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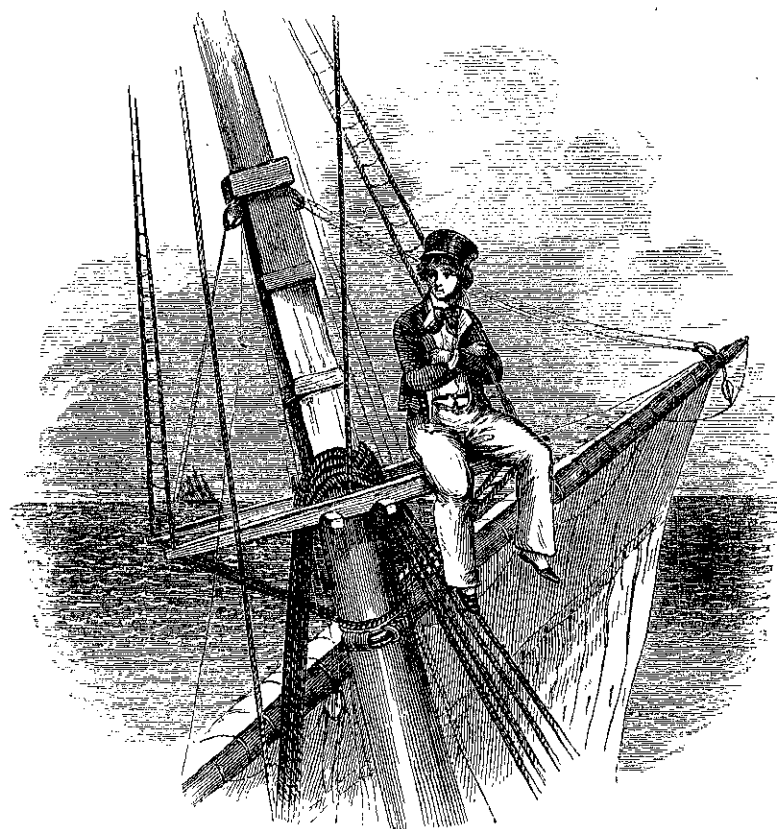
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BY

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VALDEZ, THE PIRATE.

CHAPTER I.

*The Watchers—Hope deferred—The Stranger—News of the
Absent One.*

ONE bright and lovely afternoon, in the beginning of autumn, a lady accompanied by a beautiful bright-faced boy, might have been distinguished among the gay crowd that loitered along those commanding heights where Brooklyn sits enthroned like a proud queen, smiling upon plodding, business-oppressed Gotham on the one hand, and overlooking on the other, the magnificent bay, with its green islands, its cultivated shores, studded with cities and villages, and its blue waters flecked with the "white-winged messengers of commerce," which lie like a vassal at her feet. Even if the fair brow, graceful mien, and dignified carriage of the lady had not attracted attention, still there was something in the earnestness of her manner, the fixed and eager gaze which she bent seaward, and the abstractedness of her whole demeanor, except when recalled to herself by the light prattle of her child, when a smile of ineffable tenderness would irradiate her lovely face, revealing the untold treasures of maternal affection—there was something, we say,

in all this, which distinguished her apart from the crowd, as the anxious watcher, rather than the indifferent loungeur.

The shades of evening were fast closing around them, yet the lady and her son still lingered, though the crowd was dispersing.

"Oh! mother! mother!" exclaimed the little fellow, as the white towering canvas of a ship glanced through the dusky veil of twilight, while she plowed her way up the channel; "see! mother, perhaps papa is in that ship—oh! I hope he is."

"And, so do I, my child, with all my heart; but I fear it is not so. My soul grows sick with disappointment and delay."

"But he will come soon, dear mother; won't he?"

"I trust so, dearest."

"And, oh! won't he bring me so many pretties," exclaimed the boy in the ecstasy of delightful anticipation.

"No doubt, my son; for he loves you well, and indulges you much; but come, we must be going homeward—ah! there comes Betty."

A neat, tidy Irish girl approached the lady in a respectful manner, and addressed to her a few words, which caused her to start.

"A gentleman to see me, did you say, Betty?"

"Yes, shure, Madam."

"Oh! my pa! my pa!" cried the eager child. "I know it's my pa!"

"Is it? is it your master, Betty?" demanded the lady with some hesitation, and much emotion.

"Oh! no, Madam; I shouldn't keep joyful news waiting so long," said the honest-hearted creature, "but it's a strange gentleman shure, who wishes to see yez."

Mrs. Burton, for such was our heroine's name, took her little boy by the hand, and directed her steps towards her home, which was only a few squares off. When she arrived, she found a genteel stranger, of foreigner-like appearance, waiting for her in the parlor.

"Mrs. Burton, I presume?" said he, with a slight accent.

"The same, sir. Whom have I the honor to address?"

"My name is Mendez, madam; a former acquaintance of your husband."

"Pray be seated, Mr. Mendez; Captain Burton is at sea, though I look hourly for his return. He sailed for the West Indies three months ago, and as I have not heard from him for six weeks, I daily expect his arrival."

"I was aware of his absence, madam; and it is in connection with that circumstance, that I visit you," replied the gentleman, with some feeling in his tones.

"You have news of my husband! what of him? Is he well? When did you see him? Where is he? Oh! tell me, sir."

"Calm yourself, lady. He is well; or, at least, he was so, about six weeks ago, when I left him. It is true, there is some embarrassment, which delays his return; but luckily, I have been able to serve him, which but repays a deep debt of gratitude; and all will soon be well."

"Oh! sir, a wife's and mother's thanks be yours. But tell me, what is the matter? What difficulties threaten him: keep me not in suspense."

"You are aware, lady, that your husband possesses the title to large estates in Cuba, through his mother, who was a Spanish woman; and that some part of his object in visiting that island at the present time, was to obtain possession of these, with a view probably to dispose of them; but perhaps you are not aware that there is a conflicting title to the estates, held by a distant connexion of his mother's family—a bad man, ambitious, and avaricious; who possesses much influence with the government at Havana."

"Oh! yes, I knew something of it from my husband, who on this account thought it better perhaps, not to take the title papers, but only carried copies; and left the originals with me."

A dark smile of satisfaction passed over the countenance of the stranger

"That is just it, madam ; your husband's caution has involved him in his present difficulties. The fact that he had only copies, and those not duly authenticated, in his possession, came to the knowledge of his opponent, in the course of a pretended negotiation for a settlement, who at once instituted a suit for possession, and at the same time accused your husband of forgery. Ridiculous as the charge was, the influence of his relative caused him to be thrown into prison, where I found him. In the meantime, the day for the trial of the suit came on, and the hopes of his rival would likely have been realized, since your husband, in his closely-watched confinement, could neither find the means to postpone the trial, nor send for his original titles. It was by accident that I learned these facts, and recognized in your husband my benefactor. A strong, timely effort enabled me to procure a continuance of his suit ; and though I could not obtain his release, his confinement has been rendered easy ; and that there might be no mistake in a matter of such importance, I come myself, as his messenger, for the title papers. You will understand that I have been delayed. Our vessel was obliged, by stress of weather, and injuries, to put into Charleston, where a villain robbed me of everything, even the letter your husband gave me. I learned, in my attempt to recover my effects, enough to convince me that he was an agent of your husband's enemy, and obtaining means from a few who knew me, I hastened on. But, thank Heaven ! I am not too late—I am yet in time to save my friend !"

Mrs. Burton was profuse in her thanks, and eloquent in her gratitude. She solicited the stranger to make her house his home ; which he politely declined, on the ground of the necessity for immediate departure, which would scarcely give him time to transact a little business he had in New York.

"But the title deeds which you need are deposited, with other papers of value, in the bank, and I cannot get them before the morning ; so you cannot refuse to be my guest at least for one night."

"Even that pleasure, my dear madam, I must deny myself. The vessel in which I expect to return, departs to-morrow afternoon. I will call at half past ten in the morning, and receive the documents, as well as your commands for Havana," said Mendez, in whose tone a nice observer might have perceived a shade of bitter disappointment.

"Every thing shall be ready," replied Mrs. Burton, accompanying her guest to the door, "and may Heaven reward your devotion and kindness !"

CHAPTER II.

The Dream—The Title Deeds—An Honest old Jack Tar—Suspensions—The Letter.

Mrs. BURTON retired to her bed that night, thankful and uneasy. The idea of her husband's danger filled her with apprehension and alarm; for she could not but think that the kind stranger who had come so far to serve his friend, had, in mistaken kindness, hidden some part of the truth. Sleep came slowly, and brought little rest with it—vague and startling dreams troubled her, which finally resolved themselves into something like a distinct vision. She saw Mendez and her husband struggling in a death grapple on the edge of a precipice; while she stood by, frozen with horror and unable to move, holding in her hand the black ebony box containing the title deeds, which seemed to be the prize of the contest. Finally, with a shriek, she awoke, and found herself in the darkness and stillness of her own chamber.

The next morning she arose dull, nervous, and unrefreshed. About half past ten, Mendez called; his appearance was cheerful and confident. He had received (so he said) a letter from a friend in Havana, which spoke of her husband as being quite well, but somewhat impatient at his delay; urging, also, his speedy return, as time enough yet remained before the day of trial, though there might be some difficulty in procuring a further continuance, if he should not arrive. This letter was very frankly presented for Mrs. Burton's perusal; and as it was

written in English, and purported to come from an English Merchant in Havana, she hastily glanced it over. The letter, and the manner of Mendez, disarmed the fears and doubts which had arisen from the portentous dreams of the night.

Bearing many messages of love and devotion to her husband, and a request that she might be permitted to join him if his confinement was of longer duration, Mendez departed with the prayers and blessings of Mrs. Burton, and carrying with him, also, the precious documents which he sought.

As the stranger stood waiting a few moments for the boat at Fulton Ferry, he attracted the attention of an individual who had just crossed from New York, and was somewhat startled in his turn, when he noticed the earnest gaze bent upon him. An angry frown gathered for an instant on his brow, which he quickly smoothed away, and sauntered carelessly further along the pier. The person who had thus scanned him and whom he evidently recognized, but by whom he seemed to have no wish in his turn to be known, was an old, honest-looking American sailor, who, if he sought an acquaintance in Mendez, was evidently at fault, and moved along, muttering to himself:

"Blast my eyes, but I should know the cut of that jib. That long-shore rig, howsomever, throws me off my course—and, then, he would hardly dare to cruise in these waters."

Jack Thompson was an honest old sailor, who had been many years in the employ of Captain Burton, to whom he was attached with all the fervor of a rough and manly heart. He had retired from active sea duty upon the salary of an humble but easy situation, procured for him through the kindness of his employer; and one of his sacred ideas of duty was, to visit the Captain once a week—report himself on board, as he called it. Although he knew Captain Burton was absent, yet it made no difference in Jack's notions of duty. The Madam he considered as first mate, and to her, as next in command, Jack made his regular report; on which occasion he always carried with him some little "gimcrack" for the youngster;—that was

Master Henry Burton, of whom he was particularly fond. In a somewhat thoughtful mood the old sailor steered his course towards the Heights of Brooklyn, and brought up, all standing, ere he was well aware of his bearings, at the door of Captain Burton's house. He soon obtained admission, and, having made obeisance to the Madam, he took Master Henry in his arms, who was always delighted to see Jack.

"Why, Thompson, how is this? You have not asked for news of the Captain," said Mrs. Burton, after some minutes had elapsed.

"Beg your pardon, marm; I was conning over something I saw this morning, which still troubles me somewhat," replied Jack thoughtfully.

"In the name of goodness, what was it, Jack? But stop, let me tell you first that I have heard from Captain Burton, and that he is well, though he has been in some trouble."

"Heard from him! how, marm? Did you receive a letter?"

"No," replied Mrs. Burton. "A gentleman, a friend of the Captain's, was here this morning, who left him in Havana in some difficulty, and came all the way here expressly to serve him. He has just left, taking with him papers which Captain Burton requires, and starts for Havana this day to release my husband from his troubles. I wish you had been here a little sooner to have seen him."

"I'll join you in that wish with all my heart, marm," ejaculated the sailor. "But, tell me, did he bring you a letter, or any thing of that sort from the Captain?"

"Why, no; he said he was robbed in Charleston, and lost every thing, even the letter which Captain Burton wrote to me by him."

"False colors, I'm afraid," muttered Jack to himself. "And what sort of a man might he be, marm, if you please? Was he dark-looking, large black eyes, yellow face, and short black whiskers, and dandified dress?"

"The same."

"By the holy Moses, it's him!" exclaimed Jack, convulsively: "for God's sake, marm, you didn't give him any papers could harm the Captain?"

"Why, what means this alarm, Thompson? Anything that could harm the Captain? I gave him title-deeds of vast importance, which he came for, and will take to Captain Burton, to relieve him from embarrassment which he fell under from not having carried them along with him, instead of mere copies."

"Alas! marm," said Jack, shaking his head sadly, "I'm afeard it's been a bad day's work—and the Captain will never see them papers, if they're to get him out of trouble."

"For God's sake! what do you mean, Thompson?" exclaimed the affrighted wife. "You alarm me! Do you know who the man is? Speak!"

"I fear so, marm. I met him going over the ferry, and thought then I knew him. But don't get scared, marm; maybe I am wrong; but I'll know before many hours, or my name's not Jack Thompson. I think you said he sails to-day?"

"This afternoon, he told me, the vessel on which he went, departed for Havana."

"He didn't happen to mention her name, did he?"

"No," said Mrs. Burton.

"Good morning, marm; I must get underweigh at once. Don't be scared, marm; but I must be going."

"Stop! stop! Thompson. Be more explicit. Tell me what danger is to be apprehended—who the stranger is."

"It's no use yet awhile, marm. It may all be a false report; but I'll be back afore the dog-watch sets in. Good bye, marm."

And Jack, without waiting further parley, bolted off, making his way straight for the East River.

The trepidation and alarm of Mrs. Burton was by no means quieted from Jack's visit. A half-brother of Captain Burton's lived in Boston, and to him she immediately wrote, detailing

the whole affair, and begging his advice and assistance. Jack's strange conduct troubled her much, and she was quite put out that he left so unceremoniously, without enlightening her in regard to his suspicions. And yet, the honest fellow thought himself to be acting most wisely in the premises, for he was unwilling to give her unnecessary alarm; and if his suspicions were correct, it was best to endeavor to mend the matter without delay.

While sitting, silent and sad, in her parlor, on the afternoon of the same day, Mrs. Burton was aroused by a ring at the door-bell, and the postman delivered a letter. With eager haste she caught it from the servant, tore off the seal, and found it to be from her husband. It read as follows:

"HAVANA, August 18, —.

"DEAREST WIFE—I have feared much for you, lest my continued silence should have made you unhappy; though I well knew that you would attribute it to the proper cause—the impossibility for me to act otherwise. I have been in some serious difficulty, though, thank Heaven, it is well nigh through with; and I am only remaining now to complete my arrangements with regard to the inheritance of my mother's estate—which I shall eventually secure—when, with the ample competence it will afford, I shall be able to carry out the cherished wish of my heart, and, retiring from my profession—now become so distasteful, since it parts me from my beloved Mary—live hereafter in happiness with my wife and child.

"The nature of the difficulties in which I have been involved, is briefly told. When Antonio Valdez, the relative of my mother, who claims the estate, learned my arrival, he sent a lawyer, with the most liberal proposition of a compromise, which, for the sake of a speedy settlement, I was inclined to accede to. In the confidence of a speedy arrangement, I informed the lawyer that the original of my titles were in the United States; but that I had copies with me, which I exhibited to him.

What was my surprise, a few days after, when, awaiting a visit from Valdez' agent, to see an officer enter my room, and receive notice of a suit on the part of Valdez, and also to be informed, that an information for forgery had been lodged against me—on which I was immediately arrested.

"With the proverbial delay of Spanish justice, I was kept in close confinement for several weeks before I could obtain even a hearing; and have finally been released through the interference of friends who have become my bail. The suit I have managed to delay until I can procure the original titles, the arrival of which will clear up all matters. I have written to my brother in Boston to obtain them from you, and forward them through a safe medium. You will give them *into his own hands*, my dear, for I need not tell you how important is their safety at this time.

