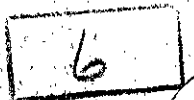


THE
BLACK CRUISER.

OR, THE



SCOURGE OF THE SEAS.

BY

MAT MIZEN,
AUTHOR OF "THE FIRE-SHIP; OR, THE PIRATE'S DAUGHTER."



NEW YORK:
ROBERT M. DE WITT, PUBLISHER.
13 FLANKPORT STREET.

[187-03]

208

NBF p. 6

THE BLACK CRUISER.

CHAPTER I.

THE PIRATE'S FIRST CRUISE.

ON the wide ocean, once the scene of so many daring exploits, but few openly professed robbers are to be found. Now and then, to be sure, a good respectable cut-throat is to be found, who carries a black flag at each mast-head, makes all the men he captures walk the plank, like the grand Seigneur marries all the women, and lives a jolly, roistering life till he blows himself into the air, or goes to the bottom with his colors nailed to the mast like a brave man.

For my part, when such a gentleman is found, I think he ought to be cherished the more for the rarity of his character—hung, of course, if he is caught, but respected as long as he manages to roam at liberty.

For a reason not very dissimilar, I hold in the greatest esteem a certain Senor Don Jose Montes Pepe, a hidalgo of the highest honor and integrity, who flourished not many years ago, and extended his reputation to all parts of the world.

Whether Don Pepe owed his existence to honest and respectable parents, may be strongly doubted; of his birth and education, therefore, the less said perhaps the better—his enemies even asserted that he had no right to the Don before his name—but thus much he could affirm, that less honest gentlemen than himself had assumed it before him. Pepe first saw the light of this sublunary world not far from that spot famed in history, the now decayed town of Palos, whence the great discoverer of the western hemisphere set out on that important expedition which served so extend the eyes of mankind wider than they had ever opened before.

I do not know that in consequence of this locality Pepe troubled his head much about Columbus, or ever read his voyages, but at a very early age he exhibited a very strong predilection for a sea-life.

Finding that his friends, who, for certain reasons, intended him for the church, did not coincide in his views, he bolted, carrying away, to

supply his present wants, as much of their money as he could lay his hands upon, and, into the bargain, some silver and gilt utensils used in the sacred mysteries, and which were under the charge of a certain holy friar in a neighboring convent. Scandal says that to one or the holy fathers he bore a strong resemblance; but of that nothing certain can be learned.

Knowing that were he caught consequences far from pleasant would ensue, besides the loss of his wealth, Pepe made the best of his way on board a ship sailing for South America. As he could pay for his passage, no questions were asked, and he was treated like a gentleman, having the air and manners of one to perfection, being a very good-looking fellow into the bargain, with a tall, manly figure, and an intelligent countenance.

In fact, he had always been a great favorite among the ladies, who being, as is acknowledged since the days of our fair mother, Donna Eve, at the bottom of all mischief, had persuaded him that it would be a great pity so nice a young man should have his crown shaved, and sleep for the rest of his days in a cold cell within the walls of a convent. So, as I have said, he went to sea.

Knowing, however, that he might have some difficulty in replenishing his pockets, he was not idle during his voyage, but by being always wide awake, he soon made himself acquainted with all the details of seamanship, so that by the time the ship reached Monte Video he was no contemptible seaman.

He liked the style of life so much, that he determined to go to sea at once; but the seductions of the sex in the New World, as it had done in the old, again proved his bane, showing also that the change of climate had not altered their natures.

He went to their tertullias, he sang and danced, he made love, and would have married, had not the ladies already been provided with husbands; he laughed and he smoked, he drank and he gamed, regardless of the future, till one night on his return home, happening to look into his chest, he found it empty, or rather full of old clothes; he searched his pockets—not a dollar could he find in them.

He then sat down like a philosopher, and after meditating a little on affairs in general, and his own in particular, he came to the conclusion that he was not worth a maravedi.

Other young gentlemen might have been disconcerted at this discovery, but Pepe instead went to bed, and determined to think the matter over on the morrow.

He had no relations or rich monks to rob, or there would have been no difficulty about the affair, he thought. He had also not a few debts, for his credit was extensive, and he patronized all the best tradesmen in the place.

It struck him, however, as he was dressing in the morning, after a refreshing night's rest, that soon he required change of air for his health, so he ordered a new kit as soon as he went, paid—not his bills—but a round of visits in the evening to his fair friends, and at night went on board a fast schooner, the captain of which was an acquaintance of his.

During his second cruise, he contrived to improve still further his nautical education, though, as he spent his money as fast as he got it, he was not the richer for his toil.

Thus, for three or four years, he remained constantly at sea, undergoing all its vicissitudes and increasing in knowledge, till at last he shipped on board a schooner, bound for the coast of Africa, to take in a cargo of slaves, which were then to be sold in one of the West India markets.

The speculation was successful, for Blacks were up when they arrived, and only a third had died; thus Pepe again found himself supplied with funds to carry on the war.

So pleasantly passed his life on shore, that he was in no hurry again to go to sea; and when the slaver sailed, he was nowhere to be discovered.

Pepe must at this time have been a bad calculator, for his money was soon gone, and his credit did not last much longer. His resources were, however, in one respect inexhaustible—he always contrived to keep up appearances, the true way to greatness. He had, by his good looks or his soft tongue, won the affections of the wife of a wealthy planter. The husband, to get rid of Senhor Pepe, offered him a berth on board a richly-freighted merchantman, bound for Cadiz, in Old Spain.

Pepe accepted the offer, and sailed; but he had his reasons for wishing not to go home; he preferred seeing more of the world first; so he persuaded the crew to take a cruise with him down the South American coast, where he sold his cargo to the Portuguese, and ended by selling the ship.

He then gave their share of the profits to his men, bought a fast schooner, fitted her out with guns, and as he was in no way particular as to morality of character, he had no difficulty in shipping a crew.

Behold Don Pepe at length launched as captain of his own ship. He had found slaving it profitable before, that he determined to try a speculation on his own account; and as he had plenty of dollars to purchase half-a-dozen cargoes, he forthwith sailed for the African coast.

Surely he must have been born under a fortunate star, for again success blessed his labours, and he cleared an enormous profit, but when are mortals content? Pepe immediately sailed on another voyage; a new passion had entered his soul, and the sex had gone to leeward—he was beginning to grow avaricious.

In the mean time, England had discovered that she and the rest of the world had for many centuries been actively engaged in a very nefarious traffic: and that, if she did not put a stop to the slave trade, a number of most unpleasant occurrences would assuredly come to pass.

She had also persuaded some of her allies and friends, by dint of strong argument, to join her in her philanthropic project, promising to take all the trouble upon her own shoulders, which her said disinterested friends not only fully intended that she should do, but also slyly purposed to increase the load as much as they could, calculating that with the kind aid of the climate her officers would have no sinecure appointment of it, and would soon induce her to abandon the enterprise.

But to return to Pepe's adventures. One fine morning, as the El

Carmen, the name of his new schooner, was off the mouth of the Nunn river, out of which she had come during the night, with about two hundred slaves on board, he observed a strange sail five or six miles away to the northward.

The haze was too thick to make out clearly, but Pepe had a strong suspicion that her appearance boded him no good: in fact, he could not divest his mind of the idea that she was a British cruiser. The breeze which had come off the land at night had completely fallen, the sea was smooth and shining, and the long, low line of mangroves on the pestilential shore looked dark and dreary.

Pepe walked the deck of his vessel with a glass under his arm, which he every now and then turned towards the strange sail: for though she, like *El Carmen*, was then becalmed, she might first get the breeze and bring it down with her. If she were also a man-of-war, she would have boats, he recollected, and might very probably think fit to overhaul him with them.

Now, although his vessel carried six long guns, and he and his crew were perfectly ready to fight if required, as he did not care one jot for the honour and glory to be gained thereby, he saw no manner of use in risking his own life, or the lives of his people, if it could possibly be avoided. He therefore got out his sweeps, and with his boats towing ahead pulled away to the southward.

The *El Carmen* was a fast craft, and soon made good head-way, but her proceedings were observed by the stranger to the northward. Captain Pepe had mounted into the main rigging, and kept his eye intently fixed on her.

For some time he was unable to make out anything to alarm him; but at last, as his telescope ranged over the intermediate space of water, he discerned three little black spots floating on its surface, no bigger apparently than so many black beetles swimming in a horse-pond.

Having satisfied himself, however, that they were ship's boats, and probably full of armed men, who would prove ugly customers if they once managed to get on board his vessel, he descended on deck and ordered the boarding nettings to be triced up, the guns to be loaded with grape and canister, and to be run out, and the arm-chest to be thrown open, and pikes placed ready to repel the enemy.

The schooner was soon in fighting order, and the crew, having done everything necessary, like brave men, prepared for the worst.

Although the enemy's light boats pulled three times as fast as they did, still they continued at their oars to prolong the time before they could be attacked, in the hopes that a breeze might spring up and carry them clear.

Jose did his utmost to encourage them in their labours, even to putting his hand to the hawser which worked the sweeps.

In this he was ably seconded by his mate, a creole, Diogo Nunez by name, a sharp active little fellow, the life and soul of the ship's company.

He appeared a realization of perpetual motion; he was here, there,

and everywhere at the same moment, shouting, jumping, and laughing: now giving one fellow a pull by the ears, now another a kick on the breech, in the most amiable way possible, just to expedite their motions; he was the idol of the men, and as brave and tough as he was full of fun and wickedness, for, to speak the truth, he was a sad scamp into the bargain.

"Well, Diogo, how far off are the boats from us now, should you say?" asked Captain Pepe of his mate.

"A good league and a half, *Senhor Captain*," answered the mate, coming down from the main rigging. "As we are slipping at the rate of three knots an hour through the water, it will take half an hour before they can be up with us. In that time, by the blessing of the saints, a breeze may spring up, and then, good by their lordships. I should like to give some of them to the sharks before we part company."

"Ay, if the whole crew of the yonder craft, and every one of their hated nation, went to the inferno, it wouldn't matter," muttered the captain between his closed teeth. "What business have they to interfere in our lawful traffic?"

"None, I should think, the vile heretics! Courage, my men!" shouted the mate. "Pull away with a will; I see a breeze playing on the water ahead of us."

This last remark was not true, but it served Diogo's purpose, and that was all he cared about. The crew redoubled their efforts, and for some time longer kept out of range of the boat's guns. The boats came on steadily abreast of each other, and none but British seamen would have pulled as did their bold crews under a burning sun, but the prospect of a skirmish nerved their arms. Pepe was watching them through his glass. "Carramba, we shall have some tough work with those fellows," he observed to his mate. "Get in the sweeps. We must let the men rest a little, to be prepared for them; but stay, look to the westward,—what's that?"

"The saints be praised, breeze on the water," cried Diogo clapping his hands.

"We'll keep the sweeps going then. Pull away, my lads, the holy Virgin favours us!"

As he spoke he pointed seaward, where a line of darker colour could be seen gradually expanding and advancing towards them. The sails of the schooner, however, still hung sluggishly against the masts, but the yards were at once braced sharp up to meet the breeze.

It did not come as soon as expected, and the consequence was that the boats got rather closer than was pleasant, as was proved by a shot from a gun in the bow of the largest, which came flying over their heads through the fore-top-sail.

"Shall we give them one in return?" asked Diogo. "It may silence their tongues."

"No, no, we'll reserve our compliments till they get nearer," answered the captain. "Perhaps, after all, we may not have to pay them, and there's no use throwing powder and shot away."

Pepe was in an economical mood, like Joe Hume. Every instant the

boats were drawing nearer—in another minute the largest fired again, and the shot passed through the main-sail.

Pepe cast his eyes anxiously towards the point whence he expected to see the breeze come. It seemed to be in a coy mood, just touching the face of the water and flying off again, ashamed of what it had been about—a third shot struck the top-sail and knocked one of the crew overboard.

"Curses on the heretics! we must fire now," exclaimed Diogo.

Pepe nodded his head. "Train a gun aft to give it them."

Just then the sails were seen slowly to bulge outward, the schooner sensibly increased her speed through the water, the sweeps were plied with redoubled vigour, so were the oars, if that were possible, of the British crew. Each moment the wind strengthened, and every sail drew well. She was, however, obliged to keep close hauled to retain her distance from the land. The sweeps were, therefore, still continued at work, for, notwithstanding all the efforts of the Spaniards, the boats gained on them.

"Shall I fire now?" asked Diogo who had been looking anxiously along the sight of a gun run out of one of the after ports.

"No, hold," answered Pepe. "It will do no good as yet, for you will hardly hit them at this distance, and it will only make them in a still greater hurry to come up with us."

"As you like, Senhor Captain," replied Diogo, shrugging his shoulders. "Then I must suggest that we just throw them a little bait to stop them for a minute or so. It will be the loss of a few dollars; but that will be better than risking the whole cargo."

"You are right, Diogo," said Captain Pepe. "I should not wish to kill them, but our safety demands it. Here, Antonio, get up three or four of the most sickly of the slaves, and bring them aft immediately."

The captain's orders were quickly obeyed, and four emaciated wretches stood trembling before him. The weakest was first selected and brought aft. The poor wretch evidently thought that his life was to be instantly sacrificed, but so stupified was he, that he did not even make a struggle for existence, looking on with a stare of amazement at the proceedings of his masters.

They, following Diogo's directions, made fast several large pieces of cork under his arms and around his neck, sufficient to buoy him up, and then, careless of his imploring looks for mercy, lowered him by a rope into the sea, one end was let slip, and the poor wretch was left floating by himself in the broad sea, with numbers, doubtless, of the ravenous monsters of the deep swimming at no great distance round him.

Had he been allowed to retain his knife, he might, perhaps, have been able to defend himself from them, but buoyed up as he was, he had not the means of encountering them. As he dropped astern of the schooner, he cast a reproachful look with his large full eyes, at the Spaniards, which seemed to say, "Was it for this, cruel men, that you tore me from my sweet and shady groves, to become the sport of your malice? May the fate to which you have abandoned me soon be yours?"

Something, in fact, to this effect he spoke; but his words did not

reach the slaver's ears. They were busy in making ready another unfortunate wretch to throw overboard, while they watched eagerly to see whether the boats would stop to pick up the first.

The breeze was every instant freshening, but the sea still remained so smooth, that the boats continued to make good way; Captain Pepe kept his glance roaming from them to his canvass, and many a look did he cast over the side to see how fast the *El Carmen* was slipping through the water, that he might give the order to get in the sweeps as soon as possible, to rest the people for further exertions should they become necessary, while now and then his eye fell upon the black head floating between him and the enemy.

"It is to be hoped no sharks will scent the bait, or our object will be lost," observed Diogo, with admirable *sang froid*; "it would be a pity to expend any of the cargo uselessly."

None of the monsters, however, appeared, and the Spaniards had quickly the satisfaction of seeing their manœuvre succeed, for no sooner did the Englishmen observe the negro in the water, than one of the smaller boats pulled towards him, and was of course delayed some time in getting him on board, his additional weight also serving to decrease their speed.

As soon as their humane conduct was perceived, another black was lowered, like the first, into the water, but he, seeing that his companion was safe, did not appear very much alarmed at what was going to happen to him.

No sooner, however, did the pursuers perceive that this trick was to be repeated, than the barge recommenced firing as fast as the gun could be loaded, in the hopes of counteracting its effects, by knocking away some of the schooner's spars.

"The fools are in a merciful humour," exclaimed the little villain Diogo, rubbing his hands with glee, "so much the better, we must expend a few more negroes; but that matters little, for they are no great loss; they cost little, and would probably have died before they reached the end of the voyage."

Four negroes had thus been thrown overboard, and successively picked up by the humane English. A fifth was now prepared. He was a stout, strong youth, full of animal life, it seemed, but he perhaps had some disease, which made him of less value to his captors.

He struggled with all his might when he found what was to be done with him, for he had not seen his fellows picked up, and fully believed that he was to be sacrificed, perhaps to propitiate the water-demons of the whites.

At last they succeeded in making the floats fast to him, and in forcing him to the stern of the vessel. Scant ceremony was used with him, and as a punishment for his resistance he was hove overboard. For an instant, carried down by the force of his fall, he sank beneath the water, but soon rising again, he struck out towards the approaching boats.

His efforts were of no avail. At that instant a dark body was seen to glide away from the side of the vessel, more ill-omened from its silent movement.

A loud shriek was heard, the hapless wretch threw up his arms, as if grasping at air, and was dragged down by his ruthless destroyer into the fathomless deep; a crimson tint marking the spot where he had disappeared. Even the rough slavers shuddered at the catastrophe they had contributed to bring about.

"We must have no more of this," said Captain Pepe, who was a humane man in his way, and averse at all times to shedding of blood.

"No," observed Diogo, shrugging his shoulders, "there will be no use in it, if the sharks are to pull them down instead of letting the boats pick them up. Ship the hatches again, or if the spars are hit, some of the splinters may be falling below and injuring our cargo. Here comes another shot."

The iron missile came hurtling along, and striking the helmsman, laid him a corpse on the deck, then, killing another man, after knocking the binnacle to pieces, struck the mainmast, whence it glanced off through one of the lee ports into the sea. Diogo flew to the helm, while the second mate, a black, savage-looking fellow, pointed one of the stern guns at the boats.

"Yes, you may fire, and take care to hit one of the villains," cried Don Pepe, his anger being aroused at the loss of his people.

The mate fired, but as the smoke blew aside, the boats were seen approaching as before.

"I must now try my hand," said the captain.

He fired, and it was evident from the confusion in one of the boats that somebody had been hit, if the boat herself had escaped. On they still came, but it was very clear that they gained nothing on the schooner.

Notwithstanding this they persevered in the hope of the breeze again failing, or of some other circumstances favouring them.

Pepe looked aloft with a satisfied air, every brace was taut, every sail drew well, and as he glanced to windward he observed the bright sparkling foam leaping upward from the fast increasing breeze.

"We shall do now, and laugh at the rascals," he exclaimed, "in with the sweeps, we no longer want them. Bravo! the saints are in good humour with us. Ten candles to the shrine of our lady of the rock."

"And ten thousand curses on the villains who have killed three of our best men," added Diogo, frowning at the boats, in which expression he was cordially joined by the second mate.

Don Pepe, mindful of his gentility, jumped up on the taffrail, and making a polite bow with his hat, wished the enemy good-by. A few more shots were sent after him, but they soon fell altogether short of the schooner, and *El Carmen* bounded gaily on her way.

The wind had come round a little more to the northward, so that she was now able to stand off shore; at the same time Don Pepe well knew that the British cruiser was not likely to give up the chase as long as she could keep him in sight, and the same breeze which was now filling his sails was also sending her along through the water.

Every means, therefore, were used to increase the speed of the schooner, and as she was a very fast craft there appeared a good chance of her getting away from her pursuer—but alas! in this world, nothing is certain.

Just as *Senhor Diogo* was in the midst of a jovial song, into which his spirits broke forth as the enemy's boats sank beneath the horizon, the look-out of the mast-head hailed the deck, to announce a sail on the weather bow.

"Diablo!" exclaimed Diogo, stopping short in his song. "What does she look like?"

"A square-rigged craft, I should say, but her royals are only just coming out of the water," was the answer.

"What's that?" asked Don Pepe, coming out of his cabin—a round house placed on the after part of the deck—into which he had gone to indulge in a siesta after the chase. "Another sail, do you say? whereabouts is she?"

The point was indicated by the man aloft. Don Pepe, after muttering a few *carrambas* and similar Spanish ejaculations, slung a spy-glass over his shoulder, and went aloft to scrutinize the strange sail himself. He came down again without saying a word, and then sent Diogo up to form his opinion.

"Well, what do you make of her?" he asked, as soon as the mate rejoined him on deck.

"A large brig, *senhor*; and, by the squareness of her yards and the cut of her canvass, I should say one of those accursed English cruisers which are playing the devil with our trade."

"Not a doubt about it, Diogo; and we shall have some difficulty in eluding her," observed Pepe, as he paced the deck with hurried steps.

"He has us fairly jammed in with the shore, and with the other vessel to windward of us; if we go about on the other tack, we shall have to encounter her, to say nothing of fighting the boats, which would be sure to cut us off, though we might easily manage them. What is to be done, Diogo?"

"Stand on as we go," answered the mate. "The vessel from which we have escaped is an enemy, that's certain. This one may, after all, possibly prove a friend."

"She does not look like one," said Pepe.

"She is too big, I fear, to beat off with our guns," observed Diogo.

"What must we do then?" asked the captain.

"Trust to the saints," replied Diogo, crossing himself. "They have hitherto proved our friends."

The schooner, with a spanking breeze, was now slipping through the water at the rate of nine knots an hour at the least, running all the time parallel with the coast.

That the stranger did not intend to allow them to pass without attempting to overhaul them, the slavers were soon convinced by the course she was steering. Their only hope, therefore, of escaping her unwelcome supervision was, by their greater speed, or from some lucky shift of the wind. Should a breeze blow off the shore, which was not very likely to happen, they would then be placed to windward, and the stranger would have considerable difficulty in working up to them. They even longed for one of those black squalls, which sometimes come off the coast of Africa with terrific violence, rendering the air dark as

midnight, but the sky over the land remained bright and clear as before. They were steering nearly due south, and as the stranger's courses appeared above the horizon, she was seen to be keeping almost south-east which would, before long, bring her close up to them.

It was pleasant sailing, the sea sparkled, the fish leaping out from their ocean homes, the woods on the low shore looked verdant, the sun shone brightly forth from an unclouded sky, the breeze being fresh and pure over the watery space towards the west, but from the smiling land on one side arose pestiferous exhalations, and from the other came on the avengers of wrong and tyranny. A cleverer man than Captain Pepe might have been puzzled how to escape from the two.

"Is she a friend or a foe, think you?" he asked of his mate, who was scrutinizing her through his telescope.

"One of them cursed Englishmen, as I'm a Christian!" answered Diogo. "We shall know soon. Ah, he's signalizing us. There, up goes his ensign. I thought so; the tyrant flag of England."

"Then, by St. Jago! we must fight for it," exclaimed the captain.

Thereupon he made his crew a very neat speech, the purport of which was, that they would be made mince-meat of, and lose the profit of their voyage into the bargain, if they could not contrive to beat the Englishman or get away from him; that honour and glory were very fine things, but that discretion was a better, though, for his part, rather than lose his ship and cargo, he would blow the slaves, himself, and them, up into the air together.

On this, instead of giving three cheers, they all piously crossed themselves, examined the primings of their pistols, felt the edge of their swords, and saw that all the guns were well loaded.

Every stitch of canvas *El Carmen* could carry was packed on her, and away she flew as fast as the breeze could impel her. It was evident, however, that those who guided the movements of the English ship-of-war had determined that she should not escape them, and, as they had the weather gage, the game was in their own hands.

Nearer and nearer they drew to each other, till at last they came almost within range of each other's guns. The hearts of the Spaniards beat quick as, with firm-set mouths and stern eyes, they gazed at their opponent.

CHAPTER II.

THE BLACK CRUISER'S ENGAGEMENT WITH THE BRIG.

THE British ship was the first to fire, but her shot fell short. Several other guns were discharged in rapid succession, without doing any damage; at last one struck the schooner, and, piercing her side, fell among the unhappy beings confined below.

The fearful yells and shrieks which succeeded almost unnerved the hard hearts of the slaver's crew, and, when another ball sent one of their

number to his last account, they could no longer restrain their rage, but let fly their whole broadside at their opponent. It however did her little damage, and she was about to return the compliment, by raking them as she shot ahead of them, when they were just in time by keeping off the wind, to avoid so dangerous a salute.

The wind by this time had shifted more to the southward, so the British ship still kept the weather-gage, and both vessels were now hotly engaged, running almost free directly upon the coast. The wind was increasing rapidly, and the sea was getting up. Several times was the slaver hulled by the shot of the brig, and each time arose the same fearful yells as before.

At last one of her shot struck the fore-topmast of the brig, just above the cap, and the instant after, both it and the bowstring being carried away, the vessel, deprived of her head-sail, flew up into the wind.

A shriek of delight escaped the Spaniards as they beheld the condition of their enemy; but they were quickly silenced, by finding that their own condition was little better; for their own mainmast, already wounded severely, pressed by the spread of canvass they carried, notwithstanding the increasing gale, was seen to totter, some of the weather shrouds had been shot away, and a heavy send, of the sea carried it fairly away close to the deck, when falling overboard, it towed alongside by the lee rigging.

Thus, in a short time, were the two vessels reduced to almost complete wrecks, while a lee-shore, towards which they were driving, appeared within four or five miles of them, threatening them with destruction. There was enough, indeed, to make a stout heart quake.

A heavy sea came rolling in across the broad Atlantic, the dark green waves topped with white crests of foam, while a heavy surf dashed on the low sandy shore; each huge billow, as it broke with a loud roar, threatening to carry back in its reflux anything which might get within its influence.

The brig of war, notwithstanding her shattered condition, seemed determined not to be balked of her prey; for while some of her crew were cutting away the wreck of her foremasts, getting up a jury-mast, and securing the mainmast, the rest were working the guns as they could be brought to bear, many of the shot from which struck the schooner—the wild tumult of the waves, and the roar of the wind in the rigging, being now added to the shrieks of the miserable blacks, who were thus unresistingly slaughtered. While thus desperately fighting, the two vessels drove together towards the shore.

It must be confessed, that Don Pepe did not like the state of affairs, and, mild-tempered and amiable as he generally was, as he stood issuing the necessary orders, he turned many a fierce look towards the vessel which was driving on to destruction, and vowed that, if he escaped with his life, he would be revenged on her and all which sailed under the same flag.

Even after the mainmast had been cut adrift, it was found impossible to bring the schooner again on a wind, and their only hope now of not going on shore consisted in riding out the gale at anchor.

A very poor one it was, for, of course, the brig would anchor also and do her best to sink them.

Just as they were preparing for this desperate alternative, Diogo reported that he perceived the mouth of a small river, directly ahead of them, and pronounced it to be one with which he was well acquainted.

"There is not much water on the bar," he observed, "but if we keep in mid-channel we may drive over it, and once inside we are safe."

The two best hands were, therefore, sent to the helm, while Diogo went forward to con the vessel towards the narrow entrance. Every man on deck held his breath as they approached the wild, broken water, for they well knew the awful risk they were incurring, but few thought of the human beings crowded below, who had not a chance of escape should they strike.

The shot from the enemy still pursued them, but did not further damage; and almost to their disappointment they saw the brig haul up to the wind, and then finding that she could not beat off, let go two anchors.

"She drifts, she drifts!" exclaimed Pepe, with exultation. "She will be driven on shore, and then we shall have our revenge."

