

The Water–Witch, Volume 1

James Fenimore Cooper

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PREFACE.

Christendom is gradually extricating itself from the ignorance, ferocity, and crimes of the middle ages. It is no longer subject of boast, that the hand which wields the sword, never held a pen, and men have long since ceased to be ashamed of knowledge. The multiplied means of imparting principles and facts, and a more general diffusion of intelligence, have conduced to establish sounder ethics and juster practices, throughout the whole civilized world. Thus, he who admits the conviction, as hope declines with his years, that man deteriorates, is probably as far from the truth, as the visionary who sees the dawn of a golden age, in the commencement of the nineteenth century. That we have greatly improved on the opinions and practices of our ancestors, is quite as certain as that there will be occasion to meliorate the legacy of morals which we shall transmit to posterity.

When the progress of civilization compelled Europe to correct the violence and injustice which were so openly practised, until the art of printing became known, the other hemisphere made America the scene of those acts, which shame prevented her from exhibiting nearer home. There was little of a lawless, mercenary, violent, and selfish nature, that the self–styled masters of the continent hesitated to commit, when removed from the immediate responsibilities of the society in which they had been educated. The Drakes, Rogers', and Dampiers of that day, though enrolled in the list of naval heroes, were no other than pirates, acting under the sanction of commissions; and the scenes that occurred among the marauders of the land, were often of a character to disgrace human nature.

That the colonies which formed the root of this republic escaped the more serious evils of a corruption so gross and so widely spread, can only be ascribed to the characters of those by whom they were peopled.

Perhaps nine-tenths of all the white inhabitants of the Union are the direct descendants of men who quitted Europe, in order to worship God according to conviction and conscience. If the Puritans of New-England, the Friends of Jersey, Pennsylvania and Delaware, the Catholics of Maryland, the Presbyterians of the upper counties of Virginia and of the Carolinas, and the Huguenots, brought with them the exaggeration of their peculiar sects, it was an exaggeration that tended to correct most of their ordinary practices. Still the English Provinces were not permitted, altogether, to escape from the moral dependency that seems nearly inseparable from colonial government, or to be entirely exempt from the wide contamination of the times.

The State of New-York, as is well known, was originally a colony of the United Provinces. The settlement was made in the year 1613; and the Dutch East India Company, under whose authority the establishment was made, claimed the whole country between the Connecticut and the mouth of Delaware-bay, a territory which, as it had a corresponding depth, equalled the whole surface of the present kingdom of France. Of this vast region, however, they never occupied but a narrow belt on each side of the Hudson, with, here and there, a settlement on a few of the river flats, more inland.

There is a providence in the destiny of nations, that sets at nought the most profound of human calculations. Had the dominion of the Dutch continued a century longer, there would have existed in the very heart of the Union a people opposed to its establishment, by their language, origin, and habits. The conquest of the English in 1663, though unjust and iniquitous in itself, removed the danger, by opening the way for the introduction of that great community of character which now so happily prevails.

Though the English, the French, the Swedes, the Dutch, the Danes, the Spaniards, and the Norwegians, all had colonies within the country which now composes the United States, the people of the latter are more homogeneous in character, language, and opinions, than those of any other great nation that is familiarly known. This identity of character is owing to the early predominance of the English, and to the circumstance that New-England and Virginia, the two great sources of internal emigration, were entirely of English origin. Still, New-York retains, to the present hour, a variety of usages that were obtained from Holland. Her edifices of painted bricks, her streets lined with trees, her inconvenient and awkward stoops, and a large proportion of her names, are equally derived from the Dutch. Until the commencement of this century, even the language of Holland prevailed in the streets of the capital, and though a nation of singular boldness and originality in all that relates to navigation, the greatest sea-port of the country betrays many evidences of a taste which must be referred to the same origin.

The reader will find in these facts a sufficient explanation of most of the peculiar customs, and of some of the peculiar practices, that are exhibited in the course of the following tale. Slavery, a divided language, and a distinct people, are no longer to be found, within the fair regions of New-York; and, without pretending to any peculiar exemption from the weaknesses of humanity, it may be permitted us to hope, that these are not the only features of the narrative, which a better policy, and a more equitable administration of power, have made purely historical.

Early released from the fetters of the middle ages, fetters that bound the mind equally with the person, America has preceded rather than followed Europe, in that march of improvement which is rendering the present era so remarkable. Under a system, broad, liberal, and just as hers, though she may have to contend with rivalries that are sustained by a more concentrated competition, and which are as absurd by their pretension of liberality as they are offensive by their monopolies, there is nothing to fear, in the end. Her political motto should be Justice, and her first and greatest care to see it administered to her own citizens.

The reader is left to make the application.

CHAPTER I.

"What, shall this speech he spoke for our excuse?

Or shall we on without apology."

Romeo and Juliet

The fine estuary which penetrates the American coast, between the fortieth and forty-first degrees of latitude, is formed by the confluence of the Hudson, the Hackensack, the Passaic, the Raritan, and a multitude of smaller streams; all of which pour their tribute into the ocean, within the space named. The islands of Nassau and Staten are happily placed to exclude the tempests of the open sea, while the deep and broad arms of the latter offer every desirable facility for foreign trade and internal intercourse. To this fortunate disposition of land and water, with a temperate climate, a central position, and an immense interior, that is now penetrated, in every direction, either by artificial or by natural streams, the city of New-York is indebted for its extraordinary prosperity. Though not wanting in beauty, there are many bays that surpass this in the charms of scenery; but it may be questioned if the world possesses another site that unites so many natural advantages for the growth and support of a widely-extended commerce. As if never wearied with her kindness, Nature has placed the island of Manhattan at the precise point that is most desirable for the position of a town. Millions might inhabit the spot, and yet a ship should load near every door; and while the surface of the land just possesses the inequalities that are required for health and cleanliness, its bosom is filled with the material most needed in construction.

The consequences of so unusual a concurrence of favorable circumstances, are well known. A vigorous, healthful, and continued growth, that has no parallel even in the history of this extraordinary and fortunate country, has already raised the insignificant provincial town of the last century to the level of the second-rate cities of the other hemisphere. The New-Amsterdam of this continent already rivals its parent of the other; and, so far as human powers may pretend to predict, a few fleeting years will place her on a level with the proudest capitals of Europe.

It would seem that, as Nature has given its periods to the stages of animal life, it has also set limits to all moral and political ascendancy. While the city of the Medici is receding from its crumbling walls, like the human form shrinking into "the lean and slipper'd pantaloons," the Queen of the Adriatic sleeping on her muddy isles, and Rome itself is only to be traced by fallen temples and buried columns, the youthful vigor of America is fast covering the wilds of the West with the happiest fruits of human industry.

By the Manhattanese, who is familiar with the forest of masts, the miles of wharves, the countless villas, the hundred churches, the castles, the smoking and busy vessels that crowd his bay, the daily increase and the general movement of his native town, the picture we are about to sketch will scarcely be recognized. He who shall come a generation later will probably smile, that subject of admiration should have been found in the existing condition of the city: and yet we shall attempt to carry the recollections of the reader but a century back, in the brief history of his country.

As the sun rose on the morning of the 3d of June, 171–, the report of a cannon was heard rolling along the waters of the Hudson. Smoke issued from an embrasure of a small fortress, that stood on the point of land where the river and the bay mingle their waters. The explosion was followed by the appearance of a flag, which, as it rose to the summit of its staff and unfolded itself heavily in the light current of air, showed the blue field and red cross of the English ensign. At the distance of several miles, the dark masts of a ship were to be seen, faintly relieved by the verdant back-ground of the heights of Staten Island. A little cloud floated over this object, and then an answering signal came dull and rumbling to the town. The flag that the cruiser set was not visible in the distance.

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At the precise moment that the noise of the first gun was heard, the door of one of the principal dwellings of the town opened, and a man, who might have been its master, appeared on its stoop, as the ill-arranged entrances of the buildings of the place are still termed. He was seemingly prepared for some expedition that was likely to consume the day. A black of middle age followed the burgher to the threshold; and another negro, who had not yet reached the stature of manhood, bore under his arm a small bundle, that probably contained articles of the first necessity to the comfort of his master.

"Thrift, Mr. Euclid, thrift is your true philosopher's stone;" commenced, or rather continued in a rich full-mouthed Dutch, the proprietor of the dwelling, who had evidently been giving a leave-taking charge to his principal slave, before quitting the house "Thrift hath made many a man rich, but it never yet brought any one to want. It is thrift which has built up the credit of my house, and, though it is said by myself, a broader back and firmer base belongs to no merchant in the colonies. You are but the reflection of your master's prosperity, you rogue, and so much the greater need that you look to his interests. If the substance is wasted, what will become of the shadow? When I get delicate, you will sicken: when I am a-hungred, you will be famished; when I die, you may be ahem Euclid. I leave thee in charge with goods and chattels, house and stable, with my character in the neighborhood. I am going to the Lust in Rust, for a mouthful of better air. Plague and fevers! I believe the people will continue to come into this crowded town, until it gets to be as pestilent as Rotterdam in the dog-days. You have now come to years when a man obtains his reflection, boy, and I expect suitable care and discretion about the premises, while my back is turned. Now, harkee, sirrah: I am not entirely pleased with the character of thy company. It is not altogether as respectable as becomes the confidential servant of a man of a certain station in the world. There are thy two cousins, Brom and Kobus, who are no better than a couple of blackguards; and as for the English negro, Diomed he is a devil's imp! Thou hast the other locks at disposal, and," drawing with visible reluctance the instrument from his pocket, "here is the key of the stable. Not a hoof is to quit it, but to go to the pump and see that each animal has its food to a minute. The devil's roysterers! a Manhattan negro takes a Flemish gelding for a gaunt hound that is never out of breath, and away he goes, at night, scampering along the highways like a Yankee witch switching through the air on a broomstick but mark me, master Euclid, I have eyes in my head, as thou knowest by bitter experience! D'ye remember, ragamuffin, the time when I saw thee, from the Hague, riding the beasts, as if the devil spurred them, along the dykes of Leyden, without remorse as without leave?"

