland returned to the shore, accompanied by his uncle and Gimbo. Mr. Lyon was introduced to Ella, and after an hour's interview she formed a strong attachment for the old gentleman. She found him kind, noble and generous in his sentiments, and she very soon felt that God had sent him to her to be her friend and counsellor. And, on the other hand, Mr. Lyon was perfectly enraptured by the many virtues which shone out like gems at all points of the maiden's character, and he soon loved her as though she had been his own child. He knew that she was betrothed to his nephew, and this circumstance may have helped to open his heart towards her.

In the afternoon, Loring went over again to the scene of the fire, and under his directions search was made for the remains of Mr. Lincoln. The bottom of the cellar had been covered with a bed of living coals, but the people soon poured on water enough to extinguish them, and then the search began. Great heaps of rubbish were pulled over, and at length fragments of bone were found; but these did not exactly bear the human stamp, and they were passed over. A heap of plastering and coals near the wall, and directly under Lincoln's sleeping chamber, were next removed, and ere long the workmen found what they sought—a human skeleton!

The bones were fleshless, and perfectly cal-

cined by the heat to which they had been exposed, and as they were lifted from their horrible grave many of them crumbled to powder beneath the touch. Yet they were collected together as well as could be, and then they were placed in a tight box which was procured for the purpose, and after this, Loring gave them in charge to the coroner whom he had requested to be present on the occasion, and who promised to take care of them until they were called for.

When Loring returned to the house of farmer Jones, he informed Ella of what had transpired. The afflicted maiden was more calm than he had expected, and though it could be plainly seen that her heart was torn by the most bitter grief, yet she talked calmly of the subject of her father's remains. She had no doubt that the remains which had been found were in reality her father's, and it was at length arranged, in accordance with her wish, that there should be a private funeral at Mr. Jones's house, and that the remains should be sacredly interred.

The rest of the day Loring spent with Ella, and in the evening he set out for the town, where he wished to purchase some few articles previous to sailing, intending to return to Mr. Jones's and spend the night. It was about eight o'clock when the young man set out. There was no moon, and though most of the stars were clear, yet it was quite dark. For nearly a mile, after the farm-house was left behind, the road led through a piece of woods, the boughs hanging low over the way, and forming a kind of arbor the whole distance.

When Loring entered this wood, his mind held not a single thought of danger, for he was too busy with the startling themes of the past few days to think of aught else. His step became more slow as he found himself in this lonesome retreat, and he was thinking of Ella Lincoln, when he heard footsteps behind him. He was sorry for this, for he wished to be alone; he wished to be left to his own thoughts, so he quickened his pace in hopes to avoid the company of the coming person; but as he quick-

ened his pace the individual behind did the

same, and ere long he came up with our hero. Yet Cleaveland had no thought of danger—he only felt worried that his privacy had been broken in upon.

"Good evening, sir," said the stranger, as he came up.

Cleaveland turned towards him, but it was too dark to distinguish his features; but he responded politely to the salutation.

"Are you going to the city?" asked the stranger.

"I think of it," replied Cleaveland.

"I am glad, for I shall have company."

Cleaveland would liked to have told him that his company was not at all desirable, but as he did not wish to be rude, he remained silent.

"This is a season of strange excitement, sir," remarked the stranger, at the end of a long silence.

"You are right," returned Loring.

There was another silence of some moments, and then the stranger said:

"You must pardon me, sir, but really your voice sounds familiar."

"Indeed?" was the young man's laconic response.

"Yes, it does. Are you not the young man who was sick at Mr. Lincoln's?"

"I suppose I am."

"Ah, I thought so. Cleaveland, I think your name is. Ah, yes—I heard your voice at the fire. By the way, is there not some suspicion afloat that the fire was set by some of the Tories?"

Now there was something peculiar in the man's tone and manner, and in an instant there flashed across our hero's mind an idea that his companion might be some sort of a spy. At any rate he resolved to be upon his guard.

"I don't know," he replied, "what may be the suspicions that are afloat."

"But it is certain that the building was purposely set on fire, is it not?"

"Not that I know of."

"Ah, well—I may be mistaken," said the stranger; and after he had spoken, he commenced singing a song.

It is not very strange for a man, when he has nothing to say, to sing a song; but in the present case the man's singing came in very unnaturally—so much so, that Loring was half startled by the strangeness of the circumstance. The man sang a few lines of his song, and then he dropped off into another silence. A few minutes had passed after he quit singing, and then Loring became aware of the disagreeable fact that he was to have another companion, and perhaps more, for he heard footsteps approaching from behind.

"Ah, here comes more travellers," said our hero's companion. "Now we shall have a jolly company. The more the merrier."

Ere long three men came up, and their very first movement excited a suspicion of danger in Loring's mind, for one of them drew his companion back and whispered to him, and then all four of them gathered about him.

"Look here, my young friend," said one of them, "we have strong suspicions that you belong on board the rebel brig that lays in the harbor."

"And what if I do?" quickly returned Loring, at the same time placing his hand upon the butt of one of his pistols.

"Why, if you do, then you must be an enemy to the king."

"Well, what of that?"

"Why, if you are, we'll just make you a prisoner, that's all."

The young man drew his pistol, but it was instantly knocked from his grasp, and on the next moment he was seized from behind and firmly held.

"Hold, here, villains!" exclaimed our hero; as he found that he could not break the grasp that was laid upon him. "What means this cowardly attack? Let me go. I have harmed you not."

"O, you needn't try to get away," growled one of the villains. "We've got you fast, and you must go with us—so come along."

Loring struggled with all his might, but he could do nothing towards freeing himself, and when he found that he was being dragged back, he cried out for help.

"Shut up your noise," exclaimed one of the ruffians, at the same time clapping his hand over the prisoner's mouth. "Shut up, or I'll shut it up for ye."

"Hist!" uttered another of the ruffians. "I surely heard some one coming."

Again Loring cried out for help.

"Shut the fellow's mouth!" growled the villain who had last spoken.

"Hallo! What's all this?" cried a man who came rushing up from towards the city.

"Help! help!" exclaimed Loring.

"Eh? Loring?" uttered the new-comer.

"Ben! Ben!"

It was indeed Ben Walker, and with the fury of a tiger, he sprang upon those who held the youth. The first one upon whom he laid his hands he dashed to the earth with such force as to stun him, and in less than a minute the other three were lying by his side. There had been two pistols fired, but neither of them took effect. One of the villains started to his feet but on the instant Ben dealt him a blow that laid him back again.

"What is all this?" the old sailor asked, as soon as he could command his speech.

In a few words Loring explained all that he could.

"Let us just find out who they are?" said Walker; "and then perhaps we can get some clue to their meaning."

The old sailor had pipe-matches in his pocket, and having lighted one, he held it down to the face of one of the fallen men.

"I don't know him," said Walker, "but he looks like a villain."

At that moment one of the ruffians leaped to his feet and started to run away.

"Let him go," continued Walker, as he held the match down to the face of the second man.

"And I don't know this fellow, neither. Now who's this? Aha! here's a pretty bird!"

"Who is it?" uttered Loring.

"Mister Abner Dodwell."

"Dodwell?" repeated the young man. "Is it possible that he can be a tory?"

"Just as likely as not."

Young Cleaveland knew more of Abner Dodwell than did Walker. He knew that he had once asked for the hand of Ella Lincoln, and though he knew not of that young gentleman's subsequent villany, yet he doubted not that the present attempt upon his person was actuated by jealousy, in part, at least.

"It's lucky that I came just as I did," said Walker, as his match went out.

"Yes. But how happened it?"

"Why, I knew you were coming down, to-night, and I took the idea of coming to keep you company."

"It is indeed fortunate," responded our hero.

"Yes, and now let us go on."

"But these bodies?"

"Let 'em be. If they've got life enough in 'em, let 'em crawl off, and if they haven't, let 'em stay."

As Walker spoke, he and Loring turned away from the scene, and bent their steps towards the town, talking, as they did so, of the incident which had just transpired.

In the course of fifteen minutes afterwards, two of the men whom Walker had left upon the ground, came to, and after recognizing each other they found the body of Abner Dodwell. One of them had a small lantern in his pocket, and having found his tinder-box, he lighted the lamp, and then they turned to examine young Dodwell. They found that he had life yet left in him, but his shoulder was broken, and he was otherwise injured.

The two men were too much bruised and lamed themselves to carry the form of young Dodwell, so they dragged his body into the woods, and then started off after help.

CHAPTER XX.

THE LETTER.

LORING CLEAVELAND struggled hard with his love when the time came for him to join the brig; but his love of country was too strong within his bosom to be overcome by any selfish emotion, and he knew that the performing of his duty to the struggling colonies would not lose him an iota of the affection he held from Ella. Yet, when the hour of parting came, he could not drive from his bosom a sort of dim misgiving which had settled there. It was a misgiving without form—without any definable substance, but yet it held an influence over his feelings.