But Senhor Pepe was mistaken, for by the time the cables were veered out the brig brought up and rode buoyantly to the gale. The slavers had enough to do to take care of themselves. The prospect ahead, as has been observed, was not tempting.

In the distance was a dark forest, low mangrove-bushes lined either side of the stream, the shore exhibited a dreary expanse of sand, and they had good reason to know that amid those raging billows many a hungry shark was likely to be sporting, ready to make a feast of them should they be compelled to swim for it.

"Starboard the helm," sung out Diogo, from forward; "so steady. We stand well for the deepest water."

"Every man hold on," cried Pepe, grasping the stump of the mainmast; but the warning was scarcely required, for all the crew had secured themselves in the best way they could.

The schooner approached the bar. She was amid the wild foaming waters. A mountain wave came rolling in with a loud roar, her stern lifted high in the air, and she seemed about to slide down into the deep gulf before her, but the wave advanced, and she rose again with her bow now aloft; before she was again on an even keel, another came on foaming and raging; it struck her, and flying over her resisting frame, deluged her decks.

A cry of terror and despair arose from the crew, and two of their number was carried far away from all help; but the vessel still careered onward, floating amid the boiling waters. Another minute of dreadful suspense passed, and she had escaped the dangers of the outer bar; but a second one was before her, which she must pass before she could be in safety. A few fathoms of comparatively tranquil water intervened.

She drove on towards it; the sea twice broke over her, a terrific squall struck her, and before she could let go the anchors she was cast upon the muddy shore, and the remaining mast went by the board, killing seve-

ral of the crew by its fall. The remainder were too well pleased at finding themselves in comparative safety to think much about them, but they had yet no easy task to get themselves and their human cargo on shore. One boat alone remained, and lowering her on the lee-side, they opened the hatches to get up some of the blacks to carry on shore.

Even Pepe shuddered as he looked below, for so many shot had hulled the schooner, that her crowded slave-deck was a complete shambles, the dying and the dead mingled amid the living.

The survivors raised a loud cry as the first were taken up, fully believing that they were about to be murdered in detail; while even the Spaniards could scarcely bear the dreadful effluvia which arose from the revolting mass of humanity.

Some little way inland was a large hut, built expressly for the reception of slaves ready for embarkation, and here, after some time, the unfortunate survivors of the blacks, landed from the schooner, were collected together.

Too stupified to consider or care what was next to happen to them, they sat down on the ground, where most of them forgot their griefs in sleep, while the Spaniards kept watch outside.

By the time all these arrangements had been made, night had come on; but the rest which visited the slaves was denied to their masters, for no sooner did they light a fire to cook their suppers, than several persons were seen approaching from among the trees. The chief of the new comers announced himself as King Bobo, sovereign of the surrounding territory.

He was habited in a cocked hat with a feather, and half of a petticoat thrown over his shoulder as a royal mantle; while his attendants, if not so strikingly, were more simply dressed in every variety of garment, few, however, boasting more than one article each.

After a long harangue, which was highly applauded by his attendants, King Bobo demanded by what right Captain Pepe had landed on his territory, and taken possession of his storehouse? Don Pepe, whose temper had been somewhat ruffled by the attack of the English, answered briefly by pointing to his gun, and intimated that if his sable majesty did not quickly take his departure, he would hasten his movements.

On this, King Bobo looked very indignant, but observing something dangerous in Pepe's countenance, soon brought his palaver to a conclusion, and, followed by his subjects, hurried off into the woods. Diogo, who knew the blacks well, warned his captain that it would be necessary for them to be on their guard, but the night passed away without their receiving any further visits.

The Spaniards had cause to be uneasy, for they were aware of the treacherous character of the blacks of that neighbourhood, and, as they had been obliged to divide their forces, they felt that they should have some difficulty to defend themselves should they be attacked.

Part of the crew, we ought to have remarked, had been left to watch the schooner, to protect her from being plundered, while the rest guarded her living cargo.

The storm had subsided as rapidly as it had commenced, and when the morning broke, not a cloud obscured the blue sky; the wind had gone down, the sea had grown calm, and the surf no longer broke upon the strand with the loud continuous roar it had hitherto done. Suddenly the party who were guarding the hut were startled by the report of a musket fired in the direction of the schooner. Others followed in quick succession. They leaped on their feet, and grasped their arms, when Pepe, ordering four of his men to follow him, set off towards the spot.

We must now return to the British brig, which we left at anchor off the coast. She rode out the gale in beautiful style, and at day-break was ready to make sail for the nearest port, where she could hope to find a new mast.

Not a breath of air, however, was blowing, so it was impossible to weigh the anchors. As the officer of the watch walked the deck, thinking what had been the fate of the people on board the schooner they had driven on shore the previous day, he observed the mist gradually clearing away over the land. At last he stopped in his walk, and turning his spy-glass towards the coast, he surveyed it narrowly.

As he did so, it struck him that there was an indentation, very like the mouth of a river, almost abreast of them, and, looking still more attentively, he made out the hull of a vessel, which he could have no doubt was the schooner. Having satisfied himself of this, he sent down to inform the captain.

"Not a doubt about it!" exclaimed Captain Hownslaw, rubbing his hands. "We'll have the rascal before the day is many hours old, and punish him for the mischief he has done us. Call the boats away, Mr. Snubben; or stay—let the boats' crew have their breakfast first."

The men were not long in laying in their provisions; and, under the command of the first lieutenant, an eager party, in three boats, was soon pulling toward the shore.

As they neared the land, they found a heavy surf breaking over the bar at the mouth of the river, and for some time even their brave leader hesitated about advancing; but the sight of the enemy's vessel increased their eagerness—and what daring deeds will not seamen undertake when their spirits are aroused.

After pulling some way along the wall of white breakers, a narrow clear line of water was perceived, and dashing through it amid the wild tumult of the waves, they were quickly again in safety. The second bar was likewise crossed without a casualty, and giving three cheers, they pulled towards the schooner.

Thus far not a sign of an enemy had appeared, but as the sea on the outside was still breaking over her, they pulled round her head and stern to board her on the inside.

The bowman of the leading boat had just hooked on, when they were saluted by a hot fire from an enemy hid among the trees, but no one was wounded; and on leaping on board they found the deck of the schooner deserted. When it was also ascertained that not a black or a Spaniard remained below, and that there was nothing to be done, the commander of the expedition quickly ordered the crews in their boats again.



THE LIEUTENANT CAPTURED.

In half a minute the English were scrambling up the mud banks to drive their concealed enemies from their ambush, with loud shouts vowing vengeance against them for their cowardice in not daring to show their faces.

Meanwhile Pepe came on; "It is those cursed Englishmen," he exclaimed; "on, my friends, let them smell the temper of Spanish steel."

The execration of his followers against the British, satisfied Don Pepe that they were in a right humor for the work in hand, and before many minutes had passed they reached the scene of action.

They found their friends posted behind a bank naturally formed by the force of the waters of the river, while the attacking party were

endeavouring to cross the space of soft mud which intervened between them. Pepe, at a glance, took in the position of affairs, and saw that if his people behaved with coolness the day might yet be his.

Ordering each of them to pick off his man, he gave the word to fire, but after the exertion of running, or from their too great eagerness, their aim was unsteady, and two only of the English fell.

This also served to inflame the rage of the rest, and, encouraged by their gallant leader, before the Spaniards had again time to load, they extricated themselves from the mud, and, with cutlasses in hand, rushed up the bank.

"Fire, fire!" cried Pepe, as the Spaniards were hurriedly loading.

An irregular volley was discharged, which did no further damage than sending a ball through the lieutenant's cocked-hat, and the slaver's crew were compelled to throw aside their muskets and defend themselves with their swords. They now showed themselves to be true men, and fought as bravely as lions.

The two parties were well matched, in point of numbers and courage, and the combat was long and furious. It seemed doubtful how it would end, for several on both sides had fallen, when one of the Spaniards, who had been left to guard the slaves, was seen running towards them, shouting loudly to his friends.

"Carramba!" shouted Don Pepe, "they are of more consequence than fighting these bull-dog Englishmen!" and uttering a few words to his men, which the British did not understand, the Spaniards simultaneously leaped down the bank, and, dispersing in all directions, fled through the woods.

The English, as soon as they had recovered from their astonishment at this proceeding, of course followed, but near the bottom of the bank they found themselves in front of a bog, through which it was impossible to wade, and while they were looking about for a passage to pass around it, the Spaniards had already got out of sight.

Though burning with anger at the loss of so many of his men, the English commander saw that he should only expose his party to still greater loss by following the enemy, for, as the latter were evidently well acquainted with the country, they had the advantage of him in that respect, and had also, in all probability, formed some plan to lead him into an ambush.

Most unwillingly, therefore, he ordered his men to return to the boats, which they did with some difficulty, carrying their wounded comrades in their arms. The two who had fallen in the mud were past all aid, and when the party returned, they found them already almost covered up in the black compound.

As soon as the boats were reached, the lieutenant determined to endeavour to get the schooner afloat, but on examining her condition, it was found impracticable to move her, so firmly imbedded was she in the mud. One course only remained, and Pepe's fine schooner was consigned to the flames.

This work was accomplished, the British recrossed the bar in safety, and returned to their ship, when, soon afterwards, a breeze springing up they made sail for Sierra Leone to repair damages.

We must now return to Don Pepe. The information brought to him while he was engaged with the English was, that the few Spaniards who had been left to guard the slaves had been attacked and overpowered by King Bobo, who was then busily engaged in carrying them off.

Now it must not be supposed that this sable majesty was influenced by any philanthropic motive in liberating his fellow-countrymen; but having undertaken to furnish a certain supply of blacks to a slave dealer located some miles to the south, he was honestly anxious to fulfil his engagement.

This information induced Pepe wisely to retire from a combat in which only honour and glory were to be gained, to protect property which he valued so much more.

As soon as he and his followers had assembled, they hurried towards the hut where they had left the slaves, and as they approached it their ears were saluted by the sound of drums, mingled with the shouts and cries of great numbers of human voices.

Advancing a little further on, they perceived a concourse of people assembled, with arms of various descriptions in their hands, and in front of them stood King Bobo, exciting their courage by an harangue which they, every now and then, interrupted to give expression to their sentiments, by the sounds the Spaniards had heard.

Pepe, on this, halted his party to engage the blacks if necessary, and having examined their arms, they again advanced boldly towards them.

This at first somewhat staggered King Bobo, and his objects; but being a brave fellow, he did not shrink from the spot where he stood. This example encouraged the rest, and even Pepe judged it would be more prudent to hold a palaver before proceeding to hostilities.

His sable majesty was the first to speak, by demanding why the Spaniards had landed on his territory, and had, without asking leave, taken possession of his hut. The only answer Pepe could make to this was, that he had landed very much against his will, and that as he found the place unoccupied, he had made use of it to shelter his slaves.

"And I," replied the king, "as you could not take care of the slaves, have taken care of them for you. They are now free men, and have gone off to their homes. You, shall, however, have the use of the hut, and I will supply you with provisions till you can return whence you came. Your ship is ours, so you must not go near her again. Now you may take possession of your house."

As this the Spaniards felt not a little foolish, for they had been completely outwitted by the blacks, but there was no use expostulating, for every one of the slaves had been carried off, and there was, therefore, nothing left to fight about. King Bobo now drew off his people with the intention of plundering the schooner; but no sooner had they gone that the Spaniards perceived a thick smoke rising in the direction where she was. This was followed by the report of several guns, succeeded by a terrific explosion, which shook even the ground on which they stood.

"The El Carmen has blown up," exclaimed Diogo. "That was her death wail, and those accursed Englishmen have done it. I hope King

Bobo and his blacks had time to get on board first and bear her company to heaven."

This charitable wish had not been accomplished, for in a few minutes his majesty and his army came running back in great consternation at the catastrophe which had occurred. Had the Spaniards seized their opportunity they might have revenged themselves on the blacks, but they had enjoyed fighting enough for one day, and besides, as Pepe moralized, there was nothing to gain by it.

Poor Don Pepe had certainly been the greatest loser by the events of the last two days. He had lost a number of his crew, he had been robbed of his slaves, he had now lost his ship, and found himself surrounded by enemies, without any immediate prospect of escape, while he was dependent, too, upon them for wherewith to support existence.

Braver men might have succumbed beneath so many difficulties, for although twenty of them remained alive, their ammunition was nearly exhausted, and they could scarcely hope to succeed in fighting their way to the nearest river, when they might expect to find some vessel to take them off.

Diogo was the only man who knew anything of the country, and he reported that about fifteen leagues to the southward there was another river, resorted to by slavers, and also by merchantmen, who went there to load with palm oil and ivory.

After some consultation it was determined forthwith to proceed thither, and, for the purpose of being allowed to travel in safety, to propitiate King Bobo and the neighbouring potentates by as large promises as they could be induced to receive.

The next morning, matters being amicably arranged with the king, they started on their journey; and whether twenty stout fellows with muskets on their shoulders, or the promises they made, had most effect on the minds of blacks, it is difficult to say, but certain it is that at last the whole party reached the neighbourhood of the Danda river in safety.

Here the greater number remained concealed, while Pepe and Diogo went down to the banks of the stream to reconnoitre. The first object which met their eyes was a fine schooner lying at anchor in the centre of the river.

"What can she be?" asked Captain Pepe.

"An American slaver or an English merchantman," answered Diogo.

"Suppose we venture out board and learn," observed Pepe.

"Agreed," said Diogo; "but how are we to get on board?"

After looking along along the shore for some time, they observed a canoe at a little distance off with two blacks in her, fishing.

On this, Pepe held up a dollar and intimated that he wished to be taken on board the schooner. The blacks soon understood him, and in a short time the two Spaniards stood on the deck of the Fair Rosamond, one of the finest traders out of Liverpool. They found that one half of the crew had died of fever, many were ill below with the same complaint, and that she had barely hands to navigate her home.

On this, Pepe framed his own story. They were Spanish seamen,

who had escaped from a vessel wrecked on the coast, their shipmates, with the exception of one, were all dead, and they were anxious to get off in any craft which would take them.

The English master, an unsuspicious, honest seaman, at once gladly offered to ship them, and they promised to join him on condition that they might return to bring off their sick shipmate.

"Of course, of course," answered Captain John Brown; "I think all the better of you for it. You shall return when you like, and please God, we'll get out of this cursed hole by to-morrow morning at daybreak, if the weather holds fine."

"All goes well," whispered Don Pepe to his lieutenant, as they pulled on shore in the canoe. "By to-morrow morning we shall have again a craft of our own, and then we shall have our vengeance on the English. The Captain did not look amiable as he uttered these words, but Diogo rubbed his hands and grinned with satisfaction at the thought of what they were to do.

Towards the evening, the two new hands returned on board the Fair Rosamond with their sick companion. The latter was carefully placed in a hammock below, while Pepe and Diogo set about the duties allotted to them with praiseworthy alacrity.

"I wish we had a few more hands like these fellows," observed Captain Brown to his mate. "It isn't often one finds Spaniards as smart as they are."

"They are smart enough, sir," answered the mate; "but the big one seems a mighty fine gentleman for a foremast-man, and I don't altogether like the looks of the little chap."

"Well I don't see anything suspicious about them," observed the captain.

"I don't say there is, sir," said the mate; "only I don't quite like them. I wouldn't wish to wrong any man, but do you know, sir, that when their sick shipmate came on board with them, it struck me that he looked no more ill than you or I do. When I passed his hammock just now he was pretending to be asleep, and snoring as loud as a sou' wester, which, if he were down with the fever, he wouldn't do, depend on it."

"Well, I hope there's nothing wrong," replied Captain Brown: "but keep a good watch on them, and as there are only three of them, they can't do us much harm, I should think."

"Ay, ay, sir," answered the mate, "depend on me for that."

This conversation took place in the evening, just as the first watch was set in which the two volunteers were placed. The watch below, wearied with the exertion of bending sails and getting the ship ready for sea with so few hands, were fast asleep in their hammocks. The captain had turned in, and the first mate kept the deck.

The night was somewhat dark, for though the sky was clear, and the stars shone brightly forth overhead, there was no moon, a thin mist rising from the river screened all objects at a little distance.

Pepe and Diogo were leaning over the bulwarks forward, and conversing in a low tone which served, it seemed, to afford them infinite satisfaction.

The mate walked uneasily up and down the deck, keeping his eyes wandering on either side, while his ears were also broad awake to detect the approach of an enemy. Suddenly he was startled by a slight splashing noise which sounded like the dip of numerous oars in the water.

He listened attentively and endeavored to pierce the obscurity, for his suspicions were aroused, and he had during that day been oppressed with a presentiment of coming ill, though from what quarter it might arrive he knew not. The noise continued, till at length he was certain that he heard the regular fall of oars.

"There's mischief abroad," he muttered; "I'll rouse up the captain, and arm the people. These black rascals are traitorous, and I don't like the Spaniards."

At the same moment he dived below to awaken Captain Brown, to whom, in a few words, he explained his fears, and again sprang upon deck. As his glance fell upon the water, he perceived three large canoes close aboard of the schooner, and, directly confronting him, stood the tallest of the Spanish strangers.

"What do these boats want here?" he asked.

A blow from a handspike, which laid him senseless on the deck, was the answer; and, before any of the English crew had time to defend themselves, the canoes ran alongside, and twenty Spaniards climbed up the sides of the schooner. The cry of some of the crew who were cut down, aroused the pretended invalid below, and, leaping upon deck, he joined his comrades.

When, therefore, poor Captain Brown made his appearance, he found his vessel in possession of a set of villains, and himself a prisoner.

At first, the Englishmen, prompted by their nature, attempted to resist, but they were soon overpowered: and Don Pepe had an opportunity of exhibiting the magnanimity and generosity of his temper. Politely bowing to the unfortunate master, whom some of his followers had tied to the main-mast, he apologized to him for the necessity he had been under of depriving him of his command, and explained to him that if he and his people would quietly go on shore, their lives would be spared, but if not, he should be under the necessity of giving them as food to the alligators and sharks.

"But we shall die of the fever on shore," urged Captain Brown.

"Patience, my friend; it would have been our fate had we remained," replied Captain Pepe, and his argument was irresistible.

Two or three of the Englishmen had been murdered by the blood-thirsty Spaniards before Pepe had time to put an end to the slaughter. The master and his mate, who soon recovered, were treated with every attention which circumstances would allow, and as the morning dawned he ordered them with the rest of the crew, who were bound hand and foot, to be put into the canoes which remained alongside, and to be carried on shore.

This done, a favorable breeze having sprung up, the sails were loosened, the anchor was hove up, and Diogo, acting as pilot, the Fair Rosamond, under the command of her new masters, stood over the bar.

Don Pepe's heart bounded with satisfaction, as he once more found himself the owner of a fine, well-armed vessel, with abundance of provisions on board. That she was not very honestly come by was a matter of perfect indifference to him.

"Viva a libertad!" he exclaimed; "our necks, through the tyranny of mankind, are in jeopardy of a halter. There's no use concealing the fact from ourselves, and so I propose that we take good care to merit it. Every man's hand will be against us, but if we are true to each other, they may try to catch us in vain, and while we are leading a roving, jovial life, the wealth of the world may be ours to pick and choose from as we list."

"Viva, viva, our brave Captain Don Pepe!" was the unanimous answer to this harangue.

A code of laws and regulations he drew up were signed without hesitation by all hands. A black flag was hoisted, and a salvo fired in honor of it; and thus Don Pepe became an open and avowed Pirate.

CHAPTER III.

THE PIRATE TURNS GALLANT.

A FINE ship was proudly sailing over the waters of the Carribean Sea, with a favorable breeze, towards the Mona passage between the islands of St. Domingo and Porto Rico.

Her last port was Cartigana, and she was about four days out. Although the John and Mary carried eight guns on her upper deck, half of them were non-combatants, for the simple reason that they were made of wood, commonly called "quakers," while her crew consisted of some twenty hands or so, including officers and boys.

In fact, she aspired to no higher rank than that of an honest trader belonging to the port of Liverpool, whither she was now about to return, touching at one or two places on her way, after a successful voyage to the Spanish Main, having hitherto escaped all the dangers of tempests and robbers.

She might have measured about four hundred tons or more, and as she now carried studdensails on either side, aloft and aloft, with her guns run out, she cut a very formidable appearance; so thought honest John Brown, her master.

She had several passengers on board, both Spanish and English, and among the former was a young and pretty widow, with her still more youthful and lovely sister, a rich merchant, and a soldier, while most of the latter were mercantile men of different grades.

Captain Brown was proud of his passengers, proud of his ship, and proud of the rich freight she bore.

It was a lovely day, the sea was smooth and sparkling, and the sun shone brightly forth from a blue unclouded sky. An awning, however, spread over the deck, sheltered the passengers collected there from his

too-scorching rays. How completely, on such occasions, people enjoy the *dolce far niente* of life.

The crew were busily employed in the various sedentary occupations of seamen, while the gentlemen were lolling about reading or talking, and the ladies were writing, or singing to the music of a guitar. Captain Brown was earnestly recounting to an interesting audience some of the adventures of his life.

"It's now about two years ago when what I am going to tell you happened," he continued. "I then commanded a fine schooner trading to the coast of Africa, with the same man I now have as mate, honest Bill Simpson there. Well, we had been for some weeks in the Danda river shipping our cargo, and had lost nearly half our people by fever, when just as we were ready for sea, we were boarded by a set of rascally pirates, who turned us on shore, and ran off with our vessel. To be sure they might have murdered us outright, and so they would but for their captain, who was such a polite villain, that he made us a low bow instead, and wished us a pleasant trip on shore. I cannot tell you how I felt as I saw my vessel going over the bar, and I am very certain that I should have died had not another trader came in a few days afterwards and taken us on board. Well, from that day to this I have never heard anything more of the Fair Rosamond, though I have good reason to suppose that the pirate who got hold of her was no other than the famous Captain Pepe, whom everybody in the West Indies is talking about."

"What a dreadful man Captain Pepe must be," observed Donna Marina, who understood a little English.

"Dreadful! a regular devil incarnate, marm," answered Captain Brown.

"What is he like, Senhor Captain?" inquired Donna Isabelita, the widow's pretty sister.

"Like, marm! why he isn't a bad-looking fellow, as far as I can remember; about the same height and figure as the major there, I should say," answered the captain.

"Dear me," observed the young lady, "he does not look like a pirate."

"Perhaps not, marm," replied Captain Brown. "Beauty is only skin deep, remember."

"I should so like to see this far-famed Captain Pepe," said the widow.

"That's more than I should, marm, except at the end of a thick rope," answered the captain.

"Why, what should make us afraid of Captain Pepe, or a hundred pirates like him?" observed Mister Theophilus Fiz, a little Jamaica Creole, who, with a straw hat on his head and in a suit of nankeen, was pacing the deck with his hands in his trousers pocket.

"Haven't we got powder and shot and eight guns, with plenty of men to fight them? I should just like to see Captain Pepe trying to play off his tricks on us."

He elevated his voice as he passed in his walk near the Spanish major, who now looked up from a book of music he had been intently studying, and smiled. He now rose from his seat, and approached the ladies.

"Oh, major," said Donna Marina, laughing, "do you know that Captain Brown says that the famous pirate, Pepe, is very like you."

A high compliment, truly, the captain pays me, if he refers to my personal appearance," replied the major, bowing. "For I have heard some ladies, who once were Pepe's guests, aver, that he is a remarkable handsome man, though his morality, it appears, does not stand very high in the estimation of the world."

"As to his good looks I can't say," struck in Mr. Theophilus Fiz, "but that he's a precious scoundrel I've no doubt, and I should just like to fall in with him and his craft to show him how I would treat him, the picarooning rascal!"

"Senhor Fiz is a bold man," said the major, bowing.

"A sail broad on the starboard-bow," cried the look-out from the mast-head.

"Which way is she standing?" inquired the master.

"Across our bows," was the reply.

"We shall see more of her by and by, then," observed Captain Brown, as he continued his quarter-deck-walk.

In the monotony of a prosperous voyage every incident is of interest, and the prospect of meeting a strange sail upon the world of waters is sufficient to arouse the most lethargic from their slumbers.

The passengers, therefore, few of whom probably were in general much given either to physical or mental exertion, were eagerly looking out from the deck for the appearance of the stranger's sails above the line of the horizon.

At last, one by one her top-gallant-sails, topsails, and courses rose as if from out of the water, shining like pure snow in the rays of the bright sun, and Captain Brown was soon able to pronounce her a large, square topsail schooner, but whither bound, or under what flag she sailed, it was impossible to say.

There was something, however, in the cut of her sails which seemed to attract Captain Brown's attention, as he continually kept his telescope, turned towards her, while his countenance wore a doubtful, if not an alarmed expression.

"That seems a valuable glass you have, Senhor Captain," observed the major, walking up, to him: "will you permit me to test its powers?"

"Certainly, sir, certainly," answered the honest skipper; "you will find it not a bad glass, I flatter myself:—bought it myself—cost five guineas—one of Dolland's best—day and night—see a man's nose five miles off."

While the master was thus running on in praise of his glass, the major, who evidently was not attending to a word he said, had his eye for a few seconds intently fixed upon the stranger, and as he returned the instrument, into the hands of its owner, a strange gleam might have been observed to pass over his countenance.

"Well, major, what do you think of her?" asked the master.

"I am too little of a seaman to form an opinion," was the answer. "I merely wished to try the power of your glass," and returning it with a bow to the master, he walked aft.

For some time longer the two vessels drew nearer to each other without the stranger making any alteration in her course, and as she became more distinct, so the anxious expression of the skipper's countenance increased in intensity. First he rubbed the object-glass of his telescope, then he adjusted the instrument, then he rubbed his own eyes, but still he was not satisfied.

"Well, captain," asked Mr. Theophilus Fiz, "what is that vessel we see out there?"

"Why, sir," answered Captain Brown, "that's more than I can say. I don't like her looks, that I own; she's too rakish a craft to be honest, I fear. Like your high-flying beauties on shore, I've learnt to mistrust such-like ladies. Some of them are all fair, and above board, and are as near real angels as I could wish any woman to be, both outside and inside. Perhaps, too, that schooner there may be a government vessel, or a fair trader, but she don't look like one, that's all."

"What does Mr. Simpson say about her?" asked Mr. Theophilus Fiz, with a slight degree of trepidation in the tone of his voice. The mate was at that instant approaching.

"Here, Simpson," said the master, "take the glass, and say what do you make out of that vessel?"

The mate looked long and steadily.

"Why, sir," he answered, "that she's as wicked, rakish-looking a craft as I ever saw afloat, and I shouldn't be surprised if she's one of the piccarooning villains that swarm about these seas, ready to pounce upon any vessel unable to defend herself."

"But do you mean to say that pirates would venture to attack us when they see that we have eight guns on our decks?" asked Mr. Fiz.

