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PAUL LARON:

—OR, THE—

SCOURGE OF THE ANTILES.

A STORY OF SHIP AND SHORE.

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PAUL LARON.

CHAPTER I.

PROLOGUE.

It was a cold, wet day in autumn, and the sun, which had not been seen since morning, was near its western home of rest. Upon the road from Malmesbury, to Bristol walked a man and two children. The former was young—not over six-and-twenty, and habited in the garb of a seaman. He was short in stature, and broad and heavy in his build, with a face of a bronzed hue, upon which was stamped much intelligence and wit. A careful observer would have seen the index to a quick, passionate disposition in that face, and from the dark, sombre smile that sometimes played upon it he would have also concluded that its possessor was not burdened with much of conscientious scruples where his purposes were at stake. Upon his shoulder he carried a small bundle, and in one corner of the handkerchief which served for a portmanteau was printed, in small, black letters, the name—MARI LARON. Such, we are to suppose, was the name of the traveller.

The children were a boy and girl. The boy could not have been over five years of age, and he showed signs of excessive fatigue. He was a bright, intelligent looking little fellow, and possessed much physical beauty. The girl was younger still, certainly not yet four years old, and as she walked wearily along by the side of her conductor, the tears ever and anon started

from her large, blue eyes. Her garb was plain and homely in the extreme, but her other appearance did not at all correspond with it. Her face was very pale and delicate, her hair long and glossy, and flowing in ringlets which betrayed much previous care and dressing, while her hands gave no token of acquaintance with dirt or filth. The boy had shed some tears, for the traces of them were still to be seen upon his plump cheeks, but he shed none now, for he had received a blow for crying.

Just as we introduce the little party, they had come to a stone which marked the line between Wiltshire and Gloucestershire, and here they stopped to rest.

"You're tired, aren't you?" said the man, addressing the boy, and at the same time placing his hand upon his head.

"Yes, sir," returned the lad, looking up, and shuddering as he met the gaze of his conductor.

"Well, never mind; we've only three miles further to go before we reach the Cross Hands Inn. You'll be glad to get there, won't you?"

"Yes, sir." The words were spoken hesitantly, and with evident reluctance.

"And when you do get there you'll remember that you are my child, won't you?"

"But you aren't my father?"

"Surely I am."

Plain

"O, no. Please don't make me say so."

"You'd rather be whipped, eh?"

"No, no!" shrieked the boy; and as he did so, the little girl sprang forward and threw her arms about his neck and burst into a passionate fit of weeping.

Marl Laroon removed the girl with a strong grip, and then looking the boy in the eye, he said:

"I am your father, and you must know it and say so. Where do you think your father is?"

"He's dead, sir!" sobbed the poor child.

"Who told you so?"

"Mr. Humphrey."

"He told you a lie, then. I left you with him two years ago, and you are my boy. I was going away, and he said he would take care of you till I came back. So when I came back I took you. Perhaps he thought I was dead, though. Very likely he did. Now just remember this, and if anybody asks you your name, tell 'em 'tis Paul Laroon. Mind, now. I don't think you want me to kill you, but I shall if you don't speak just as I have told you. Think you can remember?"

"Yes, sir."

"And will you remember?"

"Yes, sir." The little fellow's lips trembled, and he would have burst into tears, but the look of his master prevented him.

"Mary," spoke Laroon, very kindly, "you are tired, aren't you?"

"Yes, sir," lisped the child.

"Say—'yes, uncle.'"

"Yes, unkle," repeated she, as nearly as she could.

"Mary is your cousin, Paul, did you know it?"

"Yes, sir."

"All right. And now, my little Mary, you shall ride in my arms awhile; and perhaps I will carry Paul, by-and-by, if he gets very tired."

So saying, the stout sailor lifted the tiny form of the girl to his arms, and then the trio were once more on their way. It was fairly dark when they reached the little village at the point where the roads cross, and where stood the Cross-Hands Inn, at which place they stopped. Laroon did not take the children into the bar-room, but calling the landlord out he had a room provided with two beds in it, and thither he took his little charges. As it was too cold to sit up, and as it would cost too much for a fire,

Laroon brought the children up their supper, and as soon as they had eaten it he helped them to bed, remarking, as he did so, that he was going down below awhile, and that they must be sure and make no noise.

When they were safely tucked up in their nest he gathered up the few dishes and left the chamber, being careful to lock the door after him and take away the key. For a long while the little ones lay there in silence, for even the girl had forgotten to sob and weep amid the strange thoughts that came crowding upon her mind at thus finding herself put to bed by a man, and in such a strange place.

"Mary," whispered the boy, when he had seemed to assure himself that the bad man would not hear him, "where are we going?"

"See mama," replied the simple child, remembering what her conductor had told her a hundred times during the day.

"O, Mary, your mama is dead!" uttered Paul.

"Yes, and me see her pretty soon," said the unconscious little one.

"But how can you see her if she is dead?" persisted the boy.

Mary gazed into her companion's face, upon which the dim rays of the candle fell, but she did not comprehend his meaning; and again she iterated her assertion that she was going to "see mama."

"That naughty man is not my papa," said Paul, after another spell of silence. "O, I know he is not. My papa is with your mama—in heaven; your good papa told me so."

"We go see papa and mama," uttered the gentle child, now smiling at the thought.

Paul gazed upon the sweet face of his mate, and gradually the conviction stole over him that she could not understand him if he spoke to her of the things that lay so heavily upon his thoughts; and it may be that there came even to his young mind the will not to pain his companion by further allusion to her misfortune.

But even to the boy's own mind things were not clear. He had a vague idea of matters passed, and of affairs present, but his comprehension was too weak for any philosophical deductions or extended reasonings. He only knew that he had been told that his father was dead, and that Mr. Humphrey had taken him to live in his own home. As he lay there and meditated, he saw a cloud round about him, and it seemed to him one of wrong and wickedness, but he could see

no more. He clasped his hands and prayed, as he remembered he had been taught to do by some one whom he had loved, and when he had done this he turned towards his companion, but she was asleep. He reached over and kissed her, and as his lips touched hers, the word "mama," was lisped forth from her hopeful dreams.

"Poor Mary!" murmured Paul, as he lay back upon his pillow, "you will never see your mama again till you die, and perhaps we shall both be carried away off together where we shall never see our home any more!"

So the boy murmured, and then he laid still and gazed upon the dim outlines of the quaint carving which adorned the caps of the windows and doors, and while thus engaged he fell asleep.

It was quite late when Laroon came up, and having assured himself that the children slept,

he proceeded to undress and get into the other bed, and ere long his heavy, discordant snoring mingled harshly and strangely with the gentle breathings of those who occupied the neighboring couch.

Away off in a distant part of the kingdom there was alarm and anguish. A man, frantic and delirious, was calling aloud for his child—for his children—and calling in vain. Lanterns and torches were flashing in every nook and corner where the children had been wont to play, but no children could be found. The streams were sounded and dragged, and the woods and hedges were scoured all through, but the lost ones came not. At midnight the man was upon his knees crying aloud to God for his children—but his frantic prayer was in vain!

CHAPTER II.

THE SCOURGE OF THE ANTILLES.

AGAIN. And it was a bright, calm day in summer. Upon the bosom of the broad Atlantic, in about the latitude of Trinidad, but some three hundred miles to the eastward thereof, rested one of the most beautiful specimens of marine architecture that ever met the gaze of an enraptured seaman. It was a full-rigged brig with royals set, and studding-sails upon both sides. She may have been of two hundred tons burden, and perhaps more, for her graceful proportions gave no idea of her real capacity when viewed from a distance. She was heading up towards the Antilles, and taking the eastern trades nearly aft, so nearly so, at least, that her studding-sails drew upon both sides. Her sides were black, and only relieved by a stripe of blood-red just below her ports. Her masts were tall and tapering, the topgallant and royal masts being in separate spars, and they had but very little rake—just enough to give the shrouds and backstays a firm hold without too much weight of standing rigging.

But if her outward appearance was calculated to excite admiration, a view of her deck would most surely enhance it. Said deck was flush fore and aft, and as white as pure wood can be made. The disposition of the rigging showed that there was a rule for every department, even to the arrangement of the smallest item, while

the arrangement itself proved that the whole was under the supervision of some shrewd master-mind. There were eleven guns, and all of brass, ten of which were upon the sides, and common eighteen-pounders, while the eleventh, of the same calibre, was much longer, and fixed upon a pivot and railway amidships. These guns were now covered with neatly fitting tarpaulins, and secured inboard, the ports being snugly closed.

There were seventy-seven men on board, and they all belonged to her, and though the reader may have already guessed the character of the craft, yet the crew were not of that appearance which we generally are led to look for in such a place. They were mostly English, and were as neat and orderly in their behaviour as the crew of any man-of-war.

Such was the "Scourge of the Antilles," a name by which the brig and its commander were both known, not only by the crew, but by many others who had had occasion to prove the aptness of the name.

Near the wheel, with a glass under his arm, stood a man whose dress showed him to be the captain of the brig. He was short in stature, but very thick and broad, exhibiting much physical power of strength and endurance. His features were by no means repulsive, nor were

they prepossessing, but they gave evidence of a keen, penetrating judgment, a quick, ready wit, and an untrammelled will. His face was very swarthy from exposure, his eyes black and sparkling, and his head covered by a growth of thick, black, crispy hair. He was not far from forty years of age, and his name was Marl Laroon. The reader has seen him before—long years ago—on one of the highways of England.

Close by the captain stood another who is not wholly a stranger, though he retains nothing by which we might know him save his name. He is a youth, not over nineteen years of age, and possessing nothing in his outer appearance that could indicate his membership with such a crew. But he is a member, and has been for years. He is tall and straight, with features of more than ordinary beauty, and showing by every external look and action a noble, generous soul. His hair hangs in curling clusters about his head, and is of a dark brown, glossy hue, while his eyes, which sparkle like orbs of light, are of a rich, lustrous hazel. He is called Paul Laroon.

Not far off stand three more persons conversing together. The tallest of the three—he with the black hair and eyes, and the thin, satanic-looking lips, is John Langley, the first lieutenant. He is not over five-and-thirty. The next, who is of medium size, and, only peculiar on account of his light, flaxen hair, and large, yellowish blue eyes, which sometimes have a pure green shade, is Philip Storms, the second lieutenant. The third is a short, stumpy man, broad and heavy in his build, with elephantine motions. His head is large, and covered with coarse, gray hair, and his small gray eyes are quick and keen. He is the oldest man on board, being in the neighborhood of sixty years of age, and is the gunner of the brig. His name is Ben Marton. The men look to their captain for orders, and when he is cool and assured they are the same, but when the pinch comes, and a few well-directed shots can help them out of a scrape, all eyes are turned to old Ben Marton, for well do they know that he alone can handle that long gun with a sure skill; and at such times even Laroon himself watches Ben's countenance as a sure index of safety or danger. When the old gunner's eyes twinkle, and the little smile creeps around his lips, then he is sure of his game.

"Paul," spoke the captain, turning to his youthful companion, "we shall reach our sylvan retreat ere long. Are you not glad?"

The youth started, and the rich blood mounted to his face as he met the captain's gaze.

"Were you thinking of the same thing?" continued Laroon, as he noticed Paul's emotion. There was a strange tinge of irony, or perhaps of bitterness, in these last words, and the dark-faced man gazed sharply into the other's eyes as he spoke.

"I was thinking of reaching the shore once more," answered the young man, in low, but steady tones.

"But weren't you thinking of any particular point of shore, eh?"

"Certainly I was," returned Paul, perfectly self-possessed.

"And perhaps you were thinking of some particular person you would like to see, eh?" Laroon now gazed more fixedly than before into the youth's face, and in his own countenance he betrayed much eagerness.

Paul returned the look, but he seemed to dream of nothing that could have any unusual import in the case, and he was not much moved by it.

"I was thinking of a variety of things," he at length answered, "but I know of nothing particular that was uppermost."

"How would you like to see our little Mary?" asked the captain, speaking very lowly—almost in a whisper—and eyeing his companion sharply.

The youth started with a quick emotion, and for an instant his eyes dropped; but he collected himself as quickly as before, and then looking up again into his interlocutor's face, he replied:

"I should like to see her very much."

"Of course," responded Laroon. "It's natural you should." And again followed that same sharp, searching, incomprehensible look. "Of course you should," added the captain; and thus speaking he started towards the gangway where some of the men were weaving a mat.

Paul watched him as he walked away, and a troubled expression came upon his face.

"What does he mean?" he said to himself; and after some moments of thought he mentally added, "Only to tease me; that's all."

Shortly after this the boatswain piped to dinner. Paul quartered in the cabin, and was the surgeon of the brig. Some years before there had been an old man on board, who had served in that capacity, and as he grew aged and feeble he wished to leave the brig and spend the evening of his life on shore. Laroon granted his request upon condition that he would procure a good surgeon to take his place. Paul had al-

ready-gained much experience from helping the old surgeon manage the sick and wounded, for while he was but a mere boy he had been of much use in preparing medicines and assisting in dressing wounds and fractures. So the old man agreed to take Paul in hand and learn him all the mysteries of the craft, and Laroon consented. The youth soon became expert in his new profession, and at the present time he had been two years in the charge of the sick, and the crew had ample reason to bless the day that gave them their new surgeon.

Dinner was eaten, and when the captain returned to the deck he found that the breeze had freshened. He was standing by the binnacle watching the compass, when the lookout at the fore-topgallant cross-trees reported a sail. In an instant all was life and bustle on board the brig, and the captain sprang for his glass and hastened forward.

"Fore-topgallant mast, there!"

"Ay, ay!"

"Where away?"

"Three points on the starboard bow."

"What does she look like?"

"Can't make her out."

"Keep your eye on her. Here, Storms, lay aloft with your glass and help the lookout."

The second lieutenant took his glass and went aloft, and then the captain returned to the wheel, where Paul was standing by the side of the helmsman.

"Well, Paul, what d'ye think has turned up now?" he said.

"Perhaps a merchantman," replied the youth, with a shudder.

"Mayhap it is, and mayhap it isn't. We're in the latitude of such craft; but there's another kind of chap ernising about these waters."

"An English cruiser, you mean?"

"Yes. How should you like to meet one?"

"It would not be the first one," replied the youth, "without the least show of decomposition."

"That's true; but we might not reach the Silver Bay. How should you like that, eh?"

A quick shudder ran through Paul's frame, but there was more of indignation in his look than of fear, and at the end of a single moment he replied, with a half-sarcastic smile:

"We'll think of Silver Bay after we have made ourselves sure we shall reach it."

"Well spoken, my son," cried the captain, and then he turned away.

"Son?" whispered the youth to himself, as he

watched the movements of the dark man. "By my soul, I do not believe that man is my father! I never believed it! His blood never flowed in these veins. But whose blood does flow there?"

At this question Paul always stopped. He asked it of himself very often, but no answer ever came.

"Hallo!" at this moment came from the second mate, who was aloft with his glass. "It's a square-rigged craft, and standing towards us."

"Is that all?" asked Laroon.

"Yes."

For fifteen minutes the captain paced the quarter-deck in silence, and at the end of that time, Mr. Storms reported that the strange sail was a ship, and to all appearance a man-of-war.

"Very well," returned Laroon, perfectly calm. "We'll find out her mettle before we show our stern. Ben—"

The old gunner moved quickly forward and touched his hat.

"You'd better get old Saladin in order, and bring up some of your pills."

"Ay, ay, sir," responded Ben, and as he spoke he shuffled away and called his assistants about him.

The long gun had been christened by the name of the renowned Saracenic sultan, and ere long it was divested of its tarpaulin, and the shot-box by its side was filled. The balls used in this gun were peculiar, being conic in shape, and encased in a closely-fitting covering of leather. The gun itself was one which Ben had had constructed under his own supervision. The inside of the gun had been cast first in two parts, making two pieces such as would be gained by splitting a musket barrel in halves, from muzzle to breech. The concave surface of these had been grooved, and then four strips of steel firmly bedded in, so that their edges were raised nearly three sixteenths of an inch above the surface of the brass. Next the two pieces were soldered together with extreme exactness, and then the body of the gun was moulded upon it. Thus far the piece had remained firm, and it possessed all the advantages of the common rifle. The balls were so firmly held in their leather cases, which had been sewed on when wet and stretched, that they received a rotary motion which held them true to their course, and so well did they answer their purpose that the gunner seldom failed, even in his most dubious shots.

The long gun was loaded, and the ball driven

snugly home, and then Ben Marton sat down upon the railway and waited further orders.

At the end of half an hour the second lieutenant came down and reported that the stranger was an English sloop-of-war.

"Stand by to take in the starboard studd'n'-sails!" ordered the captain. "We will choose our own course, and run as fast as we can, and if the fellow wants to overhaul us he may make the trial."

The starboard studding-sails were soon in, ere long the brig was heading due West, the very course she must make to reach her destination, though Laroon had meant to stop at Tobago if it came perfectly convenient.

It was now about half-past one, and the ship's lower yards could be seen from the brig's deck, while the lookout at the cross-trees, who had the lieutenant's glass, could see her deck. He reported that she was a second class corvette, carrying twenty-four-pound carronades.

"Then she'll burn her fingers if she touches us," exclaimed the old gunner. "Why, bless her poor devoted timbers, I could batter her all to pieces afore she could get a ball to hurt us out o' one o' them carronades."

As soon as the men learned the character of the craft that was probably giving them chase they smiled at each other with knowing nods and winks, for they felt sure that old Ben would cripple her before she could come near enough to do any harm.

When the brig had changed her course it was noticed that the ship immediately did the same, thereby clearly indicating that she meant to give chase. Had the pirate chosen to run to the southward she might easily have escaped, for she was evidently the best sailer, but she meant to do no such thing. This would put her back from her destination, and Marl Laroon had reasons for wishing to reach that point as soon as convenient. At any rate, he had a deadly hatred of all things appertaining to the British government, though a native of England himself, and he had resolved that he would never run from one of her cruisers if he could help it.

At length a curl of smoke was seen to rise from the ship's deck, and in an instant more came the report of a gun.

"That means for us to show our bunting," said Langley.

"Yes," responded the captain, "and up it goes. They shall see that we are not ashamed and nor afraid to show our colors."

In a few moments more a small, compact ball arose to the mainpeak, and as soon as it was at its place the knot was drawn, and the flag fluttered out to the breeze. It was simply a field of black with a pair of crossed swords in white relief. As soon as this piece of impertinence was perpetrated, the ship fired another gun, and this time she seemed to have fired a shot, for something fell into the water about midway between the two vessels. But the brig kept on without paying any attention to this polite request.

The vessels were now not far from a mile apart. The brig, as we have before remarked, was heading due west. The sloop-of-war was now nearly abeam, and heading about southwest, so that she would come within carronading range if she kept on in that way, even allowing that the brig sailed the fastest.

A little while passed, and the pirate crew were becoming uneasy. The ship was ever and anon popping away at her bow guns, but none of her shot reached their mark. Laroon stood by the old gunner's side, and ere long he asked him how a shot would work.

"I'll try," was Ben's simple answer; and as he spoke he arose and set about levelling his gun. "I'll give 'em a runnin' shot this time," he continued, after he had calculated the distance and elevated the piece. He then took the match, and watched for his opportunity, for he had pointed the gun a little astern to allow for the head range. With a keen, steady gaze he marked the movement of the brig, and when the line of his sight along the gun struck a point about six inches abaft the ship's foremast he applied the match. There was a quick report, a shock, and a trembling of the brig's spars, and then all hands sprang to the rail to see what was the result. The old gunner waited anxiously for the report, and his eye brightened as he saw the ship's men rushing up the fore-shrouds.

"You've hit the foremast just below the fut-tocks," cried Storms, who had been gazing through a glass.

"Then we'll try once more in the same place," returned Ben; and thus speaking he proceeded to reload his gun.

Before he got it loaded, however, a shout of joy arose from the pirate's deck, for the sloop-of-war was getting off the foremast as fast as possible. Her fore-royal and top-gallant-sail were clewed up, and the topsail yard let go by the run; and it could now be seen that the mast was swaying considerably. But Ben Mar-

ton took no note of this. He loaded his gun with the utmost care—putting in an exact quantity of powder, and selecting a shot that would drive home snugly. When all was ready he took his aim with a calm precision, and when he applied the match the expression upon his face told that he meant mischief to some one. And surely he did, for hardly had the smoke cleared away ere the sloop-of-war's foremast was seen to go over the side, taking with it the main-top-gallant mast and jib-boom.

"That'll do," said Laroon, as calmly as though he had been making some new disposition of the sails.

But the men were not so cool. They shouted with all their might, and when they felt that they had expressed their full feelings they relapsed into their usual quiet and orderly state. Ben Marton carefully cleaned his gun, outside and in, and then replaced the tarpaulin, while Storms shut up his glass and placed it in its becket upon the binnacle.

"We'll go to Tobago," said the captain.

Accordingly the course was changed two points further north and the yards trimmed. Two hours later the sloop-of-war could be discerned still hampered by part of the wreck of spars that had so summarily fallen upon her.

CHAPTER III.

SURFO BURNINGTON.

JUST at evening on the second day after the encounter with the sloop-of-war, the Scourge of the Antilles dropped her anchor in a little cove upon the southern coast of the island of Tobago. There was a small village of one story huts upon the shore, and close by the water, upon a sort of bluff, stood quite a respectable house. The people here knew the character of the brig well, for here it was that she took in many of her stores when she wanted them, and here also she had a hospital, where many of the inhabitants found employment as nurses, for those who were laid up here with wounds and disease generally possessed golden pockets, and could afford to pay for good nursing.

As soon as the sails were all furled, and the deck cleared up, Laroon had his boat manned, and went on shore. It was already dark when he reached the little pier which was built out from the beach, and he took his way at once towards the house on the bluff, which was the hospital in question. When he reached the verandah he found the old surgeon—the same who had formerly sailed with him—ready to receive him. The two proceeded to one of the best drawing-rooms, where a heavy hanging lamp was already burning, and there they seated themselves. Laroon first asked after the welfare of the sick ones, and he was informed, in general terms, that they were getting along well.

"But how many can you let me have to take away with me?" asked the pirate chieftain.

"Not over five at the outside," returned the surgeon.

"But I must have more."

"Then you've been thinning off again, eh?"

"No. I've lost only five men. I have seventy-five men on board now, besides Paul and myself."

"Then why so urgent?"

"I'll tell you. I mean to take a shore cruise if I can muster the men. There's more gold on shore than there is at sea. Down around the shores of Lake Valencia there live a lot of nabobs who own gold by the ton, and I want to feel of 'em. Do you understand?"

"Yes," returned the surgeon, with a sparkling eye, for the thought of such plunder had yet a charm for him. "But can't you make your present force do?"

"I suppose I shall have to.—And you have had no applications from any one?"

"Ah, yes, I liked to have forgotten. Yes, I have had one application, and I guess the fellow is here now. I told him the brig would be in shortly, I thought, and if he would wait he might get a chance."

"Does he know what flag we sail under?"

"Yes."

"How did he find out?"

"From some one who had been with us. He met him in prison, I think he said."

"A funny place for one of our men to be found in," said Laroon, with a laugh. "But what sort of a fellow is he?"

"Upon my word I can't describe him. You must wait until you see him. I'll send for him at once."

As the surgeon thus spoke, he rang a bell which stood upon the table near him, and in a moment more a boy made his appearance.

"Jack," spoke the old sawbones, "you remember that one eyed fellow who has been here?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, you'll find him at old Madaline's. Go down there and tell him to come up here."

The boy promised to be quick, and then withdrew.

After this Laroon explained to the surgeon the results of the cruise from which he was now returning, and from that account one might have learned that the work had been both a golden and bloody one. In the course of half an hour the boy returned, and with him came the individual in question, who came limping into the room with a gait that promised anything but quickness of movement. The pirate chieftain could not repress a smile as he gazed upon the new-comer, though some more timid might have been frightened rather than amused.

The man who has thus been introduced upon the scene was, in every respect, peculiar. He was an old man—that is, past the meridian of life—perhaps five-and-fifty—and very slightly bent in form, but not enough to give his back any hump. In frame he was of medium height when he stood at rest, but somewhat taller when standing upon his right leg alone, that being some two inches longer than the other leg; and this of course gave him a very awkward movement. But his face was more peculiar still. He had lost one eye—the left one—and the skin about the orbless socket was much disfigured, giving him one of the most sinister looks imaginable. His hair was short and crispy, and of a dirty-red color, while the face was almost as dark as a Malay's. But he had one redeeming quality. He was stout and powerful in his physical mould, revealing a breast and shoulders and arms of almost Herculean proportions. Next to the repulsive-looking place where an eye had been lost, which was sunken and shrivelled up, the most peculiar and striking feature

of the face was the eye that was left. One would expect to find a light-colored eye with such a head, but it was not so. That single eye was not only of the darkest hazel, but it burned and sparkled with the most strange power and brilliancy. But what was it that yet remained of feature which gave him such strangeness of look? Surely there was something more—something different from ordinary faces—something lacking, or something superadded. But what was it? Marl Laroon had noted the orbless socket, the brilliant eye, the swarthy skin, and the crispy red hair, with its closely curling locks. There were no whiskers to look odd, for the whole face was shaven smooth, or else no beard grew there, but this latter alternative was without foundation, for those who had lived with him had heard his razor rattle upon his beard as though it had been cutting off bushes. Laroon seemed determined to hunt up that odd feature, and after awhile he found it. The man had no eyebrows!

But Marl Laroon was not the only one who gazed fixedly into another's face, for the stranger gazed full as sharply into his, and seemed full as much interested in the work.

"Well, sir," commenced the pirate captain, seeming to speak with an effort, "so you want to ship on board my vessel?"

"Yes, sir," answered the other, in a gruff, coarse tone.

"And do you know the business you will be required to do?"

"Obey orders, I suppose."

"Exactly. Upon my word, I like that answer. But what do you suppose those orders will amount to?"

"Gold! gold! Perhaps *blood!* But gold ahead of all else!"

Marl Laroon started as these words fell upon his ear, for they were not only strange in themselves, but they were most strangely spoken. And then the man looked at him so with that one dark eye when he spoke—the bold buccaneer had never shrank so before beneath a human gaze.

"You speak rather more harshly than there is any need of," he said, in a tone which would seem to indicate that he did not wholly like the speech he had heard.

"O, I can speak as kindly as you wish," quickly returned the strange man, with a smile—and there was something kind in the smile, too.

"And," he added, "I can be as gentle as a lamb."

"Are you acquainted with the sea?"

"Yes, sir."

"Hand, reef, and steer?"

"Yes, sir; and navigate and work anything out o' the book."

"Handle a cutlass?"

"Try me."

"Never mind that now. What is your name?"

"Buffo Burnington."

"A curious name," said Laroon, eyeing him sharply.

"Ay," he calmly replied, "and some people think I am a curious man."

"Do they?"

"I think so."

Laroon regarded the new man for some moments in silence, but his gaze was not steady, for there was something in that lone eye—ay, and in that whole face, that troubled him.

"Perhaps you have seen me before," remarked the captain, with seeming carelessness, but yet with a look and tone which proved him to be anxious on the very subject thus broached.

"I think I have, sir."

"Ha! Where?"

"In England."

"What part?"

"I think at London."

"Do you remember the circumstances?"

"Yes," returned Burnington, looking Laroon steadily in the face. "It was at a time when your meals were served in your own room."

"Eh?"

"By the jail—"

"Stop!" shouted the pirate, starting to his feet. "That is enough. If you will join my crew and sign my articles, you shall go with us, and fare and share with the rest. We are pirates!"

"I knew it."

"How?"

"I saw a man at Kingston, in Jamaica, who had been with you, and he directed me here."

"Do you remember his name?"

"He would not tell it."

"All right. Are you ready to go on board?"

"I can be ready in half an hour."

"Then hurry off, and you will find me here at the end of that time."

As Buffo Burnington left the room Laroon touched the bell. The same boy answered it as before.

"Jack," said the captain, "go and watch that man. Follow him carefully, and don't lose sight of him. If he attempts to leave the village hurry back with all speed."

The boy merely bowed, and then set out on his mission. After he was gone Laroon rested his elbow upon the table, and buried his brow in his hands. Thus he remained for some minutes totally regardless of the presence of another.

"Do you want those five men to go on board to-night?" asked the surgeon, at length.

But the captain did not answer. At the end of some two minutes more, the old man asked the question again:

"Do you want those five men to go on board to-night?"

Laroon seemed to have heard some one speak, for he raised his head, and then started up from his chair; but without answering he commenced to pace the room.

"McLura," he said at length, stopping in front of the surgeon, "how long has that man been here?"

"About a week."

"And did he give you that same name when he first came?"

"Yes."

"It must be some strange whim that has seized me, then."

"Why, captain—do you think you have seen him before?"

"I don't know. But he's a strange looking man, isn't he?"

"He is, surely; and one, I should think, not easily to be forgotten when once seen."

"True. I never saw him before—of course I never did—but he puts me in mind of some one whom I have seen. That's all, I'm sure."

Again the pirate chieftain commenced to pace up and down the room, and this he continued to do until the boy returned and informed him that the man he was sent to watch was coming.

"Ah, you said something about the five men, doctor—"

"Yes, sir. I asked you if you would take them off to-night?"

"No. I'll come for them in the morning."

Just as he spoke the door opened, and Buffo Burnington entered, and reported himself ready to go on board. Again Laroon gazed into that quaint, ugly-looking face, but he gained nothing by his search, and shortly afterwards he bade the new-comer be seated, and then signified his desire to see the men who were well enough to

rejoin the brig. McLara arose and led the way out from the room, and when they were both gone, and the door was closed behind them, Burnington started to his feet and stamped across the room. His hands were clasped, and his eye emitted sparks of fire. He did not walk much, for his lameness caused his steps to make an unusual noise, and he remained for some time standing still in the centre of the apartment.

"By the powers above me!" he muttered to himself, while his hands worked nervously together, as though he were renting some firm fabric in twain, "you think you have seen me before! Ha, ha, Marl Laroon, I have the advantage of thee. Misfortune has laid her relentless hand upon my body, and she has left me so much the worse for her visit that even you cannot peer beneath the veil she has drawn over me. By the mass, but we'll have a right merry cruise together!"

After this the man sat down, and though his eye still sparkled, yet there was an earnest, eager look upon his dark features. He sat with his broad hands folded in his lap, and his gaze bent upon the floor, and thus he remained until Laroon returned.

"Now, my hero, we'll move our stumps towards the shore," said the captain. "Where's your luggage?"

"At the door," returned Burnington, rising to his feet.

Laroon led the way out, and upon the piazza he found quite a respectable-sized bag. This the new man threw lightly over his shoulder, and then the two started down towards the pier, Laroon keeping his companion a few paces in advance. Whether he did this through fear, or only from the whim of habit, it were hard to tell. The boat was found in readiness, and ere long the lame sailor was upon the deck of the craft he had promised to make his home. A hammock was served out to him by the sail-maker, and the second lieutenant gave him a number upon the berth-deck. But few of the men were up to see him, and he escaped without being bothered.

Buffo Burnington was thus quartered for such a cruise as his commander might see fit to project, and he certainly looked like one who would hesitate at nothing between the grog-tub and the cannon's mouth.

And Marl Laroon had got a new man, and when he retired to his cabin he sat down and tried to call up something that dwelt in the past. The last words he uttered, before falling asleep, were:

"Surely I have seen him before! O, why—why can I not remember!"

CHAPTER IV.

AN ACCIDENT.

On the following morning there was much excitement and curiosity on board the brig. The new man had come upon deck, and no one of the crew had ever seen him before.

"Blow me tight, but he's a queer 'un, aren't he?" remarked one of the men to another—the two having, with the rest of the crew, been watching Buffo Burnington for some time.

"Aren't he, though," responded the second man, emphatically.

"Ay, that he is," added the first; "an' you may lay yer life 'at he's an ugly customer to handle. Look at his arms, and his neck, and his shoulders. An' jus' look at that eye, too. Shiver my timbers if he aren't a hard 'un."

"But d'ye mind how cool he takes it? Hang me, if I shouldn't think he'd been here all his life-time."

"But d'ye mind one other thing, eh?" uttered Jack, lowering his voice to a whisper, and speaking with a mysterious nod and wink. "D'ye mind how the captain eyes him. Just look. Just watch old Marl now, as he claps his peepers on him. Did ye mind?"

"Ay, ay, didn't I though. Haint I minded it from the first?"

And so the men conversed about the deck, and in the meantime the object of this curiosity was slowly stumping up and down the larboard gang-

way. At length the boatswain piped to grog, and when the men were gathered about the grog-tub the captain came forward and made a sign to the steward to stop a moment before he commenced to fill the torts.