Ella had determined that she would not betray the depth of her own emotions. She had thought to wear a smile when she bade the youth adieu, and thus cheer him on in the path of his patriotic duty; but when the time came, she lacked the power she had counted upon. She could not keep back the tears that swelled up to her eyes, nor could she show the calmness she had resolved to keep. The separation was more painful than she had thought.

"Do not weep, dearest," urged Loring, his own eyes swimming as he spoke. "I shall not

be gone long, and when I return we shall be the happier for this temporary parting. O, when our beloved country is free, then—then, will we meet to part no more. The tyrant shall be driven from our soil—the hand of the oppressor shall be thrown from our heads—the hearthstones of America shall be all sacred to liberty; and then we will meet—we will be happy."

The great idea awoke a new strain in both their bosoms, and for awhile the glowing picture which the youth had drawn captivated their senses.

"My uncle," said Loring, turning to where stood Allen Lyon, "you will be a father to this sweet girl—you will stay with her and protect her."

"Yes, yes, Loring," murmured the old man, while the big tears stood in his eyes. "I will give my own life if it be necessary to aid her. Fear not for her, my noble boy. Go, do your duty, and when it is done, you shall find I will not be neglectful of your interests."

"Thank you, uncle," uttered the young man, as he shook the old gentleman warmly by the hand. Then he turned towards the being whom he so fondly loved.

"Now, Ella," he murmured, as he strained her to his bosom, "we must part for awhile; but let us think only of the hour when we shall again meet. May the good angels be with you to bless and guard you. There—"

He had meant to have said "*adieu*," but he could not. He only imprinted one burning kiss upon her lips, and then he turned and hastened away. Ella looked up, but she was alone with Mr. Lyon.

* * * * *

Both Ella Lincoln and Allen Lyon found a home with farmer Jones, and there it was arranged that they should stay until Loring returned. The more Ella saw of the old gentleman the more she respected and loved him, for she found in him all that can come from a kind and generous heart which has been toned by long and severe experience. To be sure he could not fill that aching void which had been left by the loss of her father, but then he was the source of much real happiness to her.

And Allen Lyon, too, learned to love the gentle Ella more and more. He loved to sit and talk with her, and he loved to see her smile. She did smile sometimes, though the grief-marks were not gone from her face. She smiled in her gratitude for the loving kindness of Mr. Lyon, but she could not smile when she was alone.

Time sped on—the heat of summer came with its arid breath and its waving grain—the moons waxed and waned till the genial breath of autumn came to cool the feverish earth; and yet Ella Lincoln lived quietly beneath the roof of the kind old farmer. The wounds of her heart had become somewhat healed, and when she thought now of the loss she had been called upon to sustain, it was with prayerful, hopeful resignation. One thing, more than all else earthly, made her happy, and that was, the accounts which reached her of her lover's deeds. Honorable mention had been made of young Cleaveland in the Colonial Congress, and when Ella heard of it, she felt glad that she had bade him go.

One day, while Ella was sitting at her small

lattice window, gazing out through the vines that clustered upon the lattice, Mr. Lyon entered with a letter in his hand. Her eye caught the superscription, and she at once recognized the hand of her lover.

"It is from Loring," she uttered, as she reached out her hand.

"Yes, Ella," returned the old gentleman. "You must read it to me."

The maiden took the letter, and having broken the seal, she read as follows:

"Boston, Sept. 17, 1781.

"ELLA—*My own heart's love*. I cannot let this opportunity pass without sending you one word of my remembrance. Our brig is now laying in this port, where we have come with two English ships as prizes. We took them, after a hard struggle, off the coast of Massachusetts, and you may be assured that the circumstance has given joy to our countrymen here. The Ocean Martyr needs much repairing; and as soon as that can be done, we shall sail for Virginia, and then I shall see you once more. O, what a joyful moment awaits me in that happy meeting. I cannot tell you my love—I cannot tell you how my heart yearns towards you, nor can I tell how heavy are the moments that chain my thoughts upon the theme of our separation. Yet I am glad I left you, for I have helped do a noble work, and all our future life will be sweetened by the thought that we sacrificed something for the inheritance that shall be ours.

"I said, *inheritance*. O, Ella, even now I can see the dawn of our country's liberty. I can see the first streaks of that bright day which Americans shall never forget to bless so long as their nation lasts. Wait—wait—the hour shall soon come when the shout shall go forth to tell the world of the tyrant's fall. And in that hour I shall be with you. O, rapture! what joy must then be mine. When my country is free—and you are mine! Ella, pray with me, that God may hasten the hour. Pray with me to that Being who holds us both in his hands.

"My heart is too full to write more. My

thoughts are wild with hope. I must wait till I see you, and then I can speak what I cannot write. Time rolls quickly away, and I shall soon be with you. Bless my uncle for me—tell him my heart holds his image on its bosom of love. God bless you both.

"LORING CLEAVELAND."

Ella laid down the letter, and wept with joy. "Noble boy!" murmured old Lyon, as he wiped his streaming eyes.

In the maiden's heart there was a response to this sentiment, but she could not speak it. She could only take the letter again and press it to her bosom.

"And he will soon come home?" continued the old gentleman. "O, noble boy! how we will love him when he comes."

At that moment, Mr. Jones entered the room. He knew that the letter was from Loring, and he had come to ask the news. Mr. Lyon told him of its contents, and the old farmer was wild in his expressions of patriotic delight.

"Well, well," he said, after he had delivered himself of his first outbreak of feeling, "I only wish we had more young men like him. There aint many of 'em about here."

"True," returned Mr. Lyon. "But, by the way, Jones, who was that sickly-looking young man with whom you spoke in the road this morning?"

"O, that was Abner Dodwell."

"Ah, the young man who was so badly injured a few months since?" said Lyon, without noticing the tremor which had seized the maiden.

"Yes," answered Jones. "He's about well now."

"And is it known yet how he was so dangerously hurt?"

"Not that I know of. The matter has been kept pretty secret."

And so it had. Loring had not spoken of it before he went away, for fear it might give cause for uneasiness to Ella, and Dodwell's friends had not spoken of it for reasons of which the reader must be aware. But the young scamp had had a severe time of it, and for more than a month of the time of his confinement he had been utterly speechless—life seeming only to hang by a thread which a single breath might break.

"Now I think of it," resumed Mr. Lyon; "I saw him over in the field back of the garden last evening. I wonder what he wants about here? Ah, what's the matter, Ella?"

"Nothing, nothing, sir," murmured the fair girl; but yet trembling fearfully.

"You look frightened."

"Do I?"

"You do, surely."

"It is nothing. I am excited, and my nerves are weak. Excuse me, sir."

As Ella spoke, she arose and left the room, and when she reached her own chamber she sat down by the window and gazed out upon the distant road. She thought of Abner Dodwell, and, though friends were about her, yet she feared that wicked man. She tried to persuade herself that he could not harm her, but the fear would cling to her. The piercing rattle of the distant snake will cause a bold heart to tremble, though danger be not really present; and the heart quakes the more, too, when we know not but that the next step we take may set our foot upon the folds of the deadly reptile.

Ella Lincoln knew that the heart of Abner Dodwell was full of rage against her, and she knew, too, that he was vile enough to seek revenge even upon the unfortunate and defenceless; so she resolved that, until Loring returned, she would not leave the house without a companion.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE HUT IN THE WOOD.

FOR several days after Ella had received Loring's letter she seemed to live in the possession of it. She often opened it and read it, and at such times she would forget that sorrow had ever been hers. She marked each day as it fled, and on each evening she felt grateful that time had carried her another step nearer to her lover.

On the evening of the fifth day, Mr. Lyon proposed to the fair girl that they should take a walk. She was happy to accept the proposition, and in a few moments she prepared herself. The evening was calm and serene, and the bright moon was shining in all its liquid and silver lustre.

"Let us take the road, and walk up towards the spot where your home used to stand," said Lyon, after they had reached the gravelled walk in front of the farm-house.

"Well," returned Ella, in a tone made sad by the recollection thus called up, "that will be a pleasant walk."

"You tremble, Ella," said the old gentleman, after they had reached the road.

"Ah, sir, I cannot help it," murmured the fair girl in reply.

"And do the thoughts of your lost home still affect you so deeply?"

"No, sir—it is not that. That scene recalls memories which are painful, but—"

Ella hesitated, and her eyes were bent upon the ground.

"And is there aught else to make you tremble so?" asked Lyon.

"You would think me foolish were I to tell you, sir."

"No, no, Ella. I know you too well to think such a thing as that. But tell me what it is?"

"I almost think myself, sir, that I am foolish; but I cannot help the emotion which moves me. I have a presentiment of evil. It hangs over me like a black cloud, and it sinks to my heart with an icy chill."

"But what is it? Whence comes it?"

"I cannot tell."