"Perhaps no, and perhaps yes," was the unsatisfactory answer. "But wooden dogs can't bite, you know."

"What is that you are saying about pirates?" asked the rich merchant, who had just then come on deck. "I hope we've no chance of falling in with them. Mother of Heaven protect us from such an event!"

"What have we to fear with so brave a man as Don Fiz to fight for us?" said the major, smiling. "Besides, my dear sir, no pirate—if pirate yonder craft should prove—would dream of interfering with a ship like ours, armed with eight guns: nor can they be aware that we have so large a treasure on board, as I understand there is."

Don Fernandes started.

"Who says that we have treasure on board?" he, asked, with alarmed countenance.

"Oh! it is the most advantageous way of remitting money to England just now; so I take it for granted that Don Fernandes would carry some of his gold with him, and every one knows that he is the possessor of unbounded wealth."

On this the major, who spoke, made the rich man a profound bow, though an acute observer might have seen a smile lurking about the corners of his lips and gleaming in his eyes.

"We'll show our colours, at all events, to prove that we are not

ashamed of them, and try if the stranger will answer them," said the master; and, in a minute, the broad red flag of England was blowing from the peak.

Scarcely had it fluttered an instant in the breeze, before a similar ensign was shown by the stranger.

"All right!" exclaimed Mr. Fiz, rubbing his hands with satisfaction; "a friend, at all events. If she had been a pirate, we would soon have sent her to the bottom of the sea, however."

"If!" exclaimed the master. "A friend, indeed. You don't pretend to say what a man is made of by the colour of his coat? And now do you know that the fellow does not lie with his buntin' on purpose to deceive us? What do you say, Simpson?"

"Not a doubt about it, sir; and now I think of it, as well as I can judge at this distance, she's very like a Spanish schooner which was lying not far from us in Cartagena little more than a week ago."

The master now took his mate aside, and consulted with him earnestly for some time. The result of their conversation did not transpire; but it very soon got noised about the ship that the schooner in sight was a pirate.

That the captain thought she was so was soon evident, by his giving orders to prepare for action.

The crew set about their duties with alacrity, as true British seamen always will when in danger is at hand. Ammunition was handed up, the guns were loaded and run out—at least the four real ones were loaded, while the others looked equally formidable at a little distance; at the same time, the studdensails, royals, and top-gallant sails were allowed to stand, and every stitch of canvass the ship could carry was packed on her to increase her distance from the suspicious stranger. This done, the crew went to their quarters.

While these operations were going forward, the passengers exhibited the troubled state of their feelings in a variety of ways. Donna Isabelita wept and clung to her sister, who sat still with their eyes fixed on the strange sail; the rich merchant turned pale, and, with an expression of doubt and alarm on his countenance, dived into the cabin, where he remained some time among certain cases and packages; while Mr. Theophilus Fiz strutted about the deck, under the persuasion that he was the most important person on board, and, consequently, vapoured more furiously than ever, in a vain endeavour to hide his fears.

The only person to whom the approach of the hostile bark appeared a matter of perfect indifference was the major, though he every now-and-then cast a glance toward her to ascertain her position, but immediately again returned to his music-book and guitar.

"Why, Senhor Major, you seem to take things very coolly," observed Mr. Fiz, as he passed him in his walk. "We shall want you to fight presently. I suppose you'll not object to do that?"

"Bah! not at all. I will take the wooden gun under my charge," was the major's answer, with a slight sneer in the tone of his voice.

"Let me tell you, it won't be a joking matter," said Mr. Fiz. "If we don't fight, we shall be captured by the pirates to a certainty, and have all our throats cut."

"Not if we consent to join the pirates. It is what I intend to do, if we are overpowered. Bah! those fellows lead a jovial life, depend on it. Ah Senhor Fiz, you will make a dashing pirate!"

"I a pirate!" exclaimed Mr. Fiz, in a tone of horror. "What would my friends and acquaintances say, should they hear of it? No, Senhor Major, I have lived an honest man, and I hope to die one."

"Ah! you are no philosopher, I see, Senhor Fiz," observed the Major, with a shrug of his shoulders, and a twirl of his moustache. "You will have to try your courage soon, depend on it."

While this conversation was going forward, notwithstanding all the efforts made to increase the speed of the ship, the schooner, with the British Ensign flying, was gradually approaching her from the eastward. The ship's best point of sailing was nearly before the wind, or, rather, with it on the quarter; and to keep it there her course had been altered a couple of points, Captain Brown hoping thus to get well ahead of the schooner, and, perhaps, to knock some of her spars away before she could come to close quarters.

She was now within the distance of a couple of miles, and neither in her hull nor her rigging did she appear like an English vessel.

"We will soon see what she really is," observed Captain Brown. "Haul down our flag and hoist the Spanish ensign, Simpson, and depend on it, the fellow will soon show other colours."

The captain was right, for no sooner were the colours changed than up went the flag of Spain from the peak of the schooner also.

"I thought so!" exclaimed the captain, as he again hoisted the British flag. "It shall never be said, however, that John Brown fought under any flag but his own. Whatever happens, don't give in till the last, for, depend upon it, we have little mercy to expect from the crew of yonder craft."

The seamen, with a cheerful shout, promised to do their best. The stranger did not again change her colours, and just then a shot from one of her guns came flying across her bows.

A second shot followed, but went wide of its mark, and, as the missile left the gun, a black flag was seen flying from the peak of the advancing stranger. There was now, therefore, no doubt as to her character.

The mate was as brave a fellow as ever stepped; but discretion, he thought, on an occasion like the present, was the best part of valour.

"Hadn't we better haul our wind, and, if we must fight, keep the weather gage; though, for my part, the less we have to say to yonder piccarooning craft the better?" he observed to Captain Brown.

"It's no use, Simpson," answered the master; "we've no chance of getting away without fighting, though we'll do our best for the sake of our owners and passengers; and I only hope if those piratical rascals come within range of the John and Mary's guns, they'll have cause to remember her as long as they remain unchanged."

The schooner came dashing on, looking so light and delicately formed that it seemed impossible she could have power to injure the stately ship. She still continued firing, but as her shot flew high no one on deck was

injured, though the sails of the ship were more than once pierced, and now-and-then, a brace or a topmast was shot away, but were quickly again repaired.

As she approached nearer, her shot told with more effect; while, as far as Captain Brown could judge, as yet not one from the John and Mary had hit her.

At last the master lost all patience, and, pointing one of his four guns himself, he fired. His eye followed the course of the ball, but he had apparently no better success than the rest, for not a rope was shot away—not a single splinter was seen to start from the deck or sides of the schooner.

"Well, I can't tell what's in the guns that none of them do their duty," he exclaimed, turning away with vexation. "Simpson, do you try your hand as a marksman, and see if you can't clip that fellow's wings a bit."

"Aye, ay, sir," answered the mate, casting his eye along one of the guns; "I'll try and knock a feather out of him, at all events."

He was as good as his word, for the ball struck the bulwarks of the vessel, and evidently committed some mischief. Her revenge, however, was complete, for, in return, the shot from her whole broadside came rattling among the masts and rigging of the ship. Down came her fore-topmast on the deck, and the slings of her main-topsail were shot away, while numberless other damages occurred.

Before the crew could clear away the wreck of the spars to work their guns, the schooner had fired two more broadsides with still more disastrous results.

Shot after shot followed, till so complete a wreck did the ship become, that she could only be kept directly before the wind.

Poor Brown was in despair, but still he encouraged his crew to fight on bravely.

The passengers trembled with alarm, except the major, who looked calmly on as if the work going forward were an every day affair; and now and then he descended below to comfort the ladies who had been conveyed there to be out of danger.

Just as he got on deck he saw the schooner passing under the stern of the ship, while a man standing on her taffrail hailed in English to ask if she surrendered.

"Not while I've a gun to fight," returned Captain Brown.

"We shall see," answered the voice, as the schooner, putting up her helm, ranged up on the larboard side.

In a few seconds the bower-anchor of the schooner was hooked in the mainchain plates of the ship, and a savage band of pirates were climbing up her lofty side. One gun had been got over to that side, and was pointed down to the deck of the schooner. The major had been most assiduous in dragging it over and loading it. Captain Brown waited till the bulwarks of the vessels ground together. "Fire!" he exclaimed.

The priming blazed up from the touch-hole, but the gun did not go off. The mate primed it afresh, but it again flashed in the pan.

"Curses on the lubber who loaded that gun!" he exclaimed; and his

brave fellows, without time to reload the gun, had to defend themselves from the impetuous attacks of the pirates.

Though the English fought bravely, they were soon overpowered by numbers, entangled as they were also by the spars and rigging which had fallen from aloft.

The major was the only person who took it coolly, for instead of attempting to defend the ship he retreated aft, and was detected by Simpson in heaving a rope on board the schooner to assist the pirates to get on board.

Before the mate had time to punish him for his perfidy, the deck was won by the Spaniards, and the survivors of the English driven below.

The leader of the pirates was a tall, good-looking man.

He had been the first on board, and had crossed blades with Captain Brown, whom he quickly disarmed and threw on the deck.

There lay the poor master looking up at his captor, and expecting every instant to receive his death-blow, surrounded by the dead and dying of his crew, while the savage shouts of the victorious pirates sounded in his ears.

His captor, whose sword was uplifted ready to run him through the heart, seemed to be examining his countenance attentively.

In another moment the poor master would have ceased to live, but at that instant some of the buccaneers dragged forward the rich merchant, Don Fernandes, and other prisoners, and the major appeared on deck escorting the two fair donnas.

"Here's a fat fellow, who seems lined with gold," cried the pirates, producing various parts of the merchant's dress.

"Oh, Senhor Brown, Senhor Brown, save me, save me!" exclaimed Don Fernandes, wringing his hands. "Why did you not run away faster? They have robbed me of all the little savings of my life, and I am a beggar."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the major, but said nothing.

"Senhor Brown!" exclaimed the leader of the buccaneers, "I thought so. You are a brave man, Senhor Brown, and have fought your ship well; rise, your life is safe. It is no disgrace to be conquered by me, for learn that I am Pepe, the Pirate."

"Pepe, the Pirate!" cried all the passengers in concert.

"The handsome man who is so polite to the ladies," said Donna Marina, glancing her bright eyes at him.

"The dreadful scoundrel who cuts all the men's throats!" ejaculated Mr. Fiz, ready to sink through the deck with fright.

"The man who knows to a fraction the value of every cargo afloat," muttered Don Fernandes. "I am a ruined man!"

"He does not look as if he would do us any harm," murmured Donna Isabelita, clinging closer to the major's arm.

"Not while I am with you, my charmer," answered her gallant protector.

"Are you not the man, then, who ran away with the Fair Rosamond?" asked Captain Brown, as he rose to his feet.

"The very same, at your service, my friend. Necessity compelled me to deprive you of her," said the Pirate.

"And now you have deprived me of another vessel!" cried the poor master. "I am an unfortunate wretch!"

"The fortune of war," answered Don Pepe.

Among the survivors, was Simpson, the mate, though his head, was tied up with a handkerchief, beneath which the blood was trickling down.

During this conversation the major, who, although held by each arm by the pirates, retained his admirable self-possession, was approaching the chief.

"What?" he exclaimed, "my old friend, Don Jose Montes Pepe?" and rushing forward, he threw himself into his arms.

"Ah! do I see the gallant Major Mondez, who so nobly saved my life at the risk of his own?" cried Don Pepe.

"The same; and for his sake he now entreats you to spare the lives of the prisoners in your power."

"Say no more about it, your wish is granted," returned the pirate; "set their minds at rest on that score, provided no attempt is made to hide the treasure on board. Make them look sharp about it," he added, in a whisper, "for we sighted a strange sail this morning, and she may be, perhaps, an English man-of-war."

The honest mate had been excessively puzzled at this scene, still he remembered having seen the major heave a rope on board the schooner during the action.

"Oh, you scoundrel!" he muttered. "If you didn't come on board on purpose to betray us into the hands of the robbers, I'm a Dutchman."

"But," exclaimed the major, tearing himself away from his friend's embrace, "in my joy at seeing you I for a moment forgot to introduce the fair donnas under my protection. They both have considerable property in Havanah," he whispered; "one is a widow, the other a spinster. The widow has her deceased lord's property besides. You take the widow, I will be content with her sister."

Having given his friend this information, he introduced him with all form to the senhoras, who returned his courtesy most graciously, and made up their minds that pirates were much abused and maligned individuals.

When Don Fernandes observed the high favour in which the major stood with the pirate, a gleam of hope crossed his mind, for that gentleman had been especially attentive to him from the commencement of the voyage.

"Oh, Senhor Major, in mercy's name intercede for me with these gentlemen, for they look as if they were about to hang me at once," he cried.

"Sorry for it, senhor, but I have no interest," answered the major; "your gold will avail more than my interference. The ladies are my only charge."

"Gold! gold! I have no gold!" exclaimed the terrified merchant.

"Ho! ho! ho!" was the only answer the major deigned to make. The work of pillage now began, while the master and his crew were lashed back to back round the masts, where they might see their property carried off by the freebooters.

Directed by the active major, they were not long in discovering the money-chests of the merchant, which were forthwith transferred to the schooner, no one heeding the protestations and entreaties of Don Fernandes.

While those operations were going forward, Don Pepe was paying the most devoted attention to the pretty widow, which she received with evident pleasure; and every now-and-then, as the major passed Donna Isabelita in the performance of his duties, he took the opportunity of pouring some soft words into her ear, which seemed far from disagreeable.

A great change had taken place in the manners of that worthy; for instead of the indolent, phlegmatic soldier he had hitherto appeared, he now seemed an active, energetic seaman, whom the pirates implicitly obeyed—an alteration which did not fail to attract the notice of both Captain Brown and his mate.

With grief almost amounting to madness, Don Fernandes had seen chest after chest of gold go over the side, and now the pirates commenced loading the schooner with the lighter and more valuable part of the cargo.

The luggage of the passengers of course was not spared, and even the persons of them were searched, to the dismay of poor Mr. Fiz, who fully expected that it was preparatory to his being thrown overboard. At last, some trunks and boxes containing female gear were handed on deck.

"Oh, those are our trunks!" cried Donna Marina, as she saw them. "Where are they going?"

"On board my schooner," answered Don Pepe, with a profound bow. "They will be safer there than in this ship."

"Madre de Dios!—how dreadful!" exclaimed the widow. "But what are we to do, then?"

"Follow your trunks, lovely senhora," replied the pirate, with a tender pressure of the hand. "The Juannetta will afford you tolerable accommodation, and the attentions of a devoted slave must make up for all other deficiencies."

A smile was the only answer the fair widow made.

The major, as we will still call the pirate's lieutenant, now reported the schooner fully laden, and hinted that he heard strong indications among the crew of a wish to hang up some of the captives; and as he was speaking, some of them dragged aft poor Simpson, who had made a stout resistance to the last, while others seized poor Theophilus Fiz to execute as their first victim.

"The bloody-minded villains!" exclaimed Don Pepe, with an angry brow, as he rose from the side of Donna Marina. "They are never content except they are allowed to commit murder; but they shall not be indulged. What are you about to do with those men, villains?" he exclaimed, in a loud tone, which sounded in every part of the ship. "The first man who attempts to injure them shall die. How often, as to-day, have I not brought a prize into your hands?—how often have I not led you to victory? Without me you well know you could nothing, and therefore I will be obeyed. Hear me then; let go free, and get every one of you on board the schooner."



THE MANIAC LADY ON BOARD THE PIRATE.

The pirates, with sullen looks, but without answering a word, obeyed. When the crew of the boat alone remained, he, with his own hands, released Captain Brown.

"You are a brave man," he said, "and deserve to live. For your sake I spare the lives of all on board, on condition that every one promises never to appear as witnesses against me or any of my followers. Go and learn the determination of the rest."

"I am very certain all will agree," eagerly cried Mr. Fiz, who had overheard the speech; "don't we, Captain Brown? Thank you, Senor Pirate. There's no use even asking the rest. I, for my part, will vow I never cast my eyes on you before."

While Captain Brown went round to notify the pirate's offer to his passengers and crew, Don Pepe took the hand of Donna Marina.

"Fair lady," he said, "I am bound for the Havanah, and can offer you a quick passage; your property is already on board."

"I must not be separated from my baggage," she answered looking towards the schooner.

"And you, sweet Isabelita, will you proceed in the ship?" said the gallant major, imitating his chief.

"I must not be separated from my sister," was the young lady's discreet answer.

As, may be supposed, there were no dissentient voices to Don Pepe's proposal, and in another minute he and the major, with their fair charges and a black maid, were on the deck of the schooner, which stood away to the westward; the crew of the John and Mary were busily employed in repairing damages, while the ship continued on her course.

By daybreak next morning a sail was discovered, four or five miles off, on the starboard bow, standing towards them. When poor Fiz, who had just come on deck, heard of it, he was terribly alarmed.

"Oh dear! oh dear! this is the last time I am ever caught at sea," he exclaimed. "If it is another pirate, we shall this time be all murdered outright, and the ship sent to the bottom."

"I almost wish she may be," said poor Brown. "After all my losses I can never lift up my head at home."

"Oh, don't be down-hearted now," answered the little Creole; "I believe, if it were not for you, not one of us would have been alive at this present moment, so depend on it, if we ever get home safe, we will make your losses up to you."

As the stranger drew near, she proved a sloop-of-war, with the flag of England flying from her peak, while the condition of the John and Mary explained what had occurred. When the sloop got within hail she was ordered to heave to, while a boat from the man-of-war boarded her.

"By your appearance we thought that you had been engaged with an enemy," said the lieutenant who came on board, "and I'll be bound it's no other than the very fellow we've been sent to look after, the notorious Pepe."

"All I can tell you is, that we were knocked about as you see; that we were robbed of every thing the pirates could carry off; but that, after we surrendered, no one was ill-treated," answered Captain Brown.

The officer having ascertained from some of the crew, who were not so conscientious as the master, the course the schooner had steered when she left them, after assisting them in getting somewhat to rights, returned on board his ship.

The sloop-of-war then made sail in chase, while the John and Mary was allowed to continue on her course—Captain Brown considering himself very fortunate in not being detained to give evidence against the pirates if they should be captured.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PIRATE IN TROUBLE.

His Britannic majesty's sloop Sea-gull had now been out six weeks from Jamaica, cruising in search of Captain Pepe. She had fallen in with several vessels plundered by him, and had boarded numbers of others from whom she received information of his movements, but for some reason or other she had never been able to get hold of the bold freebooter.

At last her captain began to suspect that he had been purposely misled, which was in reality the case.

In fact, Pepe had agents, not only in every port, but on board every cruiser and merchantman in the seas, so that it was as difficult to elude his vigilance as to discover his movements.

He has often been known to board a vessel, and, when pressed for time, to demand only certain chests and packages, which always proved to be the most valuable.

He never shed blood if it could possibly be avoided, nor was he ever known to ill-treat the prisoners who fell into his hands, provided they made no resistance.

The commander of the Sea-gull was now in hopes of falling in with the pirate before he could get into port to dispose of his cargo.

The sloop, therefore, stood away for St. Domingo, the coast of which island she ran down, speaking every vessel she met, but gaining no satisfactory intelligence of the pirate schooner.

Sometimes, indeed, a craft answering her description was heard of, but if it were her, she always managed to elude her pursuer, or else the chase turned out to be some Yankee trader, or other peaceably disposed vessel.

At last Captain Heskett, the commander of the Sea-gull, was almost in despair of finding the cunning pirate, and vowed if he ever came up with him, he would blow him and his band of miscreants out of the water together, while the crew whispered among themselves, that the vessel they were so vainly looking after must be the flying Dutchman, or one of those phantom barks well known to cruise over the ocean to lure mariners to destruction.

Captain Heskett was not a man to give up his object any more than the famed Vanderdecken himself.

One evening, just at sundown, he sighted a large schooner standing for the coast of Cuba, to the south of which he then was.

He fired a gun to bring her to, but to no effect, and not ten minutes afterwards, another vessel was seen going towards the same coast, a little more to the eastward. It was impossible to say which of the two it was the most advisable to chase, so he followed the one first seen.

All night the Sea-gull kept the chase in sight, and at daybreak next morning she was seen close in to the Cuba coast.

Just, however, as the sun arose, a thick mist came over the shore, beneath which, as it advanced, wafted slowly along by the land-breeze, appeared, shining brightly in the rays of the rising sun, the topsails of two vessels, three miles or so apart from each other.

That one was the chase there was no doubt, while the other was probably the sail seen on the previous evening.

A few minutes afterwards, however, it fell a dead calm, and the mist gradually settled down over the sea, obscuring the shore and the two vessels from the sight of the English.

It was indeed provoking; but as probably both vessels were becalmed as well as the Sea-gull, her commander determined to send away the launch in search of the one last seen, while he followed the one he had chased during the night.

The launch was accordingly lowered into the water, and, with a crew of fourteen hands, under the command of Mr. Brooks, the second lieutenant, sent away in the direction of the stranger.

After pulling to the north-east for about an hour, the mist cleared away slightly, and exposed, close aboard of them, the sail of which they were in search.

"Give way, my men, give way," shouted Lieutenant Brooks, "and the pirate will be ours in five minutes."

In less than that time they were alongside a low, rakish-looking schooner, but instead of any opposition being made as they sprang on board, they were received by a demure, puritanical-looking personage, who, in the nasal twang of a true Yankee, informed the officer that he was the master of the schooner Pilgrim, from New York, and asked the reason of their visit.

Lieutenant Brooks apologized for his mistake.

"You are a civil fellow, and deserve a civil answer!" said the master of the Pilgrim. "Now, I guess it's Pepe, the piccarooning Spaniard, you're looking after. Well, then, about the end of the middle watch, last night, as we lay close in shore, we saw two boats come out of a creek right abreast of us. As they pulled close to us we gave them a shot over their heads, but they didn't like our looks, I calculate, so they went away back again in the very direction from which they came. Now, I guess they are some of the very chaps you are looking after; and if you want them, there you'll find them, as snug as rats in a hole."

Thanking the American master for his information, the English lieutenant returned to his boat, and pulled away towards the shore, in high hopes of capturing the renowned freebooter.

"Now, I calculate, some one will put his nose in a trap," muttered the Yankee skipper, as he squirted a stream of tobacco-juice in the direction the English had taken. "Well, that's no business of mine," and he continued his quarter-deck walk, whistling for a breeze.

The launch had got within a quarter of a mile of the shore, before any opening could be perceived, when, as the officer thought he must be

mistaken as to the spot, he observed a narrow line of blue water running up between the trees which lined the very margin of the sea. "Give way, my boys, give way," he shouted; and in a few minutes the boat was threading a narrow passage, with rocks and trees on either side, leading into a broad lagoon.

When, however, Lieutenant Brooks looked round the lake-like expanse, and saw not the sign of a vessel, he began to suspect that the American had deceived him; yet, before giving up the search, he resolved to examine the place to discover if there were any other inlets in which a vessel might be concealed.

For this purpose they skirted round the shores of the lagoon, and had not pulled long, before they reached a thickly-wooded headland, on doubling which, they discovered the entrance of another lagoon.

Not a sound, however, was heard; not a boat floated on the smooth surface of the lake, when, on a sudden, the solemn silence was broken by the sharp bark of a dog.

"There are persons concealed not far from here, depend on it," cried the lieutenant. "Give way, my lads, and if Pepe is among them, we'll carry him off a prisoner."

The persevering seamen, although fatigued by their incessant exertion, pulled up the channel for some little distance, till they reached a little bay or nook, where, at the further end, almost concealed by the lofty trees, they saw a large schooner with a row of guns bristling from her ports, and boarding nettings triced up on either side.

Without considering the disparity of force, they at once made a dash at the stranger. Not a soul appeared on deck, nor was the silence that reigned over the scene broken by any sound, till, as they were approaching near, a loud derisive laugh sounded in their ears, and a black flag was run up at each mast-head.

The effect was startling, and sufficient to appal the stoutest hearts, but the seamen encouraged by their officer, quickly recovered their courage, and as they gave way again, uttering a loud cheer in answer, in an instant they were alongside of the schooner.

As they climbed up the side of the vessel they endeavoured to cut with their tomahawks and cutlasses the boarding nettings, which formed a strong protection to the people within them.

The brave lieutenant was the first to make a way through, but no sooner did he leap down on deck than a lasso was thrown by an unseen hand over his neck, and he found himself dragged rapidly over to the other side of the vessel, without the slightest power of resistance.

At the same moment, from the hatchways, and from behind the bulwarks, from every spot where they could have been concealed, up sprang some sixty stout seamen or more, and with loud shouts and cries fell upon the English who had followed their leader.

One after one, as they leaped down on deck, they were treated as he had been, till the whole party were fairly caught and pinioned.

The more they struggled the tighter the ropes were drawn, and the louder they swore the more uproarious became the derisive laughter and abuse of their opponents.

It was a very disagreeable position, and considering the sort of characters into whose hands they had fallen, not without a considerable amount of danger.

Few men like to feel ropes round their neck—the Spaniards might at any moment be tempted to run them up to the yard-arms; and that such would be the fate their commander was convinced, from the fierce looks and expressions which passed among their captors.

The one who appeared to be the captain of the pirate band, had hitherto not spoken, though foremost in seizing the British lieutenant.

He was a tall, fine-looking man; his costume was rich and elegant, betraying the nautical dandy, with not a slight dash of the privateer. As he advanced towards the captive officer, he made him a bow of mock politeness.

"So, Senhor Tenente," he began, "you wished to pay us a visit it seems. It is thus we receive those who are unwelcome. Now I dare say you expect to be shot, or hung, but you are mistaken, we are not butchers,—we must, however, give you a lesson you will not easily forget—not to put your head into a lion's mouth. You shall then be welcome to your boat, to find your way back to your ship as best you can."

"We are your prisoners, and you may murder us if you like; but depend upon it, if you do, you will some day hang for it," answered the lieutenant, who understood a little Spanish, and was enraged at the pirate's coolness; "and let me ask you who you are who dares to oppose the British flag?"

"I—I am Pepe, and care no more for the British flag than I do for my pocket handkerchief."

"Pepe! I thought so," answered the lieutenant: "and depend on it, if you are caught you will grace a yard-arm."

"Probably!" was the only answer, as the pirate turned away, and without further notice the Spaniards began belabouring their prisoners in the most unmerciful manner, though the officer escaped the same punishment, while the men swore that they would some day have their vengeance on the scoundrels. They were then led below, and compelled to perform all the most menial offices, with knives held at their backs to urge them on, and every now and then a pirate would prick his weapon into the flesh of his captive, to expedite his movements.