"I alway b'rieve some make-mischief tell Masser, dat time;" returned the negro sulkily, though not without doubt.

"His own eyes were the tell-tales. If masters had no eyes, a pretty world would the negroes make of it! I have got the measure of every black heel, on the island, registered in the big book you see me so often looking into, especially on Sundays; and, if either of the tire-legs I have named dares to enter my grounds, let him expect to pay a visit to the city Provost. What do the wild-cats mean? Do they think that the geldings were bought in Holland; with charges for breaking in, shipment, insurance, freight, and risk of diseases, to have their flesh melted from their ribs like a cook's candle?"

"Ere no'tin' done in all 'e island, but a color' man do him! He do a mischief, and he do all a work, too! I won'er what color Masser t'ink war' Captain Kidd?"

"Black or white, he was a rank rogue; and you see the end he came to. I warrant you, now, that water-thief began his iniquities by riding the neighbors' horses, at night. His fate should be a warning to every negro in the colony. Theimps of darkness! The English have no such scarcity of rogues at home, that they could not spare us the pirate to hang up on one of the islands, as a scarecrow to the blacks of Manhattan."

"Well, I t'ink 'e sight do a white man some good, too;" returned Euclid, who had all the pertinacity of a spoiled Dutch negro, singularly blended with affection for him in whose service he had been born. "I hear ebbery body say, 'er'e war' but two color' man in he ship, and 'em bot' war' Guinea-born."

"A modest tongue, thou midnight scamperer! look to my geldings Here here are two Dutch florins, three stivers, and a Spanish pistareen for thee; one of the florins is for thy old mother, and with the others thou canst lighten thy heart in the Paus merrymakings if I hear that either of thy rascally cousins, or the English Diomedes, has put a leg across beast of mine, it will be the worse for all Africa!Famine and skeletons! here have I been seven years trying to fatten the nags, and they still look more like weasels than a pair of solid geldings."

The close of this speech was rather muttered in the distance, and by way of soliloquy, than actually administered to the namesake of the great mathematician. The air of the negro had been a little equivocal, during the parting admonition. There was an evident struggle, in his mind, between an innate love of disobedience, and a secret dread of his master's means of information. So long as the latter continued in sight, the black watched his form in doubt; and when it had turned a corner, he stood at gaze, for a moment, with a negro on a neighboring stoop; then both shook their heads significantly, laughed aloud, and retired. That night, the confidential servant attended to the interests of his absent master, with a fidelity and care which proved he felt his own existence identified with that of a man who claimed so close a right in his person; and just as the clock struck ten, he and the negro last mentioned mounted the sluggish and over-fattened horses, and galloped, as hard as foot could be laid to the earth, several miles deeper into the island, to attend a frolic at one of the usual haunts of the people of their color and condition.

Had Alderman Myndert Van Beverout suspected the calamity which was so soon to succeed his absence, it is probable that his mien would have been less composed, as he pursued his way from his own door, on the occasion named. That he had confidence in the virtue of his menaces, however, may be inferred from the tranquillity which immediately took possession of features that were never disturbed, without wearing an appearance of unnatural effort. The substantial burgher was a little turned of fifty; and an English wag, who had imported from the mother country a love for the humor of his nation, had once, in a conflict of wits before the city council, described him to be a man of alliterations. When called upon to explain away this breach of parliamentary decorum, the punster had gotten rid of the matter, by describing his opponent to be "short, solid and sturdy, in stature; full, flushed and funny, in face; and proud, ponderous and pragmatistical, in propensities." But, as is usual, in all sayings of effort, there was more smartness than truth in this description; though, after making a trifling allowance for the coloring of political rivalry, the reader may receive its physical portion as sufficiently descriptive to answer all the necessary purposes of this tale. If we add, that he was a trader of great wealth and shrewdness, and a bachelor, we need say no more in this stage of the narrative.

Notwithstanding the early hour at which this industrious and flourishing merchant quitted his abode, his movement along the narrow streets of his native town was measured and dignified. More than once, he stopped to speak to some favorite family-servant, invariably terminating his inquiries after the health of the master, by some facetious observation adapted to the habits and capacity of the slave. From this, it would seem, that, while he had so exaggerated notions of domestic discipline, the worthy burgher was far from being one who indulged, by inclination, in the menaces he has been heard to utter. He had just dismissed one of these loitering negroes, when, on turning a corner, a man of his own color, for the first time that morning, suddenly stood before him. The startled citizen made an involuntary movement to avoid the unexpected interview, and then, perceiving the difficulty of such a step, he submitted, with as good a grace as if it had been one of his own seeking.

"The orb of day the morning gun and Mr. Alderman Van Beverout!" exclaimed the individual encountered.
"Such is the order of events, at this early hour, on each successive revolution of our earth."

The countenance of the Alderman had barely time to recover its composure, ere he was required to answer to this free and somewhat facetious salutation. Uncovering his head, he bowed so ceremoniously as to leave the other no reason to exult in his pleasantry, as he answered

"The colony has reason to regret the services of a governor who can quit his bed so soon. That we of business habits stir betimes, is quite in reason; but there are those in this town, who would scarce believe their eyes did

they enjoy my present happiness."

"Sir, there are many in this colony who have great reason to distrust their senses, though none can be mistaken in believing they see Alderman Van Beverout in a well-employed man. He that dealeth in the produce of the beaver must have the animal's perseverance and forethought! Now, were I a king—at-arms, there should be a concession made in thy favor, Myndert, of a shield bearing the animal mordant, a mantle of fur, with two Mohawk hunters for supporters, and the motto, 'Industry.'"

"Or what think you, my Lord," returned the other, who did not more than half relish the pleasantry of his companion, "of a spotless shield for a clear conscience, with an open hand for a crest, and the motto, 'Frugality and Justice?'"

"I like the open hand, though the conceit is pretending. I see you would intimate that the Van Beverouts have not need, at this late day, to search a herald's office for honors. I remember, now I bethink me, on some occasion to have seen their bearings; a windmill, courant; dyke, coulant; field, vert, sprinkled with black cattle No! then, memory istreacherous; the morning air is pregnant with food for the imagination!"

"Which is not a coin to satisfy a creditor, my Lord," said the caustic Myndert.

"Therein has truth been, pithily, spoken. This is an ill-judged step, Alderman Van Beverout, that lets a gentleman out by night, like the ghost in Hamlet, to flee into the narrow house with the crowing of the cock. The ear of my royal cousin hath been poisoned, worse than was the ear of 'murdered Denmark,' or the partisans of this Mister Hunter would have little cause to triumph."

"Is it not possible to give such pledges to those who have turned the key, as will enable your lordship to apply the antidote."

The question stuck a chord that changed the whole manner of the other. His air, which had borne the character of a genteel trifler, became more grave and dignified; and notwithstanding there was the evidence of a reckless disposition in his features, dress and carriage, his tall and not ungraceful form, as he walked slowly onward, by the side of the compact Alderman, was not without much of that insinuating ease and blandishment, which long familiarity with good company can give even to the lowest moral worth.

"Your question, worthy Sir, manifests great goodness of heart, and corroborates that reputation for generosity, the world so freely gives. It is true that the Queen has been persuaded to sign the mandate of my recall, and it is certain that Mr. Hunter has the government of the colony; but these are facts that might be reversed, were I once in a position to approach my kinswoman. I do not disclaim certain indiscretions, Sir; it would ill become me to deny them, in presence of one whose virtue is as severe as that of Alderman Van Beverout. I have my failings; perhaps, as you have just been pleased to intimate, it would have been better had my motto been frugality; but the open hand, dear Sir, is a part of the design you will not deny me, either. If I have weaknesses, my enemies cannot refuse to say that I never yet deserted a friend."

"Not having had occasion to tax your friendship, I shall not be the first to make the charge."

"Your impartiality has come to be a proverb! 'As honest as Alderman Van Beverout;' 'as generous as Alderman Van Beverout,' are terms in each man's mouth; some say 'as rich;' (the small blue eye of the burgher twinkled.) But honesty, and riches, and generosity, are of little value, without influence. Men should have their natural consideration in society. Now is this colony rather Dutch than English, and yet, you see, how few names are found in the list of the Council, that have been known in the province half a century! Here are your Alexanders and Heathcotes, your Morris's and Kennedies, de Lanceys and Livingstons, filling the Council and the legislative halls; but we find few of the Van Rensselaers, Van Courtlandts, Van Schuylers, Stuyvesants, Van Beekmans, and

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Van Beverouts, in their natural stations. All nations and religions have precedency, in the royal favor, over the children of the Patriarchs. The Bohemian Felipses; the Huguenot de Lanceys, and Bayards, and Jays; the King-hating Morrisises and Ludlows in short, all have greater estimation in the eyes of government, than the most ancient Patroon!"