"My men," spoke Laroon, "you have a new shipmate. Let me introduce him to your friendship and acquaintance. Buffo Burnington—and I hope the acquaintance may prove a benefit to us all."

As the captain moved aft after having thus spoken, the men gathered around their new shipmate and extended their hands. The whole cast of his countenance was changed in an instant. A warm smile lighted up his dark features, and for the while one might almost have forgotten the wild distortion of his features. After this the men drank their grog, and then sat down to their breakfast, which was served upon mess-cloths spread between the guns on the spar-deck.

About an hour later Burnington stood by the binnacle as Paul Laroon came up from the cabin. The youth started with surprise as he saw the strange-looking figure, and then cast an inquisitive glance upon the captain. Marl understood the silent question, and moving forward, he said:

"This is a new man, Paul—Buffo Burnington."

The man turned quickly towards the youth, and his eye snapped till tiny sparks seemed really to start from it.

"This is our surgeon, Burnington," resumed the captain.

"And your son, I should take it, if I might judge from his looks," returned Buffo, looking first upon one, and then upon the other, but particularly noting the countenance of the youth.

"Yes, yes," responded Laroon, with a pleasure which he did not attempt to hide, for this was the first time that ever such a remark had been made. "Then you think he looks like me?" he added, half carelessly.

"There is certainly a resemblance," replied Burnington; "enough, at least, to indicate that you are both of one family."

"So we are—so we are," uttered Marl, gazing into Paul's features with a dark smile; and as he did so Buffo was regarding him with another smile—and such a smile that more than one man noticed it, and wondered what it meant.

Paul turned away and went to the taffrail, and from the expression of his countenance one could have easily seen that he was far from pleased with the remarks which had been made.

"Why, bless my soul, do ye think 'at Paul looks like the old 'un?" asked Ben Marton as Buffo walked forward and stood by the long gun. The old gunner gazed into the new man's face as he spoke, as though he were a little incredulous. He had heard the conversation at the wheel, and he seemed desirous to know where the resemblance lay.

"Yes," returned Buffo; "I think there is a family resemblance. They don't either of 'em look like a horse, nor a dog, nor a dolphin; but they look like men. Don't ye think that the capt'n belongs to the human family?"

"Eh? What?"

"Don't ye think Marl Laroon belongs to the human family?"

"Sartin I do," returned Ben, who had just got hold of the idea.

"And how about the young one? Don't he belong to the same?"

"Sartin," responded Ben, inquisitively.

"Then they belong to the same family, don't they?"

"Ha, ha, ha," laughed the gunner, beginning to see into the paradox. "Then ye don't think they look alike, arter all?"

"As one man looks like another, that's all."

"What did ye say so for, eh?"

"I thought 'twould please the captain to think that he possessed even one solitary feature that looked like the face of such a noble-looking youth."

"By the great gun, you've hit it now, shipmate," exclaimed Ben, with uncommon emphasis. "The youngster is a noble-looking fellow; but that aren't half. He's better, if anything, than he looks. Perhaps you wont believe it, but it's true. He's just one of the noblest, kindest, faithfulest, best-hearted youngsters you ever sec. Between you and me—I don't think you'll blab—"

"When I betray the confidence of an honest-hearted shipmate, I'll open my bosom to your knife."

This answer pleased Ben much, and from that moment he began to have a generous friendship for the strange man.

"I was goin' to say," he resumed, looking carefully about him to see that no one else could overhear, "at it seemed strange to me why the capt'n should want to make such a noble boy follow this life. I'm an old hulk now, an' aint much good to anybody only with this old gun here, an' I s'pose I'll die alongside of some honest man than I am, but I tell ye it has made my heart ache to see poor Paul forced to see our wickedness, and sometimes made to help in it, when at the same time I could see 'at he hated it."

"Then the captain has forced his son to sail with him?"

"Yes. I've heard Paul beg and beg to be left alone, but 'twas no go. Marl would make him come."

"But hasn't the youth had a chance to run away?" asked Buffo, with considerable earnestness.

"Yes, a good many, if he had wanted to."

"Then why has he not done it?"

"Ah, there's a very good reason," answered Ben, with a sad shake of the head, and speaking in a lower tone. He cast his eyes about him as he spoke, and then settled into a moody, thoughtful silence.

"What is that reason?" asked Burnington, in a whisper.

It was some moments before the old gunner answered, but at length he said:

"There's one he wont leave behind him, and that he can't easily take with him."

"On board, is he?"

"Who, on board?"

"This person that Paul would take with him."

"O, 'tisin't a he."

"Ah—a female, then?"

"Yes. A young girl who stays at Silver Bay. O, you should see her. Such beauty! My eyes, but you never saw the like. She wa'n't more 'n so high when I first see her—" and Ben placed his open palm about two and a half feet from the deck—"and even then she was the beautifulest thing I ever clapped my eyes on. But she's grow'd up now, an' she's made just a regular angel."

"And so Paul went go away and leave this girl?"

"No, for she's never real happy only when he's with her."

"What is her name?"

"Mary Delany."

After this Buffo Burnington walked forward, and for over half an hour he leaned over the bows and looked down into the water; and even then he was only called from his reverie by the order to man the windlass, and stand by to get under weigh. He moved very slowly at first, but soon he entered into the spirit of the bustle, and hove away at the handspike with a will.

It was just about noon when the anchor was secured at the cathead and fished, and as soon as all sail was made, and the yards properly trimmed, the boatswain piped to grog, and then the off-watch went to dinner. The distance from Tobago to Silver Bay was not far from five hundred and fifty miles, and the course lay but a very little south of west. The wind here was variable, for the bold, broad shores of Trinidad broke the trades. At the present time the wind came out from the northward and eastward, and blew quite a respectable breeze, so the brig took it full upon the quarter, and carried her starboard studdingsails below and aloft.

"That fellow handles himself well," remarked Langley, the first officer, as he stood by the side of the captain upon the weather quarter. He nodded towards Burnington as he spoke, which individual was then sitting alone upon the rail-way of the long gun.

"I think he'll make a good hand for us," returned Laroon, looking upon the maimed seaman.

"He's got strength enough, if that's all," resumed the lieutenant. "He'd almost walk the anchor up single-handed, and if he fights accordingly, he'll be valuable."

The captain made no reply to this, but had fallen into a sort of moody silence, with his eyes

fixed with a sort of sidelong glance upon Burnington. After a while Langley spoke again:

"What was the news on shore? Any cruisers been in sight?"

"Yes, one," replied Laroon, starting as though he had been aroused from an interesting and absorbing thought. "A French corvette has been hovering around the island, but she left three days ago."

"Sure 'twas a Frenchman?"

"So McLara said, and I think it very likely, for there are several of them stationed at Martinique."

"Which way did she go?"

"Off somewhere to the northward."

"Then we shan't see her."

"Probably not," returned Laroon, at that moment attracted by some sort of disturbance forward. He went immediately to the fore-castle with a heavy frown upon his brow, but when he arrived there, he found that the disturbance had been occasioned by the gunner's falling from the breach of one of the bow-guns, where he had been standing to look upon the shore.

At first the accident seemed likely to pass off with only a laugh, for old Ben arose immediately to his feet and smiled. But his smile was a very blank and ghastly one, and he staggered some as he attempted to move away. He had hit his head upon the deck in falling, and the blow was far from being a light one. The old man had not taken more than half a dozen steps when he stopped and threw his arms wildly about him, and in a moment more he sank heavily upon the deck. The men gathered quickly about him, and Buffo Burnington took him into his arms, as he would have taken a child, and carried him aft.

"He's hurt pretty bad, I'm sure," Buffo said, as he stopped before Paul.

"I hope not," uttered the youthful surgeon, seeming to speak with himself, "for I shall have lost my best friend if—"

He did not finish the sentence, for at that moment the captain came up, and at his order the senseless form was placed upon the trunk of the companion-way. Paul at once set about examining the old man's head. He found where the blow had been received, but there was no fracture of the skull that he could detect.

"How is it?" asked the captain, as Paul arose from the examination.

"Bad—bad," replied Paul.

"Skull broken?"

"No, but the brain has received a severe shock, and the utmost care will have to be taken to prevent a fatal result."

This intelligence created much sensation among the crew, for Ben was the last man whom most of them would wish to have spared. The captain himself was nervous and uneasy, for well did he know that one half the virtue of the long gun would be gone with its master.

Ere long the old man came to, and as soon as he was fully conscious he began to groan and writhe with pain.

"My head! my head!" he fairly shrieked. "It will split! For the love of heaven do something!"

Paul's first movement was to bathe the head in cold water. Then he administered a dose of physic—of salts—and next he applied leeches to the head. As soon as the blood began to flow his head felt easier, and Paul then had a hot bath prepared for the feet, after which he applied draughts. After the leeches had taken

all the blood Paul thought necessary, he had the invalid removed to his cot, and then placed a watcher by him to keep the bandages about the head wet with cold sea-water.

The youth had now done all he could, and he could only see that his patient was kept perfectly quiet, and watch for any new development that might manifest itself. At dark Ben was still groaning with pain, and the surgeon applied more leeches, and at the end of half an hour he was easier again. At nine o'clock Paul gave a strong dose of opium, but the poor fellow got no rest during the night, for the pain in his head was so severe that no narcotic could overcome it while life remained.

Marl Laroon watched the invalid with much anxiety, for now that his gunner was disabled he was led into a train of thought upon what would be the probable result of meeting a fleet cruiser from whom he could not escape by fair sailing.

Little did he dream how near at hand the test was!

CHAPTER V.

A FEARFUL CONFLICT.

As the sun arose the men were gathered about the quarter-deck waiting for the appearance of the young surgeon, for they were anxious to hear of the gunner. Ere long Paul came up, and he informed the men that he believed Ben to be out of danger, but that it would be some time before he could return to his duty; and at the same time he requested them to make as little noise as possible about the deck.

The day passed away, and the gunner was no easier, though Paul felt sure, if no accident happened, that the result would not be fatal. At night more leeches were applied, and a narcotic was given, but the invalid could not sleep. On the following morning the coast of Margarita was in sight upon the starboard bow, and to take advantage of a current the brig was kept pretty close into the shore.

The wind was now to the south of east, and blowing quite fresh—that is, a fair ten-knot breeze, though this had only been since sunrise. The gunner had not slept a moment during the night, though the pain in his head was surely diminishing. He now for the first time since his accident asked for something to eat, and Paul allowed him to have some light gruel, not daring to give anything more hearty for fear of fever.

Near midway of the southern coast of the

island of Margarita there is a long high cape, or promontory, making out into the sea a distance of some ten miles. At nine o'clock, A. M., this cape was upon the lee bow, and not more than four miles distant, and at that time the wind came to a lull, and then chopped around to the northward, coming off the shore. As the brig's course now lay she would pass within two furlongs of the cape, but Laroon knew the channel well, and he was not afraid of the shore. At half-past nine the wind was steady once more, and the brig now had her starboard tacks aboard, and in fifteen minutes more the headland of the cape was directly under the weather bow, and not more than two cables' lengths distant.

"*Sail ho!*" at this moment came from the fore-top in tones that made every man start.

"*A ship! a ship!*" shouted the same voice.

And now they could all see the fore and main royals of a ship looming up over the promontory.

"Up with the helm!" shouted the pirate captain; "Jump to the braces! cast off to leeward—round in on the weather braces!"

In a few moments the brig's head was to the southwest, and by the time the braces were belayed she had cleared the cape, and there, just under the western bluff, and not a quarter of a mile distant, was a French corvette under full sail with her yards nearly square.

"To the guns, every man!" ordered Laroon, much excited—"every man who belongs there, and the rest of you get up the small arms. Load every pistol and carbine, and each man secure his cutlass! Load—quick!"

The brig's crew sprang to the work with a will, each man knowing just what to do. Two of the port guns were run aft and secured to the after ports, and just as the breeching of the last gun was lashed there came a shot from the Frenchman's bows. The ball whizzed over the starboard bumpkin, and did no damage.

"Now give 'em a shot in return," cried Laroon.

Accordingly one of the stern guns was fired, but without effect. Next came another shot from the corvette, which struck in the water some twenty yards from the brig's starboard beam.

During this exciting prelude poor Ben Marton had been in a state of intense excitement. At the first mention of the French man-of-war, he had leaped from his bunk, and it was with the utmost difficulty that Paul could get him back again.

"By the holy saints, I must go on deck!" the old man cried.

"Well—let's see you go," returned the surgeon.

"Help me up—help me up," gasped Ben, who found himself totally unable to rise to his feet.

"But what's the use? You couldn't stand if you should get up there."

For some time the old gunner raved and prayed by turns, but at length Paul managed to convince him that 'twould be of no use, and he allowed himself to be lifted back into his berth.

At length there came a shot from the corvette which struck the brig upon the stern rail, and killed two men who stood by one of the guns. At this sight the pirates were frenzied, and they begged as one man to be laid alongside of the Frenchman. Mr. Storms had been aloft with his glass, and he reported that the corvette carried twenty guns, and they were known to be twenty-four-pounders by the shot which had struck the taffrail. It was soon evident, also, that the ship was the best sailer, with the wind as it was now, at any rate; though probably the brig would have sailed fastest on a taut bowline.

The pirate kept his stern guns going, and he did some damage to the corvette, but no more than she seemed amply able to return, for at the fourth fire from the one that shattered the taff-

rail, the brig's main-yard was carried away in the slings, a twenty-four-pound ball having just grazed the mast and struck square upon the yard.

"Lay us alongside! Lay us alongside!" cried the crew.

"I shall do it, boys!" uttered the commander, after a few moments of thought. "Before we can possibly get away from that craft she may totally disable us. She probably has more than double the men we have, but I shall trust you to overcome them. The moment I give the order to heave-to, be sure, every man of you, that you have a carbine and two pistols in readiness."

Just as the captain arrived at this point another ball struck the brig's stern, and sent the splinters flying over the deck, but no one was wounded by them. As soon as this was done the captain gave the orders for heaving-to, and ere long the pirate lay upon the wind with her fore-topsail aback, the main-topsail being useless from the loss of the main-yard.

The carbines—and there were over a hundred of them—were all loaded and laid beneath the lee rail, it being evident that the ship would come to upon that side. Beside this, each man had a brace of pistols concealed beneath his frock, and his cutlass at hand.

The brig now lay upon the starboard tack, and the corvette came down within a cable's length and began to round to under her stern.

"Brig ahoy!" came from the Frenchman.

"Hallo!" responded Laroon.

"Where's your flag?"

"Down. We've surrendered."

"Who are you?"

"I thought you knew, and were after me."

"You're the Scourge of the Antilles?"

"Yes."

"Then we'll soon clip your wings."

"But you shall be honorable in your deal. We won't surrender unless you promise to treat us as prisoners of war. We'll die at our guns first!"

"Wait till we see what you're made of," was the Frenchman's response; and as he spoke the ship's yards were braced sharp up, and she came gliding along under the brig's lee quarter.

Of course most of the Frenchmen were either at the ports, or else looking over the nettings, for they had a curiosity to see the dreaded pirates, seeming to think that they were already prisoners. There were at least a hundred heads

exposed, and the pirate chieftain saw that now was his moment to give the first blow. His men had been trained to this work. They were not only excellent marksmen, but they each had their station, and knew how to pick off an enemy without wasting a dozen shots upon the same mark.

"—s-s-s!" hissed the captain, in a sharp, shrill note that was heard all over the deck.

The men gathered quickly to their stations and selected their marks.

"One!—Two!—Three!—Fire!"

At the first word the men stooped to their pieces—at the second they cocked and made ready—at the third they started up and took aim—and then they fired. The whole was performed in a very few seconds, and from the howl which arose from the corvette's deck, it was evident that much execution had been done. And how could it have been otherwise, considering that the pirates had faithful carbines, were expert in practice, had their marks well exposed, and not more than twenty yards distant?

"Pistols! pistols!" shouted Laroon. "Stand by to board. Grapplings, there! Now for it!" he added, excitedly.

But these orders were not to be fully carried out, for no sooner had the two vessels come near touching than the Frenchmen threw their grapplings, and prepared to board. They were frantic with rage at the cruel deception which the pirate had practised, and they seemed prepared to face a foe ten times their own number. But they had no ordinary foe to deal with now. In a moment after the grapplings were thrown the ship's nettings were crowded with men.

"—s-s-s!" again came hissing from the captain's lips. At the sound of that well-known signal the pirates were calm in an instant.

"Pistols! Be sure of your aim! Fire!"

Seventy-two pistols were discharged on the instant, and more than a score of dead men came tumbling upon the brig's deck, besides others which fell overboard, and some which fell back upon their own deck.

Now, however, the Frenchmen began to pour upon the brig's deck, and they rattled away with their pistols as they did so; but strange as it may appear, they did but little damage, for they were so excited that they paid no attention to their aim, while, in the meantime, the pirates were laying about with their long, keen, heavy cutlasses in right good shape.

All this while, Ben Marton had been utterly

frantic, and when he heard the report of the firearms, and also the voices of the Frenchmen; his frenzy knew no bounds. At length he heard the rushing of feet, and the clashing of steel, and he knew that the enemy were upon his deck. With one mighty effort he leaped from his cot, and pushing Paul aside he rushed for the ladder.

It was the strength of the maniac which served him now, and before the youth could reach him he had gained the deck. Paul had the presence of mind to seize his cutlass before he followed his patient, and then he sprang up the ladder. When he reached the deck he found Ben just throwing a French officer over the taffrail, which feat he accomplished as though the Frenchman had been an infant. In a moment more the officer was in the water, but three stout men had seen the movement, and simultaneously they sprang upon the old gunner with their cutlasses. Paul felled the first with one blow of his weapon. Ben sprang upon the second and wrenched his cutlass from him, while the third engaged Paul hand to hand. He was a powerful fellow, and an adept at the sword exercise, as he proved himself by the first few passes he made.

Ben Marton laid his antagonist low in an instant, but he could do no more. The strange flame which had started so suddenly and so powerfully to life in his soul now went out, and with a heavy groan he sank down upon the body of the man he had killed.

Most of the fighting was going on amidships and forward, the only combatants at that moment abaft the mainmast being Paul and his antagonist. From the manner in which the Frenchman came to this contest he evidently expected an easy conquest, but he was doomed to find himself greatly mistaken, for the youth was not only quick, cool, and powerful, but he was thoroughly versed in every part of the sword-play. Our hero was surely getting the advantage, and in a few moments more would have felled his adversary, had not some new men come upon the scene. Two of the corvette's men had been standing upon the poop of their own ship watching this contest, and as they saw their shipmate likely to get the worst of it, they leaped upon the brig's quarter rail, and from thence to the deck, landing close upon the swordsmen, with their cutlasses drawn.

Paul saw the movement, and with a quick motion he started back against the taffrail, but he must quickly have been despatched beneath the combined efforts of three stout men had not

a new actor appeared upon the field. The youth was in the act of warding off a blow when something flashed above his head, and on the next moment one of the men before him fell with his skull cleft in twain, and before a movement could be made towards resisting the new-comer, a second Frenchman had fallen. Then it was that Paul looked up, and he found Buffo Burnington by his side.

"Lay him down," said the stout, strange man, pointing to the remaining Frenchman as he spoke. "He is the one who first gave you battle."

The youth dropped the point of his cutlass from exhaustion, for it must be remembered that he had performed almost a Herculean task in keeping the old gunner below as long as he did; but no sooner did the point of his weapon fall than his enemy sprang upon him, but he had been watched, and just as he raised his sword arm the cutlass of Burnington passed through his body.

"Now, Mr. Laroon," spoke the man, "I'll help you carry Ben Marton down, and I hope you'll stay there with him."

"Call me anything but that," quickly uttered the youth, as he turned towards the spot where Ben had fallen.

"And what else shall I call you?"

"Call me Paul."

"Very well, we'll think of that another time; but now let's get old Ben down, for you'll soon have your hands full. The battle has turned, and must soon come to an end."

Without speaking further they lifted Ben up and carried him below, and just as Buffo returned to the deck the French were crying for quarters. The battle had been a quick and decisive one, for after the conflict came hand to hand, the French had not much the advantage of numbers, for as it afterwards appeared fifty men were either killed or disabled by the first discharge of musketry, and nearly fifty more were laid down by the pistols.

As soon as the enemy showed a disposition to lay down their arms, Marl Maroon gave the order for stopping the conflict, and it was stopped at once. There were but about thirty French-

men left alive, and they were huddled together upon the fore-castle. They laid down their arms upon promise of their lives being spared, and were very quickly put in irons. After this was done, Captain Laroon mustered his men, and forty-seven answered to their names, so thirty-three were either dead, or so badly wounded as not to be able to answer. (It will be remembered that six men were taken in at Tobago.)

The next movement was to clear the decks, and hammocks were brought from the corvette in which to sew the dead bodies, and three men were detailed from among the prisoners to help in the work. Grog was served, and then they commenced to bury the dead, and by the time this was accomplished, it was well into the afternoon.

As soon as a hasty dinner had been prepared and eaten, the pirate captain took some of his men with him and went on board the corvette, where he made a general overhauling of the cargo and stores. He found the purser's steward, and from him he learned where everything was. He found, to begin with, something over seventy thousand dollars in gold. This was moved first. Next he took what provisions he could conveniently stow away, a lot of spirit, considerable ammunition and arms, some sails and rigging, and all the charts, signals, mathematical instruments, etc. The next movement was to get the corvette's boats down and put the prisoners into them—all save seven; seven wished to join the pirates, and they were gladly taken. The rest were directed to pull for the shore as quickly as they pleased, and as soon as they had shoved off the ship was set on fire in half-a-dozen different places.

It was just dark when the pirates had fished their main-yard so that sail could be made on it, and by this time the corvette was all in flames. Ere long the Scourge of the Antilles was sweeping away to the westward, and just as her boat-swain was calling the first watch, a broad, wild glare shot up into the heavens, and on the next moment a loud roar burst upon the air, and the devoted corvette was but a black, charred mass of torn and blasted timbers.

CHAPTER VI.

SILVER BAY.

PAUL had not so much work to attend to as one might have imagined. There were but a few cuts, and even those were not of much moment. He had only six men upon his list, and these he promised to restore to duty in a few days. The old gunner was in a precarious situation, and the surgeon assured him that it was only by scrupulous care he could hope to recover.

On the morning of the third day from the engagement with the corvette, land was reported directly ahead, and in an hour more other land was made out upon the larboard bow and beam. At ten o'clock, a number of small islands were plainly distinguished, and before noon the brig had run in among them. After this her course was laid more to the southward, and to one not used to the place, it appeared as though the vessel was to be run on shore. But ere long a narrow inlet was opened, between what proved to be the mainland and a large island, and beyond here appeared a wide bay. The track through this inlet was a dubious one, for huge black rocks lifted their heads above water on every hand; but the brig was run safely in, and was then within a circular bay some ten miles in diameter. But the end was not yet. Towards the eastern side of this bay appeared to be a sort of cape, extending out some distance from the mainland, but which proved, upon approaching it, to be an island which stood at the mouth of a smaller bay. Around this island the brig made her way, and ere long she was anchored at the mouth of quite a respectable river.

This was Silver Bay, and the river bore the same name. Its position was upon the coast of Venezuela, and some fifty or sixty miles distant from Porto Cabello. It was a strange place in view of its natural defences, and seemed made for the use to which it was now put. Marl Laroon had received it from an old freebooter who had used it for many years, and probably the present chieftain told the truth when he said that it had been a piratical retreat for nearly two centuries.

"How long shall we lay here, captain?" asked Buffo Burnington, after everything had been put to rights.

"Perhaps a month. That last haul from the corvette may give us a longer resting-spell than I had before calculated upon."

"And I suppose we may all have a chance to cruise about a little?"

"Are you very particular?" asked Laroon, eyeing the man sharply.

"No more so than I always was to see a new country," returned Buffo, candidly.

"Well, I guess you'll have a chance to see enough of it."

After this the captain walked aft to where stood Paul, and after standing by his side for some moments in silence, he said:

"Well, Paul, do you want to go up with me this evening?"

The youth started, but if he felt any strong emotion he quickly subdued it, for he soon replied, and without any hesitation:

"I think if you go up this evening I had better wait until you come back, for I do not think it safe to leave Ben Marton alone. Either you or I should be with him."

"What's the need of that?"

"He is very low now, and his recovery depends entirely upon his being suited in every respect. If we can keep him easy, say, four days at the outside, he will be over the crisis. So you go up to-night, and when you come back I'll go."

The captain's first impulse was to leave Ben Marton out of the question, but he dared not do such a thing as that in the presence of his crew. But he went down to see the old man, and it was his request that either Paul or the captain should stick by him. So finally Laroon agreed to "go up" alone, and let Paul "go up" on the morrow. Accordingly, just at sundown, the boat was manned, and the captain was pulled away up the river.

It was near midnight, and the old gunner had fallen asleep. Paul watched him until he was sure he slept, and then he went upon deck. The night was calm and serene, and the heavens were cloudless. Away in the eastern heavens the moon was just rising, and her soft light already lay upon the green verdure and the glistening wavelets of the bay and river. The youth gazed around upon the scene awhile, and then he sat down upon the truck of one of the after guns. He was alone upon the quarter-deck, the anchor-watch being all forward. A deep sigh escaped him as he sat down, and he bowed his head upon his hands.

"Alas!" he murmured to himself, "how long must this last? How long shall my feet tread these devious ways? Why should I thus be cast upon the world in outlaw's shoes, and be only a candidate for the gallows, while my heart shudders at the blackness of its life, and my soul turns in loathing from the things of evil that surround me?"

At that moment the youth heard a movement near him, and on looking up he saw the outlines of a human figure. He started to his feet, and as he did so, the intruder spoke:

"I trust I have not offended?"

"Burnington?" cried Paul, extending his hand. "No, no, you need not fear of offending me by your presence, for I have had it when my very life hung upon it."

"Then I don't intrude?"

"No, no." Paul spoke quickly and energeti-

cally, for there came over him at that moment a desire to know more of the strange man. At first he had looked upon him with dislike and distrust; and this arose from two causes: First, the personal appearance of the man; and second, from the remark he had made on the morning after he shipped, about his looking like Marl Laroon. But the circumstance of the man's having saved his life as he did, had awakened new feelings in his bosom, though until the present moment he had had no opportunity to express his thanks.

As the youth spoke he sat down again, but this time he sat upon the carriage of the gun, leaving room for Buffo to sit by his side.

"I suppose you saved my life as much for the captain's sake as my own?" the young man said, after Burnington had seated himself.

"Why should I have thought of the captain?" asked Buffo.

"Because you thought him to be my father."

"Do I think the hyena can sire a lamb?"

"How?" uttered Paul, in surprise. "Did I not hear you speak of my resemblance to him?"

"Yes, for you both stood by the binnacle as I spoke, and you looked more like Marl Laroon than you did like a binnacle. I only discovered that you both belonged to the same family of animate things—that you were both of Adam. But let that pass. When Caucasian parents give birth to an Ashantee child then might I believe that some few drops of Marl Laroon's blood flowed in your veins, but not till then. And yet—I—I—have seen some members of a family whom you resembled."

Paul started and placed his hand upon Buffo's arm. The words he had heard were enough to excite his curiosity, but the tone, and the manner, were of more import still.

"Do you mean anything by that?" he asked, in a whisper.

"Yes. I mean that I have seen those of whom your face puts me in mind."

"And who are they? Where do they live? The name? The name?"

"Let me ask you a question first. How long have you been here?"

"With Laroon?"

"Yes."

"Ever since I can remember."

"And can you remember nothing back of that?"

"Yes," returned Paul, eagerly, and yet sadly. "I can remember of playing in a wide park, and

riding a little pony. And I can remember of a little brook where I used to play in the water."

"And do you remember the name of the person with whom you lived then?"

"No, sir. Laroon has done everything in his power to make me forget those things, and what with my youth, and with his false—Yes—*falsehood*—for I believe he has lied to me—I have forgotten it all. I can remember, one cold, wet day, of being taken into a carriage with a strange man, and my little Mary with me—and of being driven off a long distance, and then Marl Laroon came, and during the rest of the day we walked. And I can remember how little Mary cried, and how he told her he would kill her if she did not stop. And then we stopped at a strange house and slept that night, and the next day we reached the place where I saw ships and wharves. That was Bristol, as Marl has since told me."

"And you have been with him ever since?"

"Yes."

"Did you come here then?"

"No. His rendezvous was then at Tobago. We remained there until I was ten years old, and then he took me to sea, and left Mary in care of an old woman there. When I was fourteen he moved his head-quarters to this place, and since then Mary has lived here?"

"Is this girl of whom you speak a sister of yours?"

"O, no," quickly replied the youth; and in a tone which seemed to imply that he hoped not.

"Did you ask Laroon whom you used to live with?"

"Yes, and he told me it was with a man named Delany."

"Then why did you say you had forgotten the name?"

"Because I do not think that is true."

For some moments Burnington was silent, but at length he said:

"Did you ever know any one whom you called 'Uncle Stephen'?"

Paul started to his feet and laid both his hands upon his companion's shoulders, and after gazing a few moments into his face, he said:

"Speak that name again?"

"Uncle Stephen."

"Ay—I remember it well. Now do I know that that name has often prattled over my boyhood's tongue. But there is more. Stephen is but half the name."

"Humphrey!" spoke Buffo, in a low, meaning tone."

The youth sat back upon the gun carriage and folded his hands in his lap.

"Why—O, why," he murmured, "have I never been able to call these things to mind? O, how clearly now is the whole thing. How well do I remember that name—'Uncle Stephen,' 'Stephen Humphrey.' But tell me, sir, what you know of this?"

Burnington made no answer, but sat with his dark face hidden in his great hands. Paul had more time to reflect, and his anxiety grew apace.

"By my soul," he uttered, laying his hand upon his companion's arm, "you must know something of my people—something of my early childhood. Do not refuse me?"

"I know your countenance put me in mind of those whom I had seen," returned Burnington, and then, after some hesitation, he added, "I was at Sir Stephen's—"

"Sir Stephen?" interrupted Paul, with energy. "Then I am honorably connected?"

"You once had most honorable friends. But let me go on. I was once at Sir Stephen Humphrey's, and I saw you there. I am sure 'twas you. That was seventeen years ago—you were a mere infant then, perhaps two years old. I can tell you no more, save that I knew you when I saw you here. I knew you from the very lines of your face."

"But tell me if I have friends living?"

"Yes, you have friends all about you. Ben Marton would die for you, and half the crew—"

"I know that," interrupted Paul, with a grateful emotion manifest in his tone; "but you know what I mean. Have I any friends in England?"

"I think you have, but upon my soul I cannot assure you to that effect. It has been a long while since I was in England."

"Can you tell me in what part of England Sir Stephen lived?"

"In Northamptonshire. Hark! What sound was that?"

"Poor Ben is awake," answered Paul, starting to his feet. "We shall converse again?"

"Perhaps so."

The youth heard Ben's voice calling to him, and he stopped to say no more.

Buffo Burnington watched the graceful figure of his companion until it had disappeared down the companion-way, and then he arose and walked forward, muttering to himself as he went:

"He has a friend he little dreams of."

CHAPTER VII.

MARY. THE EAVESDROPPER.

On the following day, towards the middle of the forenoon, Paul left the brig to go up the river. He had the same boat which the captain had used the evening previous, and he would have had the same crew had he listened to the will of Laroon. But he was determined to have men of his own choosing, and he did so. For the first time in his life, he believed the chieftain wished to play the spy upon his motions, for there was something in Marl Laroon's look and tone while he was trying to force a boat's crew of his own selection upon the youth, which seemed to indicate that he had some secret reason for wishing it; but Paul simply remarked that he had promised four of his best friends that they should go up with him, and go they should. The pirate captain dared not openly resist the young man, for well he knew that he should find few adherents to back him against his noble-hearted protege.

"You will take good care of Ben," said the youth, as he stood at the gangway.

"Certainly," returned Marl, gruffly, and with ill-humor.

"Do not leave him, for he will worry if you do, and you may run the risk of losing one of the most useful men you ever had."

"I know my duty, sir." This was spoken in a quick, sharp tone, and Paul knew its meaning,

so he went over the side without saying anything more.