The lieutenant had remained on deck for some time ruminating on his fate, when he was aroused by a pirate with a kick, and ordered to get below to wait at the captain's table. Brookes had no power of resisting, so he was compelled to obey. What was his astonishment, however, on entering the cabin to find it ornamented in the most costly style, while at the table sat two young and beautiful women. At the head of the board was Pepe, and at the foot his quondam friend and lieutenant.

"We have sent for you to prove how well an Englishman can serve his masters," said the pirate, in a scornful tone. "Now take care that I am not deceived."

"In heaven's name, do not resist," whispered one of the ladies, near whom the officer was standing. "It will make him furious, and the consequences may be fatal to you."

"I am in your power, and it would be madness in me to refuse," answered the officer. "Besides," he added, with a low bow, "when I serve ladies so fair as these it can alone afford me pleasure."

"Bravo!" exclaimed the pirate, clapping his hands. "An Englishman turned courtier. You deserve to be free at once. I only wished to prove you. You are a brave fellow, and shall sit down and join our feast. Here, Domingos, cast loose this gentleman's arms. Now allow me to introduce you to Donna Marina Montes, my lady wife, and to Donna Isabelita Mendes Pinto, the wife of my particular friend and lieutenant, Don Rodrigo Mondes, a lineal descendant of the celebrated traveller, Ferdinand Mondes Pinto, of whom you no doubt have heard."

On this name being mentioned up sprang our friend the major, for no less a person was thereby indicated, and, with a profound bow to the astonished lieutenant, handed him a seat.

The ladies bent their heads gracefully and smiled sweetly, and in a minute afterwards the English lieutenant and the Spanish Pirate were hob-nobbing at each other in the most amicable way possible. Pepe's mood seemed entirely changed.

He laughed, talked, and joked; the ladies joined with spirit in the conversation, of which the major, or rather Don Rodrigo Mendes Pinto, monopolized the greater part.

After the repast was concluded, Donna Marina and her sister, accompanied by the lover of the latter, took their guitars, and sang, till Lieutenant Brookes almost forgot where he was, and how he had lately been engaged.

"You little expected to find such a reception as we prepared for you on deck," said Pepe, addressing his guest, and laughing; "still less to see the manner we live on board. For much are we indebted to the ladies you see before you. That they were here you knew from my friend Captain Brown, of the John and Mary—Ha, ha, ha! He complained of our treatment of him, and gave you every information to discover us. I know all about it. Nothing escapes me—Ha, ha, ha!"

"It is the case," answered the lieutenant. "Your information seems boundless."

"Yes, you are right. There is not a vessel which sails on these seas of which I have not an exact account, and scarcely a man-of-war either on board of which I have not a spy. Now, while you were looking for me in one direction, I took good care to be in another, and was well employed in visiting the Havannah, where my friend and I had the happiness of being united to our respective brides. Carramba! they are women of spirit, and instead of remaining quietly at home preferred coming with us to sea. What think you of that, Senhor Tenente! We are happy men, are we not?"

"Certainly, senhor, as long as you avoid the rope," bluntly answered the officer.

Pepe's brow grew black as night, and Donna Marina cast an imploring look towards the rash speaker.

"I may do something to deserve it yet," answered Pepe. "And these words may yet cost you dear. Here, Domingos, conduct this British officer on deck again, and let all his men be collected from below."

The order was instantly obeyed, and with scarcely time to bow to the ladies, who had evidently interested themselves in his fate, the lieutenant found himself again bound and standing on the deck of the vessel, surrounded by his men.

Their boat was still alongside, but without sail, mast, oar or spar of any kind.

Without farther ceremony their limbs were loosed, and they were ordered to find their way into the boat. She was then taken in tow by two of the pirate's boats, which at once pulled out towards the sea.

"What's going to happen now?" exclaimed one of the Englishmen. "The rascals are not going to take us out here to shoot us, I hope."

"More likely to cast us adrift, and let us float about till we are starved," said another.

"Silence, men," cried their commander; "you are still afloat in your own boat, and must not despair. Our ship will certainly be off here before long to look out for us, and I have every hope we shall be picked up."

The men said no more, but sat looking anxiously towards the pirates, expecting every moment to see them lift the muskets by their sides to their shoulders, and give them a quieting volley. On, however, they pulled across the lagoon through the outer passage, and at length cleared the land directly out to sea.

On, on they pulled, till even the pirates, hardy as they were, and accustomed to the climate, began to weary.

At last they cast off, and with shouts of mocking laughter, returned to the shore. Leaving the English crew to their fate—death by hunger and thirst, with the most dreadful torments, was what they must expect if not succored. For some moments even the stoutest gave way to despondency, till they were aroused by the voice of their commander. A word from him cheered their spirits. He reminded them that they still had the means of sending the boat through the water, for that the pirates had neglected to take the bottom boards and thwarts out of the boat, or to deprive them of their clothes, while some still had their knives hanging round their necks.

Under his directions they tore up the bottom boards and manufactured a spar—not a very stout one, but sufficient for the sail they could set upon it.

With their shirts sewed together they formed a sail, while the linings of their jackets served to form ropes and yarns to strengthen their masts. The remainder of the bottom boards and some of the thwarts served for a rudder and oars.

These preparations took them till dark, till when they were afraid to move, lest the pirates should observe them. They then made sail in the direction their ship had gone—for the wind was fortunately fair—and paddling at the same time, by daybreak the next morning they had run many leagues along shore.

They were afraid to pull very close to land lest they might be observed by any other piratical bands; but they kept a bright look out all the time for their own ship, in the hope that she might have put back to

look for them. In vain, however, they toiled on, under a tropical sun, without a drop of water to quench their burning thirst; not a sail appeared dotting the smooth surface of the shining ocean.

One by one the men sank back, exhausted from their labour, but the officer urged them on by words of encouragement, taking his turn at the paddles with the rest. Even he, however, felt his strength decreasing, when, towards evening, as he was casting his aching eyes round the horizon, the white canvas of a ship, shining in the rays of the setting sun, met his sight, a little on the larboard bow.

Their course was altered a point or so to meet her, but still the odds were very much against their being seen during the night, and even then she might not prove ready to succor them.

It was an anxious time; for the sun went down, and darkness rapidly covered the face of the deep, and, as yet, the ship was far distant. Soon the veil of night completely hid her. When last seen, however, she was, as far as they could judge, standing towards them close-hauled on the larboard tack, but a shift of wind might make her go about, and then to a certainty miss them.

The wind was so light, that neither she nor they could make much way through the water, and thus their anxiety was of necessity prolonged. At last the moon, to their great joy, rose above the water, her pale beams falling on the white canvass of a ship, not half a mile ahead of them.

They shouted, as if they could be heard at a distance. She steadily advanced towards them: again they shouted, and an answering cheer came down to their ears.

They could not be mistaken, she was the Sea-gull, and in a few minutes they were on her deck, and receiving the congratulations of their shipmates on their narrow escape.

No sooner had Captain Heskett received an account of the adventures of his lieutenant, than he determined at once to go in with his boats and attack the pirate.

Fortunately for his purpose, the off breeze freshened, and, long before daybreak, the Sea-gull was the off mouth of the lagoon where Pepe lay concealed.

The corvette stood in as close as she could venture, when all her boats being speedily manned, they at once pulled in for the lagoon, led by Lieutenant Brooks, who in spite of his fatigue, insisted on piloting the expedition.

In the most profound silence they advanced through the outer passage across the lagoon, and into the inner creek.

In another instant they expected to be engaged with the formidable pirate, but, on rounding the point, the schooner was nowhere to be seen. They pulled to the head of the creek; not a sound broke the stillness of night, not a sign of any vessel appeared.

"He has shifted his berth to no great distance, probably, and we may still find him," observed Lieutenant Brooks.

The boats accordingly pulled round the lagoon into every creek and bay, and the sun was already high in the heavens before they had explored half of it.

They brought up for a short time to refresh the men, and then continued their labours, but in vain; not a sign was there of Pepe or his vessel.

Our hero, for so ought Pepe to be called, was not so quite green as the English supposed, to be caught in the way they expected; for no sooner had the boat full of prisoners got out of sight, than he ordered the cables to be cast off from the shore, and slowly warped the schooner towards the mouth of the lagoon.

As soon as it was dark, he ran out and stood away to the eastward, while the English as he calculated they would, were looking out for their ship from an opposite direction.

He thus easily got off unperceived, but, as he had appointed a rendezvous in a lagoon a day's sail more to the eastward, in order to dispose of the remainder of his cargo, before he returned to Havannah, he made the best of his way thither.

The vessels he expected arrived at the same time, and, having given him gold in exchange for his various commodities, again took their departure. Pepe ought to have done the same. But Donna Marina was unwell, or unwilling, to go to sea that day, and Donna Isabelita wished to spend a longer time in the romantic spot where the vessel lay concealed.

It was a lovely evening, the heat of the day was cooled by a gentle sea-breeze, the tall and graceful trees, behind which the sun had just sunk, cast their shadow on the smooth waters of the narrow inlet out of which every instant leaped numerous fish, rippling its surface as they again fell into their tranquil home.

The two ladies were seated on the deck of the schooner, their sweet voices accompanied by their guitars, while their husbands lay at their feet admiring their beauty and listening to their melody.

The pirates, after the work of the day was over, lay about the decks either asleep, or playing at cards, or narrating their adventures—the great resource of seamen of every age and clime.

Discipline had become very slack of late on board; the ladies, it is to be feared, had something to do with it. A man had been stationed at the foretop-mast-head, to keep a look-out towards the sea; he had left his post, and had only just returned; with a sharp cry he aroused those on deck to sudden activity—

"Five boats pulling up the creek with the ensign of England flying at their sterns."

"To arms! to arms!" responded along the decks. The pirates rushed to their stations, and their guns were loaded and run out.

"Lower a boat and carry the ladies on shore," whispered Pepe to his lieutenant. "We must not expose them to the work we have on hand."

The order was instantly obeyed, in spite of Donna Marina's entreaties to be allowed to remain on board.

"Who was stationed at the mast-head?" exclaimed the captain. "Come here. You did not give due notice of the approach of those boats. If we are captured, it will be owing to your negligence. Receive your reward." As he spoke, he levelled a pistol, and the man

fell dead. "Let that be a warning to you, my men," he exclaimed, in a fierce voice. "We must have no further trifling, for depend on it, we have no mercy to expect at the hands of our enemies."

As he spoke, the boats were close a board of them. "Fire!" he exclaimed, and the whole broadside of the schooner was discharged at the advancing boats.

The iron shower did not stop them for an instant, but the crews, with loud shouts, sprang more vigorously to their oars.

Many, however, were killed or wounded, and more than one shot passed between wind and water.

In an instant they were alongside,—one boarding on the bows, another astern, and the seamen were scrambling up the sides of the pirate schooner. Nothing could withstand their fury, and the pirates knew what they had to expect, for among them they recognised their late captives.

The struggle was fierce, for the Spaniards fought with desperation, but they were at length compelled to give way; many were cut down, some were driven below, but the greater number leaped overboard.

The English seamen wished to follow them in their boats, but so well had the broadside done its work, that they were found half-full of water.

The pirate's late captives were the most savage; and as they were swimming for their lives, several were shot dead by the muskets of the marines.

What had become of Pepe no one could tell. He might have escaped on shore, or been killed in the water. An empty vessel and a dozen Spanish prisoners was all that remained to the victors.

When the leaks in the boats were stopped, and they were baled out, a few men being left on board to guard the prize, the remainder pulled on shore in search of the pirates who had escaped.

They wandered about in every direction, but not a sign of them could they discover, and at length they were compelled to return on board the prize. She was got safe out, and the pirates were tried and hanged.

Some years afterwards, lieutenant Brookes, then a commander, was ordered in his ship to look into the magnificent harbour of Havannah. While he lay there he was invited by a British merchant residing there, to make a short excursion into the interior. The first night they stopped at the house of the merchant, the next at a magnificent quinta, belonging to one of the most wealthy and respectable men in the island.

"He is rather an extensive dealer in slaves," observed the merchant, "but that is thought nothing of here. He has a charming wife, a lovely sister-in-law, and is one of the most courteous and hospitable men I know."

"By all means, let us pay him a visit," said Captain Brookes.

The two visitors were ushered, into a magnificent saloon with highly polished floors, and mirrors, for that was all they could perceive, as the thick blinds were closed to exclude the heat of the day. The owner of the mansion, a dignified, fine-looking man, of middle age, received them with the greatest politeness.

"Allow me to introduce you to my wife, Donna Marina Montes, and to my fair sister-in-law, Donna Isabelita Mondes Pinto."

The ladies answered courteously, and were evidently smiling. It was a pity they could not be seen. Captain Brookes fancied he recognised the voice of his host. At length the servants brought in a dozen or more wax-lights. Captain Brookes examined the countenance of his host more attentively.

"Pepe, the Pirate!" burst from his lips.

"The same," was the answer, "and happy again to have Senhor Brookes as his guest—ha, ha, ha."

Captain Brookes vowed that he never spent a pleasanter evening in his life than he did in the mansion of the wealthy and respected planter, Don Jose Montes, *ci-devant* Pepe, the Pirate.

CHAPTER V.

FURTHER PARTICULARS ABOUT DON PEPE.

"I FANCIED that I recollect the name of Pepe when you mentioned it," I observed, when Green had concluded his narrative. "And now I remember all about our amigo. I also fell in with him when I was in the West Indies and heard of him constantly."

I am sorry to say, that Donna Marina has had as little success in reforming him as wives in general have in improving their rakish husbands. She has however, perhaps made him more cautious, and, as he has run his head into one noose, he takes care to keep it out of another.

If he is no longer a pirate, he is as great a dealer in slaves as any in the Havanah, and, it is well known, that his vessels commit a little quiet piracy whenever they have an opportunity, without fear or detection. He is said to prodigiously rich, and to own more slaves than any in the island."

"In fact, you would say he is a notable instance of the success of villany, and a shining example to all men to turn rogues," observed Haggis.

"Exactly, doctor. If there were not another and better world, where we hope to moor ship at last, many a man might be content to bring up in the unsheltered bay, where Don Pepe has chosen to anchor," observed our good captain. "But, remember, he had bad holding-ground: the wind may shift and drive him out to sea, without compass or provisions, or dash him to pieces on the rocks. When a villain is painted, that reflection should occur to every one. But you were going to give us an account of your adventures in the West Indies, Mr. Fairfield."

"I was sir, and I will gladly do so," I replied. "I was at that time junior lieutenant of the Victor, brig-of-war. We had been cruising for some time in different parts of the Carribean Sea, when we at length returned to Jamaica. We had not long lain in Kingston harbour, when

it was up anchor again, and we were ordered to make the best of our way to Havanah. On leaving the island, we stood over to the Cuba coast, when, the wind coming off the land, we are able to lay our course to the westward. The evening was drawing on as we passed point Escondida, and by the time we were off the mouth of the bay of Guantnamo, it was almost dark. Guantnamo is a fine, deep bay, the shores are beautifully wooded, and highly picturesque, and there are besides numerous snug little harbours in it, where a vessel may be secure, either from the storms of heaven or from mortal foes.

"We'll just look into the bay, and see if, by chance, any slaving gentlemen are brought up there," said Captain Benham, our commander. "We shall be out again before dark. It never does to leave any spot unsearched; if you do, what you are looking for is sure to be there."

So we made a board over to the west shore, and then stood right up the bay.

None of us, however, expected to find any vessel in there.

We stood on for a mile or so, when, as we opened one of the harbors I spoke of on the west shore, we observed a brig lying at anchor, with her sails loosened, just ready apparently to get under weigh. She had hitherto been concealed from us by a high point, thickly covered with trees.

"About ship," exclaimed the captain. "We must get alongside that fellow and overhaul him, for if he's virtuous I'm very much mistaken."

About we went so as to keep outside of her, that she might not slip away, but, after making two or three short boards, it fell a flat calm, and there we lay utterly unable to move.

"Our boats," cried our skipper: "it will never do to wait here all night without paying that fellow a visit. Wilson," to our first lieutenant, "you will lead in the gig; Fairfield, do you take the pinnace. We will try and come up to you if there should come a breath of wind to help us along. Stay, however; first fire a shot, to see if the fellow understands good breeding, and will send a boat on board of us."

The gun was fired, and the noise went reverberating among the rocks and trees which fringed the bay, but it drew no response from the stranger. We were all the time anxiously watching her with our glasses. We could make out that she was a large vessel, and pierced, apparently, for some six or eight guns on each side. We observed, also, a number of boats passing continuously between the brig and the shore.

"They have found out what we are, and are landing their slaves, I am afraid," said our captain. "Bear a hand and get the boats ready, my lads; we must put a stop to that."

The boats were soon in the water, for every man worked with a will. Wilson leaped into his boat and shoved off, and I followed in the pinnace. Our crew gave way in style, and the ship's company cheered us as we left the side. We went through the water at a tremendous rate, and soon reached the mouth of the smaller harbour, in which the brig lay.

When thus far, we opened another point, and, as we did so, the spars and masts of a large schooner came into view. There was just suffi-

ent light for us to see the Spanish Ensign run up at her peak. Before we had pulled many strokes farther, a shot from the schooner came flying over our heads.

"What can this mean?" I thought, "She does not take us for a pirate, I suppose. Perhaps, she is one herself."

"That ere football was plaguy near," said Tom Harding, the coxswain of the pinnace. "The sooner we gives them chaps as sent it the taste of our cutlasses the better for us, my boys."

He had scarcely spoken, when a whole shower of shot came hurtling through the air, and dashing up the water on every side around us. One came so near that it actually sent the spray over us, and went skipping on a long way astern of us.

Wilson waved his hand for me to follow, and on we dashed with greater energy than before. There is nothing like the sound of firing in their ears to make brave seamen hurry on to the place whence it comes.

As we advanced, however, the schooner could not fire at us without running a chance of hitting the brig. The latter vessel had not all the time fired a single shot. This seemed very strange, and I could not account for it. The brig lay with her head towards the shore. Not a soul could we see on her decks.

Wilson pulled up on the port side—I boarded on the starboard. We expected to be saluted with a shower of shot and grape, but to our surprise not the slightest opposition was made. We sprang upon deck at the same moment, and as we did so we distinguished some of the brig's crew tumbling in a tremendous hurry down below, evidently expecting that we should cut them to pieces.

I suspect that if our people had got at them, they would at all events have broken their heads, for they were very justly in a great rage at having been fired at by their consort, for such we supposed the schooner to be. The brig was a very large vessel, nearly three hundred tons, I dare say, and was, moreover, strongly armed with a long swivel-gun amidships, and six long nines.

This puzzled us still more to know why she did not attempt to defend herself, for if her guns had been well worked, she might have sunk both our boats. Here we were, masters of the ship. We accordingly looked down the hatchways, and summoned the crew to appear before us, not, however, without some suspicion that they might fire at us from below, or play us some other cowardly trick.

At last, after bawling at them for some time, a fellow made his appearance with a lantern in his hand, followed by several others in the usual dress of Spanish seamen. Among them I observed one on whose coat some gold lace was glittering.

"Hillo, sir, who are you?" I said, catching hold of the gentleman. "Come forward, and show yourself."

"Sono aspirante de Marinha," he answered in a terrible fright, lest I should cut him down.

He meant to say that he was a Spanish midshipman, but what business he or the crew had on board that vessel we could not tell, till he contrived to explain to us that she was a prize captured by the schooner—which schooner was a Spanish man-of-war.

"Tell that to the marines!" said Wilson. "She is some rascally pirate, or she would not have fired at us. We'll, however, overhaul the vessel, and see if we can make out more about her."

We accordingly made the Spaniards understand that we wanted all the lanterns they could muster, and when they were brought, while Wilson kept the deck, I went below to examine the ship throughout.

The crew looked very vindictively at us as we passed, but I also imagined that I could detect a derisive smile lurking in the corners of the mouths of most of them. I had soon convincing proofs that she was a slaver outward bound.

Her hold contained a large assortment of printed cottons of gay colours, to barter for slaves; a large copper cauldron to boil the farinha, the food on which they are fed, and, besides that, abundance of planking to form the slave deck.

I reported what I had seen to Wilson on my return on deck.

"She is a slaver, there is no doubt of it," he observed. "And I suppose the story of the Spanish midshipman is true. However, take the jolly boat, and go on board the schooner to learn further particulars. I will remain in charge of this vessel till you return."

"Ay, ay," I replied; and calling my boat's crew, I was soon on my way towards the schooner. As I got near, I discovered that she had a spring on her cable, and that she was gradually bringing her broadside to bear directly on the brig.

It was with no very pleasant sensation also, that, as I looked up when we were almost aboard of her, I perceived that her guns were depressed so as to bear directly down upon us; except, however, that one felt rather flattered that such vast preparations should be made for the reception of an English jolly boat.

No opposition was offered to our clambering up the sides as we best could, but the gangway was not manned, nor was any other respect paid, such as we had a right to expect on visiting the ship-of-war of a friendly power. Well, when I got on deck, I beheld a sight for which I certainly was not prepared. The whole deck, fore and aft, was lighted up with lanterns, the crew of, I should say, at least, two hundred men, were at their quarters, and there were sixty marines drawn up in martial array, with shouldered muskets, and swords by their sides. Looking fierce enough to swallow us whole if we had shown fight.

You may just fancy me, with my handful of seamen, stepping over the gangway. Directly facing me stood the mighty commander of this band of heroes, with a crowd of officers, covered with gold lace and cocked hats, grouped behind him.

He was a short man, and very fat, and he seemed to have selected the largest cocked hat ever manufactured to cover his head, in order to add to his dignity; but what he highly prided himself on still more, was a pair of huge moustaches; which curled up in the true Don Whiskerandos style.

He looked very like a vain turkey-cock, when a farm-yard is visited by a stranger. I heard some loud grumblings as I first caught sight of this fearful personage, which afterwards resolved themselves into sun-

dry ferocious oaths, at least, so I suspected from the expression of his countenance, and the words *maldicho*, *carramba*, &c., which came out among them; but this mattered very little, so neither I nor any of my people could understand a word he said.

Taking our silence for contempt, I suppose, he grew furious, twirling his moustache with fearful energy, and stamping on the deck, as if he were anxious to summon some one from beneath to his assistance; at last, he wound up by clapping his hand on the hilt of his sword—a movement which was followed by all his officers. I stood firm. Not so my men, who grasped their cutlasses, and I heard one of them whisper to another—

"We shall have a scrimmage may be, after all, with them here strange Dons. We shall have enough to do to heave them all overboard."

And, by Jove! I believe if I had led them on, they would just as willingly and merrily have leaped down among the Dons, and laid about them with right good will, as have stood quiet where they were.

At last, I thought it was time to say something, so in a sort of *lingua franca*, I asked the captain why he had fired at us; but the only answer I got was a further volley of oaths, winding up with "*non intendo ustedes*."

"I ask you," I repeated in English, "why did you fire at us when you must have seen our flags, and know that we were friends?"

The captain on this shook his head, and, turning round, called to some one in another part of the ship. Immediately a man came aft and saluted us in very good English, with "Your servant, sir."

I was afraid, from his accent, that the fellow was an Englishman, though he might perhaps have been an American. The captain again uttered a very long sentence, looking fiercely at me all the time.

"He asks, sir," said the interpreter, "how you and your people ventured to go on board the brig yonder, when he fired you off?"

"Tell him," I replied, "because I was obeying orders. I belong to a British man-of-war, and my captain desired me, with another officer, my superior, to overhaul the brig. We have done so, and we have full evidence that she is a slaver."

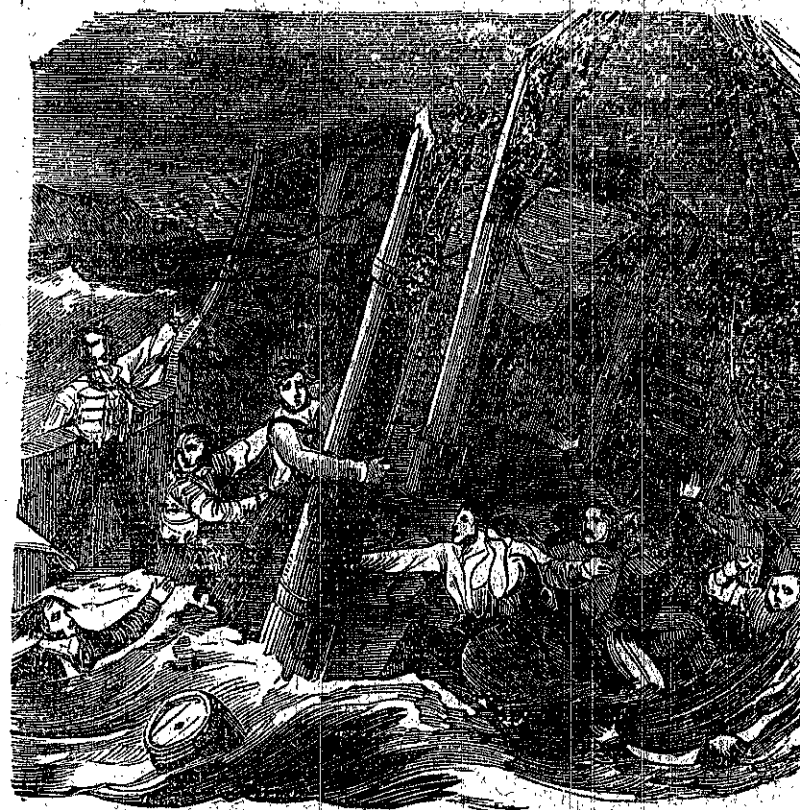
Again the Spanish captain spluttered forth a long sentence, which the interpreter explained—

"He knows that she is a slaver, sir," he said, "and he has therefore captured her under the same treaty that you capture slaves; and, as she is his prize, he was consequently very angry that you should venture on board without his leave."

"He may say what he likes," I replied. "But now ask him how he dared to fire on the British flag, when he must know that if he were doing all that was just and above board, we should be on friendly terms?"

Again the moustache was twirled, and the stamping recommenced, while the man delivered my message.

"O', by St. Patrick, them chaps won't grow aisy till they've had some blood drawn!" said an Irish lad who pulled the bow oar. "If



THE PIRATE SHIP SINKING.

Mr. Fairfield would but say the word, and let us try our cutlasses on their heads, it would do them a wonder of good."

"Silence!" I exclaimed, really afraid lest some overt act of my people might give the cowardly Spaniards an excuse to set on us.

The interpreter now again spoke. "He says, sir, that it was too dark to see your ensign—that there have been some piratical craft cruising about in these waters lately, and that he thought your boats belonged to one of them, which had come in to re-capture the brig."

"You may tell him that I believe he lies incontinently," I felt very much inclined to say, but I did not, and merely answered, "Very well—I am not the person to judge of the truth of his statement, but I am desired to request that he will immediately come on board the brig, to explain matters to my superior officer, who has charge of her, for, if he does not, we shall most certainly carry her off as a prize."