"It is only a wild phantasy, my dear girl, believe me. Your heart has been strung to its

utmost of joy by the letter from Loring, and this is but a re-action. Your soul has sunk down into the gloom of the past, and you allow yourself to imagine that the gloom is an alarm from the future. Cheer up, Ella. You have friends who will protect you."

"O, I know that, sir," quickly returned the fair girl. "I know you all will be kind to me; but you cannot know all I feel—you cannot know the whole sorrow of my aching heart. At times, sir, I feel grateful for God's mercy to me, and I try to be happy; but there are times when all the earth is dark—when all is gloom and sadness. The memory of that terrible moment when I was made fatherless comes upon me, and I cannot rise above the awful sensation. I hope God will pardon me, for I do not doubt his kindness."

Allen Lyon was startled by the depth of the maiden's tone—by the fearful emphasis of her feelings, and for a few moments he could not answer.

"Ella," he at length said, "it is a glorious thing to hold the heart up to God, and feel that he has it in charge. Let come what will, we can turn to that one fount of hope."

"I know it—I know it," quickly returned the maiden; "but my heart is a wilful thing. I often reason with it, but as often does it rebel."

While the maiden was speaking there had been some one approaching them from ahead, and as she closed, there appeared a man in advance of them, and apparently walking the same way that they were. He had come from beside the hedge, but they did not know it, and shortly after they had discovered him, he turned to the left, and passed over a stile that led to the field on the other side of the hedge.

"Let us turn back," said Ella, who had begun to tremble with alarm.

"Why so, my dear?"

"There may be danger here. Something tells me that there is."

"Are you afraid of that man who just crossed the stile?"

"He may mean us harm. He surely came into the road ahead of us."

"And what of that?"

"Why should he have gone out again so quickly? Let us turn back, sir. I shall feel easier if you do."

"Certainly, Ella. If it will please you, I will retrace my steps with pleasure."

As Lyon spoke, he turned towards the point from whence he had come. He did so willingly, for he saw that his companion really desired it. They had taken only a few steps on their way homeward, however, before Ella stopped and uttered a low cry of terror.

"What has frightened you?" quickly asked Mr. Lyon, regarding the maiden with a look of surprise.

"I saw a man's head just above the hedge, sir."

"Only imagination, my dear girl."

"No, no—I saw it distinctly. There! there it is again!"

At that instant a man sprang from the hedge into the road, and another followed him. Mr. Lyon had just time to catch a sight of the two forms when he was struck upon the head by a blow that felled him to the earth. He did not move nor cry out, for the blow had completely stunned him. Ella was too utterly astounded to attempt to flee, and before she could fully realize what had transpired, she was seized by the two ruffians.

"Come," said one of them, "let's be off out of this as soon as possible. The old fellow won't trouble us."

"No," returned the other, with a coarse chuckle, "he lays still enough now."

"Hold, good men," cried Ella, "you do not mean to harm me?"

"O, no, my pretty lady," returned the first speaker, "we don't mean you no harm."

"Then let me go—let me go. I am not—"

"Hist! you are just what we want, so come along; and don't make no noise, neither, for that won't answer at all."

"Let me go!" shrieked the poor girl, strug-

gling to free herself from the grasp of the two villains.

"Mercy on us, Toby, shut her mouth," uttered the first of the ruffians. "Shut her mouth, I say, or she'll raise the whole neighborhood, and then we'll have a pretty kettle of fish!"

According to these delicate instructions, Toby placed his great broad hand over the maiden's mouth, and then she was lifted from the ground and borne swiftly away. She struggled no more, for she found that the movement was not only useless, but that it also subjected her to more harsh treatment, and she did not cry out, for she could not.

For the distance of some forty rods the maiden was borne along the road away from her home, and then her conductors turned to the right and crossed a stile that led over into the pasture. This pasture was flanked by a thick wood, and towards this wood the men took their way. They seemed to have their course well laid out, for without the least deviation they struck a narrow path that led into the wood, and as they entered it they were obliged to set their prisoner upon her feet and make her walk, for the boughs and bushes came so near together, that they had to pick their way along as best they could.

After they had gone some distance into the thick copse, the way became so dark, that Ella could hardly distinguish the outlines of the men who were with her, and her terror became more and more dreadful.

"O," she uttered, in the most agonizing tones, "spare me! spare me! Do not murder me!"

"Poh! we aint a goin' to kill ye," returned he who had been called Toby, "so don't be afeared."

"But where are you carrying me to? O, tell me."

"You'll see when you git there, so don't ask any more questions."

Ella still begged and entreated, but no answer was returned. She pleaded in words and tones that might have turned a tiger from his bloody feast, but they did not move the men who carried her; and at length, when she found that all efforts were useless, she relapsed into a state of physical quiet.

On, on, moved the ruffians, until some miles must have been traversed in the wood, and at length they stopped. Ella could see that there was a kind of opening in the wood, for she could see the stars overhead, and then in front she saw what appeared to be a hut of some kind. She could just distinguish the line of the roof as it stood blackly against the starlit foliage beyond.

"Here, now, we stop," said one of the men, as he turned towards the hut. "You hold her, Toby, while I unlock the door. Egad, we're safe so far, at any rate."

The poor girl heard the opening of a door, and in a moment afterwards she was led towards it. She was led up a single step—then forward, until she trod upon a wooden floor. Here she staid in the midst of impenetrable darkness until one of her conductors had struck a light. She saw the sparks as they flew from the ringing steel—she saw the death-like flame of the match; and then she saw the light as it increased in brightness upon the wick of a lamp which had been found.

"There," said the man who had lighted the lamp, as he set it upon a rough shelf, "you must look out for yourself now."

As he spoke, he turned towards the door, and then, for the first time, Ella noticed that the other man had not entered the place, or, if he had, that he had already gone out. She sprang wildly forward, but the villain roughly pushed her back.

"No, no," he uttered, "you must stay here. You wont be alone long."

The man passed out, and when he had gone, Ella sank down upon the floor. When she

arose, she found the lamp was burning, and that she was all alone. Her first impulse was to examine the place; and the lamp, where it stood, afforded light enough for this.

Hoping to find some avenue of escape from her prison, she made a search with as much closeness as she could, breathing an earnest supplication for deliverance from the power of a foe from whom she entertained the most distressing fears, and anxious for relief from the uncertainty of the fate which seemed to hover over her. But egress from her durance seemed wholly cut off.

The room was very small, but evidently occupied the whole of the building, for the frame, from the sill to the rafters, was all exposed.

There were two small windows, but they were shut up with doors and nailed. She went to the door, but it was of solid wood, and fast upon the outside. She looked all about the place, but there was not the least chance for escape. In one corner there was a stool, and upon this she took a seat. Here she sat for a long time—how long she could not tell—and just as a sense of drowsiness was beginning to overcome her, she was aroused by the moving of the fastenings upon the outside of the door. Whoever was there seemed desirous of entering in a stealthy manner, for the effort was made with much caution and apparent secrecy. But Ella's ears were quick of discernment.

CHAPTER. XXII.

TO-MORROW!

ELLA LINCOLN started to her feet when she heard the sound upon the outside of her prison-house, and ere long the door was opened. It was Abner Dodwell who entered. But how he was changed! Ella would hardly have known him but for certain marks of character about the eyes and mouth which nought could have altered. He had become thin and pale, and his features were shadowed by a deathly hue. But his thin lips still bore the same restless tone, and his eyes were yet full of that fierce fire which had burned there before.

Ella started back as she saw the young man, and her first impulse was to sink upon her knees.

"Abner," she cried, clasping her hands beseechingly together, "spare me, O, spare me!"

"I have come to spare thee, maiden," returned Dodwell, in a cold, biting tone, at the same time fixing his eyes keenly upon the kneeling girl.

"And you will take me away from here?"

"Certainly I will. I have come now for that purpose."

"And you will let me go home?"

"Ay, to the house I have prepared for you."

Ella started again to her feet, for she read at once the man's meaning. She stood trembling against the wall, and with her hands still clasped, she murmured:

"Spare me! O, spare me!"

"Hark, ye, lady," said Dodwell, in a tone full of calm resolution, "I have had you brought here that you might be in my possession. Long ago I loved you, and you gave me reason to think that you loved me in return. You allowed me to be kept on in suspense until your eyes had fallen upon another whom you preferred to me. Your changeful love caught the young sailor, and—"

"Hold! hold!" interrupted Ella. "O, Abner Dodwell, you know you are speaking falsehood. I never loved you—never; and only when you forced yourself upon me, did I keep your company."

"Never mind, Miss Lincoln; your explanations are too late now. I loved *you*, and you thought not of rejecting me until young Cleaveland came to your house. But I am not to be rejected so easily. Once before this have I had

you in my power, and you escaped me, but you will not escape me again. You shall now be my wife, though the very heaven itself were against me."

"Mercy! mercy!" groaned Ella, again sinking upon her knees.