As soon as the boat had fairly entered the river the scene became delightful in the extreme. The bed of the stream seemed to be composed of fine white sand, and it gave to the water that brilliant, silvery appearance which had suggested the name of the stream and the bay. The banks were covered with verdure and aromatic shrubs, and flowers of every size and hue were abundant. And then the birds which flew from shore to shore, and from bough to bough, were brilliant and gaudy in plumage, and some of them—some of the more insignificant in outward show—warbled most sweetly. It was amid such a scene that the boat was pulled for a distance of five miles ere anything like a human habitation was seen. But at length, as they rounded an abrupt angle in the river, they came in sight of a clump of buildings, most of which were small, thatched cots; but upon one side, where a rivulet flowed down to the river, stood a large building of stone, seeming to have been originally erected for a place of refuge, for it was surrounded by a high wall with circular towers at the angles, in which were numerous embrasures for guns, though no guns were at present to be seen.

Towards this castle-like building the boat was pulled, entering the small tributary stream,

which flowed beneath the wall. When they reached the point where the water came from beneath the wall, Paul gave a loud cry and ere long a human head appeared upon the other side, and soon afterwards a heavy iron portcullis was raised, and the boat glided through beneath the heavy arch which was thus guarded.

This building was constructed somewhat after the Moorish style of architecture, and was quite spacious. There were two stories above ground, and how much room there was below this, even Paul himself did not know. He only knew that the structure was built by the Spanish buccaniers many years before, and that it had once stood a very severe siege. The courtyard, within the wall, was some twenty rods long by fifteen wide, and then there was much more room back of the buildings.

In one of the chambers of this place—a chamber sumptuously furnished—sat a female. She was not more than seventeen years of age, and as beautiful as the fabled houri. In form she was light and graceful, but yet full and well rounded, possessing much more muscle and weight of flesh than her appearance would seem to indicate. Her hair was a light auburn, having a golden hue where the light rested upon it, and hung in glossy curls about her neck and shoulders. Her eyes were a deep, sparkling blue, and her features were as regular and finely chiselled as the most ambitious sculptor could wish to imitate. And then the tone of her features was one of love and joyousness—of faith and purity—of truth and holy virtue, and surely smiles would find a genial, happy home there when the soul was at rest. She was called, by those who knew her now, Mary Delaney.

She was sitting by a window which overlooked the hills and plains back of the building, and there had surely been tears upon her cheeks. The expression of her face was one of eager, anxious earnestness, and at the slightest noise she started up, while the rich blood mounted to her face. Soon there came the sound of footsteps upon the stairs, and some one approached her room. She started to her feet—her door was opened—she saw the form of a man—and on the next moment she was clasped to the bosom of Paul Laroon.

"O, Paul, Paul!" she murmured, as she wound her arms more tightly about his neck, and gazed up through her happy tears, "thanks be to God that I see you once more. O, Paul—my own dear—"

She did not finish the sentence, for the word she would have uttered seemed to stick in her throat.

"I am back once more, Mary," the young man said, as he led her to a sofa and sat down by her side, "and what joy is mine to find you so well and in safety. O, this has been a long, long year."

"Over a year, Paul—over a year."

"So it has. It was a year last spring."

"And why did you not come and see me last spring, when the captain came? O, I watched for you then."

"Did not he tell you why I came not?"

"Only that you—"

"What?" Speak on."

"He said you did not care to come." And as the girl thus spoke she burst into tears.

"Did he tell you that?" uttered the youth, indignantly, and with much surprise.

"He did."

"And did he make no explanation?"

"No."

"Then he deceived you, Mary, most wickedly deceived you. On that occasion our vessel lay at our rendezvous at Tobago. Six of our men lay at the point of death, and when they heard that I meant to leave them they wept like children, and begged me not to forsake them to death. What could I do? Those men had been friends to me, and I know that some of them would have laid down their very lives for me in case of need. I was the only physician. I asked Laroon to run the brig to Silver Bay, but he would not. He said he had found passage to Porto Cabello, and he should go, and that I might go with him. I asked him what was to become of our sick men. His answer was this: 'Let them die if they will. We can get new men more easily than we can cure them!' I told him to come, and to tell you that I had remained behind to save the lives of some of my suffering fellow-creatures."

"O!" murmured the maiden, once more throwing her arms about the youth's neck. "I could not believe all that he meant for me to believe, but yet I was sad and unhappy. But I bless you now. Ah, Paul, I should have been happier had I known all before."

"Then you may be happy that you know all now; and if the knowledge of my truth and virtue will make you happy, be so ever."

The maiden withdrew her arms from the young man's neck, leaving one hand resting upon

his shoulder, and then she looked inquiringly up into his face. There was something strange, almost imploring, in the cast of her countenance at that moment. For awhile Paul returned the gaze in silence, but at length he said:

"What do you mean, Mary?"

"You will not be offended, Paul?"

"You know me better."

"Then I was thinking what assurance I could have of your—"

"Speak on. Fear not that I shall think unkindly of your words."

"O, Paul—I have feared—long and painfully feared that your present life would not long leave you in virtue. Do not blame me. I cannot help it. But look at the men with whom you associate—and—and look at the life you follow. And—and—"

The afflicted girl lost her power of utterance here, and bowed her head upon her companion's bosom.

"Speak it all, Mary," he said.

"I will," she sobbed; "and I know you will not blame me. Look at these poor females who live in the humble cots about me. And I know there are more at Tobago. They are not wives, Paul!"

"Mary," spoke the youth, drawing the lovely girl more closely to him, and speaking in a tone very low and earnest, "I know what you mean, and I bless you that you have opened this way for me to speak. Too well do I know what misery and shame there is in the track of our people, but God know that none of it can be laid upon my shoulders. What I might have been had I been differently situated, I will not pretend to say, but so long as your pure image is before my mind my soul knows no wickedness, my heart, no impurity. Sooner would I place the pistol's flaming muzzle to my own temple than have the shame of a defenceless female upon my head. Ay, and sooner would I quit life now, with all its hopes, than have such shame upon myself. No, no, Mary, not yet has stain of my own will come upon me. Are you happy now?"

"Yes, Paul—happy now; but how shall the future be?"

"I know what you mean," quickly responded our hero; and holding his companion so that he could look into her face, he continued: "It was upon this subject that I most desired to speak. I know that I am not safe where I am. I mean my character and my person, for no power could

ever willingly lead me into the sin I see so much about me. I detest the doers of it too bitterly, and loathe the deeds too deeply, to ever enter into the work. But I have resolved not to remain any longer than I can help. Many a time could I have fled from the wicked men, but I had rather die here than go alone. Sometime—sometime, when I can take you with me,—then will I flee from them. Do you understand me, Mary?"

"Yes, Paul."

"And would you flee with me?"

"O, how gladly—how quickly!"

"And when we had fled you would be mine for life?"

"Everything—anything—for you, Paul, so that I might be free from the rule of our dark master."

"And you love me, then? You love me with your whole soul?"

"I have ever loved thee; and thou art all on earth I have to love."

For some moments after this, the twain sat there locked in each other's arms. They understood each other's soul now, and it may be supposed that their thoughts were running nearly in the same channel. At length the young man spoke:

"Mary," he said, "we have a strange man on board our vessel. He knows where we used to live in England."

The maiden started up and looked her companion almost wildly in the face; but the extreme emotion soon passed away, and she was more calm.

"He told me some things," continued Paul, "which I remembered. Do you remember the name of *Humphrey*?"

Mary repeated the name several times, and a sort of intelligent gleam at length rested upon her countenance.

"Surely, Paul, there is something familiar in the sound of that name, but I cannot call it to mind."

"I should not suppose you could, for you were not over three years old when we both came with Marl Maroon. But this man of whom I speak has seen us both, in years gone by—long ago—when we were both very small—at Sir Stephen Humphrey's, and I remember of calling some one, '*Uncle Stephen*'—I remember it well. O, Mary, we must escape from here! I know that Marl Laroon has no right to us, and I cannot divest myself of the idea that he did a

great sin when he took us away from our home."

"Then he is not your father?" uttered the maiden, with some energy.

"No!" answered Paul, quickly and energetically. "I know he is not my father. Not only does every feeling of my soul assure me that such is not the case, but Marl Laroon's own manner proves it. And then this man—Buffo Burnington, he calls himself—assures me that he is not. Thank God, I owe no spark of being to that dark-souled man!"

There was another silence of some moments, at the end of which Paul resumed:

"Marl Laroon was here last night. Of course you saw him."

"Yes," returned Mary, with a shudder, "he was with me a long while."

"And what did he say?"

"I could not tell you. He talked at times very strangely, and—you may laugh at me, and think me foolish—but certainly he did talk more like a lover than a guardian."

Paul started, and turned pale.

"What is the matter?" asked Mary.

"O, we must escape from here as soon as possible," cried the youth, anxiously.

"But why?—what now?"

"Can you not see? Mark Laroon *does* love you—all he is capable of loving. If we remain here, you are lost. Now I know what his strange words to me have meant. He means that you shall be his!"

The fair girl gazed into her companion's face for some moments without speaking, and the fixed, vacant look of the eyes showed that she was thinking of something past.

"God have mercy on me!" she at length uttered, clasping her hands together. "It is for that, perhaps, that he has called the miners—four of them—to the castle, and bade them remain here. It is for that he has given directions for having the night-watch doubled, and for having no soul pass out from here save the crew of the brig, and the fishermen and hunters."

"Has he given all these orders?" asked Paul.

"Yes."

"And how has it been with you since he was here last? Have you been strictly watched?"

"I have been but a prisoner, Paul—but a mere prisoner. I have not been allowed to go outside these walls without two attendants, and one of those must be from among Laroon's blind followers. His negroes have kept an eye upon me all the time, and I do not think that during the

past year I could have escaped even had I bent my whole energies to the purpose all the time. But do you—oh! do you think that he meant to—"

"I fear he meant to make you his own, body and soul."

"His wife, you mean?" uttered Mary, in a trembling whisper.

"Yes. He would call it wife, I suppose; and he might have a regular priest come and make you so."

The maiden bowed her head, and her frame shook with strong emotion. "It was now growing dusk, for the sun had set some time since, and the shades of night were beginning to gather their garb over the things of earth. Mary turned to the window, and looked out. Paul arose and walked several times across the room, and when he stopped it was close by the door which opened to the corridor by which he had entered. Just as he stopped he was sure he heard some one at the door. Without waiting to reflect, he moved to the door and opened it, and he saw a black woman just hurrying away from the spot. His first impulse was to spring out into the corridor and catch her, and he obeyed it.

"What are you doing here?" was his first question, as he seized the negress by the arm. She was one of Laroon's slaves, and some fifty or sixty years of age, with a face upon which were strongly marked cunning and cruelty. "What are you doing here?" repeated Paul, in no very gentle terms.

"Noff'n," was the short reply.

"Then why were you here?"

"'Cause I have to be here—all ober de house jus' whar I'm a mind to."

"Were you not listening at that door?"

"No, sar—sartin' I wa'n't."

As the woman gave this answer, she freed herself by a jerk from the youth's grasp, and then hastened away. Paul returned to the room where he had left Mary, and found her just coming towards him.

"Paul," she said, "I thought you told me that Marl Laroon would remain on board the brig until you returned."

"So I did," the young man returned, with some surprise.

"But he is here now."

"Who is here?"

"The captain."

"Impossible!"

"I am sure I saw him in the garden but a moment ago, and he was gazing most closely up at my window."

Paul started to the window and looked out, but he could see nothing. This window overlooked a small garden which was enclosed within the wall, and Mary pointed to a clump of orange shrubs, where she had seen Laroon. But it was too dark now to see objects plainly at such a distance, and Paul soon gave up the search. But he was not easy. First, he believed that the old slave had been set to watch him,

and if Marl Laroon had really come up from the brig, then there was something serious in the wind.

Mary ordered her attendants to prepare her supper in her own apartment, and to prepare enough for two, and ere long afterwards candles were brought, and the meal was served. Paul ate almost in silence, for he was very uneasy, and he wished not to force his doubts upon his fair companion; and Mary, too, was far from being easy in her mind.

CHAPTER VIII.

PLOTTING AND COUNTER-PLOTTING.

WHILE Paul and Mary were eating their supper, there was a scene transpiring in another part of the building that was not wholly unconnected with their interests. Marl Laroon had come up from the brig, though he had not come in a boat. He had administered a powerful dose of opium to the old gunner, and as soon as the invalid was asleep, he had been set on shore for the purpose, as he said, of taking a look at the country. As soon as his boat had returned, and he had got out of sight from the crew, he had started for the castle.

It was an out-of-the-way apartment in which the pirate captain now was, and he had one companion—the very woman whom we have seen at the young people's door, and whom Paul caught in the act.

"Now what have you heard?" asked Marl, with much eagerness.

"O, I heard lots," returned the old negress, showing the whites of her eyes, prodigiously.

"Have you heard them speak of me?"

"Yes, mas'r—lots 'bout you. Paul said you wasn't his farder, an' Miss Mary, she said she war drefful glad. Den dey tole—or rudder Mas'r Paul tole 'bout man 'board de brig as tole him you for sartin sure wa'n't his farder, eh?"

"By Saint Paul!" uttered the pirate, grind-

ing his teeth, "that is some of Mr. Buffo Burnington's—"

"Dat's 'um—dat's 'um, mas'r," interrupted the slave, clapping her hands. "Dat's 'is name, 'cause I heerd Mas'r Paul say so."

"But tell me, Hagar, what else did Paul say about this fellow?"

"O, he said lots. Fust, dis man tole him whar he war born, an' who he lib wid when he war little piccaniny. Den he tole him 'bout—'bout de man what he call uncle. I'se forgot de name."

"Was it Dunklee?" asked Marl.

"No, no—dat wasn't it," said Hagar, shaking her head, thoughtfully.

"Wasn't it Dumfrees?"

"No, no. Ah, I coch um now! It was not Dumfrees, but it was Humphrey. Dat's 'um for sartin sure."

The pirate's black eyes now emitted sparks of fire. He walked up and down the narrow apartment several times like a chafed tiger. At length he stopped, being somewhat cooled down.

"Did you hear anything more about this Buffo Burnington?"

"No, mass'r, noff 'n more 'bout him."

"Now tell me what else the boy and girl talked about."

"My samp, mas'r, he lubs her, and she lubs he; an' dey talked 'bout runnin' away."

"Did they make any plans for doing so?"

"Doin' how?"

"Running away."

"No—not's I knows on. But dey was boff of of 'um dreffal 'fraid you war goin' to marry wid Mary."

"And that was the amount of all you heard?" said Marl, in a deep whisper.

"Yes," said Hagar, showing her teeth, "'cept missus tole Mas'r Paul 'bout how you had kep' her watched, an' how you had gone to set more watch ober de castle. Mas'r Paul tole her you was sartin sure goin' to make her your wife, an' den she said, 'God bress me,—no, she say, 'God hab mercy!' dat was it. An' den, yer see, Mas'r Paul, he cum an' open de doer rite in my face, an' cotched me hold de arm, but he no hold dis chile. I got away jus' as easy."

And as the old woman remembered how she had given the youth the slip, she indulged in an immoderate fit of laughter.

Again Marl Laroon walked up and down the room, and when he stopped, there was a dark smile upon his face.

"Hagar," he said, "you have done well, and you shall be rewarded for it. You have served me more than you can be aware of. By my floating flag these vipers shall know whom they have to deal with. Mr. Buffo Burnington shall come in for his share soon—much sooner than he dreams of. He shall have something to do beside—but never mind. He'll make excellent food for fishes!"

"So he will," chimed in the old woman, showing her teeth more than before.

The pirate stopped at this interruption, and evidently thought that he had better keep his thoughts to himself, for he meditated no more aloud, but turning to his old slave, he said:

"You must watch them carefully, and be sure that they move not into the garden without you are close upon them. Follow them every where they go, and hear every word they say. And mind, not one lip that I have been here to-night—not a word to a living soul. I shall be here to-morrow night, and then you shall tell what more you have seen and heard."

Hagar promised to obey, and shortly afterwards the pirate captain left the place. He passed out through the garden, and from thence he made his exit by way of a postern, and then hurried off by the upland path to the bay, which

he reached about nine o'clock. At a given signal a boat came off for him, and his patient was not yet awake, so he fancied there would be no trouble on account of poor Ben.

After Paul and Mary had done their supper, and the things had been removed, they sat down and commenced to converse once more. The young man had been thinking much during the meal, and he was ready now to go ahead with his investigations. He had a mind naturally quick and strong, and a power of reasoning that was seldom at fault. Added to this he possessed one of those ready wits which never fail to serve a good purpose in cases of emergency, and his past life had been of a character to keep all these points of mental power at work, for he had been a whole lifetime, almost, engaged in keeping himself free from the burden of guilt which Laroon would put upon him. And then he knew Laroon's character well.

"Mary," he said, "are you sure that was Marl Laroon whom you saw in the garden?"

"Just as sure as I am that I see you now," replied the maiden.

"Then of course he has come to watch us. I know him well. I can see now the meaning of some things that have puzzled me exceedingly—some things in his manner towards me. But if he has come to watch us, of course he will gain his information of some one else. Is there any one in the castle whom you think you have occasion to think he would select in preference to another for a spy?"

"O yes. He would take old Hagar for that business."

"And she is the one whom I found at the door. Now that woman may have heard every word we spoke, for I know we spoke loud enough for any one to hear who stood in the passage near the door. And if that is the case, then she has heard some strange things; and if she tells Laroon all, then he will have his eyes opened. It is a bad piece of business. But I will find out whether she saw the captain. Does she answer your summons?"

"Yes, always; but you will get nothing from her, for she is as crafty as a fox, and as cunning as mortal can be."

"Never mind. I may not get any words from her to that effect, but I can read much from her looks. Will you call her?"

Mary arose and pulled a cord that hung near her, and ere long a young Indian girl appeared, and our heroine requested her to send Hagar

up. The girl disappeared, and in a short time afterwards Hagar made her appearance.

"Hagar," said Paul, speaking kindly, and with a smile, "I forgot to tell you before, but the captain wants you to have everything ready for him to-morrow night, as he will be here at that time."

"Sartin," responded the old woman, with a twinkling of the brown eyes that Paul at once understood.

"That was the order he sent by me, and for the sake of doing my duty I give it, but you needn't make the preparations, for he will not come."

"Eh! Why wont he come?"

"Because this afternoon he fell and broke his leg."

"Hi, hi, hi—yah, yah, yah—ah, ah," laughed the old slave. "Guess Mas'r Paul don't know noff 'a 'bout it."

"But I do know. The poor man is suffering the most excruciating agony, and he cannot bear to be brought up here."

The old woman smiled, but spoke not a word.

"What do you think about it?" asked Paul.

"I think I'll do same as you do. I git 'um all ready so to obey orders, eh?"

"Very well. That's all."

Hagar went out, and as soon as Paul was sure she was out of hearing, he said:

"So she has seen him."

"Are you sure, Paul?"

"Sara?" iterated the youth, in evident surprise. "How should she know his leg was not broken if she had not seen him?"

"But does she know that it is not broken?"

"Ah, Mary, you would never make a good lawyer. Suppose she had not seen Laroon safe and sound since I came here, can you not imagine how her tongue would have rattled with questions the moment I told her of the accident? Why, she would have fairly whelmed me with them. And then do you suppose she would have laughed in that way if she had not known the truth from actual sight?"

"I see, now," returned Mary, shuddering at the thought of how much might have come to the pirate captain's ears.

"But, do not fear," urged Paul, as he noticed his companion's emotion, "for Marl Laroon will have his hands and head both full when he attempts to come directly to the antagonistic with me. Very fortunately I now know as much as he does, and more too; for I know just how

much he knows, while he will not dream that I mistrust him."

"But how much do you think he does know?" asked Mary.

"Why, I feel confident that he knows nearly all we said before you saw him in the garden, for I remember well of hearing a noise at the door—a sort of low, wheezing sound, several times, but it did not attract my attention until I arose from my chair. I am confident Hagar heard it all, and if she did, then the captain knows it all now. I am more sorry for Burnington than for myself; but I will put him on his guard as soon as I go on board. I wish I knew more of that man."

"Why," uttered the maiden, "is there any thing peculiar about him?"

"Of course, there must be; and since I have been here—within the last five minutes, I have thought more of him than I ever did before. His face is before me, and I see it plainly—I see it as something that I have surely seen before—and yet, so strange is that face, that even an infant should not seem to forget it. And then his voice, too. But I cannot think—I cannot call up clearly, nor even dimly, anything of him in the past."

"But what is he, Paul?" asked Mary, much interested. "What sort of a looking man?"

"At first sight he is one of the most uncomely, homely, repulsive men I ever saw. He has but one eye, and the yellow socket is very much disfigured. His face is very dark; his hair red, and short, and crisp; his brow very low and overhanging; his face all distorted and grim; and besides all this, one of his legs is much shorter than the other."

"Surely," returned Mary, with a smile, "you have painted not a very inviting figure."

"So he first appeared to me; but since I have talked with him, he appears differently—Ay—when three stout men had set upon me, he came up and overcame them. When not another of my shipmates noticed me, he sought me out in my need and saved me. He struck bravely too."

"O how I shall love him, now," murmured the fair girl, while her zeal brought a bright tear-drop to her eye.

Paul understood her meaning, and his grateful look was reward enough.

The moon was up bright and full, and the lovers walked out into the garden. There was some dew upon the grass, but they noticed it not. They had walked about the place once,

talking the while only that sweet, soft language, which is nonsense to all save those who talk it, when Paul was sure he heard other footsteps near him. He stopped and listened.

"Mary," he said, "we are surely dogged."

He spoke in a sort of hashed, tremulous whisper, for he was moved very deeply. This continuous espionage cut him to the quick. The first case—that of the watching by Hagar in the corridor—seemed to be of such moment, that he had looked upon it almost in the light of a fair thing; but to be thus followed in his every motion of privacy, not only annoyed him, but it made him angry, and his mind was quickly made up that he would put an end to it. He considered himself by right of circumstance, which had been forced upon him, second only in authority in that place, at least so far as personal freedom from annoyance went, and he determined to exercise his right.

"Let us walk around again, my love," he said, to his companion; and accordingly they started.

Paul conversed as before, but his thoughts were upon the subject of his plague, and he watched narrowly for some demonstration. At length he had reached a point where a thick clump of rose bushes grew at an angle of the wall, and when he reached this, he was sure some one was near him. He passed on, but kept an eye directed behind him. In a moment more, he heard something in the path, and on turning quickly about, he saw a dark figure just gliding across the path from the rose bushes. He saw in an instant that it was Hagar. With one bound he reached her side, and seizing her by the throat, he forced her to the ground. With his handkerchief he bound her ankles firmly together, and then taking off her long cotton apron he folded it up, and with it he bound her wrists down to her knees. Having thus deprived her of all power of locomotion, he said to her, in a tone which she knew too well meant all that it said:

"Now if you make the least noise with your mouth, even so much as would awaken a sparrow that had perched upon your black nose, I'll

finish the work by putting a gag between your jaws. I think you know me!"

From that time Paul and Mary walked in the garden undisturbed, and before they separated for the night, they said much which they would not have others hear.

"We must watch and be wary," said the youth, at the end of a long conversation upon the subject of their love, and the probable chances of their ever enjoying life free from pain and bitterness. "We must remember that others have eyes as sharp as ours, and that others may wish to detain us as much as we may wish to go. If Marl Laroon approaches you on this subject, be sure that you let him not see one mite of your purpose. And above all, do not be too hasty with him. He may ask you to become his wife. I think it very likely he will. And if he does, you must not refuse him too abruptly. Better not refuse him at all, at first, but put him off, and let me know of it."

Mary promised that she would do her best to maintain her own presence of mind, and to keep Laroon from excess of passion, and that she would let Paul know of all that happened. At all events she would not let slip one word which could implicate either of them in any plan for desertion.

Before our hero retired to the dwelling, he went and set Hagar free.

"You'll suffer for dis," she said, as she rose to her feet, and shook herself.

"You'll suffer more still, if you do not keep out of my way. I have known people to die before now, by forcing themselves into dangerous places."

If Paul could have seen the wild, unearthly grin that rested on the old woman's shrivelled features, he would have imagined that she did not fear him. However, it would have affected him very little, either one way or the other.

Ere long, after this, Paul had retired to his rest for the night, and amid all the wild hopes and fears that crowded on him, he forgot not to offer up a prayer to Him who alone is able to save.

CHAPTER IX.

THE LETTER.

PAUL arose early in the morning, and he was not long in discovering that old Hagar was watching him very narrowly; but he appeared to take no notice of it, only looking out that she did not come near enough to annoy him; and she, when she found that the youth's eyes were upon her, seemed anxious to avoid him. Paul could see all this—he could see with what tenacity she kept her gaze upon him, and yet how uneasy she was in the work. Of course he knew from this that the slave was acting under orders which she dared not disobey.

After breakfast our hero walked out into the garden with Mary, and having secured a spot where no one could watch and overhear them without being seen by them, they devoted a few moments to planning for the future. They were calm now, and their thoughts were of a more cool and devoted character than they had been when first they knew all the wickedness that worked against them.

"Never," said Paul, earnestly and fervently, "have I joined in any of Marl Laroon's foul projects, and I have only raised my hand against my fellows when unfortunate circumstances have forced me to defend my own life. O, I must be free from this thralldom! For years I have felt the fatal canker eating to my soul, and yet I could not rid myself of it. I could not leave

Marl Laroon, and know that you were left behind. He knows this—and he has ever taunted me with it. Ay, taunted me with the noblest passion of my soul. When I have threatened to leave him, he has sneeringly spoken your name to me. He knew that was a talisman that would bind me to him. But it cannot be so always. I shall not leave this base man while I live, unless I can take you with me; but I cannot always live so. The time must soon come when I shall sink beneath the load if I cannot throw it off. While I was but a boy I thought not so much of it, but now that I am a man—perhaps not yet in years a man, but surely so in experience—I feel the curse of the shame more deeply. Mary, we must make our way from here, or not only I, but you also, must fall. You know what I mean. You know the thing which threatens you. But weep not—let not your heart fail you—for we will yet accomplish our purpose of salvation. I cannot think that God will let the villain triumph."

As Paul ceased speaking, Mary placed her arm about his neck, and bowed her head upon his bosom.

"I think God will smile upon us," she murmured, "for surely I have ever tried to obey him so far as I knew how. O, we shall be very happy when we have a home of our own where

wicked people cannot harm us. You say you have very lately grown a man. So have I grown a woman. When last we were together before this, I felt as a child, but it is so no longer. I begin to feel the canker of a slavery worse than death upon me, and if our tyrant does as he means to do, then I shall die indeed."

"Do not fear," again urged the youth, "for I will save you. Sometime when I come, I will bring a suit of sailor's clothes that will fit you, and I can take you out as one of my boat's crew. Some such way can be managed; and when we are once free from this place we will make our way at once to some port on the coast, and from thence we can easily find passage out of the country. You will not despair, dearest?"

"I will not, Paul," returned the maiden—"I will not."

And then the youth went on to speak words of cheer and comfort to his loved one. To be sure they were words which had little foundation in fact, but then they had a good effect, and they were far better than thoughts of fear and pain. The hour drew nigh at which our hero was to take his departure, for he had promised to be on board at ten o'clock. So he spoke to Mary all the hope he could, and having promised to come again very soon, he kissed her, and then hastened away to his boat.

The passage down the river was quickly made, and when Paul stepped over the brig's side the captain was in the gangway to receive him.

"You are punctual," said Marl, with a sneer upon his face which the youth did not fail to notice.

"I generally mean to be so," replied the youth. "When I give my word I keep it."

"If you can," added Laroon, with a dark smile.

"Certainly, I admit the power of some things to thwart me, even to the crushing of my soul, but I acknowledge not the right, and he must be wary who would attempt it."

"Thank you," responded Laroon, with another sneer. "I shall remember your lesson."

Paul passed on to the quarter-deck and descended to the cabin, and his first movement was to seek the bunk of the old gunner whom he found in a very weak and painful condition. The old man was glad to see the young surgeon, and hoped that he should not be left to the captain's hands again.

"If I do go again," said Paul, "I will leave proper medicine for you, and commission some

one that I know will be faithful. But how do you feel now?"

"Very weak, and I can't sleep."

"Have you slept since I went away?"

"Ay, and there's the trouble. Some of the stuff you left must have put a reg'lar stopper on my peepers. I went to sleep last night 'bout four bells in the dog-watch, an' didn't wake up again till this mornin'."

"It's nothing that I left, Ben," said Paul, reaching out and taking the old man's wrist. "You've had something that I never ordered, but you needn't fear. It won't hurt you only to make you uneasy for a little while."

The youth knew very well from the symptoms he could perceive that a powerful soporific had been administered, and he knew, too, why it had been given; but he resolved to guard against a repetition of the thing. He immediately administered to his patient such medicine as he thought necessary, and then passed through the cock-pit to the berth-deck. He had not noticed Buffo Burnington upon the spar-deck, and he supposed of course he should find him here, which he did. The strange man started up as soon as he saw Paul, and hurried towards him. He grasped the young man's hand as he came up, and having gazed hurriedly about him, as though fearful that some one might overhear him, he said, in quick, low tones:

"What has the captain heard about me?"

"Why do you ask?" returned Paul, wishing first to know what had transpired.

"I'll tell you. Last night Laroon went on shore pretending that he only meant to take a stroll among the woods. He was gone till quite late. His first question on coming over the side was, 'Is Burnington aboard?' The boatswain told him I was. 'Then keep him aboard,' said the captain. I heard this myself. This morning when I went on deck, Laroon was there, and he has watched me as a cat would watch a rat ever since. He must have heard something."

"So he has," answered Paul. "He has heard all that you said to me on the evening we conversed together here."

And the youth went on and told all that had transpired, giving a full account of what Hagar must have overheard, and of her having afterwards seen Laroon.

"Then you are sure he knows all this?" said Buffo, in a tone which betrayed some distress.

"I am," answered Paul.

"Well," resumed the old man, "it will not

benefit him any, especially since I know what has happened, and shall now know how to take him."

"But be careful," suggested Paul, "for he does not dream that I mistrust him. He thinks his visit to his castle was made in secret last night, and if he had not been so anxious to peep up at the window at which the poor maiden sat he might not have been discovered. But now we have the advantage of him in one respect, at least. He knows only what we have said and done, while we know all that he thinks secure in his own mind. But what is all this?" continued our hero, with more earnestness. "What can the captain fear in you? What connexion is there between you and myself? There must be some. There must be something thus to start such a man as Marl Maroon into so much fear."

"—sh!" uttered Buffo. "There he is now, just coming down into the cabin, for I hear his voice. Can you get a letter to Caraccas for me?"

"Yes, easily. But—"

"Never mind now. When I hand you a letter do you see that it is sent to Caraccas at once, and that not another person sees it but you and me. Trust to me yet awhile, and I may help you. I know your want, and I will not forsake you. Look to your patients now."

As Buffo Burnington thus spoke he turned quickly away, and Paul took his hint and went at once to the cock-pit where three of the wounded men lay. He was just feeling the pulse of one of them when the captain entered.

"O, you are here, are you?" said the latter.

"Yes, sir. Did you wish for me?"

"Only to know where you were, that was all."

As Laroon thus spoke he returned to the cabin, and there waited until the youth got through with his examination. Paul found that the wounded men needed nothing more than his assistant had already orders to do, and having spoken a few words of cheer to them he returned to the cabin.

"Well, my dear son," was the captain's first salutation, "how have you enjoyed yourself?"

"Very well indeed," replied Paul, seeming to take no notice of his commander's sarcastic manner.

"Did you find Mary looking as well as you expected?"

"Yes, sir."

"I suppose you love her full as well as you did when you was a boy?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Perhaps more?"

"Well, I cannot say as to that. My love may be different now."

"I should think so," said Marl, apparently a little disconcerted by the young man's straightforwardness. "Did you tell her how your love had changed?"

"I told her how you had spoken falsely to her concerning me," answered the youth, looking his interlocutor calmly in the eye.

"Ah, how was that?"

"You told her, when you visited her a year ago, that I did not wish to come and see her."

"Did I?"

"You did."

"Mayhap I may have thought so at that time."

"If you did, then you must have been very forgetful, that's all. But let that pass. I enjoyed myself very well. I found Mary in excellent health and spirits; chatted with her to my heart's content; told her how I loved her; walked with her in the garden; caught one of your old women and seized her up out of the way, and made myself generally happy and at home."

"Seized up one of my women?"

"Yes. Old Hagar. You know her. She dogged me in the garden, and I just bound her. But I didn't hurt her. I let her go as soon as we went into the house."

"How dared you, sir?" exclaimed Laroon, in a passion.

"How dared I?" iterated Paul, laughing.

"Why, I thought you knew I dared do anything?"

"You may do too much one of these days, sir."

"Perhaps I have done too much now. But never mind. I suppose the old woman had a great curiosity to find out how two lovers would talk, so she took that method to learn. But I gave her a lesson for the time, though I suppose she'll forget it by the time I go there again."