On this there was a great deal of talking, and then the captain's gig was hauled up alongside, and he tumbled into her in a great hurry, and

away she pulled as hard as his men could bend to their oars towards the brig.

I immediately followed, but the jolly-boat did not pull as fast as the Spanish gig, though my people gave way with a will to see the fun.

When I reached the quarter-deck of the brig, a wonderful transmutation of characters had taken place. There was Wilson drawn up to his full height of six feet four, I should say, with his sword in his hand, and surrounded by his crew—a fine set of fellows they were—with their shirt-sleeves tucked up to their elbows, and their cutlasses in their fists, looking very much as if they meant mischief.

I scarcely at first recognised the little Spanish captain among the crowd. His cocked hat was in his hand, and he seemed busily employed in sweeping the deck with it, while his large head went bobbing away, and his left foot kept scraping away at the same time, like a hen making o hole in the dust to bask in.

"And how dared you fire into my boats?" thundered Wilson, in a voice which made the Spaniards tremble. "Let me tell you that I have a great inclination, if you cannot offer a proper explanation, to bring the guns of the brig to bear on your schooner, and to blow you out of the water. When a breeze springs up, our ship out yonder will stand in here and make you pay dearly for your audacity."

"Oh, Señor, it was a mistake, entirely a mistake, I can assure you, on the honour of a Spanish hidalgo," returned the little captain, in a trembling voice—so Wilson, who understood Spanish, afterwards told him. "We could not distinguish your flags, and took you for an enemy. The fact is, we only this morning made prize of this brig just outside this place, and we brought up here to wait for a breeze off the land to continue our voyage to St. Jago da Cuba, where we were bound, to deliver her over to the court of adjudication. We were on the point of getting under weigh when you made your appearance. What I tell you, Señor, is the entire truth, I again repeat, on the sacred word of honour of a true Spanish gentleman," he added, with further bows and gesticulations.

The account seemed plausible enough to Wilson, and as there was no doubt of the schooner belonging to the Spanish Government, he could not doubt the word of the commander. I cannot say that I was quite so credulous; I could not help fancying that there was a trick somewhere or other.

"Very well, Señor Captain, a good voyage to you," said Wilson. "I think there is no fear but that the brig will be condemned."

"Oh, no fear," returned the Spaniard; "I look upon her as our property already."

With mutual protestations of affection and esteem, which on the part of the Spaniards, might have been interpreted into the directly opposite feelings, we returned to our boat, and pulled back to the Victor.

Our captain was satisfied with what we had done; but, as a matter of precaution, determined to watch our friend and his prize safely into St. Jago da Cuba. We accordingly kept a bright look-out on their movements during the night, lest they might slip away to sea unseen.

The calm continued till daybreak, when a light breeze from the northward sprang up and filled our sails. Directly afterwards we saw the brig standing out of the harbour, followed by the schooner.

We hove to for them, greatly, we afterwards had reason to know, to the disgust of the Spanish captain. All appeared going on right, and as soon as they got round the points, they hauled up for St. Jago. St. Jago da Cuba, as the Spaniards call it, is, as you know, about thirty miles from the bay of Guantanamo. As the day drew on, the breeze freshened up a little, and all the vessels went gaily dashing on towards the port. Our captain, while it was still calm, sent to ask the Spaniard to come and dine with him, but the latter was too sulky, I suppose, to accept the invitation, for he did not make his appearance. By three o'clock in the afternoon we got in St. Jago, and saw the brig and schooner safely at anchor close to each other.

Our captain, however, was too old a cruiser to be yet content, so we also brought up, till we had ascertained, beyond a doubt, that the brig was delivered up to the proper authorities.

The next morning, when I came on deck, I looked out towards the spot where she was at anchor, half expecting to find that she had given us the slip during the night; but there she was sure enough and on going on shore during the day, we found that all was right, and that she was now in the power of the law.

As legal proceedings in Spain are proverbially slow, our captain did not think it worth his while to remain to see the result of the trial, of which, indeed there could be no doubt, so we once more continued our voyage to the Havannah. I ought to have described the brig. She was a beautiful vessel, perfectly new; indeed, she had not been to sea before, and, from her look, I should say, was very fast. In a word, she was, in every respect, fitted to act as a slaver or a pirate. She was called the Panchita.

After a quick passage we reached that magnificent place the Havannah. We spent ten days there before we sailed for Jamaica. I was one day walking through the streets of the town with an English merchant, settled there, which a gay cavalcade dashed by, headed by a fine-looking, dignified gentleman, with a cigar in his mouth, and his cloak thrown jauntily on one side.

"Do you know who that is?" asked my friend Hardy.

"No," I answered. "One of the most respectable inhabitants of the place, I suppose."

"One of the greatest rascals," he replied. "That fellow is not only the greatest slave dealer in the island, but he owns several vessels, whose crews are strongly suspected of being guilty of piracy whenever they have an opportunity, without fear of detection. Not three weeks ago, a vessel of his sailed from hence, strongly armed, and with a crew capable of any atrocity. She was a fine brig, the Panchita."

"The Panchita?" I exclaimed; "why, that was the very brig we boarded in the bay of Guantanamo. Her career is soon ended then, for she was captured by a Spanish schooner of war, the Regulo, Don Huasco de Montebellino, commander, and is long ere this condemned as a slaver."

"Don't be too sure of that," he observed. "Ha, ha, ha!—pardon my laughter, but I am sadly afraid you have been gulled. Why, that same Don Huasco is the bosom friend of Don Montes Pepe, the cavalier who passed just now; and as the Panchita is his property, I don't think the little chap would venture to capture her. It would be as much as his life is worth, if he ever came back here—no, no, I smell a rat," and he laughed again.

We had not gone on far when we observed the same cavalcade returning, and what was my surprise to see our captain and two or three of my brother officers riding alongside of Don Pepe. When they got abreast of us, that gentleman reined up his steed, and addressed my companion, looking also pointedly at me.

"He invites us to come to an entertainment he gives to-day, at a country house he has a little way out of town," said my friend. "It won't do to refuse from our scrupulous delicacy, seeing that your skipper has already accepted—so I'll say that you'll be delighted to come."

Before I could even frame an excuse, had I wished it, for I certainly doubted how far I was justified in going to the house of such a rascal—knowing him to be such—I found that the engagement was made. My friends, in their ignorance, were not certainly to blame.

On this, Pepe expressed his high satisfaction, and ordering two of his attendants to dismount, my friend and I were supplied with their steeds, and away we all ambled cheek by jowl towards our reputable friend's mansion.

The house was spacious, with verandahs all round, and commanded a fine view of the harbor, the shipping, and the distant ocean. After we had washed our faces, and brushed the dust from our garments, we were introduced to the lady of the house, Donna Marina, who, as Green describes her, was really a very handsome woman; and her sister, also, Donna Isabelita Pinto, was still very pretty and engaging in her manners.

The entertainment was superb—with viands and fruits of all descriptions, and a number of sable attendants in scanty garments, some of whom might have been dispensed with to advantage.

I particularly observed the vast profusion of plate; but what was curious, it was of every variety of pattern, and evidently cast in many different countries and times. Some even looked most suspiciously more fitted for a church than a side-board—but I might have been mistaken. After dinner, an extemporary poet got up, and recited and sang till he sent some of us to sleep, and after smoking several cigars, we all got into net hammocks, and snoozed away for a couple of hours.

We had then coffee, and a number of ladies coming in with a band of music, we had a regular ball, which lasted till past midnight. When we were about to take our leave, Don Pepe would not hear of our going.

"Oh, mis amigos," he exclaimed, embracing our skipper most affectionately, "I cannot allow such a thing—you have come here for a week at least; this is only the prelude to our festivities; Donna Marina will never forgive you if you deserted us at this juncture: so go you shall not."

The end of it was, we enjoyed a very comfortable night's rest in the luxurious beds he had prepared for us.

"Depend on it, the rogue—I beg pardon—our respected host has a reason for detaining you," whispered my friend, as we went to our chamber. "I should advise you to look to it, or you may be gulled—(I beg your pardon)—as you were in the case of the Panchita."

I had no opportunity of speaking to Captain Benham till next day, and when I told him what I had heard of my friend's caution, he would not at first credit it.

"Nonsense!" he exclaimed: "all scandal depend on it. Such a respectable, fine fellow as our host, cannot be the character you insinuate. I never met a more gentlemanly courteous man—a regular Spanish grandee of the first class. Why, he was telling me last night of his father and grandfather, and how it was they first came over to settle here. Oh, no, it's impossible!"

"Was he telling you the truth, sir, do you think?" I asked.

"By jingo, I never thought that he might possibly have been romancing all the time. Well, I will look to it," was the answer.

"But I think it right, sir, to tell you that Mr. Hardy (my friend) suspects that something is going on which he is anxious to conceal from us. Probably one of his vessels is ready for sea, and he wishes to get her off while we are here, and the Victor is quietly at her anchors."

The captain gave a long "Whew!" "I'll tell you what it is, Fairfield, I suspect you are right, but we must not excite the gentleman's suspicions—you must go back to the town and get on board as quickly as you can; then take my gig and pull round the harbour in every direction, just as if for your amusement, and observe if there be any suspicious-looking vessel getting ready for sea. At the same time, get Mr. Hardy to institute inquiries on shore, and if you find that you are right tell Wilson to have everything ready for sea, and send and let me know. We will meantime remain on shore here, and then, when every preparation is made, we will post off and get on board as the anchor is run up to the bows. I beg Don Pepe's pardon if our suspicions are wrong, and if correct, he has only fallen into the trap he has laid. I don't much like it, however."

When I mentioned to Don Pepe the necessity there was of my returning to my duty on board my ship, he expressed deep regret, and insisted on furnishing me with a horse and a guide.

"The road is difficult to find, and as you are in a hurry, I will send you by a short cut," I understood him to say, but my knowledge of the Spanish language was at that time very limited.

A fine horse was brought to the door for my use, and my attendant was also mounted, and off we set.

I certainly did not observe accurately the route we took: indeed, relying on my guide, I was thinking of other things. I remember that we soon quitted the road, and on we went for a considerable distance over mere horse tracks, without seeing scarcely any human habitations, the country every instant growing wilder and wilder. At last I became convinced that we had taken the wrong direction, and had gone directly

towards the interior of the island. I instantly turned my horse's head, and told my boy that I must make the best of my way into the town. He pretended to understand me, but either did not do so, or again purposely misled me; for after several hours riding, I found myself again directly in front of Don Pepe's mansion.

The hospitable owner was there to receive me, and with the blandest of smiles, asked me how my ride was enjoyed, or something to that effect.

I was very indignant, and could scarcely find words to explain that I wished to return to Havannah, and not to take a pleasure ride. While this was taking place, who should arrive but Captain Benham, and my friend Hardy.

"What, Mr. Fairfield, come back already," exclaimed my captain soon as he saw me: "you bring important news, I hope."

"I can only say, sir, that my suspicions are confirmed," I replied, and explained in a few words what had happened.

"Ho, ho! that does look something like it," he observed. "Well, make the best of your way on board, late as it is, and do as I directed you,—there is more reason for it than ever."

"Ay, ay, sir, I'll not lose a moment, depend on it," I replied: and then turning to Hardy, I begged him to explain to Don Montes Pepe, that my duty required me to be on board without delay, and to beg that he would send some one who would lead me by the most direct cut into the town.

"The latter part of the request I shall not give," said my friend; "I intend to go with you myself. I cannot reconcile it to my conscience to trust you to the tender mercies of such piccarooning villians as are some of our host's followers. Why, man, if he does not wish you to arrive at Havannah to night, they would murder you without the slightest scruple."

I cannot say that I was sorry for Hardy's determination, though I at first begged him not to give up his amusement on my account. We were soon in our saddles, and accompanied by two of his servants, who had come out to escort him, and two whom Pepe insisted on sending with us, we set off for Havannah.

A ride of two hours took us there, without any adventure worth recounting. I got on board the brig just as it fell dark, and, if Pepe's object were to make me lose a day, he had certainly succeeded. Wilson was not at all surprised at what I told him.

We at once set to work to get the ship ready for sea. The next morning I took the gig, as the captain had directed me, and pulled into every nook of that vast harbour, narrowly examining every craft I saw, but, though I observed several rakish-looking schooners and brigs, I could not fix upon any one of them as particularly of doubtful character.

I had almost given up the search in despair, and was about returnint on board, thinking that our suspicions had been ill founded, and that Don Pepe was, after all, a maligned and highly honourable gentleman, when I observed, over a point of land to the eastward, what looked

very like the glitter of a top-gallant sail, as it is first loosened, though it might have been a white bird just taking wing.

Determined, however, to satisfy myself, I told the people to look out for a long pull, and put the boat's head to the point I speak of.

I have never found seamen grumble when they know that there is a good object for exertion, and my lads bent to their oars as if there were not such a thing as a tropical sun overhead, so that we soon neared the spot.

Before we got there, I took off my coat, and the gold lace from my cap, and made the men bind their handkerchiefs round their heads, so as not to excite the suspicions of those on board the vessel, if vessel there were; however, I knew well that whatever she might be like, I could not even go on board her, much less take possession of her.

In another quarter of an hour, we rounded the point, and there lay, in a snug little cove, as wicked a looking craft as ever I put my eyes on.

She was a schooner, with taunt, raking masts, and square yards, and a long, low hull, just the cut of a vessel for a slaver. She was full of people, some were aloft bending sails, others were at the same time setting up the rigging, and others were hoisting in her stores and water.

So busily employed was every soul on board, that I do not believe they ever observed us. I longed to pull in and reconnoitre more minutely, but I had seen enough to convince me that she had some particular reason for being in so desperate a hurry.

I therefore pulled back to the brig as fast as I could, and told Wilson what I had observed. He agreed with me, that we ought to let the captain know of the circumstances, and, accordingly, packing up a carpet bag, as a pretence for sending to him, we despatched it, with a note, under charge of his coxswain.

As we expected, before night, he and the rest of our shipmates returned on board, they having taken an affectionate farewell of Don Pepe, greatly, probably, to his disgust.

Everything was ready for sea, but we had no pilot on board, for the master knew the harbour too well to require one; nor was any other sign given of our intention of sailing, for we felt certain that our late host would be carefully watching our proceedings.

However, we waited till it was perfectly dark, and then got up the anchor, and loosened the sails as silently as we could, when, a light air coming from the south-west we were able to stand clear of everything out of the harbour.

When off the little bay I spoke of, we hove to, and Captain Benham ordered me to take the gig and pull in, with muffled oars, to see if our friend were still there. I had no little difficulty in finding the spot in the dark, but at last, after half an hour's search, I hit on it and pulled in.

In vain I looked about for the schooner. I tried right round the bay, and passed the very quay near which she had been moored. As I did so, I fancied that I heard a derisive peal of laughter, but I might have been mistaken; at all events, the schooner was gone.

Not a little disconcerted, I returned on board, more fully convinced

than ever of Pepe's roguery. The puzzle was, which direction we were to take, for, by the delay which had occurred, she had already some hours' start of us. Our only satisfaction was, that in the morning, when Pepe found that we had sailed, he would be left in uncertainty whether we had made a prize of his schooner or not. At last, it was determined to round the west end of the island, for the navigation of the north side is dangerous and difficult.

To make a long story short, and to arrive at a very lame conclusion, whichever course our friend took, we never saw her again, and the chances are, she is still employed in adding to the wealth of Don Pepe.

I have, however, not as yet done with the Panchita. On our way back to Jamaica, we put into St. Jago, and on making inquiries for the brig, we found that the captor had brought her to trial as being a pirate instead of a slaver; and that by the piece of legal irregularity, the poor man had lost his prize.

We were speaking on the subject to an English merchant, who was dining on board with us, and we also recounted our adventures with Don Pepe. When he had heard them, he burst into a loud fit of laughter.

"And so, my good fellows, you suppose that Don Huasco Montebello, the captain of the Spanish man-of-war schooner, has suffered by his innocent mistake!" he observed. "Don't you think he made it on purpose? I can tell you I know he did, and they sailed together directly she was released, as amicably as possible. Don't you know the dodge? It is beautifully simple; Don Pepe gives the Spanish officer a handsome gratuity, provided his vessels get free beyond the 70° of longitude, outside of which the British men-of-war seldom cruise. So his Catholic Majesty's ship sticks close to the slaver, and if a British pennant heaves in sight, he directly takes possession, and you cannot touch her. He is certain then, if compelled to bring her to trial, to make a flaw through which she may easily escape. The Spanish government know all about it, and wink at everything which is done to assist the slave trade. Now I know it for a fact, that the royal schooner accompanied the slave brig through the windward passage, and did not quit her till she was beyond all fear of pursuit."

We thanked our guest for his information, which was very valuable.

"Oh, I forgot to tell you," he added, "that very brig will be just as ready to commit piracy as to carry slaves. I know that the man who is in her as a master, in the last vessel he commanded, never got across to the African coast, and yet returned with a cargo of slaves."

"How did he manage that?" we inquired.

"By a very simple method; he met the slavers on their homeward voyage, and running alongside one of them took all his slaves out of her; when in his more gracious mood, paying for them in cotton goods to enable her to purchase more, or not unfrequently making her go back with an empty hold, her people glad even to escape with their lives. Pepe, as it is said, orders his captains never to kill if they can possibly help it; so he is looked upon as a humane and generous man."

CHAPTER VI.

THE DEMON PILOT.

WE found ourselves one day, becalmed close to an outward-bound merchant ship. I boarded her to gain information from home; and the master very civilly supplied us with newspapers and several little luxuries for our table.

Finding Captain Andrews a very respectable old man, I invited him on board to dine in the gun-room. Hearing me talk about my collection of sea-stories, he offered to add to them, if we wished, by narrating an occurrence which happened to him in his youth; and from his evident respectability and gravity of manner I have no reason to doubt his belief in its truth—though of its probability I will allow my readers to judge for themselves.

"I was just out of my apprenticeship when I was appointed, by a friend of my father's merchant in Liverpool, Mr. Damer by name, as third-mate of a fine large brig he had just launched at that port, and called after his wife, 'The Mary Damer.'"

"Well, as it happened, a week or ten days before we were ready for sea, the master Mr. Damer had selected to command the brig was taken very ill, and was utterly unable to proceed on the voyage. A day or so after the owner had been informed of this, a young man presented himself with a letter from his correspondents in London, stating that he had been for some years in their employ as mate and master, and that he had always afforded them the greatest satisfaction; so that they regretted being unable to provide him at once with a ship, but that if Mr. Damer could give him the command of one of his for a voyage, they should feel much obliged. I was in his office at the time, waiting for orders.

"You have arrived very opportunely, captain—I beg your pardon—what is your name?" said Mr. Damer.

"Penrose, sir—William Penrose," replied the stranger.

"Oh, yes, I see," looking at the letter. "Captain Penrose, I am happy to be able to forward your wishes. I have a vessel just about to sail, and you shall have the command of her, if you please. She is the Mary Damer. Go on board; and then if you like the look of her, come and tell me your opinion—after that we can settle the matter."

"It is not necessary," answered Captain Penrose. "I saw that very brig alongside the quay as I was strolling down to the river, and could never wish for a finer craft."

"Well, then, we will consider the affair settled," said the merchant. "When did you arrive in Liverpool, Captain Penrose?"

"Only last night, sir," answered the captain; "I hurried down from London as fast as a horse would carry me, for I hate idleness, and am no sooner on shore than I wish to be at sea again."

"I like your spirit, captain—it will much assist your success in the world," observed Mr. Damer. "The Mary Damer is bound for Port

Royal in Jamaica, and will return with a cargo of sugar. By-the-bye, have you ever been before to the West Indies?

"Know every creek and key among the islands," answered Captain Penrose, quickly. "Wherever you may wish your ship to go, depend upon it I can take her."

"So far so good," observed the kind-hearted gentleman. "You can sign your agreement to-day, and go on board and take command; you will be able to expedite affairs, which the illness of poor Captain Jones has much delayed. Before you go, I will make known to you a young man who is to act as your third mate." And he beckoned me to come forward, for I had been standing during this conversation at the farther end of his office.

"After I had been introduced, and Captain Penrose, as he called himself, had expressed his confidence that he should pull together, he took his leave, promising to return in an hour, when the papers were to be ready. Mr. Damer was an acute man, and a great observer of men's characters. He was, however, sometimes mistaken.

"I like your new master, Andrews," he remarked, as soon as Captain Penrose had quitted the room; "he appears a very honest, intelligent man, and I think you will find him a pleasant person to sail with."

"Yes, sir," I answered mechanically, for I had no reason to offer for an opposite opinion; yet somehow or other I could not cordially agree with him.

"There are some men who appear like very saints on shore, yet the moment they get into blue water, show themselves in their true colours, as very devils incarnate; and such an one, by the glance of his eye, as I felt it for a moment fixed on me, did I suspect was my new captain; but of course I could not say this to our owner. After I had taken my leave, Captain Penrose returned, was formally invested with the command of the *Mary Damer*, and soon afterwards returned on board and took charge of her. We were at that time still rather short of hands, but in the course of two or three days, six stout, active fellows presented themselves, who were instantly entered by the captain, and our employment was soon complete.

"I had never met any of the new men before, nor had any of the crew; but there was nothing strange in that. They were obedient and orderly, and prime seamen, as I could judge by the way they worked at setting up the rigging and bending sails. The expression of their countenances was certainly not prepossessing, I thought; and what struck me as odd was, that though they apparently had never met each other before, they at once kept entirely together, speaking very little to the rest of the crew. I must confess, though not of a suspicious disposition, I was not altogether easy in my mind about our new captain and seamen he had entered, yet there was nothing tangible to lay hold of, and I feared either to wrong him, or to appear a mischief-maker to our owners, should I whisper my suspicions, so I kept them to myself, and determined to hold a strict watch on all that was going forward. In truth, Captain Penrose had the manners of a very agreeable gentleman, and contrived quickly to ingratiate himself both with Mr. Damer and

his family, and with his mates and all his crew; indeed, before we sailed, I began to laugh at the thoughts I had at first entertained.

"He certainly, by his exertions and resources, got the ship in a very short space of time ready for sea; and the day before we sailed, Mr. and Mrs. Damer, and a party of friends, came on board and drank success to our voyage, when Captain Penrose stood up, and in a neat speech expressed his thanks for their good wishes, and promised to return as quickly as possible with a rich freight.

"The evening we hauled out into the stream, and the next forenoon, with a fine breeze, we were standing out of the Mersey, and before dark we were fairly in our voyage running down the Irish Channel.

"I must not forget to tell you, that we had two cabin passengers, one a married lady, going out to join her husband at Port Royal. She was still young, and very handsome, but she had charge of a young lady, scarcely seventeen years old, whose father was in the West Indies. She was the sweetest rose-bud ever seen, charming in her manners, and delightful in her disposition; so that, though I did not actually fall in love with her at first sight, I felt ready to die to serve her.

"In those days it was not safe to navigate the Carribean Sea without being armed; for although the old pirates of the Black-beard race had long before been extirpated, there were still a number of picarooning villains cruising about ready to pounce upon any craft unable to protect herself. England was also at war with France, and with the revolted States of America, who sent out shoals of privateers to destroy her commerce; so that plenty of enemies were to be found in every direction.

"The *Mary Damer*, therefore, was supplied with letters of marque; carried six guns, two long nine and four carronades, with plenty of muskets and cutlasses for all the crew, of whom, including officers, there were five-and-thirty; so that we were well able to bid defiance to most vessels of our size, although we were strictly charged by Mr. Damer, who did not approve of privateering, not on any account to go out of our way to make prizes, but to evade all contests, and merely to defend ourselves if attacked.

"She was also a very fast craft: indeed, in no way did she disappoint our expectations. She was a good sea-boat, as stiff as a church under canvass, and possessed as nimble a pair of heels and as much beauty as any young lady in the three kingdoms.

"Now I am going to tell you a very extraordinary circumstance, which happened on the evening of the very day we sailed, though of course, I did not know it till long afterwards. Mr. Damer was sitting in his counting-house congratulating himself on the prospect of a favourable voyage for his brig, when a person presented himself, looking very pale and haggard, who stated that his name was Penrose; that he was travelling from London on horseback with a letter from his correspondents, when he had been attacked by robbers, who took everything from him, and left him for dead; and that as soon as he was sufficiently recovered, he had hurried on to Liverpool, as he was anxious to get to sea to make up his losses.

"For some time Mr. Damer would not believe the story, treating the poor man as an impostor; and at last, though he thought he might be speaking the truth, he was still convinced that there must be, though a curious coincidence, two Captain Penroses, and that he could not have given the command of his fine new brig to an impostor, and something worse. Of course he wrote to his friends in London to ascertain the truth—what that was I shall by and by tell you.

"Everything went on well on board the *Mary Damer*. With a brisk north-easterly breeze, for many days, we kept a direct course for Madeira.

"Though the wind headed us till we were within about sixty miles of that island, fine weather continued, the blue waves dancing gaily in the sunbeams which darted forth from an unclouded sky. The ladies were constantly on deck; indeed, Miss Arden—for that was the name of the youngest—spent most of her time beneath the shades of an awning we used to spread, to protect them from the burning rays of the sun. In those days, as was to be expected from my age, I was rather sensitive to the tender passion, and it was not long before the charms of Miss Arden made a deep impression on my heart, nor was the poor girl insensible to my attentions, though they were bestowed in rather a boyish manner. The other mates were blunt, honest fellows, who never thought of interfering with what they considered my nonsense; indeed, it rather amused them, so that the captain was the only person likely to prove my rival,—but he flew at other and less lawful game, but of that by and by.

Well, one night the second mate being ill, I took the middle watch, it being his turn off duty. The watch were snoozing away between the guns, except a look-out man forward, and the man at the wheel, and I was taking my solitary walk on the quarter-deck, whistling for want of thought or company, when, as I stopped for a moment, as I reached the waist, to take a glance along the horizon, over the starboard bulwarks, I felt a hand laid upon my shoulder. I knew not why, a cold shudder ran through my veins. I fancied that no human being was near me. For a moment I dared not move, when a low, quiet laugh recalled me to my senses, and turning suddenly round, I beheld the captain.

"What! indulging in a reverie, Andrews?" he observed. "I fear that I must have interrupted it; but, truth to say, I could not sleep, so I have come to take a turn on deck."

"It's a night fine enough to tempt any man from his hammock," I answered, for want of something to say.

"Fine enough, yes; but tame and dull." He spoke as if musing to himself, rather than addressing me. "For my part, I prefer the tempest and the fight to idleness and a calm. What say you, Andrews—would you not rather be pursuing a richly-freighted enemy—a heavy Spanish galleon, for instance—than sailing on in a steady course as we are doing?"