"I will show the same mercy that you showed to me," returned Dodwell, with a bitter laugh.

"I was once in your power—you had the power to make me, or to unmake me—I threw myself upon your love, and you cast me off. I begged and entreated, but you would not listen. Now the scale is turned. *You* are in *my* power. Now beg on—beg on, lady, and let me assure you that your begging is sweet music in my ear, for it tells me how deep is my revenge. You are to be my wife!"

Ella Lincoln clasped her hands upon her bosom, and with eyes now tearless, she groaned aloud. She knew that further entreaty would be vain, and with one faint hope of escape she resigned herself to the coming fate.

"Come," continued Dodwell, "you will now accompany me to a more fitting place than this. You may go with me peaceably, or I will call for help and have you carried. Which will you do?"

"I will go, sir," said Ella, for she knew that resistance would be useless.

"Then cover your head and follow."

Abner Dodwell took a small lantern from his pocket, and having lighted it he blew out the lamp that stood upon the shelf, and then turned towards the door. Ella followed him to the outside, where he stopped, and closed the door and locked it, and then he gave the maiden his hand. She drew back from the extended hand with a cold shudder.

"Do not touch me," she uttered. "I will follow you."

"As you please," bitterly returned the young man; "only mind that you *do* follow me."

The way which Dodwell took was opposite from the one Ella had come, and in less than fifteen minutes they had cleared the wood. The maiden noticed the circumstance, and she saw

that she was now in a large field which belonged to Mr. Dodwell, and she could see that gentleman's house gleaming in the moonlight ahead of her. She walked by the side of her conductor, who had now returned the lantern to his pocket, and in half an hour she entered the court in front of the dwelling.

"Now here we are," said Abner, as they reached the piazza, "and I do not mean that you shall escape me again. Come."

He led the way to the front door, and with a trembling step Ella followed. Once the idea of turning to flee entered her mind, but she knew it could avail her nothing, and she kept on. When she had entered the house her conductor stopped, and having turned the key of the front door and put it in his pocket, he bade the maiden wait till he returned. He was gone only a few moments, and when he came back he had a lamp.

"Now," he said, "you shall find a place of rest. Come."

Ella hesitated, and the young man took her by the arm and led her towards the stairs. She would have shrank from his grasp, but he held her too tightly.

"There, my lady, is the room you have once before occupied," said Dodwell, as he stopped in front of the well remembered door through which Ella had passed when she had been before in the villain's power. "How you escaped that night has ever since puzzled me, but you may rest assured that you won't escape me again. There, go in, and seek the rest you need."

He pushed Ella in as he spoke, and having set the lamp upon a chair near the entrance, he closed the door, locked it upon the outside, and then went away.

The first movement of the poor girl, after she was left alone, was to sink upon her knees, and pray. She prayed earnestly that God might help her in this, her hour of need, and when she arose she was more calm. She sought the bed, and with another murmuring prayer she sank down upon it. For awhile the thoughts of her fearful situation raged wildly in her brain,

but fatigue was too heavy upon her for long thought, and at length she sank into an uneasy, dreamy sleep.

It was near midnight when young Dodwell turned away from the chamber where he had left Ella Lincoln, but yet when he entered the library he found his father up. The old man sat at his table, with letters open before him, and an involuntary start as his son entered told how uneasy was his mind.

"Well, father, the bird is caged at last," said Abner, as he sat down near the table.

"Do you mean Ella Lincoln?" asked the old man, laying down his pen, and regarding his son with a fixed look.

"Yes. She is safe up stairs."

"And now I suppose, you mean to marry her?"

"Of course I do."

"Well, I don't blame you; but you will get no money now. Lincoln's creditors have taken every cent there was left. The land has been sold to a gentleman in Norfolk, and you see he is already building upon the spot."

"Yes, I know all that, but I will marry the girl out of revenge. I have sworn that she should be mine, and mine she shall be."

"O, I don't blame you, my son, though I do wish we could have secured those broad lands—they are the handsomest and best in the country."

"It's too late to cry for that now, father. I think we've burnt our own fingers a little. We took one step too far when we—"

"Stop, stop, Abner," uttered the old man, with a shudder. "Let the past go, for we have enough in the future, or in the present, to look out for. Our plans are working well if there be no treachery. The American army

must soon be annihilated, and then we shall gain our reward. Heavy reinforcements are expected every day at Yorktown, and Lord Cornwallis has the reins in his hands. The work is nearly done."

"Upon my soul, I hope it is," added Abner. "But look ye, father, what now of Dagon? Do you yet trust him?"

"Yes. I trust him, because I cannot well avoid it, but by my soul I doubt him. O, I would give much to know that man thoroughly."

"But what work has he done for the king's cause yet?"

"Not a stroke that can count, that I know of; though I must say, that he has helped us lay some of our best plans. Yet, Abner, I distrust the man."

"And so do I," added the son. And then casting his eyes furtively about him, he continued: "I don't feel easy while Dagon is about. I think a bullet would settle him!"

Old Dodwell started at this dark hint.

"Wait awhile," he said. "He will not be dangerous at present, for he is thoroughly watched. Let him rest now, and we will think of consummating your business with Miss Lincoln. When do you mean to marry her?"

"To-morrow, if I can find the priest to do it."

"Well, I suppose the sooner it is done the better," returned the father, in a sort of thoughtful mood. "Make your arrangements, and we can easily find a priest. We can turn this matter off to-morrow, and then we shall be free to attend to other business that needs looking after."

"It shall be to-morrow!" repeated Abner; and as he spoke, he arose and left the room, murmuring—"To-morrow," as he went.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"TO-MORROW! AND 'TIS DONE!"

WHEN Ella Lincoln awoke it was broad day. It was some time before she could clearly recall the events of the past night, but when she did—when she fully realized her situation—she sank back upon her pillow and sobbed in her bitter anguish. With heart-broken tones she called on God to help her—she prayed long and fervently, and when she felt more composed she arose from her bed and went to the window. The sun was already high up in the heavens, and the air was cool and bracing.

From where she stood she could see the broad lands that had once belonged to her father, and she could also see the top of the great house which had been built upon the spot where she was born. She started with surprise when she saw that the building was already erected. She knew that a rich man of the city, a Mr. Van Geisen—had bought the land, and she knew that he intended to build upon it, but she knew not that the house was finished. She had not visited the spot, for she could not bear to see it.

"Alas!" she murmured, as she gazed upon

the scene, "so departs my home to the hands of strangers. All—all is gone—the home of my childhood—my mother, father—all! all!"

The big tears which had long been kept back now burst forth, and the unhappy girl sank down upon a chair. She had not set there long when she was aroused by the opening of the door, and a female looked into the room. Before Ella could distinguish the features of the woman she was gone, and in a few minutes afterwards the door was again opened, and this time Abner Dodwell entered.

"Good morning, Ella," he said, as he approached the spot where the maiden sat.

But Ella answered him not. She only gazed into his face with a cold shudder; and the fountain of her tears became dry beneath the fearful oppressiveness that came upon her.

"What," uttered Dodwell, while a spark of anger appeared in either eye; "have you no word of greeting for me this morning?"

Again the poor girl looked up, but she could not speak. The very sight of Abner Dodwell tied her tongue.

"Your looks do not become you, my fair

girl," continued Abner, in a sarcastic tone. "This is your wedding-day."

"Sir!" uttered Ella, loosening her tongue and starting to her feet.

"I said this was your wedding-day."

"O, why should you—"

"Come, come, a truce to your entreaties, now, for I want none of them. This day—ay, this very hour—you are to be my wife!"

"O, vile monster!"

"Go on, my lady—go on. It does me good to hear you rail, for it makes me take a keener relish for my revenge!"

"Revenge, sir? O, Abner Dodwell, what have I ever done that you should seek such revenge?"

"You have done enough. You have trampled upon my very heart!"

"O, wretch—you never had a heart."

"Then, sweet maiden, you should not entreat me, for men without hearts have no feelings. So hush your pratings and come with me. Come."

He took the maiden by the arm as he spoke, and drew her towards him.

"Spare me! O, spare me!" she cried, as she struggled to free herself.

"O, I have no heart, lady, so I feel not for you. Your struggles will be useless—utterly so. Come, we are waited for below."

Ella's heart sank within her, and with a deep groan she suffered herself to be led from the room. When she reached the lower hall she was conducted to one of the front parlors, where she found Mr. Reuben Dodwell, together with three other persons, one of whom was habited like a priest. With one more faint hope the maiden sprang towards the old gentleman.

"Mr. Dodwell," she cried, "you will save me—for the sake of my poor father's memory, you will save me?"

"Appeal not to me, girl," returned the dark old man, in a stern, forbidding tone.

"But my father—"

"Was a villain!" interrupted old Dodwell.

"O, great God of heavens!" groaned the stricken girl, starting back and gazing upon the old man before her.