"Valdez has left the Island; but as he is supposed to be connected with unlawful commerce, no regard is paid to this; in fact, he is baffled, and will scarcely sustain his suit by any effort.

"My fondest love to our little one, and believe me ever your devoted husband.

"CHARLES BURTON."

CHAPTER III.

Jack Thompson seeks a Confederate—A Sailor Boarding-House—The Jew Isaac—The young Spaniard—Purposes of Revenge, and an Appointment.

WHEN Jack Thompson left the house of Captain Burton, instead of returning to Fulton Ferry, he took his way to Catharine Ferry, and, crossing the river, proceeded at once to a grog-shop and sailor boarding-house, near the foot of Catharine Street, the exact location of which I do not choose to give, as I am not employed by the police. Entering a large sort of half-parlor, which was furnished with small tables and broken stools, around and upon which were seated more odd sort of folks than we have leisure to describe, he cast a hasty glance at the inmates, and, not appearing to find the face he sought, he approached the bar, and addressing himself carelessly to a long-nosed, hump-backed, baboon-faced old Jew, who was watching, with the eager eyes of disgusting, smirking avarice, the various customers, from whose appetite he hoped to pocket a few more pennies.

"Give us a drink, Isaac—real stuff—none of your poison."

"Ah! it *ish* mine friend, Jack!" said the creature. "How do, Jack? You will treat, some—aye?"

"Yes, old Nazareth, if you have anybody here an honest tar can take a mug with," said Jack, glancing around, and, perceiving three or four trim-looking man-of-war's men, one of whom he recognized, he exclaimed, "Hallo, boys! I ax pardon, but didn't see you: come, take a nip with old Jack!"

They promptly consented, and the grog was ordered to their table. In the meanwhile, Jack again addressed Isaac—

"I say, old sodger, I want to see Spanish John, and no humbug. Where is he?"

"Ha! hà! Jack, you besh very funny. What, I know John? no see John these three weeks."

"You lie, you scupper-swab! I tell you I must see him in an hour, or look out for your figure-head!"

"Well, well, no passion, Jack. I hear, yesterday, Jack ship; but I'll send see for him."

"Let it be done at once, or——" said Jack.

"All right, Jack—all right; good fellow, Jack; you never peach."

"No, you lubber, if you don't provoke me—neither make game, nor break game: but I want Spanish John."

Jack was soon on excellent terms with the man-of-war's men, and learned that they belonged to the U. S. schooner Dolphin, then about to sail to the West Indies. Jack had not been seated long, however, before Isaac, who had retired from the room a short while, returned, and beckoned him aside, and pointing to a door that led into an adjoining apartment, said, in a low voice—

"He ish there, Jack; but he looks plack."

Jack entered a low, dimly-lighted room, where seated on a stool, with his head down, and apparently, in a sulky humor, he found a young man, about twenty-five years of age; of fine athletic appearance, dark-skinned, and black whiskers, somewhat of the corsair-looking order, such as young ladies picture to themselves when they go into ecstasies over Byron's Conrad. He was neatly, and somewhat peculiarly dressed, and wore a Spanish cap, which gave a wild appearance to his costume.

As Thompson approached him, he looked up with a mixed expression of countenance, and extended his hand—

"How do you, Jack? I am glad to see you. But what do you come here for?"

"To see you; and would to God the errand didn't bring me to such a place. You are an honest lad at heart, and should keep clear of the d—d land pirates about here."

"No danger to me, Jack; besides, you know my object."

"Yes; but I fear this old devil, Isaac, will yet lead you astray, or do you an injury. You are in his way."

"Never fear, Jack; I have him in my power, and I watch him. But tell me, Jack, what brings you here?"

"News for you, John."

The dark eyes of the Spaniard flashed fire, as he eagerly demanded—

"News of him? is it of him?"

"The Rover has been in New York."

"I knew it!" exclaimed John; "and I shall reach him at last. Tell me Jack, have you seen him? do you know where he is?"

"I met him about two hours ago, crossing Fulton Ferry. He was dressed so dandy-like, however, that I did not easily recognize him."

"I should know him in hell."

"What led to your suspicions that he was in New York? Did Isaac tell you?"

"No, he did not tell me; and yet I suspected it, from certain things, which I cannot now tell you of. But, come, Jack, I must be going. Isaac *shall* tell me where to find him, or my knife shall find his Jewish heart."

"Stay a moment, John, I don't think Isaac can help you at this pinch. The Rover has just accomplished an object of far greater importance than Isaac knows of; and he will be off, without leaving trace, if he can."

"What do you wish me to do?" asked the Spaniard, impatiently."

"That which will serve both you, and one you are bound to—Captain Burton."

"You are right, Jack; I'd serve *him* with my heart's blood."

"Well, listen to me; the Rover is the Captain's greatest

enemy, not only on account of what you know of, but he is leagued in with those who are seeking to rob him of his rights. He has just obtained from the Captain's wife, papers which will ruin Captain Burton, if they are lost. Now he must be found, and the papers must be found too."

"Tell me what to do, Jack; you know there's blood between the rover and me—a mother's blood; and but for the brave Captain Burton, would have been a sister's dishonor. God will not let me die until I avenge them; for poor Maria died at last of grief; but if my last breath can serve her protector, it is his."

"Meet me in an hour on the Battery; I think I can learn something; at any rate, we will do what we can."

"I'll not fail you, Jack," said the Spaniard; and, as Thompson retired from the room by the door he entered, the other left by a different way.

CHAPTER IV.

Juan Gomez—The deep Wrong—Counter Plots—Juan on board the Pirate.

SPANISH JOHN, or Juan Gomez, was the son of a Spanish merchant Captain, who had died when Juan was quite young, leaving a widow and two children with a very small patrimony to subsist upon. Juan, the eldest, was bound at an early age to a trader, and became a sailor. Some cruelty on the part of his employer, induced the high-spirited lad to run away, and he found refuge on board an American bark, of which Captain Burton was then first mate. Though somewhat wild and intractable in his nature, he possessed many fine qualities which soon attracted the confidence and esteem of Burton, who became his friend and protector. But a few years before the date of the present story, one of those terrible misfortunes which turn the very life-blood to gall and bitterness, and cause the fire of hatred and revenge to burn in the veins, had happened to Gomez. His mother and sister resided in a small town on the sea coast of Cuba. The latter possessing that voluptuous beauty which is found alone in Spanish women, had attracted the attention of a dissolute and profligate young Spaniard, whom we may as well introduce to the reader in proper person. Antonio Valdez, the Rover, as Jack Thompson called him, or Pedro Mendez, as he called himself to Mrs. Burton,—was one of those demons in human shape, who make us shrink back affrighted from the contemplation of our own natures, lest we should find the shadow

of kindred lurking there. Born to wealth, which he had early spent in riotous excesses, he possessed a fine person, a keen and vigorous intellect, and had enjoyed the advantages of a superior education. Voluptuous in his tastes, and extravagant in his habits, he felt the necessity of wealth which might satisfy his inordinate passions; unprincipled and utterly reckless in his character, he hesitated at nothing to gratify his extravagance, save that a certain pride of birth and position would not let him resort to low open villainy, though his secret practices were of the blackest dye.

At first he visited the gambling table, and *won*, for he was in secret league with the sharpers, with whom he acted well the part of decoy. His fierce and intractable spirit soon tired of so dull a part, though it supplied well, for a time, his necessities. Next he turned his attention to the slave trade—that human Golconda, whence out of the tears, and groans, and agony, and blood of our fellow beings, is extracted the gold that supplies the luxuries of many a Spanish lord and lady; aye, and of others we wot of, too. Valdez often made trips himself, and won, because an expert sailor and able commander; and when—as in a few years happened—the wild and lawless spirit of adventure led him to more criminal excesses, if such are possible; he became a noted Pirate chief, fearful and terrible as ever darkened the bright sea with deeds of blood. It is true that wealth followed, and that Valdez regained much of his consequence in his native island, Cuba, where rich men's affairs are never too closely scanned, especially if an old family name backs them. This did not exactly satisfy his proud heart, and avaricious soul. There was an immense estate belonging, as he deemed, of right to his own branch of his family, but which, through deed or gift by one of his ancestors, had been diverted to a collateral one. This was the estate of Captain Burton's mother, who was a Valdez, but had married an American merchant, himself wealthy, and who died in a few years, leaving only one child. The intrigues of

Valdez, and the proverbial corruption of Spanish justice, had delayed Captain Burton for years after he became of age, from obtaining possession, and it will be recollected that it was through Valdez's means that Burton had become involved in his present difficulties. It may be as well here to remark, that Valdez was unknown to Burton in his own character, since their communications with each other had always taken place through agents; but it will be seen hereafter, that in his darker career they had met, and known each other upon an eventful occasion.

During one of his sea excursions, Valdez had been forced to put into the little harbor, where was situated the village in which the mother and sister of Gomez dwelt; and upon some trivial occasion had entered their cottage, and received their hospitality. He was startled at the extreme beauty of Maria Gomez, and the fires of passion were at once lit in his heart. By all those tender assiduities he was so well prepared to pay, he strove to win the affections of the young girl, in a feigned character; but strange to say, though her heart was unoccupied, and though Spanish maidens are not often averse to the soft gallantries of so accomplished a cavalier, he made no progress. A deep and incomprehensible dread seemed to make her shudder at his approach; and though her mother, deceived by his pretensions and conduct, believed him to be an honest sea-captain, in moderate circumstances, and in her anxiety for the welfare of her beloved child, urged the matter somewhat strongly, yet not no argument could change Maria.

This did not suit Valdez. He, who was never baffled, was not to be foiled by an unprotected girl. His plans were accordingly laid; and with two of his crew, he surprised Maria about sunset, one evening, as she was walking with her mother on the sea beach, some distance from the village. The shrieks of the girl, and the wild shouts and passionate agony of her mother would have availed but little; but heaven seemed to have sent rescue. Three stout, well-armed men, who were passing near at the time, soon rushed to their aid: and after a

short but fierce conflict, the pirates—who had been taken somewhat by surprise—were stretched wounded upon the beach, and Maria borne hurriedly by her deliverers towards the village; for a boat was rapidly approaching from Valdez's schooner, whose crew had been aroused by a pistol-shot, fired by Valdez. The fatal ball lodged in the heart of Maria's mother!

The rescuers of Maria were Captain Burton, Jack Thompson, and a Spanish guide, who had undertaken to show them the residence of Gomez's mother, to which they were proceeding, for the purpose of taking her some money on the part of her son, who had been left in the United States, on business, by Captain Burton. The guide knew Valdez in his character of pirate captain, only, and gave the information to Burton and Jack.

These were the circumstances hinted at by Gomez who with the undying constancy of Spanish hatred, had, since then, lived only for revenge. He had managed once to come near Valdez whom he knew only as the rover, but was baffled by circumstances, of his revenge, though he had marked and learned to know his man. In less than an hour, Gomez was on the Battery, where he was not compelled to wait long for Jack.

"All right, John;" said the old sailor, as he came up puffing. "You once told me that the Rover did not know you, I believe."

"He never saw me to know me; and now he thinks I'm dead, for he is too smart not to have heard of and watched me."

"You have never trusted your story to Isaac, have you?"

"Never."

"Do you think he suspects the reason why you take an interest in the Rover's movements?"

"He thinks I wish to turn pirate; and this was why I suspected the Rover's presence, from his hints this morning."

"Ah!" exclaimed Jack, "now, I understand. He told me this morning you had shipped. Well, John, you must do so, but not through Isaac. Yes, you must join the Rover, and turn pirate."

"How do you mean?" eagerly demanded the Spaniard.

"Why, don't you see, the Rover's brig is now disguised as a Spanish man-of-war lying outside of the Hook; he is more than half way on board, but a messenger goes off in a boat hired for the occasion, you must take passage in her, and ship with the Rover."

"Why don't you give information to the man-of-war schooner, Jack?"

"Because our Rover would be off in a whiff, for they say nothing that carries sail can catch him. Do you suppose he got his reputation by being caught like a booby sleeping?"

"Well, Jack, when I'm on board, what shall I do, drive my knife into his heart?"

"And be thrown overboard to the sharks, and Captain Burton lose everything! No, no, John! make yourself useful to the Rover, get his confidence if you can, and follow him to Havana. I'll be there soon after you."

The friends parted, after proper instructions from Jack, and in a few hours afterwards, Gomez, who had obtained by a well-contrived story a passage in the boat that went off to the Rover's brig, was on her deck, and in conversation with Valdez, who still wore his citizen's dress.

The fine sailor-like appearance of John, and the history he gave of himself, soon obtained him employment, and he was at once enrolled in the crew of "*El Demonico*," for such was the name of Valdez's brig.

CHAPTER V.

Jack Thompson's Devotion—The Stranger's Character revealed—A Wife's determination—Change in Captain Burton's position—Our Characters all afloat.

JACK THOMPSON was as good as his word in calling on Mrs. Burton on the evening of that eventful day. He found her alarmed and anxious.

"Well, Jack, now you can explain yourself. Why did you leave in such a hurry this morning, and in such an unsatisfactory manner?" she asked.

"Well, marm, I met a bad man, as I came over the ferry, who has long had a grudge against the Captain; and when you spoke of them papers, my suspicion was aroused."

"And what have you learned, Jack?"

"Why, that it's him, marm, who's got your papers."

"Him!—whom, in the name of God, do you mean, Jack—the Captain's enemy?"

"The same, marm. Do you recollect the story of John?"

"Too well, poor fellow—the terrible fate of his mother, and the lingering death of his sister."

"Well, marm, you may suppose the Rover, from which Captain Burton rescued Maria, was not likely to forgive it; and though you haven't been told so, know that more than once he has hired men to kill the Captain—and that always makes me afraid for him when he goes to Havana. It was the Rover I met this morning, and who has got your papers."

He has found out the Captain's enemies in Cuba, and is leagued with them."

"Stop a moment, Jack: you remind me of something the Captain says in his letter."

"What, marm?—have you a letter from the Captain since I left this morning? You didn't tell me that."

"Never mind, Jack—you shall hear it now."

Mrs. Burton immediately went to her own room, and, returning with the letter she had received on that day, read the contents to Jack. When she came to that part where her husband spoke of the departure of Valdez from Cuba, and the report of his connection with illicit trade. Jack brightened up, as if a new idea had entered his mind.

"Do you know, marm, if Captain Burton is acquainted with his kinsman, Mr. Valdez?"

"He has never seen him, unless it is during this trip to Havana; and he speaks in his letter of an agent coming to him."

"Marm, I have a curious suspicion," said Jack, gravely, "that Mr. Valdez is no more nor less than the Rover himself; for he does not always sail with his craft; and once, a schooner he had was taken and destroyed; but they say it was because the Rover was not on board. And then he is said to be a gentleman born, and can go to Havana without fear, as the Governor is his friend."

"Well, Jack, it may be so; and, Heaven knows, I fear the worst," said Mrs. Burton.

"And what do you calculate to do, marm?"

"Why, I have written to Captain Burton's brother, in Boston, and expect him here in a day or two, when I propose to accompany him to Havana; or, if he cannot go, to set out by myself."

"A bad notion, I am afraid, marm. But no," said he, after a moment's reflection; "it's natural, too—for the Captain certainly is in a fix. Well, marm," continued he, "you know

how it is. All I've got, the Captain gave me; and if he hadn't another soul in the world to serve him, he's always got Jack Thompson left at the pinch. I am going to Havana with you, whether Mr. William Burton can or not."

"Thank you, thank you, Jack; and better protection than an honest tar, a sailor's wife could never have. But you did not finish telling me what you learned about the Rover, as you call him."

"Well, you see, marm, I knew him at first, notwithstanding his dandified dress; and I managed, by hook or by crook, to come by his bearings. You know Spanish John; well, poor fellow, he has dreamt of nothing for the last five years but revenge, on account of his mother and sister; and I've helped him along, occasionally, to get the run of the pirate; for though I hate this nursing of bad blood, yet, if such a bloody rascal could be put out of the way, I'd willingly lend a hand. Well, as I say, I've learned somewhat of the Rover's secrets, and found out it was him, for sure, and, moreover, that he had some great scheme on hand, that he wouldn't trust his old agent with."

"And what have you done, Jack?"

"Sent Spanish John on board the pirate's brig, to watch him."

"Why did you not give information, if his vessel was in the harbor, and have her seized by the authorities?"