"This has long and truly been the case. I cannot remember when it was otherwise!"

"It may not be denied. But it would little become political discretion to affect precipitancy in the judgment of character. If my own administration can be stigmatized with the same apparent prejudice, it proves the clearer how strong is misrepresentation at home. Time was wanting to enlighten my mind, and that time has been refused me. In another year, my worthy Sir, the Council should have been filled with Van's!"

"In such a case, my Lord, the unhappy condition in which you are now placed might indeed have been avoided."

"Is it too late to arrest the evil? It is time Anne had been undeceived, and her mind regained. There wanteth nothing to such a consummation of justice, Sir, but opportunity. It touches me to the heart, to think that this disgrace should befall one so near the royal blood! 'Tis a spot on the escutcheon of the crown, that all loyal subjects must feel desirous to efface, and so small an effort would effect the object, too, with certain Mr. Alderman Myndert Van Beverout?"

"My Lord, late Governor," returned the other, observing that his companion hesitated.

"What think you of this Hanoverian settlement? Shall a German wear the crown of a Plantagenet?"

"It hath been worn by a Hollander."

"Aptly answered! Worn, and worn worthily! There is affinity between the people, and there is reason in that reply. How have I failed in wisdom, in not seeking earlier the aid of thy advice, excellent Sir! Ah, Myndert, there is a blessing on the enterprises of all who come of the Low Countries!"

"They are industrious to earn, and slow to squander."

"That expenditure is the ruin of many a worthy subject! And yet accident chance fortune or whatever you may choose to call it, interferes nefariously, at times, with a gentleman's prosperity. I am an adorer of constancy in friendship, Sir, and hold the principle that men should aid each other through this dark vale of life Mr. Alderman Van Beverout?"

"My Lord Cornbury?"

"I was about to say, that should I quit the Province, without expressing part of the regret I feel, at not having sooner ascertained the merits of its original owners, and your own in particular, I should do injustice to sensibilities, that are only too acute for the peace of him who endures them."

"Is there then hope that your lordship's creditors will relent, or has the Earl furnished means to open the prison-door?"

"You use the pleasantest terms, Sir! but I love directness of language, above all other qualities. No doubt the prison-door, as you have so clearly expressed it, might be opened, and lucky would be the man who should turn the key. I am pained when I think of the displeasure of the Queen, which, sooner or later, will surely visit my luckless persecutors. On the other hand, I find relief in thinking of the favor she will extend to those who have proved my friends, in such a strait. They that wear crowns love not to see disgrace befall the meanest of their

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blood, for something of the taint may sully even the ermine of Majesty. Mr. Alderman !"

"My Lord?"

" How fare the Flemish geldings?"

"Bravely, and many thanks, my Lord; the rogues are fat as butter! There is hope of a little rest for the innocents, since business calls me to the Lust in Rust. There should be a law, Lord Governor, to gibbet the black that rides a beast at night."

"I bethought of some condign punishment for so heartless a crime, but there is little hope for it under the administration of this Mr. Hunter. Yes, Sir; were I once more in the presence of my royal cousin, there would quickly be an end to this delusion, and the colony should be once more restored to a healthful state. The men of a generation should cease to lord it over the men of a century. But we must be wary of letting our design, my dear Sir, get wind; it is a truly Dutch idea, and the profits, both pecuniary and political, should belong to the gentlemen of that descent My dear Van Beverout ?"

"My good Lord?"

"Is the blooming Alida obedient? Trust me, there has no family event occurred, during my residence in the colony, in which I have taken a nearer interest, than in that desirable connexion. The wooing of the young Patroon of Kinderhook is an affair of concern to the province. It is a meritorious youth!"

"With an excellent estate, my Lord!"

"And a gravity beyond his years."

"I would give a guarantee, at a risk, that two–thirds of his income goes to increase the capital, at the beginning of each season!"

"He seems a man to live on air!"

"My old friend, the last Patroon, left noble assets," continued the Alderman, rubbing his hands; "besides the manor."

"Which is no paddock!"

"It reaches from the Hudson to the line of Massachusetts. A hundred thousand acres of hill and bottom, and well peopled by frugal Hollanders."

"Respectable in possession, and a mine of gold in reversion! Such men, Sir, should be cherished. We owe it to his station to admit him to a share of this, our project to undeceive the Queen. How superior are the claims of such a gentleman to the empty pretensions of your Captain Ludlow!"

"He has truly a very good and an improving estate!"

"These Ludlows, Sir, people that fled the realm for plotting against the crown, are offensive to a loyal subject. Indeed, too much of this objection may be imputed to many in the province, that come of English blood. I am sorry to say, that they are fomenters of discord, disturbers of the public mind, and captious disputants about prerogatives and vested rights. But there is a repose in the Dutch character which lends it dignity! The descendants of the Hollanders are men to be counted on; where we leave them to–day, we see them to–morrow.

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As we say in politics, Sir, we know where to find them. Does it not seem to you particularly offensive that this Captain Ludlow should command the only royal cruiser on the station?"

"I should like it better, my Lord, were he to serve in Europe," returned the Alderman, glancing a look behind him, and lowering his voice. "There was lately a rumor that his ship was in truth to be sent among the islands."

"Matters are getting very wrong, most worthy Sir; and the greater the necessity there should be one at court to undeceive the Queen. Innovators should be made to give way to men whose names are historical, in the colony."

"'Twould be no worse for Her Majesty's credit."

"'Twould be another jewel in her crown! Should this Captain Ludlow actually marry your niece, the family would altogether change its character I have the worst memory thy mother, Myndert, was a "

"The pious woman was a Van Busser."

"The union of thy sister with the Huguenot then reduces the fair Alida to the quality of a half-blood. The Ludlow connexion would destroy the leaven of the race! I think the man is penniless!"

"I cannot say that, my Lord, for I would not willingly injure the credit of my worst enemy; but, though wealthy, he is far from having the estate of the young Patroon of Kinderhook."

"He should indeed be sent into the Indies Myndert ?"

"My Lord?"

"It would be unjust to my sentiments in favor of Mr. Oloff Van Staats, were we to exclude him from the advantages of our project. This much shall I exact from your friendship, in his favor; the necessary sum may be divided, in moieties, between you; a common bond shall render the affair compact; and then, as we shall be masters of our own secret, there can be little doubt of the prudence of our measures. The amount is written in this bit of paper."

"Two thousand pounds, my Lord!"

"Pardon me, dear Sir; not a penny more than one for each of you. Justice to Van Staats requires that you let him into the affair. Were it not for the suit with your niece, I should take the young gentleman with me, to push his fortunes at court."

"Truly, my Lord, this greatly exceeds my means. The high prices of furs the past season, and delays in returns have placed a seal upon our silver "

"The premium would be high."

"Coin is getting so scarce, daily, that the face of a Carolus is almost as great a stranger, as the face of a debtor "

"The returns certain."

"While one's creditors meet him, at every corner "

"The concern would be altogether Dutch."

"And last advices from Holland tell us to reserve our gold, for some extraordinary movements in the commercial world."

"Mr. Alderman Myndert Van Beverout!"

"My Lord Viscount Cornbury "

"Plutus preserve thee, Sir but have a care! though I scent the morning air, and must return, it is not forbid to tell the secrets of my prison-house. There is one, in yonder cage, who whispers that the 'Skimmer of the Seas' is on the coast! Be wary, worthy burgher, or the second part of the tragedy of Kidd may yet be enacted in these seas."

I leave such transactions to my superiors," retorted the Alderman, with another stiff and ceremonious bow.

"Enterprises that are said to have occupied the Earl of Bellamont, Governor Fletcher, and my Lord Cornbury, are above the ambition of an humble merchant."

"Adieu, tenacious Sir; quiet thine impatience for the extraordinary Dutch movements!" said Cornbury, affecting to laugh, though he secretly felt the sting the other had applied, since common report implicated not only him, but his two official predecessors, in several of the lawless proceedings of the American Buccaneers: "Be vigilant, or la demoiselle Barbérie will give another cross to the purity of the stagnant pool!"

The bows that were exchanged were strictly in character. The Alderman was unmoved, rigid, and formal, while his companion could not forget his ease of manner, even at a moment of so much vexation. Foiled in an effort, that nothing but his desperate condition, and nearly desperate character, could have induced him to attempt, the degenerate descendant of the virtuous Clarendon walked towards his place of confinement, with the step of one who assumed a superiority over his fellows, and yet with a mind so indurated by habitual depravity, as to have left it scarcely the trace of a dignified or virtuous quality.

CHAPTER II.

"His words are bonds, his oaths are oracles;

His love sincere, his thoughts immaculate; "

Two Gentlemen of Veroma

The philosophy of Alderman Van Beverout was not easily disturbed. Still there was a play of the nether muscles of the face, which might be construed into self-complacency at his victory, while a certain contraction of those which controlled the expression of the forehead seemed to betray a full consciousness of the imminent risk he had run. The left hand was thrust into a pocket, where it diligently fingered the provision of Spanish coin without which the merchant never left his abode; while the other struck the cane it held on the pavement, with the force of a resolute and decided man. In this manner he proceeded in his walk, for several minutes longer, shortly quitting the lower streets, to enter one that ran along the ridge, which crowned the land, in that quarter of the island. Here he soon stopped before the door of a house which, in that provincial town, had altogether the air of a patrician dwelling.