"Then you were talking to Mary of love?" uttered Laroon, in a sort of hushed voice, as though he struggled to keep back part of his feelings.

"Why, bless you, what else should we talk of? A brother and sister just come together for the first time in a year and a half. Did you ever have a sister?"

This last question was asked in a low, altered tone, and the pirate bowed his head at once.

At this moment the gunner, probably noticing that there was a lull in the conversation, called out for Paul to come into his room. The youth obeyed the summons, and the captain went on deck, where he paced up and down the poop for some half hour without speaking. He was evidently puzzled. He knew that old Hagar was not the most correct person in the world to retain and report a thing just as she heard it, and and he wondered if, after all, there might not be some mistake. But a few moments of reflection assured him that the old woman must have had some foundation for what she said, and if there was any mistake it could only be in the sort of love which existed between the two young people. At first his jealousy—for he was now jealous of Paul—had blinded him to the other points of Hagar's revelation, and he felt that if Paul loved the maiden only as a sister then all was well; but soon he remembered the rest—the project for escape, and so on—and his mind was stragg again with purpose for prevention and revenge. But for the time being he troubled Paul no more about it.

On the next day Burnington slipped a letter into Paul's hand, directing him, in a whisper, to conceal it, and send it off as soon as possible. When our hero had opportunity he examined the missive. It was an ordinary letter, closely sealed, and directed to "DON PEDRO MARIQUEZ, Caraccas." This superscription was in a tremulous, but yet bold and open hand, evin-

cing much character, and some former experience with the pen.

On the very next day, Paul was on shore with a party who had been sent to hunt up some horses that had escaped from the castle. Three of the animals had been found, and Paul mounted one of them, telling the men he was going to try his mettle. These men cared little what the youth did so long as he did not hurt himself, and to have prevented that they would have sacrificed much; so they only bade him be careful, and then laughed to see him start off. He struck into a path which he remembered well, and at the end of some seven miles he came to a little cove where there were half-a-dozen cots occupied by poor Spanish fishermen. He soon found some of them, and learned that one of their small luggers would sail for Caraccas on the morrow with a load of dry fish, and that another would sail in just a week from that time.

Paul easily found the man who was to sail on the morrow, and to him he gave the letter. The fisherman promised to deliver it faithfully, and the youth offered him a dollar for his trouble. The old man refused at first, but the money was tempting, and he took it with many thanks.

Our hero reached his party just as they had brought the fifth horse up, and when he returned to the brig he found an opportunity to inform Burnington that his letter had gone.

Little did Paul dream of how much that letter was to do!

CHAPTER X.

HOPE FINDS A RESTING PLACE.

It was not until along into the evening that Paul remembered anything about the information he had received respecting the lugger which was to sail for Caraccas in one week. He was walking the quarter-deck when the thought of the thing came to his mind, and he stopped and clasped his hands together with strange energy.

"Surely," he uttered to himself, "he said, 'in one week,' in one week from to-morrow, if the weather was good." And thus muttering the youth commenced to walk the deck again. His mind was now busy with a mighty idea. "Why could he not get Mary away from the castle as well by that time as any other?" This was a proposition that dwelt in his mind until he had resolved to set to work towards that end.

On the next morning he told the captain he believed he should go up to the castle sometime during the day. Laroon may have wished that Paul should remain on board, but he had been too long in the habit of allowing the youth to have his own way about such things to stop him now. And there might have been one more reason why he did not care to enforce his wishes at present. He knew that Paul would have the sympathy of every man on board the brig, and though his authority was absolute, yet he knew too well that his youthful protege possessed the most real governing principle—that principle

which is most keenly felt, and quickly and truly obeyed. But he had one source of consolation: The maiden could not be removed without first overcoming all hands at the castle, and that was more than Paul could do, or a score like him.

So after dinner our hero went up the river, and he took a boat's crew of his own selection. He found Mary well, and of course joyed to see him. This time he took good care that all his conversation of importance should be carried on in a tone that no eavesdropper could hear him.

At the end of an hour Paul and Mary were seated in the very chamber where they had been watched by Hagar, but now they left their door open, and sat where they could see any one who should ascend the stairs. It was not five minutes after they were thus seated before Paul saw a black mass of wool appear above the balustrade, and in a moment more Hagar's shrivelled face followed it; but she saw the young man's keen eye fixed upon her, and she dodged quickly back. Paul smiled at her discomfiture, and then went on with the conversation he had planned.

"Mary," he commenced, "you must excuse me for the question I am about to put to you, but I wish to know how much money you could raise in an emergency."

"Why do you ask that question?" asked the maiden, with a smile.

"Because I wish to know if between us, we can raise money enough to get to England."

"How?" cried she, in a tone of quick eagerness. "Can we get away?"

"I have an opening—a dim chance. I think we can succeed."

"O, God grant it!"

"But we must have the money, Mary. I have some—perhaps a thousand dollars—which I have received from poor generous fellows whom I have helped."

"I thought you had many thousands."

"So I should have were I to take my share. But hold—I will take my share of the last French prize. She is my country's enemy, and that was a man-of-war. I will take my share of that, and if I do, I shall have some two thousand more; but perhaps I cannot get it without exciting the captain's suspicions, for that has not been distributed yet."

"Let it go, Paul—let it go," said Mary, with a sparkling eye and waking smile. "I have enough, and more than enough, though not much in ready money. I have a faithful friend who has for three years supplied me with baubles for my amusement."

The youth gazed up into his companion's face with a puzzled, inquisitive look, and as the smile about the maiden's lips grew broader and warmer, his anxiety increased. Mary noticed it.

"You would like to know what I mean," she said. "Listen, and I will tell you: Among the slaves here is a young girl—an Indian—who has ever manifested a great affection for me, and who will run away to her own people when I go away. Some three years ago she came to me and brought a small piece of crystal-like substance, and asked me if it was not a diamond. I examined it, and told her it was. She had wiped it clean and rubbed it with dry pumice, and upon comparing it with some gems in my possession, I knew it at once to be of great value, and told her it would buy her freedom many times over. She told me she should not want her freedom so long as she could have me for a mistress, and after some hesitation she asked me if I did not hope at some time to be free from the place. I told her I did, and thereupon she informed me that she thought there were many more diamonds where she found this. It was at some distance from here where the small stream, which runs under our walls, eddied about a deep cavern in the side of the cliff above here. She found, accidentally, an entrance to that

cave, and upon a bed of sand which had washed up from the mountain stream she found the gem. Her supposition proved correct, and she has brought me, since that time, nearly two hundred diamonds—some large and some small. She has kept half the same number for herself at my command, for to my request she would not listen; but yet I have been forced to accept the richest ones. You know, of course, what those will bring to us."

"To you," said Paul. "They are not mine. I knew not you were so wealthy. You are sure they are all diamonds?"

Mary did not speak, but she at once left the room, and when she returned she had a small box in her hand, which she handed to her lover. Paul opened it, and his hands trembled as he lifted one after another of the jewels, which he knew were worth thousands of pounds each.

"You are a princess in wealth," he said, almost mournfully.

"I have a mind to punish you, Paul."

"For what?"

"For thus fearing that I shall look upon you as owing me a debt if I accept you for a husband."

The youth started, and his face burned, as he thus found how truly his thoughts had been read. But Mary helped him out of the difficulty.

"But I have not told you all," she said, with a smile brighter than any she had yet shown. "My poor slave has loved you long and truly, for you were ever kind to her when you and she and I—when we all were younger than we now are."

"Is it Otehewa of whom you speak?"

"Yes."

"How could I help being kind to one so faithful?"

"And she was faithful because you were kind. Let me tell you, Paul, that these Muyscas are not of a nature to be faithful to one who is unkind, and for that reason would poor Otehewa kill our master for me at any moment. She is a shrewd person, and in case of need I should place much dependence upon her. But to the rest of my story: She made me take one half of these gems in trust for you. Thus has the faithful creature made us equal sharers with herself, she only keeping one third of all she found. Now, what think you?"

"Forgive me, Mary. O, we will be very happy!"

A few moments more passed in silence, and

then the maiden closed the box and carried it back to the room from whence she took it. When she returned the door was again left open, and then Paul continued with the unfolding of his plan:

"Now," said he, "this part of money is settled, and the next is the means of getting away from this place. In one week from to-morrow, if it is fair, a small lugger will sail from the little fishing cove to the southward and eastward of us, for Caraccas. If we can be on the ground at the time, our object may be accomplished—Ha! there is that woolly head again!"

Paul darted towards the head of the stairs like a bolt, and poor Hagar tumbled from the point she had gained to the bottom, rolling like a piece of wood, and shouting most lustily when she reached the solid pavement.

"I hope she has not injured herself," said our hero, when he returned to his companion, which he did as soon as he noticed that some of the other servants had come to pick her up. "I only meant to frighten her. But I was going to say: I will be here on the evening before that day, and I will get you out in this wise: The smallest of my boat's crew is not much larger than you are, and surely no taller. I will bring an extra suit of his clothes, and you shall put them on. Then Billy—his name is Billy Mason—shall watch his opportunity, and creep to the boat and hide beneath the thwarts. After this I shall call my crew off, and when you come boldly with them, as one of the four, the deception will not be noticed, for it will be dark, you know, and no one will think of our ruse. How does it suit you?"

"You mean then to leave the boat as soon as we get clear of the castle?"

"Yes."

"I hope it will work," returned Mary, thoughtfully. "But how about the men in the boat?"

"Of course they will return without me."

"But where will they tell the captain you have gone?"

"Stop a moment. There is a loop I did not notice. Of course if they return at once—but I have it. They shall tell the captain this: I ordered them to wait for me, if it was until daylight, and then they returned without me. That's it. When we leave the boat, I will tell the crew to wait for me there until I return, if it is until daylight. And if I do not come then they may go down to the brig. By that time, we will be at sea, for money will do much, and

for a few dollars the fishermen will put off before daylight. Thus the crew will be clear from all blame; for the captain knows they are bound to obey me to the letter."

"But when he finds that I am gone, will not the crew come in for punishment then?"

"Not at all, for they can swear that they know nothing of you, and that if you went with me, you must have gone out from the castle and met me in the woods. Do you not see?"

"Yes, I do," returned the maiden, "and I should think the plan might succeed. But—"

"By the consecrated host, if that woman has not crept up the stairs after all!" suddenly broke in Paul, in a low whisper. He had just at that moment caught sight of her gliding along from the head of the stairs to an opposite angle of the corridor. "Hark! She is creeping this way!—sh! There, she has stopped. Now be careful, and we will put her on the wrong scent."

Our hero now knew that Hagar was where she could hear every word he should speak in an ordinary tone, and in a voice perfectly clear and distinct, and little louder than usual, but at the same time very earnest, he said:

"Now we must be very careful, Mary, how we act. I have put that old Hagar out of the way at any rate, so there is no more fear of her overhearing us."

A very low chuckle was here heard, and both Paul and Mary smiled.

"In one month from this time I shall be able to escape," resumed the youth, in the same distinct key. "By that time I can get all my prize money, and then we will make some plans for our moving off. I have had some further talk with Buffo Burnington, and he says he thinks Marl Laroon is, after all, my father! and he advises me to stick by and be a pirate! He says it is a free and noble life, and that he would rather be a follower of Captain Laroon than be a duke in England. But I don't mind him. When he told me he had seen me at Mr. Humphrey's house, I was in hopes he would tell me something more, but he won't. He is not so good a man as I took him for—nothing but a pirate at heart after all."

"I am sorry for that," chimed in Mary, distinctly. "But then we shall not need his assistance. But cannot we escape before the end of a whole month?"

"No," returned Paul, "for I cannot get my money before that time; and then again, about that time, Marl Laroon will begin to think about

sailing, and we may have a better chance. But let it rest. I will see you in one week from this evening, and then we may make out our plans more fully. Remember, in one week I will try to have something more definite to tell you."

Thus the two talked for a spell, and then Paul proposed that they should walk out into the garden. Mary was soon ready, and as they passed out to the head of the stairs, the youth just caught a glimpse at a dress disappearing around an angle in the corridor at no great distance. He smiled, for he knew that the bait had been taken.

When they reached the garden they knew they were secure, and Paul made sure that his

companion understood the whole plan. She promised that on that day week she would have everything ready for the flight, and when this plan was fully settled, they turned their attention to other matters.

When our hero started to return to the brig he felt sure that his servitude was soon to have an end. His heart was light and buoyant, and his hopes were all sunny and bright. He forgot how many clouds arise suddenly upon the clear sky, and how many cups are broken on their passage to the lips. But he had reason, perhaps, for his joy, though at times there would creep in a slight doubt upon him, which he immediately drove away.

CHAPTER XI.

CONFERENCES.

In the course of two days Paul found that his plot had begun to work. On the very next day after he returned from the last visit to Mary the captain went up to the castle, and when he came back there was a look of satisfaction upon his features which Paul could at once read. It was a half smiling, dark, satanic look, and one which showed pretty plainly that its owner had suddenly come upon something which pleased him.

And while Laroon was gone, Paul had a long conversation with Burnington, during which he related the plan he had adopted for putting the captain upon the wrong track.

"So you see," said our hero, "if the bait takes you will be removed from his suspicion."

"But not from his curiosity," returned the one-eyed man.

"That will be of no harm, for if he thinks you are only some one who chanced to see me when I was a child, and that you now believe me to be his son, he will care for little else. But we can tell when he comes on board how much he has heard, for he will soon show it."

The youth considered some time whether he should tell Burnington of his plan for escape, and the result was, that he resolved to keep it to himself, for the secret would be nowhere so safe as in his own bosom. Perhaps he would let the man know of it before he went; but he would consider well upon it first.

As we have already remarked, it was not long before both Paul and Buffo knew that the bait had been swallowed, for the captain was very complaisant and polite to the young surgeon, though of course there was any quantity of sarcasm mixed up with it. And to Burnington he was evidently inclined to show much favor. One day the latter individual was engaged in weaving a sword-mat, when the captain passed near him. Paul was at that time on shore with a water party, where he had gone for the avowed purpose of hunting up some medicinal roots which he wanted; but in fact he had gone to see the fishermen at the cove. Laroon bade Burnington follow him to the cabin.

"Is your name really Buffo Burnington?" asked the captain, as soon as they were both seated.

"Certainly," answered the maimed man, affecting a surprise which he did not feel.

"Do you remember a remark you made, when you first came on board, respecting Paul?"

"I said he resembled you."

"Yes. Now I wish to ask you if you have reason to think you ever saw the young man before?"

"Why do you ask that?"

"Because I have noticed you many times regarding him with extraordinary interest. My question is a fair one."

"Surely it is, and I will answer you fairly. I do think I have seen him before. I saw him some seventeen years ago, in Northamptonshire. He was at Sir Stephen Humphrey's."

Marl Laroon changed color beneath the keen glance of his companion, but he quickly regained his composure.

"What were you doing there?" he asked.

"It would be difficult to tell that just now," returned Buffo, with a smile. "But I can tell you what I know of Paul. I know he was at that time a protege of the baronet's, and that his father had only left him there for safe keeping, and I have of course supposed that Sir Stephen would never have given him up to you unless you had the right to claim him."

"Certainly—certainly. Of course not," uttered Laroon, very quickly, and with much energy. "You were right there. But now tell me who you are—what you were doing in Northamptonshire?"

"Why, to tell you the truth," answered Buffo, with a strange leer, "I sometimes used to find it very convenient to be in very odd places."

"Eh?" uttered Marl, looking at his companion inquisitively.

"I supposed you would remember the name of Buffo Burnington."

"There is something familiar in the name—and in your face, too; but I can't call it to mind."

"Then you don't remember the man who used to give the revenue officers so much trouble about the mouth of the Severn, and all along the shores of the Bristol Channel?"

"Ha! Yes I do," cried Marl, his face lighting up in an instant. "Yes I do. I remember now. And so you are that bold smuggler?"

"I fear I am so closely related to him that the revenue of England would like to get hold of me, even now."

"By my soul, Burnington, this is worth a thousand dollars, and if I had known it before I should have been more free and generous with you. You have proved yourself to be a brave man, and now I shall know how to appreciate you."

Buffo seemed much gratified by this new turn affairs had taken, and he confessed to his commander that he had been afraid that there was some secret cause of dislike existing towards him.

They conversed awhile longer together, and Burnington did his utmost to fix himself firmly

in the captain's confidence, and he succeeded—at least if Laroon's assurance was of any weight.

In the meanwhile Paul had found a horse and rode off to the cove where the fishermen dwelt, and he had made arrangements with them to have their lugger all ready for sailing on the evening previous to the day on which they meant to sail. He told them that it might be possible that he should want to take passage with them for Caraccas, and if he did he should want to start the moment he arrived, even though it should be at midnight. He promised to pay them well, and they evinced as much love for the money as they did for accommodating him, though they were by no means grasping or avaricious. When this was arranged Paul returned.

And there was another who was not idle during all this time. The fair prisoner at the castle was making herself busy with preparation. It was on the fourth evening from her lover's last visit, and she had prepared everything so that she could now be ready to flee at a moment's notice. She was sitting in her chamber—in the same one where she and Paul were wont to sit, and which served her for a drawing-room—when she was somewhat startled by the abrupt entrance of Marl Laroon. The pirate captain smiled very blandly as he came in, and having placed his hat upon the table he sat down upon the sofa by Mary's side. She would have arisen, but her master detained her.

"Stop, my dear," he said, laying his hand upon her arm. It was the first time he had ever applied that appellation to her, and she shuddered as she sat back. "I have somewhat of importance to say to you," he continued, "and I want you to listen. Why do you suppose I have taken this castle, and kept up so expensive an establishment?"

Mary looked up, but did not answer. But she knew that the "establishment" was not a source of expense to him, but rather an income, for not only did the slaves raise much stock and produce from the broad lands to sell at Porto Cabello, Caraccas, and Valencia, but a silver mine on the place had already yielded him more than he originally paid for the whole concern with the subsequent expenses added.

"Of course," resumed Laroon, "I did not purchase this place for nothing. I meant, from the first, to find a home here, and such I still mean to find. But I cannot have a home without a wife. Do you understand that?"

The poor girl turned pale, but could not

speak. Had she known nothing of the pirate's plans, she might have spoken freely, for the monstrous idea of his making her his wife would not yet have entered her mind.

"Do you understand me?" the man asked again, rather sharply.

"I understand what you say," tremblingly returned the maiden.

"And so you shall understand what I mean."

Now if Marl Laroon had known nothing of the girl's project for escaping with Paul, he would have spoken as kindly as could be; but the knowledge he had gained through Hagar had served to make him angry, and hence he now came to the business in anything but a kindly mood.

"I have told you," he resumed, "that I need a wife. Now where shall I find one unless I take you?"

"Me?" faintly articulated Mary, forgetting all else but the man by her side, and the words he spoke. She looked upon his broad, heavy frame, his thick, coarse, sensual features, and his black, snake-like eyes, and a thrill of perfect horror went to her soul.

"Yes, you," returned the pirate. "I do not think I can find a better. You are handsome, and I like that. You are young, and I like that, too, for I shall have the satisfaction of teaching you how to please me. You know all my tastes and whims, and hence will know how to care for me. I think I cannot make a better choice."

Mary felt as though this was the first time she had ever heard the dreadful idea.

"Spare me!" she ejaculated.

"How long?" he asked, with a wicked leer.

"Always! Forever!"

"I hope you will be spared to me, love, as long as I live; but you must be my wife. Why, what do you suppose I have kept you here so long for, and had you attended like a princess, too, all the while?"

"I did not suppose you were all this while planning for such misery as you now show to me in prospect," returned Mary, more calmly than she had before spoken.

"That is all nonsense. I understand you very well. You have conceived a childish passion for Paul; but let me tell you at once that you shall never live to see him your husband, unless I have first been laid away in the ground."

The maiden had now become more calm. The first shock had passed, and she began to think more of the hope she had entertained of escape. Thus her mind became more clear, and she remembered the plan Paul had adopted for putting Hagar upon the wrong track, and she resolved to carry out what he had begun.

"How long before you mean to do this thing?" she asked, still manifesting much pain.

"That depends upon circumstances."

"You will give me one month—one short month—in which to think of this?" she urged.

Laroon's eyes snapped like coals. He thought he knew very well what was meant by this request. He was sure now that Hagar had heard aright. "One month!" Just the time the old slave had told him they had set before they would make their escape.

"Why do you ask just one month?" he uttered, eyeing her very sharply, and laying much emphasis upon the last two words.

"Because that will give me time to think," returned Mary, "though I would much rather you would grant me a longer time."

"But why will not two weeks answer? You can do all the thinking you will find necessary in that time."

The girl appeared to be much frightened at this, but before she could speak the captain went on:

"We will see about this. But of one thing you may rest assured; you must be my wife, for I think of giving up the sea ere long, and then I shall settle down with you. With regard to the time of our marriage, I shall think of it, and in due time you shall be made acquainted with my determination. I have thought best to make this known to you now, so that you may be prepared. I shall see you again before I leave."

As Marl Laroon thus spoke he arose and left the apartment, and from the direction in which his steps sounded, she knew he had gone to Hagar's apartment.

Of course, Mary had been somewhat startled by this meeting, and its subject, and as she reflected upon the state of abject debasement and misery to which the plan would reduce her, she shuddered fearfully, but she had yet much ground for hope, and in her prayers she prayed with much faith in her soul's salvation from the deep debasement the wicked man would cast upon her.

CHAPTER XII.

ON THE WING.

TIME passed on, and the week was gone. On the morning of the day which had been set for the last to be spent in these regions by the two lovers, Paul arose with an aching, dizzy head, for the night last past had been one of uneasiness and anxiety; and if there may be anything in omens, then all the omens of that morning were unpropitious. Paul came upon deck, and though the cool air tended somewhat to revive him, yet when he found the heavens all hung with black clouds, his heart began to fail him. The captain noticed how dejected he looked, and he asked the cause of it. The youth replied that he did not feel well, and that he had probably taken cold.

Ben Marton had now so far recovered that he needed only rest and care, and the wounded men were also out of danger; so Paul left no one who needed his assistance. Up to the present time our hero had not made up his mind how he should manage with regard to Burnington, about letting him know of his intended movement. He had the feeblest confidence in that man, though there was yet something about him which he could not fathom. At length, however, he resolved to write a brief statement of his plan, without letting the man know anything about where and how he was going. So he went down to the cabin, and having made sure that he was

not observed, he took a sheet of paper, and with a pencil wrote as follows:

"BURNINGTON: When you open this I shall be on my way from those who have thus far proved only a curse to me, and Mary will be with me. Should you ever wish to see me again, you will find me with my friends in England if I have any such there. Of course I shall go to Northampton at once. You will know where to find me much better than I can tell you, for you evidently know more about them than I do. With regard to this matter, I have not given you my full confidence, it is true, and I am sure that you have not confided the half of your knowledge concerning myself to me. But I hope to see you again. God bless you for your kindness.

PAUL."

The youth sealed this letter, and at the first opportunity he slipped it into Burnington's hand saying, as he did so:

"You will not open this till after dark—till midnight. Will you promise?"

"Certainly," responded Buffo, in blank surprise.

"Then take it, and be sure that no one else sees it. Remember, now, you are not to open it until well into the night, unless I come off before."

Burnington would have asked many questions, but there was no opportunity, so he slipped the missive into his bosom and then turned away;

but he did not keep his promise, for in half an hour afterwards he had read the letter, and his face showed that he was troubled.

Towards noon Paul began to feel much better, for the clouds were all rolling off, and the prospect was that the weather would be clear and beautiful. After dinner he told the captain that he was going up to the castle. Laroon smiled a bitter smile as he heard this, but he made no objections. Our hero made up a bundle of linen which he said he should get washed, and within that he concealed a full suit of Billy Mason's clothes; and thus prepared he called away his boat's crew, and went over the side. He had taken all the money he could raise that he felt free to use, in all amounting to thirteen hundred dollars—for of course the prize-money from the French corvette had not yet been distributed, and Paul had not dared to ask for any of it, for fear of exciting suspicions. But he cared not for that—he and Mary had wealth enough without it, and he should thus go free from the touch of one penny of real piratical prize-money.

The castle was reached, and the crew had pledged themselves to obey their young commander to the very letter, and be faithful to his interests. He knew he could depend upon them and he felt no uneasiness on that score. Billy Mason had been thoroughly instructed in the part he was to play, and he was prepared for it. The portcullis was raised, and the boat passed under and was moored at the landing-stairs close by the building.

Paul found Mary waiting for him with much anxiety, but her countenance brightened as soon as she saw her lover, for she knew by his look that all had gone right thus far.

"Are you ready?" was the youth's first remark, as soon as they had secured a situation by themselves.

"Everything is done that I can do," the maiden answered.

"Then I think we are safe. No one suspects us—no one dreams that we are going—none save Buffo Burnington."

"And does he know?"

"Yes. Or, rather, he will know, for I wrote a letter and gave to him, in which I told him we were going. But why do you look so sober?"

"Do I look so?"

"You do, surely."

"I was thinking that I should not have trusted that man."

"Ho—there is no feat of him."

"But yet it can do no good, and all would have been just as well without his knowledge. However, let us not think of that now."

But Mary's words had opened the youth's mind to thoughts which he had not held before, and he now wished that he had not written as he had. He wished that he had that letter back in his possession which he had given to Buffo Burnington. He now called up that man's countenance, and he remembered all its repulsive points. He began to distrust him. In short, he feared that the strange man would prove false to him. But 'twas too late now. The thing had been done past recalling, and he must now run the risk.

"Never mind," he said, at the end of a long debate with himself, "we must go on as though all was safe, and trust God for the result. I hope Burnington is true."

"O, perhaps he is—very likely he is," quickly added Mary, "so let not that trouble you any more."

"I will not. Ha! there is our old friend again. Ha, ha, ha,—she really has become a sort of a shadow of mine for this place."

He alluded to old Hagar, who at this moment passed by the door, probably without noticing that it was partly open.

From that time neither Paul nor Mary spoke another word concerning their flight until after supper, and then they walked out into the garden, and having assured themselves that they were safe they rehearsed their plans.

As the night came on they both grew nervous and uneasy, and Mary was sure that she could hear the beating of her lover's heart as she stood by his side. Billy Mason had watched for the coming darkness, and as soon as he thought he could do so without being discovered, he crept into the boat and hid himself under the thwarts. A little while afterwards Paul went to the boat, and as soon as he found that the youngster was there he repaired at once to Mary's apartment, where he found the lovely girl already the very beau ideal of a young and handsome sailor. The youth next went to see that the corridor was clear, and having found it so, they passed over to the maiden's sleeping-room, which was on the front side of the building. The window was carefully raised, and Paul could see the dusky forms of three of his men below. He whistled very lowly, and they whispered—"All safe."

It was but a few moments' work to knot three

linen sheets together, and with these Paul lowered the girl safely to the ground. Just as she touched terra-firma a dark form came gliding up from beneath the shade of the wall, and Mary would have cried out in alarm, had she not quickly recognized her faithful Otehewa.

"God bless and protect you!" murmured the noble-hearted slave girl, at the same time throwing her arms about her mistress's neck. But she was too wise to detain the party, so she only added, after she had received a kiss and a blessing in return:

"I shall not leave here until I am sure you are safely off. Be not afraid of detection from your absence to-night, for I will see that no one enters your apartment."

There was one more warm pressure of bosom to bosom, and then the faithful Indian girl glided away just as Paul came out upon the verandah.

"Hallo, my men," cried the youth.

"Ay, ay," responded one of the crew.

"Come—look alive. We must be off as soon as possible, for I promised to be on board early. To your oars at once."

The four suits of sailors' clothes, with the four human beings wrapped up therein, moved at once towards the boat and Paul followed them. Near the landing stood several of the male servants, all of them willing tools of the pirate captain—but they did not recognize their young mistress beneath her disguise, and with a trembling step she descended to the boat; but she had not the power to lift an oar. She sank down upon the thwart where young Mason should have sat, and there she sat, with her powers of both mind and body about gone. Paul quickly leaped to his seat, and he saw at once how Mary was situated; but there was no danger of detection now, for it was too dark for those on the landing to see the movements of those in the boat, and the youth ordered the bowman to push off. In a few moments more they had passed under the arch; and the heavy portcullis came down with a low, grating sound.

Both Paul and Mary now breathed more

freely. The barrier was passed, and the road was open. Ere long they struck into the main river, and then for the first time the young man spoke. His first movement was to call Mary to come and sit by his side, and then to release Mason from his narrow quarters.

"Now, love, how feel you?" asked our hero, placing his arm about her shoulders.

"Almost safe, Paul," she returned, looking up into his face.

"And why not wholly safe?"

"We are not yet beyond our tyrant's power," the maiden murmured.

"But we shall be soon," said Paul.

At this moment they reached a point which Mary designated as the place where Otehewa had concealed a bundle of her clothing. The boat was pulled in to the shore, and beneath the cover of an overhanging rock was found quite a large bundle. This was taken on board, and they started down the stream.

At length they came to the point where Paul had resolved to land, and the boat was again laid in by the shore. The youth helped Mary out, and then he landed himself. The gold he had concealed about his person in leathern belts, and the diamonds were in a small bag which Mary carried. Turning to his crew, he said: "Now, my brave boys, you will remain here and wait for me until daylight, and if I do not return by the time you can see the distant mountains plainly, you may return to the brig; and there you may answer your captain as you please. Now I am about to leave you—most of my shipmates have ever been kind to me, and I love them. You have the warmest love of my grateful heart, and I shall never cease to pray for your welfare. Farewell—God bless you all!"

Paul would have turned away at once, but Billy Mason sprang forward and caught his hand, and the rest followed his example. The youth heard them sob, and he knew they were weeping. He embraced the noble fellows in turn, and uttered one simple word more of farewell, and then turned away from the place.

CHAPTER XIII.

BETRAYAL.

THE night was quite dark, and as Paul and his companion struck into the wood path, the way became one of almost impenetrable gloom. Once, at a distance of a few rods from the shore, he stopped. He could plainly hear the sobs of the poor fellows he had left behind, and he knew how quickly they would have gone to the very ends of the earth with him; but he could not take them now, and after listening for a moment he moved on again. Fortunately the path was a very clear one, for it led to the wide opening where the horses were kept, and was consequently much travelled. In half an hour they reached the opening, and here Paul caught a horse. He had already concealed a bridle there, which he readily found, and as soon as the animal was prepared with his fixtures, Mary was helped upon his back. The youth took his seat behind her, and then started on. The animal proved to be a kind and gentle one, and he kept the path without difficulty.

Of course the young man had to travel slowly, for even though the horse might have kept the true path, yet it was so dark that the overhanging branches could not be seen, and hence it was necessary to proceed very slowly in order to avoid being bruised and wounded by coming in contact with them.

"We are getting farther and farther from his power," said Paul, as they rode on.

"Yes," returned Mary. But she did not speak as one full of hope. Paul noticed it, and his own heart sank several degrees, but still he spoke cheerfully.

"We must escape," he said. "There is nothing to prevent us. The weather is favorable for the lugger, and we may be at sea ere long. By daylight we may be half way to Caraccas; and if we once reach that city we are safe, for Laroon will not show his face there upon business that might expose him. We are safe, Mary. There is no ground for fear."

The maiden made no reply, but there was in her very silence, and in the coming and going of her breath, a sort of mystic language which the youth knew too well how to interpret.

"Tell me, my love," urged Paul, "if you have any fear?"

"Paul," she returned, almost convulsively, as though it was with an effort that she gave utterance to the thought, "I will tell you the truth: I wish you had not given your secret to that man."

"What man?"

"Buffo Burnington."

"But why fear him?"

"I do not know, but yet I cannot help it. From the manner in which I have heard that man spoken of, and from his very appearance, as it has been described to me, I cannot feel much

confidence in him. But let it pass. Do not you be affected by my feelings. We may get away, indeed, I think we may—and then this will all be nothing. Do not think of it, Paul. Perhaps I am foolish."

The youth did not speak, for some time, for his companion's remarks had called up some very unpleasant thoughts in his own mind, and again he was wishing that Buffo Burnington had never received that letter. But his only consolation was—"It's too late now." And so it was.

It must have been near midnight when the fugitives came to the open country that bordered upon the small bay where the fishermen's huts stood, and by this time the stars had begun to peep through the breaking clouds, but the moon had not yet risen. Paul rode at once to the rude pier where the lugger lay, but he found no one there. This was to him a bad omen, and it struck him with fear. His next movement was to make his way to the cot where lived the man who was to have taken command of the lugger. He knocked at the door, and it was soon opened by the man whom Paul most wished to see.