"I should not mind a fight, if it were necessary, but I find no fault with the weather we have at present," I replied.

"Well, it will be strange if we cross the broad sea without some change, and I hope we shall have luck enough to fall in with an enemy of our own size, without going out of the way to look for her. Do you think the men are staunch?" he asked.

I said that I thought they were, and ready to fight any Frenchman, Dutchman, Don, or American we were likely to meet. For more than an hour he continued the conversation while pacing the deck, though it was some time before I discovered its drift. He spoke of the pleasures of a privateer's life, the large fortune to be rapidly acquired, and the contemptible dullness of a mere trader's existence. While we were conversing, the wind gradually fell, and, in a short time, the loud flapping of the sails against the masts showed that we were almost becalmed. The captain took a look round the horizon.

"Rouse up the watch on deck, Mr. Andrews, and hand the top-gallant sails," he sang out sharply. "We shall have a stiff breeze before morning."

The order was quickly obeyed; the rest of the lighter canvass was then furled, and the now useless courses clewed up. The captain, instead of going below, kept the deck, watching with a seaman's eye the sign of the heavens. He was not deceived. Before the end of the morning watch, dark masses of clouds came rolling on from the southwest, and the ship was already beginning to feel the heavy swell which precedes a storm, although as yet there was little wind. The topsails were now closely reefed, and everything made snug. Fortunate, indeed, was it for us that it was so, for, just as day was breaking, a squall struck the brig, laying her almost on her beam ends, and carrying away the gaff of the mainsail by the jaws.

At that instant I heard the cry of a man overboard, and, turning round, I observed that the captain was no longer where I had just before seen him standing. Running aft, I saw an object in the water close astern of us, for the brig had not gathered way, and without a moment's consideration, being an admirable swimmer, I slipped out of my shoes and jacket, and plunged overboard. At first I sank, but rising again, I found myself close to the figure of a human being, and on swimming up to it I discovered that it was the captain, but insensible from a blow he had received on his head. It was surprising that he did not sink at once. Having grappled him by the collar, I looked round for the ship, when what was my horror, to see her, through the faint light of the morning, apparently driving away from us before the gale. The foaming, bubbling waves were around me, the dark clouds overhead, the hissing of the waters in my ear; I was giving way to despair when I saw a broken spar floating close to me, and pushing the captain towards it, I managed to get hold of it, and to secure him to it likewise.

At first I thought we were to be abandoned to our fate, and while under this impression, the captain's senses returned.

He appeared as if just waking from a deep sleep, and while mechanically grasping the spar he looked round to see where he was. Instantly comprehending our awful situation, and seeing who had preserved him, he exclaimed.

"By Jove, Andrews, you are a gallant fellow! I meant you wrong, but if we live, I will die sooner than harm you."

I thought he was raving as he spoke, so paid little attention to his words; indeed, I was rather thinking of preparing for another world, where I felt that both of us must soon be sent. The white foam, driven by the furious wind, dashed over my head, almost blinding and suffocating me; and every instant I feared the captain would be washed from his hold. I had given all up for lost when, as we mounted to the top of a wave, I saw through the gray dawn the brig heave-to, and directly afterwards a boat pulled round from under her stern.

As yet the sea had not got up very much, though it was rapidly rising, and every instant was of importance. The men in the boat bent bravely to their oars, but they had hard work to pull up against the gale, which sent the white foam flying in sheets over them. They cheered as they came near us, and I grasped still tighter hold of the captain, who could do little to assist himself, his arm I found having been injured by the blow which knocked him overboard.

At last the boat reached us, but there was no little difficulty in approaching the spar without risk of staying in the bows of the boat, or giving either of us a knock on the head, which would inevitably have sent us to the bottom. The bowman, however, contrived to seize hold of the captain's collar, and with the aid of the rest hauled him on board; while I was still hanging on to the spar. At that moment I observed that the crew who manned the boat were those who had been last shipped by the captain, the next instant the send of the sea separated her from me, as I was about to grasp hold of an oar.

"Let the young coxcomb drown, and be damned! We've no time to waste in hauling him on board," I heard one of the men exclaim in a loud tone.

Life, however, was not to be abandoned without a struggle, and making a desperate effort, I grasped hold of an oar, but the villain, pulling it, would have shaken me off, had not the captain, seeing the treachery of the men, ordered them with a terrible threat to take him on board. The intervening moments which I held on the oar were those of dreadful suspense, for my strength was too much exhausted to enable me to swim another stroke. Indeed, I scarcely knew what occurred till I found myself in the boat pulling towards the brig. I was close to the captain.

"Utter not a word on board of what has occurred, and you are safe," he whispered, putting his fingers to my lips. "If not, I have no power to protect you."

I had little time to meditate on the meaning of these strange expressions before we were alongside the brig, and, with considerable difficulty, got on board. Scarcely was the boat hoisted up when the gale came down upon us with fresh fury, and the ship being once more got before it, away we scudded under bare poles. It did not, however, last many hours, though we were several days retracing our course before we reached Madeira.

Our lady passengers were very much alarmed at the storm; of the

accident they knew nothing till the captain and I were safe on board again, and with the return of fine weather their spirits revived.

With me, on the contrary, it was a time of anxious suspense; though my suspicions were aroused that all was not as it should be, with all my vigilance I could find nothing definite to communicate to my brother-officers.

I felt, at the same time, that I also was narrowly watched by the captain and the men I have spoken of, that I was scarcely prepared for the dreadful catastrophe which was about to occur.

After taking in wood and water, and fresh provisions at Madeira, we again sailed, shaping our course for the West Indies. Everything went on favourably for some days, with a fair wind and smooth sea; the ladies were constantly on deck, and I, as before, continued my attention to Miss Arden, which she received with apparent pleasure.

We sighted several sails during the passage, and more than once were pursued, but always had the heels of our enemy. Another point I did not like was, that the captain insisted on keeping a more southerly course than the two senior mates approved of, he alleging that we should thus more easily make Jamaica, which was not the case, we all well knew.

At last we found ourselves running in through the broad passage between Grenada and Trinidad, when, the wind falling during the night, we lay completely becalmed.

At the dawn of the following morning a sail was perceived about four miles to the southward of us, which we were not long in making out to be a sloop of war under British colours. We accordingly hoisted our ensign, and in a short time perceived a boat pulling towards us, which, as she approached, we saw contained an officer and ten men, fully armed.

A dark frown came over the captain's brow at the sight of this, and mustering the men on deck, he told them that some of them would to a certainty be impressed on board the man-of-war; that if they chose to be made slaves of they might, but that if they resisted he would protect them.

Saying this, he threw open the arm-chest, and stuck a brace of pistols in his belt, the greater number of the men following his example, so that when a lieutenant from the ship of war, with his men, stepped on board, he found a determined band ready to encounter him.

Undaunted, however, by our hostile appearance, he went about the performance of his duty in a quiet, firm manner, selecting me and seven more of the crew to serve His Majesty. Not only was I not armed, but I was prepared with a heavy heart to yield to my fate, when I heard the captain exclaim in a voice of thunder—

"Take my men if you like, but do so at your own peril!"

"We shall see," replied the lieutenant, seizing one of the men (five of them were the volunteers of whom I had the doubts I spoke of).

"There's a breeze coming down to us from the north, my boys," sang out the captain.

The man took the hint, and with the butt end of his pistol felled the young officer to the deck. It was the signal for a general slaughter.

The man-of-war's men fought with desperation, for they saw that they had little hope of quarter after the outrage which had been committed. A shot from one of their pistols brought me on the deck, as I was rushing to preserve their lives; and at the same moment, the captain, not knowing my intentions, but seeing me fall, vowed he would avenge me; and drawing his cutlass, like a madman, gnashing his teeth with fury, he cut the man-of-war's men on every side. Not one of them escaped.

I heard a loud cry as a cannon-shot was thrown into the boat along-side, and the man remaining in her left floating on the wide waters. The still breathing body of the lieutenant was thrown overboard, followed by those of his slaughtered and dying crew.

A fresh breeze filled our sails; and as we flew from the scene of destruction, I heard some of the savages jeering at the hapless wretches still struggling in the water, and soon to become the prey of the voracious sharks, which were sure before long to assemble round them.

I knew not what happened for some hours, for I fainted from loss of blood, till I found myself on a sofa in the cabin, with Miss Arden, sitting by my side, and bathed in tears.

"What has occurred?" I asked, lifting myself up on my arm, after having somewhat recovered my senses and strength, and looking wildly around me.

Miss Arden uttered a faint cry as she saw me come to myself.

"Thank heaven that you have recovered, Mr. Andrews!" she exclaimed. "But, oh! do not ask me what has occurred, for I scarcely dare to utter the dreadful suspicions which have risen in my mind. There have been bloodshed and murder, and I much fear that it is not yet over."

"I will go on deck and ascertain the truth," I answered. "Oh! I recollect—the officer and boat's-crew of the man-of-war were basely murdered, and I had no power to save them. Alas! Miss Arden, I fear your worst suspicions are correct; but, believe me, whatever happens, I will protect you to the last."

"I trust to you, Mr. Andrews; and, should all else fail me, that must be my last resource."

As she spoke, she pointed to the now foaming ocean, seen through the stern-ports, or rather scuttles.

She endeavored to prevent my rising, entreating me to remain quiet; but assuring her that, for her sake, I would be careful how I behaved, I succeeded in getting on my feet, and gaining the deck.

My worst anticipations were realized. Complete was the change that had occurred since I was carried below. A heavy gale had arisen, dark clouds were chasing each other over the sky, and a high, broken sea was running, through which the ship was working her way, close-hauled, the water washing her decks in clear sheets, almost burying her bows beneath its weight; while, far away to leeward, appeared the man-of-war in hot pursuit, with as much canvass set as she could venture to carry.

On board, the signs of recent strife were still visible. Three of our own crew lay wounded on the deck, while the two mates, with their

hands behind them, were lashed to the mainmast, and four more, for ward, were evidently prisoners.

The captain stood aft, with a spy-glass under his arm, with which, every now and then, he turned a glance at the man-of-war, but seemed to be paying little attention to the sailing of the brig. Two men were at the wheel, and near them appeared a swarthy man, with an eye piercing as an eagle's who was conning the ship, and acting as one accustomed to command. I regarded him attentively, and was soon convinced that he was a perfect stranger, though *how* he had come on board it was impossible to say.

The longer I looked at him the greater difficulty I found in withdrawing my eyes from him. I felt myself fascinated, like the bird hovering over the jaws of the snake. There was something indescribable dreadful in his aspect; his bronze-like, passionless countenance, his eyes glowing like hot coals; his tall, undefined figure; the involuntary shudder which ran over me as I first beheld him, gave me the idea that he was not of this world. I had heard that the evil one had been known to come on board ships to pilot them to destruction, but did not believe the tales. "Could they then be true? Can such things be?" I asked myself. I looked again at the dark stranger, and felt convinced that they might. A rapid survey showed me what I have taken much longer to describe. While hesitating how to act, Captain Penrose, seeing me, advanced to where I was standing, near the companion-hatch.

"Andrews," he exclaimed, "You are not in a fit state to be on deck. Remain below, and you are safe," he whispered. "Should you draw the attention of the men on your life is not worth a moment's purchase—but I promised to protect you, and will do so if you follow my directions."

"I do not understand you, Captain Penrose," was my reply; "what is the meaning of all this?"

"That the *Mary Damer* has changed owners, and that all who refuse to obey my orders are likely to find themselves without a plank to stand upon," was the answer.

"All hands, about ship," cried out a hoarse, unearthly voice.

The men, obedient to the call, flew to their stations, the helm was put a-lee, the yards were braced round, and the brig was darting away on the other tack, quickly weathering on her pursuer. While this operation was going forward, I again asked the captain the meaning of all I saw, but instead of answering me, he took my arm and led me below. As I passed Mrs. Lawley's cabin, I heard her sobbing violently, and her female attendant endeavoring to comfort her; but the captain paid no attention to her, and leading me up to Miss Arden, desired her to watch that I did not again venture on deck. Having done this, he hurried from the cabin.

As soon as he was gone, the young lady entreated me to tell her the worst, and though I would willingly have calmed her apprehensions, I felt that it would be impossible so to do; and I confessed that my conviction was, that the captain, having once set the laws at defiance, was about to commence the cursed calling of a pirate, though I did not ven-

ture to whisper all my suspicions of the terrific character of the dark stranger.

"Great Heaven! and what will be our fate?" cried the poor girl, wringing her hands.

"I feel that had the captain intended you any injury, he would not have waited till now," I answered. "He evidently also means me well; so that we must place our trust in Providence, and hope for the best."

I continued talking to her for some time, though nothing I could say served to soothe her alarm. Our conversation was at last interrupted by a wild shriek, which came from above, and my curiosity getting the better of my discretion, I again sought the deck.

Had I remained below I might have saved myself from being witness to the scene of murder which met my eyes, and in which every body was too much engaged to observe me at first.

The first mate was nowhere to be seen, and the fate prepared for the second showed me what his had been. He was at that moment standing at the end of a plank projecting over the bulwarks, near the main-rigging, with his arms lashed behind him, and his eyes blindfolded.

"Will you sign the articles?" I heard the dark stranger say.

"Never!" cried the mate, firmly.

"Then walk him forward," shouted the stranger; and a shriek of despair escaped the unhappy youth, as the board on which he stood being tilted up, he felt himself plunged beneath the boiling waves.

Two of the petty officers were next led aft, and remaining faithful to their trust, were likewise made to walk the plank, while the wounded seamen, lashed back to back, were hove overboard, and the wild tempest howled above their lifeless forms.

This work of death being concluded, I expected that my turn would come next, but neither the captain nor any of the crew appeared to pay me any attention, and I was allowed to wander about the decks as I pleased, he asserting that I was mad, which was, I believe not very far from the truth; the supposition, at all events, saved my life with the superstitious sailors.

The evening was now approaching, and the gale every instant growing more furious; but still the brig continued to beat against it, for the avenger of blood was seen to leeward, hovering, like the white wing of a sea-bird, on the dark mass of waters. At last darkness came on; but away, away we flew, with unabated speed into the black obscurity, the tall masts bending like reeds, the rigging straining, the white sails ready to burst from their bolt-ropes, the wind howling, the sea roaring, the waves dashing over us, loud thunder rolling through the sky above, and vivid lightning, serving only to show the horrors of the scene, darting ever and anon from the opaque clouds, and casting a blue, unearthly hue over the faces of the crew and the swarthy stranger.

"If I were to live a hundred years never should I forget that night; it was one fit for demons to hold their revels in, and an appropriate accompaniment to the work of murder which had been just accomplished.

But neither the captain nor his crew seemed to heed the fury of the

gale, though never before was mortal bark pressed as was ours, but they knew whom they had got on board, and placed reliance on his mysterious skill and power. Every order which was issued came forth from his mouth, in the same deep, unnatural tone I had before heard, and promptly, too, they were obeyed.

Horror-stricken at all I saw, I could not tear myself from the deck, my anxiety to see what might next occur conquering all other feelings; indeed, I expected every instant to find the masts go by the board, and to feel the ship striking on some coral reef or rock, and her timbers parting beneath our feet; still, on we tore into the black, unexplored space of darkness rising before us, like suicides rushing into an unknown eternity.

At last, a still more heavy squall than usual struck the ship, and away flew her mainsail into a thousand shreds. Her head, deprived of its balancing power, no longer kept up close to the wind, but, falling off from the seas, she drifted rapidly to leeward. A momentary lull followed.

"Square away the main-yards, and up with the helm," cried the stranger, in his terrific voice.

The fore-yards were next squared, and away flew the brig before the wind. The crew were then ordered to their quarters, and the guns were loaded and run out, while the men stood with their matches in their hands ready to fire, the swarthy stranger going round and pointing each with his own hands.

I was not left long in doubt as to what was to happen. Onward we rushed before the gale, when, directly ahead of us, I beheld the white canvass of the corvette, just then made visible by a vivid flash of blue lightning. I thought we should have run into her, as our bows almost grazed her spanker boom.

"Fire!" shouted the stranger.

Gun after gun, pointed with a demon's power, discharged a deadly shower into the hapless bark. Loud fearful shrieks arose and filled the night air, drowning the sound of the tempest, and, as it seemed echoed by the mocking laughter of a thousand evil spirits.

Not a shot struck us in return—there was a fearful pause—then a deafening report was heard, and bright flames burst forth—the tall masts with their canvass spread shot upwards to the sky, the dark hull itself seemed to rise above the waves, human forms appeared by the bright lurid light and the wild confusion, then in another instant all vanished as a dream from sight—a solemn silence followed—and we bounded onward in our demon-directed course.

Daylight at length appeared, but it served alone to reveal the horrors of the scene; the storm raged as furiously as ever, the seas ran mountains high, and away we wildly careered before it, as if flying from some unseen foe.

When the gale abated we were close in with the Spanish main, and hauling our wind we stood to the westward till we reached one of the numerous islets which abound on the coast, with deep bays in them, where a vessel may lie securely concealed, even from any craft expressly looking for her.

Into one of these we hauled the brig to water and wood, and while here I entertained thoughts of escaping from her, but though I enjoyed apparent liberty, I felt that I was narrowly watched nor could I leave the unhappy young lady, Miss Arden, to her fate, without attempting her rescue. I consequently remained on board the brig, entertaining, however, but slight hopes of escaping with my fair companion in captivity.

Thrown together as we now were, every day she wound her self more and more closely round my heart. I was all in all to her, for unhappily her friend Mrs. Lawley could render her no consolation or advice.

I need not describe how we spent our time at the island; our stay was brief, for the pirates were eager to be off to commence the life of plunder and dissipation, which they contemplated for themselves.

How Miss Arden escaped other annoyance than such as her imprisonment entailed, I know not; unless it was by the influence of the captain, who took every opportunity of showing his gratitude to me. It was the redeeming trait in his character.

What may seem extraordinary, all the time we lay there, the mysterious pilot did not once appear; indeed, from the moment we left the open sea I did not observe him.

What had become of him I could not tell, nor did the men seem to know more than I did.

Some affirmed that he came on board in a canoe after the massacre of the king's officer and boat's crew; but others again denied this statement, and declared no boat of any sort had come alongside, indeed, at the distance we were from the land, such was not probable, if she were indeed a bark built by human hands, and he a human being. Afterwards the certainty forced itself on me, that a spirit of darkness and evil had come among the devoted crew to urge them on to destruction.

At last we sailed, and, as the canvass was loosened, a coal-black ensign was run up at our peak, a broadside was fired, and three loud cheers from the maddened crew saluted the pirate flag.

Away we flew on our course of havoc and destruction, and many a richly laden bark we met never entered her destined port. I am not going to give a detailed description of all the atrocities committed by that accursed crew: indeed, my recollection of those dreadful events is far from distinct, except that the mysterious pilot was always chief instigator and leader.

No sooner had we quitted the harbour, where we watered, and got into the open sea, than he appeared at his post on deck. He never spoke to the men, but, when the tempest raged the loudest, and the fight grew the hottest, his voice was heard above the howling of the wind, or the shrieks and groans of the dying, and the shouts of the victorious, encouraging the pirate band; or urging them on to fresh deeds of violence.

Sailing northward, our course marked by plunder and destruction, we reached the coast of Cuba. It was towards the evening when we stood in near one of the Keys at the back of the island, when a signal was hoisted at the fore, and before dark we again stood off the land.

During the night, we tacked and beat back towards a fire we saw burning close down to the water. We then fired a gun and hove-to. Not long afterwards the splash of oars was heard, and through the darkness I discovered two large boats approaching the vessel. Captain Penrose hailed them, and the answer appeared satisfactory, for they were allowed to come alongside.

Immediately a number of dark forms swarmed up the side of the vessel. I scarcely thought the boats could have contained so many of them. Whoever they were, they were warmly greeted by our crew.

They were savage-looking beings, habited in every sort of costume, and, apparently, of every clime and nation under the sun. As soon as they were on board, the boats which brought them pulled back again to the shore.

All that night there was a wild carousal among the newly-met comrades, and, had they been attacked, they would have fallen an easy prey to an enemy. Drunkenness and brawls were the consequence—daggers and knives were drawn, and more than one fell beneath the steel of a shipmate.

Twice I heard the sullen splash of a heavy body thrown overboard; the dark water was the only grave, an obscene jest the only obsequies the murdered pirate received.

During this time, Captain Penrose continued moodily pacing the deck, keeping a few of the people to attend to the necessary duties of the ship, but not attempting to interfere with the rest.

He evidently felt that his authority over them was gone, while the mysterious pilot was moving among the excited crew the whole time, encouraging them to increase their debauch, and fomenting fresh disputes and quarrels.

We now again stood southward towards the Spanish main, and, though before we had captured many defenceless vessels, we now attacked any we encountered of equal force with ourselves, and always came off victorious. Some, after plundering, the pirates set on fire, with all their people on board; the crews of others were made to walk the plank; some were sunk; and none escaped to betray the perpetrators of these atrocities.

With a ship loaded with plunder, we then repaired to a Spanish port, where the pirates were received by the inhabitants with open arms. Here they soon spent their ill-gotten gains in debauchery and excess of every kind; and, not till they had no means left of purchasing these gratifications, could they be induced to make any preparations for putting to sea in search of more plunder.

During this time I remained a close prisoner on board; nor could I account for the anxiety of the captain to detain me, till he one day came to me, and told me that he purposed landing me and Miss Arden, on the first opportunity, at Jamaica, or on one of the nearest islands belonging to the English, concluding, by saying,—

"I shall then, Andrews, have fulfilled my promise to you; for your sake, also, I have preserved Miss Arden, and you thus have no cause to say, that among my other crimes ingratitude is one."

I expressed my thanks for his intentions and the favour he had shown to my unfortunate companion and to me.

"Speak not of it," he answered; "I do not willingly part with you, for you are the only man on board this accursed craft with whom I can have any sympathy, and yet I have made most of them what they are. I would have made you also a comrade, but you were not to be tempted. Well, I cannot find fault with you: mine is not, perhaps, the most enviable career, but I have pursued it too long to dream of turning back; my soul is already lost without hope—lost, lost, lost!"

He was silent for a moment.

"What nonsense I was speaking!" he exclaimed, suddenly, a ghastly smile lighting up his features. "We shall part soon, Andrews, and shall never meet again; for my time is nearly up, and there is one for me who never allows his bondsmen to escape."

He again checked himself.

"More folly!" he suddenly exclaimed, breaking into a loud, wild laugh. "I have been apt lately to talk in a rambling way. What did I say? Well, no matter. I was telling you I would land you and Miss Arden, as soon as possible."

"And why not quit this dreadful life yourself, Captain Penrose, before it is too late?" I uttered, hastily.

The same ghastly smile, as before, passed over his features.

"The advice of a boy, Andrews!" he replied. "Because I am wedded to it, and it to me, with bonds stronger than the church ever bound man to woman."

"All hands unmoor ship!"

These words were uttered in the unearthly voice of the dark stranger, yet no one was aware that he was on board.

"My last cruise!" exclaimed the captain, springing from his seat, and rushing on deck. "All hands unmoor ship!" he repeated, and in a moment he was all life and energy. "Huzza, my boys! the wealth which floats on the wide sea shall be our reward!" he shouted, to encourage the men as they ran the anchor up to the bows.

"The wide sea shall be your reward!" cried the mysterious voice.

"Ha, ha, ha!" rang through the ship.

The seamen for a moment stood aghast, but they were not to be daunted; they persuaded themselves it was the voice of the captain; but that night they had terrible cause to think differently. The sails were loosened, the tacks hauled on board, the sheets aft, and once more the doomed brig flew seaward to her accursed work; tempest and lightning accompanying her on her course.

No sooner were we clear of land, than the sky, hitherto of azure hue, became overcast with clouds; the wind increased to a furious gale, the sea rose with wild foaming crests, and away we drove before the blast; the lightning flashing vividly, the thunder roaring, and the waves in deluges breaking over our decks. Whenever I went on deck, there I saw standing, near the helm, the mysterious stranger.

He might have been taken for a statue, so calm and unmoved he stood; not a word did he utter, his dark, bronze-colored countenance

alone exhibiting marks of satisfaction, as the storm raged more fiercely, and many of the seamen showed signs of fear at the awful strife of the elements.

There was something peculiarly terrific in the stern glance of his dark eye, and the sarcastic curl of his otherwise immovable lip. As spell-bound I gazed on him, my limbs shook, till I sank senseless on the deck.

On, on we flew towards the north, day after day, when a sail was made out right ahead.

"A prize! a prize!" was the cry on board.

We neared her fast, nor did she attempt to escape us. We seemed to fly over the waters, at such a rate did the gale drive us onward; and the pirates little thought what demon power blew those furious blasts, urging them on to destruction.

The stranger was soon made out to be a large ship, and the pirates, eager for plunder, insisted that she was a richly laden merchantman. Every preparation was, however, made for a fight, should she prove, as she probably was, well armed.

The black flag was hoisted to intimidate the enemy, and before long we brought her within range of our guns. As we were about to run alongside, she suddenly hauled her wind, and before we had time to luff likewise, she poured in from a broadside of ten guns a heavy fire, raking us fore and aft, and then keeping away again, allowed us to range up on her beam, giving us a taste of her quality on that side also.

Never shall I forget the shrieks, the cries, and the groans of the enraged pirates, or their fearful denunciations of vengeance. They stormed and swore in vain; their oaths and cries echoed with mocking cries by the same mysterious voice as before; and *this time* the seamen guessed from whence it came.

Every shot from the enemy had told with awful effect, while we had done but little damage in return. Numbers lay dead, others dying or dreadfully wounded, some of the guns were dismounted, the bulwarks torn, and decks ploughed up, slippery with gore and encumbered with the wreck of the shattered spars and rigging, while the mainmast struck just above the deck, looked as if ready every instant to fall.

Above all the noise and confusion, the voice of the dark stranger was now heard with terrific tones, encouraging the pirate crew to renewed exertions.

Their only chance of victory was to run alongside, and try a hand to hand struggle, but scarcely could they hope for success against a well-armed king's ship. The attempt, however, was made, the pirate captain lashing fast the fluke of the bow-anchor into the fore-rigging of the enemy.

Then came the fiercest strife. Three times did the pirates gain a footing on the deck of the king's ship, and as often were they driven back, and boarded in return, each time with much diminished numbers; but they fought for life and liberty, and well knew that quarter would neither be asked nor given.

Among the first who boarded us from the king's ship, was a gentleman dressed in plain clothes, who fought with the greatest desperation.