Two false gables, each of which was surmounted by an iron weathercock, intersected the roof of this building, and the high and narrow stoop was built of the red free-stone of the country. The material of the edifice itself was, as usual, the small, hard brick of Holland, painted a delicate cream-color.

A single blow of the massive glittering knocker brought a servant to the door. The promptitude with which this

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summons was answered showed that, notwithstanding the early hour, the Alderman was an expected guest. The countenance of him who acted as porter betrayed no surprise when he saw the person who applied for admission, and every movement of the black denoted preparation and readiness for his reception. Declining his invitation to enter, however, the Alderman placed his back against the iron railing of the stoop, and opened a discourse with the negro. The latter was aged, with a head that was grizzled, a nose that was levelled nearly to the plane of his face, features that were wrinkled and confused, and with a form which, though still solid, was bending with its load of years.

"Brave cheer to thee, old Cupid!" commenced the burgher, in the hearty and cordial manner with which the masters of that period were wont to address their indulged slaves. "A clear conscience is a good night-cap, and you look bright as the morning sun! I hope my friend the young Patroon has slept sound as yourself, and that he has shown his face already, to prove it."

The negro answered with the slow clipping manner that characterized his condition and years.

"He'm werry wakeful, Masser Al'erman. I t'ink he no sleep half he time, lately. All he a'tiverty and wiwacerty gone, an' he do no single t'ing but smoke. A gentle'um who smoke alway, Masser Al'erman, get to be a melercholy man, at last. I do t'ink'ere be one young lady in York who be he deat', some time!"

"We'll find the means to get the pipe out of his mouth," said the other, looking askance at the black, as if to express more than he uttered. "Romance and pretty girls play the deuce with our philosophy, in youth, as thou knowest by experience, old Cupid."

"I no good for any t'ing, dat-a-way, now, not'ing," calmly returned the black. "I see a one time, when few color' man in York hab more respect among a fair sec', but dat a great while gone by. Now, de modder of your Euclid, Masser Al'erman, war' a pretty woman, do' she hab but poor conduc'. Den a war' young heself, and I use to visit at de Al'erman's fadder's; afore a English come, and when ole Patroon war' a young man. Golly! I great affection for Euclid, do' a young dog nebber come a near me!"

"He's a blackguard! My back is no sooner turned, than the rascal's atop of one of his master's geldings."

"He'm werry young, master My'nert: no one get a wis'om fore a gray hair."

He's forty every minute, and the rogue gets impudence with his years. Age is a reverend and respectable condition, when it brings gravity and thought; but, if a young fool be tiresome, an old fool is contemptible. I'll warrant me, you never were so thoughtless, or so heartless, Cupid, as to ride an over-worked beast, at night!"

"Well, I get pretty ole, Masser Myn'ert, an' I forget all he do when a young a young man. But here be'e Patroon, who know how to tell'e Al'erman such t'ing better than a poor color' slave."

"A fair rising and a lucky day to you, Patroon!" cried the Alderman, saluting a large, slow-moving, gentlemanly-looking young man of five-and-twenty, who advanced, with the gravity of one of twice that number of years, from the interior of the house, towards its outer door. "The winds are bespoken, and here is as fine a day as ever shone out of a clear sky, whether it came from the pure atmosphere of Holland, or of old England itself. Colonies and patronage! If the people on the other side of the ocean had more faith in mother Nature, and less opinion of themselves, they would find it very tolerable breathing in the plantations. But the conceited rogues are like the man who blew the bellows, and fancied he made the music; and there is never a hobbling imp of them all, but he believes he is straighter and sounder, than the best in the colonies. Here is our bay, now, as smooth as if it were shut in with twenty dykes, and the voyage will be as safe as if it were made on a canal."

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"Dat werry well, if a do it," grumbled Cupid, who busied himself affectionately about the person of his master. "I t'ink it alway better to travel on'e land, when a gentle'um own so much as Masser Oloff. Der' war"e time a ferry-boat go down, wid crowd of people; and nobody ebber come up again to say how he feel."

"Here is some mistake!" interrupted the Alderman, throwing an uneasy glance at his young friend. "I count four-and-fifty years, and remember no such calamity."

"He'm werry sing'lar how a young folk do forget! 'Ere war' drown six people in dat werry-boat. A two Yankee, a Canada Frenchman, and a poor woman from a Jarseys. Ebbery body war' werry sorry for a poor woman from a Jarseys!"

"Thy tally is false, Master Cupid," promptly rejoined the Alderman, who was rather expert at figures. "Two Yankees, a Frenchman, and your Jersey woman, make but four."

"Well, den I s'pose 'ere war' one Yankee; but I know all war' drown, for'e Gubbenor lose he fine coach-horses in dat werry-boat."

"The old fellow is right, sure enough; for I remember the calamity of the horses, as if it were but yesterday. But Death is monarch of the earth, and none of us may hope to escape his scythe, when the appointed hour shall come! Here are no nags to lose, to-day; and we may commence our voyage, Patroon, with cheerful faces and light hearts. Shall we proceed?"

Oloff Van Staats, or the Patroon of Kinderhook, as, by the courtesy of the colony, he was commonly termed, did not want for personal firmness. On the contrary, like most of those who were descended from the Hollanders, he was rather distinguished for steadiness in danger, and obstinacy in resistance. The little skirmish which had just taken place, between his friend and his slave, had proceeded from their several apprehensions; the one feeling a sort of parental interest in his safety, and the other having particular reasons for wishing him to persevere in his intention to embark, instead of any justifiable cause in the character of the young proprietor himself. A sign to the boy who bore a portmanteau, settled the controversy; and then Mr. Van Staats intimated his readiness to move.

Cupid lingered on the stoop, until his master had turned a corner; then, shaking his head with all the misgivings of an ignorant and superstitious mind, he drove the young fry of blacks, who thronged the door, into the house, closing all after him with singular and scrupulous care. How far the presentiment of the black was warranted by the event, will be seen in the course of the narrative.

The wide avenue, in which Oloff Van Staats dwelt, was but a few hundred yards in length. It terminated, at one end, with the fortress; and at the other, it was crossed by a high stockade, which bore the name of the city walls; a defence that was provided against any sudden irruption of the Indians, who then hunted, and even dwelt in some numbers, in the lower counties of the colony.

It requires great familiarity with the growth of the town, to recognize, in this description, the noble street that now runs for a league through the centre of the island. From this avenue, which was then, as it is still, called the Broadway, our adventurers descended into a lower quarter of the town, holding free converse by the way.

"That Cupid is a negro to keep the roof on a house, in its master's absence, Patroon," observed the Alderman, soon after they had left the stoop. "He looks like a padlock, and one might sleep, without a dream, with such a guardian near his dwelling. I wish I had brought the honest fellow the key of my stable!"

"I have heard my father say, that the keys of his own were always better near his own pillow," coolly returned the proprietor of a hundred thousand acres.

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"Ah, the curse of Cain! It is needless to look for the fur of a marten on the back of a cat. But, Mr. Van Staats, while walking to your door this morning, it was my fortune to meet the late governor, who is permitted by his creditors to take the air, at an hour when he thinks the eyes of the impertinent will be shut. I believe, Patroon, you were so lucky as to get back your moneys, before the royal displeasure visited the man?"

"I was so lucky as never to trust him."

"That was better still, for it would have been a barren investment great jeopardy to principal, and no return. But we had discourse of various interests, and, among others, something was hazarded concerning your amatory pretensions to my niece."

"Neither the wishes of Oloff Van Staats, nor the inclinations of la belle Barbérie, are a subject for the Governor in Council," said the Patroon of Kinderhook, stiffly.

"Nor was it thus treated. The Viscount spoke me fair, and, had he not pushed the matter beyond discretion, we might have come to happier conclusions."

"I am glad that there was some restraint in the discourse."

"The man certainly exceeded reason, for he led the conference into personalities that no prudent man could relish. Still he said it was possible that the Coquette might yet be ordered for service among the islands!"

It has been said, that Oloff Van Staats was a fair personable young man of vast stature, and with much of the air of a gentleman of his country; for, though a British subject, he was rather a Hollander in feelings, habits, and opinions. He colored at the allusion to the presence of his known rival, though his companion was at a loss to discover whether pride or vexation was at the bottom of his emotion.

"If Captain Ludlow prefer a cruise in the Indies, to duty on this coast, I hope he may obtain his wish," was the cautious answer.

"Your liberal man enjoys a sounding name, and an empty coffer," observed the Alderman, drily. "To me it seems that a petition to the admiral to send so meritorious an officer on service where he may distinguish himself, should deserve his thanks. The free-booters are playing the devil's game with the sugar trade, and even the French are getting troublesome, further south."

"He has certainly the reputation of an active cruiser."

"Blixum and philosophy! If you wish to succeed with Alida, Patroon, you must put more briskness into the adventure. The girl has a cross of the Frenchman in her temper, and none of your deliberations and taciturnities will gain the day. This visit to the Lust in Rust is Cupid's own handywork, and I hope to see you both return to town as amicable as the Stadholder and the States General, after a sharp struggle for the year's subsidy has been settled by a compromise."

"The success of this suit is the affair nearest my " The young man paused as if surprised at his own communicativeness; and, taking advantage of the haste in which his toilette had been made, he thrust a hand into his vest, covering with its broad palm a portion of the human frame which poets do not describe as the seat of the passions.