"How is this?" asked our hero, in Spanish. "You were to have everything ready for sailing by an hour before midnight?"

"To-morrow was the day set," said the fisherman, scratching his head, and looking perplexed.

"To-morrow!" uttered Paul, starting and turning pale. "What do you mean by that?"

"Why, we were to sail to-morrow, and you said you might be here in the evening; but at any event, by an hour before midnight. Did you mean to-day?"

Paul saw that the man was honest in what he said, and he saw, too, where the mistake had come in. The fishermen had planned to sail on the morrow, and they had confounded the evening and midnight of this meaning with the close of the day they had set. It was surely a blind, blundering piece of work on their part, and so Paul felt it to be. But there was no help for it now but to get ready as quickly as possible, and the youth had the good sense not to bother them by finding too much fault with their carelessness.

"How long will it take you to get ready?" asked the youth.

"O, only a few hours. I can call up the men, and have all ready soon after daylight."

"Lost! lost!" groaned Mary, hanging heavily upon her lover's arm.

"But that must not be," cried our hero, too

much moved by excitement to pay attention to Mary's ejaculation. "We must be off in an hour—now—as soon as possible. Stop for nothing!"

"But the fish are not half aboard," urged the man.

"Then let them go. Sell them to us. I will pay you full price for them, and leave them here into the bargain. What are they worth?"

"Fifty dollars."

"Then off you go without them, and I will give you the fifty dollars twice over. Come—up with your crew, and get under weigh as soon as possible!"

"Then it was to-night you meant, after all," muttered the fisherman, apparently in a brown study.

"Of course it was; and if you had not been a most unmitigated— But don't stand there talking. Have us at sea in one hour, and at Caracas as soon as possible afterwards, and you shall have six golden doubloons in your hand. Now start."

Paul was excited, and he spoke wildly and vehemently, but the six broad gold pieces did the job. The fisherman promised to start at once, and do his best. He had only to put on his boots and cap, for it seems he had turned in with the rest of his clothing on, and as soon as this was accomplished he started out. In fifteen minutes he had aroused the four men who were to accompany him, and having told them of the young man's offer, they agreed at once to start immediately without waiting for any more load. So they made a hasty preparation, and then proceeded to the pier where the lugger lay, Paul hurrying them up, and resolving to take the command upon himself, until they had got clear of the bay at all events, for the fishermen were not the most quick-witted men in the world, nor were their motions calculated to inspire one with the most exalted ideas of their physical aptitude for overcoming obstacles against time.

But it was not such an easy job to get the lugger underweigh as Paul had thought, and for the very good reason that she was aground! The tide was out, and the clumsy vessel was surely three feet short of floating! Here was a dilemma. The anxious, impatient youth could contain himself no longer, and he poured out his bitter indignation upon the heads of the fishermen; but they couldn't help it, and when they came, very mildly, to inform him that his finding so much fault would never help the lugger

off, he felt ashamed of his hot speech, and became more calm. It soon became evident to him that there was but one thing to do, and that was, to wait for the tide, for there were not men enough about to haul her off at present.

Those were painful moments to Paul. There he stood, or rather walked, upon the pier, and thought of how all this might have been avoided.

"O!" he uttered to Mary, at the same time clasping his hands in agony, "if those dolts had possessed the sense of a common sheep, all this might have been obviated, and we should now—at this moment—have been away. We should have been free! O, 'tis too bad! too bad! See how slowly the sluggish tide comes in. Not yet an inch gained!"

"O, yes, Paul," remonstrated the more patient girl; "it has risen over a foot."

"And that is not over a third of the rise we need. Nearly two hours more must we remain here. O, why were not those clowns made with brains!"

And then Paul walked away to the opposite side of the rough pier and back again; and this he repeated many times. Ever and anon he would stop and look at the water where it gathered about the rudder of the lugger, and he wondered why it did not rise faster. Every moment seemed an hour to him, and the lazy element appeared to gain nothing.

But the water was not to be forever in rising, and at length the rudder was covered, and in a few moments more, the old lugger began to right up. The moon had now risen, and it was quite light, for the clouds had all broken away. Paul helped Mary on board, and then conducted her below where there was a rude sort of cuddy partitioned off for the sleeping quarters of the crew, and this he had secured for Mary's own use, having planned to sleep himself on deck under some mats which the fishermen promised to provide. The youth found this cuddy not a very inviting place to a person of cleanly habits, but that was no objection now. However, he selected the best bunk he could find, and then set about arranging the scanty bedding so that Mary might take as much physical comfort as possible. Thus he was engaged when the men on deck began to gather in the shore-fasts, and he knew from the feeling of the vessel that she was very near afloat, for he could hear her keel grate upon the sand.

"We shall be off ere long," he said to his companion. "Now you lay down here and get

some sleep if you can, and I will go on deck and help get the old thing off. You will—"

"What was that?" uttered Mary, breaking in upon her lover's speech.

"What did you hear?" asked Paul, who, having at that moment been shaking the bed while he spoke, had heard nothing.

"I heard a voice—some one hailing the vessel, I thought," answered Mary, turning pale.

Paul leaped upon deck, and a sight met his gaze that made his heart stand still. A dozen men were standing upon the pier, directly alongside the lugger, and in advance of the rest, he saw the short, square, heavy form of Marl Laroon!

"Ah, my dear boy," cried the pirate captain, leaping on board as he spoke, and at the same time motioning for his men to follow him, "we have met once more. You have no idea how anxious I have been."

"Back! back, sir!" uttered the youth, drawing a pistol from his bosom as he spoke. "Lay a hand upon me, and you shall die!"

"What—would ye shoot your own father?" said Laroon.

"Ay—if you were that father. But there is no need of speaking that falsehood more. Leave me to myself."

"But I dare not do it, my boy," returned the pirate, in a mocking tone. "I wouldn't be safe to allow such a hair-brained fellow to run loose yet awhile. And besides, you are wanted on board the brig."

"Back! Lay but a finger upon—"

Before Paul could finish his sentence he was seized from behind, his pistol taken from him, and his arms pinioned. Some of the men had come up back of him without his notice. As soon as this was done, Marl Laroon started for the companionway and disappeared down the ladder, and in a moment more there came a sharp, wild cry up from the cabin. Paul started, and with his feet he knocked down two of the men, but he could do no more, and while he was yet struggling, the captain re-appeared, leading Mary by the arm.

"Now, my son," he said, as he came near to where Paul stood, "we will be on our way back, for you have been away long enough. Don't you begin to feel homesick?"

The youth was now too disgusted to speak. He had wit enough to see what caused Marl's lightness of manner. The captain had evidently been fearing that they were gone past catching,

and thus to come upon them so easily raised his spirits.

"Paul," spoke the maiden, in tones of almost fearful calmness, "there is a God! Forget him not!"

The pirate had something upon his tongue to say, but he kept it to himself. He led Mary from the deck of the lugger, and his followers went after him with Paul. Laroon spoke a few words with the fishermen, and then turned up towards a clump of cocoa-trees, where a number of horses were hitched. He spoke no more until he had reached the horses, and then he said only enough to inform those who guarded Paul, how they were to dispose of him. During this time our hero had been wondering how this all came about. Either the boat's crew must have been discovered—or Laroon must have gone up to the castle—or Burnington must have turned traitor. He disliked to think this last thing, and yet it would hold the most prominent place in his mind.

"Look ye, Paul," uttered the pirate captain, after he had assisted Mary to the back of his horse, "where is your boat, and the men you had with you?"

The youth hesitated a moment, but he quickly understood that if he did not answer this question plainly his boatmen might have to suffer, so he answered:

"They are waiting where I left them, I suppose."

"Then they were to wait for you, eh?"

"I told them to wait for me until daylight, and that if I did not return then, they might go on board."

"Very considerate, to be sure," responded Marl, with a bitter sneer. He asked no more, and would have ridden off at once, had not Paul detained him.

"Unbind me," said the youth. "I shall not try to escape alone."

The captain pondered upon it a few moments, and then gave directions for unbinding the "boy's" hands. This was done, and then the pirate chieftain started on, and in a moment more his men followed him, Paul riding the horse he had come down on, and which had joined the others as soon as they had been left by the cocoa-trees. For some distance not a word was spoken. Paul rode by the side of Philip Storms, the second

lieutenant, and he knew this officer to be friendly to him.

"Storms," he said, as soon as he was sure on one else would hear him, "at what time did the captain leave the brig?"

The lieutenant hesitated.

"Do not fear to trust me," urged the youth, "for I give you my word that whatever you may say shall never be used to your prejudice. Tell me, if you know?"

"You will not mention that I told you anything?"

"Never."

"Well, he left about nine o'clock."

"And when did he return for you?"

"He took us with him."

"Ha!" uttered Paul, starting. "Then he knew of my flight at that time?"

"Yes."

"Then Buffo Burnington has betrayed me!"

"Why—did you trust that man with your secret?"

"Yes. I thought he was my friend."

"Then you were most wofully deceived. He was in the cabin all the evening, and once, when I slipped in upon them, he was showing the captain a letter. I only saw that it was written with a pencil."

"That was mine!" gasped Paul. "O, fool—dolt—that I have been!"

Again the youth wished that he had never written that letter; but now the wish came with different feelings from those he experienced before. But it was now too late indeed!

When they reached the clearing where the horses had been kept, the day was just breaking, and it was soon evident that the captain was going to the brig, for he turned into the path which led that way. And so it proved, for just as the sun made its appearance over the high headland of the cape the party had stopped upon the beach opposite to where the brig lay, and Laroon made a signal for a boat. Just then, too, the other boat made its appearance, just coming in sight around a curve in the river, and both parties reached the brig at about the same time. The four men who had come from their night's watch by the river's bank, were not a little surprised at seeing their young master thus brought back to the brig. They reported themselves to the first lieutenant, however, who had

charges of the deck, and he bade them remain by the mast until the captain could see them. Laroon at that moment came up, and turning to the cockswain of the boat, he asked him where he had been all night?

"Been waitin' for Mr. Paul, sir," replied the old salt.

"Very well—that'll do."

So the boatmen went forward, while the captain turned in the opposite direction, leading Mary, who still wore her sailor's suit, by the hand. The maiden's bundle of clothing had been brought along, and she was conducted to a state-room, and there bid to resume her own garb.

CHAPTER XIV.

A STARTLING REVELATION.

PAUL walked moodily up and down the larboard side of the quarter-deck, and no one came there to trouble him. Pirates though they were who surrounded him, yet he could see that most of them sympathized with him in his distress. He could see it in their looks and actions. Once he had seen Buffo Burnington since he had returned, but it was only for a moment. That individual had come up the fore hatch, but upon seeing Paul on-deck he went immediately back. That alone would have been enough to convince the young man that Burnington was the betrayer. Of course he felt the most utter contempt and indignation towards the dark-looking man, but yet he could not see through the whole of it. There was much of curiosity yet in his mind, though he had lost sight of it for awhile during the time when the first shock of the betrayal was upon him. He remembered the time when that strange man had saved his life—he remembered the letter he had helped get off to Caracas—and other things he remembered which excited much besides anger in his bosom. But that Burnington was a villain and a traitor he felt confident. The young man was walking thus when the steward came and told him the captain would see him in the cabin.

Paul at once obeyed the summons, and when he entered the cabin he found Mary there habit-

ed in her own garb, and looking very pale. She had been weeping, for her eyes were red, but there were no traces of tears upon her cheeks. She sat away in one corner, but when Paul came in she quickly arose and went to meet him.

"Stop," said the pirate captain. "You may be seated together, if you wish."

Accordingly Paul sat down upon the softly cushioned seat which extended all around the cabin save where the state-room doors broke it, and the maiden sat down by his side. He looked into Laroon's face, and he found an expression there which it was beyond his power to translate. But Marl left him not long for study.

"Paul," he said, speaking very calmly and candidly, but yet revealing something in his black eyes which gave the lie to his manner, "I have sent for you to let you into a secret which I meant ever to have kept from you. You may think that I have never loved you—that I have never cared for you more than for any other man or boy who may have been under me. How is it?"

"I have judged you, sir, only from what I could see," returned the youth, and he spoke somewhat harshly, for he liked not that demonic fire which burned in his commander's eyes.

"And what have you seen?"

"That you would curse me if you could."

"You are honest, but not very truthful. However, let that pass. Now why have you wished to flee from me?"

"Because I loathe the life I am here forced to lead."

"Being a subaltern, you mean?"

"No, sir. I allude to the profession you follow. I allude to the dark, condemning crime that surrounds me on every hand, and the atmosphere of which I am forced to breathe."

"Ah, you fear the gallows—to speak plainly."

"No, sir. I fear my God, and my own soul."

"Well, perhaps you do. But now tell me why you would have taken Mary with you?"

"For the self same reason on her part."

"What do you mean by that?"

"You should know what I mean, sir," returned Paul, elevating his voice, and speaking proudly. "Ask yourself what I mean?"

A flush of anger passed over the pirate's face, and his eye burned with a keener fire, for he knew the bearing of this illusion. But he quickly overcame the emotion.

"Speak within bounds, sir," he said, "or you may fare worse. You will find it well in life not to stand too much upon your superiority of virtue, when by so doing you tread upon those who are your superiors in everything else. I merely give you this as a hint. I have known people to die of just such a complaint!"

There was something in the tone and manner in which these last words were spoken, that carried to Paul's mind the conviction that Marl Laroon would take his life without much hesitation if he felt in the mood. But his spirit was not broken, though he resolved to be more careful in his language, and not provoke the villain's anger foolishly. The captain evidently saw the effect his words had produced, for he soon resumed:

"We understand each other now I think, and may proceed. If I understand you, you mean to say that Mary wished to accompany you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Mary, was this movement made at your own expressed wish?"

"Yes, sir," the trembling girl timidly answered.

"Now, Paul, I come to the main question: What did you mean to do with your charge after you had got clear?"

"I meant to place her in a position where she could have been contented and happy."

"I supposed that was your intent, but how did you mean to do this?"

"That, sir, we had left to the future. We had only planned to get away."

"Ah, that's it? Then you had not planned for anything else?"

"Nothing definite."

"Had you not planned to make this girl your wife?"

Paul hesitated a little before he answered this question.

"Answer me," said Laroon.

"I had, sir."

"And Mary had consented to become your wife?"

"She can answer that."

"How is it, Mary?"

"I had consented, sir," she replied, frankly.

"And you love each other even so that you would marry, eh?"

"I do," quickly answered Paul.

"And so do I," fervently added Mary.

"Then I shall never believe in the instincts of nature more," uttered the captain, looking first upon the youth, and then upon the maiden. "Paul," he added, changing his tone to one of deep import, "I have tried to deceive you. *You are not my child!*"

At any other time the young man would have received this announcement with joy, but now a terrible fear struck to his heart, and his brow grew cold with a freezing moisture.

"You are no child of mine, and no relation save by adoption," resumed Laroon. "Your father died when you were only three years old—or rather nearer to four. Your real name is—DELANEY!"

"*Delaney!*" gasped Paul.

"Ay," returned the pirate, while a grim smile played upon his dark features. "You bear the same name as does Mary—so if you should ever marry her, there would be no change of names. Curious, isn't it?"

"Go on," gasped Paul, paying no attention to this last fling.

"It's all told in a very few words," the pirate captain resumed. "*Mary is your sister!*"

"Merciful Heavens! it cannot be!" cried the stricken youth, clasping his hands in agony. To have found a noble sister under any other circumstances would have been a heavenly joy, but to find a sister in Mary Delaney was to strike a dagger to his very soul. It was to tear out the heart which had become all filled with a holier,

warmer love, and throw it bleeding away. A sister's love is a holy thing, but O, it cannot replace that powerful, all-absorbing affection which binds the two hearts that are to be but one for life in everything of earth and heaven.

"You do not speak truly now," the youth said, in a low, mournful tone, as though he would implore the dark man to unsay those fatal words.

"I never spoke more truly in my life," returned Laroon. "She is your own sister. You had but one father and but one mother, though the father died some months before Mary was born."

"And why was I never told of this before?" Paul asked.

"Because I felt it to be for my interest, when I first took you, to claim you for a son. I hoped you would be more obedient, and having once told you that, I did not choose to give myself the lie without some strong cause for it; and that cause has now most surely come. You see what a state you came near being led into. But you don't seem very happy at having found a sister. How is it with you, Mary? Are you not glad you have found a brother?"

The maiden gazed up into her interlocutor's face, but she did not speak. Her face had turned now to an ashy pallor, and her hands were moving about her throat and bosom as though there were a sense of oppression there. Paul thought he heard a gurgling in her throat, and on the next instant her eyes began to glare wildly at himself. He threw his arms about her, and as he did so, she sank upon his bosom like a corpse. He quickly laid her back upon the seat and rushed for his medicine chest, and obtained a bottle of liquid ammonia. By this time the captain was on hand, and he entered into the work of resuscitation with a will. Cold water was brought, and her brow and temples bathed, while her hands were chafed, and ever and anon Paul held the ammonia to her nose.

The maiden possessed a strong and perfect organization, and ere long she revived, but she was too weak to converse. For awhile her pulse beat very slowly and irregularly, but ere long its velocity increased, and finally it beat with extreme feverish rapidity.

"She must be removed to the castle immediately," said Paul, "for I fear a fever will set in upon this, and this is no place for her to be sick in."

"Do you really think there is danger of a fever?" asked the captain, now speaking earn-

estly, and without any of that strangeness which had marked his words thus far.

"She will have one most surely if she remains here," returned the youth, "and she may have one at any rate; but the sooner she is removed the better, for should she be taken down it would then be too late."

Mary showed by her looks how grateful she felt for this interference in her behalf, but she did not speak—she could not then have spoken above a hoarse, painful whisper had she tried. Laroon at once hastened on deck to have a boat called away, and while he was gone, Paul clasped Mary to his bosom.

"Dearest," he whispered, "we may yet be—" He stopped suddenly, as though some one had struck him, and the pain marks came to his face, for at that moment he remembered that she was *only a sister!*

In a few moments, the captain returned, and bade Paul help him get the maiden ready for going. This was quickly done, and then Laroon took her in his arms as he would have done a child, and carried her on deck.

"Shall not I accompany you?" asked our hero.

"No," was the simple answer.

"But she may need—"

"If she needs more skill than we can find at the castle, we will send for you."

As the captain thus spoke, he proceeded to the gangway, where most of the crew were gathered.

"Back—back—every one of you!" cried Laroon.

All obeyed this order save Buffo Burnington. He crowded nearer up, and as the captain came to the gangway ladder, he said;

"Let me take her, captain, while you go down into the boat, and then I will hand her to you."

Marl had not before thought of the difficulty he should find in descending to the boat with his load, and he quickly gave her into the man's arms. Buffo seized her, and with a quick, excited movement he brushed the hair back from her face and brow, and then, for one moment, he gazed into her face with all the power of outward and inner vision.

"Mary!" he uttered, in a low, thrilling tone, "Mary," he repeated, seemingly forgetful of those who stood around, "look at me."

The maiden looked up into those horrid features, but she did not shrink, nor did she trem-

ble, but she seemed, rather, to be fascinated by the devouring gaze that was fixed upon her.

"All ready!" cried Marl.

In an instant Burnington ascended the ladder, and when he had gained the top of the bulwarks he adroitly held his burden with his left arm, and seizing the man-ropes with his other hand he descended and deposited the girl safely in the captain's arms. He waited to see the boat off, and then he returned to the deck.

Paul had seen all this strange work on Burnington's part, and he was sorely puzzled. He gazed into those features, and he thought they looked now all kindness and love. And his gaze was returned. For awhile the youth was sorely puzzled. Perhaps, he thought, there might be some mistake after all. Perhaps Burnington did not betray him. He took a few turns up and down the deck, and finally he resolved to call the strange man to the cabin and question him. The first lieutenant had the deck; the old gunner was forward lounging on the bitts, and the second lieutenant he knew would not disturb him, so he should be pretty sure of having the cabin to himself. As soon as he had come to this determination he went to the gangway, where the man yet stood, and touched him upon the shoulder.

"What is it?" asked Buffo.

"Come to the cabin, will you?"

"Certainly."

Paul led the way aft, and the lame man followed. Many of the crew noticed the movement, and many were the nods and sidelong shakes of the head it caused, for all the crew had by this time come to know that there was some mysterious connection between Paul and the one-eyed pirate. They knew, too, by this time, that their captain and Mary Delaney were in the affair, and not a little surmise and discussion had it caused. The most prevalent opinion, among those who had yet expressed any, was, that both Laroon and Burnington had been originally two great villains, and that Paul and Mary were somehow victims of their wickedness. But now Burnington would repair all the wrong if he could—he would atone for the evil he had helped to bring upon the children; and for this purpose—moved to it by remorse—had he come on board the brig!

So guessed the pirate crew, or a part of them, at least; and as the rest saw no explanation more plausible, they accepted this. Some men can guess very near the truth—while others come far from it.

CHAPTER XV.

MORE STRANGE WORK.

THE young surgeon was alone with the man who had decapitated so much of his most earnest thought, but the latter evinced no uneasiness or fear. He took a seat opposite the youth, and then appeared to wait for some one to commence the business.

"Burnington," said Paul, as soon as he could sufficiently compose himself to speak calmly, "I have called you here to ask you some serious questions, and I hope you will answer me truly."

"If I answer at all, my answers shall be true ones," returned Buffo, without any show of offence or injured pride.

"You are of course aware that I attempted last night to make my escape from this place and these people?" resumed Paul.

"Of course," answered Burnington, "for you gave me information to that effect."

"And you must be aware, too, that Marl Laroon overtook me?"

"Certainly."

"And is it not reasonable to suppose that some one in whom I reposed confidence betrayed me?"

"I should think so."

"Excuse me for the question, but I must ask it. Did you betray me?"

Burnington did not answer this question at once. He gazed first into his interlocutor's face, and then he bent his eyes to the floor.

"Your silence almost amounts to an affirmative answer to me," said Paul, with a spice of bitterness in his manner.

"Very well," returned Burnington, returning Paul's gaze calmly and steadily. "I was thinking, not what answer I should make, but whether any explanation would be of use. I can simply say that *I did betray you*. I showed the captain the letter you gave me—and but for me, you might now have been in Caraccas."

Paul started back and gazed into the dark, distorted features of his companion. Never had that eyeless socket looked so repulsive before, and never before had that whole countenance worn so sinister a look.

"Why did you do this?" the young man at length asked, striving to keep back his anger.

"Because I felt it to be my duty," calmly returned the other.

"And wherein was it your duty?"

"We all have our own ideas of duty, Paul, and perhaps if I were to explain this point you would be no more satisfied than you are now."

"That is enough sir," uttered the youth, rising from his seat. "I thank you for your candor and for your truth, for I shall know now whom to trust. I have nothing more to say."

Without a word, Burnington arose and moved towards the ladder. His step was very slow and heavy, and, in addition to his lameness, he

seemed to have an impediment of motion that proceeded from within. Paul could see his face and he could see that there was a sad, unhappy look upon it. In an instant the whole current of his feelings changed.

"Stop—stop one moment," he uttered. "Tell me why you did this thing?"

"Because I meant that you should not leave the brig," answered Buffo, stopping at the foot of the ladder and turning towards his questioner. As he thus spoke, he turned again and moved up the steps. Paul would perhaps have asked more had the man remained, but he would not call him back.

As soon as Burnington was gone our hero commenced to pace up and down the cabin floor, and at the end of half an hour he had fully made up his mind that Buffo Burnington was more ready to serve the interests of the pirate captain than any one else!

It was now dinner time, and Paul was aroused from his reverie by the entrance of the steward who had come to set the table. After dinner the second lieutenant took the deck, while the first lieutenant took twelve men and started off to hunt up more of the horses. With this party Buffo Burnington went, and as we shall have occasion to note something that befel them on their route, we will go with them.

Mr. Langley, the lieutenant, knew all the crooks and turns of the woods where the horses wandered, and as it was now approaching the season when horses were in demand, Laroon wished to get up all that were fit to break and dispose of them; for, as we remarked before, the pirate made much money by the raising of stock on his estate, and the merchants of the neighboring cities knew him only as the owner of the Silver River estate. Many of them knew that he followed the sea some, but they thought he only went to the Atlantic cities to dispose of his effects.

Langley's party were furnished with bridles and lassos, and when they reached the shore, they took their way first to the enclosure where the tame horses were kept. Their first movement was to call the horses together, which was readily done by a peculiar whistle, and while they were thus engaged they noticed a man approaching them from the woods. He was a well-dressed, gentlemanly-looking person, in the prime of life, and possessing a frame of great muscular power. He came up to where the party stood, and after

running his eyes over the men, he evidently selected the lieutenant for the superior.

"Can you tell me," he asked of Mr. Langley, speaking in Spanish, "if Captain Laroon is about here?"

"I think he is at his dwelling," returned the lieutenant, eyeing the stranger sharply.

"And I suppose you are men in his employ?" resumed the new-comer, gazing around upon the party.

"We are at present working for him."

"So I supposed. He has a vessel lying somewhere about here, I believe?"

"He may have, for he owns several."

As Langley made this reply the stranger took off his hat and took therefrom a handkerchief, and after wiping his face with it he returned it to the place from whence he took it, and replaced his hat upon his head. On the next instant there came a crashing sound from the circumjacent wood, and upon looking in the direction from whence the sound proceeded, Langley saw a party of some twenty horsemen dashing towards him.

"What means this, sir?" he uttered, turning to the stranger.

"O, those are friends of mine," was the cool reply.

"Treachery! treachery!" cried the lieutenant, drawing a pistol from his belt. "Beware, my men! Arm! arm!"

Langley's pistol was knocked from his grasp by the stranger, and on the next instant the lieutenant himself was lying prostrate. The rest of the pirate gang would have sprang to his assistance, but by this time the horsemen were upon them, and they had to look to themselves.

"These are our prisoners!" cried the man who had knocked Langley down, addressing the horsemen as they came up. "These are the horse-thieves!"

The struggle was a short one, though one of the pirates escaped, a young, nimble fellow, named Jack Martin. He seemed more inclined to use his legs than his arms, and he got off; but the others were quickly captured, and their arms pinioned behind them. Langley had arisen, and as soon as he could command himself he spoke:

"Why is this?" he asked, turning a flashing look upon his captor. "By what authority do you thus assault quiet people who are about their own business?"

"Ah, that remains to be proved."

"What to be proved?"

"Whether you are now upon your own business," replied the stranger.

Upon this Langley was so enraged that he could not speak, and the leader of the other party resumed:

"But I will tell you the whole truth, and then you can best judge whether any harm can come to you or not. The Governor of Caraccas sent us here, and ordered us, if we found any one catching horses here, to take them and bring them to him."

"And do you mean to take us all the way to Caraccas?" asked Langley, in a tone of some alarm.

"I do, most surely."

Upon this the prisoners were all mounted and secured in their seats, and then the party started on. It was a strange piece of work, and so suddenly had it come upon them that the pirates knew not what to make of it. But to Caraccas they had evidently got to go, and they made the best of it by hoping that horse-stealing would be the only thing brought against them, for they felt sure that they could free themselves from that charge; but there were other things which, should they be brought against them, would rest more heavily upon them.

Buffo Burnington tried to beg off, upon the ground that he had been in the country but a short time, and had been hired to catch horses for Mr. Laroon. He professed to be horrified at the idea of horse-stealing, and assured his captor that he would never have engaged in the work had he dreamed that there was anything wrong connected with it. But his protestations did not save him.

"Your very face gives the lie to your words," said the Spanish officer, with a sarcastic smile. "There—you needn't say any more, for you've got to go; but if you can make Don Pedro believe you, you may get clear."

"And who is Don Pedro?" asked Buffo.

"Don Pedro de Manriquez is governor of Caraccas."

Burnington said no more.

In one hour the party had gained the small bay where the fishermen's huts were built, and here was found a small government vessel, on board which both men and horses were soon placed. Shortly afterwards the prisoners were on their way beyond the power of escape, for some of them, thinking that the whole passage, of some ninety to a hundred miles, was to be

made by land, had held strong hopes of getting away.

In the meantime Jack Martin had made his way back to the brig, where he had stated the strange event that had transpired. At first the pirates were frightened, fearing that they should all be taken, but when Martin came to assure them that Langley and his men were taken for horse-stealing, their fears were mostly removed.

Paul heard the whole story, and his suspicions at once fell upon Burnington. He remembered the letter he had disposed of, and which was directed to Don Pedro de Manriquez; and he had since learned that de Manriquez was the governor. But he had no idea of what it all meant. It was but another strange link in the mystic chain of circumstance that seemed to bind that dark-visaged man to his present position, and to others about him. If Burnington had been the means of getting these men entrapped, he must have meant something more by it, than their mere apprehension for crime. And if this was the fact, then he must have meant from the first to be taken with them, for he had been very urgent of late to be allowed to accompany the shore parties, professing that it did him much good to roam about on the land.

But Paul's meditations were soon cut short by another cause. It was now near sundown, and just as the youth came up from the cabin, where he had been eating supper all alone—he having taken the deck while the second lieutenant at the captain's boat was seen coming down the river as swiftly as the oarsmen could pull. The captain was not there, and our hero's heart sank, for he feared that something ill had befallen Mary.

The cockswain leaped on board the brig as soon as he came alongside, and moving at once up to where Paul stood, he said:

"You must go up to the castle immediately."

"What is it?" breathlessly asked the youth.

"The young lady is worse."

"Do you know how?"

"Fainted again."

Paul rushed to the cabin, and having possessed himself of every kind of medicine that could possibly be wanted, and having also taken his lancets and leeches, he hastened back and descended to the boat, and in a moment more he was on his way up the river.

"Pull, my men! Pull for life!" he cried.

And the stout fellows pulled until the oars bent like reeds, sending the sharp-bowed boat through the water like a dolphin.

CHAPTER XVI.

WHISPERS.

WHEN Paul reached the castle the first person whom he met was the faithful Indian girl, Otehewa.

"Fear not, my master," she said, in a tone that no one else could hear, "she is not in much danger. She has fainted again, and I made the captain believe that she would die if she did not have medicine. I knew he must send for you then. Keep up a good heart, for you have some friends who will not betray you. All is not lost yet."

The youth pressed Otehewa's hand with gratitude, and then hastened away to Mary's room. He found Marl Laroon by her bed, while the maiden herself seemed to be asleep. But his step aroused her, and she opened her eyes. She smiled as she saw who had come, and putting out her hand, she said:

"I am glad you have come—my brother."

Paul started at these two last words, for he had almost forgotten them. A dagger's point reached his heart. But he stopped not—he took the small, white hand and raised it to his lips.

"How do you feel, Mary?" he asked, when he had taken a seat by her head, Laroon moving his own chair further down in order to allow him room.

"I am very weak, Paul."

"You have been fainting again?"

"Yes."

"More than once?"

"No."

"How long did she remain so?" the youth asked of Marl.

"Nearly an hour," answered he.

Paul felt of the pulse for some moments, and then examined her tongue. After this he ran his hand over her brow and temples, and then said:

"Ah, Mary, you are very low, and you must have the utmost care. If you manage to keep quiet and easy, I think I can break off the fever."

"Did you bring your lancet?" asked the captain.

"Yes, sir."

"Then you'll bleed her?"

"I think not. She will need all the vitality she has to help her over the disease. I took lancets and leeches for fear the difficulty might have a tendency to the brain, but I do not now apprehend any such thing. How does your head feel, Mary?"

"I have no pain there—only a light, dizzy feeling at times."

The young surgeon found the circulation free, and after some reflection he resolved for the present to administer some light sedatives and

watch their effect. This he accordingly did, and then he left his patient under the charge of Otehe-wa, with full directions for her treatment.

After this he and Laroon withdrew, and as soon as they had reached the hall, Paul told the captain what had occurred to Mr. Langley and his party. At first Marl was dumb with astonishment, but soon his tongue found its use, and he questioned the youth upon every point; but the latter could only tell what he had heard from Jack Martin—that the party had been captured by a band of Spanish officers or soldiers, and that they had been accused of horse-stealing.

"By the blessed virgin," exclaimed Marl, vehemently, "not a single horse have I captured, or my men, that did not belong to me. There is some villainy in this!"

No man could have expressed more virtuous indignation than did the pirate captain at that time. To be thus charged with an offence which he never committed seemed painful to him, and he was determined that the perpetrators of the outrage should suffer. After pondering upon the thing for some time he resolved to leave Mary wholly in the charge of Paul, and return at once to the brig to see if he could not hunt up something more concerning the business. Accordingly he had his boat manned, and having promised either to come up, or send, in the morning, he went away to see old Hagar, and having conversed with her some minutes, he entered the boat and put off.