Even the fiercest held back till he crossed swords with the captain. At that moment, the unhappy Mrs. Lawley, instigated by what motive I know not, rushed on deck, and no sooner did her glance fall on the brave man who was defending himself against such fearful odds, than she uttered a piercing shriek, which sounded above the din of battle and the roaring of the wind.

"My husband! my husband!" she exclaimed; but scarcely had she uttered the words, when the sword of the pirate pierced him to the heart. She rushed forward to stay the murderer's hand, but it was too late; and as she beheld the lifeless body of her husband, she clasped her hands, with an expression of hopeless agony on her countenance, which I shall never forget, exclaiming,

"And was it thus for one abandoned like me you died? Oh, Henry, how unworthy was I of you, but I will not survive you."

As she uttered these words, she threw herself on the body. She took the hand on which the chill of death was already settling; she gazed into the eyes of the corpse now glazed and senseless. She assured herself that her husband was indeed dead; then, imparting a kiss upon the cold brow, she sprang on her feet, and before any of the pirates could stay her, she threw herself with a shriek of convulsive laughter, into the raging ocean.

The sound was echoed in still wilder strains, by a thousand mocking voices, which seemed to issue from the dark clouds, hanging like a funeral pall overhead.

Even the bold pirates stood aghast, but the captain ordered a boat to be instantly lowered. The command was obeyed, and the boat was swamped alongside, while three of the crew were swept away by the sea; indeed the attempt was useless, for the moment the unhappy lady plunged into the water, she sank beneath its surface, nor was the least trace of her again visible.

During every action I had been on deck, standing near the mainmast, but taking no part in the fray, and caring little whether a shot knocked me over or not.

Had it not been for Miss Arden I should have welcomed death, as a release from the life of thralldom I was doomed to bear, and the horrors to which I was daily a witness; but to protect her I wished to live—only I was determined that the pirates should not say that I held back from joining them through cowardice.

It might seem extraordinary that I should care for the opinion of such reprobates; but I believe my behavior in this respect mainly assisted the captain in preserving me from their fury.

While I was standing as I have described, the shot and splinters flying harmlessly about my head, thrice did the Demon Pilot pass close to me, a gleam of malignant satisfaction on his bronze-like countenance for he knew full well the souls that he had lured to destruction were about to become his prey.

The guns roared louder than ever, the shot crashed through the sides of the brig, the yells of the combatants grew fiercer and fiercer, when it struck me that the ship was settling deeper and deeper in the water.

The thought that Miss Arden would be left to perish, rushed into my head, and I sprang below. I found her stretched on the sofa fainting with terror, and the water already washing the deck of the cabin. Lifting her senseless form in my arms, I hurried again on deck, when seizing a cutlass, I struck a pirate dead who attempted to oppose me, and at that instant the quarters of the two vessels meeting, I sprang over the hammock-nettings, on board the king's ship.

The last act had been witnessed by one of the officers, or I should have been cut down immediately, for the seamen thinking that they were about to be boarded in that direction, came aft to repulse the enemy, but the fresh air recovering Miss Arden, she instantly perceived what had occurred, and throwing herself before me, exclaimed,

"He is no pirate! oh, do not injure him!"

At these words the men restrained their hands, and the next moment their attention was called off to witness the awful fate of the pirate ship.

During the action the storm had much increased, and the crew of the corvette, seeing her condition, contrived to cut her clear of their own ship, just as I was leaping on board. To the last, although the water was almost awash with the deck, the pirates continued firing their guns, uttering fearful yells, shrieks, and curses.

As I gazed at her with staring eyes, I beheld the terrific form of the dark stranger, standing upright and the bodies of the dying and the dead, and the wreck of spars and rigging which cumbered the deck.

Gradually his figure expanded into gigantic proportions, growing every instant more hideous and awful. His bronze-like countenance, with his eyes like furnaces, reached the topmast-head as he stood between the two masts of the brig, grasping one in each hand, the vivid lightning playing round his stern features, while the roar of the thunder and the cannon, the crashing of spars and timbers, the wild tumult of human voices, and the shouts of the mocking laughter of the invisible spirits who surrounded us, made a wilder din than is heard in the fiercest fight.

Furiously he stamped his feet; the wild sea rushed over the deck of the pirate ship; again he stamped with greater fury than before, and the waters dashed upwards from the stroke, the thick spray flying in showers over our mast-heads; a third time he stamped, and down, down, down went the accursed brig to the unfathomed depths of the ocean, the despairing shrieks of the crew ringing in our ears ere they were engulfed beneath the foaming waves, the last object seen being the tremendous countenance of the demon, lighted up with a gleam of satisfaction at having thus secured his prey.

That also grew gradually fainter and fainter, till it totally disappeared, and not a trace was left of the doomed bark.

No sooner had this dreadful event occurred, than the wind subsided, the sea went down, the clouds were dissipated, and the bright sun shone forth from the blue sky.

What may seem extraordinary is, that not a man, a spar, or a sail of the cruiser had been injured.

I was immediately led up to the captain, who, hearing the account of the officer who witnessed my killing the pirate, believed my rather incredible story (which I hope, by the by, you will do,) and every attention which courtesy and humanity could dictate was paid to Miss Arden and myself.

We soon reached Port Royal, in Jamaica, where Mr. Arden, who had given his daughter up as lost, was so overjoyed at her recovery, that he could deny her no request she made. One of the first was, that she might bestow her hand upon me.

On my return to England I called on Mr. Damer, who of course thought that I must have been lost in his brig. He expressed himself much pleased at seeing me safe, and satisfied with my conduct throughout, though he did not appear quite to comprehend the account I gave him of the Demon Pilot.

I afterwards met the real Captain Penrose, who happened just then to be in Liverpool, and he narrated to me how he had been robbed by a man who had assumed his name, and ran away with the brig; but to this day no one has been able to discover the true name of the pirate chief.

We thanked Captain Andrews for his yarn, and he having made himself, as he said, perfectly comfortable, returned to his own ship, which, on the following morning, made sail to the southward, and we saw no more of him.

I have strong suspicions that at the time he referred to, he was out of his mind, and that the Demon Pilot was the phantom of a heated brain.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SHIP ON FIRE.

THOSE who have been alone accustomed to the quick changes of a northern clime, the seldom falling breeze, the heat and cold, the clouds and sunshine, which harden and invigorate the frames of Englishmen, can scarcely picture to themselves the lassitude of mind and body, and the weariness of one whose eye rests from day to day on the same unchanging expanse of the ever-shining and boundless sea, and the blue, cloudless sky. For some days we lay almost like a log on the water, without life or animation, when even a gale of wind and a black canopy of clouds with deluges of rain, would have been welcomed as a change. At last, towards evening, a breeze sprang up, and carried us along in our course, at a somewhat faster rate than we had for some time past moved.

I had the first watch that night, and somewhat about seven bells I was walking the quarter-deck with the mate of the watch, Henry Seaton, as gentlemanly, open-hearted, and fine a youngster as ever stepped.

It is a strange part of the world we are bound for," he observed, (I had before discovered that he was fond of moralizing.) Even the pro-

fusion of nature's bounties become curses, and man adds his own worst passions to turn the paradise into a pandemonium.

"You are in a poetical mood to-night, Seaton," I observed.

"I believe I am, sir. It is a night to make every one fanciful."

He spoke the truth. The wind was still so light that it had scarcely raised a ripple on the glass-like surface of the ocean, on which the myriads of stars such dotted the dark arc of heaven were reflected as in a gigantic looking glass, except where the young pale moon, just sinking in the sky, cast a line of light like chased silver upon the water.

A thin, transparent mist filled the atmosphere, in which one almost expected to see floating things of another world, the guardian spirits of the calm, and snow-white wings and crowns of pearls, and to hear the soft music of their voices.

Not a sound met the ear except the gentle ripple of the water against the vessel's bows, as she clove her onward way, and the occasional flap of some finny inhabitant of the deep, as, after rising above the surface, it fell again into its native element. There are seasons when, from some peculiarity in the atmosphere, or from the scenery, the *genius loci*, or from one's own internal sensations, one feels more inclined to give way to superstitious feelings. This was one of them.

"Do you know, sir, that I feel that I shall not enjoy more nights like this," continued my companion. "Something tells me that my days are numbered. You will laugh at me, sir, when I tell you, that just now, as I stood looking over the taffrail, I distinctly saw a figure, dressed in shining white robes, rise out of the sea, and with a look of deep grief beckon me towards her. The features became gradually like those of my sainted mother, now in heaven, and I heard a strain of music like that which strikes the ear as one perchance passes at a little distance from a church where mass is performing. I felt a strong inclination to follow the blessed vision; but it faded gradually from my sight the moment I heard your voice calling me. Depend upon it, sir, we shall have a hurricane or something peculiar before long."

"The vision, if vision it were, more probably was sent to assure us of safety," I answered gravely, for I saw that the lad was not in a mood to be laughed at. "More probably it was the work of your own imagination."

"With due respect to you, sir, I think not," he answered, calmly: "I was never of an imaginative turn till now, though my fancy, I confess, has run rather wild lately. Ah, sir, I thought I was right!" he exclaimed, suddenly pointing to south-east, nearly ahead of our course. "Look, sir, look at the red glow which has just lighted up the eastern sky. It cannot be the sun rising some hours before his time."

I gazed in the direction he pointed. At first I thought it was some phenomenon like the aurora borealis, but it gradually grew redder and redder, till it was of a far deeper hue than that ever assumes. We watched it attentively, and as we advanced in our course it appeared to extend more widely over the sky, and to radiate from a centre below the horizon.

"Go aloft, Mr. Seaton, and see if you can make out what it is, before we are relieved," I said.

He sprang into the fore-rigging, and in a few minutes was again by my side.

"A burning mountain, or a ship on fire, sir. I fear the latter; for I fancied that I could see her masts amid the flames."

"I agree with you, Seaton; I fear that this strange light proceeds from a burning ship. How's her head?"

"East-south-east, sir," he replied. "We are standing directly for the light."

"Keep her so, and we shall soon solve the mystery."

The master soon after came on deck to relieve me, but I was far too interested to turn in; so I continued pacing the deck with my brother officer.

As the morning drew on the breeze freshened up a little, but not enough to satisfy our impatience, when we discovered, as we soon did, to a certainty, that a large vessel was burning ahead of us, and that every moment's delay might consign some of our fellow-beings to the most dreadful of deaths.

The captain, according to his standing orders, when any thing unusual occurred, was called, and as soon as he came on deck, he ordered every stitch of canvass the brig could carry to be set. The seamen flew with alacrity to the work, and very soon every soul in the ship, except a few inveterate sleepers, were on the alert.

As we approached the burning ship the sight was awful, and at the same time beautiful. The whole sea seemed on fire with the reflection of the bright flames, which towered up in wreathy columns around the tall masts towards the sky, and cast their ruddy glow on our wide spread of canvass; but we were too distant to render assistance, the masts, one after another, were seen to shoot upwards and then to fall—we almost fancied that we could hear them hiss—into the water, and after that the flames rushed forth from stem to stern, still brighter and more fiercely, till it was clear that not a human being could be existing on board. She was burning rapidly to the water's edge.

We still persisted in nearing her, for it was probable the whole or part of the crew might have escaped in the boats. Our glasses were employed in looking for them, but none could be seen. We, however, fired several guns, in case any people remained afloat, to warn them of our approach to their assistance. The fire was still burning as fiercely as ever, when, as we were gazing at it, the whole mass seemed to oscillate for a moment, and then we were left in a sombre darkness. The wreck had sunk beneath the waves.

What had become of the human beings who lately peopled her, was the question? We shortened sail, and lay to near the spot, firing guns at intervals, while the boats were got into the water and pulled about in every direction, in case any one should be still floating alive on rafts and spars, though our hope of finding them was faint indeed. I was in the gig, and had taken rather a longer sweep than before, when a man I had placed in the bows to look out, exclaimed—

"Starboard, sir, starboard! There's something, I see, away on our larboard bow, steady, so."

On standing up in the stern-sheets, I could perceive a long dark object floating on the water, to which I could not help fancying I saw several human beings clinging. We hailed, but there was no answer.

The men gave way with all their might, and we were soon up to a topmast or the bowsprit of the burnt ship, and as we pulled along it, we perceived the head of a man resting on the jibboom end, while his body was supported by a grating, which he had contrived to lash to it, and which had saved him from the sharks, who had been attracted to the spot.

At first we thought he was dead, but on getting him into the boat, we poured a few drops of spirits into his mouth from a flask I had, by the doctor's advice, taken with me, when he gave signs of returning animation. Our further search proved unavailing and at length we returned to the ship, with the only man saved from the wreck. He was a negro, but dressed in an English seaman's jacket and trousers. For some time the surgeon's exertions to recall him to his senses were unavailing, and when he opened his eyes and looked about him, he evidently thought some grievous personal injury was about to be inflicted on him.

"Oh, massa, no cut throat! Let lilly bit child live! Oh, massa, pirate no kill. All de blood, de blood! run like big river. oh, oh, Oh!"

These broken exclamations were the first intimation we had of a dreadful tragedy, which had been enacted the previous evening near the spot on which we now floated. The black, it appeared, had belonged to a large ship, the *Anna*, which had touched at the Cape, on her way from the Mauritius, and taken several passengers on board, so that she mustered in all between fifty and sixty souls fore and aft. Unsuspicious of evil, she was approached by a schooner under British colours, who hailed her to know the longitude, and to ask her for water.

The crew and passengers of the ship were looking at the strangers, who, after speaking them, had gone a little distance from them, when they observed two boats shove off from her side, but they thought nothing of this, as they fancied the people were in a hurry to quench their thirst. As the boats pulled up on one side, the schooner went about and ranged up on the other, when a tarpaulin, which had concealed some men in the bottom of the boats, was thrown off, and before a gun could be brought to bear from the ship, or the crew could seize their arms, thirty desperadoes were on their decks, cutting and slashing right and left, and killing every one they met without mercy. Their aim was evidently to leave no one alive to tell tales.

All the men, who offered any resistance, were cut down at once, but the women, the negro fancied had been carried on board the schooner. The pirates then set to work to rifle the ship, and to transfer everything they considered of value to their own vessel. The negro had escaped forward, when he saw that they were overpowered, and had remained clinging to the bight of a rope, hung overboard under the bows.

On seeing the pirate sheer off, he returned on deck, when, to his horror, he found that the miscreants had set the ship on fire in several places, leaving the crew, whom they had bound hand and foot, so that

they could not free themselves, and the wounded and dying, to this terrible fate.

He liberated those he could reach, but all their exertions could not quench the flames, which now raged furiously. His companions had made a rush aft to lower away one of the quarter-boats, but the fire overtook them before they could accomplish their object.

He had climbed out to the end of the bowsprit, where, as the ship came up head to wind, he remained till the heel being burnt almost through, it was carried away by the falling masts. He knew very little more of what happened till we picked him up.

Returning daylight enabled us to ascertain that there was no boat or any other floating thing upon the world of waters; but good look-outs were sent aloft to watch for any sail we might sight. After the dreadful account we had heard, every man in the ship was eager to come up with the pirate; indeed there was little fear of his escaping notice, should he come within the range of vision, for every instant men were going to the top-gallant-mast-head to watch for him.

Thus passed the greater part of the day, without a sail appearing to break the dark line of horizon. About the middle of the afternoon watch, my young friend Seaton had gone aloft to take a look round, when I heard him shout out, "A sail in sight on the starboard bow!"

"Port the helm," I cried.

"Port it is," was the answer.

"Steady—how does she go now, Mr. Seaton?"

"Right for it, sir," he answered, from his lofty perch.

"Get a pull on the larboard braces," I cried. "That will do."

The wind was now on our starboard quarter, and with studdensails set aloft and aloft, away we bowled after the stranger.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CHASE.

THE freshening breeze carried us bravely along over the laughing blue waves, the foam flew from our bows, and the white sails strained and pulled like impatient spirits, eager to drag onwards their bodies of grosser mould. Thus we rapidly approached the stranger; for instead of flying from us she was standing towards us, on a bow-line, under easy sail.

"I fear she is not the craft we are in search of," said the captain to me, or she would not stand on so close to us in that bold way.

"I do not know that, sir," I replied; "she may mistake us at the distance she is still from us, for a merchantman. Many of the Liverpool traders are fine vessels, and the Portuguese and Spaniards often carry a broad spread of canvass. Perhaps she may find that she has caught a Tartar."

"I hope you are right, Mr. Fairfield," replied the captain. "If she

prove the slaver we'll make her pay for her last night's work. What do you make her out to be, Mr. Green?"

"A large square topsail schooner, sir," replied the master, who was addressed. "She has a wicked look about her which sadly belies her if she is honest."

"I do not think there is much of that commodity on board yonder craft, I observed. "Wait a bit, and as soon as she makes out what we are, depend on it, she'll turn at a great rate."

"Beat to quarters," exclaimed the captain; "we'll at all events make the fellow show himself as soon as we come up to him."

Still the schooner approached till we thought it scarcely possible she should not discover that we are a man-of-war, for though our ports were closed, no pains had been taken to disguise ourselves. Through our glasses we could perceive that she was a long low vessel, with ten guns on a side, and a long one amidships, not to speak of sundry brass swivels which graced her quarters. In fact she was one of the most rakish looking crafts I ever saw.

"If they are pirates, they are bold fellows to board a British man-of-war in that way," I observed to Seaton, who was standing near me.

"There seems something strange about the craft altogether, sir," he replied. "Who would suppose that yon beautiful fabric was employed as an instrument of evil? yet, I feel certain that, notwithstanding her behaviour, she is the pirate which destroyed the ship last night. And do you know that even now I fancy she is destined to work us some evil."

"Why, Seaton, you are growing fanciful," I replied, laughing. "At night the imagination may be excused if it ramble a little, but in the day-time you ought to keep it within bounds."

While we were speaking, whiz—bang—went a shot across our fore foot, and up went the flag of Spain to the peak of the schooner. Our captain laughed outright.

"The fellow is determined to be beforehand with us at all events," he exclaimed. "Hoist our colours, and run out the guns to show him that we have teeth as well as he, and can bite as hard when we have a mind for it."

"Shorten sail, Mr. Upton," to the first lieutenant, "and be ready to tack ship, for as soon as the fellow discovers his mistake he'll be off in the wind's eye, and be a mile to windward of us while we are taking in our flying kites."

Not a bit of it—the stranger came on, and passing close to us on the other tack, hailed in Spanish to know what ship we were. In answer to the same question put by us, he said he was bound to Cadiz, from some port the name of which we could not make out.

"Heave to, then, and send a boat on board us," exclaimed the captain; but the stranger did not, or would not, comprehend the order.

"Give the fellow a shot then, across his bows," continued the captain; "he must be taught manners if he does not know them."

No sooner, however, was the shot fired, than he backed his fore-top-sail and remained stationary on the waters, the sharp bow of the vessel rising and falling gracefully in the swelling wave—but he did not send

a boat on board as he was ordered to do. Accordingly, we hove about and ran down to him, asking him why he did not do as desired.

"Non tengo, senores," answered a man standing in the main chains. "They have all been lost or disabled, and we have none which can swim."

The truth of this assertion might have been doubled, for a dingy,—a small boat,—in very good condition, apparently, was hanging over her stern, and her starboard quarter-boat appeared uninjured, though the larboard one looked as if it had a shot through the bows.

The captain, however, did not seem to have any suspicions as to her character, as he answered that he would send a boat on board, and ordered me to go in the gig and overhaul his papers. A boat was immediately manned, and I jumped into her. As I pulled alongside I observed a number of villanous-looking countenances peering down upon me, and being fully impressed with the idea that the men with whom I was about to venture, were a set of daring cut-throats, and I should not have been at all surprised, had I been knocked on the head as I stepped on board. With this impression, I ordered the men on no account to be tempted up the side, or to answer any questions put to them, but if they saw anything suspicious, to shove off at once, for I thought there was no reason why the poor fellows should be sacrificed, even if I were.

I was therefore somewhat surprised when a pair of unexceptionable white side-ropes were handed to me through the gangway, and I found the sides manned man-of-war fashion; more so still, when I was received on the quarter-deck by a fine, gentlemanly man, but whose immense whiskers completely hid the lower part of his countenance, in a sort of undress naval uniform, who politely bowed to me, welcomed me on board the Spanish schooner, *Esperanza*, belonging to the Port of Cadiz, and lately from Havannah, having been driven somewhat to the southward of her course by a gale she encountered ten days before.

"A very probable account," I thought. "But, Senhor, may I beg to know if you are the captain of this ship?"

"I have the honour to command her," was the answer.

"And your name, Senor?"

"Don Diego Lopez de Mendoza, at your service, Senor," he replied, with another of his inimitable bows.

"Then, Senor Don Diego de Mendoza, I must trouble you to show your papers."

"Con mucho gusto, Senor," he answered, smiling blandly. "Will you step down below into my humble cabin, and I will show them to you?"

I bowed, and prepared to follow him, casting a look, as I got to the head of the companion ladder, towards my own ship; she was well to windward, and kept the schooner completely under her guns. I was scarcely prepared for the luxury displayed in the cabin, the damask hangings and coverings to the sofas and chairs, the profusion of plate and glass, and the quantity of weapons of various manufacture, swords and fire-arms, arranged against the bulk-head.

The cabin was right aft, and the stern windows were open, admitting



THE PIRATE IMPRISONED.

the fresh breeze—a box of cigars was on the table. After placing me on a luxurious sofa he politely handed me the box with a lighted match, observing, "We ought always to make the most of life, and do as many things as we can at a time; we cannot tell how soon it may be brought to a close. We can smoke while we look over the papers."

I took the proffered cigar; it would have been an affront, or would have shown suspicion had I refused it, and employed myself in lighting it while he produced his papers from a handsome escritorio, inlaid with ivory. As he turned sharply round he caught my eyes fixed on the array of weapons.

"Ah mio amigo, I have a few pretty little pieces there, and some honest toledos, which have seen some service in their day. I keep them as curiosities to ornament my cabin, though, as a peaceful sugar carrier, I have little use of them."

"And your guns on deck are——"

"Chiefly for ornament also," he answered, finishing my sentence, "that is, at present, for the fact is, this vessel was a slaver, captured and condemned at St. Jago de Cuba, where I bought her, and as I thought it more than probable that I should fall in with her old owners, who would be likely to consider that they can show a better right to her than I have, I judged it prudent to keep the means on board of defending my property..

"Besides, there are pirates still among the West Indian Islands, and even in other seas, who might find a fast sailing craft, like yours, very serviceable," I observed, and was about to tell him of the discovery we made last night, but thought it more prudent to say nothing about it. I then looked over his papers; they were in every respect perfectly correct. He smiled blandly as he received them back from me, observing.

"It must be disagreeable to you, Senor, thus to suspect every stranger you meet on the high seas, but we caballeros understand these matters between each other. You would wish, I presume, to look over the ship."

I signified that such was part of my duty, and accordingly, he leading the way, I looked into some other cabins and over the hold, which had far from a full cargo. There were, however, neither slave decks nor shackles to be seen, nor anything which would authorize us to detain her, though I confess I remember seeing a very miscellaneous collection of goods stowed below. Our eyes often rest on objects with little or no attention, but afterwards, when removed from them, they come vividly before us, and we are surprised that we did not remark them more minutely at the time—and so it was with me.

I did, however, observe the villanous countenances of her crew, who accompanied their captain below and watched me most suspiciously, while, as I passed along the lower deck which was free from cargo, several others who were lying or sitting about, merely lifted up their heads as I passed, and I caught some of them making, as I afterwards thought, very significant gestures at each other.

I was not sorry, I must own, when I was able to breathe the free air on the upper deck. The captain of the *Esperanza* accompanied me to the gangway, and insisted on shaking hands with me as I descended to my boat. At that instant I fancied I heard a faint cry as if from a female voice, within the vessel, but it was not repeated, and the next moment I believed it was merely a sound of my own imagination.

"Shove off," I sang out, and the men gave way with a will, for as the coxswain, Bill Leadline, observed, "he didn't like the cut of that chap's jib."

I saw Don Diego Lopez de Mendoza waving his hat to me as I pulled under the stern of his vessel to return to my own. Again, when some distance from the schooner, the stroke oar observed, that there was for a moment some one beckoning to us, from the cabin windows, but none of the other men saw any one, so I believed he was mistaken as I had before been.

My brother officers received me with congratulations as I stepped on deck. "We have all been insisting that the fellow is a pirate, and fully expected to see you run up to the yard-arm."

"Yes, and Senton,—(he was the senior mate, and would have stepped into my shoes,)—was going to make a bid for your uniform," observed the purser.

"Yes, and Haggis, our medico, was thinking of begging your body of the miscreants, to be able to give an anatomical lecture to the ship's company, with a real subject," said our first, laughing.

"Ye may laugh as much as ye please, sir," exclaimed the surgeon, "but let me tell ye the men might be less profitably employed than in listening to one of my discourses; and I may as well observe that before long, if report speak true of the climate, I shall have as many corpses as I desire."

"Well, Medico, I will bequeath to you this mortal husk of mine when its spirit has departed, to do with it as you list, on one condition, that you do not poison me to get hold of it sooner," cried the master, who had a mortal aversion to physic, as have sailors and other men also, if they are wise.

While we were thus running on, the schooner had again filled her topsail, and was standing on in a course which would quickly have brought her to windward of us. She had already made some way when the negro whom we had saved from the wreck was brought on deck, as the surgeon thought some fresh air would do him good.

No sooner did his eye fall on the white sails of the receding schooner, than it became fixed and dilated as if he had seen a spirit of another world,—his thick lips parted asunder, exposing his white grinning teeth, his black, woolly hair almost uncurled and stood on end, as he started up from his seat on the booms where he had been placed, pointing towards her with his outstretched arm.

What is dat—what is dat I see?" he screamed out. "De schooner, de cursed schooner, that rob and murder all my shipmates. For what he come here—for what he go away?"

What is that you are speaking about?" I asked, attracted towards the poor fellow by his extraordinary attitude and exclamations.

"De schooner—de pirate, sare—de d—d pirate, sare! Me know she well by de tree new cloths in de mainsail; she big willain, massa."

"Are you certain she is the pirate that attacked you?" asked I, his words confirming the suspicions I had begun to entertain about her.

"O, certain sure, massa; me sabe that scoundrel if me meet her in one thousand years," answered the black, positively.

"In that case we ought to be after her without delay," I exclaimed, as I hurried off to the captain.

"All hands wear ship," he exclaimed, in a sharp, animated tone, without waiting to ask any further questions. The men flew to their stations, and the brig's head came rapidly round in chase of the supposed pirate. "Beat to quarters, Mr. Upton," he added, addressing the first lieutenant, for the guns had again been secured on my returning on board. The people of the schooner were not long, as may be supposed, in perceiving our change of course, nor were they evidently ignorant of the reason for it, for they instantly packed on every stitch of sail.