"If you mean stomach, Sir, you will not have reason to be disappointed," retorted the Alderman, a little more severely than was usual with one so cautious. "The heiress of Myndert Van Beverout will not be a penniless bride, and Monsieur Barbérie did not close the books of life without taking good care of the balance-sheet but yonder

are those devils of ferrymen quitting the wharf without us! Scamper ahead, Brutus, and tell them to wait the legal minute. The rogues are never exact; sometimes starting before I am ready, and sometimes keeping me waiting in the sun, as if I were no better than a dried dunfish. Punctuality is the soul of business, and one of my habits does not like to be ahead, nor behind his time."

In this manner the worthy burgher, who would have been glad to regulate the movements of others, on all occasions, a good deal by his own, vented his complaints, while he and his companion hurried on to overtake the slow-moving boat in which they were to embark. A brief description of the scene will not be without interest, to a generation that may be termed modern in reference to the time of which we write.

A deep narrow creek penetrated the island, at this point, for the distance of a quarter of a mile. Each of its banks had a row of buildings, as the houses line a canal in the cities of Holland. As the natural course of the inlet was necessarily respected, the street had taken a curvature not unlike that of a new moon. The houses were ultra-Dutch, being low, angular, fastidiously neat, and all erected with their gables to the street. Each had its ugly and inconvenient entrance, termed a stoop, its vane or weather-cock, its dormer-windows, and its graduated battlement-walls. Near the apex of one of the latter, a little iron crane projected into the street. A small boat, of the same metal, swung from its end, a sign that the building to which it was appended was the ferry-house.

An inherent love of artificial and confined navigation had probably induced the burghers to select this spot, as the place whence so many craft departed from the town; since, it is certain, that the two rivers could have furnished divers points more favorable for such an object, inasmuch as they possess the advantage of wide and unobstructed channels.

Fifty blacks were already in the street, dipping their brooms into the creek, and flourishing water over the side-walks, and on the fronts of the low edifices. This light but daily duty was relieved by clamorous collisions of wit, and by shouts of merriment, in which the whole street would join, as with one joyous and reckless movement of the spirit.

The language of this light-hearted and noisy race was Dutch, already corrupted by English idioms, and occasionally by English words; a system of change that has probably given rise to an opinion, among some of the descendants of the earlier colonists, that the latter tongue is merely a patois of the former. This opinion, which so much resembles that certain well-read English scholars entertain of the plagiarisms of the continental writers, when they first begin to dip into their works, is not strictly true; since the language of England has probably bestowed as much on the dialect of which we speak, as it has ever received from the purer sources of the school of Holland. Here and there, a grave burgher, still in his night-cap, might be seen with a head thrust out of an upper window, listening to these barbarisms of speech, and taking note of all the merry jibes, that flew from mouth to mouth with an indomitable gravity, that no levity of those beneath could undermine.

As the movement of the ferry-boat was necessarily slow, the Alderman and his companion were enabled to step into it, before the fasts were thrown aboard. The periagua, as the craft was called, partook of a European and an American character. It possessed the length, narrowness, and clean bow, of the canoe, from which its name was derived, with the flat bottom and lee-boards of a boat constructed for the shallow waters of the Low Countries. Twenty years ago, vessels of this description abounded in our rivers; and even now, their two long and unsupported masts, and high narrow-headed sails, are daily seen bending like reeds to the breeze, and dancing lightly over the billows of the bay. There is a variety of the class, of a size and pretension altogether superior to that just mentioned, which deserves a place among the most picturesque and striking boats that float. He who has had occasion to navigate the southern shore of the Sound must have often seen the vessel to which we allude. It is distinguished by its great length, and masts which, naked of cordage, rise from the hull like two tall and faultless trees. When the eye runs over the daring height of canvas, the noble confidence of the rig, and sees the comparatively vast machine handled with ease and grace by the dexterity of two fearless and expert mariners, it excites some such admiration as that which springs from the view of a severe temple of antiquity. The nakedness

and simplicity of the construction, coupled with the boldness and rapidity of its movements, impart to the craft an air of grandeur, that its ordinary uses would not give reason to expect.

Though, in some respects, of singularly aquatic habits, the original colonists of New-York were far less adventurous, as mariners, than their present descendants. A passage across the bay did not often occur in the tranquil lives of the burghers; and it is still within the memory of man, that a voyage between the two principal towns of the State was an event to excite the solicitude of friends, and the anxiety of the traveller. The perils of the Tappaan Zee, as one of the wider reaches of the Hudson is still termed, was often dealt with by the good wives of the colony, in their relations of marvels; and she who had oftenest encountered them unharmed, was deemed a sort of marine amazon.

CHAPTER III.

"I have great comfort from this fellow: methinks he hath no drowning mark upon him; his complexion is perfect gallows."

It has been said that the periagua was in motion, before our two adventures succeeded in stepping on board. The arrival of the Patroon of Kinderhook and of Alderman Van Beverout was expected, and the schipper had taken his departure at the precise moment of the turn in the current, in order to show, with a sort of pretending independence which has a peculiar charm for men in his situation, that 'time and tide wait for no man.' Still there were limits to his decision; for, while he put the boat in motion, especial care was taken that the circumstance should not subject a customer so important and constant as the Alderman, to any serious inconvenience. When he and his friend had embarked, the painters were thrown aboard, and the crew of the ferry-boat began to set their vessel, in earnest, towards the mouth of the creek. During these movements, a young negro was seated in the bow of the periagua, with his legs dangling, one on each side of the cut-water, forming no bad apology for a figure-head. He held a conch to his mouth, and with his two glossy cheeks inflated like those of Eolus, and his dark glittering eyes expressing the delight he found in drawing sounds from the shell, he continued to give forth the signal for departure.

"Put up the conch, thou bawler!" cried the Alderman, giving the younker a rap on his naked poll, in passing, with the end of his cane, that might have disturbed the harmony of one less bent on clamor. "A thousand windy trumpeters would be silence itself, compared to such a pair of lungs! How now, Master Schipper, is this your punctuality, to start before your passengers are ready?"

The undisturbed boatman, without removing the pipe from his mouth, pointed to the bubbles on the water which were already floating outward, a certain evidence that the tide was on the ebb.

"I care nothing for your ins and outs, your ebbs and floods," returned the Alderman, in heat. "There is no better time-piece than the leg and eye of a punctual man. It is no more pleasant to go before one is ready, than to tarry when all business is done. Harkee, Master Schipper, you are not the only navigator in this bay, nor is your craft the swiftest that was ever launched. Have a care; though an acquiescing man by nature, I know how to encourage an opposition, when the public good seriously calls for my support."

To the attack on himself, the schipper was stoically indifferent, but to impeach the qualities of the periagua was to attack one who depended solely on his eloquence for vindication. Removing his pipe, therefore, he rejoined on the Alderman, with that sort of freedom, that the sturdy Hollanders never failed to use to all offenders, regardless alike of rank or personal qualities.

"Der wind-gall and Aldermen!" he growled, in the dialect of the country; "I should be glad to see the boat in York-bay that can show the Milk-Maid her stern! The Mayor and council-men had better order the tide to turn when they please; and then, as each man will think of his own pleasure, a pretty set of whirlpools they will give us in the harbor!"

The schipper, having delivered himself of his sentiments, to this effect, resumed his pipe, like a man who felt he deserved the meed of victory, whether he were to receive it, or not.

"It is useless to dispute with an obstinate man," muttered the Alderman, making his way through vegetable baskets, butter-tubs, and all the garniture of a market-boat, to the place occupied by his niece, in the stern-sheets. "Good morrow to thee, Alida dear; early rising will make a flower-garden of thy cheeks, and the fresh air of the Lust in Rust will give even thy roses a deeper bloom."

The mollified burgher then saluted the cheek, whose bloom had been deepened by his remark, with a warmth that showed he was not without natural affection; touched his hat, in return for a low bow that he received from an aged white man-servant, in a clean but ancient livery; and nodded to a young negress, whose second-hand finery sufficiently showed she was a personal attendant of the heiress.

A second glance at Alida de Barbérie was scarcely necessary to betray her mixed descent. From her Norman father, a Huguenot of the petite noblesse, she had inherited her raven hair, the large, brilliant, coal-black eyes, in which wildness was singularly relieved by sweetness, a classical and faultless profile, and a form which was both taller and more flexible than commonly fell to the lot of the damsels of Holland. From her mother, la belle Barbérie, as the maiden was often playfully termed, had received a skin, fair and spotless as the flower of France, and a bloom which rivalled the rich tints of an evening sky in her native land. Some of the *em bon point*, for which the sister of the Alderman had been a little remarkable, had descended also to her fairer daughter. In Alida, however, this peculiarity did not exceed the fullness which became her years, rounding her person and softening the outlines of her form, rather than diminishing its ease and grace. These personal advantages were embellished by a neat but modest travelling habit, a little beaver that was shaded by a cluster of drooping feathers, and a mien that, under the embarrassment of her situation, preserved the happiest medium between modesty and perfect self-possession.