On the following morning Paul found Mary much better, and he felt assured that she would have no fever if she remained quiet. At about ten o'clock Marl came up, and after he had seen the invalid he concluded to let Paul remain to attend her, for he had planned to go to Caraccas and learn why his men had been arrested. If they had really been seized for horse-stealing he knew he could free them at once, and as he could not well afford to lose them, some of them being his best men, he was prepared to run some risk on their account.

But before the captain made this arrangement he was anxious to know how long it would be before Mary would be able to move about. The young surgeon assured him that it would be a week at least, and when he became convinced of this he concluded to go and leave Paul in charge of the sick girl. Accordingly Laroon hastened away, and our hero was once more in company with the being he had so wildly, fondly loved.

But a "change had come over the spirit of his life-dream." That gentle being was not to him now what she had been. The heart wherein he had treasured up that love was all torn and bleeding now. The hope of a whole future was dashed to the earth, and he had lost the brightest jewel of his earthly crown. That evening, as the sun touched the western horizon, and poured its flood of golden sheen into the room, Paul sat by the bed and held Mary's hand within his own. He had sat thus for some time in silence, when the maiden spoke:

"Paul," she said, in a low, tremulous voice—tremulous from emotion rather than weakness—"you are not happy in having found a sister."

The youth started, and for a moment his eyes were bent to the floor. But he soon looked up, and while an expression of more than common sadness rested upon his handsome features, he replied:

"It is not what I have found that moves me. It is a holy blessing to own a sister's love. But *what have I lost!*"

"None of my love, Paul," quickly cried Mary. "O, none of my love."

"But you cannot love me as you did?"

"I can love you ever, my brother."

"O, Mary, if you love me, speak not that name. Call me Paul—call me—call me—Love. O, call me anything but *that!*"

"And do you not love your sister?" murmured the stricken girl, in soft, plaintive sadness.

"Yes, yes, O, yes—I love you more than I can tell; but do not call me—*brother*. Not now, not now. At some time, when my heart has arisen from its grief, I may bear it. But not now."

"Paul, we will never part."

"We must part, Mary," exclaimed the youth, bitterly. "We cannot now be what we have hoped to be to each other. Soon this bond will be broken—the inner bond of the heart will be sundered as the outer bond has already been sundered—and then you will form new ties for life."

"I will never leave you, my love," uttered the fair girl, earnestly.

"Ah, Mary," returned the youth, shaking his head sadly, "you know not what life may yet hold out to you among its inducements. One so fair and beautiful as yourself cannot long live without being loved, and you cannot always keep your heart isolated. I know your nature too well. Ere long my image shall hold only a brother's place in your heart, and then—then—"

"—sh. Speak no more now, Paul. Never will I leave you—never will I give my love to another but with you— But why do I speak so! My heart's like your own. Never—O, never, can another occupy the place you have held in my love. It may be wicked—it may be unnatural—but I must love you ever; and we will never be separated, but over life's journey we will walk together, and at the foot of the hill will we lie down in death all free from stain, and thoughtless of all guile. We will, Paul—we will love—ever."

The youth pressed the white hand he held to his lips, and the tears coursed freely down his cheeks. In this position was he when Otehe-wa entered the room. The faithful Indian hesitated a moment when she saw how matters stood, but at a word from her young mistress she approached the bed.

"My master," she said, addressing Paul, "you must not fear, for all is not yet lost. I have long been prepared for any emergency, and Marl Laroon cannot succeed in any plan of wickedness he may undertake, save to keep my mistress here a prisoner; and I do not think he can always do that."

The girl spoke in an idiom which it would be useless to attempt to follow, but her words were nevertheless plain to be understood, and her mode of expression was beautiful in the extreme. Paul returned her a look of gratitude, but he made her no immediate reply in words.

The sun was now down, and the shades of evening were gathering about the place. The youth saw that his fair patient needed repose, and leaving with Otehe-wa instructions how to administer the medicine he left the apartment and walked out into the garden, and there he paced to and fro until long after the mantle of darkness had been drawn over the scene.

"She my sister!" he murmured to himself, stopping suddenly and clasping his hands together. "I know that man can lie—most basely lie; but this may all be true. Alas, I fear it is, for my own memory holds some such picture. Well do I now remember of calling her my sister, yet it may be false. The man with whom I

lived was not my father, for Burnington has told me as much; and then I remember that I called him, *uncle*. O, why has this thing come to blast my life-plan! Why has this heavy hand of anguish fallen upon me! Buffo Burnington might tell me something, but he is mine enemy—and he is a prisoner beside. O, God! wilt not thou have compassion upon me! Look down and—"

Paul stopped, for at that instant he felt a light touch upon his shoulder. He turned, and saw Otehe-wa.

"What seek ye here?" he quickly asked.

"To tell you a secret," answered the dark-skinned girl, at the same time casting her eyes quickly about.

"A secret?" repeated Paul.

"Ay," whispered Otehe-wa, "and when you know it you may be on your guard, though you must trust me more than yourself."

"But your secret?" impatiently uttered the youth. "What is it?"

"Simply this: Marl Laroon means to make my mistress his wife as soon as he comes back!"

"What!" ejaculated the young surgeon, starting as though he had been shot. "How know you this?"

"Because I heard him say so; and he has sent to San Felipe for a priest. The priest will come here, and here remain until the maiden is well enough to be married."

"And you are sure of this?"

"Of what I have told you—yes."

"But the priest has not yet come?"

"No, not yet."

Paul started away with his hands clasped, and when he came back, he said:

"What can you do?"

"Much, much that, I shall not yet confess."

The girl hesitated a moment, and then she added, in a thrilling whisper. "Wait until the time comes. Even the base pirate's life is not worth that pure maiden's happiness!"

Again the youth started away in a frantic mood, but this time when he returned he found the Indian girl gone, and shortly afterwards he followed her to the house.

CHAPTER XVII.

A STRANGER.

MARL LAROON went to Caraccas, and he found that his men had been apprehended for the alleged crime of horse-stealing. They were in prison, and he was not allowed to see them. He went to the governor, Don Pedro de Manriquez, but from him he could gain no satisfaction. Don Pedro simply told him that a complaint had been lodged against the men who were taking horses from the woods about Silver Bay, and that he had consequently given orders for their arrest. Laroon then demanded a trial at once, but to this the governor could not accede, as he said that the complainant was at present out of the city. Upon this the pirate began to rave, but a simple hint that he might find a home at the expense of the government stopped his tongue at once, for he had no desire to be placed in a situation where he might be required to answer questions touching his movements for the past few months, or for the past few years.

The pirate captain made as much inquiry as he dared to, but he could not find that any other suspicions were held against his men save upon the question of horse-stealing, and this made him somewhat easier than he had been when the news of their arrest first reached him. He also learned that the trial would not come off under a month, and then he set out on his return, having first, however, gained a promise

from the governor that the prisoners should be informed of his endeavors in their behalf, and that they should also be assured that he would be on hand to defend them with his testimony.

It was just one week from the time of his leaving that Marl Laroon reached the castle on his return. It was towards evening when he reached the place, and his first movement was to learn the condition of Mary. He found her not only convalescent, but almost wholly recovered, and the peculiar sparkle of his eyes told how much inward satisfaction he found in the fact. Although it was near sundown the captain had his boat called away and manned, for he desired to visit the brig to see how matters were progressing there. Paul's heart beat quick when he heard this order, for he feared that he should be forced to accompany his commander, but such was not the case. Marl simply told him that he should return before long, and then went away.

Our hero now felt anxious and uneasy. He had seen Mary recover with much joy, but ever and anon that joy had been clouded by the fears which Otehewa's revelation had brought up. And now those fears assumed a palpable form. The dark spirit had returned—the lovely maiden was strong again—and within the dwelling there had come a man whose very look and air of

pious sanctity struck him with dread. It was the priest from San Felipe! Well did Paul know why he had come!

At ten o'clock the captain returned, but he did not again see Mary that night. During the latter part of the night the wind arose, and before morning heavy drops of rain began to fall. When daylight came a severe storm had set in, and before noon the wind blew almost a hurricane; but Laroon did not make himself uneasy about the brig, for he knew that the tops of the hills would have to blow off before the gale could touch his vessel, and besides this he knew that Storms and Ben Marton would know as well what to do in case of danger as he would himself.

This wind came from the northward and eastward, and before night the atmosphere had become really cold—so cold that Mary shuddered under the influence of the searching blast, and Laroon ordered a fire to be built in the great sitting-room, and after this was done, Paul and Mary repaired thither to eat supper, the captain having invited them to eat with him.

The meal had been eaten, and the table moved back, and both Paul and Mary had taken seats near the blazing fire, when there came an alarm from the great gate. Marl Laroon's first emotion was one of fear, for he showed it in his every motion, but he soon overcame that, and by the time the porter entered, he was quite calm.

"What is it?" he asked of the servant.

"A stranger, sir, who asks hospitality for the night."

"Alone?" asked Laroon.

"Yes, sir."

"Then let him come in."

"In here?"

"Is he a gentleman?"

"He appears so."

"Then let him come in here."

The servant withdrew, and ere long the door of the sitting-room was opened, and the stranger was ushered in. He wore a long cloak which was fastened about the neck by a golden clasp, and the appearance of the spurs upon his boots showed that he had ridden hard, for the rowels were covered with blood. He bowed gracefully to the company, and having removed his cloak and hat and handed them to a servant, he approached the fire. He was a medium-sized man, or rather of medium height; but in his frame he was more full and bulky than usual, though not tending at all to obesity. His features were regular and handsome, his eyes of a dark hazel

and very brilliant, his hair a dark auburn in color, with much mixture of silver, and in age he appeared to be not far from fifty. The only peculiarity about him was a peculiar squint of the eyes; or rather a tendency to a crossing of glance, one of the eyes turning differently from its neighbor. But this was not noticed at all times—it was only when he looked sideways that it was very apparent. Further than this he seemed to be a man who had seen much trouble, and his features had assumed a sort of melancholy cast.

"Have you travelled far?" asked Marl, after the stranger had become seated.

"From Caraccas since yesterday," returned he.

"This is the place of Captain Laroon, I think?"

"It is."

"Are you the gentleman?"

"I am, sir," returned Marl, beginning to eye the stranger with interest. "What may I call your name?"

"Fox, sir—James Fox."

"Ah, an Englishman?"

"England, I suppose, is my native land."

"From what part did you come?" asked the pirate, now showing some palpable signs of uneasiness.

"From the east."

Laroon seemed for the moment more easy, but as he gazed into the man's face again his uneasiness was manifest.

Nor was Marl Laroon the only one who watched that man with more than usual interest. Paul also eyed him anxiously, and once or twice when Fox spoke, the youth started as though some long-forgotten memory had come suddenly upon him. But the guest seemed to notice nothing of this. He had simply examined the countenances of those present when he first sat down, and now he seemed only intent on warming and drying himself.

"You have not supped, of course," said the captain, when he had again recovered himself.

"No, sir."

Thereupon the servants were called and directed to set the table, and while this was being done, Laroon engaged his guest in conversation.

"You may deem me over-curious," said Marl, after some remarks had been passed on the weather, and so on; "but we seldom see a traveller on this road save our fishermen and peasants."

"O, it's natural you should be curious about it," quietly answered the other, "and I'm sure I

should be so myself. It was pleasant when I came from Caraccas, and I only came to look at the country about here, and perhaps find some opening for business."

"Business? What business would you find here?"

"Hunting for jewels."

"Ha, ha—you'll find but few here. None at all, I think."

"I had supposed there were some about these streams."

"If there are I have never found them," said Laroon.

Paul and Mary exchanged significant glances.

"There is another estate further up the river, I believe," resumed Fox.

"Yes," answered Mark. "There is one ten miles up owned by Lopez Garonne. I say ten miles up—I mean his boundary is there. His dwelling is over fifteen miles."

"I thought I should go up there."

Laroon would have asked more questions; but at this juncture the meal was prepared, and the guest moved his chair up to the table.

The pirate captain had noticed not only some peculiarities in the voice and face of his guest, but he noticed the effect which had been produced upon Paul. He had seen it all, even to a sort of nervous, anxious look which Mary herself gave the new-comer. After the man had taken his seat at the table, Laroon commenced to pace up and down the room, and when he was where he could look upon his guest's face he did so most keenly. At length he stopped in his walk and beckoned for Paul to follow him, at the same time taking a lighted candle from the mantel and leaving the room.

Just as the youth closed the door after him the guest had finished his repast, and with a quick, decided movement he arose and moved close to Mary's side. The maiden did not shrink from him, nor shudder, for there was something so naturally kind in his countenance, and then he wore such an appearance of modesty and goodness, that she felt rather drawn towards him by some inward force.

"You are a child of Mr. Laroon?" he said, inquiringly, as he sat down by her side.

"No, sir," she quickly replied.

"Ah, a ward, then?"

"I am—am—yes, I suppose a ward," the maiden answered, with much embarrassment.

"But not a very happy one, I should say,"

remarked the man, at the same time placing his hand upon her shoulder.

"I have been sick, sir," said Mary, feeling sure that he alluded to her looks.

"Ah, a physical, bodily ailment?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then your mind is well. In spirit and soul you are at peace."

Mary started and gazed fixedly into the man's face. There was something almost like a smile upon his face, but it was a very sad and melancholy one.

"Mayhap I know not your meaning," she at length murmured. She could not feel offended with him, for his every look and tone forbade it.

The guest cast his eyes about the room as if to assure himself that they two were alone together, and then he said:

"I have been informed of some circumstances which have led me to suppose that you were not very happy here. Have I been informed correctly?"

"Indeed sir—" So far Mary spoke, and then she burst into tears. The question touched upon a spring that opened every wound afresh.

The stranger drew one of her small, white hands within his own, and then he drew her head upon his bosom. It was a very strange movement, but Mary did not resist it. No, she pillowed her head there as though it were her home, nor did she seem to think that he was a stranger who thus supported her.

"Weep not now, my child," he said, in tones as sweet as a mother's voice. "If the pi—captain should return and find you thus, he would wonder at it."

"And do you know then, my guardian's character?" asked Mary, raising her head quickly, and speaking earnestly.

"Why do you ask?"

"Because you half spoke a word which has a fearful meaning."

"That was a slip of the tongue, my sweet child, but I will not attempt to deceive you. I do know Marl Laroon well, and I know his business. But let that drop where it is. I can perhaps help you."

"And you have known me before?" uttered Mary, half-imploringly.

"Not exactly, but I think I have known those who did once know you. I once promised a person that if ever I came across you, I would

help you if it lay within my power, and I suppose I must now keep my promise."

It was some moments before the fair girl could speak. Wonder and curiosity held about an equal sway with gratitude and joy, and the emotions thus produced were wild and incoherent. But she soon managed to speak, though her words were strangely tremulous and low:

"What do you know of me or mine? O, tell me if you can?"

"—sh! Here comes Laroon. I know nothing that would benefit you now to know. But take hope. I must leave you in the morning, but I shall return. I have come all the way here only to help you, and I tell you thus early of my mission that you may have more to hope for. Be careful now, and do not let him see that you have learned anything. All may depend upon your secrecy and care."

CHAPTER XVIII.

SHADOWS AND FIGURES.

WHEN Laroon called Paul out from the room where the guest was eating, he went at once to a private apartment, and as soon as the youth had entered he closed the door. Paul wondered what all this meant, for the pirate showed by his very countenance that he had some purpose in it. After they had gained this place, Marl walked up and down the room several times before he spoke, and during that time he seemed to be in a nervous thought.

"Paul," he said at length, stopping in front of the wondering youth, "you have noticed that man who is now eating in the room we have just left?"

"Yes, sir," returned the youth, looking up with an expression of curiosity.

"Do you think you have ever seen him before?" pursued the captain, carefully.

"Why, really—I cannot say."

"But is there not something familiar about his face and voice?"

"There is certainly," returned Paul, after a moment's thought.

"So it appears to me," said Marl, with a puzzled look. "Where should you think we had seen him?"

"I'm sure I cannot tell. I am not sure that I ever did see him before."

"But you think you have?"

"Why—yes, sir. There is something about him that calls up a recollection in my mind, but it has no form nor feature. But why should you ask me?"

"Because I thought you might possibly help me out with the puzzle."

"But who do you think he is?"

Laroon did not answer this question at once, for it evidently took him unprepared; but he soon surmounted the difficulty, and said:

"I did not know but that he might be some man who knew us in our sea business. You understand?"

"Yes, sir," answered Paul, with a shudder. He shuddered at the bare idea of being recognized by one who had seen him with the pirate crew, for he knew it was to that which the captain alluded.

"And doesn't it strike you that you have seen him on board some ship we have overhauled?"

"I should think not," returned the youth, not suspecting Marl's real drift. "Surely such a countenance as that would not be so easily forgotten."

"True—true, my son, and you see you haven't forgotten it."

"I have forgotten it so that it does not come readily to my mind. No, sir, if I ever saw that face before it must have been long years ago."

"Ah," uttered the captain, speaking as though he had just remembered something of which he had not before thought, "I do now remember a Mr. Fox who lived close by your father's, I think that must be it."

"That would seem the most reasonable to me," added Paul, "for if I have seen him before it must be as you suggest."

"That's it," resumed Laroon, starting across the room. "That's it," he repeated, as he came back. "You may return now."

Paul left the room, and as soon as he was gone the pirate captain commenced to pace the floor.

"It's he!" Marl muttered to himself, with his fists clenched. "I am sure of it now. The boy knows him, and that is enough. But what is he doing here? Why did he come? O, I wish he had remained away, for he will trouble me—trouble me to hold his blood upon my hands till the judgment day! For he must not know these children!"

The dark man walked more, and he walked faster, and at the end of some minutes he resumed:

"It may be all accident, his coming here. But he will know us—he will know us unless I am mistaken in the man. But I will make myself sure. I can do that, at all events."

As he spoke thus his countenance brightened, and soon afterwards he rejoined his guest, whom he found talking with Paul about the river, and the nature of the soil. Laroon eyed the face of the youth, and it was not long before he found that he was regarding the face of the stranger with renewed interest. But when he came to notice that Mary also regarded him with such palpable anxiety his doubts were nearly all removed.

But there was one other person in that room who watched the countenances of all with more than ordinary interest, and who surely did so to some effect if the changes of her own face could have been seen. But she sat so far in the shade that she was not noticed. This was Oteheha. She had slipped into the room unperceived by all save Mary, when the guest's supper had been first brought in, and when he revealed his business to Mary she had been so far behind the projection of the jam of the fire-place that he did not notice her. She had heard all, and she had seen all; but most particularly now did she watch the movements of Marl Laroon, for she read his thoughts in his looks. Could that dark man have known how truly the shrewd Indian

girl was translating his looks and motions, she would have been likely to be missing ere morning. But he did not even know that she was in the room, and if he had it would have mattered not to him, for in his presence she had never manifested anything but a half-foolish clownishness, and he dreamed not of the wit that she possessed. Had he known that she was by far the most keen and witty person in the castle, she would not have enjoyed the peace that she had thus far been blessed with. Only Mary knew the girl, and even she did not know all her wonderful powers of perception and ingenuity. She had no logical thoughts to distract her mind, and no argumentative powers to conflict with her observations. She knew what she saw, and she intuitively read the souls of men from their faces, and their thoughts from their changes of countenance. So Marl Laroon's secret thoughts were not his own, and even a mystic form that floated in the stranger guest's soul was not his alone. Into his soul the Indian girl had probed with her strange wand, and she read that night a new and holy truth!

At length the hour grew late, and the stranger asked for rest. Old Hagar was sent for to show him to his room, and in this Oteheha read a warning which others saw not. James Fox arose, and having bid the company good-night, he followed the old slave from the room. It was late for Mary to be up, and she and Oteheha also left. Paul had nothing now to detain him, and he, too, sought his own room. And Marl Laroon was left alone. He gazed about him, and a shudder crept through his frame.

The room was a large one, with a high, vaulted ceiling, and the wainscoting was of solid mahogany throughout, while the heavy casings of the doors and windows were of the same wood. Age had made them dark and grim, and they now seemed ten times more sombre than usual. Those who had departed had taken away lamp after lamp, and now only one remained, and the dim light of that had not power enough to penetrate into the remote corners of the spacious apartment. There was one candle upon the table—one which Marl had used during the evening—but it was not now lighted.

And the pirate stood there alone in that wide room and looked about him. He trembled now, most surely, and big drops of sweat stood upon his brow.

"Why did he come?"

So spoke the dark man to himself, and then

he walked away into the darkness, and back again. Then he stood still, and repeated the question. He gazed about him, and he saw dim spectres floating about in the dim corners of the room. They were men and women whom he had murdered. And he saw another spectre—and he covered his face with his hands. Soon he started up, and his fists were clenched, and with the right one he smote his breast.

"Why did he come?"

And as the words echoed through the high place an answer seemed to come back:

"Vengeance!"

And again the sweat stood cold and heavy upon the dark man's brow. He saw two children—two laughing, prattling, gleesome children, and he remembered that cold, wet, cheerless day when he fled with them into Gloucestershire. He remembered the Cross-Hands Inn, and the night he spent there. He remembered when he went up to his bed on that night—how he saw the children asleep—the boy with a stern, sorrowful face, and the girl with a calm, confiding smile. He remembered how that tiny white arm was thrown over the boy's neck, and how the boy's hand rested protectingly upon her shoulder.

And Marl Laroon remembered that he himself was young then—then his own blood was fired with the ardor of youth, and his foot had pressed the threshold of crime for the first time. After this the pirate remembered other years that followed! Alas! even he shudders at the picture his memory presents. And shall he ever smile again with joy? Shall he ever again taste the sweet cup of life's blessing?

And now Marl Laroon is an old man—old, at least, in crime and trials. Only forty years have passed to his debt in the great life-book, but see how laden with accounts those years are! See the lines of silver already in his hair, and the lines of woe already on his brow.

And Marl Laroon thinks of those children now, as they have just left him, and for the moment a softer shade rests upon his dark face. Not once in all those long years has that boy done him harm by word or deed—and not once in all the while has the girl given him cause for complaint—until within the past few days. He

sees them the only pure things he has about him, and they would flee from him. Why is it? Too well he knows. But the thought comes to him, and he speaks again to himself:

"She shall be mine!"

Then he starts away again, and penetrates the gloom, and when he turns even the lamp itself has changed to a spectre, for it is gone, and a hideous-looking object has taken its place. He starts back and clasps his hands in fear, for his mind is not with present things, and he stops not to reason. But soon he sees the lamp again, and the spectre has passed away, but not from sight, for it has only moved from before the light, and now stands by the smouldering fire.

"Who's there?" he gasps.

"Hagar," is the response.

And the pirate is himself again, for now another incarnate demon is with him to combat the dwellers of the spectre world.

"Where did you put our guest?" asked Marl, approaching the woman.

"In the turret chamber."

"You did well. And you did nothing more?"

"Not much."

"How much?"

"He asked me for drink."

"Well."

"And I gave it him."

"Yes. And more?"

"He will sleep more soundly than he would if he had drunk not."

"But not to danger."

"No. Only for the night. I doubt if he feels it beyond the rising of the sun."

"Good Hagar, thou art a very jewel. What shall I pay thee?"

"Gold!—gold!"

"As much as you want. Come to me on my wedding-day. No—hold. On the day after."

"And I shall have gold?"

"Plenty."

And with this assurance the old black hag went away, and Marl Laroon was once more alone. He looked at his watch—and it wanted yet an hour of midnight. Midnight was with him a charmed hour, and he loved to work at that mystic period between two days!

CHAPTER XIX.

THE DEATH-FLUT.

THE turret chamber was so called from being situated below one of the turrets of the building, the other turret being raised upon the centre, and consequently over the hall. This chamber was in the southwest corner of the building, and overlooked the stream which ran through the yard. In this chamber the stranger guest was put to sleep. There were two doors leading from it, and these he locked before he retired.

It was midnight, and the man slept soundly. He heard no noise—no sound disturbed him. Upon that side of the room near the foot of the bed a secret door was opened. It was a door which no stranger could have ever discovered, for it was only one, broad panel made to swing back. This panel opened, and Marl Laroon entered the room in his stocking feet. He stood where he first entered until he heard the low, deep, regular breathing of one in a sound sleep, and then he approached the bed. He moved to the head of it, and carefully held up a pocket-lantern so that its rays could not fall upon the face. Then he moved down the coverlid and the sheet, working as carefully as a mother would handle her sick infant. Then he opened the shirt at its bosom, and soon the broad, full

breast was exposed, and there was a deep, heavy scar there, running from the upper point of the right collar-bone to the centre breast. A single instant the pirate looked at that scar, and then he put back the clothing he had removed. He stopped not to examine anything else, but stealthily he glided away from the place, and noiselessly closed the panel after him.

"I knew him at first!" he muttered to himself, after he had gained the hall. "Why did he come?"

One long hour the pirate walked up and down the wide hall with the lantern in his hand. Then he went out into the court, and crossed over to the low building against the wall where the male slaves slept. He entered here and awoke a slave—an Indian named Warda. As soon as the fellow knew who it was that called him, he leaped out of bed. He was not a powerfully built man, being rather light than otherwise, but his very movement just made showed him to possess uncommon activity, while his face revealed a disposition capable of anything, from a petty falsehood up to the most foul murder.

"Warda," whispered Marl, "come with me."

The slave threw a blanket over his shoulders and followed his master out into the court. The rain had ceased falling, and the clouds were fast rolling off, but yet the air was chilly, and the pirate captain entered the building he had left, and pursued his way to the very apartment where he had received his guest the night before.

Marl Laroon did not dream that his motions were all watched. He did not see the dark, slight figure that hung upon his steps like a shadow. When he entered the great drawing-room he did not notice that through another door a dim figure flitted and lay concealed beneath a wide ottoman while he talked.

"Warda," commenced Marl, as soon as the door was closed behind them, "did you see the stranger who came here last night?"

"No, master." This man talked with the same idiom that marked Otehewa's language, and which it would be wholly useless to attempt to follow.

"A stranger did come, and he sleeps now in the turret chamber. I think he will leave here to-morrow for the estate of Lopez Garonne. If he does I shall send you to show him the way. Do you understand?"

"So far, master."

"Before he reaches Garonne's I would like to have him turn off and visit that place from which men never come back. Do you understand me now?"

"I think so."

"I would have you sure."

"I am sure that you want the man killed."

"Exactly, Warda. And I want it done without mistake."

"I understand that."

"Now mark me: Do this faithfully, and you shall have Otehewa for your wife."

The red man clasped his hands with savage, sensual joy; but they fell to his side in a moment more, and in a tone of doubt he said:

"But the young mis'us wont let me have her."

"As soon as the young mistress is my wife the maid shall be yours; and that will be very soon. Do this for me—faithfully and surely, without mistake, and without a third person's ever knowing it—and Otehewa shall be yours as I live!"

"I'll kill a thousand enemies for you at that price," uttered Warda, with sparkling eyes of vengeful joy.

Long had Warda loved the bright-eyed maid of the Muyscas, but she would never yet be his, for she loved him not, and to protect herself from his importunities she had persuaded Mary to forbid him ever again to molest her maid with his propositions of love. Laroon knew all this, and though Warda would have obeyed him without such reward, yet he knew that such a course would ensure more complete success.

"What weapon will you take?" asked the pirate.

"I'll carry all three," answered the Indian. "The sword, the knife, and the pistol; and I'll use which comes handiest. I can perhaps put a pistol to his head and finish him the quickest. But he shall die before he reaches Lopez Garonne's. I'll take him in the ravine beyond the bluffs. Nobody will hear a pistol there, and I can throw the body down among the rocks, and it'll be eaten up in a few days."

"Then it is all understood," said Marl. "Now remember: When the stranger—Mr. Fox—is ready to set out, I shall send you with him as a guide. You know the rest."

"But if he don't want a guide?"

"I think he will. But if he don't, then follow him. It's all the same."

"I understand."

And so the master and the slave separated, and the master went now to seek his rest. Otehewa crawled out from beneath the ottoman, and having assured herself that the pirate's work for the night was done, she too, went away to sleep.

It was late on the following morning when the stranger guest arose. He found that he had slept long and soundly, but that was no wonder, for he had been very much fatigued when he went to bed. But he did not feel so much refreshed as one might have expected from such a sleep—he felt a sort of lassitude—a dull, leaden feeling. Yet many people feel so after a very hard sleep induced by excessive exercise. When James Fox reached the hall he found that breakfast was not yet ready, for Laroon himself was not up.

The morning was bright and beautiful, and the atmosphere, purified by the late storm, now dwelt upon the scene loaded with the grateful incense of a thousand sweet shrubs and flowers. The guest saw the garden from one of the back windows of the hall, and he resolved to walk out there and snuff up the fresh air, feeling sure that it would start up his blood and quicken his

senses. So to the garden he went, and he was not disappointed in the effects. He had walked some dozen times up and down the main path, and was just stopping in front of a bower of vines, when he heard light footsteps near him, and on turning he saw the same bright-eyed Indian girl whom he had seen so attentive to Mary the night before, and whom he had heard her call Otehewa. The girl came close to him, and then having cast a quick glance about her, she said, in a low whisper:

"You are going to Lopez Garonne's to-day?"

"I had thought of it," returned Fox, with some surprise.

"Go—go. Go this forenoon," said Otehewa.

"Marl Laroon seeks your life!"

"Ha! He knows me then?"

"Yes. He entered your room last night, and laid your bosom bare. He gazed upon it, and then all his doubts were removed."

"But I locked every door."

"There were some doors you could not lock. You were put in that chamber on purpose for the use of its secret doors, and the old woman who gave you drink last night, put a sleeping potion in it."

"Ah, then Laroon knows me—and well he might if he saw that mark, for he put it there himself. But how do you know he means to take my life?"

The Indian girl smiled faintly, and then related all the conversation she had heard between the captain and Warda, only leaving out what related to herself.

"And now," continued the girl, "you see you must go to the other estate, and you must take the guide, too, for if you do not, they will contrive some other means for your death of which you may gain no warning; and hence you would be likely to fall without the power of defending yourself."

The man understood it all, and after a few moments' thought he said:

"I shall certainly do as you advise; but tell me why you have taken such an interest in my behalf. You never saw me before?"

"Paul and Mary have been my friends, sir; and at this moment I would lay down my poor life for them."

"But what have I to do with them?" asked the stranger, somewhat moved, and eyeing the girl sharply.

"You do not need instruction on that point from me, sir. *I am not blind!*"

James Fox knew very well that his secret had been penetrated by this dark-skinned girl. He watched her calm countenance for a few moments, and then he asked:

"Does Mary, or Paul, know what you know of me?"

"No, sir. You can see that they both feel drawn towards you, but wonder and curiosity take precedence of all other ideas with them," she replied.

"My blessed angel," cried the old gentleman, reaching forth his hands, and drawing the slight form to his embrace, "how shall I reward you for this?"

"I am already rewarded, sir. The gratitude of one like you is reward enough. But I may ask more at your hands one of these days. Hark! They are calling to breakfast. Go you in, and I will follow afterwards. Do not speak to me again. Look to your pistols in secret, and mind that Warda rides not behind you on the way. You will know the ravine when you come to it, and there your guide will do the deed if you let him!"

Thus speaking the girl glided away; and Fox, as soon as he was sure his face was calm, returned to the house. He found the morning's meal prepared, and his host was up to receive him. Never was Marl Laroon more kind and smiling in his manner. He embraced his guest cordially, and expatiated upon the beauty of the morning.

Paul and Mary were also there, and the young man still manifested the same anxious curiosity that had marked his manner on the previous evening. He gazed into the stranger's face, and he wondered if Laroon had told him the truth when he said that this could only be a man who had once lived near him. But he had no opportunity to question the stranger, for Laroon did not once leave him after breakfast. The pirate captain meant that no conversation should be held that he could not hear, and for the present he succeeded. Mr. Fox manifested a desire several times to speak a few words in private with both the youth and the maiden, but he did not find an opportunity, for Laroon hung about him like a twin of Siam. Once he had a single moment while he stood by the side of Mary, and he whispered in her ear:

"Can you trust that young, beautiful Indian girl?"

"With my very life and soul!" quickly responded Mary.

This was all, for on the next moment Laroon was by them.

It was ten o'clock when the guest said he must be on his way to the next estate. Marl urged him to stop, but Fox said he must go.

"You will want a guide," said the buccaneer, frankly.

"Is the path blind?"

"There are a number of them, and you will surely miss your way alone."

"Would you as lief spare me a guide as not?"