"Do not waste your time in looking upon me," resumed the old man, shrinking before the burning gaze of the injured girl. "Take her, Abner."

The young man approached Ella, and again took her hand.

"Come, sir priest," he said, turning towards the individual thus habited, "we are ready."

"Mercy!" shrieked the affrighted girl, as she now comprehended all.

"Men without hearts have no mercy," uttered Abner. "Go on, priest."

The man with the holy book approached the spot, and opened the volume. Poor Ella Lincoln gazed upon him with a wild, haggard look. She knew enough to see that he had no mercy in his looks, and her tongue clove to the roof of her mouth. Abner Dodwell grasped her hand with a grip of iron, and at another nod the priest proceeded. The maiden uttered not a word—she moved not a muscle—and yet she heard the marriage mockery go on.

"Now—now you are mine!" cried Abner, as the priest moved back from the performance of his infamous work. "I swore this should be, and—*it is!* You are my wife now, past all redemption. Ha, ha, sweet Ella, did I not tell you so?"

The maiden did not answer, for she could not. Her sorrow-laden senses had left her, and she sank unconscious back into the arms of her persecutor.

"Bear her away to her chamber, Abner," said the old man; "and come you back again as soon as you can. We have business now."

The young man obeyed his father's injunction, and when he had placed his bride under lock and key, he returned to the parlor.

"Now," resumed the elder Dodwell, "we have work of more moment to attend to. Who has seen Dagon to-day?"

"I have," answered one of the men who had been a witness to the marriage ceremony.

"Ah, Maxall, and where was it?"

"Right here, in front of the house, sir. And I thought he looked strange, too, sir."

"Not wonderful for him," added Dodwell.

"But he looked mighty savage, sir," resumed Maxall. "He stood out here in the park, and when I caught his eye, it was burning like a coal of fire."

"Never mind. We must have him away from here to-night. We have business before our meeting this evening that he must not hear. To-night, we must make the final arrangements for sending off our troops to Yorktown, for Cornwallis needs them all. I have letters from him, and he wants what men we can raise to cross over to Hampton as soon as possible, and there a private messenger will meet them. I am afraid to trust Dagon with this."

"Let us send him to the coast upon a fool's errand," suggested Abner.

"That will do as well as any way," rejoined the old tory. "I will send him off."

"And suppose he refuses?"

"Then—" Old Dodwell spoke thus much, and then laid his hand significantly upon his pistol. "You know our laws grant us this."

The rest signified assent to this meaning proposition, and a general chuckle ensued. None of them liked the old hunter, for he had more than once hinted to them that they were villains.

It was two hours afterwards that Reuben Dodwell found the man whom he sought.

"Dagon," said he. "I want you to start at once for Namby's Point."

"But that is many miles from here, sir. It will take me all night," returned the hunter.

"Never mind that. The business is of the utmost importance, and we have selected you as the most fitting man to do it." And thereupon, Dodwell went on, and detailed very minutely the errand he had fixed up for the occasion.

"Very well, sir," returned Dagon, with a peculiar look, "your business shall be attended to."

"You must start at once."

"O, yes. I am off already. Where shall I meet you in the morning?"

"Here, of course."

"Very well. When we meet again, never fear but that I shall have news for you."

As the hunter thus spoke, he turned away, and flinging his rifle across his shoulder he started off down the path that led to the road. Twice he stopped and turned his gaze back upon Reuben Dodwell's dwelling, and when he did so his eyes gleamed with a strange fire, and the muscles of his face worked with an emotion that boded ill for somebody.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CONCLUSION.

It was night. Hour after hour passed, and yet Ella was left alone in the chamber to which she had been conducted. It must have been ten o'clock, when the door of her room was unlocked, and a female entered, who asked the poor girl if she wished for anything.

"Nothing but my liberty," answered Ella. "O, you are a woman! You must have a heart! You can give me egress from this place!"

"Surely," uttered Ella to herself, a few moments after the woman had gone, "she did not lock the door! I did not hear the turning of the key!"

Tremblingly she moved towards the door—she placed her hand upon the latch—it yielded to her pressure, and the door opened. The maiden trembled so violently that for a few moments she was powerless; but with a powerful effort she composed her nerves, and noiselessly she pushed the door further open. The moon shone into the hall window, and she could see the stairs where the moonbeams lay upon them. Slowly she moved towards them—she had placed her feet upon the first step when

she heard the sound of voices in a room below. She stopped, but it was only for an instant, for she knew that moments were like hours to her now. Without noise she had reached the foot of the stairs, and as she stopped there to think upon the direction she should take, a door upon her right hand suddenly opened, and Abner Dodwell stepped into the hall! He had a lamp in his hand, and his eye caught the form of the maiden.

"Ha!" he uttered. "Out again? By my faith, I am just in season."

He sprang forward as he spoke, and just as Ella uttered a low cry he caught her by the arm, and dragged her into the apartment he had just left. It was one of the large parlors, and the elder Dodwell was there.

"How now, Abner?" asked the old man, as his son led the poor girl into the room.

"Why have you brought her here?"

"Brought her?" repeated Abner. "By the saints, governor, she was making her exit; just going to take French leave."

"Ah. Well, carry her back, and put a guard over her. We must go now, for our peo-

ple were all assembled long ago. Come, come, we have no time to lose."

Abner was upon the point of turning to obey his father's injunction, when the front door opened, and some one entered the hall.

"There is some one after us now," said the old man. "Make haste and carry her back. We should have been at the meeting, an hour ago."

As he finished speaking the person who had entered the hall burst into the room where they were. It was Maxall, and he was covered with dust and blood.

"S'death! Maxall, what is all this?" cried the old man, starting forward.

Abner had also started, leaving Ella to sink back upon a lounge that stood against the wall.

"Our people, sir," gasped Maxall, sinking back into a chair from utter exhaustion, "are all either killed or taken prisoners!"

"No, no! Death and furies, no!" shrieked old Dodwell. "You lie!"

"O, my heavens! it is true," murmured Maxall, holding his hand to his head to cover a wound that was bleeding there.

"But how? Where? Where?" asked Abner. "We heard no noise."

"There was not a pistol fired," returned Maxall. "We had assembled in the barn—all as usual—our sentry was at his post—and ere we could tell how they came, the place was full of enemies. I saw a score of our brave fellows cut down, and while they were securing the others, I leaped to my feet and escaped. They thought me dead at first. The sentinel at the door was killed, and I saw one more of our men, who had only a moment before started out to call you, laying dead at the threshold."

"Then we must flee!" cried the old tory. "O, there's treason here! Abner, we must fly!"

At that moment there came the sound of quick, heavy steps upon the piazza. Reuben Dodwell would have fled, but the way was now cut off. In a moment more the footfall sounded upon the hall floor, for Maxall had left the doors open in his haste, and while old Dod-

well and his son were looking wildly about them for the means of escape, the giant form of Ben Walker stalked into the room.

In an instant, Ella sprang to her feet. The moment she saw that man, she knew that she was saved. The very appearance of his noble countenance and stalwart frame was an assurance to the maiden of safety. With a wild cry of delight, she leaped forward and caught the old sailor by the arm.

"O, you have come to save me?" she cried.

"Yes, lady. Ah, but here comes somebody that'll take care of you. I must attend to these pretty gentlemen here."

"Ella! Ella!" at that moment cried a voice behind her. She turned, and was clasped in the arms of Loring Cleaveland. At that moment she thought not that she was a wife—she thought not that she was in the presence of her persecutors; she only knew that he whom she loved was with her, and she wildly murmured her notes of joy.

There were a score of the old Ocean Martyr's crew followed Loring into the room, and before the three tories could recover from their first shock of astonishment they were seized and bound.

"Hollo, here!" cried a voice from the hall. "Ah, you have them safe. Thank God, that makes the whole nest of them!"

It was the old hunter-spy who had spoken, and while the last sentence was upon his lips he entered the room. The moment he came in sight, the eyes of the gray-headed old tory flashed with fire.

"O, villain!" he hissed, "it is you who have betrayed us!"

"It is I who have delivered you to justice," calmly returned Dagon. "It is I who have freed the country from the greatest pack of villains that ever infested it."

"O, for one moment of liberty to shoot you dead!" gasped Abner, as he writhed beneath his bonds.

"Never mind your kind wish now," returned the hunter. "I have come in time to save

you from your last act of villany. I am in season to save this poor girl from your—"

"Ha, ha, ha," broke in the young renegade.

"She is my wife—my lawful, wedded wife!"

"Just heavens!" ejaculated Loring, turning pale as death. "Ella, Ella, is this thing true?"

"O, O!" groaned the poor girl. "He speaks the truth!"

"One moment," said Dagon, as he eyed the young villain with a scathing look. "If she were really your wife, she would soon be your widow! But the whole thing is false. It was no priest who married you. The villain who said over that meaningless mockery, was one of the basest of your tools, and he now lays dead in your barn. I saw it all. Fear not, Loring, and you, sweet Ella, take courage, for you are as free from the marriage vow, as the speechless infant."