When Alderman Van Beverout joined this fair creature, in whose future happiness he was fully justified in taking the deep interest which he has betrayed in some of the opening scenes of this volume, he found her engaged in a courteous discourse with the young man, who was generally considered as the one, among the numerous pretenders to her favor, who was most likely to succeed. Had other cause been wanting, this sight alone would have been sufficient to restore his good-humor; and, making a place for himself, by quietly dispossessing François, the domestic of his niece, the persevering burgher endeavored to encourage an intercourse, that he had reason to think must terminate in the result he both meditated and desired.

In the present effort, however, the Alderman failed. There is a feeling which universally pervades landmen and landwomen, when they first embark on an element to which they are strangers, that ordinarily shuts their mouths and renders them meditative. In the older and more observant travellers, it is observation and comparison; while with the younger and more susceptible, it is very apt to take the character of sentiment. Without stopping to analyze the cause, or the consequences, in the instance of the Patroon and la belle Barbérie, it will be sufficient to state, that in spite of all the efforts of the worthy burgher, who had navigated the sluggish creek too often to be the subject of any new emotions, his youthful companions gradually grew silent and thoughtful. Though a celibite in his own person, Myndert had not now to learn that the infant god as often does his mischief through this quiet agency, as in any other manner. He became, therefore, mute in his turn, watching the slow movement of the periagua with as much assiduity as if he saw his own image on the water.

A quarter of an hour of this characteristic, and it is to be inferred agreeable navigation, brought the boat to the mouth of the inlet. Here a powerful effort forced her into the tide's-way, and she might be said to put forth on her voyage. But while the black crew were trimming the sails, and making the other necessary preparations for departure, a voice was heard hailing them from the shore, with an order, rather than a request, that they would stay their movements.

"Hilloa, the periagua!" it cried. "Haul over your head-sheet, and jam the tiller down into the lap of that comfortable-looking old gentleman. Come; bear a hand, my hummers! or your race-horse of a craft will get the bit into its mouth, and run away with you."

This summons produced a pause in the movements of the crew. After regarding each other, in surprise and admiration, the watermen drew the head-sheet over, put the helm a-lee, without however invading the lap of the Alderman, and the boat became stationary, at the distance of a few rods from the shore. While the new passenger was preparing to come off in a yawl, those who awaited his movements had leisure to examine his appearance, and to form their different surmises concerning his character.

It is scarcely necessary to say, that the stranger was a son of the ocean. He was of a firmly knit and active frame, standing exactly six feet in his stockings. The shoulders though square were compact, the chest full and high, the limbs round, neat, and muscular, the whole indicating a form in which strength and activity were apportioned with the greatest accuracy. A small bullet head was set firmly on its broad foundation, and it was thickly covered with a mass of brown hair that was already a little grizzled. The face was that of a man of thirty, and it was worthy of the frame, being manly, bold, decided, and rather handsome; though it expressed little more than high daring, perfect coolness, some obstinacy, and a certain degree of contempt for others, that its owner did not always take the trouble to conceal. The color was a rich, deep, and uniform red, such as much exposure is apt to give to men whose complexions are, by nature, light and florid.

The dress of the stranger was quite as remarkable as his person. He wore a short pea-jacket, cut tight and tastefully; a little, low, and rakish cap, and full bell-mouthed trowsers, all in a spotlessly white duck; a material well adapted to the season and the climate. The first was made without buttons, affording an apology for the use of a rich Indian shawl, that belted his body and kept the garment tight to his frame. Faultlessly clean linen appeared through the opening above, and a collar, of the same material, fell over the gay bandanna, which was thrown, with a single careless turn, around his throat. The latter was a manufacture then little known in Europe, and its use was almost entirely confined to seamen of the long voyage. One of its ends was suffered to blow about in the wind, but the other was brought down with care over the chest, where it was confined, by springing the blade of a small knife with an ivory handle, in a manner to confine the silk to the linen; a sort of breast-pin that is even now much used by mariners. If we add, that light, canvas slippers, with foul-anchors worked in worsted upon their insteps, covered his feet, we shall say all that is necessary of his attire.

The appearance of one, of the air and dress we have just described, excited a strong sensation among the blacks who scrubbed the stoops and pavements. He was closely attended to the place where he hailed the periagua, by four or five loungers, who studied his manner and movements with the admiration that men of their class seldom fail to bestow on those who bear about them the evidence of having passed lives of adventure, and perhaps of hardship and daring. Beckoning to one of these idlers to follow him, the hero of the India-shawl stepped into an empty boat, and casting loose its fast, he sculled the light yawl towards the craft which was awaiting his arrival. There was, in truth, something in the reckless air, the decision, and the manly attitudes of so fine a specimen of a seaman, that might have attracted notice from those who were more practised in the world than the little crowd of admirers he left behind him. With an easy play of wrist and elbow, he caused the yawl to glide ahead like some indolent marine animal swimming through its element, and as he stood, firm as a planted statue, with a foot on each gunwale, there was much of that confidence created by his steadiness, that one acquires by viewing the repeated and successful efforts of a skilful rope-dancer. When the yawl reached the side of the periagua, he dropped a small Spanish coin into the open palm of the negro, and sprang on the side of the latter, with an

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exertion of muscle that sent the little boat he quitted half-way back towards the shore, leaving the frightened black to steady himself, in his rocking tenement, in the best manner he could.

The tread and posture of the stranger, when he gained the half-deck of the periagua, was finely nautical, and confident to audacity. He seemed to analyze the half-maritime character of the crew and passengers, at a glance, and to feel that sort of superiority over his companions, which men of his profession were then a little too wont to entertain towards those whose ambition could be bounded by terra-firma. His eye turned upward, at the simpler and modest sails of the periagua, while his upper lip curled with the knowing expression of a critic. Then kicking the fore-sheet clear of its cleet, and suffering the sail to fill, he stepped from one butter-tub to another, making a stepping-stone of the lap of a countryman by the way, and alighted in the stern-sheets in the midst of the party of Alderman Van Beverout, with the agility and fearlessness of a feathered Mercury. With a coolness that did infinite credit to his powers for commanding, his next act was to dispossess the amazed schipper of the helm, taking the tiller into his own hands, with as much composure as if he were the every-day occupant of the post. When he saw that the boat was beginning to move through the water, he found leisure to bestow some observation on his fellow-voyagers. The first that met his bold and reckless eye was Francois, the domestic of Alida.

"If it come to blow in squalls, Commodore," observed the intruder, with a gravity that half deceived the attentive Frenchman, while he pointed to the bag in which the latter wore his hair, "you'll be troubled to carry your broad pennant. But so experienced an officer has not put to sea without having a storm-cue in readiness for foul weather."

The valet did not, or affected not to understand the allusion, maintaining an air of dignified but silent superiority.

"The gentleman is in a foreign service, and does not understand an English mariner! The worst that can come, after all, of too much top-hamper, is to cut away, and let it drift with the scud. May I make bold to ask, judge, if the courts have done any thing, of late, concerning the freebooters among the islands?"

"I have not the honor to bear Her Majesty's commission," coldly returned Van Staats of Kinderhook, to whom this question had been hardily put.

"The best navigator is sometimes puzzled by a hazy observation, and many an old seaman has taken a fog-bank for solid ground. Since you are not in the courts, Sir, I wish you joy; for it is running among shoals to be cruising there, whether as judge or suitor. One is never fairly snug and land-locked, while in company of a lawyer, and yet the devil himself cannot always give the sharks a good offing. A pretty sheet of water, friends, and one as snug as rotten cables and foul winds can render desirable, is this bay of York!"

"You are a mariner of the long voyage," returned the Patroon, unwilling that Alida should not believe him equal to bandying wits with the stranger.

"Long, or short; Calcutta, or Cape Cod; dead reckoning, eye-sight, or star-gazing, all's one to your real dolphin. The shape of the coast between Fundy and Horn, is as familiar to my eye, as an admirer to this pretty young lady; and as to the other shore, I have run it down oftener than the Commodore, here, has ever set his pennant, blow high or blow low. A cruise like this is a Sunday in my navigation; though I dare say, you took leave of the wife, blessed the children, overhauled the will, and sent to ask a good word from the priest, before you came aboard?"

"Had these ceremonies been observed, the danger would not have been increased," said the young Patroon, anxious to steal a glance at la belle Barbérie, though his timidity caused him, in truth, to look the other way. "One is never nearer danger, for being prepared to meet it."

"True; we must all die, when the reckoning is out. Hang or drown gibbet or bullet clears the world of a great deal of rubbish, or the decks would get to be so littered that the vessel could not be worked. The last cruise is the

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longest of all; and honest papers, with a clean bill of health, may help a man into port, when he is past keeping the open sea. How now, schipper! what lies are floating about the docks this morning? when did the last Albanyman get his tub down the river, or whose gelding has been ridden to death in chase of a witch."

"The devil's babes!" muttered the Alderman; "there is no want of roisterers to torment such innocents!"

"Have the buccaneers taken to praying, or does their trade thrive in this heel of the war?" continued the mariner of the India-shawl, disregarding the complaint of the burgher. "The times are getting heavy for men of metal, as may be seen by the manner in which you cruiser wears out her ground-tackle, instead of trying the open sea. May I spring every spar I carry, but I would have the boat out and give her an airing, before to-morrow, if the Queen would condescend to put your humble servant in charge of the craft! The man lies there, at his anchors, as if he had a good freight of real Hollands in his hold, and was waiting for a few bales of beaver-skins to barter for his strong waters."