"He's no such fool as that, marm; the brig has been lying safe enough outside the Hook all the while."

"But is there not a man-of-war in the harbor?"

"Yes, marm, and a fine little craft she is, but not fast enough, I fear, for the 'Devil,'—for that's the name of the Rover's brig. But I haven't forgot that, marm; and the schooner is, no doubt, under sail now."

"Well, Jack, I cannot thank you too much; and now I'll trouble you with a commission to find a vessel for me to-mor-

row, going to Havana, and engage our passage; for I shall start as soon as I can after Mr. Burton arrives from Boston."

"I'll do that, marm, with pleasure; and now, good night to you, marm; and there's a *kickshaw* for Master Harry," said the good old tar, taking a small bundle from his jacket pocket.

Within two days after, Mr. William Burton arrived from Boston, and expressed promptly his determination to proceed, in person, at once to Cuba. He opposed, however, strenuously at first, the determination of his sister-in-law to accompany him. He was forced, at last, to yield to the vehemence of her anxiety; and it was arranged that little Harry should be left with his grandmother—the mother of Mrs. Burton, who resided in Brooklyn.

In less than twenty-four hours, the trio—Mrs. and Mr. William Burton, and Jack Thompson—were snugly stowed on board a fine brig bound to Havana, and passing out of the harbor of New York. Here we will leave them awhile, to look after some of our other characters.

Shortly after Captain Burton had written to his wife, which we have seen, an important change took place in his affairs. A new Governor had arrived in Havana, and his predecessor was ordered home to be tried on various charges of malfeasance in office, which had been accumulating for some time against him. Among others, was not only a connection with the slave-trade (which was not, perhaps, so obnoxious), but a strong suspicion of piratical associations. Much was revealed when matters thus came to a crisis. And, among other things, considerable light was thrown upon the practices of Valdez, whose character stood exposed, and with whom his late Excellency was more than suspected of having been associated in some illicit speculations. The new Governor was a soldier of distinguished reputation, and a man of stern integrity, as well as of much energy of character; and the new broom of reform, for a while, swept clean. The case of Captain Burton was brought to a summary hearing; and not only was the false charge against

him abandoned, but the suit of Valdez dismissed, for want of sufficient grounds for the action. And it only remained for the Captain to probate some of his title deeds, with certain other papers—to have them recorded, and obtain an order, putting him in possession of his magnificent inheritance. In his anxiety to get home, he determined to employ a confidential agent whom he knew to be honest, and capable of receiving his papers when he arrived, and of attending to the whole matter for him. This was consequently done, and the Captain hurried his departure, so that about the time that Mrs. Burton, her brother, and Jack, embarked at New York for Havana, he took passage for home in a richly freighted bark that had touched at Havana, where she was delayed some three or four weeks. This bark, the value of whose cargo was immense, had been marked as a prize by Valdez's agents, and he had already been notified of her movements.

By some strange coincidences, our characters were thus all on the sea at one time; and the terrible finale in which these eventuated, belongs rather to wild and improbable romance, than to a plain, truthful narrative like my own. I must not hurry however, the *denouement*; for the events which yet preceded it have a deep and thrilling interest.

CHAPTER VI.

Maria Gomez—The Pirate Ship—The Boy Pedro!—Juan's Suspicions—A Rough Friend—The Mystery Explained.

MARIA GOMEZ died of a broken heart. Such were the sad tidings that reached her brother; and thus ran the story:—On coming to her senses, after she had been rescued by Captain Burton from Valdez and his accomplices, and learning the terrible fate of her mother, she was prostrated again with a wild and delirious fever. In this state it was utterly impossible to remove her, as Captain Burton kindly proposed, to his ship, for the purpose of carrying her to the United States, where he had intended to offer her a safe and respectable home. Under these circumstances, he did the best thing in his power, by providing her with suitable attendance, affording means for her comfort, and procuring her the care and protection of a proper guardian. Such a one was found in the person of an old, devout lady, whose circumstances made the recompense offered for her services welcome, but whose really kind heart led her to treat Maria with the affectionate regard of a beloved child.

After some weeks of intense suffering, the poor girl recovered from her fever; but was left a shattered and emaciated wreck of her former self. A deep and black melancholy seemed to settle on her mind, and every one thought her sinking into a rapid and hopeless decline. Even the physician, a stranger from Havana, who took up his residence near the village a few days after the accident, and whose gratuitous kindness to poor

Maria, was the theme of praise all over the country—even he, whose skill had rescued her almost from the grasp of death, seemed to despond in a great measure, though he endeavored to cheer her up. Rapidly, however, did she fade away, as a flower whose stem is broken. Her grief became less violent, it is true, but her mind seemed to have retired, as it were, within itself, and refused all vent to its suffering, which preyed faster and more surely upon her life; and, at last, in a very few weeks after the first hopes of her recovery had been awakened, she sank quietly to sleep—calmly as the flowers when they close their leaves to sunset.

Her brother, who hurried to the scene of his heart's desolation, as soon as the news reached him, was yet too late to shed a tear over the tomb of his mother and sister, and breathe an oath of vengeance!

We will now pay a short visit to the renowned Rover, on board his fleet and beautiful craft, "El Demonico"—(The Devil). There was nothing very alarming or repulsive in her appearance, as, in vulgar acceptation, her name might indicate. On the contrary, she was a model of the symmetry and perfection of naval architecture—resembling a keen, proud-crested, full-chested, lank-quartered racer. I do not know if the simile is original; but I maintain it to be an excellent one. There was nothing gloomy, either, in her outward appearance—no "raw head and bloody bones" emblems about her, such as vulgar superstition attributes to the floating home of the ocean freebooter. With her long, taper spars, her neat and rakish rig—not a rope-yarn out of place—her snow-white canvas, and the delicate white man-of-war streak which encircled her form, like a riband around the waist of a ball-room belle—she was the very thing to delight a sailor's heart. On board, every thing was in keeping with her external appearance. Her armament, which consisted of a "long Tom," i. e., a long twenty-four pounder, on a pivot, and six carronades, three on each side, was in excellent order, while her quarter-deck was

garnished with sharp, bright cutlasses, half-pikes, and battle-axes. The crew consisted of, generally, from seventy to ninety men, among whom might have been found some of all classes, creeds, and nations.

"——— a lawless brood,
But rough in form, nor mild in mood."

Their appearance, however, was uniform and neat, and the discipline under which they were held, was of that rigid and summary kind, by which alone some men are governed.

It was a clear and beautiful morning, and the brig, under easy sail, was somewhere in the latitude of the Virginia capes, leisurely plowing her way southward.

Seated in his cabin, which was furnished with oriental luxury, the Rover was earnestly engaged in examining some papers, which he took from a small ebony box that was placed before him on the table.

"Yes, yes! here they are; these musty, dull-looking old scrolls of parchment, worthless as they seem, have kept from me one of the finest estates in Cuba. But they are mine—mine! And so, too, shall be the inheritance of my fathers. And then with the wealth he has accumulated, Antonio Valdez may purchase a title, and hold his head up as the richest noble in Cuba! Aye, by St. Iago! I will go to Madrid, quit the blue sea forever, and gild my escutcheon so heavy with gold, that the stains beneath shall be hidden from all eyes!"

Thus soliloquized the Pirate as he examined one by one the documents; and then returning them to the box, which he locked and put away, he took a small hand bell from the table and rang it. The summons was promptly answered by a youth of slight and elegant form, somewhat fantastically dressed, whose countenance was sad and pale, but whose exquisitely moulded features, and large black eyes, full of half smothered fire, and half banished softness possessed an extraordinary degree of beauty.

"Pedro," said the Rover, in a mild voice, but scarcely noti-

cing otherwise his attendant; "send the mate, Alonzo, to me."

The youth disappeared, and Valdez continued his soliloquy:

"This Bark too; I must have her. Quarter of a million in specie, and a cargo worth more than double the sum. By St. Iago! my last prize will be my best. I want it, too, to pension off the crew. Let me see, she should be in these latitudes."

The mate, Alonzo, now made his appearance.

"You wished me, Signor. I am here," said he with the apparent humility of his station.

"Yes, Alonzo. How are the look-outs? You know we expect a prize in these latitudes."

"Aye, aye, sir, the look-outs are well set; one at each mast-head, with orders to go to the royal yard every bell, to the foremast man."

"That's well, Alonzo; and now I wish a word with you. On deck with you, Pedro," said he addressing the youth, "and taste the fresh breeze. You are moping of late."

We will leave the Pirate chief, and his mate to their conference, and follow our new acquaintance, Pedro, on deck. Without noticing any one, when he reached the deck, or seeming to attract notice, he seated himself on the rail near the taffrail, and gazed in deep and fixed sadness, down on the clear blue sea, as if its mysterious depths could reveal consolation or hope to banish his gloomy thoughts. His reverie was undisturbed by intrusion, or even apparent observation from any one save Gomez, who was employed in some occupation about the quarter-deck. No sooner had he obtained a complete view of Pedro's face, than he paused in fixed amazement, his pulse almost ceased, and his countenance grew rigid. Gradually, and slowly, as if drawn by a magnet, he approached where the youth sat, until he was startled from his dream of abstraction, by a rude, but friendly grasp.

"Forward! go forward, youngster! It is well I only saw

you," whispered, with strong emphasis, a rough familiar voice in his ear.

Turning, a little angry at the interruption, Juan recognized a stern, weather-beaten old sailor, who had shown him some kindness since he had been on board.

"What's the matter, Ramon?" asked he.

"Only you were putting your head in the Lion's mouth," said the old pirate pulling him along the deck. "I once saw a sailor look twice at the boy, as you were doing, and the third time he got a bullet through his head."

"Tell me, Ramon, who is that boy? Is it a woman?"

"Ask no foolish questions; and mind you don't stick your oar in where it ain't asked aboard a *free trader*, or you'll lose the number of your mess."

"By heavens, it is! it must be. I will know," exclaimed Gomez endeavoring to break from the old sailor's grasp, who had by this time hurried him forward of the main-mast, out of sight of the quarter-deck.

"You'll get your brains knocked out, fool!" said Ramon, handling him like an infant; "what the devil's in you?"

"No, no; it can't be," muttered Gomez, as he yielded to the rough, but well meant kindness of his protector, to whom he merely expressed thanks, without an explanation; nor did the other seek it.

And yet it could be, and was!

It was Maria Gomez, his sister, whom he had seen, and lucky it was perhaps, that her own attention had not been attracted by his conduct, for she could scarcely have failed to recognize him, whom as yet she had not seen, though he had been several days on board the Rover's vessel.

Maria's story is soon told. The physician who had attended her in her illness was, indeed a man of great professional skill, and had, perhaps, saved her life; but he was, nevertheless, the unprincipled tool of Valdez. Her drooping and languor after her recovery, was principally induced by medicines adminis-

tered by him for that express purpose; and her seeming death was no more than a state of somnolency, produced by his means. Her body, after it was placed in the chapel, previous to interment, had been removed, and was conveyed on board Valdez' brig, which had returned to the coast, under care of her doctor, and where, to her astonishment and horror, she awoke from the deep, death-like lethargy in the arms of her violator—the murderer of her mother!

CHAPTER VII.

Maria's story continued—Sail Ho!—Brother and sister meet again—The Pirate chief witnesses an unexpected sight—The Prisoner—The chase!

THE feelings of loathing, of desperation, and abandonment with which Maria awoke to her actual condition, are better imagined than described. In the first burst of her passionate grief, she strove to tear herself away, that she might end her miserable existence, and hide her dishonor beneath the waters of the unfathomable deep. But she was forcibly restrained from this. Next she glanced around with unmistakable eagerness, as if for some weapon; but whether to end her own wretched life, or to execute vengeance upon her destroyer, was, perhaps, questionable. So fierce was the light that flashed from her dark eyes, though her countenance was filled with an expression of utter and painful despondency, even more absorbing than her anger.

Valdez was prepared, however, for the emergency. While he prevented Maria from any attempt at violence, either against himself or her own person, he strove assiduously to calm and reconcile her. He exhibited the deepest apparent contrition for his violence, spoke of the death of her mother in accents of the most heartfelt regret and sorrow, declaring with every solemn protestation, that it happened by an accident, not from his own hand, but that of one of her rescuers; swore his own intentions had always been honorable; in proof of which a priest had been

procured and brought on board his vessel, who would perform the ceremony without delay, and give her a lawful protector and husband; make her, who now seemed but a victim of deep treachery and lawless passion, by means of an excusable ruse, what he always and ardently desired, his honored bride. The countenance of Maria became, for a moment, relaxed from its sternness and gloom, and assumed a brighter expression. I do not pretend to say that, like Richard the Third, he was able,

"To take her in her heart's extremest hate;
With curses in her mouth, tears in her eyes,
The bleeding witness of her hatred by;
With God, her conscience, and these bars against him,
And he no friend to back his suit withal,
But the plain devil, and dissembling looks,
And yet to win her—all the world to nothing!"

but, that disgraced, broken-hearted, and despondent, she rather grasped at his offer, as a straw floating on the tide of infamy, beneath which she was sinking, with the drowning man's hope, that it would rescue her soul from perdition.

The marriage ceremony was performed by a *real* priest, for Valdez cared little to deceive her in such a matter, as he had no fear that the record would ever rise against him. To say that Maria was reconciled, would be to do deep injustice to the real delicacy of her sentiments; but she was in his power, from which there was no escape, save in self-slaughter—from which her mind, imbued with the pious feeling of her early education, revolted. Her feelings of revenge sometimes burned fiercely, as she pondered on her unparalleled wrongs; but she could never nerve her soul to strike at his life, to whom, even through the grossest outrage, she was bound by holy ties. Nay, more: strange enigma of the human heart, yet common as every-day practice—she began to entertain a growing regard for him to whom she was thus wildly linked!

And thus she lived on, sad, despairing, and gloomy, the half-loathing but obedient slave—filled with the sad memories of the

past, blinded by the rayless gloom of the future. Valdez, whose regard was altogether sensual, recked little of the state of her mind, so long as he had a submissive leman, in which light alone he considered her.

The boy Pedro (Maria) remained on deck, in his abstracted state of mind, for some time, with the shadow of thought dark upon his soul. His attention was at last attracted by a cry from the mast-head—

"Sail, ho!"

"Where away?" demanded the person in charge of the deck.

"Broad on the lee beam," was the answer of the look-out.

"Can you make her out?" asked the clear, sharp voice of the pirate, who had sprung lightly to the deck himself.

"Not yet, sir," replied the man.

Valdez descended a moment to his cabin for his telescope, and returned in an instant to the deck; but, when he arrived there, a most unexpected scene arrested his attention.

Gomez had yielded as well to reason, as to the well-meaning force of his friend Ramon, and quietly retired; but his instinct would not be thus satisfied. He soon found his way back to the quarter-deck, and, controlling his emotions by a strong will, sought an opportunity of scanning, more closely, the countenance of the boy. This he was unable to do, until the cry of "A sail!" from the mast-head, aroused the youth from his reverie. Deep and scrutinizing was the gaze which Gomez then bent on him, and wild and agitating were the emotions which filled his bosom. His fixed stare, unnoticed for the moment by others, who were too much interested by the report of a sail in sight, to observe his demeanor closely, nevertheless attracted the attention of Pedro, who grew pale, almost to fainting. This conduct seemed to confirm Juan's suspicions; and, springing forward convulsively, he caught the youth by the wrist, exclaiming, in a choked voice—

"Maria! Maria! my sister!—tell me, is it you, Maria Gomez?"

A wild shriek, that ran far over the sea, burst from her lips, as she fell on the shoulder of her brother. It was the shriek that startled the Rover—the scene that arrested him, just as his foot touched the deck.

Quick as thought, a pistol was snatched from his belt, and the sharp click fell upon the ear of the fainting Maria, who would have been too late to save her brother's life, or perhaps her own, but the grim form of the old pirate, Ramon, rose between them. Taking off his hat, he addressed the Rover, whose brow grew "dark as night," in a firm, quick, but respectful tone—

"Hold, senior!—he called her *sister*! Forgive old Ramon, who has served you long and faithfully, for interfering with your will; but, hold, till you see what it means."

Maria had by this time sufficiently recovered to exclaim—

"It is true, senior; it is my brother. Forgive him; for God's sake, harm him not!"