"Hold, base traitor!" cried young Dodwell, whose fear of death bent him from the subject of his false marriage. "You lie when you say she would soon be my widow. We are but prisoners of war, and you dare not murder us."

"I know what you are," returned Dagon, with a bitter sneer; "and I know that both you and your father will be hanged ere a month more shall pass. It was you," continued the hunter, lowering his voice, and shaking his finger at the prisoner, "who set the house of Matthew Lincoln on fire."

"Liar!" broke from the lips of both father and son at once.

"O, I know of what I speak," resumed Dagon, "and I can prove what I say."

Just as the hunter spoke, and while the miserable prisoners were becoming pale with a new and deadly fear, old Allen Lyon entered the room. He had entirely recovered from the blow he had received the night previous.

"Ah, he uttered, as he gazed about him, "you have done the work well, I see. And you, dear Ella, are safe. Thank God! But listen, brave patriots, and you, too, you tories—I have glorious news for you. America has told her story of power! Yorktown is taken!"

Cornwallis has surrendered! Over seven thousand British soldiers have laid down their arms!"

Dodwell's old mansion shook to its very foundation with the shout which burst from the noble patriot band; and when the pean died away, old Dagon stepped forward and gazed for a moment upon those who stood around him.

"O!" he uttered, as the tears started to his eyes, "my duty is done—the hour of my triumph is come. If Virginia is free, then the colonies are safe. O, heavens! what hours of agony have I passed that I might help bring about this glorious result. Look upon me, ye who stand here, and you shall know how I must have wrestled with the duty I had imposed upon myself. Years ago, when the invader first put his sacrilegious foot upon our soil, I became what now I am. I saw that many of my own countrymen were proving false to their birthright—I saw that Virginia was infested with a secret, dangerous foe, in the shape of her tories, and I resolved to dive into their secrets, and give them up to the justice they merited; so I assumed a fitting disguise, and commenced my work. I succeeded better than I expected. Band after band of the renegades fell into the hands of the patriot troops through my contrivance, and at last I found this nest which we have this night encompassed, and you know the result. There is not one of them now at liberty."

The hunter's voice was choked. He bowed his head upon his hands for a moment, and when he again arose, there was a movement among that crowd as though a messenger from heaven had suddenly descended amongst them. The black beard had gone, and tears were upon the cheeks where it had been. Ella Lincoln broke from the grasp of her lover, and took one quick step forward. She stopped and raised her hand to her brow. Again she moved forward, and, without speech, she was folded to the hunter's bosom.

"Heaven save us!" gasped Reuben Dodwell. "It is Matthew Lincoln!"

Wildly, wildly, clung Ella to the bosom of

her father, for fear that some dark power should snatch him from her. She murmured wildly, too, in her frenzy of joy, and her murmurs were sent up to God.

"I know you wonder," said Matthew Lincoln, as he had received the grasp of each of his friends; "but it is all very simple. While Matthew Lincoln was thought to live, none suspected that he and Dagon were one. Hence you see how easily Dagon escaped from danger when there was need. That morning on which I was thrown from my horse, I was hardly injured at all—only stunned for the time, and when I came to, I thought how serviceable it would be to my cause, if people could think that I was really confined to my house and bed. The task I then had before me was a difficult one—that of detecting and betraying tories who all knew me. I thought if Matthew Lincoln was laid in bed with a broken leg, there would not be so much danger of Dagon's being recognized. Doctor Thornton joined me in the plot, and to old Quash I confessed the secret. O, it made my heart ache to see my child suffer, but I knew that all would be bright in the end; and I knew, too, that a few months of sorrow would make the coming joy more sweet. I was working for my country, and I shrank not from the ordeal. I went out and in from my chamber when I wished, and when I was gone Quash would let no one in to see me.

"On the night of the fire I was away; but you see how faithfully Quash kept his secret. The poor fellow did his duty nobly. Those bones which you found among the ruins, were evidently those of a fellow who was lost there on the night of the fire. There were a number of men there who went for plunder, and he was one of them. At any rate they were members of the tory band, and one of them has been missing since that night. Only once during the years that I have worn my hunter spy's disguise, have I trembled in fear of detection, and that was when I met you, Allen Lyon, on board the brig. The people at home, thinking that they knew the whereabouts of Matthew Lincoln, could not dream that Dagon was the

man; but when you first started at the sound of my voice, I trembled. I knew that, from the many times I had met you on business in England, you would be more likely to trace my voice to the truth, but I hoped to bewilder you, and I succeeded. But the trial is passed. I have gained my dearest wish, and I am content. Ella, my child," continued the old man, as a shade of sadness passed over his features, "we have happiness left for us, and we must not grieve for what is lost. Our once bright home is gone—my property is stripped from me—and in the wealth of earth I am penniless; but—"

"Matthew Lincoln," interrupted Allen Lyon, "wait. I, too, have a secret. Come, come—there are carriages at the door. Let these prisoners be secured, and then follow me."

* * * *

There were carriages at the door, and those of the patriots who could find room therein entered, while the others—members of the Ocean Martyr's crew—started off on foot. The drivers were all instructed, and as soon as all was ready, they started off. Matthew Lincoln was in a maze of wonder—and so were all the rest, all but Allen Lyon. He alone looked satisfied and smiling.

When the carriages stopped, Matthew Lincoln found himself in front of the great house that had been built upon the spot where his own had once stood. He had no chance to ask a question, for Lyon took him by the arm and led him up the broad piazza, and from thence into the house. Ella and Loring followed, while Ben Walker and his stout crew brought up the rear. It was a great hall into which they entered, and bright lamps were burning in dazzling profusion. A long, wide banquet-table was spread, at the head of which stood old Quash, while up and down on either side, were arranged the servants who had been wont to tread the floors that lay above the spot before.

For a moment all was wild confusion. The servants who stood by the board had recognized their beloved master, and they came crowding about him.

"There, there," he uttered, as he shook

them by the hand, "old Quash will tell you all about it."

Then Matthew Lincoln turned to Mr. Lyon, who stood, looking proud and happy, at the end of the table.

"Allen Lyon, what means all this?"

"I will tell you," returned Lyon, with a swelling bosom. "When I came to this country I brought all my wealth with me, and it is a round sum, sir. I told not of my riches at first, for I wished to see where they were most deserved. It took but a short time to tell me that, however; for I soon found that my noble nephew—my only sister's son—was worthy. I found that Ella was pledged to be his bride, and then I thought that I would give her back her home—that she should possess the lands that were by right already hers. I took a fancy to make a surprise of this, so I got Mr. Van Geisen to do the business at my bidding as though he did it for himself. The house was finished and furnished a week ago, and last evening, or rather on the evening before that—for it must be near morning now—I meant to have taken Ella up here and shown her what had been done; but you all know how that was prevented. This morning I met Dagon, and he assured me that the maiden should be free to-night. I knew he spoke the truth. The brig had arrived—my nephew had returned, and all was ready for my plan, and so I prepared this banquet. But the joy is made more than I had expected, for there is no sorrow now to come up from the past. Lincoln—my old friend—you are alive, and all is now assuredly blessed of Heaven."

The two old men embraced each other, and just as they parted Gimbo entered the room.

"He's cum, Mas'r Lyon," cried the negro, with a joyous smile. "He's cum wid me. Here he am. Gor a'mighty, didn't I run quick!"

It was an old white-haired man who followed Gimbo—the old clergyman who had long ministered in that region. He recognized Matthew Lincoln, and he held up his hands in wonder towards him.

"Now, now, Lincoln," said Mr. Lyon, "the hour of my joy has come. This house—

these lands, and all their appurtenances, I give as a bridal gift to your sweet child, and the rest of my wealth, to the amount of more than an hundred thousand pounds, I have settled upon my nephew. We are old—too old to dive into business now—and we will find a home with them. Come, here is the minister, and here is my nephew."

"And here," cried Matthew Lincoln, while the tears rolled down his cheeks, "is my daughter. O, blessed be God!"

The white-haired man of God did his work, and when Loring Cleaveland clasped Ella to his bosom and called her *wife*, then the two old men caught each other by the hand and wept while they saw the joy they had made. Ben Walker threw up his hat and shouted with all his vast might, and his brave crew followed his example.

The old clergyman stood at the head of the banquet-table and asked for the blessings of God upon the occasion, upon the people, and the country, and then sat down with the rest.

Now, what more shall we tell? The tory prisoners were delivered up to the proper authorities; but old Dodwell and his son were kept in the hands of the civil law. They escaped its fearful penalty, however; for Abner died from the effects of the terrible shock he had received, coming, as it did, upon a constitution already weak from former disease, and his father, dreading to meet the gaze of the world again, took his own life!