As the stranger coolly expressed this opinion of Her Majesty's ship Coquette, he rolled his glance over the persons of his companions, suffering it to rest, a moment, with a secret significance, on the steady eye of the burgher.

"Well " he continued, "the sloop answers for a floating vane to tell which way the tide is running, if she does nothing better; and that must be a great assistance, Schipper, in the navigation of one who keeps as bright a look-out on the manner in which the world whirls round, as a gentleman of your sagacity!"

"If the news in the creek be true," rejoined the unoffended owner of the periagua, "there will be other business for Captain Ludlow and the Coquette, before many days!"

"Ah! having eaten all his meat and bread, the man will be obliged to victual his ship anew! 'Twere a pity so active a gentleman should keep a fast, in a brisk tide's-way. And when his coppers are once more filled, and the dinner is fairly eaten, what dost think will be his next duty?"

"There is a report, among the boatmen of the South Bay, that something was seen, yester'night, off the outer side of Long Island!"

"I'll answer for the truth of that rumor, for having come up with the evening flood, I saw it myself."

"Der duyvel's luck! and what dost take it to be?"

"The Atlantic Ocean; if you doubt my word, I appeal to this well-ballasted old gentleman, who, being a schoolmaster, is able to give you latitude and longitude for its truth."

"I am Alderman Van Beverout," muttered the object of this new attack, between his teeth, though apparently but half-disposed to notice one who set so little bounds to his discourse.

"I beg a thousand pardons!" returned the strange seaman, with a grave inclination of his body. "The stolidity of your worship's countenance deceived me. It may be, indeed, unreasonable to expect any Alderman to know the position of the Atlantic Ocean! And yet, gentlemen, on the honor of a man who has seen much salt water in his time, I do assure you the sea, I speak of, is actually there. If there be any thing on it, or in it, that should not in reason be so, this worthy commander of the periagua will let us know the rest."

"A wood-boat from the inlet says, the 'Skimmer of the Seas' was lately seen standing along the coast," returned the ferry-man, in the tone of one who is certain of delivering matter of general interest.

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"Your true sea-dog, who runs in and out of inlets, is a man for marvels!" coolly observed the stranger. "They know the color of the sea at night, and are for ever steering in the wind's eye in search of adventures. I wonder, more of them are not kept at making almanacs! There was a mistake, concerning a thunder-storm, in the last I bought, and all for the want of proper science. And pray, friend, who is this 'Skimmer of the Seas,' that is said to be running after his needle, like a tailor who has found a hole in his neighbor's coat?"

"The witches may tell! I only know that such a rover there is, and that he is here to-day, and there to-morrow. Some say, it is only a craft of mist, that skims the top of the seas, like a sailing water-fowl; and others think it is the sprite of a vessel that was rifled and burnt by Kidd, in the Indian Ocean, looking for its gold and the killed. I saw him once, myself, but the distance was so great, and his manœuvres so unnatural, that I could hardly give a good account of his hull, or rig."

"This is matter that don't get into the log every watch! Whereaway, or in what seas, didst meet the thing?"

"'Twas off the Branch. We were fishing in thick weather, and when the mist lifted, a little, there was a craft seen standing in-shore, running like a race-horse; but while we got our anchor, she had made a league of offing, on the other tack!"

"A certain proof of either her, or your, activity! But what might have been the form and shape of your fly-away?"

"Nothing determined. To one she seemed a full-rigged and booming ship; another took her for a Bermudian scudder, while to me she had the look of twenty periaguas built into a single craft. It is well known, however, that a West-Indiaman went to sea that night, and, though it is now three years, no tidings of her, or her crew, have ever come to any in York. I have never gone upon the banks to fish, since that day, in thick weather."

"You have done well," observed the stranger. "I have seen many wonderful sights, myself, on the rolling ocean; and he, whose business it is to lay between wind and water, like you, my friend, should never trust himself within reach of one of those devil's flyers. I could tell you a tale of an affair in the calm latitudes, under the burning sun, that would be a lesson to all of over-bold curiosity! Commission and character are not affairs for your in-shore coaster."

"We have time to hear it," observed the Patroon, whose attention had been excited by the discourse, and who read in the dark eye of Alida that she felt an interest in the expected narrative.

But the countenance of the stranger suddenly grew serious. He shook his head, like one who had sufficient reasons for his silence; and, relinquishing the tiller, he quite coolly obliged a gaping countryman, in the centre of the boat, to yield his place, where he laid his own athletic form, at full length, folded his arms on his breast, and shut his eyes. In less than five minutes, all within hearing had audible evidence that this extraordinary son of the ocean was in a sound sleep.

CHAPTER IV.

"Be patient, for the prize I'll bring thee to,

Shall hoodwink this mischance."

Tempest

The air, audacity, and language of the unknown mariner, had produced a marked sensation among the passengers of the periagua. It was plain, by the playfulness that lurked about the coal-black eye of la belle Barbérie, that she

had been amused by his sarcasms, though the boldness of his manner had caused her to maintain the reserve which she believed necessary to her sex and condition. The Patroon studied the countenance of his mistress, and, though half offended by the freedom of the intruder, he had believed it wisest to tolerate his liberties, as the natural excesses of a spirit that had been lately released from the monotony of a sea-life. The repose which usually reigned in the countenance of the Alderman had been a little troubled; but he succeeded in concealing his discontent from any impertinent observation. When the chief actor in the foregoing scene, therefore, saw fit to withdraw, the usual tranquillity was restored, and his presence appeared to be forgotten.

An ebbing tide and a freshening breeze quickly carried the periagua past the smaller islands of the bay, and brought the cruiser called the Coquette more distinctly into view. This vessel, a ship of twenty guns, lay abreast of the hamlet on the shores of Staten Island, which was the destination of the ferry-boat. Here was the usual anchorage of outward-bound ships, which awaited a change of wind; and it was here, that vessels then, as in our times, were subject to those examinations and delays which are imposed for the safety of the inhabitants of the city. The Coquette was alone, however; for the arrival of a trader, from a distant port, was an event of unfrequent occurrence, at the commencement of the eighteenth century.

The course of the periagua brought her within fifty feet of the sloop-of-war. As the former approached, a movement of curiosity and interest occurred among those she contained.

"Take more room for your milk-maid," grumbled the Alderman, observing that the schipper was willing to gratify his passengers, by running as near as possible to the dark sides of the cruiser. "Seas and oceans! is not York-bay wide enough, that you must brush the dust out of the muzzles of the guns of yon lazy ship? If the Queen knew how her money was eaten and drunk, by the idle knaves aboard her, she would send them all to hunt for freebooters among the islands. Look at the land, Alida, child, and you'll think no more of the fright the gaping dunce is giving thee; he only wishes to show his skill in steering."

But the niece manifested none of the terror that the uncle was willing to ascribe to her fears. Instead of turning pale, the color deepened on her cheeks, as the periagua came dancing along, under the lee of the cruiser; and if her respiration became quicker than usual, it was scarcely produced by the agitation of alarm. The near sight of the tall masts, and of the maze of cordage that hung nearly above their heads, however, prevented the change from being noted. A hundred curious eyes were already peeping at them, through the ports, or over the bulwarks of the ship, when suddenly, an officer, who wore the undress of a naval captain of that day, sprang into the main rigging of the cruiser, and saluted the party in the periagua, by waving his hat, hurriedly, like one who was agreeably taken by surprise.

"A fair sky and gentle breezes to each and all!" he cried with the hearty manner of a seaman. "Ikiss my hand to the fair Alida; and the Alderman will take a sailor's good wishes; Mr. Van Staats, I salute you."

"Ay," muttered the burgher, "your idlers have nothing better to do, than to make words answer for deeds. A lazy war and a distant enemy make you seamen the lords of the land, Captain Ludlow."

Alida blushed still deeper, hesitated, and then, by a movement that was half involuntary, she waved her handkerchief. The young Patroon arose, and answered the salutation by a courteous bow. By this time the ferry-boat was nearly past the ship, and the scowl was quitting the face of the Alderman, when the mariner of the India-shawl sprang to his feet, and, in a moment, he stood again in the centre of their party.

"A pretty sea-boat, and a neat show aloft!" he said, as his understanding eye scanned the rigging of the royal cruiser, taking the tiller at the same time, with all his former indifference, from the hands of the schipper. "Her Majesty should have good service from such a racer, and no doubt the youth in her rigging is a man to get most out of his craft. We'll take another observation. Draw away your head-sheet, boy."

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The stranger had put the helm a-lee, while speaking, and by the time the order he had given was uttered, the quick-working boat was about, and nearly filled on the other tack. In another minute, she was again brushing along the side of the sloop-of-war. A common complaint against this hardy interference with the regular duty of the boat, was about to break out of the lips of the Alderman and the schipper, when he of the India-shawl lifted his cap, and addressed the officer in the rigging, with all the self-possession he had manifested in the intercourse with those nearer his person.

"Has Her Majesty need of a man in her service, who has seen, in his time, more blue water than hard ground; or is there no empty berth in so gallant a cruiser, for one who must do a seaman's duty, or starve?"

The descendant of the king-hating Ludlows, as the Lord Cornbury had styled the race of the commander of the Coquette, was quite as much surprised by the appearance of him who put this question, as he was by the coolness with which a mariner of ordinary condition presumed to address an officer who bore so high a commission as his own. He had, however, sufficient time to recollect in whose presence he stood, ere he replied, for the stranger had again placed the helm a-lee, and caused the foresail to be thrown aback; a change that made the periagua stationary.