Pale as death, with eyes flashing fire, his lips compressed and bloodless, and his step advanced, one arm around his sister, and the other hand grasping at his belt for the knife which he usually wore, but which was not there, (having fallen out when he struggled to release himself from the friendly but rough grasp of Ramon,) Gomez met the eye of Valdez unflinchingly. The Rover glanced disdainfully at him, and, replacing his pistol in his belt, said, in a cold, harsh voice—

"Forward with him! and put him in double irons! Down to your cabin, boy!"

Gomez would, perhaps, have been disposed to resist, but Ramon knew better, and quickly hurried him forward; while Maria, from whose proffered embrace he shrunk, shuddering, hung her head, and descended, with slow, feeble steps, to her cabin.

The scene created much less attention on board than might have been supposed; for, whatever might have been its effect

upon the crew, they knew better than to meddle with anything which concerned their dark and terrible chief.

Valdez was soon employed in observing the sail, which had been reported from the mast-head as a large square-rig, and was just becoming visible, by the use of the telescope, from deck. In a few minutes he raised his head, and quietly gave the order to the mate, who had taken his place on deck—

“Make chase, Alonzo!”

The helm was instantly put up, and the yards squared, while sail after sail was crowded upon her, until the tall pyramid swelled to its fullest proportions. They gained rapidly on the chase. Her lower sails had become visible, when the Rover, who had watched her with intense interest, raised his eyes from the telescope, and remarked to his mate, who stood by, with a smile of fiendish joy—

“A bark, with their dark cloths in her mainsail! It is our prize, Alonzo: prepare for the capture!”

CHAPTER VIII.

The Chase! — The Storm!

THE movements of the Rover's brig were soon perceived on board the bark; and the suspicious character of the vessel at once impressed itself upon those on board—as well it might. Alarm and fear took possession of most of the passengers; nor did the pulse of the oldest sailor keep its even tenor.

The captain of the bark was a bold and brave mariner—a man who had followed the sea from boyhood to mature age; and, though possessed of an honest, kind heart, was somewhat bluff in his manner, and very decided in his character. After listening to the various conjectures and suggestions around him, Captain Ross, who had not quit his spyglass for an hour, and had announced, a short while before, the change of course in the Rover, turned round, voided his quid, and, addressing himself to Captain Burton, (for whom he had conceived a great respect, from long acquaintance,) remarked—

“I don't like her looks, captain, and she comes down upon us too fast; I think I shall put her before the wind.”

This was said in rather an under tone.

“Do you know him, Captain?” was the response.

“I fear so. I think I have seen that tall, rakish rig before; and if I am right, God save us!”

“Then I need not ask what, but who is it?”

“You have heard of the Rover, as they call that bloody

Spaniard, who has done so much damage in the last two or three years?"

"Yes; but he sailed in a topsail schooner, five years ago."

"She was taken by a British man-of-war, but he with his devil's luck, was on shore at the time. He has now a hermaphrodite brig, that was fitted out for a slaver in Baltimore, and they say nothing but the wind can beat her."

Again the glass was brought to bear on the stranger, and then proffered to Captain Burton, who also examined her attentively.

"It is certainly an hermaphrodite; taut, and man-of-war rigged," remarked Burton; "perhaps it is a cruiser."

"Under the *red* flag, Captain," replied the other.

"And what will you do, Captain?"

"In the first place, what I said a minute ago, put her before the wind, and crowd all sail; for that's our best point, and the Rover's worst. In the next, I don't mean to be taken, while a hand on board can raise a cutlass or a handspike, or until masts and canvas part company," answered the commander of the bark, in a dogged stubborn tone.

"I can appreciate your feelings, Captain Ross," said Burton; "but would it not be better, if we must be taken, to submit in time, and save the lives of the passengers? You cannot be blamed for what is inevitable, and you must recollect that these are equally under your charge, as well as the cargo."

"You know nothing of the d—d son of H—ll," blustered out the old Captain with emotion; "he leaves no one to tell tales, where he has been. If he catches us, you are as safe as if you were overboard in an hundred fathoms water, with a frigate's anchor made fast to your feet."

The bark, which had been sailing with the wind a little abaft the beam, immediately wore off before it, and sail by sail her full canvas was spread, until everything that would draw was set. Her speed was materially increased, and the hopes of Captain Ross brightened.

"If we can hold this a few hours, night will set in, we have no moon, and in the darkness we may escape him," said he.

"And dark enough it will be, I think;" replied Burton, whose eyes had been for some moments fixed on the distant horizon, where a small gray cloud, no bigger than your hat at first, was fast swelling into the size of a mountain.

"Do you see yon fellow how he comes? he'll give us both trouble, if I mistake not."

The commander of the bark turned quickly to the direction pointed out, contemplated the appearance of the cloud, looked down at the water which was assuming a peculiar appearance, then up at the sky, where long snowy drifts were rapidly floating onward, borne by the upper current, and then in a sharp lively tone, gave orders to the mate in charge of the deck.

"All hands shorten sail, Mr. Foster! quick about it, sir, or we'll have the spars tumbling about our heads."

"Aye, aye, sir!"

And in less than a minute, everything on board the bark which was full manned, was prepared to reduce her canvas, and the mate reported:—

"All ready, sir!"

"Keep her so, Mr. Foster," answered her commander. Turning to Burton, he said:—

"I'll hold on to the last, Captain, the Louisa is as staunch as a frigate; and as yonder chap must catch it first, I'll watch how it serves him."

Onward came the wind upon its rushing pinions. The cloud that was just now like some distant mountain rearing its dusky form above the horizon, soon spread wide its wings, and advanced its lowering front. The wind died gradually away, and the sea moaned. Already was the Rover's brig becoming enveloped in its mist, yet no stitch of canvas had been furled, and he seemed to bid defiance to the coming storm.

"Only see," exclaimed Captain Burton, "how that fellow holds on. By Jove, he'll catch it."

"No, no!" replied the commander; "I'll warrant him, he knows what he is about—but it's time to look out for ourselves."

The orders were rapidly given on board the *Louisa*, to reduce sail; and were promptly obeyed. In came the studding-sails, up went the foresail, and down went the jib and flying-jib, leaving the bark with only her topsails and fore-topmast stay-sail. The royal and top-gallant yards were quickly on deck.

"Stand by the top-sail halyards; hand the clewlines and buntlines! ease away the halyards! clew down!"

These orders had been obeyed almost as quick as we have related them, and yet there was no time to spare. Onward came mist and storm, fierce as the angel of destruction. The bark heaved, groaned, and careened; her tall masts bent like whip staffs, until royal and top-gallant masts went, cracking close off like pipe stems. Her sails bellied, flapped, and swelled again; and with a sharp explosion, split into ribbons. Rising from the effects of the storm, under which she bent and staggered like a drunken man, the bark bounded madly forward.

There was less confusion on board than might have been expected. The sails with which the deck was cumbered, were rapidly stowed, and every effort made that was possible, for the safety of the vessel. The broken masts were got rid of as well as could be, but all attempts to interfere with the topsails would have been useless, as the wind increased every moment, and threatened a hurricane.

In about an hour, the horizon became clearer, and Captain Ross could discover the brig, upon which they had somewhat gained. She was, nevertheless, ploughing her way after him, under a close-reefed fore-topsail, with her top-gallant masts housed, and without having received any apparent injury. This was yet easy for her; as those who have sailed will readily understand, that such a storm as I have described, usually cuts down the sea, and renders it for a time comparatively smooth; but, that were it otherwise, a vessel of her sharp build and low decks, could not with safety have done so. This

was naturally the first thought of Captain Ross, who with his friend Burton was again at his post, watching her movements.

"See, the rascal has a fine time of it, and comes bravely down under that foretopsail. Wait, my boy, until the sea rises, and then we'll have you glad enough to haul your wind. I think, Captain Burton, that I'll try to put something more on forward; this is a fine chance to double our distance."

"If you'll excuse me," said Burton, "I think the bark is better as she is; head sail will only bury her now, and it seems to me she goes finely, and is running away from her fast."

"Well, well," said the commander, "I believe you are right, but I must get a close-reefed foretopsail ready to bend;" and he left Burton to give his orders to that effect.

Night began to set in, and everything having been made as snug as circumstances allowed on board the *Louisa*, the hopes and spirits of those on board rose in proportion.

The brig had scarcely suffered the parting of a rope yarn; for manned and rigged as she was, Valdez, who we have said was a perfect sailor, handled her with ease under all circumstances. The storm, nevertheless, disconcerted him considerably. He knew to a nicety, the qualities of his brig, and was well aware that when the sea rose, which it must do in a few hours, scudding was out of the question with him; yet he determined to hold on to the last. He had hoped when he first saw the storm rising, that the bark would be caught unprepared, and thus crippled, so as to enable him more easily to come up with her, but, as we have seen, he was disappointed in this; so, after watching her awhile, he gave his orders to his mate, and retired to his cabin.

CHAPTER IX.

Valdez and Maria—Ramon and Juan.

WHEN Valdez reached his cabin, he found Maria humbled and agitated, with deep anxiety painted on her countenance. He looked coldly and sternly upon her: addressing her in a harsh tone, he demanded—

"What means this, Maria? You are seen on deck in the arms of a sailor; *your brother*, you say—a probable story!"

"He is my brother, *senor*—Juan Gomez."

"Did they not tell me he was dead?"

"You once said they did, *senor*; but, as I hope for salvation, this is he! Oh, harm him not!"

"And yet he spurned your embrace, and deems you the Pirate's leman!"

"You will permit me, *senor*, to explain to him that it is not so—that Maria is your wife; and that our mother did not fall by your hand."

"No, by h—ll! If you dare breathe such a thing as our marriage to him, you seal his death-warrant—for, that hour he dies! See you—I have use for him; if he serves me well will free him, and give you both wherewithal to make merry through life; for, mark you, woman, I leave this course of life soon, and desire to obliterate all traces of my career."

"Am I not your wife, *senor*?"

"Oh, doubtless—my honored wife, the Pirate's bride! But, *senora*, I think it difficult to prove your title."

"The priest, who married us?"

"Aye, the good father! Where will you find him, Maria? and the witnesses, too—did you forget them? They are quite, at your service—my Alonzo, and old Ramon."

"And you, who have blasted my life—torn, by the roots, every gem of happiness from my heart—planted in my bosom the curse of loathing—for whom I have sacrificed my hopes here and hereafter—forgetting God and religion; you will abandon me, cast me away like a faded flower, whose bloom and fragrance you have rifled! Is it not so, Valdez?"

"Who spoke that name? How dare you call me by it?" exclaimed the Pirate.

"*Antonio Valdez*, I know you. For a long time my destroyer, but still my husband, was only Mendez, the pirate. I know you now as Valdez, the well-born."

"You know me; well, what is your information worth, my lady wife?" asked Valdez, with a cold, bitter sneer.

"Nothing," said Maria, "save that I will still be your wife. You have nothing to fear from me."

"To fear from you!—ha! ha! ha!" laughed Valdez, with the mocking irony of a demon. "See you, woman! Have you forgotten the last five years, in which you can recollect no shadow of the fear of God or man, coming between me and my purpose? Beware, then, and tempt me not! To your cabin! If your brother serve me faithfully, he shall be free. You shall also go, after you have taken *an oath of secrecy*—for I know your conscience—and with such a dower as befits the Rover's bride. To your cabin—and dream no more; and, above all, make no attempt to see your brother, without my permission!"

Maria retired, her bosom crowded with conflicting emotions. She had long felt that the struggle with Valdez must, sooner or later, occur. She had never truly loved him; but it was a balm to her conscience, to know that she was in reality his wife; and, as upon her salvation, did she build on her being

recognized and treated as his wife, when he should quit (as she always believed he would, since she had learned who he really was) his present course of life. There was another tie, which drove from her soul the dark thoughts that would otherwise, perhaps, have gathered there, and kept off desperation from her mind. Her union with Valdez had not been fruitless. A fine boy was the offspring thereof, born about twelve months after Maria first went on board the brig. Valdez had taken him away at two years old, and his mother had never been permitted to see him since, though she was occasionally informed of his health. Here was a barrier to those wild purposes of revenge, which would doubtless have fired her Spanish blood, at Valdez's cruelty and injustice. We leave Maria now, sunk in the gloomy feelings of uncertainty and anxiety inseparable from her situation.

Ramon, who, from motives somewhat foreign to his character as a lawless and cruel pirate, and which we will explain, had shown Juan Gomez some kindness, and so well befriended him in the recent emergency, had taken care to exhibit no marks of preference so publicly as to attract attention or arouse suspicion; on the contrary, his conduct had seemed rather rough and fault-finding with the new hand.

At night, Ramon relieved the man on guard over the "brig," where Juan was confined; and, as soon after the watch was set, and the rest of the crew had turned in, as he deemed prudent, he opened a confab with his prisoner—

"Be quiet a bit, lad; I wish to talk with you."

"Is it you, Ramon? I thank you for your kindness; but it's all over now. He's not fool enough to let me clear."

"Keep up your pluck, lad; I tell you, I've something to say."

"Ramon," whispered Juan, in a low, deep voice, through his clenched teeth, "if you'll just free me for ten minutes, and give me my knife, I'll be your slave for life. You may kill me then as quick as you please."

"Peace, you fool!" said the old sailor, "and listen to me!"

"But, I tell you, he killed my mother; he has brought shame upon my sister, which is worse than death. Oh, I could drink his blood, to feed my revenge!"

"You would drink the salt sea-water first, and feed the fishes," was Ramon's reply. "Now, listen to me, Juan Gomez."

"Gomez!—how do you know my name?"

"I knew it, lad, before you knew it yourself. Your father—honest old Captain Jose Gomez—was the best friend I ever had; and if he had lived, I should never have turned villain; but that's too long a yarn for the spinning now. It's enough for you, that even an old pirate's black heart may have one drop of good feeling left. Your father treated me like a man, when those who owed me everything, treated me like a dog—and curse me, if I forget his children!"

"His children!" said Gomez. "Did you know Maria?"

"Aye, from the first; and your errand, as soon as you came on board."

"My errand!" exclaimed Juan, recollecting how much that concerned his benefactor, Captain Burton.

"To be sure; what else are you doing on board of this craft, but to look after your sister? You are no pirate, boy. Yes, I knew your errand, and may say that I expected you long ago."

"I thought her dead—would to God she had been in the same tomb with her mother. I thought her dead, and dreamed only of revenge. But, Ramon, you knew her—loved my father—and did not save her."

"What could one man do against a ship's crew?"

"Then you should have stabbed her to the heart, before she became the thing she is."

"It was too late when I found all out. But, perhaps, I can serve her as well, and you too, if you do as I tell you. Now, listen to my news. After the Rover got possession of your sister, he was afraid she would die, or kill herself; and as he was not willing to lose so pretty a bird, whom it was so hard

to cage, what does he do, but tell her it was his purpose to make her his lawful wife."

"Did he? did he marry her?—*he*, the murderer of her mother!—sinful as that would be, there is a shadow of consolation in it."

"As for your mother, it was easy to swear that off his conscience, which he did; and then, to save her shame, *Maria* married him."

"Was it real, Ramon?"

"Aye, I'll warrant him who did it a real shave-head, but a d—d scamp."

"Thank Heaven for so much!" exclaimed Juan; "she is not so guilty, after all."

"Yet she would find it no easy matter to prove her marriage, however; but I was a witness, and when the time comes, I'll stick to her for old Jose's sake."

"Thanks! thanks! Ramon; but in the meantime we are all in his power; what can you do to aid us?"

"Never do you mind, at present; keep yourself quiet, and I'll soon tell you more. Now go to sleep in a jiffy; I hear the watch relieving; to-morrow night I'll explain, or before if necessary." //

As Ramon said, the watch was being relieved; and his own turn came, when he retired to his hammock. The gale had not yet abated, but the sea was rising, so that the brig was compelled to haul her wind, and lie to, which was done before the old watch left the deck.

CHAPTER X.

The gale abates—Deeds of Blood!—Mrs. Burton on board the Pirate—A Hostage.