"Certainly," uttered Laroon, with a strange sparkle of the eye which his guest did not fail to notice.

"Then I shall not only accept your offer, but your man shall be amply rewarded," replied Fox, as he prepared to go.

CHAPTER XX.

THE INDIAN GUIDE. ANOTHER NEW-COMER.

It was eleven o'clock before the stranger set out on his way to the upper estate. He drank a hearty draught of native wine after having seen Laroon drink from the same flask, and then mounted his horse. He had carefully loaded his pistols, arranged the priming very nicely, and picked the flints so that they should not miss of throwing good fire. His guide was an Indian, a finely built, muscular fellow, not more than five-and-twenty years of age, and showing in his countenance a goodly share of intelligence and cunning.

Mark Laroon wished his guest a prosperous journey, for which he was duly thanked, and then Mr. Fox set out. For some distance he and his guide rode side by side, and though Fox tried to engage the fellow in conversation he found it extremely difficult to get much out of him. The fellow was not surly nor clownish, but he appeared to be diffident, and at times he manifested a desire to remain wholly silent even when the most simple questions were asked.

"This path seems perfectly plain," said the gentleman, after they had ridden some three miles along a wide cart-road.

"It's different after we pass the ravine," returned Warda, unintentionally laying a peculiar stress upon the last word.

"The ravine?" repeated Fox. "Where is that?"

"O, some five miles ahead."

"Ah." That was all Fox said in reply, for he saw that the Indian did not like to talk, and he feared that if he made him nervous he would be in a hurry to put his wicked purpose into execution.

It was a beautiful ride, for the path ran along upon the river's bank, and the foliage was lovely in the extreme. Yet the traveller did not find much time or inclination to enjoy it, for his mind was busy in another quarter. Sometimes the road took a curve away from the river to avoid the high bluffs which overtowered the bank; and at length Fox saw, at some distance ahead, a bluff higher than any of the others, and from the nature of the place he concluded that it must be the spot where he was to be put out of the way. If he had any doubts on this point they were soon removed, for the guide began to show symptoms of anxiety, though they were so well guarded that a person might never have detected them without some pre-possessed clue to them.

"You see that high bluff," he said, pointing to the place in question.

"Yes," returned Fox, with apparent interest.

"The ravine of which I spoke lies just beyond. The path after that is very blind."

"Ah. Then I'm glad you have come with

me, for it is not very pleasant to lose one's way in such woods."

Finally the place was approached, and Fox could see most of its peculiarities. Towards the river the rocks were piled up as though by some mighty convulsion, while to the left was a deep gorge over which ran a sort of natural bridge of rock. Or rather this bridge seemed more properly to be a shelf of the bluff. Just as they reached this point the guide uttered an exclamation of dissatisfaction.

"Bah! My saddle-girth has broken," he said. "You ride on, sir, and I will follow you as soon as I have fixed it."

Fox was now behind his guide, and as he saw the fellow slip from his saddle he drew up his own horse. His first impulse was to cast his eyes over the strange, wild scene ahead. The gorge, or ravine, was very deep, with rough, jagged sides, and with a bottom of huge rocks, over which the torrent was evidently wont to dash during the season of heavy rains and freshets, though the place was dry now. But the most peculiar feature of all was, a wide, naturally arched tunnel which extended through the bottom of the bluff to the river. The path was very narrow, not wide enough for a cart, all articles which needed to be transported from side to side being generally carried by pack mules, though the more common mode of transportation from the upper estate was by the river. This path upon the shelf or bridge of rock was not over four feet wide in any place, and certainly a hundred yards in length, while the gorge extended away to the left until it became lost in the distant forest.

"Come," uttered the guide, somewhat impatiently, "ride on, and I will soon overtake you."

"It is not proper for a guided party to ride ahead of the guide," replied Fox, carelessly, having first seen that his pistols were at hand, and noiselessly cockin one of them.

"But you had better ride on now," urged the guide, "for you have no time to lose."

"I am in no hurry."

"But I am."

"Then we will ride the faster when we get started again."

Warda was not only perplexed, but much agitated. He found that the stranger's eye was steadily upon him, and his every movement watched. But soon he seemed to gain confidence, and with a steadier hand he patched the

girth with a thong where he had himself cut it, and in a few moments more he was in his saddle.

"Now you may ride on," he said, "for my horse is not safe with another behind him. He will not go over with the sound of hoofs in his rear."

"Then," replied Fox, who could not help smiling at the fellow's quaint ingenuity, "I will not start until you are across. Now, if you are in a hurry, *move!*"

This last sentence was spoken sharply, and with a half-smothered oath the fellow started on. Fox waited until he had gained the opposite side, and then he followed him. When the traveller reached the spot where his guide stood, the latter rode on ahead at a brisk trot, and Fox followed at a respectful distance. Soon the gentleman saw Warda place his right hand in his bosom, and when he withdrew it he had a pistol in it. The Indian supposed he had accomplished this without being noticed. On the next instant Fox heard a sharp *click-click*—and he knew that the pistol was cocked! and from the way in which the fellow's right elbow was bent he knew that the weapon was held ready for firing. Fox drew his own pistol, which was already cocked, and held it beneath the skirt of his frock, by bringing the skirt up over his saddle-bow.

Suddenly the Indian drew in his horse by a powerful movement, and quickly changing his pistol into the left hand, he cried out, in a wild, strange tone, at the same time pointing off over the river:

"*See there! See there!*"

James Fox had seen the whole process, and he knew full well that if he did not now act promptly he should have a ball through his head before he could prevent it. He waited until he saw the Indian reach back with his right hand for the pistol, and then he knew the crisis had come. It was hard to take the life of a fellow, but now he had his choice—to fall by the hands of an assassin, and thus leave this villain to do more murder, while at the same time a still darker villain would be left behind with a defenceless maiden in his grasp—or to save his own life, and thus live to accomplish a work which justice and mercy and love demanded at his hands. These thoughts flashed through his mind like lightning, and on the next instant his course was clear.

"Look! look!" cried the guide.

Fox saw the villain's finger now upon the trigger of his pistol. With a firm hand he drew in his rein, and as his horse settled back he quickly brought his own pistol to within a yard of the assassin's head and fired. The guide's horse bounded forward at the sound of the report, and the Indian was thrown upon the ground. He had uttered no cry, for the ball had passed through his brain, and the force of the concussion, even without the ball, so near his head, would have stunned him for awhile.

James Fox dismounted and stooped over the prostrate Indian, but life was extinct, and after dragging the body out from the path, so that his horse could pass freely along, he remounted and rode on, taking no notice of the guide's horse which had now stopped as though waiting for its rider.

* * * * *

Towards the middle of the afternoon Marl Laroon began to look for his slave whom he had sent to guide James Fox, but the hours passed away until near nightfall, and he did not come. The buccaneer now became uneasy, and he sent off two of his most trusty men to hunt Warda up if possible. These two—they were negroes—took their horses, and they were directed to follow the path to Lopez Garonne's, and look carefully for the missing man.

"Be sure and examine well about the great bluff and ravine," said Marl, in conclusion, "for there is a dangerous place: Hasten, now."

Half an hour after the negroes had gone the buccaneer was in the great hall pacing up and down the paved floor. The sun was near setting, and the shadows were now lengthened out till they became lost in the distance. Suddenly, Marl heard an alarm at the gate, and soon afterwards he was informed that one of the men from the brig would see him. Of course he gave orders for the man to be admitted, and he waited there in the hall to receive him. Ere long he heard a heavy step upon the verandah, and he started with a quick emotion as the sound fell upon his ear, for there was but one man who walked with that unequal thump—and that man he supposed to be in prison. But his queries were soon stopped, for the hall door was thrown open, and the maimed form of Buffo Burnington appeared upon the threshold.

"What! Buffo!" cried Marl, starting forward and grasping the new-comer by the hand.

"Yes, captain."

"But how is this? Are you at liberty?"

"I am."

"And the rest?"

"Where I left 'em, I suppose—in prison. I escaped."

"And couldn't you have brought off some of the others?"

"Not then. But I have set a ball in motion in Caraccas, and they will all be out ere long."

"Are you sure of that?"

"I am."

"Good! Good, Buffo. You shall be rewarded for this."

"Don't talk about rewarding me for getting my shipmates out o' jail. But—excuse me—I am hungry, captain. I haven't put a morsel of food into my mouth since early morning, and then I didn't eat half a meal."

"We'll have supper in a short time, and then you shall eat with the rest of us. Have you been on board the brig?"

"No. I struck the path which I thought would take me there, but I was mistaken, for it brought me out here."

"All right. Sit down now and rest, and you shall have supper in a few moments."

Accordingly Buffo sat down upon one of the long stone benches which were stationary fixtures in the hall, while Marl went away to hurry on the supper.

In fifteen minutes after this the lame sailor was informed that the meal was ready, and he followed Laroon into the supper-room. Paul was there, and he started back in surprise as he saw the dark, strange man.

"Buffo Burnington!" he uttered.

"Burnington!" faintly repeated Mary, who had taken a seat.

"Yes," answered Laroon. "Our good friend has made his escape."

Mary's first impulse, as she gazed into those repulsive features, was one of fear and disgust, but that feeling quickly passed away, and the next met his gaze, there was a soft, strange light in that single eye that disarmed her of her fear. She remembered how she had been once fascinated by that gaze when she had reposed in those stout arms, and she remembered how he had spoken to her. She could even now feel the thrill that went leaping through her soul as those incoherent words fell upon her ear. And the longer she gazed the more did she become used to his deformities, and the less repulsive did they appear.

And Paul, too, was strangely worked upon.

Surely Buffo Burnington had betrayed him; but might he not have had some powerful reason for it? One thing was sure: Argue with himself as he would, there was a strange spirit in his soul which yearned towards that dark man. He could not rid himself of it, nor could he gain to himself any amount of indignation that would do it away.

During the supper the buccaneer made but little conversation, for his mind was too heavily burdened with other affairs than those he could converse of there, and as soon as he had done he left the room, leaving Burnington alone with Paul and Mary. As soon as he was fairly gone the dark man said, while a faint smile worked upon his features:

"Paul—and you, too, lady—I fear you have not yet forgiven me for the part I seemingly played against you?"

"Seemingly played against us?" said the youth, dubiously.

"Ay, for you shall know that 'twas not for your ill that I did that thing. I meant to help you, and you may yet know that I have done you no harm. Has there been a man—a stranger—here yet?"

"Yes. Last night one came."

"Ah. Did he give his name?"

"Yes. He said it was James Fox."

"Where is he now?"

"Gone up to Garonne's."

"Did you notice that man particularly, Paul?"

"Ay, I did," uttered the youth, with energy; "and I know I have seen him before."

Burnington smiled. The youth saw that smile, and in a moment more he added:

"Who is he? Burnington, I do put confidence in you once more. Now show me that I do not misplace it, by telling me truly who that man is, for I am sure you know him?"

"I will make you one answer," returned

Buffo, in a serious tone, "and that shall be final on that point. James Fox has reposed confidence in me, and I will not violate it. He shall tell you ere long all you would know, and at the same time he shall tell you of me. Now if you would trust those who would save you, show it by inflicting upon me no more questions, which you must know I do not wish to answer. Trust me—and yet show it not. Let Marl Laroon think you hate me, for the more he thinks that the more easily can I work."

Paul and Mary gazed first into the face of the speaker, and then they looked upon each other, and though each seemed only intent upon discovering what emotions the other manifested, yet they both showed by their looks that they were ready to trust the strange man.

At this moment Otehewa entered the room. She caught the stranger's eye, and she came near dropping the tray she carried in her hands. Both Paul and Mary noticed her emotion, but they noticed it not so deeply as did the man himself who had caused it. Slowly the Indian girl drew nearer, and as she sat her tray down close by where Burnington was seated, she gazed fixedly into his face, never minding the look he gave her in return. A shade rested upon her features for some moments—a shade half of doubt and half of anxiety—but it soon passed away, and a look of strange satisfaction took its place.

In the meantime the negroes had returned. Marl Laroon met them in the court, and asked them if they had found Warda. But hardly had he asked the question when he noticed a dark mass upon one of the saddles. He went up to it, and held up his lantern, and he saw the grim, ghastly features of the Indian guide, all covered with dirt and gore!

In a few words from the negroes he learned all; and he knew that now he must have a more dangerous enemy than before!

CHAPTER XXI.

THE BUCCANEER'S BRIDE!

THE buccaneer chieftain bade the negroes carry the body away and say nothing about the affair for the present, and then he returned to the hall, where, for full half an hour, he paced up and down the place like a caged lion.

"By my soul," he gasped to himself, with his hands working nervously upon his bosom, "I am not to be thwarted now. If that man returns here he shall find his labor lost. Ay—by the host he shall! All is yet in my hands, and we'll see who shall play the winning hand! What ho, there!"

Two slaves presented themselves.

"Call away my boat, and have it manned."

As he gave this order he strode to the apartment where he had left the supper party, and found those there yet whom he had left when he went from his meal.

"Burnington," he said, "I have not heard from the brig since the storm. They should have sent me up word, for I am anxious. My boat is ready and manned, and I wish you to go down and see how they are. Some of the men may have got injured during the gale, and if so they will need their surgeon—so you may accompany him, Paul. Come, the boat waits."

Both Burnington and the youth seemed somewhat startled by this order, and for a moment they were dumb.

"But," uttered the old man, at length, "it is hardly fair to send me off so soon. I am all run down with fatigue now."

"Never mind, 'twont hurt you to ride down the river; and then you may rest as much as you please when you get there."

Paul also made objections, but the captain would listen to none of them. Go they must, unless they openly rebelled, and that they were not yet prepared to do; so at length they prepared to set off.

"But when may I return?" asked our hero.

"When I send for you. You have been here long enough for one hitch."

"But this is a strange time to send me off," uttered Paul, whose mind was immediately filled with the worst fears.

"I should suppose it would be the most proper time," returned Marl, in a tone of irony. "You have spent the whole day, and a part of the evening, and now you can surely sleep on board the brig as well as here. But we will not argue the question. It is my wish that you should go. You, Burnington, may return in the morning and bring me word how matters move on in the brig. The boat is ready."

Paul hoped the captain would leave him alone with Mary a few moments at least, but he did not. Yet he could not leave her without one

fond embrace, and moving quickly to her side he bent over and wound his arms about her, and imprinted a warm kiss upon her fair cheek.

"I shall see you again, Mary," he said, "and until then keep up a good heart. God bless you."

"God bless you, my brother!" murmured the stricken girl.

"—sh!" whispered the youth. "I am not sure of that. Do not call me so. He has lied to us!"

The maiden started up with a cry of surprise and hope; but she found the quick, burning eye of Laroon fixed upon her, and she did not speak. On the next moment Paul was gone from her, and she sank back upon her seat.

Laroon followed the two from the room, and saw them in the boat. Paul would have said more if Burnington had not stopped him. Ere long the boat had passed through the arch—the portcullis was lowered after it, and then the buccaneer returned to the dwelling. He called Hagar and bade her go to the cot where the priest was stopping and tell him to come to the castle.

Laroon had had the sense to keep the priest out of the castle since the first night of his coming, for he knew that his presence would be not only unpleasant to Mary, but also likely to retard her recovery; so he had been kept at one of the cots without the walls—the one occupied by Laroon's chief herdsman.

Mary was still sitting in the eating-room when the pirate returned. She looked up as he entered, and he saw the shudder that passed through her frame. Otehewa stood close by her side, but the latter had heard the bad man's step, and her face wore only a look of cold, blank indifference, and at that moment she looked as though she cared for nothing and nobody. Well was it for the mistress that Marl Laroon was so deeply deceived in the maid.

"Now, my love," said Marl, as he approached close to where the maiden sat, "we will very soon have our joys for this life fixed. Go and prepare yourself at once, for this night you become mine, for life! Go and dress to suit yourself, and you will suit me—only let it be done quickly."

The maiden seemed at first in a dream; but soon she realized it all, and starting to her feet, she gazed a moment wildly into the wicked man's face, and then threw herself upon her knees at his feet.

"Spare—spare—O, spare me!" she cried, in tearless, burning agony, while she clasped her hands and raised them frantically towards him.

A dark, grim smile passed over the pirate's face, but when he spoke his features were as stern as ice.

"Mary," he said, "Heaven and earth, with all angels and men combined, have not the power to prevent me from making you my wife, this night! You know how much has been done to thwart me. But now the power is in my hands. Go and prepare. Otehewa, you will assist her."

"Yes, sir." And as the slave-girl spoke, she moved to the maiden's side and seemed to wait for her to arise.

Laroon lifted Mary up.

"Come, my lady," said the maid, after this, "I will help you all I can. It will be better if you do it at once."

"That's the doctrine," interposed Marl. "The sooner the better."

Without another word, Mary followed Otehewa from the room, and when she had reached her own chamber she threw herself upon her bed and burst into a flood of tears.

"My mistress," said the faithful girl, after the maiden had wept for some minutes, "hope is not yet all gone. You cannot escape this ordeal. It must come."

"Otehewa," spoke Mary, with a strange look and tone. "I can prevent it!"

"How?"

"By fleeing."

"But the gates are closed."

"Not the gates of death!"

"But you shall not die, nor yet shall you be ruined!" vehemently cried the girl. "He shall die before real harm comes to you. But go through with this ordeal as boldly as you can."

"Heaven have mercy!" groaned the stricken maiden, clasping her hands in agony. "O, Otehewa, you do not know what you say. Go through with this ordeal? O, what shall I be in the end! His wife! Ruined—body and soul!"

"—sh! Speak not so, my mistress," urged the faithful girl, at the same time winding her arms about Mary's neck. "As sure as there is a God in heaven you shall not be harmed. This night there shall be an empty mockery performed by a man who profanes the sacred name of God. Marl Laroon shall call you wife, perhaps once—perhaps twice. But he shall not know thee to thy harm. He shall not, even though it requires

a pistol or dagger to stay his villainy. While I live have faith in me. On the morrow, Buffo Burnington will be here."

"And what of him?" asked Mary, quickly.

"More than I can tell, I'm sure. I know he has the power and will to serve thee. But waste not time now. Be sure our bad master must be obeyed for the present."

Mary saw where she stood, and that she must obey, and she allowed her maid to do as she pleased, she herself seeming only a piece of mechanism, in the hands of a master. At length she was prepared. She was robed in white, for so Otehewa had chosen. Her hair was free from jewels, but a few orange blossoms were braided with it. About her pure, white neck, was a chain of gold from which depended a cross set with magnificent diamonds. Mary had objected to every article, but the maid noticed her not.

Soon there came a rap upon the door, and Hagar presented herself. She had come to announce that her master waited for his bride. Again the poor girl would have fainted but for the words of her attendant.

"If you falter now, all may be lost," urged Otehewa. "I know Marl Laroon well, and I know that he will carry out what he has begun. Sustain yourself yet a few hours, and I will do the rest. Will you not trust me?"

Of course Mary could not say no; and yet how great was the thing she gave in that trust. She stood upon the brink of a yawning gulf, and she was bidden to leap into it. She was to be forced to make the dreadful plunge. "Leap," says the maid, "and I will see that you do not sink, for I will carry you safely over." But as the devoted one looks down into the horrid pit she sees nothing but death and torment. So she may give up, but hope is far from her the while.

And Mary followed Hagar from the chamber, and the Indian girl walked by her side and supported her. They entered the drawing-room, and Laroon was there habited in a most sumptuous uniform of his own designing. The priest was there in his sacred robes, and some of the servants stood back by the high windows.

"By my faith," uttered the buccaneer, as he moved forward and took Mary's hand. "I never saw you look so well. Now we will soon be one for life."

Perhaps Marl Laroon mistook that look which

he received, for one of calmness. It was calmness, but such calmness as the marble slab maintains when the fierce blast sweeps over the church-yard. She was now all rigid and cold, for her heart had sunk to its lowest depth.

"We are ready."

Thus spoke the buccaneer chieftain—and he spoke to the priest. The man of the church moved forward, and Marl Laroon took Mary's cold hand in his own. The priest read on from his book, and then he asked the bridegroom the usual questions. They were answered promptly, but yet nervously. Next he asked the same questions of Mary, but she did not answer.

"Go on," whispered Marl. "Silence gives consent."

"No—no—no—no!" cried Mary, starting to life for the instant.

A flash of fire darted from the pirate's eyes, and then he turned a terrible look upon the priest. That man cared not whose soul was crushed—and he went on with the ceremony. In one more short minute the words had been spoken, and Mary Delany was pronounced the wife of Marl Laroon!

The slaves, acting under instructions, set up a wild shout of professed joy, in the midst of which Marl led his bride to a seat, and then sat down by her side.

"Now the wine! the wine!" cried the buccaneer, in coarse tones. "Such an event as this should be made one of joy for all."

"My master," cried Otehewa, coming up and falling upon her knees before him, "let me be the first to wish you joy of your blessing. Mine shall be the task of serving your fair and lovely wife with all my poor strength."

"Good Otehewa, if faith I'd give thee thy liberty for this, were't not for my bride. But bring the wine now."

The servants brought the wine, and placed it upon the sideboard. Hagar would have served her master first, but Otehewa was too quick for her. The Indian girl seized a small waiter, and upon it she placed two goblets. One was of rock crystal, and small, while the other was of silver, and held a pint. Beneath her sleeve the maid had a small bladder, secured by a string to her waist, and within this was a potion of her own preparing. She had gathered it from the herbs of her native forests, and she knew well its properties. With a small knife she punctured the bladder, and then as she poured out the

wine into the goblet of crystal she so held her wrist that the bladder emptied itself into the silver cup. When she had filled them both—and the mystic manoeuvre she had performed detained hardly an instant—she hastened to the newly-wedded pair.

"Now, my mistress," she said, with a merry laugh, "here is crystal for you—and it is an emblem of your purity and virtue. Here, my master, is silver for you—and it speaks of your ambition and worth. Health, peace and long life to ye both."

Never was a bad man more charmed. He raised the goblet and poured off the contents at a draught.

"Drink! drink!" whispered Otehewa, bending close down to the ear of her mistress; and then in a tone meant for all to hear, she added:

"Drink, fair lady, to your noble lord."

Instinctively Mary raised the small crystal cup and drank its contents, and when she had done so, the goblet fell to the floor. Otehewa instantly picked it up and bore it away to the side-board, and then she went and stood by the side of the unhappy bride.

The buccaneer saw that his bride was not to be made joyous in presence of the company now assembled, and with one more bumper all around he dismissed them. Otehewa had yet a small potion of her medicine left, and this she had contrived to put into a goblet which she left upon the side-board half-filled with wine. Two persons had already attempted to drink it, but she had stopped them by claiming it as her own. At length old Hagar approached it, and Otehewa drew away to the side of her mistress again, and she had the satisfaction of seeing the old negress drink the wine. She knew the hag would drink it if she found it. The Indian girl was happy now, for she had not a hope thus far lost.

At length the buccaneer and his bride, and Otehewa and Hagar, were the sole occupants of the great room.

"Now, Otehewa," said Laroon, while his eyes worked uneasily in their sockets, "go up with your mistress and help her to bed, and when she is ready call me." Then the pirate turned to Mary, and having kissed her cold brow, he added:

"Go now, my sweet wife, and I will soon join you. You shall be alone no more in this world."

With a deathly feeling the bride staggered

from the room. She leaned heavily upon Otehewa's arm, and faintly she murmured:

"To my own chamber! To my own chamber!"

"Of course!" answered the maid, "and you shall be safe there, too."

Mary reached her room, but she could do no more. She sank down upon her bed, and she was powerless and senseless. Otehewa knew what to do for her, and ere long the poor girl was reviving.

"Fear not—fear not," urged the maid, for there is no danger.

"But *he!*" gasped Mary. "Will *he* come?"

"No. He already sleeps a sleep that will not pass away until the morrow's sun is high in the heavens."

"And I shall be safe to-night?"

"Yes—and for all coming time."

"O, if I could believe it!"

"I can kill him now, as he sleeps."

"No, no. Let him live. If I can pass this night, and one of those men comes, I shall hope."

Otehewa saw that her mistress had wholly recovered, and then she went below to see how matters went on there. She stopped in the hall to hearken, but all was still, save a loud snoring from the drawing-room. She entered this room, and when she had seen all there, a smile of triumph passed over her features. The pirate chieftain lay upon the floor in a sound sleep, while Hagar sat back in a chair snoring fearfully. First the girl placed a cushion beneath Laroon's head so that the uneasy position should not tend to awaken him before day; and then she laid down another cushion upon which to place old Hagar's head. She dared not leave the beldam in that chair, for fear she should get uneasy before morning and tumble out, and perhaps thus wake up. The hag was little else but skin and bone, and Otehewa easily placed her upon the floor. This was done—then the girl put out all the lights, and then made her way noiselessly back to the chamber of her mistress. From that moment Mary possessed the love of one who would at any moment have sacrificed life itself at that love's call.

"Now, my sweet lady," she said, "you may sleep in peace, for no one shall trouble thee this night."

"But you will not leave me?" uttered Mary, timidly.

"Not if you wish it otherwise."

"Stay with me."

"I will. I can make me up a bed on the—" said Otehewa.

"No, no—you will sleep with me."

It was sometime before Otehewa would consent to this.

"I am but a poor Indian girl," she said, "and should—"

"You are my saviour!" cried Mary, throwing her arms about the neck of the faithful crea-

ture, and kissing her dark cheek. "O, look at the thing—the *toad*—the *asp*—the *serpent*—that would have shared my bed but for you! You are my sister, Otehewa—my sister; and so will I ever love and bless thee!"

Now the Indian maiden wept such tears as she had not wept before for years; and from that moment her life was devoted to the benefit of the noble, generous being whom she called mistress.

CHAPTER XXII.

SOMETHING NOT LOOKED FOR.

On the following morning Marl Laroon was awakened by feeling some one shaking him by the shoulder. He opened his dull, leaden eyes, and saw Otehewa standing over him.

"Come, my master," she cried, "you have slept long enough."

The pirate saw the bright sunlight shining in through the windows, and he slowly arose to his feet. It was some time before he could comprehend what had passed, but at length the scenes of the night before came to his mind, and he started and gazed wildly into the Indian girl's face.

"Otehewa, I have a wife!"

"Yes, sir," returned the girl, looking calmly into his face. "Don't you remember—you were married to Mary last night?"

"I do remember. But have I slept here all night?"

"Yes, sir. You told me to go up with your bride, and then come down for you. I did so, but I could not awaken you."

"Was I drunk again?"

"I feared so at the time."

"Accursed fool that I was!" muttered the pirate, in anger with himself alone. "I resolved that I would not drink much last night. Did I drink much?"

Now Otehewa knew just where to take the

man, for she had seen him helped to bed so many times after his carousals, and had also heard him talk the next morning, that she knew he never remembered anything that transpired after he had become intoxicated on the previous evening.

"You drank a great deal of wine, sir," she answered; "and you know 'twas the strongest kind."

"Fool! dolt! idiot! But why didn't they put me to bed?"

"Because you sent them all off but me. Don't you remember that?"

"Partly."

"And don't you remember of telling me to put that cushion under your head and let you lie?"

"No. I must have been very drunk. But where is Mary—my wife?"

"She has not arisen yet."

"Get me some wine. My head feels wretchedly."

Otehewa went to get him wine, and while she was gone he cursed and swore at himself stoutly. She brought it to him, and when he had drunk a cupful he turned and left the room without noticing Hagar, who yet slept upon the floor, but whom the Indian girl quickly awakened. The old hag was much surprised when she found how

she had slept, but Otehewa did not wait to hear her wonderments.

In half an hour after this breakfast was served, and Marl sent for his wife to come down. Mary refused at first, but Otehewa told her she must. "And," she added, "you must not show one angry look, nor speak one bad word. Keep the pirate on good terms with you, and if help comes not to-day, I will fix your oppressor the same as he was last night. He shall take his night's rest in his tea."

At length Mary went down, and at the door of the eating-room she found her husband waiting for her. Her first impulse was to shrink away, but she remembered her promise to Otehewa, and she gave the pirate her hand. At that moment she felt a strange degree of strength come to her soul. Perhaps her hope had overcome her fear. She had been a wife one long, dark, cheerless night, and yet the angel of mercy had answered her prayer. She saw Otehewa standing by her, and when she saw how calm that noble girl looked it gave calmness to herself. She allowed Laroon to lead her to a seat, and then sit down by her side, and yet she did not even shudder. He made all sorts of excuses for not having joined her as he should have done, but she made no reply to this.

The meal was finished—the buccaneer and his bride had eaten alone, while Otehewa waited upon them; and Laroon was upon the point of rising, when the door was opened, and Paul entered the apartment. But he was not alone, for close behind him came James Fox!

Let us go back to the brig and follow the youth to his present position in that eating-room.

Early in the morning Buffo Burnington came down from the masthead, where he had been for over an hour, and sought the young surgeon, and informed him that he must go back to the castle.

"Ask no questions," said Buffo, "but come with me at once. There are a score of men, or more in the woods, and they will go with us. Come, if you would save Mary, come."

Paul was bewildered, but that was enough, and he prepared himself quickly. The boat was manned with our hero's own crew, the same four whom he used to take with him, and then they set off. Half-way up the river they pulled in to the shore, and having landed, Buffo and Paul told the boatmen that they might return to the brig when they pleased, and tell the captain's

crew to come up at sunset. After this our hero and Burnington struck off towards another path which led to the castle, and when he reached it Paul was not a little astonished at meeting a company of thirty armed men—all of them Spanish soldiers, and one of them in the splendid undress of an infantry colonel, to whom the youth was introduced.

"Now," said Buffo, speaking to Paul, "you lead these men to the back of the small wooded hill by the castle. I must go and call Mr. Fox, who lies in waiting close at hand, and I may keep on up to Garonne's. If I do conclude to keep on, Fox will join you and proceed at once to the castle, and I shall join you there in season for the denouement."

As Burnington thus spoke he started off by a narrow cross path, and Paul turned to Colonel Tafalla, remarking as he did so:

"Do you understand all this, sir?"

"Perfectly," replied the officer. "Lead us on."

There was a promptness and decision about the look and tone of the man which forbade Paul to ask questions, and he at once started on his way. In just about one hour he reached the back of the hill, which lay only a few rods from the castle wall, and here, in less than ten minutes, they were joined by James Fox. The old gentleman shook the youth warmly by the hand, and then proposed that they should start at once for the castle. It happened very fortunately that all the men who lived in the cots without the walls had gone off to their work upon the other side of the river, where they were engaged in gathering cochineal, so the party approached the main building without alarm, and even reached the postern without being discovered.

This postern was often left unlocked in the daytime, and it happened to be so now, so Paul opened it and passed in. There were some dozen men—male slaves—lounging about the buildings in that part of the yard, but they gave no alarm, for they saw Paul first, and hence supposed of course all was right. Then when they came to be threatened with death by the soldiers if they made any noise, they dared give no warning, and all was so far safe. After this Paul and the old gentleman who had been here before, left the colonel and his men, and proceeded at once to seek Marl Laroon, and with what success we have seen.

The pirate started up when he saw the youth; and when his eye also rested upon the old gen-

tieman whom he had worked so hard to get out of the way, he trembled and turned pale. But he was not long without his speech.

"What do you here, sir?" he asked of Paul, with a flashing eye.

"I came at the command of another," answered the youth.

"And who shall command here beside me?" proudly and defiantly cried the pirate captain.

"Leave the house, both of you—and you, my young gentleman, will go back at the brig at once. I like not that my first hours of wedded life should be thus broken in upon."

"Wedded!" exclaimed the youth, turning pale as death, and grasping the back of a chair for support.

"Did you say, wedded?" asked Fox, in a shrill whisper.

"Ay," answered Laroon, with a demoniac smile. "This sweet girl was made my lawful wife last evening. It seems to astonish you."

"Lost! Lost!" gasped Paul, sinking down into a chair and covering his face; and at the same time the eyes of James Fox seemed starting from his head.

"No, no, Paul," cried Mary, forgetting all else but her loved one's agony, and rushing to his side. "No, no!" she repeated, flinging her arms about his neck, "I am not lost! Look up, look up. Last night a foul mockery was said here against my will, and the base priest pronounced me *wife*! But he has not laid even a hand upon me. From the moment that those words were pronounced which falsely called me wife until I came to this table this morning, Marl Laroon has not seen me! No, no, Paul—a kind angel has guarded me, and never breathed there mortal more free from stain than I! O, God knows not yet has the curse fallen upon me!"

With one low cry of joy our hero wound his arms about the form of the gentle maiden and drew her upon his bosom, while the hands of the old man were instinctively clasped and raised towards heaven. But all this did not seem to suit Marl Laroon. He raised his clenched fists and brought them down upon the table with such force that the dishes leaped again.