Loring and Ella found all the joy that can grow upon two such pure hearts as were theirs, and with their immense wealth, they strewed the seeds of joy about them on every hand, so that others might taste the sweets of life in their bounty.

Gimbo and Quash were real lords in the great house, and though, from extreme indulgence, they grew in self-consequence, yet they were ever faithful.

Ben Walker followed the sea a few years more, and then Loring made him come and find a home beneath his roof. The noble old sailor did not reject the offer, for he knew that it was made from the depths of an honest heart.

THE END.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE—The foregoing Novelette was originally published in THE FLAG OF OUR UNION, and is but one among the many and deeply interesting productions emanating from that source. THE FLAG has attained to a circulation unrivalled in newspaper literature; its contributors form a corps of the finest talent in the land, and its romances, tales, and poetical gems are of a high order, and such as enrich the columns of no other publication.

[FROM THE FLAG OF OUR UNION]

A COUNTRY RESIDENCE.

BY MRS. M. E. ROBINSON.

MRS. RODNEY ALVORD was decidedly tired of a city life, and so was Mr. Rodney Alvord. Both believed that a residence in one of the suburban towns was the only thing lacking to complete their mutual felicity. Mrs. Alvord preferred a neat, pretty little cottage, with a wilderness of vines running over and about it, and a green and white summer-house in the rear; it would be so delightful and romantic to take their tea there during the warm weather!

Mr. Alvord, however, liked a more solid looking style of architecture; a massive, substantial, square-built edifice, fashioned more for comfort and convenience than ornament.

But the gentleman was not very tenacious, and liked to gratify his wife; so it was finally settled that when they moved into the country her taste should first be consulted. The latter discovered every day some new objection to her city home, and became more and more sensible of the disadvantages under which they were hourly laboring; they were centrally located; their residence was a pleasant and convenient one, and all their neighbors were kind and agree-

able. But these items were of little consequence to Mrs. Alvord and husband, when they reflected on the numerous advantages of an out-of-town residence.

"Had I better buy a house, or hire?" asked the latter, during a long conversation on the pleasing topic.

"O, buy, by all means! It will seem so much more independent and less city-like than hiring. And as we shall occupy it the whole year, we may as well have a place we can call our own; in that case we can repair the house, if it needs it (but be careful that it don't, Mr. Alvord), and make such alterations as we like, without feeling that by some sudden caprice of the owner, we may be obliged to leave."

"My sentiments exactly!" exclaimed the gentleman, rubbing his hands together enthusiastically. "What a treasure you are, my dear!"

"We shall keep our carriage, of course?" continued Mrs. Alvord, inquiringly.

"Well, really, my love—I don't—think it would be practicable," he rejoined, hesitatingly.

"Plenty of room in the country, you know?" suggested his companion.

"Wouldn't horses require something to eat in the country as well as here? You must remember we are not rich, my dear."

"Sure enough! But we can have a stable attached to the buildings, and that will do almost as well," added Mrs. Alvord, with a smile, "I can imagine myself sitting under our own vine and fig tree, with nobody to molest and make us afraid. Cities never were made to live in, and that is settled beyond a doubt. The children can run to school and pick flowers by the way. Wont it be delightful?"

"And we can raise our own vegetable, and perhaps a few bushels of apples," added Mr. Alvord.

"The noise, too, in this Babel of a place is so annoying. I'm sure I can't hear myself think; and when I have callers we are obliged to talk distressingly loud. I shouldn't wonder if one or both of my lungs are affected." And the lady coughed a little to try their strength.

"There is another matter that you have omitted, and one that I consider very important. You know we have a great deal of company; company can't find us there, my dear," said Mr. Alvord, significantly. "We can't be blamed for that, however," he added, stroking his handsome whiskers with a complacent smile.

"That will be an advantage assuredly! You think of everything, Mr. Alvord," replied his better half. "But you wont be able to dine with us?"

"That is of slight consequence; I can drop into an eating saloon and take a bite and have the more time to devote to my business. To be sure it may not taste quite as good as our family dinner, but I shall enjoy your company at tea quite as well for the slight self denial on my part."

"And I shall have my whole time to look after myself and the children. The advantages certainly multiply," observed Mrs. Alvord.

In the course of a month Mr. Alvord succeeded in finding a house, about three miles from the city, which suited his own fancy and that of his wife, and soon after the requisite papers were made out, and the property passed

into his possession. The children were delighted at the news, and immediately set about forming plans for their future happiness.

It was early in March that the purchase was completed, and owing to circumstances over which they had no control, it was deemed best by both Mr. Alvord and his wife to take possession as soon as possible. In fact the lady was inclined to facilitate matters; she was eager "to breathe pure air, and see the beautiful sun once more; it was strange that people could contentedly exist in a crowded, smoky, dirty, dark, noisy city."

Packing now commenced in good earnest, and Mrs. Alvord, who had not moved for several years, brought to the light numberless articles of trifling value, but which, she argued, were much too good to leave behind, and some day could be put to use; so baskets and bags, barrels and boxes were soon brought into requisition. Mrs. Alvord's happy spirits were somewhat dampened by a driving snow storm, which came on in the midst of this important business, and soon after turned into a drizzling rain; but after much delay and trouble, she had the satisfaction of seeing the last load of goods deposited in their country residence, and of knowing that at last her much desired wish was gained.

To be sure the baby had caught cold, and was in danger of having the croup; and also, owing to the extreme coldness of the weather, several valuable house plants had been frozen by exposure; but the lady argued that these same events would probably have transpired anywhere else.

Neither the husband nor wife had taken more than a cursory view of the premises before purchasing, and were evidently rather disappointed when they discovered that the house was a very cold one, and the drafts not particularly good. Having been accustomed to the genial warmth of a furnace in the city, the change to a situation rather bleak than otherwise, and exposed to every blast of wind, was keenly felt. The wind howled, windows rattled, blinds with broken fastenings banged back and forth, and one with hammer and nails, and another with plenty

of cotton wool, commenced trying to shut off, in some measure, the many currents of air that were pouring in from every direction.

But there was one consolation; March might be a second February, but it could not always last; it must give way to welcome April, and then they should begin to enjoy themselves. The next four weeks were long and dreary ones to Mrs. Alvord, who liked society and had always made it a practice to go out every day; but the weather was such a medley of wet and dry, warm and cold, that but twice in that time did she venture to visit the city; as the line of coaches that ran to and from the latter place did not come within half a mile of her door, a circumstance that both had neglected to previously ascertain.

"We must see Madame A—to-night," said Mr. Alvord, one morning while at breakfast. "I will procure tickets, and come home earlier than usual. We cannot fail to enjoy it."

"I should like it much, but I fear we shall be gone too long. One of the children is not well, and Jane will have the babe to take care of," returned Mrs. Alvord.

"A very slight service, my dear, for a stout, healthy girl like Jane. Don't worry about the children, but put yourself in readiness to go against my return," he added, as he closed the door.

"I suppose there will be no trouble about getting home?" said Mrs. Alvord to her husband, as the performance was about ended, and the brilliant and fashionable audience were dispersing.

"Not in the least," he rejoined. "A coach always stands at the door for our place, so we need not hurry ourselves at all. There is abundance of time."

The lady felt quite easy, and the couple leisurely proceeded towards the door, criticizing the respective merits of the different performers, not imagining that the last seat in the already crowded carriage had been taken ten minutes before. By the time they were outside, not a public conveyance was to be seen. Mr. and Mrs. Alvord looked at each other in blank sur-

prise; that haste was at all necessary to procure passable accommodations they had no idea; neither did they know much of the scrambling, pushing and crowding of every applicant for a seat, and the vast amount of care manifested for self.

"What are we to do!" at last exclaimed the lady, with much concern. "We have been exceedingly careless."

"I am afraid we have. But it wont do any good to blame ourselves now, as I can perceive. Here we are, three miles from home, after eleven o'clock, and not a carriage of any kind to be seen. But something must be decided on at once, for this keen night air is chilling you through," added Mr. Alvord, as his companion shivered with cold.

"O, I have it!" she exclaimed, quickly. "You recollect Mrs. Andrews—the lady I was once so intimate with?"

The gentleman answered in the affirmative.

"Well, she has repeatedly urged me to come and stop all night whenever we felt so disposed, and I certainly never felt more inclined to do so than at present. How fortunate that I happened to think of her kind offers!"

"Persons sometimes say things that they do not exactly mean," said Mr. Alvord, slowly, as though he were calculating their chances by being warmly greeted about the midnight hour.

"Not Mrs. Andrews!" added his wife, with considerable warmth, as they moved slowly along. "She would not be guilty of such deception."

The gentleman said nothing more, and quickening their steps they soon reached the residence of the friend Mrs. Alvord had named. After considerable trouble and delay they succeeded in arousing the inmates and obtaining admittance. They were ushered by the servant into a cold and cheerless apartment, where they remained until Mrs. Andrews made her appearance. The lady tried to assume a cordial demeanor, but it was evident that she expressed more satisfaction than she really felt; for her manner was constrained and confused.