THE gale continued high through the night, but began somewhat to slacken, about sunrise. The brig had been obliged to lay to, and at day, there was no bark in sight. Towards noon the wind and sea had so far gone down, as to allow the *Rover* to alter her course; and Valdez, whose humor was none the better on account of the probable loss of his prize, ordered her to be headed as near as possible on the course for New York, to which port he knew the bark was bound, with the hope of intercepting her. In the meantime, Valdez had sent for Gomez to his cabin, for the purpose of extracting information with regard to Captain Burton, in whose employ he knew him to have been. There, too, he was permitted to see his sister, though the meeting between them was cold and restrained. Gomez was then returned to his confinement, though with orders for his better treatment. By evening, the wind and sea had considerably abated. About two hours, by the sun, a sail was descried, and the hopes of Valdez rose, for the moment. They were soon dissipated, however, for she was made out to be a large brig, standing in an opposite direction to himself. It was more with the spirit of that fell rage, which, disappointed of its object, hawks at, and tears the first thing it meets, than any great hopes of gain, that Valdez determined on her destruction.

The sea was too high for boats, and so he concluded to run her aboard. The course of his vessel was shaped for that purpose, and, before dark, the two had approached very nearly. The object of the *Rover* appeared now, for the first time to those aboard of the merchant brig, and every effort was made to avoid the collision. She wore off before the wind, and crowded sail; but only to delay her fate. The Pirate did the same, and the chase was not of long duration; for she gained hand over hand on the merchantman, on board of which there was terror and confusion. A few resolved to defend themselves to the last, and sell their lives dearly. Among whom was our old friend, Jack Thompson; for this was the brig, on board which Mrs. Burton, in her unlucky determination to go to her husband, had embarked.

They had soon grappled, and, ripe for deeds of blood, the Pirate's crew poured on board. The opposition with which they met was somewhat unexpected; but, though it was dogged and determined, yet the few brave hearts who maintained it were unable to sustain themselves, and one by one they sank before the numbers that overwhelmed them. That portion of the crew who had skulked the contest, were equally sought out and murdered, and in less than one hour from the time she was first boarded, the merchant brig, rifled, abandoned, and scuttled, was fast sinking, with those who so recently manned her decks, full of life and hope, now ghastly corpses, into the depths of that sea, whose blue waters would close over her, and leave no vestige of her fate behind!

Ah! if those mysterious depths could reveal but half the deeds that have transpired on the fair bosom of the bright and sunny ocean, the only records of which they hold buried in their unfathomable caves, what stories of bloodshed and crime would horrify and appal the heart of the listener.

They did not all perish on board the merchant brig, nevertheless; for Mrs. Burton was found by Valdez himself, who immediately recognized her, as he beheld her on the floor of

the cabin in a fainting fit, and caused her to be transferred carefully to his own cabin, where every attention was paid, which her situation needed.—The explanation of this conduct is easy and natural. The ambition of Valdez was the acquirement of the immense estate in Cuba, of which Captain Burton was the legal heir. And although he possessed the title papers, upon which so much depended, and was backed, as he believed, by the influence of the Governor—for as yet he was ignorant of the recall of that official, and the charges preferred against him—still he was not unwilling to strengthen his position by such a hold upon his rival, as the present opportunity afforded. He might now, perhaps, through his agents, effect a sure compromise; and he knew too well the power of money and position, to fear much the knowledge which Mrs. Burton would now obtain of his pursuits. He was, nevertheless, well aware that an outrage upon her person would destroy all his advantages; and hence she was treated with a consideration, which one of her sex was not likely to have received on board that wild and lawless craft.

It was long before Mrs. Burton recovered her consciousness, and when she did so, her surprise was startling indeed, to find herself lying on a couch in the gorgeous cabin of the *Rover's* brig. Almost the first thing she encountered, as her bewildered gaze swept rapidly around the apartment, was the deep, earnest eyes of Maria, (who wore, at the time, the habit of her own sex,) fixed with a sad, pitying expression, upon her.

"Oh, tell me," exclaimed she, "for pity's sake, tell me, where am I? What has happened? I have had a fearful dream, and am not, surely, awake yet."

"Calm yourself, lady. It has not been all a dream. One of those terrible scenes has been enacted, which man, in the bitterness and hatred of his heart, so often creates, crushing and destroying his fellow-man. But calm yourself, lady—you are yet safe."

"Explain—for Heaven's sake, explain your meaning! where

am I? They told me we were chased by a pirate: the brig—my brother—oh, where are they?"

"They told you true, lady, and they are all gone—gone! And the blue sea smiles above them, as if no deed of blood ever darkened its surface."

"Oh, my God, have mercy!—I am lost, lost for ever! My husband, my child, what will become of me?" exclaimed Mrs. Burton, as she sank back into insensibility. Maria's heart was deeply touched with her distress, nor did she feel exactly easy herself at the appearance of the beautiful stranger; but she nevertheless tended her with honest and gentle care.

It was the next day, when Mrs. Burton had somewhat revived, though her heart was still sunk in despondency and fear, that Maria announced to her, that there was one who would speak to her. Divining in a moment who it was, she nevertheless asked—

"Who is it? Is it the—the——"

"Yes, lady, it is the Rover—and you must go quickly, for he likes not to wait; yet keep up your heart; I think he will respect you: he must have some strong reason for trusting you as he has done, or else you would ere this have prayed for death as a gracious boon."

Supported by Maria, Mrs. Burton entered the main cabin, where Valdez sat awaiting her, dressed in the same suit of clothes in which he had visited her in Brooklyn. No sooner did she recognize him, than her cheek grew even paler than before, and, sinking almost lifeless upon an ottoman, she murmured—

"My God! it is he!"

"The same, fair lady; your humble servant, Pedro Mendez, who thanks you for this return of his visit, and trusts his apartments are not distasteful to you."

"Mercy, sir! mercy for a mother and wife, helpless and miserable!" breathed Mrs. Burton.

"I intend to be merciful, lady, and, for once in my life, just

and generous. But that you may better understand me, let me introduce myself to you in proper person. You have known me only as Pedro Mendez, the old friend of your husband, and now, perhaps, as the dreaded Rover; there is yet a third (and to you, more important) character. I am *Antonio Valdez*, your unworthy connection, whose patrimony your husband seeks to appropriate. You are aware, that, by a *ruse*, I am in possession of papers which will aid me in my just claims; but fate has been still more propitious in throwing you into my power. The law might baffle or delay me in obtaining my rights; but now I have the game in my own hands, if your husband is loyal, and loves you as well as so fair a dame deserves. You shall be the mediator between us; you shall write to him, and tell him in whose hands you are, and that when he makes a clear and legal assignment in my favor, to be delivered as I shall direct, he shall receive back his wife, safe and unharmed. Think of this, lady. I will furnish you the means and occasion to write, and will keep my word. That is all, for the present. You shall be undisturbed in your apartment, and Maria will see that you want nothing."

Mrs. Burton was led back to her apartment, somewhat reassured, even in her wretchedness, by the dawn of hope.

Maria, to whom it was a relief to understand the motives of Valdez' conduct, addressed her with an enquiry which appeared to her somewhat strange. "Well, lady, shall you be free? Will your husband give up his rich estate?"

"He loves me," was the only reply.

Maria hung her head, and retired, murmuring—"That is the love I used to hear of, but poor Maria will never know what it is."

CHAPTER XI.

Jack Thompson's chance for the Bounty—Ramon discloses to Juan a Conspiracy—The Bark makes Land—Preparations for a Nor'wester.

TRUE to his promise, Ramon was with Gomez the next night, though somewhat later than on the night previous. In fact, it was not until after the destruction of the merchant brig. As soon as the man he relieved had departed, Juan demanded, in a low and earnest tone—

"What's the matter, Ramon? I felt a shock, and thought I heard the noise and confusion of strife."

"And so you did. I never saw a handful of men make a braver resistance in my life, but it was of no avail."

"What, have you made a capture? What has become of her?"

"Not much of a capture, for the whole cargo was not worth the two lives we lost. And as to what has become of her, she is many fathoms down in the deep sea by this time."

"And her crew, did they, too, perish?"

"Aye; they stuck to their craft like true sailors, and are buried with her. But take care, lad; don't show your feelings too plainly," added he, seeing that Gomez fairly shook with terror at his cold-blooded relation of the atrocity. "It's not safe, I told you once before, to have a heart on board a pirate."

"And they all, all perished?" said Juan, somewhat abstractedly.

"Not exactly all, either. The captain saved a prize of as neat a little craft as ever sailed under a petticoat, and seemed to be devilish careful of her too; and I made a prize of my own—a tough old sailor, who fought with such good will, that hang me if I could *do* for him, after I cut him down; so I saved him, and brought him aboard in a somewhat battered state, to give him the chance of the bounty, if he's not a fool, when he gets well."

"What's that—the chance of the bounty?"

"Why, you see, it's not so easy to recruit good hands in our line of trade, although we do occasionally get one knocked on the head, as to-night we did: so sometimes after we have crippled a stout-looking tar, we save him, bring him on board, and when he is well, give him a chance to ship, or walk overboard; and I assure you they very seldom make shark's meat. But hold, lad—I must to the old boy, for I've had a hamnock slung forward here for him, and he's lying on deck without anybody to look out for him." So saying, Ramon passed up on deck, and soon returned, bearing, by the aid of one of the hands, the stalwart form of an old sailor, who appeared, at present, insensible, from his wounds. The astonishment of Gomez, whose curiosity, as they passed near them, led him to examine the features of the wounded man, to behold the countenance of Jack Thompson, was great indeed, and his surprise would have been easily apparent to any one who had watched him. To do this, however, there was no one present at the time.

As soon as Ramon had seen his charge comfortably stowed, he dismissed the sailor who had been assisting him, and returned to Juan, who felt doubtful as to the result, to reveal to him at once his knowledge of his prisoner.

"Well, lad, I am about to tell you that, which, if known, would certainly secure us both a berth down under the waters; but I am determined to trust you, as I intend to save you. The Rover, as long as he was content with his place (although he visited the shore a little too often, and stayed a little too long at times),

was first the greatest commander who ever trod the deck of a *free-trader*; and though he has been at times blood-thirsty and cruel in his discipline, yet he's always had a run of luck, taking rich prizes, and escaping cruisers; so the boys have been content. But for the last year or two he has had some schemes which he will let no one understand, and has employed the brig on long cruises for his own business, while he has neglected many a rich haul, which has just been a dead loss to the crew; they have growled much at this, but now they have found out he intends to leave them for good; and many think that he intends to purchase his own safety by selling them to the government, on his return to Havana. Nearly three-fourths of the crew are of one mind, and that is: never to let him see the Island again, but to seize the brig, elect a new commander, and chuck him overboard. The hope of capturing this bark has made them hold back for the present, as he has all the information about her; and while there is any hope of her, he's safe enough—after that let him look out. You must follow in my wake, keep a bright look-out for the signals, and see if I don't manage to land you safe in port, with your sister."

"I thank you, Ramon, for your good intentions, as well as your kindness, and I must now tell you that I saw the face of your prisoner, and I know him. He is one of the sailors who rescued Maria from the Rover, when my mother was killed, and is known to him."

"Then, there's little chance for him!"

"You must save him, Ramon. I'll tell you more. It was he who found out that the Rover was off Sandy Hook, and who sent me on board. The Rover had been to Brooklyn, and got hold of papers that would ruin a sea-captain who has long been a friend of mine, and he was following to Havana to see about it."

"What the devil do I care for your sea-captain, or his old sailor? I wanted to serve the children of old Jose Gomez—the first good action I have thought of for many a year, and the

last I ever expect to have a hand in. So, be content to look out for yourself, lad, and let others do the same."

"But, Ramon, this old man cannot harm you, and he has been like a father to me," pleaded Juan, earnestly.

"Well, well, he's safe enough now for some time, and we shall see hereafter." So saying, Ramon bid Gomez good night, who didn't bother him more, and then fell into a brown study himself, during the rest of his watch.

It is almost time to say a word of the bark, which, during the storm, had so successfully escaped the Rover. As the storm had somewhat abated, Captain Burton, who had been enabled by the peculiar build and adaptation of his vessel, to sail, or keep before the wind the whole time, now found himself, by the first observation he was able to take, considerably out of his course. By the first direction, the bark resumed, as nearly as possible, her route, and sail was made as fast as the wind and sea would allow it.

The satisfaction of all on board was lively and full, at their own providential escape; for the character of the brig was not doubted by any.

The wind continued to abate, hauling round until the bark paid up fully her course, with a point or two to spare, and in three days after, the look-out made the distant heights of Nevisink. It was late towards evening as they stood in, with a signal for a pilot flying at the mast-head, but no boat appeared in sight; and, as the sky looked threatening, though the wind had nearly lulled, Captain Ross was somewhat puzzled and considerably annoyed, as appeared from his conversation with his friend Burton.

"D—d troublesome work, this, Captain, and a fair chance to be thrown off. If I had daylight, and a capful of wind, I'd take her in myself, and disappoint the lazy rogues of their fees."

"I would hardly advise that, though I am as anxious as yourself to get in," replied Captain Burton. "But if you'll listen to

me, Captain, you'll make preparations for a nor'-wester; for, if ever I saw one brewing, it's in yon sky."

Captain Ross had much experience himself, but had neglected the signs now pointed out to him, in his anxiety to get into harbor. A moment's reflection showed him the justness of Burton's remark, and orders were accordingly given to reduce sail on board the bark, and make all ready for the expected gale; which was accordingly done.

CHAPTER XII.

Betrayer and Betrayed—Woman's Devotion—The Plot discovered.

THE ROVER sat moody and thoughtful in his cabin. It was not conscience which troubled him; for no remorse had ever yet touched his soul; but there rose up, as it were, a dark shadow before him, that hid the future; and unseen influences seemed to baffle his projects. Upon the capture of the bark he had calculated largely; for a rich prize was very much needed just then to propitiate his crew, who had some reasonable cause of late for dissatisfaction; yet, almost as if by a miracle, she had escaped him. There were no murmurings among the men, it is true, nor was there any apparent revolt against the iron discipline by which he held them in control: but Valdez well knew there were certain points upon which there was no tampering with the wild and lawless spirits who were under him. So long as he faithfully devoted his energies, as their commander, to the object of their association—plunder,—and while he met with but a tithe of the success which had always followed his exertions, there was not the slightest danger of rebellion—which it was the direct advantage of the majority to aid him in suppressing, even by the sharpest and most summary means; but were he to relax his exertions, or show any signs of distaste for his career, his position would become extremely critical.

For more than a year past, he had rather attended to his own

affairs than those of the piratical horde of which he was the chief, and the utmost energy and activity on his part had been necessary to maintain his position. Now that his resolution was fully made up, to abandon his comrades, and their hellish calling, apprehensions and doubts that never before darkened his mind, thickened around him. The system of espial always maintained by him, was kept up with renewed care; but nothing of any moment transpired, according to his information, which was calculated to justify his fears or anticipations.

After a long reverie, the Rover roused suddenly up, and rang slightly the small hand-bell at his side; and in a few moments Maria, dressed in her boy's habit, appeared. Valdez addressed her in a low, soft tone, which contrasted strangely with that which he had used in their last interview.

"You look sad, Maria. Have you not yet forgotten the harsh words you forced from my hasty temper?"

"Ah! senor, it were easy to forget and forgive all, if I could think your language was only the effervescence of a hasty temper. It is the cold reality of your stern resolution, that weighs heavily at my heart."

"Banish it then, Maria."

"And you will not desert me, then! You will not cast me off! Oh! promise me but that, Valdez, and more than ever command me, life and soul!"

Valdez gently extended his hand to the excited girl, whose large black eyes began to sparkle with hope, shining through the moisture which suffused them, like dew drops that catch the first bright sun ray of morning; and whose bosom heaved with rising emotion. She immediately clasped it in her own, and pressed it to her lips, as she sank on her knees at his feet. For a few moments, Valdez permitted her to remain undisturbed, then raising her kindly to his arms he bestowed a tender embrace upon her, softly whispering:

"Mine, until death, Maria!"

The emotion of the poor girl was powerful indeed, but in a

few moments, so perfect was the control she had acquired over her feelings, that all traces of it were subdued, and drawing gently from him, she asked—

"Your commands, senor?"