"Now by the holy mother!" he cried, "I'll know who rules here, and you shall know the fate of those who tread in my way! What ho! slaves! Here, I say! Here!"

The door was quickly opened, and a defiant smile had already begun to work upon the pirate's

face, but it passed away immediately, for those were not his slaves who entered; they were a Spanish colonel and a score of soldiers!

"Take that man!" uttered Fox, pointing to Laroon as he spoke.

There was a short struggle, and a few oaths, and then the buccaneer was a bound prisoner.

"Now, Marl Laroon," pronounced the old man, "your race has come to its end! You know me, I think?"

He gazed fixedly into the pirate's face as he spoke, and the bold, bad man cowered and trembled. He did know who he was that spoke to him, and he revealed the fact in words:

"Ay," he hissed, standing now at ease, while his brow grew black as night with hate and deadly vengeance. "I do know ye, Stephen Humphrey! But I am not gone yet. You must not think of triumph while I live!"

"The less you think of life, my dear sir, the less you'll feel of disappointment when the hangman takes you," quietly remarked the colonel.

There was something in the very calm, sober quietness of that remark which carried an ice-bolt to the pirate's heart.

"Stephen Humphrey?" uttered Paul, as soon as he could command his speech, at the same time letting go his hold upon Mary and turning towards the old gentleman.

"Yes, Paul," returned he whom we have known as James Fox. "I am Stephen Humphrey. Do you remember the name?"

"Sir Stephen?"

"Yes."

"Uncle Stephen?"

"Yes," answered the old man, with a smile.

"And I lived with you when I was a child?"

"Yes."

"And Mary?" whispered the youth, trembling violently.

"Can she not guess?" uttered the baronet, extending his arms towards her, while a strange look overspread his features.

The maiden tottered forward and sank upon his bosom. She gazed up into his face, and in a very low whisper she murmured: "*Father!*"

Sir Stephen only said "Yes," and then fell to weeping.

"But you are not my father!" cried Paul.

"No, nor am I any relation, save such as my solemn pledge, given to your dying father, and my love, may make."

Quickly the youth clasped his hands and raised them towards heaven.

"O, great God, I thank thee!" he ejaculated, with all the fervency of his soul.

Sir Stephen looked on with surprise.

"What?" he uttered. "Are you thankful that you are no son of mine?"

"Ay," quickly returned Paul. "Marl Laroon told me, a short time since, that Mary was my own sister; and from that moment my heart lost all its joy. I could love a sister, sir; but, O, for such a sister I must have given up my very soul—my life of love and joy!"

"Ah, I understand you now," said the baronet, with a beaming smile. "But fear no more, Paul, for you shall not lose your love."

"She's mine, body and soul!" hissed the pirate. "Believe her not. She is my wife, and as such I claim her. She lies when she says she

saw me not last night, for well she knows I shared her bed!"

"Out upon thee, monster!" at this moment cried Otehewa, starting forward, and regarding the pirate with flashing eyes. "Into the first cup of wine you drank last night, I put an opiate that would have placed four such men as you into a sleep of hours. I laid your head upon a cushion, and left you sleeping side by side with Hagar, and then I went back to my mistress, and slept where you meant to have slept. Had I not aroused you, you would have yet slept on upon your hard, cold bed."

Quick as thought the pirate darted towards the Indian girl, but she slipped easily from his way, and soon afterwards he was seized again.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CONCLUSION.

By this time Mary and Paul had both become calm, and passing his daughter over to the youth's keeping, Sir Stephen confronted the bound villain.

"Marl Laroon," he said, "I always knew you had a hard heart, but I never knew what a villain you were until you stole my children from me. For years after that dark day when you thus robbed me, I could gain no clue to your whereabouts, but at length, while at Jamaica, I heard of the fearful depredations of the Scourge of the Antilles, and I heard your name mentioned as her captain, and sometimes Marl Laroon was but the incarnation of that Scourge. I learned that you had a haunt at Tobago. I then found Buffo Burnington, and to him I gave the task of hunting you up. You know how he has succeeded. He joined you, and when he felt sure that my child was in this place, he wrote a letter to the governor of Caraccas, informing him of the facts. It was at the contrivance of him, too, that he and your party of horse hunters were apprehended. And now, Paul," continued the old man, turning to where the youth and maiden stood, "you know why Burnington did not want you to escape as you had planned to do?"

"Ay," answered Paul, fervently. "I see it all now; but I knew not then how noble he was."

"Noble?" cried Laroon, gnashing his teeth. "O, the traitor! Let me but set eyes upon him once again!"

"And what will you do?" asked Sir Stephen, with a strange smile.

"I'll have his life!" hissed the pirate.

For a moment the baronet regarded Laroon with a curious look, and then he placed his hand within the breast of his frock, and took from thence a curiously contrived boot, within the leg of which there was a firm socket for a small-sized foot, such as the baronet possessed, while the apparent foot of the boot was of solid cork. This he put upon his right foot, thus making his left leg appear some inches shorter than its mate. Sir Stephen's next movement was to take from his hat a wig of red, crispy hair, and put it upon his head. Next he pressed his fingers about the socket of his left eye, and that eye, being of crystal glass, fell out into his hand. Then the strange man took a box from his pocket, from which he drew a sponge, and having passed this several times over his face, and particularly about the eyeless socket, he turned towards the pirate captain and smiled.

The mystery was solved! There stood Buffo Burnington, save in mere dress! The metamorphosis seemed even now impossible, for the transformation was complete. Hardly a feature of

the baronet seemed left; and yet Otehewa had seen it all at her first examination of Buffo.

"The eye puzzled me at first," she explained to Mary, afterwards; "but when I came to remember the strange look of Mr. Fox's eyes, and called to mind the fact that the more he turned them sideways, the more marked was the peculiarity, I knew that one of them was artificial."

"Yes," explained Sir Stephen, "I lost my left eye seven years ago while hunting stags. In my hot, blind haste, I rode full upon a tree and a dry twig entered my eye."

But how did Marl Laroon receive this astounding development? At first he seemed hardly to credit the evidence of his own senses, but soon the whole truth was open to him, and for a few moments his head sank upon his breast. When he looked up his anger had assumed a dejected cast, for he saw that at every point he was met beyond the power of resistance.

"O," he muttered, "if Warda had done his work, I had been free from this accursed trap."

"You should have been more careful how you did your work," said the baronet. "Your whole plan of that night, when you stole into my room and looked upon the scar you gave me so many years ago, was overseen and overheard."

"Death and furies!" howled the pirate. Instinctively his eye rested upon Otehewa.

"Ay," the Indian girl said, looking him full in the face, "I was awake that night, and I heard your offer of my body and soul to Warda!"

This was too much for the iron spirit of the pirate chieftain. To find that he had been but the mere tool of an old man and a poor Indian slave—and that, too, while he thought himself carrying all before him at his will—struck him so near the heart that he sank back upon a chair and bowed his head.

"Now, Marl Laroon," spoke Sir Stephen, in a sad tone, "we are about to part to meet no more on earth. For all that you have done against me and mine, I freely forgive you, for I now receive back all that I have lost, and I find no harm is done to it, since I know that the souls of these two children are as pure as anything of earth can be. Yes, Marl, with my whole heart do I forgive you; but I cannot save you, for the laws you have so long outraged, and the blood you have so cruelly spilled, call for justice! God grant that you may repent ere you die, and may he—your Father in heaven—forgive you as I do!"

As he ceased speaking he made a sign to the

colonel, and Marl Laroon was led from the room. The pirate stopped as he reached the door, and turned back. His eye rested upon Mary, and a strange look of sadness stole over his features. Something seemed struggling within him for utterance. But in a moment more he saw Paul, and Sir Stephen, and Otehewa—and the whole of his momentary emotion ended in a curse!

Those in that room whom he had so deeply wronged never saw him again! He was conveyed to Caraccas, and his whole crew, save the four boatmen who had brought Paul up in the morning, were taken with him. There he and they were tried for piracy, condemned, and executed under the laws of Spain. Of these four boatmen three made their escape, but Billy Mason came up to the castle, and Sir Stephen gave him liberty and protection, for he knew that the youth had been taken when a boy by Laroon, and had ever since remained on board the pirate's vessel from compulsion.

* * * * *
Of course both Paul and Mary were anxious to know the secret of all that had transpired, and Sir Stephen, now himself in looks again, spoke as follows:

"Marl Laroon, whose real name is Delaney, loved your mother, Paul, but she would not marry him. She found that he was a bad youth, and she left him, and then married with George Lattimore, a warm friend of mine. It was through my instrumentality that this latter match was brought about, for I loved Sir George and I knew that Helen Laroon would make him a most excellent wife. Helen was an orphan, worth some ten thousand pounds, and I leave you to guess whether this latter item had any influence over Marl. But I introduced Lattimore to the maiden, and in a few months they were married, and from that moment Marl Delaney swore vengeance. He went away to sea; and while he was gone you were born; and while you were yet an infant your mother died. Two years after that your father died. On his death-bed he placed his boy in my hands, and with him forty thousand pounds to be kept for that boy's use. Your money is safe, Paul, and has more than doubled now.

"When you had been with me a short time my own child was born—my little Mary here—and all seemed bright for a while; but soon a cloud came. My sweet wife died, and I was left alone with the children, for the gentle boy

had won upon my love, and in my heart he found the place of a son. Two years passed away, and my wounds were healed, when Marl came back. He had now taken a new name—calling himself by the name of the girl he had tried to win. He met me on the highway near my house, and accused me of having stolen his love from him. I told him all I had done, and also why I had done it. I told him of his character, his dissipation, and so on, and in a moment of wrath he drew a knife and sprang upon me. He struck me in the shoulder, and cut a gash the whole width of my bosom, but the wound was not dangerous. This was in the spring. In the following autumn he came to my house in the morning, and by the help of an old woman whom he bribed, he got the children away. I knew it not until night, for I was not at home. I remember the day well, it was a dark, wet, dismal day, and that night, after I had searched every nook and corner in vain, I sank down in utter despair. On the following morning one of my men brought me a piece of paper which had been found stuck into one of the crevices of my carriage. It was a scrawl from Marl Laroon, and simply informed me that he had my own child, which he should keep, out of revenge, and that the boy he took as his own, it being the child of one who was by right his.

"Of course I did all I could, but I could gain no clue to my lost children, save to trace them to Bristol. Years after that I was in Jamaica, and there I heard of Laroon, as you have already heard me tell. The rest you know. I have suffered much, more than you can ever know, but all is bright now. Hereafter God shall hear thanksgiving with my prayers."

For some time after the baronet had closed his narrative there was a profound silence. Paul was the first to speak:

"And my name is Lattimore?" he said.

"Yes," answered Sir Stephen.

"And you like the name?" resumed the youth, tremulously.

"Certainly. But why do you ask?"

"I'll tell you, my noble, generous friend," uttered Paul, in a sort of hushed tone. "You must be aware of the feelings which exist between your daughter and myself?"

"Ah, I see," cried Sir Stephen, with a beaming smile. "You would have Mary take your name, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"If she will consent, I assure you I shall be

most happy to see it done. Yes, my noble boy, you shall be my son after all."

* * * * *

Within a week the Spanish authorities at Caraccas had taken possession of the pirate's valuable estate on Silver River, and Sir Stephen Humphrey had gone to the city with his friends. Of course the faithful Oteweha accompanied her loved mistress, and Billy Mason went with Paul.

When another spring opened its gifts of sunshine and flowers upon the soil of "Merrie England," the great house at Humphrey Park, in Northamptonshire, was alive with joyous spirits. Sir Stephen was young again, and Paul and Mary were made one for life upon the spot, and amid the scenes, where their earliest childhood was spent.

And young Mason, who had ever proved himself a noble, faithful fellow, whispered a strange question into Oteweha's ear. She blushed, and hung down her head, and then told him to go to her mistress. Mary smiled at his request, and sent him to her husband. Paul smiled, too, but his answer was favorable, and Billy and Oteweha were married, and if they had one thought in their souls that could possibly rival their own mutual love for each other, it was the love and devotion they ever felt for their noble young master and mistress.

It was not until after he was married that young Mason knew of the wealth he had gained with his noble-souled young wife. His eyes opened wide, and he was long in realizing that he was the master of more than an hundred thousand pounds! But so it was, for Oteweha's diamonds had yielded her that amount under the careful negotiations of Sir Stephen. The gems belonging to our hero and his bride were disposed of at the same time, and yielded in the same proportion.

With respect to Oteweha, we will only add, that the golden key she possessed opened the door of the best society, and her dark skin was little noticed, even by those who did not fully know how bright and pure was her soul.

The summer came and passed, and autumn followed with its withering touch upon all without, but within the home where dwelt our friends the cloud and storm never came. All there was peace and joy, experienced by souls that had learned the value of God's blessings through lessons of bitter adversity. And the day of peace was more bright from its contrast with the night of anguish which had passed away.

THE
END.

THE TWIN DAGUERREOTYPES.

BY EDWIN G. MERVIN.

A WILD but beautiful interval lies before us upon the head waters of the Mokelumne, dotted here and there as far as the eye can reach with white tents, on which the California sun is shining with fervid heat; and rude looking men are to be seen gathered in groups beneath the scattered trees, or at the doors of the tents, discussing the news of the day, the mining prospects, wild tales of Indian trails and murders, grizzly bears and panthers, and all the dangers of camp life generally; while in the distance, on the banks of the river, might be seen others, digging up the black earth and washing out the rich gold dust, without regard to the day which is the Sabbath, here too often desecrated by the worship of mammon, or idols of silver and gold, by men who had in their far off homes been brought up to revere it as a holy day of rest, set apart by the great Ruler of all the earth for the best good of all the human race.

We will enter one pleasantly located tent and see how its inmates are passing the time; and we must not be shocked if we find them rather gay and thoughtless. They are four in number, all good looking young men, as far as nature

was concerned, and art had had very little to do with the appearance of one of them, who was lounging upon a bunk in a corner in all the luxury of dirt and river mud. The second, a tall, dark, but fine looking fellow, was engaged in the laudable work of clearing away the morning meal, and setting the pots and pans in order for another; a duty each in turn had to perform. He was arrayed in a coarse, dirty, blue jean frock—the usual working dress of a miner; though there was something in his air and appearance that bespoke the gentleman.

The third, a jolly devil-may-care sort of fellow, is up and dressed in his best—marching around the tent, poking fun at all the rest. While the fourth, a genteel, light complexioned young gentleman, is overhauling his trunk, and taking out various nameless articles to get at his shaving apparatus—which he then proceeds to use before a stuck up bit of looking glass.

"What a rare joke it would be, boys, if we could only get Howe's razor and sink it in the Mokelumne," said No. 3, glancing at No. 4. "I'll bet we all nursing big California beards in this fashion, while he, at least

every week, is primming off as daintily as if he was going to see his lady love, or expected her here to see him."

"Well, I don't want to frighten the Indians, or tempt the mosquitoes by a greasy beard like yours," said Howe.

"Ay, but the mosquitoes can't bite through that, or a good thick coating of river mud," said No. 1, yawning and stretching out his soiled limbs. "It's certainly a great protection against varmints."

"Well, you are welcome to it, Wallace," said Howe, disdainfully, "but for my part, I don't like the feeling, and when the Sabbath comes, I like to get up some of the old home feeling of cleanliness, if I can't anything better, and so does Dorn, and Belden, I believe, if you don't."

"Well, I'll confess to being the laziest of the lot, and especially Sunday," said Wallace, good naturedly; "but there, take care of your treasures, Howe," said he, pointing to Belden, who had discovered and snatched up a daguerreotype from among Howe's things, and was hurriedly displaying it to the admiring Dorn.

Howe dropped his razor and hastened to secure the treasure which he had so carelessly exposed to the gaze of his rude companions.

"Keep off, Howe, keep off! what do you want of my lady love's picture?" said Belden, laughing and keeping out of Howe's reach.

"Not your lady love, but Howe's," said Wallace; "come, let me see it?"

"Neither yours nor mine," said Howe, angrily, grasping after the picture.

"Aint it now, upon your honor, Howe?" said Dorn, eagerly.

"It's none of your business at any rate," said the angry Howe, "and the proud original would feel disgraced to have her image the sport of such rude fellows as you."

"As if she wouldn't think us all fine fellows, if she could see us," said Dorn, laughingly. "And now I think of it, she's just the girl I shall marry when I go back to civilized life."

"She'd as soon marry a grizzly bear, or wild Indian, as such a rough, boisterous fellow as you, Dorn," said Howe, contemptuously.

"I'll bet you a cool thousand that she would, if she could get a chance," said Dorn, very seriously.

"And I'll bet you five thousand that she'd give you the mitten in a trice."

"Done! I'll accept the bet; if, when I see her, I like her as well as I do her picture."

"And Belden and I are the witnesses," said Wallace, laughing, as the scufflers rolled down on the ground.

"There, where's the plaguy thing gone to!" exclaimed Belden, rising and rubbing his shins. "It slipped through my fingers somehow."

"You've hid it, you rascal," said Howe, angrily.

"No, I have not, but I guess that lazy Wallace has got it."

"No," said he, gleefully, "but I imagine it will turn up somewhere in these diggings."

Search was now made over the tent by the three scufflers—trunks and boxes, spades and pickaxes, pots and pans were all overturned but without finding the missing treasure.

"I wouldn't have my sister know that I had lost her picture in such a way, for no money," said Howe, throwing himself down on the ground, after his fruitless search was over, deeply chagrined.

"Tell me now, was it really your sister's picture?" said Dorn, seriously.

"Yes, Dorn, and I prize it far higher than any of your lady loves."

"Then I shall some day win the bet," said Dorn, smiling, "and then you'll not only have to pay it, but own me for a brother in the bargain."

"Well, I defy you to win it, though I will confess she might find worse ones," said Howe, holding out his hand to Dorn, while his brow became more serene; for Dorn was the only one he did not suspect of secreting the treasure, while Dorn—sly fellow—was the only one who knew where it was; and for hours that day, he was out upon a solitary ramble over the hills, ever and anon gazing upon the beautiful face that ever after made one of the images in his dreams.

Not long afterwards, Dorn having business in San Francisco, took the daguerreotype down with him, and had it twice duplicated, with one of himself, which he had had taken on his way from New England, before he had grown the big California goatee. He then had one of them set in a rich case made on purpose, enclosed a beautiful ring of California pearl and gold, with "How do you like me," engraved on the inside for a motto, and sent it on to Boston by a trusty friend, and from thence by mail to Miss Caroline Howe of Saranaco, whose name he had before ascertained from her unsuspecting brother.

A few days after Dorn's return to the Mokelumne, the lost daguerreotype was found behind

Wallace's bunk to the great joy of its owner, who had no suspicions of the truth.

More than a year has passed away, and the scene now opens in the pleasant village of Saranaco, which is all in a bustle on the occasion of a great party given in honor of the joyful return of Hubert Winslow, the old squire's son from California.

The old fashioned brown house, with its gambler roof, large rooms and huge fireplaces, was all aglow with light and beauty, and graceful forms, bright eyes, and happy faces were flitting from room to room, mingling in scenes of mirth and gaiety; while the varied tones fell upon some listening ears like remembered music, while to others there are some discordant notes to spoil the harmony. Presently Mr. Hubert Winslow, the fine young gentleman for whom the entertainment was got up, is called out, but returns soon after with a young man of—to say the least—striking personal appearance, whom he presents to the company in the big parlor, as Mr. Darlington. The stranger was rather tall and dignified, with brilliant black eyes and hair, a broad, high forehead, somewhat darkened by a tropical sun, and a Roman nose, while all his visible features were set off by a rather long goatee beard, of raven blackness.

"Who in the world is that Mr. Darlington, Grace?" said one very fair and beautiful belle to another by her side, who was scarcely less so.

"O, he is a Boston gentleman who came home from California in the Golden Gate with Hubert, and entertained him very agreeably while he remained in the city," said Grace Winslow, "and it's really lucky that he has come down this evening for his promised visit, as we can now show him the big and little lions of Saranaco."

"Of which you are one of the first, I imagine," said the lady, "or at least one of its greatest attractions. But how do you like the gentleman's looks, Grace?" said she, gazing on him with interest.

"O you know such dark, fierce, bandit-looking fellows are my abomination—because I'm so dark myself, I suppose, but you always admire them, and I've no doubt he'll be lovely in your eyes, and who knows but what you may captivate him, Carrie."

"Sure enough, Grace, and at any rate I can but try," said Carrie, laughing; "and just think, what a profitable speculation it would be, if he could be caught; for one would never

again need to buy a shoe brush, or duster, if they owned that formidable goatee."

"I'll remember that if you do fancy him," said Grace, laughing, "but now for sober faces, they're coming this way."

Hubert approached and presented the stranger to his sister, then, as a matter of course to Miss Howe, the lady by her side.

Grace could hardly keep her countenance, but the merry Caroline looked sober as a judge for some time after she met the stranger's first, earnest, admiring glance; though she thawed out, when the conversation grew animated and California became the theme of discourse.

"In what part of California have you resided, sir?" she at last ventured to say.

"Most of the time in San Francisco," said the gentleman, in a deep, rich tone; "but I spent some months in the gold diggings on the Mokelumne."

"Indeed!" said Miss Howe with animation; "why I have a brother in that very place—perhaps you have seen him?"

"Possibly! Let me see—I think I knew one gentleman of your name, there. He was of rather small stature, light complexion, with brown, curling hair, and a Roman cast of features."

"O, it was him without a doubt; but did you see much of him?"

"Why, yes, I saw him frequently, but had no very intimate acquaintance with him. People are too busy on the Mokelumne to form many such," said he, smiling.

Hubert Winslow and his sister were soon called off to attend to other guests, and Carrie and Mr. Darlington were soon deep in the mysteries of California and sea voyages; while the music was beginning to tune up, in the adjoining room, and the gentlemen were looking up partners for a dance, some of them looking rather surlily at the stranger's appropriation of one of their most coveted partners.

"Come, Darlington, you are a dancer," said Hubert, coming round to him, "and I'll give you a choice of a dozen girls at least, if you will join us."

"Any hopes of winning that shoe brush?" whispered Grace in Caroline's ear, just as she was preparing to go home that night.

"Not the least, Grace," said Carrie, blushing; "but why will you remember that foolish speech of mine?"

"Because I want something to tease you about, in return for your joking me so often."

"Well, don't expose me if I happen to change my mind," said Grace, laughing, and trying to look wise.

The gossips soon took it for granted that Grace had found a lover in Paul Darlington, and Carrie Howe began to feel some strange misgivings not only with regard to the reports, but also of her own feelings.

Darlington remained several weeks in the neighborhood, during which time Carrie had seen him almost every day, either at home or some where else, and notwithstanding the goatee, she had found a fascination in his society she had never felt in any other. And when he at last left Saranaco, she began to feel as if all the world around her was a dreary blank; nor did it lessen the bitterness of her feelings to hear that Grace, after his departure, was receiving letters with the Boston post-mark. Pride, however, taught her to cloak her disappointment by a mask of gaiety, so that no one but the keen-sighted Grace had a suspicion of the truth.

Some weeks after Darlington left, Carrie went out one fine June day to hunt for strawberries in the fields back of her father's house, and perhaps nurse her gloomy fancies; and finding a rock overshadowed by a large tree, she sat down, and taking out the twin daguerreotype she had received so mysteriously the year before, which she happened to have in her pocket, she gazed upon it for some time with singular feelings.

"Men say that a woman's heart is changeable," she said to herself, "and I begin to think they speak truth, for not three months since I imagined I loved this beautiful image better than any living ones I had ever seen; but now—"

She turned, as a slight rustling noise met her ear, and there was Darlington peering over her shoulder with a curious expression at the daguerreotype. Mortified, ashamed and somewhat angry withal, to be thus caught by him, Carrie started up with her face all in a glow, while the picture fell from her trembling hand.

"I hope you will excuse my intrusion, Miss Howe," said he, taking her hand, "and not think me impertinent, if I ask you whose image this is," as he stooped and took up the picture.

"I do not even know myself," said Carrie, in an embarrassed tone.

"Not know when it is your own beautiful image that is thus mated?"

"No, I do not, however impossible it may appear," said Carrie, earnestly. "It came to me through the mail, and how my face was obtained for it, I cannot imagine, or what name the other bears."

"May I believe this, Miss Howe?" said he, questioningly. "Since I first saw you, I have worn your image in my heart, and I had hoped to find a place for mine in yours. Must I be disappointed? O tell me, is it already pre-occupied?"

"Not with a reality," said Carrie, in a low, trembling tone. "That I have bestowed many thoughts upon that fictitious image, I will not deny—but upon no living man more than—than yourself."

"Thanks for the sweet confession that you have thought of me, but tell me, dear Carrie that you do and will return my deep, tender love for you, and that you will soon become my best earthly friend and companion," said he.

That the low toned reply was satisfactory, we should judge, by the happy glow that illumined his face, like a sudden gleam of sunshine on a cloudy day, though it slightly faded, as he said:

"But will not this other image—pointing to the picture—sometimes intrude on our future felicity?"

"No, for it has no voice or soul to awaken tender feelings. But shall I tell you that I have often thought there was a strong resemblance between it and you," said she, smiling.

"Indeed! but in what particular—sit down and tell me."

"O something about the eyes, brow and hair."

"I'm afraid I shall be jealous of that picture, if I don't very soon obtain one of its representation for my own. Say, dearest Carrie, shall it not be as I wish? Will you not very soon be my bride?"

"Perhaps not; for I should be afraid of a jealous husband," said Carrie, with some of her old coquettish archness, "and besides, what is to become of my friend, Grace Winslow, to whom everybody has engaged you for a long time."

"Ah, so you are jealous, too, and now we are even."

"No, not now, but that I have been a little, I won't deny."

"Well, you have really had no reason for it, as some correspondence we have had, will show you some day. Grace has been not only my best friend, but yours too, dear Carrie."

"I am very willing to believe it, and not for

my own sake alone—for my brother really loves Grace, as I think he will tell her some day, if he lives to come home, and I once believed it was returned."

"I think you are right, there, for I have guessed as much myself, from the drift of her inquiries; but when do you expect him home?"

"O he writes that he will be at home next month."

"Well, then, let us get up a little surprise for him when he does come. What now could be better than a wedding party to welcome him home. Shall we not have one, dear Carrie?" said he, coaxingly.

"O, not so soon as that!" said she, looking down and blushing.

"But why not? If we love each other, shall we not be much happier in having the privilege of always being near each other?" said he.

"Perhaps so," said the blushing Carrie; "but I cannot be ready so soon as that, and be decently dressed."

"O, that's just no reason at all," said he, smiling. "Go down to Boston with me, or your father, and I'll engage to get you ready in a day or two. So now for some more weighty reason."

"Well, I've a good many. Our acquaintance has been rather short, and a year I think will be quite soon enough."

"A year! Don't for pity's sake ask me to wait a year. I shall go back to California, and die of despair before the time is up, if you do. If you love me, do be a little reasonable, for I'll buy any thing or do anything to please you, if you'll only name an early day."

"Will you?" said Carrie, with a smile.

"Yes, anything reasonable or unreasonable."

"Well, a queer fancy has just come into my head. Would you think me a Delilah, and be offended, if I should ask you to take off that disagreeable California goatee of yours?" said she, laughing.

"Well, that certainly would be a great sacrifice—but are you quite sure you could admire me without it?"

"O yes, much more than at present."

"Then off it comes the day we are wed; but I've a reason for wearing it till then," said he, with a mysterious look and smile.

Darlington did finally succeed in persuading Miss Caroline to be married, on the day of her brother's return, and as the match was a pleasing one to her family, every preparation was

made, and the wedding guests all invited, when that day was fully ascertained.

The morning train brought Darlington, still arrayed in his goatee, at which Miss Caroline cast sundry significant glances, though she said nothing—all of which he answered by a smile. But when he came from his room that evening, arrayed for the bridal, the glory had departed from—his chin, and Carrie fairly started with surprise as he entered the chamber, for the living image of the twin daguerreotype was before her.

"Well, dearest Caroline, how do you like me?" said he, pointing to the beautiful pearl ring on her finger, and smiling gaily.

"I've a great mind to say I don't like you at all," said Carrie, when she got over her surprise. "But how in the name of wonder have you managed to deceive me so?"

"No deception at all, except in your own imagination," said he, laughing.

"Well, I wouldn't have believed so slight a thing could have made such a transformation. But tell me, now, how did you get my image for that picture?"

"O I'll tell you all about it before the evening is over, but not now."

"But why not now?"

"O I want to know first whether you really redeem your promise about those precious whiskers, Carrie," said he, laughing.

"What's all this sparring about," said Grace, coming in at that moment.

"We'll tell you presently," said Darlington, looking at his watch; "but hasn't Horace come yet, Grace? It's already past the time."

"No," said Grace, blushing; "and I begin to fear I shall be a lonely bridesmaid; for the clergyman and guests have nearly all arrived, and there's no sign of a groomsmen yet."

"Ah, but you are mistaken, Grace," said Carrie, looking towards the door, and then joyfully rushing out to meet her long absent brother.

"Why, Carrie," he exclaimed, after the first warm greetings were over, "how you have surprised me by such a plan of reception as this."

"Got up for your especial amusement, too," said Darlington, coming forward; "but you must present the actors to each other, Carrie," said he.

"Well, then, dear brother, this is the Mr. Darlington I wrote to you about, and this young lady is Miss Grace Winslow—perhaps you recollect her," said she, archly.

"I think I do," said Horace, presenting his

hand to Grace; "and I hope too, she has not forgotten me."

"Everything is in readiness for the ceremony below; are you all ready here?" said a messenger at the door, at this moment.

Carrie and Grace both looked very beautiful in their ethereal white dresses, with sprigs of white blossomed roses in their hair, as they stood up for the ceremony, and they were the envy of more than one of the assembled belles of Saranaco; and the same might be said of the two gentlemen with regard to the beaux; though many wondered why they missed the bridegroom's splendid whiskers.

When the evening was somewhat advanced, and good cheer had opened the hearts and mouths of the company, Horace Howe said to the bride, with whom he was conversing:

"You wrote to me, Carrie, that I should find an old acquaintance in your intended, but somehow I don't seem to recognize him, though I knew two of his name in California."

"Indeed, then we'll have it explained," said Carrie, leading him to where Darlington stood, conversing with Grace and her brother.

"Horace seems to have forgotten your face or acquaintance. I don't know which," said she, smiling—"can't you sharpen his memory, a little?"

"It will need no sharpening, when I demand his five thousand dollar bet of him," said Darlington, in a peculiar tone.

"What bet?" said Horace, with a curious look.

"Why the bet you made on that well-remembered Sunday morning, in our tent upon the Mokelumne, when we had that scuffle about your sister's daguerreotype, and you said she would as soon marry a wild Indian, or grizzly bear, as your humble servant—Paul Dorn Darlington."

"Dorn—Darlington! Do I dream?" exclaimed Horace Howe.

"Not now," said Darlington, smiling.

"But why this change of name?"

"O I took a fancy to be Paul Dorn in Cal-

ifornia, but when I came to Saranaco, to endeavor to win the bet, I didn't wish to sail under false colors."

"Ah, but you did, though!" said Horace, laughing; "and for that reason I shall evade paying it, for Carrie would never have consented to wed you, if she had seen you in that grim bearish goatee."

"There you are mistaken again, I assure you; for I wooed and won her consent to do so in that same beautiful appendage. This is the first evening she has ever seen me without it; and but for the interest it created in my favor, I fear I should never have won the bet; so now it's fairly mine, you see, and you'll own me for a brother, wont you?"

"With all my heart," said Horace, frankly, holding out his hand to him; "but as to the five thousand, I doubt whether you'll find as much among my baggage."

"No matter for that," said Darlington, turning to Carrie, "so long as it has been the means of my finding a more precious treasure."

"But I don't know about the treasures being bought and sold in such a scurvy manner," said Carrie, rather haughtily; "there'll be another voice in the bargain, I imagine."

"O there has been already," said Darlington, drawing Carrie up to his side—"for you mustn't forget what a martyr you've made of me, in sacrificing my pet whiskers, dear Carrie."

"And even that was all a ruse to deceive me a little, and Horace a good deal, till you won the bet," said Carrie, while Grace and Hubert laughed aloud.

"Well, I suppose I must own up, and ask pardon for my offences," said D. "But are you sorry that I have won it, Carrie," said he.

Whether Carrie was sorry or not, then, we are sure she does not look so now; for a happier pair than she and Darlington are seldom to be met with—and the same might be said of Horace and his pretty Grace.

THE END