Mrs. Alvord thought of her husband's remark, and a dozen times wished herself at home;

but as that was not possible, she tried to appear agreeable to her hostess, who roused up a sleepy and grumbling chambermaid to make ready a bed. When this was done, and the new comers were alone, Mrs. Alvord began to think of Jane and the children. What would the girl imagine had happened to them? What if little Emma should be taken suddenly ill, and not find her mother as usual by her side? Mrs. Alvord was disturbed by these reflections and troubled dreams the entire night; anxiety and nervousness prevented rest and sound sleep on her part as positively as thin bed-clothing and damp sheets did on that of her husband. A slight touch of rheumatism served to remind him of the fact next morning, and Mrs. Alvord needed no better evidence of her sleeplessness, than was presented by her pale cheeks and sunken eyes.

We scarcely need say that the parents returned home as early as possible the next morning, and found matters in a great state of confusion. Jane had been greatly alarmed at their non-appearance, and distressed herself with conjectures of numberless unhappy accidents to account for the same. The babe had proved exceedingly troublesome, the sick child had cried incessantly for its mother, and to sum up the whole, the parties at home had passed a night of severe trial. Mrs. Alvord thanked fortune that nothing more serious had happened, and decided that the transitory pleasure she had experienced from the evening's entertainment but poorly repaid for the trouble and anxiety that had followed in its train.

Three months had now passed away, and Mrs. Alvord during this time had made many comparisons to herself. She had been obliged to give up the preaching of her favorite minister and listen to that of one (when she went anywhere); who differed materially from her in opinion, and who was, moreover, tedious and prosy. The Sabbaths, that used to pass so quickly and pleasantly, now seemed long and dull. Books and papers were not so conveniently procured as formerly, and the Sunday school was conducted on a plan so entirely devoid of interest, that the children could not be

willingly induced to attend. But the weather was fast becoming warm and summer-like, and the lady's spirits rose in consequence. To be sure the groceries to be procured at the village store were vastly inferior to those to be had in the city, and the market-man had a decided propensity for bringing them tough meats and poor vegetables; but these were slight disadvantages, and in all probability their neighbors were served no better than themselves.

The house they had purchased was located on elevated ground, as we have before said, and commanded an extensive view of the fine scenery around. The family never tired of looking at the bright green leaves and swelling buds, and the green carpet that Nature had spread out on every side. Wild birds rivalled the pet canaries in the sweetness of their notes, and flowers of delightful fragrance opened their petals to the morning sun.

But with all these pleasant things came something not quite so agreeable; an avalanche of company from the city slid into their quiet, rural residence, overturning all her bright anticipations of romantic and undisturbed retirement.

Mrs. Heavysoles, a large, portly woman, accompanied by three young daughters and two sons, together with a French poodle and a swearing parrot, burst upon her astonished vision, with trunks, satchels, carpet-bags, and handboxes to match.

At the moment of their advent, the youngest child was screaming most dolorously in consequence of a fall, the parrot was screaming, whistling, and going through the programme of its entertainments generally, while the poodle howled for the purpose of keeping the juvenile Heavysoles company.

"My dear Mrs. Alvord, how do you do!" exclaimed the maternal guardian of the interesting troupe. Here we are, you see! Why, it seems an age since I've seen you—how well you are looking! I've brought the children, you see—I couldn't resist their entreaties, they think so much of you! How your James has grown—noble little fellow! Josephus, mind that poodle—How is dear Mr. Alvord's health? Alexan-

der, tell the hackman to bring the things into the hall."

Mrs. Heavysoles paused, apparently, for want of breath, and seated herself to rest after her extraordinary efforts.

Mrs. Alvord, though heartily wishing Mrs. Heavysoles and her troupe at her antipodes, put the best face that she could on the matter, and played the hostess as well as could be expected under the circumstances. As soon as her guests were disencumbered of their street garments, Mrs. Alvord's thoughts recurred to her empty larder, with feelings which none but careful and experienced housekeepers can understand. She sat a few minutes, and then begging to be excused, went to consult Jane in this emergency.

"Don't put yourself out," said Mrs. Heavysoles, following her to the door. "I shan't enjoy my visit if you do, for I hate parade. Don't perplex yourself about what we shall eat; set before us just what you happen to have; a little cold ham or fowl, or something of that sort. We are not particular, you know, and the children are all small eaters."

"All gas! all gas!" shrieked the parrot, and then made use of some emphatic words, which fully established his known reputation for profanity, and which had the effect to convulse the juvenile Heavysoles with laughter; whereupon Poll, greatly encouraged, proceeded to crack nuts and whistle.

"Cold ham and fowl, indeed!" sighed Mrs. Alvord, as she glanced at the empty shelves of her pantry. Her situation was not an enviable one, but something must be done, and that quickly; for at that moment Alexander Heavysoles was heard inquiring "if dinner wasn't almost ready;" while the youngest, Jerusha Ann, was peremptorily demanding "sponge cake."

As Jane had not finished her morning work, nothing remained to be done but to go herself to market and order such meats as she might find, which was no slight task, as said market was three quarters of a mile distant, and the walking bad.

As may be imagined, it was a very late hour

before dinner was served; a fact which produced great dissatisfaction on the part of the juvenile visitors, whose appetites, instead of being of that diminutive capacity spoken of, proved to be quite the reverse. They were both rude and ill-natured, greatly shocking Mrs. Alvord's nice sense of propriety, stopping occasionally during the process of mastication to imitate the senseless screaming of the parrot, or the impatient whinings of the dog.

The second day was like unto the first, and all the others like unto the second, with the exception that each brought new and unexpected trials. Her own children, by the force of bad example, began to grow undutiful and disrespectful, and on several occasions, in moments of irritation, quoted extensively the profane language of the ill-taught bird.

Mrs. Heavysoles prolonged her visit for nearly the term of a fortnight; "she did so like to rusticate, and it seemed entirely useless to return home and open the house, until her husband returned from his business tour." When she did go, her place was immediately filled by somebody else, who thought "that her dear friend Mrs. Alvord could not help feeling very lonely in such an out-of-the-way place, and that company must certainly be desirable."

And so it continued the entire summer; their family expenses greatly increased, and their comfort and domestic happiness daily interrupted. We would not convey the idea that Mrs. Alvord was not a warm-hearted, hospitable woman, always willing to extend a cordial welcome to those who entertained feelings of real friendship towards her; but yet not willing to make her house an inn for those whose only object was to obtain the greatest amount of enjoyment with the least expense.

At the expiration of the summer, Mr. and Mrs. Alvord found that they had not been alone two weeks of the same; and the former decided that her cares had been greater, and she had suffered more annoyance and inconvenience than at any period of her life. The children had made but little progress in their studies, and had become quite rude and uncouth.

Mrs. Alvord possessed considerable musical talent, and was a tolerable performer on the piano, and before leaving the city had flattered herself that she should have plenty of leisure to practise. In this she was also disappointed, for her time was so much employed with other matters, that the instrument was rarely touched, except for the amusement of visitors.

But yet our two friends were not willing to acknowledge that a country residence, for people in their circumstances, was not just what they had anticipated. So accordingly preparations were made for the coming winter; repairs were made, fuel was laid in, and hopes expressed that visitors would not see sufficient attractions for a winter's campaign.

The ensuing winter proved an unusually severe one; an abundance of snow fell, blocking up the roads, and on several occasions preventing the attendance of the children upon school. The cellar was an exposed one, and a quantity of apples and vegetables were ruined by being frozen, while the pumps were locked up with frost, producing great inconvenience.

Mr. Alvord found himself deprived of all the pleasure to be derived from concerts and lectures; for being gone from morning till night, he felt it incumbent upon him to devote his

evenings to his family; and had he been disposed to return to the city, it was not always convenient or practicable. Added to this, sore throats and colds, with which the whole family had been troubled during the winter, were greatly aggravated by exposure to the open air in riding on the outside of an omnibus on a cold night; a disagreeable experience which had invariably happened to Mr. Alvord when he had been so bold as to attend a lecture.

When spring came both husband and wife concluded that a return to their old home was advisable. One year's experience had convinced them that to persons habituated to city life, a residence in the country the year round was neither profitable, nor, all things considered, desirable. If any lingering regrets were felt for the loss of summer-houses, pleasant walks, fine scenery, and other desideratums, they were soon dispelled by recollections of a cold house, frozen pumps, frost-bitten vegetables, unexpected visitors, distant markets, inferior groceries, crowded omnibuses, barricades of snow, etc., etc. Whatever others might think who had made the experiment, Mr. and Mrs. Alvord were of the opinion that for those doing business in the city, whose circumstances were moderate, a country residence was by no means advantageous.

THE END.

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