To reconcile the conduct of Maria, is not so hard as might appear at first blush. It is true, Valdez had not been her lover—that by a horrible treachery he had possessed himself of her person—and that marriage had only been resorted to on his part, to preserve his prize: but to her, it had been the only consolation of her dark fate, which shielded her from insupportable self reproach. She had not loved him when he became her husband—did not, perhaps, in its true meaning, now—but then he *was* her husband, the father of her child, and those who have read the female heart in its depths and its mysteries, who know that even as the ivy clings to the cold rugged rock where it has been trained to twine, so woman, a creature all sympathies and affections, is faithful to ties which custom, and sometimes force, have formed for her, will be little surprised if Maria had learned to value even her connection with the Pirate. Life possessed few, if any joys for her; but its endurance, when cast off by him, and deprived of all hope of again seeing her offspring, would have been too heavy a burden to support. The emotion, then, with which she heard his promise, was not to be wondered at.

In reply to her question, Valdez drew her again affectionately towards him, and asked in a low, cautious voice:

"Have you been as vigilant as usual, of late? Is there nothing astir on board?"

"Nothing that I can learn, senor: what is it you suspect?"

"The crew are jealous of my purpose to leave, which they have more than half suspected for some time past."

"But what of that, senor; will you not give them the brig, her equipments, and supplies; and can they not choose a new chief?"

"They do not like to lose the old one; nor do you know

enough of our people's habits to understand why they dislike to lose an accomplice. A comrade who leaves them for a more honest profession, they always look upon as a spy—a viper, whom they must endeavor to crush."

"And are you certain they suspect your purpose?" asked Maria, in some alarm.

"Aye! do I; and you must go to work on that supposition. I wish an accurate report of the state of their feelings, as well as of any dissatisfaction that may appear to disturb them; and I must have it quickly too."

"You shall be obeyed, senor," said the girl, as she retired.

While Maria busied herself to put in operation cautiously and carefully, that system of espial which Valdez had established, and so often confided to her woman's tact, the Pirate, himself, relapsed into his reverie.

"Aye!" murmured he, "the dogs are dissatisfied, and I have no doubt would throw me to the sharks, without a scruple. *But I shall baffle them!* and revenge myself too, for their kind intentions, if I find such to have been their purpose; yet, though I have felt the struggle must come, sooner or later, I would not that it came now: for it cumpers some of my best plans. This fair lady cousin of mine, too, will have been saved to little purpose, if such a struggle comes, and must then follow her fate. In good truth, she is fair enough to be worth an hour's dalliance, though, just now, my mind is too busy with thoughts of deeper import, to incline that way, nor do I care much for your cream-faced, milk-and-water dames, though she might find my crew, if they became the conquerors, less fastidious. But we shall see, we shall see!"

It was several hours after, when Maria again entered the cabin where Valdez was; she was pale, earnest in her manner, and bore the marks of internal and suppressed agitation.

Approaching the Rover, she said in a low tone—

"There is cause for alarm, senor! It is to be feared, two-thirds of the crew are already determined on some desperate act in regard to you. The hope of capturing the bark, has

unsettled their purpose for the present; but when you attempt to return to Havana, you will not be allowed to reach that port, where it is said you intend to compromise for your own pardon, by giving up the crew."

It is surprising, how indignant a villain is, at being suspected of any particular species of rascality, to which he has, by chance, an aversion. Deeply dyed as Valdez was in sin—ready to rob, murder, or do anything else monstrous, for his own gratification—nay, prompt as he would have been, in some desperate undertaking, to have sacrificed his companions to his own safety or success, without a feeling of remorse, yet to become a traitor, and yield them up to justice, possessed a peculiar atrocity in his eyes, the bare suspicion of which aroused his indignation.

"The treacherous knaves!" exclaimed he, "do they judge me by their own paltry motives? or do they think me so much in love with the law, as to sacrifice such a crew of scoundrels to propitiate its favor!"

"For God's sake, senor, be cautious! speak lower," said Maria in alarm, for Valdez had raised his voice somewhat loud.

"Fear not," said he in a lower tone, "my safety requires no such holocaust, nor did I contemplate it. But my plans are fixed as regards the knaves: in three days, they shall banish all thoughts of injuring me. Did you learn the names of the leaders in this fair scheme?"

"As yet, no, senor."

"The mate, Alonzo, think you not he is in the plot?"

"I can scarcely say, senor; and fear to injure him by my suspicions; but I will soon know more."

"Well, I can answer for you, *he is*, but be cautious; we have enough to go upon, to satisfy my views."

"I will. Have I permission to visit my brother?"

"With the caution I have given you, yes; but let your communication be brief. In the meantime, send the mate to me."

In a few moments Alonzo was in the cabin, where he was

received with an appearance of unaltered confidence; and conversation about the bark, the probabilities of overhauling her, etc., entered upon.

"Should we lose her, Alonzo," said the Pirate, in whose manner no sign of unusual feeling or want of interest could have been detected—"should we lose her, it will be a great misfortune."

"Certainly it will, senior; it is long since we had a good prize."

"Never fear, we will not lose her; we are about twenty-four hours' sail from Sandy Hook. Let the brig be kept direct on her course, and see all sail set that will draw, we shall be there twenty-four hours in advance of her, and it will go hard, but we will catch her yet."

"Aye, aye, sir!" answered the mate.

"And, Alonzo, even if this prize escape us, I have a scheme which will leave us little to regret, as far as gold is concerned," said Valdez, watching closely the countenance of his inferior as he spoke. He was enabled to detect nothing but the usual expression of calm deference, which it was accustomed to wear.

CHAPTER XIII.

*Fire Island—The Wreckers—Isaac, the Jew—Sam Soakes—
The Jew's Plans.*

THE Rover's brig had arrived off the harbor of New-York at least forty-eight hours before the arrival of the Louisa; and well was it for the latter, that, about twenty-four hours before, she had been chased off by an American cruiser, which had been stationed there since the information given to the commander of the Dolphin, by Jack Thompson, just previous to his embarking on board the merchant brig with Mrs. Burton. During the nor'wester, which blew the Louisa off, and which lasted for some days, the pirate was enabled to avoid his pursuer; and when the wind abated, he again shaped his course for New York, in the hope that he was not too late for his prize; at least, this was the idea which Valdez held out to his crew, but really on account of his own ulterior views, for he had fully made up his mind to abandon the brig, though he had really no intention of betraying his companions, as had been suspected of him by the conspirators on board: and he had also had an opportunity, through the means of the same boat employed in his former visit to New York, to communicate with his agent in the city, and send him instructions. Although the recent storm was succeeded by almost a dead calm, there were evident signs of foul weather in the horizon, which led the initiated to look for a heavy wind from the eastward. We must leave

our characters for awhile, to notice others, who have become unavoidably connected with the close of our story.

In a tenement situated on Fire Island, near Long Island, about six or seven days after the *Louisa* was blown off the harbor of New York, was collected a group of eight or ten men, of the roughest and most piratical appearance that could be well conceived. Their countenances indicated the lowest and most selfish characteristics that ever disgraced the "human face divine," accompanied with all the marks of bestial dissipation. They were engaged in smoking and drinking, occasionally uttering their low blasphemy, or exchanging their rude, heartless jokes. A new arrival was added to these, not particularly distinguished above the rest, except that the marks of dissipation were less recent on his face, and that his eye, perhaps, exhibited more cunning than would have been found in the expression of any other among his comrades.

"Where's Mr. Soakes?" demanded the new comer, gruffly.

"He's busy, Tom," answered one of the group; "so just open your bag, and let us have the news."

"Busy or not busy, he must come up; so, Tom Scraggs, just be after telling him, instead of reading your catechism to me."

"You'd as well be quiet, Devil's Tom, for you can't see him now. He's *fabbing* with old Ike, the Jew, and will be out in a jiffy; so, bring yourself to an anchor, and take a mug, while you give us the news."

"Come, Tom, the news, the news!" cried three or four voices. "It's no use being so close; you know it's all one."

"Well," said Devil's Tom, (for such was the *soubriquet* of the man,) "you know the *glimmers* were all fixed after dark to-night; and as the bark, that was trying to claw off, appears to have lost all idea of the channel, she has dropped her anchor, and seems like she was preparing to ride it out."

"She'd as well try to ride the devil's dam without martin-gale," exclaimed one.

"There's one thing I move, boys," said a rough, mulish-looking wrecker—for among such wretches, kind reader I have been compelled to introduce you for a short time—"there's one thing I move, and that's a full division of the spoils, at once. I've no notion of a trifle in hand, and wait three years for a full division. Sam Soakes is generally too smart, and buys off a fellow's share, long before it's due, for a mere song."

"But, Jim, don't you know it's clear agin the law, to sell peltry, for three years? And there's some watches us close, and would like to jug us," remarked one of the crew.

"Three years be d—d! Jew Ike knows better than that; and you can't *hum* me, that he and Sam don't know how to work that traverse."

Just as the speaker finished, the inner door of the apartment opened, and two individuals entered, one of whom I need not describe, for he was no more nor less than our former acquaintance, Isaac the Jew, who was in reality the agent of Valdez. The other was the leader of the wreckers, the proprietor of the house in which they were assembled—the redoubted Sam Soakes. In person he was short and heavy, and built for strength, with a florid complexion, and a low, sensual expression, mingled with much fierceness, both assumed and real, though, at times, he could smooth his countenance down into the most deferential politeness and urbanity that coarse hypocrisy can assume.

Order was soon restored after Soakes and his companion entered the room. The former listened to a report from Devil's Tom, and issued his orders to the different individuals of the group, who dropped off one by one, until he was left alone with Isaac, whom he addressed—

"And you think you know something of this bark, Isaac, ha?"

"If dere bish no mistake, I does, Mister Soakes; and if so be she ish de same, we make much monish."

"And was that what brought you to the beacn to-night, Isaac?"

"No, Mister Soakes, I know nothing, when I come, of de bark; but I know about one bark now on de coast—may be all de same."

"What do you know, Isaac?"

The Jew answered the question, by asking when he thought the bark would go ashore. Soakes' reply was, that it might be not until the next evening. Whereupon Isaac expressed his determination to return to the main land, promising Soakes to come back by twelve the next day, and to give him all the information he asked—cautioning him, at the same time, not to let his hands have the too free handling of the wreck. A surf-boat belonging to Soakes, well manned, took Isaac to the main shore, who carried with him some light but valuable articles, the purchase of which was made the pretended object of his visit to Soakes' house. The real object of the Jew, however, was in connection with the bark. She had been seen to leeward at the entrance of the harbor, trying to beat up by a pilot-boat that had run in; and Isaac, who, in consequence of the communication of the Rover, when he was off the harbor a few days before, had kept a sharp look-out, immediately understood the chances of her becoming a wreck, and determined to visit his old friend at Fire Island, with whom his transactions had become extensive, and devise some scheme for a grand haul at once. He had satisfied himself, but did not, for several reasons, choose to divulge at once his information, especially as he saw that the arrangements for plundering the wreck on a large scale were all made. His interview with Soakes, whose selfish and grasping nature he so well knew, had satisfied him that *he* would enter willingly into any scheme by which a considerable booty would fall to his own share, and that he could easily manage to rid himself of his companions.

The object with which Isaac so promptly returned to New York was the hope of communicating with the Rover, whose

brig had been seen by the same pilot boat from which the Jew obtained his information as to the bark (she was in his employ) lying too, about ten miles to windward, off the mouth of the harbor.

The plans of the Jew were these: If he could convey information to the Rover to return immediately to Soakes, promise him \$100,000, with the opportunity to leave the country for a time, or forever as he pleased, in the Rover's brig—and obtain his co-operation and assistance. The brig was to be off, ready to receive the spoils, which her crew would be sufficient to rescue from any civil force that might be collected to protect the wreck. He would go on board of the brig himself; for he felt sure that *he* would be permitted to land with *his* reward, as his usefulness to the Rover as an agent in New York, was his guarantee of safety. This he intended to do by means of the pilot boat, as he deemed it might be done with slight risk of detection; Soakes was to be left on board to the generosity and good faith of the *Pirates*. It was right shrewdly planned of the old Israelite, but we shall see the consummation.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Bark anchors off Fire Island—The Wreck—Scenes at Soakes' Hotel—A Bold Attempt at Plunder.

THE bark had experienced the same change of weather as the brig. The gale, which came on from the eastward, had blown her on the coast, and she would probably have made the harbor of New York in safety, but the wind, without abating, shifted round to the southward, and drove her right on Long Island beach. As long as there was the remotest chance of *clawing off*, that is, of beating to windward, Captain Ross spared neither pains nor exertion; but he had scarcely a hope of success in this himself, and when he found that if he kept sail on, he must inevitably go on shore, he made preparations to anchor the bark, that he might, if she could not ride out the gale, at least choose his own time and manner of beaching her, and save, if possible, the lives of his passengers and crew. His first thought was to run the Fire Island channel, that he might obtain a lea under Long Island beach, but the *glimmers*, or false lights, of which Devil's Tom, the wrecker, spoke in the last chapter, were set six or seven miles to eastward of the light-house, and had so far deceived him, that he only found out his mistake when too close in to enable him to make the true channel.

The bark was accordingly anchored five or six cables' length

outside of a bar, which here lies about a hundred yards out from the beach. Everything which skill and industry could do to save the bark, was accomplished. Her anchors were strongly backed, and all possible precaution taken to enable her to hold on to her anchorage; but the hopes of the commander were not sanguine. About daybreak the wind increased, and the bark was found to be dragging over the outer bar, upon which she struck several times severely. Captain Ross, who had not left the deck during the night, and who felt the full responsibility of his situation, had frequently advised with Captain Burton, who still kept him company. He now turned to him, and remarked:

"She must go, Captain; and I think it is time to look out for the safety of those on board."

"You are right," answered Burton; "but may I ask what your plan is?"

"To let her get cleverly over the bar, for I now know where I am; then get her as near broadside as possible, and cut away the masts."

"Just the thing, Captain; so just give your orders, and I'll stand by to lend a hand."

It was done as Captain Ross said. The masts fell, so as to make a tolerable breakwater, under the bar of which the bark went ashore. An attempt was made to land a portion of the passengers in the long boat, but the surf was high, and she swamped, though no lives were lost.

There was nothing now to do but to wait for assistance, or for the wind to abate, of which the weather gave fair promise; for there seemed no immediate danger of the bark going to pieces.

Sam Soakes, and one or two chosen men of his followers, had been the keen anxious observers of everything that took place in regard to the *Louisa*. About mid-day, as the gale somewhat abated, they launched a surf-boat, and succeeded in successfully landing the passengers, to whom Sam offered the comforts of his hotel. The force on board was too strong for any at-

tempt on the part of Sam and his wreckers at open plunder; but he determined not to lose the chances for want of vigilance.

As soon as the passengers were landed, Captain Ross set about caring for the safety of the cargo, and the interests of the owners. The crew were placed to watch the bark at once, under charge of the mate, with a general supervision confided to his friend Captain Burton, who, with the prompt generosity of a sailor, offered his services; and Captain Ross proceeded to Soakes' hotel to inquire the nearest Notary before whom to make his protest. Sam was exceedingly obliging, and offered a boat of his own to take him up to Islip, where he very cunningly recommended him to go, as he knew there was no chance of his accomplishing his business there, and that it would be too late on his return to go to Babylon, where he should have gone, before the next day.

During the afternoon the wind lulled considerably, and many of the lighter articles were got on shore with the assistance of Soakes, who very generously lent the aid both of his boat and followers. Among other things was a very heavy, and seemingly valuable chest belonging to Captain Ross, which he took under his special charge at the suggestion of the mate. The two men who remained with Sam were employed as messengers to the rest of the wreckers, who to the number of some thirty odd, were waiting a few miles off for information, or rather orders from Sam, to make a descent disguised and armed, and either frighten or beat off the crew, and plunder the wreck.

About sunset the Jew arrived. Soakes had looked for him with some anxiety before sending out his men, and retired with him immediately, that they might take counsel together. Isaac had communicated with the Rover, which had slipped into the harbor during the gale, and was now lying off the quarantine, disguised as a foreign brig of war; and had received orders to repair at once to the scene of the wreck, and await the brig's arrival. He was also directed to secure the coöperation of Soakes by any promises that were necessary, no matter how

extravagant. In his interview with Soakes, therefore, Isaac, by degrees and with consummate diplomacy, made Sam acquainted with the true value of the prize, impressed upon him the utter impossibility of securing her through means of his wreckers, and secured his services by the promise of one hundred thousand dollars, and a safe passage in the brig, whithersoever he chose to go.