"What is that?" I observed; "the fellows do not think that they are within a pistol-shot of us."

"Probably some one was looking to his arm, and it went off by chance," answered the master. "By jingo! one ought to have a sharp pair of eyes to see in such a night as this. Mine are growing dim, I believe. Where the d—l has the chase got to?"

"Where?" I exclaimed. "Why—hang me if I can see her either. Can you see her, Jenkins?" I asked of the midshipman standing by me.

"No, sir, she's just gone into the thick wall of mist there," answered the youngster. "There—I see her again."

"That's more than I do," observed the gunner. "At first I thought as how she'd tacked to weather on us; but I don't see her anywhere away ahead, where she would be if she'd done so. I can't make it out rightly."

"How does the chase bear now?" cried the captain through his speaking trumpet. I sent Mr. Jenkins aft to tell him.

We watched and watched in vain the best part of an hour, the pirate did not again appear. We still, however, held the same course, for it was considered likely that she would also do so on the chance of our taking or hearing up. Thus the night wore on. We managed to clear away the wreck of the topmast, and made preparations for sending up a jury topmast at daybreak, for it was impossible, in the heavy sea there was then running, and in the dark, further to repair our damages.

Such are some of the scenes in a sailor's life.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MIDNIGHT FIGHT.

THE ship had been made snug, the guns secured, and the watch below had gone to their hammocks, an example I was meditating following, when, as I cast my eyes to windward, I fancied I saw a towering mass looming through the darkness.

"What is that away there?" I asked of the master, who had relieved my watch. I pointed to the spot indicated; he looked earnestly.

"A vessel, by Jupiter?" he exclaimed. "The pirate as I live? All hands on deck; call the captain: beat to quarters."

"He's standing towards us," I observed.

"Ay, and will be right down upon us, too," answered Green.

The captain and first lieutenant were on deck in an instant. They looked at the advancing vessel, now growing every instant more distinct.

"Run out the guns and give him a broadside," shouted the captain, through his speaking trumpet.

"He intends to pass under our stern and rake us in passing, I think, sir," observed the first lieutenant.

"We'll give him our larboard guns and then keep away," replied the captain. "By heavens! no: he's rounding to, and will be on board us. Larboard guns—fire, men—now fire!"

Our whole broadside was discharged into the approaching stranger within pistol-shot of him.

The fire blazed forth, and the loud crashing of the shot was heard as it tore through the planks and timbers of the enemy.

Loud shrieks and cries then arose high above the howling of the blast, but still the stranger came on.

"Boarders, be prepared to repel boarders!" shouted our commander, ere the terrific tumult had ceased. The seamen rushed for their cutlasses. Crippled as we were, it was difficult to avoid a collision whenever the enemy chose to board us.

The towering mass approached; a tremendous crash was heard; the sides of the two vessels ground together, grappling irons were hove on board us, and a hundred fierce countenances appeared in the nettings and lower rigging, lighted up by the flashes of pistols and swivel guns, with which they endeavoured to cover their attempt to board.

They were to be met, however, by brave seamen—fellows not easily daunted by the ugliest visages under the sun.

"Boarders, follow me!" shouted our first lieutenant, flourishing his cutlass and leaping into the main rigging.

He was there met by so strong a party of pirates that he was thrown back on the deck with a number of our men, and full fifty of the enemy leaped after him with the wildest shrieks fury could call forth.

Our marines, meantime, who were stationed on the poop, were clearing the after part of the pirate vessel, while our two foremost guns were blazing away into her bow and knocking the foremost ports into one.

On seeing the fall of our first lieutenant, I hurried to his assistance with the men nearest to me.

He was uninjured, and was up in a moment, and laying about him with such right good will—an example well imitated by our people—that half the miscreants were cut to pieces on the deck, and the remainder were either driven back into their own vessel or overboard, where they were crushed between the sides or perished miserably in the boiling sea.

Never have I heard a more infernal din—the crashing of the bulwarks of the two vessels as they ground together—the tearing and rending of the shot as they went through the pirate's bows.

And then, too, the thunder of the guns, and the sharp report of the muskets and pistols—the howling of the storm—the lashing of the angry waves—the wild shrieks and hoarse shouts of the combatants—the cries of despair and agony—mingled in one deafening and terrific discord.

As my post was forward, I had no opportunity of boarding, but the first lieutenant, backed by the master, after defeating the attempts of the pirates to board, succeeded in getting on board the schooner, when they were met by Don Jose, who, to do him justice, pirate as he was, behaved like a brave man.

He fought desperately for some time till at last Green gave him a blow on the head which brought him to the deck; and some of our fellows who had been of the boat's crew, and recognized him as captain, got hold of him, and hauled him on board as a prisoner.

While Upton was carrying the fore-part of the schooner, Green fought his way aft, where a strong stand was made against him.

As we could no longer fire our guns without a risk of injuring our own people, I led the remainder of our boarders on to the deck of the pirate, when, seeing Green hard pressed, I hurried to assist him, and with this additional strength, we soon drove most of those who were opposing us, overboard.

Others jumped down below, where Green and I followed them.

A lamp, suspended from a beam, was burning in the centre of the cabin, its light shedding a lustre on the silver utensils, the jewelled arms, the glass mirrors, and the rich damask coverings of the furniture.

An instant after it was obscured by smoke, the mirrors were shattered by the bullets, and the furniture deeply stained by the blood of the combatants.

The pirates, driven to desperation, fought with the fury of demons; they felt that they could expect no mercy, and sought for none.

But our brave fellows were more than a match for them, and few escaped the sturdy blows of their cutlasses. Many stood still at bay, when I heard Green's voice above the din, exclaim:

"Back, men, back to the brig, on your lives; she's on fire and sinking."

I repeated the order to our people, and as I was making my way up the companion-ladder, I saw Green carrying a young girl in his arms, followed by two men bearing between them a female form.

There was no time for explanation; as we reached the deck, in the darkness of the night, the scene appeared doubly terrific, and for a moment the horrid thought appeared to me that the two vessels had separated.

It was not the case, they still were fast by the main chains; and our people were rushing to regain the brig, followed by the pirates, some fighting, others with the idea of prolonging their lives for a short time.

The last of our men who had been below had just reached the deck, when a bright flame burst up from the main hatch of the schooner with a loud explosion.

I had reached the main rigging of my own vessel, my men had followed me, and two of the pirates attempted to leap after us.

One was shot dead by one of our men, who turned round and fired deliberately at him.

The other leaped, but the vessels were parting, his hand missed the grasp, and, as he fell back with a shriek of agony into the dark gulf below, the glare fell on his distorted countenance, his long hair streaming in the blast, his eyes starting from their sockets, his mouth wide open, and his neck bent back, while his sword still waved idly in the air. I shall never forget the horrors of that dreadful picture.

It seems to this day more vivid than any of the scenes of that terrific night.

"Cut away everything—get clear of the schooner—up with the helm!" shouted the captain. "Square away the mainyard—ease away the larboard braces!"

The brig paid off before the wind. The men flew to cut away the lashings which held the dangerous foe to us.

"Huzza! we are clear," shouted our crew, as we tore away from the schooner.

Then ascended a cry of agony, despair, and horror, from the survivors of the pirates, as they stood on the deck of their fated vessel.

They knew no mortal power could save them, and they had provoked alone the vengeance of heaven.

The explosion had been only partial, for the magazine was drowned; but the schooner was on fire fore and aft, and sinking.

One or the other of two dreadful deaths was to be the lot of all who remained on board.

It was literally a struggle between the two elements, which should obtain the prey.

The flames burned up brightly and fiercely, while the raging seas rose high above her sides and swept over her decks with terrific fury.

The waves were to be triumphant! On a sudden a vast flame ascended as it were to the sky, and some declared, though it must have been the work of the imagination, that they heard shrieks, and groans, and cries, with shouts of mocking laughter, uttered by no earthly voices.

Then there was darkness, and the waves danced up where the ship had been.

The pirate schooner had sunk.

We afterwards had reason to know that the pirate had run us on board, in consequence of finding their vessel in a sinking condition from the holes our shot had made.

It was their only resource; they thought that they might take us by surprise, and perhaps capture us.

At all events, they expected to have their revenge, by destroying us with themselves.

The events I have been describing took place in the course of a few minutes.

How short the lapse of time since I had seen the pirate schooner, like an evil spirit stalking through the night, approaching to destroy us—and now, a blackened hulk, she was many fathoms down in the depths of the ocean.

I do not mean to say I made these reflections at the moment, for my energies and those of all on board were required to repair our own damages.

They were considerable; our larboard bulwarks and main chains were torn away, while the quarter was much stove in; and had the two vessels remained much longer together, I verily believe our sides would have been ground down to the water.

However, she still remained tight.

We secured the guns, got up temporary bulwarks, and secured the main rigging.

The brig had, on getting free from the enemy, been kept away on our proper course to the southward, nearly before the wind.

CHAPTER X.

THE PRISONERS.

WE were hard at work all night long, and when day broke and the sun rose, he shone aslant decks still slippery with human gore, and a ship almost a wreck. The wind and sea had fortunately gone down, so that our work proceeded with less difficulty. When the crew were mustered, five were found missing, who must have been killed by the pirates, or fallen overboard in attempting to leap into the schooner. Two were killed on our own decks, and nine wounded, so that our loss was severe, and shows the desperation with which the enemy fought.

Eight bells in the morning watch had struck before I knocked off work to go below and recruit with breakfast; and I then, and only then, remembered the females I had seen Green engaged in preserving. Without speaking a word to any one, I jumped down below, and opened the door of my cabin. I stood transfixed with amazement, for there I saw—her head on my pillow—an infantine face so perfectly beautiful, so angelic in its expression, that I thought for an instant I beheld a being of another and a better world. She slept soundly the sleep of innocence, for my entrance did not awake her. Her long dark eye-lashes marked distinctly on her almost alabaster skin, though her hair, which floated in ringlets round her neck, was of a golden hue. One fair arm was stretched out instinctively, as if to steady herself on her couch, while the other was placed beneath her head. How can so bright a flower bloom amid scenes thus stormy and wild?

Green just then poked his head into the gun-room. "Hillo, master," I exclaimed, "some visitor from a better world than ours, has taken possession of my cabin, so I'll e'en go and wash my foul, blood-stained hands in yours."

"Oh! mine's occupied too," he answered. "Try the purser's; he's snoring to himself, and won't awake in a hurry; but bear a hand about it: and come and set down to discuss breakfast, and I will tell you how it all happened."

By the time breakfast was over, we had learned all that each other had to communicate; and I was then not sorry to throw myself on the deck, in the corner of the gun-room; notwithstanding the rolls and pitches the vessel made, I enjoyed two hour's sound sleep and forgetfulness of the rough present, for my dreams were of home and its dear faces, the green lane, and my own Edith.

When I awoke the sun was shining down through the cabin skylight,—(at first I thought its beams came through the window of my snug little room in my father's house,)—the sea had gone down, and the brig was making her way calmly and quickly.

When I went on deck I found the captain, who told me to go down below with the corporal of marines, and endeavour to elicit some information from the pirate captain, as to the history of the lady and the

child we had saved, as I was the only officer who could speak or understand Spanish, a necessary qualification for holding communication, which had been before overlooked.

On going below I found my friend, Don Diego Lopez de Mendoza, seated on the deck, within a screen in the forehold, and heavily manacled. His head was bent down between his knees, his dress was torn, besmeared with blood, and his hair hung lank and clotted with the same ruddy stream, over his shoulders. As the light of the lantern, carried by the corporal, fell on his countenance his eye glanced up with the glare of a tiger, as if he would spring and destroy the person who came to disturb him. He probably fancied that we were come to drag him forth and run him up to the yard-arm, according to his system of justice. When his eyes were accustomed to the glare of the lantern, he recognised me immediately.

"Things have changed with me since yesterday morning," he said; "and I must observe, your barbarous shipmates do not treat me as if I were a gentleman."

"Deliciously cool of the murderous ruffian," I thought.

"You will have more courtesy, and will explain to your captain, that as an Hidalgo, I ought not to be treated in this unbecoming manner—as a mere robber. But, tell me, how was it you attacked me after letting my vessel go free? I shall complain to my government, and they will insist on compensation."

"You are mistaken, Senor, in supposing that we do not know the character of your vessel," I replied.

"Why, what do you take her for?" he asked, with the most inimitable coolness.

"A pirate?" I replied. "It were wrong to deceive you, and as such you must prepare to meet death."

"I, a pirate, indeed!" he exclaimed. "You are the pirate rather:—I was quietly sailing on, when you fired into me, and thinking you were a pirate, I endeavoured to escape, till you reduced my vessel to a sinking condition."

"You cannot deceive us," I answered; "several witnesses will appear against you; a lady and her child were saved, and we, yesterday morning, rescued a black from the wreck of the ship you burned, who immediately recognised you."

He started, and his countenance grew pale, I thought. He seemed to be mastering himself.

"That comes of not carefully destroying every human being on board," he observed, in an every-day tone, as if he spoke of a matter of indifference. "I said such foolish mercy led to our destruction. Well, at all events, if die I must, let it be like a caballero, and not as a common thief, by the *garrote*" (the gibbet).

I told him in reply, that we should have no voice in the matter, that he would be tried by the laws of our country at Sierra Leone, and if found guilty of piracy, that no distinction would be made between him and his companions. I then asked him if he would give me any information about the unhappy lady we had rescued from his vessel.

"What, a lady and her child?" he asked. "I know which you mean. There were several others on board, for we are far too gallant to injure any ladies we capture. They are somewhat scarce on the high seas; but they were forward, I suppose, and went down with the vessel. About this lady, though I know no more than you do, she came on board my schooner because her ship was on fire. Cannot she give an account of herself?"

I told him that she was mad.

"Oh, then she cannot appear against me," he replied, laughing.

"There may be quite sufficient evidence to hang you," I observed, irritated at his heartlessness.

"There is many a slip between the cup and the lip," was his reply, or, at least, he made use of a similar Spanish proverb: "The flax is not yet grown which is to hang me."

"Be not so sure of that," I answered; "we treat pirates with scant ceremony."

"Pirates! yes, but I am no pirate," he exclaimed, as if a new plan of defence had occurred to him. "What I have said to you in joke, you, as a caballero, are not to bring against me."

Of course I promised him nothing, and disgusted at his audacity and despairing of getting any of the information I required, I left him. I heard him, as I turned my back uttering a deep oath, accompanied with an expression far from complimentary to the officers and ship's company.

From the other three prisoners, who were fierce ruffians of the lowest order, I could not gain information, compelled to wait, as must our readers, for another day, to satisfy our curiosity respecting our unfortunate passengers.

CHAPTER XI.

A DEATH BED.

"LAND ahead!" sounded in my ears as I awoke out of a deep sleep into which the unremitting exertions of the last two days had thrown me. I jumped up, my head still confused with the scenes I had witnessed; of

the ship on fire, the night engagement, the storm, and the subsequent events, and for the first few moments I could not tell whether I was returning to the shores of my native land, or was still outward-bound. I had been dreaming of that land—of the loved ones there—of her I loved more than all; and my imagination half deceived me into the hope that my time of banishment was ended, and that the well-known cliffs of Albion was the land in sight. Vain delusion! it was soon dispelled by the voices of my messmates.

"Whereabouts are we, master?" asked the purser, who, with some other person, was in the gun-room, while Green was busying himself in examining the chart.

"Not a hundred miles north or south of Sierra Leone; but we shall soon see when we get on shore," was the master's rather vague reply.

"I'll go on deck and have a look at the place, and see if it be as bad as people say," observed Sleepwell, as he ascended to the deck.

The third voice I heard was soft and low—how strange it sounded among those of the rougher beings on board!—it was that of the little rescued stranger. I was not long in slipping on my habiliments, and preparing to go on deck. As I stepped out of my cabin I stood for a moment to watch Green and his little charge. She was looking up confidently and affectionately in his face, when he guided her soft little fair hand over the chart, to give her a lesson in geography.

"Oh, how nice it is to be near the land, Massa Green, and shall I be able to go and run about, and to pick flowers for poor mamma, as I have often before? It is so pleasant to run about in the shade, under the green trees! You must come too, dear massa, and so must dear mamma; it will do her good to sit under the trees, and listen to the birdies singing. We will all go—will we not, massa?"

A tear came into Green's eye as the child spoke, and I saw it running down his well-bronzed cheek. Poor child! she little knew that the days of her only parent were already numbered. As I went into the gun-room from one side, the doctor entered from the other, and though we tried to entice the little girl to come with us on deck, she would not quit Green, but kept fast hold of his hand till he led her there himself. I then asked Haggis how the unfortunate lady we had rescued was getting on.

"She canna last till to-morrow's sundown, I am thinking."

"Poor thing!" I observed; "and what will become of that sweet child?"

"He who feeds the sparrows will take care of her," replied Haggis.

"And tell me, how does the black man we picked up get on? He was badly wounded, I fear."

"He has slipped his cable already for another world, as you sailors say," he answered. "He never spoke again after he was knocked over."

"That is bad, indeed," I observed. "Then we shall have no witnesses against those rascally pirates, and they may escape after all."

"Is the poor lady conscious of her approaching death?" I asked.

"No—she still remains in the same demented state, but far weaker in body, which makes me fear she canna recover," he replied. "She

has been removed into the captain's cabin, and I must go and see her. He insisted on my coming to lay down a bit, while he is acting nurse."

While the medico went to attend on his unfortunate charge I ascended on deck.

The sea was as smooth as glass, the light air which came off the distant shore, scarcely serving to ruffle for an instant its shining surface. The hot sun, rising above the land, had not served to dispel the haze, which floats almost constantly in the atmosphere, not rising in it, but remaining suspended, like the canopy of smoke spread over London on a calm day. Over the shore it was far denser, till, in the horizon, it assumed the appearance of a thick brickdust-coloured hue, out of which were seen emerging: like a series of azure clouds, the lofty hills above the far-famed, and not at all maligned, settlements of Sierra Leone.

As the day wore on, the breeze freshened, and our approach was more rapid. I was not at all prepared for the beautiful scene which gradually opened to our sight as we drew near. In the distance were the Sierras or mountains of the Lion, while from the water rose sloping hills, richly cultivated, and interspersed with large villages, handsome mansions, neat thatched cottages, surrounded with banana, orange, paw-paw, and other fruit trees, forming altogether a picture which one might suppose the abode of contentment, peace, health, and happiness,—alas! how different is the reality.

A pilot came alongside in a small boat pulled by four hands, and was taken on board.

At last we reached the anchorage of Free Town, and dropped our anchor once more to the bottom.

The broad mouth of the Sierra Leone river has the appearance of a smooth and extensive Lagoon, bounded on one side by the low, woody Bullom shore, and on the other by the verdant and gentle acclivity on which the town is situated, the back ground of which, gradually ascending, terminates in a semicircular range of moderate-sized hills, forming an amphitheatre decorated with lofty trees, and richly foliated shrubs, while every spot of the ascent, here and there studded with neat country seats, presented to our delighted eyes a picture of the most agreeable character, while the harbour bore on its unruffled bosom, ships, of various sizes and rig, from every part of the world. While I was gazing on it, I felt a little soft hand placed in mine—

"Will you come and help take poor mamma on to the green shore, there?" said the child, looking up with an inquiring glance into my face. "Mamma Green says she is not able to go—she is ill, and I am sure the sweet green shore will make her well."

While the little girl was speaking, the captain came on deck and beckoned me towards him.

"Her last moments are come," he whispered; "she has returned to consciousness, and asks to see her child. Green is with her, and has promised to protect the girl, and he will keep his word—but we have no time to lose."

The kind skipper took the child's hand and led her below, whilst I followed. I am not fond of harrowing up the feelings of my

readers by describing death-bed scenes, when no particular moral can be deduced therefrom. The mother recognised her daughter as soon as she was brought to her side, but the film of approaching dissolution was already dimming her sight. She had just strength to take the little girl by the hand, and place it in that of Green, who knew what it meant.

"Yes, yes, ma'am," he said, "I'll be a father to your child—do not doubt it. I've no babies of my own, and I don't expect ever to have any; I shall be too glad to take this one home to Mrs. Green, and she will be too happy to have her, and will be a good mother to her, depend upon it."

The dying woman understood him, and drew her child near her to kiss her; in the act her head fell back, her features altered, the eyes became motionless—her spirit had fled. Thus died the unfortunate lady among strangers. Nothing of her history could we learn, except that she had pronounced the name of Markham, and called her daughter Eva. The child we found at once answered to the name, and said it was hers.

For some time she could not at all comprehend her loss, nor was it till the body of her mother was conveyed on shore to be buried, that a suspicion of the truth entered her mind. When she asked for her mamma, and was told that she had gone on shore, she cried bitterly at not being allowed to accompany her; and in order to pacify her, Green was obliged to explain to her that God would not let her see her any more in this world, but that in another and a better land she would be again united to her. It was interesting to hear the honest sailor in his homely way instructing the fair child in his own theological ideas, and to see the deep interest with which the little girl listened to him. Poor child! she was the only living thing—the only remnant of a proud ship, and her freight of human beings.

CHAPTER XII.

THE TRIAL.

It is time that I should return to those who had worked all the woe and destruction I have just described—the cold-blooded pirate and his fierce associates. I was on deck when they were brought up from below to be conveyed to a prison on shore. Fortunately the courts were sitting, and they were to be tried forthwith, so that we should not be delayed on this account any considerable time after we had completed our wood and water.

The first who appeared was Don Diego Lopez de Mendoza—but how changed from the gay and gallant cavalier who had received me in the cabin of the *Esperanza*—his linen soiled, his face unwashed, and his dress torn and bloodstained from the fierce struggle in which he had been engaged.

He looked boldly around, though, somewhat anxiously at the same time, for he was not quite certain that he was not forthwith to be hung up at our fore yard-arm—a fate he must have felt he not a little merited.

When his eye fell on me, he instantly inquired, with a slight swagger in his tone, what was to be done with him. I answered that he would shortly be tried for piracy and murder on the high seas, and if found guilty, would in all probability suffer the penalty of the law.

The three survivors of his lawless crew followed with their arms in irons; a necessary precaution, for as they cast their scowling glance on either side, they evidently meditated revenging themselves on their captors. As they perceived, however, the guard on deck, the fortresses on shore, and the flags of the numerous British ships in the harbour, they felt the hopelessness of their case, and uttered imprecations, loud and deep, on our heads, but as they were Spanish, our crew neither understood nor heeded them.

When the Spanish captain reached the gang-way, he turned round, and looking aft with the dignified air of an injured patriot, he exclaimed in his own language,—

“I call all here to witness that my ship was unlawfully captured, and that I have been treated as a common felon, and that my own government will not fail to seek for satisfaction from the British for the insult they have offered to them in my person.”

Having thus delivered himself, he descended into the cutter, in which Seaton, with a file of marines, was waiting to carry him and his companions to prison.

“Remember, Mr. Seaton,” said the captain, “if either of the men attempt to make their escape, shoot them; they deserve no mercy at our hands.”

For the remainder of the day we were busily employed in watering the ship, so that I was unable to go on shore to see the lions of the place. Of the pure liquid, there is not only an abundant and constant supply, but it is of the very best quality—the only good thing the place produces; for, notwithstanding the beauty of the scenery, the climate is most deadly. While we lay there, deaths were occurring daily on board one or other of the numerous vessels which had put in to load with wood, an article of which much is exported.

I must now return to the pirate, Don Diego Lopez de Mendoza as he called himself. I saw nothing of him till I met him in court, where he stood arraigned for piracy and murder on the high seas, for attacking Her Britannic Majesty's brig, and for slaying and maiming some of her liege subjects on board the said brig. I am no lawyer, but as far as I recollect, these were the crimes for which he stood charged, as did also his three companions.

The officers and crew of our ship proved that we found a ship on fire; that we rescued a black man from the wreck: that the said black man stated that he had been passenger on board the ship; that the ship had been boarded by a piratical schooner; and that the pirate had murdered some of the people, carried off the women, rifled the ship, and then set her on fire.

We then proved that on the following day, the black, on seeing a schooner we had just boarded from thinking her a suspicious character, had positively asserted that she was the piratical schooner which had attacked the ship; that when ordered to heave-to, she not only refused to do so, and endeavoured to make her escape, but fired into her Britannic Majesty's brig, and for a time contrived to elude us; that, however, she afterwards ran on board of us at night, with the evident intent of taking us by surprise, but that we had, instead, sent her to the bottom, and destroyed all her people, with the exception of the four prisoners at the bar. We also proved the death of the black, and of the unhappy lady who was rescued from the schooner.

A smile of evident satisfaction lighted the countenance of Captain Mendoza as this piece of information was translated to him; but his visage elongated as little Eva was brought into the court and placed in the witness-box.

Child as she was, the judge consented to receive her evidence, if she were able to give any.

At first, she was startled at finding herself in the presence of so many strange men, but as she gained sufficient assurance to look up, her eyes wandered round the court.

When they reached the pirate they rested on him for a moment, and then, with a cry of terror, she flew into Green's arms, and tried to hide her face. When asked why she was alarmed, she answered.

“He took mamma and me from ship—he kill poor papa—he burn ship.”

This closed the evidence against the prisoners; one would have supposed that it was conclusive, and sufficient to condemn them.

Their defence was very ably conducted.

It went to prove that Captain Mendoza was a very quiet, peaceable man, and that his companions were very elderly people; that so far from setting a ship on fire, they would never wish to injure any one; but, when fired into by the brig, they believed that they were attacked by a pirate, and accordingly defended themselves to the utmost of their ability, and that when they ran into her at night, they did so from finding themselves in a sinking condition, as the only means of saving their lives.

They then called upon the court to consider well before they harboured even a suspicion against innocent men.

The defence was worthy Don Diego Lopez de Mendoza, who spoke at great length, and displayed considerable oratorical ability.

The judge summed up, and the jury, on returning into court, pronounced him not guilty.

He, on this, bowed politely to the judge, and most profoundly to us, as if no matter of importance had occurred, and evidently expected to be allowed to take his hat and walk off with his companions, when some fresh actors appeared on the scene, who stated themselves to be the survivors of the crew of a brig attacked and plundered by him and his followers.

This again entirely changed the form of his countenance, and he broke forth into curses loud and long, as the handcuffs, which had been removed, were again placed on his wrists, and he was conducted to prison.

Upon his next trial the evidence was sufficiently strong and to the point, to fully convict him of the crimes of piracy and murder, and he was soon after executed. Prior to his death, he sent for me, and in the course of a long interview, confessed—what I had all along more than suspected—that Don Diego Lopez de Mendoza was no other than the famous pirate Pepe; more widely known among seamen as the captain of the "Black Cruiser; or, The Scourge of the Seas."

THE END.