It now became necessary for Soakes to get rid of his arrangement with the wreckers, which he attempted by sending one of his men to them, with an exaggerated account of the strength and watchfulness of the crew, and a promise that he would keep a good look out and seize an opportunity for plunder, as soon as possible.

About nine or ten o'clock at night, Captain Ross returned tired, angry, and suspicious. He had been sent on a "fool's errand," and it was now too late to go right before morning. With the aid of Captain Burton, however, he managed to arrange every thing as well as possible, for the safety of the bark, and he felt pretty easy as to the watchfulness of the crew, and their ability to protect her, though a strong suspicion of his host's honesty rested on his mind.

Upon retiring to his room at Soakes' hotel late at night, he remarked to Captain Burton, who was his companion, that he could not but entertain suspicions, and informed him that the mate had told him of the loss of two watches from his chest which had been carried up to the hotel.

"I never had a good opinion of our host," replied Burton, "though I have known him for some years, and as for Long Island wreckers, they are a set of infernal scamps; and I am somewhat inclined to believe he is in league with them, though he is respectably connected in Brooklyn."

"But surely you do not think they have force enough to attack us, or that they are bold enough to do so?"

"It is hard to say. At any rate, too much caution cannot be used in making all secure. It is well they do not know what

the most valuable part of your cargo really is; and for that reason I advised you to let the specie remain on board, as there appears to be no danger of the bark being destroyed before it can be safely removed."

"Your advice was good, my friend, and these rascals may mean mischief; but we will give them a warm reception if they attempt any such game. I have given my mate pistols; you and I have good double-barreled guns; and there are several muskets on board, and put into good hands."

The two Captains now prepared to retire, when Burton, whose suspicions seemed to be the strongest, remarked a bureau in one corner of the room, and turning to his companion, said, that he had a bunch of keys in his pocket, and felt disposed to examine the drawers.

"That would scarcely do, Captain, upon mere suspicion," remarked Captain Ross; "we may be altogether wrong, and the man perfectly honest."

"I am aware of the responsibility of the step; but my suspicions are strong, and my motives honest. I noticed the reluctance with which Soakes' wife consented to our occupation of this room, and have almost a presentiment of the result; so I will do it," said Captain Burton.

He accordingly applied his keys, and found one to fit. He opened a drawer, and the first object that met his eye, was a watch which Captain Ross recognized as belonging to his mate. On examining another drawer, he produced the second watch; and, after securing their door, the companions retired to bed, with their suspicions confirmed, and resolved to be doubly watchful.

About daylight, a messenger from the bark awoke Captain Ross with the news, that about thirty or forty men, with their faces blackened, and armed with clubs, had made their appearance on the beach, and threatened to board the ship. These were Soakes' wreckers who had grown impatient in waiting for him, and determined to act without him. Captain Ross and his

friend, together with two or three gentlemen passengers who promptly volunteered, repaired immediately to the beach, armed with their fowling-pieces, and soon scattered the wretches with the mere threat of a volley.

The crew were then armed according to the best means available, and every thing left in "ship-shape." Captain Ross returned to Soakes' house, the worthy proprietor of which was quite loud and indignant in his denunciations of the outrage.

Preparations were soon made for transferring the passengers to the main-land, and Captains Ross and Burton were to proceed at once to Babylon,—the former to make his protest, and return as speedily as possible to the care of his vessel,—and the latter with the purpose of going to Brooklyn to see his wife, and also to make certain arrangements for his friend, to whom he promised to send immediately an auxiliary force, to aid in guarding the bark and her cargo.

The affair of the watches had been bluntly mentioned by Captain Burton at the breakfast table; when the wife of Soakes spoke up boldly and without apparent embarrassment, and declared she had placed them herself for safe keeping, as they had been given her by the mate, when he was drunk on the previous afternoon, while Captain Ross was absent. She also added some very pertinent remarks about people being so mighty suspicious, and taking liberties where they had no business to.

Both Captains knew her statement to be false, for they were satisfied of the perfect sobriety, as well as upright and truthful character, of the mate; but they permitted the matter, however, to drop.

After their meal, the party embarked for the main-land.

CHAPTER XV.

The pirate crew Plot, and their chief Counter-plots—Maria having revealed their treachery to Valdez, he prepares a hellish Revenge!—Valdez leaves the Brig, and sends Isaac the Jew on board—They must all perish!

THE hopes of Valdez were somewhat excited in regard to the prize, and he calculated upon the effect among his crew in quieting their suspicions and reëstablishing his ascendancy; thereby enabling him to carry out more fully his ultimate designs. It is true, the measure he proposed was a bold one; but then the stake was high, and he was accustomed to bold adventures; while the impunity with which he had so long set the world at defiance, made him somewhat over confident. His plans of operation were pretty much such as have been detailed. Valdez intended to land with a sufficient force, seize upon the specie which the bark contained, convey it on board the brig, and make sail immediately for the Island of Cuba. With this purpose, he made sail on the evening after the wreck of the *Louisa*, and stood out. Events, however, as will be seen, changed the whole tenor of his conduct.

It will be recollected that Valdez gave permission to Maria to visit her brother. This was just after his own pretended kindness had so gladdened the heart of the poor girl, and, in her joy, regardless for once of the injunctions of the Rover, she revealed all to Juan, under the promise of profound secrecy. The satisfaction with which Gomez contemplated even this

meagre justice to his sister, disarmed him of much of his revenge, and he became, under the passionate persuasions of Maria, better reconciled to her fate, and less vindictive against the Rover. In this softened state of feeling, Maria found out that he knew something of the conspiracy going on in the brig.

It was just after the brig was outside of the Hook, that Maria entered the cabin of Valdez, and intimated her desire for a private interview.

"Senor," said she, as soon as an attendant who was in the cabin left, "your design is to obtain this prize, sail directly for Havana, and leave the brig: is it not so?"

"Yes, Maria," answered the Rover.

"And you told as much to Alonzo the mate, except that your absence in Cuba would be temporary, and your return on board speedy—did you not?"

"How knew you that?—yes, I told him so."

"Well, Senor, you know that my visits to Juan have already afforded us some information. He has at last become reconciled, is your friend, and has revealed all to me. First, you may not trust Alonzo—he is to be your successor."

"The villain, the d—d ungrateful villain!" muttered Valdez; as if he had any right to expect virtue in his minions: "but go on, Maria; time presses for my determination."

"The story is a short one, senor. They will forbear until the prize is aboard, and the brig fairly off the coast, then you are to be disposed of, and Alonzo becomes captain."

"Is your information sure, think you, Maria?"

"Juan has been trusted more deeply than would beseem their prudence—perhaps on account of his supposed enmity to you; and he revealed it all to me less than an hour ago."

"The devils! I'll baffle them yet, and pay them too! Well, Maria, away to your room, and have no fear; I must plot too."

The Rover saw that he had been nearly trapped, and that instead of thinking of the prize, his whole energies must be bent to prepare the means of self-preservation. The reader may

feel curious to know whether any consideration for her who had saved him, entered into his schemes; whether any gratitude or affection towards her, moved that stern and cruel heart? But the sequel will show him as hardened and remorseless a demon, as ever wore the human shape. His plans were soon laid, and diabolical they must seem, even in such a character, towards those who planned his own destruction.

"Yes, yes," muttered he to himself, "they shall all go. I will leave no wreck of the past. She too, for I will not have the encumbrance. Ha! it will be a brave idea to send them all—brig, crew, wife, and all—in one blast, to h—! Aye, even this fair lady cousin, whom I reserved so daintily to confirm my intended treaty with her husband. There will then only be two lives in my way to the inheritance, if intrigue and diplomacy fail. It shall be done—but I must plot cunningly, if I propose boldly."

"What ho! on deck there!" he called out aloud—"send the mate to me!"

Alonzo descended quickly to the cabin, wearing the usual expression of deference and respect for his superior upon his countenance.

"Well, Alonzo, we'll soon have a truck of the old times—ha?"

"It is to be trusted so, senor," replied the mate; "but may I ask the plan of action?"

"Certainly—I sent for you for that purpose," said Valdez. "You will detail forty men, well armed with cutlasses and pistols, and a dozen muskets, and hold yourself in readiness to land at a signal. As soon as we arrive nearly off the wreck, I will take the whale-boat, and a couple of hands, and land about four or five miles above, where I shall meet my agent, who is already on the ground to give the information. I will either come off, or make signal, as may be, and the detail will immediately pull ashore. You may have some hard scratching, but we will not fail."

"No danger of that, senor; *los demonios* (the devils) are used to hard knocks. But may I ask if you are sure of your agent?"

"You may judge for yourself. He is old Isaac, the Jew, of whom, I think, you know something."

"It is all right, then, senor," said the mate, as in obedience to the Rover's hand, he left the cabin. A few minutes after he had retired, the Rover went to the door of Maria's room, secured it with an outside bolt, drew a blind to prevent her from seeing into the cabin; he then opened a locker near the stern of the brig, took out various things, removed, at last, a false bottom, and unscrewed with care a copper box, revealing, as he took it off, a well-loaded fusee of the same metal, which, in reality, led to the magazine. Finding everything correct, he carefully replaced it, while with a smile of infernal meaning, he muttered,—“A slow match, that will burn for four or five hours. I have some prepared for the purpose; by that time the boat will return. I shall be safe ashore, and *El Demonio*, with her traitor crew, gone to her namesake in hell!”

It was well nigh mid-day when the brig lay to, the next day, off the lighthouse, on Long-Island beach; Valdez's boat was lowered, and the gale having abated, he was enabled speedily, to pull ashore. He was too cunning to rouse suspicion, by attempting to take anything away from the brig. In fact, the amount of his valuables on board was not extensive; for the immense fortune he had accumulated in his dark career, had been safely invested in funds. A few jewels of value, and gold, were easily secreted upon his person, as were also the important papers belonging to Captain Burton, which he took out of their box.

Valdez found Isaac upon his arrival, and was informed of all particulars of the wreck, and, moreover, of the probability of a civil force that night.

"Well, Isaac, all shall be right. You shall go on board, to guide the boats right, and hurry them on shore."

"No, no, my good senor," said the trembling Jew, in good Spanish, "I will stay with you; we will go back together, and you can send word by your men."

"But I say, Isaac, that *you will go on board*," said the pirate, in a decided tone, but with a playfulness of manner, as if to give the Jew confidence. "Come, come, old boy, what do you fear? Jump in the boat, and tell Alonzo not to start for three hours (looking at his watch) after you get on board. Mind, I am particular."

Thus admonished, the Jew unwillingly entered the boat, which immediately returned towards the brig. Valdez contemplated first the boat, and then the brig:

"There they go, and will be on board in time; the match is sure, and; in less than two hours, every living proof of my career will be lost. 'Twas a cunning thought to send the old Jew off; he might have become troublesome hereafter. And this wrecker—he knows nothing by eyesight, yet he must be cared for. Have I no regrets? Pshaw! not one. Yes—my brave brig—the staunchest and the swiftest that ever swam upon the blue ocean! It is not thus that I would part with you, my noble bark; but you must go. The sacrifice is necessary; and never did Antonio Valdez pause from love or fear, when an obstacle opposed his progress."

Turning abruptly from this view, and ceasing his soliloquy, Valdez strode on in the path by which Isaac had directed him to the "Hotel" of Sam Soakes.

CHAPTER XVI.

Maria defeats the purpose of Valdez, and plans with old Ramon—Death before dishonor.

WE must now return a short time to the brig. Juan Gomez had been released from his confinement, by order of the Rover, which was given as an earnest of his sincerity towards Maria, and had resumed quietly his ordinary duties on board. Jack Thompson, of whom we have for some time lost sight, had nearly recovered of his wounds, and, from a policy that cannot be blamed, under the circumstances, had agreed, as the price of his life, to ship on board the pirate, though he had, so far, kept out of the Rover's observation.

The Rover had scarcely left his vessel before Maria, pale as death, but yet firm, had issued from her apartment, and approaching the locker, opened it, and removed, with extreme caution, everything therefrom, and examined the slow match, which she found lit, and attached to the fusee, of which it is spoken in the preceding chapter. It would naturally seem, that her first impulse would have been to remove it at once, and thus relieve the brig and her crew from their imminent peril; but a second thought came over the girl, and arrested her purpose; she knew, from overhearing Valdez, that if left to itself, the match had several hours to burn, before there was any danger from the ignition of the fusee, and explosion of the magazine. And the

thought that, abandoned by Valdez, she was at the mercy—so soon as his intentions were known on board—of the lawless and desperate crew, gave pause to her purpose, since even the frightful fate the Rover had prepared for her, in common with his crew, were far preferable, degraded as she was, to the living death she would be forced to endure.

The natural abhorrence of her woman's nature, however, to the death of those whom she had been accustomed to see around her, gave her energy for at least an effort for salvation, without the awful sacrifice.

"And then," she thought, "if I must die, to save myself from loathsome brutality, a leap into the clear waters, where I have so often gazed in the vain search for consolation and sympathy, were far better than this catastrophe. Yes! let me sink, un mutilated, into their calm and peaceful depths, to rest, until my soul arises, to seek the God, whose mercy can receive such as I."

Rising, Maria closed the locker, and rung a small bell, with which she was in the habit of calling her attendant. A boy made his appearance, and received the command to send Ramon to the cabin. On account of his age, position as next in command to the mate, (he was boatswain), and the confidence Valdez placed in him, Ramon entered freely the cabin, when sent for by Maria, who felt more easy to take the liberty with him than another.

As soon as he arrived, which was speedily, Maria, laying her head upon his shoulder, addressed him with some emotion—

"Ramon, I have always felt as though you would be kind to me in an emergency, though I know not wherefore. Now, I do; Juan tells me you knew our father."

"Yes, and owe the last goodness, left in my heart, to his children. What shall I do to serve you? I am willing, if in my power. Once, I supposed, such an hour might come; but Juan says the Rover treats you kindly, and promises to acknowledge his marriage."

"So he did."

"Then what would you now of old Ramon? When the hour comes, you may trust him."

"Then, listen to me, and be patient. The Rover you will never see again; he has abandoned the brig."

"What! eh!—gone for good! Where is the wreck—the money? Has he given them all up?"

"Perhaps he deems life a fairer boon than gold."

"Life! ha! he has heard, then; all is betrayed?"

"Be quiet, good Ramon. I ask not what is betrayed, though, perhaps, I understand that too. Look here!"

And she removed, with care, the top of the locker, and exhibited to the astonished sailor, the slow burning match coiled with so much caution, that its folds were in no danger of contact, while one end was attached to the fusee. Ramon understood all in an instant.

"Quick, girl, out of the way! let me take the d—d thing off. Oh, when the devil's own brood were hatched, Antonio Valdez was born!" exclaimed the old pirate, as he gently detached the match, and drew it from its dangerous position. "And yet," continued he, "it is but turn about; for they would have served him as bad, perhaps; though I have stood up to the last against hurting him."

"Yes, Ramon, that's right; take it away; for I've no wish to harm the brig or the crew, though I let it remain until your own eyes could see it," as she sank languidly upon a seat. The old pirate turned to gaze thoughtfully upon the girl. After a few moments' pause, he said, solemnly—

"And you, poor girl, what becomes of you?"

"That is the question, Ramon; I would care little to hide my shame and sorrow in the deep sea; but my brother must be saved; and I would fain say a prayer at my mother's grave, before I die."

"They shall quarter me, before they touch you! and I think old Ramon could find a few friends on board, to lend him a

hand in a tight place, even though they laughed at his soft heart."

"What will be the first step, Ramon, when the crew learn Valdez's desertion?"

"They will choose their officers. Though that is easy done, as the matter is pretty well settled now. Alonzo is first, and I second."

"Alonzo!" exclaimed Maria.

"Ay! I know what you mean. He loves too well to look at your black eyes, and that's all that puzzles me."

"Ramon," said Maria, solemnly, "you profess to have some good feeling for me, on my father's account; aid me in this, and I will pray for you to God. Listen to my plan. Go on deck, and reveal the Rover's desertion; let them choose their officers, and then bring Alonzo, and one or two of their chief men here; I will be ready for them."

"What do you mean?"

"Fear not; Maria can only die once."

The old pirate, yielding to her request, immediately went on deck, and summoned a council, to whom the fact of Valdez having left the brig for good was revealed; and who accordingly proceeded to regulate their affairs.

Maria went at once to the apartment of Mrs. Burton, who had received so much sympathy and kindness at her hands, that her eye had learned to brighten at her approach, or sadden at her departure.

"Well, Maria," she said, as the Spanish girl approached, "what news?"

"Very sad, lady; the Rover has deserted the brig, and endeavored to blow her up; though, thank Heaven! I discovered, and have defeated his purpose."

"And what is to become of us? I am all doubt and mystery," said Mrs. Burton, growing very pale.

"Alas! lady, that hangs upon the result of the next hour, perhaps. But, tell me; would not death be sweet, if it saved you

from dishonor—from the cruel and brutal lust of such men as you see here?"

"Oh! a thousand times welcome! Maria, I have a husband, a son—whom I love as my soul; I would not leave them; but if I must, let it be, as that I can meet them in heaven, without a blush! Oh! kill me, dear Maria! kill me at once!" And she sank almost in a swoon upon her bed, covering her face with her hands.

"Stay, lady," said Maria—"there is yet a chance; I may yet save you—do you remain quiet, and pray, pray, lady; for God must hear one so pure and good. If I fail, I will not desert you—we will die together." So saying, she took the cold lifeless hand of Mrs. Burton, pressed it to her lips, and left the apartment.

The crew had settled upon their officers—Alonzo was captain, Ramon mate, and an old, fierce-looking Frenchman, boat-swain. These, with two others of the crew, proceeded, by the request of Ramon, to the cabin, Alonzo's eyes sparkling with anticipation, and glowing with satisfaction, and Ramon looking discomfited and uneasy: close behind them, and unobserved, except by the old Pirate, came Gomez—his teeth set, his eyes gleaming, his lips compressed and pale.

CHAPTER XVII.

Heroism of the Spanish Girl!—The Deliverance; and the Escape—Critical position of Captain Ross, and his Bark—The Pirates Baffled—Death of Isaac, the Jew.

WHEN the new commander of the brig arrived at the threshold of the cabin, a scene met his sight which startled him, bold and reckless as he was. Ramon had explained to them the danger from which the watchfulness of Maria had rescued the brig, and commented upon the gratitude due her, so far, as to raise even a momentary shade of that feeling in the depraved and hardened hearts of those around him; and, perhaps, with the exception of Alonzo, who had long admired the beauty of Maria, those now in power, were prepared to have acted generously towards her. The new chief, however, was too full of selfishness for this.

But to the scene which he saw when about to enter the cabin. In the middle of the floor stood Maria, with a pistol in each hand, the muzzle pointed downwards, and her fingers upon the trigger; while strewed around her were several pounds of powder, and a train leading to the fusée, which, it has been said, communicated with the magazine. Maria was calm and pale, with high and stern determination written upon her brow, and beaming from her eyes.

"Pause!" she exclaimed, "and listen to me. I have this day saved the brig, and all your lives. I ask of you but the justice to set the poor lady who is on board, my brother, and myself,

on shore, be it even upon yon barren beach, and then speed you as God chooses to permit.—But I know you well, and have taken my determination. Know, then, that rather than be detained against my will, with one motion of my finger I will fire this train, and send brig and crew to destruction."

"For God's sake, senora, be careful!" said Alonzo, pale with emotion, and trembling with fear and rage. "Why is this? You shall be treated with all honor and respect, and landed, when we return to our own native island, wherever you please; and with such a dower as befits the lady of our former chief."

"I trust you not, so give me your answer."

Alonzo, while speaking, had slyly drawn a pistol from his belt, which he raised quickly, with the intention of ending the scene with the death of the desperate girl, conscious that his own distance from the powder would leave little danger of ignition from his fire. But the quick eye of Juan caught the movement, and his knife gleamed over the pirate's shoulder. A more judicious hand, however, was present for the safety of all. Old Ramon also saw it; and, pushing Juan back with one hand, before his movement was seen by Alonzo, he arrested the hand of the latter, exclaiming—

"Hold, Captain! don't you see her finger is hard pressed upon the trigger? It will go off to a certainty as she falls, and we are done for."

"Your answer?" demanded Maria, sternly; "you see treachery will only recoil on yourselves."

"Come, come," said Ramon, "what she asks is not so unreasonable. She has saved the whole of us, and can be of no use on board, for I won't see her wronged after what she's done."

This expression would have been hazardous, in view of the strict and bloody discipline of the Pirate code, at another time, but Alonzo felt his authority new, and old Ramon, too, felt that he had the support of those around him.

"In the devil's name, then, let the girl go—man a boat, and set her ashore, to follow after her master. But why should

we part with the other woman, or discharge a good hand?" said Alonzo.

"I will have no compromise," said Maria, firmly; "aye! you must swear it upon the cross, by *the oath you know of*."

Again the newly-elected chief frowned and bit his lips with rage.

"Vell, Captain," said the boatswain, who was a Frenchman, "vat shall we do—de lady ish go blow all to de *diable*; we suppose go set dem on shore, ha?"

"We are wasting time," said one of the crew, who had been permitted to accompany the rest to the cabin, as an adviser. "I suppose the Captain means to make an effort for our prize yet, even though one traitor has deserted."

"True," exclaimed Alonzo. "Ramon, ship them off, bag and baggage; for I must make ready for the wreck. Give them the whale boat, and let her join us."

"Do you take the oath?" asked Maria, doubtful whether to leave her position, although she had heard the orders of the pirate.

Alonzo, however, had left, and old Ramon replied—"It's no use; we're agreed; but stand where you are a minute, and we will be ready in a jiffy."

Leaving Gomez at the door, he went to man the boat, in which, by the way, he placed Jack Thompson, with a hint that he well understood.

Maria, making a sign to her brother, quickly left her position, spoke a few words to Mrs. Burton, who had been a silent and unobserved witness of the whole scene, and then quickly secreted about her person a few jewels of value, and a purse of gold, and had just resumed her position when Ramon came to announce the boat ready.

"You may lay them down now," said he, "and come up as quickly as possible."

Throwing a thick veil over Mrs. Burton, whose feeble steps she kindly supported, Maria and her *protege* ascended to the

deck, and were assisted by Ramon over the side into the boat, which lay under the quarter. In a few moments they were fast pulling towards the shore.

That portion of the brig's crew detailed for the capture of the prize, were soon armed and in the boats. The brig was left under Ramon's charge, and the commander, with his force, pulled for the wreck, accompanied by old Isaac—who was willing, for a consideration, to guide Alonzo as freely as he had purposed to do so for Valdez. This, of course, was promised him.

Valdez, after sending off the boat which carried him on shore, instead of taking his way towards the "Hotel" of Soakes, crossed over the beach, in hopes of finding a boat which would convey him to the main island.

The boats of the pirates rapidly approached the wreck, and the information was given to Captain Ross, who prepared to defend, to the best of his ability, his charge. His anxiety and apprehensions, however, were wrought to the highest degree, and many a wistful glance did he cast in the direction from whence he expected the auxiliary force promised by Captain Burton. Closer and closer the boats approached, and the crew could scarcely be restrained from pouring in their fire, though strictly ordered to reserve it by Captain Ross. About three or four hundred yards off, on the beach, were hovering the band of wreckers, blackened, and armed with clubs, who had previously visited him. His situation was indeed critical. Sam Soakes was nowhere to be seen. At that crisis a blue wreath of smoke was seen to issue from the side of the brig, and, in a few seconds, the sound of her signal-gun came booming on their ears.

"What in hell's name is that for?" asked Alonzo, as he turned to look at his craft, and saw a signal flying from the mast-head.

"Look yonder, to win'ard, Captain," said an old sailor, pointing in that direction where a white sail was barely perceptible.

but which must have been plainly seen on board the brig; "the wind's fresh'ning too," continued the old tar, shaking his head.

"By G—d, it's that d—d cruiser!" exclaimed Alonzo, as he reluctantly gave the order for the boats to turn back, which they did, the pirates bending to their oars with renewed vigor, and muttering deep and bitter curses.

The movement had somewhat puzzled Captain Ross, but on sweeping the horizon with his glass, he too caught sight of the strange sail, and instantly divined the cause. In the excess of joy at their escape, the crew gave three cheers, and fired a volley on the retreating pirates, which fell harmless around them, except one shot. Old Isaac, upon the sudden determination of the pirates to return to their brig, had risen to expostulate on being carried back with them—a bullet pierced his brain, and he fell into the sea.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Conclusion—A Tragedy—Juan Gomez consummates his Revenge—The Troubles of the other Characters are happily ended.

CAPTAIN BURTON was both surprised and grieved, on his return to Brooklyn, to find that his wife had sailed for Havana; and was somewhat puzzled as to the course that he himself should pursue. After spending an hour or two with his son and mother-in-law, he determined to do his immediate duty to his friend Captain Ross, and set to work at once to procure a competent and well-armed police force—which he was enabled to do. It was just after the pirates had been compelled to turn back, by the appearance of the cruiser, that he returned to the wreck. Captain Ross received him kindly, and explained how nearly his arrival was opportune. They both proceeded to the beach to watch the brig; although everything on board was ready to move in an instant's warning, yet she appeared to be riding listlessly and carelessly at anchor, without any thought of the approaching danger. Her boats were rapidly nearing her, and soon arrived on board. A few seconds only seemed to elapse, before she was under sail, standing with a freshening breeze to the eastward, but evidently with much disadvantage in the chase, for the cruiser had come up handily since she was first discovered, and now lay on the weather

quarter of the brig—from which position there was no escape, on account of the south-west direction of the wind, and her proximity to the beach.

Long and anxiously did the group watch the chase, in which they could not fail to admire the wonderful qualities of the Rover's brig, which, under these disadvantages, seemed likely to hold her own. The shades of the evening were closing around when Captain Burton proposed to proceed to the "Hotel," as he himself wished to return to Brooklyn that night.

"Well," said Captain Ross, "she is certainly the devil's own craft, or she could not walk away from a cruiser under all these disadvantages, but I trust she'll catch it this time; she has a long lee shore to weather."

"Oh, easy matter to do that, and still beat your heavy cruiser, I opine," said a strange but manly voice at his elbow. Turning around, the commander of the bark saw a genteel-looking person in a shooting garb, with a fowling-piece in his hands.

"Excuse my remark," added the stranger, "but I always feel interested when I see a gallant stag distance the hounds that follow in his track; or even a wolf—ferocious beast that he is—bravely defying his pursuers."

Then, in a tone of much urbanity, the stranger asked if he had not heard them mention a hotel, and if they would not have the kindness to point it out to him, as he had hunted, without any refreshments, all day, the boat which had set him over on the beach that morning not having returned for him according to promise.

He was courteously and kindly invited to accompany them, Captain Burton offering him a passage to the main-land when they had obtained refreshments.

When the group arrived at Soakes' Hotel—who, by the way, had not yet made his appearance—Captain Burton was extremely surprised to find Jack Thompson at the door. The surprise was indeed mutual, and the old sailor immediately

beckoned his former commander aside; to have a parley with him, in which he briefly detailed to him the whole of the incidents with which the reader is already familiar, as far, that is, as they were known to him.

"And my wife, Thompson, where is she? tell me—tell me quickly."

"All right, Captain. Safe and snug moored in her room up stairs. But hadn't you better heave out a signal before you board her too suddenly? Such an unexpected meeting might take her aback."

"Never fear, Jack," said the Captain, smiling. "She knows my hail. But did you not tell me the Rover had landed on the beach?"

"Yes, Captain; five or six hours ago."

"Ah! most probably then he has found his way to the main-land, and has doubtless accomplices enough in New York to effect his escape."

Captain Burton now proceeded at once to his wife's room. The meeting between them was indeed full of the deepest, and most heartfelt affection; and marked by not a little agitation on both sides, at the recollection of the perils which had been encountered. Mrs. Burton presented Maria as her savior, and asked her husband's regard and protection for the poor girl. Captain Burton recognized her, and she for the first time saw, to know him, her deliverer on that sad, and never to be forgotten day, when her mother was murdered.

The recollections almost overpowered her, and she was about to retire for the moment, until she could recover herself, when Jack Thompson entered abruptly and whispered something in the ear of Captain Burton.

"What! the stranger? Is it he! Are you sure, Jack?" demanded Burton.

"Quite sure, sir," was the reply. "I would not trust my own eyes; but Spanish John recognized him through the win-

dow, and I could scarcely keep the young devil from rushing in on him with his knife."

"This is then a strange and mysterious providence!" said Captain Burton, losing himself for an instant in thought, but rousing himself, for he well knew the occasion required prompt action, he whispered: "Quick! Jack, slip out and get three or four of the guard, let them load their muskets, and bring them around the back way. Where is John?"

"Just outside the door, waiting for you, sir."

"Well, *bear a hand*, Jack," said the Captain, and turning to his wife and Maria, he excused himself for leaving them abruptly, but bade them remain where they were, until his return. At the door, he found John, pale with suppressed passion, his nostrils distended, his dark eyes flashing fire, and his hand clutching the long knife he wore at his belt. A few words, however, sufficed to subject him to the control of one to whom he looked up with almost veneration. Giving him his orders to follow quietly, he went out to the back of the house where Jack Thompson and his guard were already arrived. Stationing these as he thought most proper for his purposes, he entered alone the room where the Pirate, for it was indeed Valdez himself, sat conversing with Captain Ross. The quick eye of the Rover instantly detected something more than usual in the appearance of Captain Burton, and he turned at once to examine the window, where he saw the peering face of the guard, and the glitter of a musket. He then calmly confronted Burton, without uttering a syllable, or appearing at all conscious of his position. The latter was well satisfied, however, that he was but contemplating some bold and desperate movement, and addressing him in a quiet, but firm voice, he said:

"It is of no use, sir; escape is impossible—so you may as well surrender quietly. I know you."

"And, pray who may I be, sir?"

"The renowned, and bloody Rover, Mendez—"

"Otherwise called Antonio Valdéz, your mother's relative," said the Rover coolly, who was still meditating escape.

Burton advanced, and Valdez, whose mind seemed made up as to his course, drew a pistol and levelled it at his head, while a smile of devilish triumph played about his mouth—entrapped as he was, he had yet his foe—his rival—in his power, and one touch of that trigger which he held with firm unflinching nerves, would send him out of the world before him. The pause and smile were but natural under the circumstances, but they were fatal to his purposes of revenge. At the same instant, Juan Gomez sprang forward, a knife gleaming in his grasp, and Captain Ross threw himself upon the Pirate. The report of the pistol rang through the apartment, but the ball missed its aim, to find a place in the only heart that held one sentiment of kindness for the outlawed wretch!

Maria, who had overheard the whispering of Captain Burton and Jack Thompson, and suspecting its import, had followed him down just in time to receive her death-wound from the hands of her mother's murderer!—her own destroyer!

The shriek of the girl as she fell, reached the ears of her brother just as he grappled with the pirate, and regardless of everything—excited to madness—he drove his knife twice into the breast of Valdez, before a hand could arrest him. The Rover sank with a groan, and expired in a few minutes, muttering the name of Maria, whose fate he lived just long enough to learn.

Upon the person of Valdez, Captain Burton found his papers. Maria was conveyed to an apartment, where every attention was paid her, which affection and tenderness could suggest. But it was all in vain; she died in less than an hour, breathing a prayer, even for her destroyer.

Captain Ross was successful in saving most of his cargo; but *that* chest, of which Sam Soakes was so careful, "as the Captain's," has never been recovered, though the Captain thinks he saw a costly shawl which it contained, about three years

after, on the shoulders of the lady who was about to take such good care of the *drunken* mate's watches.

Captain Burton was confirmed in the possession of his Cuba estate; but soon sold out, and now lives happily at a beautiful place which he has purchased a few miles up the East River. Jack Thompson is with him. Of Spanish John, he has heard nothing for some time. Sam Soakes still flourishes at the old place, and may find himself again in some future work from our pen.

And now, kind reader, you may turn in, as we are about to do; for Mrs. Brace has been growling this half hour at us, for sitting up so late.

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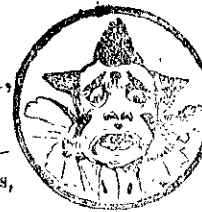
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