"The Queen will always receive a bold mariner in her pay, if he come prepared to serve with skill and fidelity," he said; "as a proof of which, let a rope be thrown the periagua; we shall treat more at our ease under Her Majesty's pennant. I shall be proud to entertain Alderman Van Beverout, in the mean time: and a cutter will always be at his command, when he shall have occasion to quit us."

"Your land-loving Aldermen find their way from a Queen's cruiser to the shore, more easily than a seaman of twenty years' experience;" returned the other, without giving the burgher time to express his thanks for the polite offer of the other. "You have gone through the Gibraltar passage, without doubt, noble captain, being a gentleman that has got so fine a boat under his orders?"

"Duty has taken me into the Italian seas, more than once," answered Ludlow, half disposed to resent this familiarity, though too anxious to keep the periagua near, to quarrel with him who so evidently had produced the unexpected pleasure.

"Then you know that, though a lady might fan a ship through the straits eastward, it needs a Levant breeze to bring her out again. Her Majesty's pennants are long, and when they get foul around the limbs of a thoroughly-bred sea-dog, it passes all his art to clear the jam. It is most worthy of remark, that the better the seaman, the less his power to cast loose the knot!"

"If the pennant be so long, it may reach farther than you wish! But a bold volunteer has no occasion to dread a press."

"I fear the berth I wish is filled," returned the other, curling his lip: "let draw the fore-sheet, lad; we will take our departure, leaving the fly of the pennant well under our lee. Adieu, brave Captain; when you have need of a thorough rover, and dream of stern-chases and wet sails, think of him who visited your ship at her lazy moorings."

Ludlow bit his lip, and though his fine face reddened to the temples, he met the arch glance of Alida, and laughed. But he who had so hardily braved the resentment of a man, powerful as the commander of a royal cruiser in a British colony, appeared to understand the hazard of his situation. The periagua whirled round on her heel, and the next minute it was bending to the breeze, and dashing through the little waves towards the shore. Three boats left the cruiser at the same moment. One, which evidently contained her captain, advanced with the usual dignified movement of a barge landing an officer of rank, but the others were urged ahead with all the earnestness of a hot chase.

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"Unless disposed to serve the Queen, you have not done well, my friend, to brave one of her commanders at the muzzles of his guns," observed the Patroon, so soon as the state of the case became too evident to doubt of the intentions of the man-of-war's men.

"That Captain Ludlow would gladly take some of us out of this boat, by fair means or by foul, is a fact clear as a bright star in a cloudless night; and, well knowing a seaman's duty to his superiors, I shall leave him to his choice."

"In which case you will shortly eat Her Majesty's bread," pithily returned the Alderman.

"The food is unpalatable, and I reject it and yet here is a boat, whose crew seem determined to make one swallow worse fare."

The unknown mariner ceased speaking, for the situation of the periagua, was truly getting to be a little critical. At least so it seemed to the less-instructed landsmen, who were witnesses of this unexpected rencontre. As the ferry-boat had drawn in with the island, the wind hauled more through the pass which communicates with the outer bay, and it became necessary to heave about, twice, in order to fetch to windward of the usual landing-place. The first of these manœuvres had been executed, and as it necessarily changed their course, the passengers saw that the cutter to which the stranger alluded was enabled to get within-shore of them; or nearer to the wharf, where they ought to land, than they were themselves. Instead of suffering himself to be led off by a pursuit, that he knew might easily be rendered useless, the officer who commanded this boat cheered his men, and pulled swiftly to the point of debarkation. On the other hand, a second cutter, which had already reached the line of the periagua's course, lay on its oars, and awaited its approach. The unknown mariner manifested no intention to avoid the interview. He still held the tiller, and as effectually commanded the little vessel as if his authority were of a more regular character. The audacity and decision of his air and conduct, aided by the consummate manner in which he worked the boat, might alone have achieved this momentary usurpation, had not the general feeling against impressment been so much in his favor.

"The devil's fangs!" grumbled the schipper. "If you should keep the Milk-Maid away, we shall lose a little in distance, though I think the man-of-war's men will be puzzled to catch her, with a flowing sheet!"

"The Queen has sent a message by the gentleman," the mariner rejoined: "it would be unmannerly to refuse to hear it."

"Heave-to, the periagua!" shouted the young officer, in the cutter. "In Her Majesty's name, I command you, obey."

"God bless the royal lady!" returned he of the foul anchors and gay shawl, while the swift ferry-boat continued to dash ahead. "We owe her duty, and are glad to see so proper a gentleman employed in her behalf."

By this time the boats were fifty feet asunder. No sooner was there room, than the periagua once more flew round, and commenced anew its course, dashing in again towards the shore. It was necessary, however, to venture within an oar's-length of the cutter, or to keep away, a loss of ground to which he who controlled her movements showed no disposition to submit. The officer arose, and, as the periagua drew near, it was evident his hand held a pistol, though he seemed reluctant to exhibit the weapon. The mariner stepped aside, in a manner to offer a full view of all in his group, as he sarcastically observed

"Choose your object, Sir; in such a party, a man of sentiment may have a preference."

The young man colored, as much with shame at the degrading duty he had been commissioned to perform, as with vexation at his failure. Recovering his self-composure, however, he lifted his hat to la belle Barbérie, and the

periagua dashed on, in triumph. Still the leading cutter was near the shore, where it soon arrived, the crew lying on their oars at the end of the wharf, in evident expectation of the arrival of the ferry-boat. At this sight, the schipper shook his head, and looked up in the bold face of his passenger, in a manner to betray how much his mind misgave the result. But the tall mariner maintained his coolness, and began to make merry allusions to the service which he had braved with so much temerity, and from which no one believed he was yet likely to escape. By the former manœuvres, the periagua had gained a position well to windward of the wharf; and she was now steered close upon the wind, directly for the shore. Against the consequences of a perseverance in this course, however, the schipper saw fit to remonstrate.

"Shipwrecks and rocky bottoms!" exclaimed the alarmed waterman. "A Holland galliot would go to pieces, if you should run her in among those stepping-stones, with this breeze! No honest boatman loves to see a man stowed in a cruiser's hold, like a thief caged in his prison; but when it comes to breaking the nose of the Milk-Maid, it is asking too much of her owner, to stand by and look on."

"There shall not be a dimple of her lovely countenance deranged," answered his cool passenger. "Now, lower away your sails, and we'll run along the shore, down to yon wharf. 'Twould be an ungallant act to treat the dairy-girl with so little ceremony, gentlemen, after the lively foot and quick evolutions she has shown in our behalf. The best dancer in the island could not have better played her part, though jigging under the music of a three-stringed fiddle!"

By this time the sails were lowered, and the periagua was gliding down towards the place of landing, running always at the distance of some fifty feet from the shore.

"Every craft has its allotted time, like a mortal," continued the inexplicable mariner of the India-shawl. "If she is to die a sudden death, there is your beam-end and stern-way, which takes her into the grave without funeral service, or parish prayers; your dropsy is being water-logged; gout and rheumatism kill like a broken back and loose joints; indigestion is a shifting cargo, with guns adrift; the gallows is a bottomry-bond, with lawyers' fees; while fire, drowning, death by religious melancholy, and suicide, are a careless gunner, sunken rocks, false lights, and a lubberly captain."

Ere any were apprized of his intention, this singular being then sprang from the boat on the cap of a little rock, over which the waves were washing, whence he bounded, from stone to stone, by vigorous efforts, till he fairly leaped to land. In another minute, he was lost to view, among the dwellings of the hamlet.

The arrival of the periagua, which immediately after reached the wharf, the disappointment of the cutter's crew, and the return of both the boats to their ship, succeeded as matters of course.

CHAPTER V.

Oliv.

"Did he write this?"

Clo.

"Ay, Madam."

What you will

If we say that Alida de Barbérie did not cast a glance behind her, as the party quitted the wharf, in order to see

whether the boat that contained the commander of the cruiser followed the example of the others, we shall probably portray the maiden as one that was less subject to the influence of coquetry than the truth would justify. To the great discontent of the Alderman, whatever might have been the feelings of his niece, on the occasion, the barge continued to approach the shore, in a manner which showed that the young seaman betrayed no visible interest in the result of the chase.

The heights of Stanten Island, a century ago, were covered, much as they are at present, with a growth of dwarf-trees. Foot-paths led among this meagre vegetation, in divers directions; and as the hamlet at the Quarantine-Ground was the point whence they all diverged, it required a practised guide to thread their mazes, without a loss of both time and distance. It would seem, however, that the worthy burgher was fully equal to the office; for, moving with more than his usual agility, he soon led his companions into the wood, and, by frequently altering his course, so completely confounded their sense of the relative bearings of places, that it is not probable one of them all could very readily have extricated himself from the labyrinth.

"Clouds and shady bowers!" exclaimed Myndert, when he had achieved, to his own satisfaction, this evasion of the pursuit he wished to avoid; "little oaks and green pines are pleasant on a June morning. You shall have mountain air and a sea-breeze, Patroon, to quicken the appetite at the Lust in Rust. If Alida will speak, the girl can say that a mouthful of the elixir is better for a rosy cheek, than all the concoctions and washes that were ever invented to give a man a heart-ache."

"If the place be as much changed as the road that leads to it," returned la belle Barbérie, glancing her dark eye, in vain, in the direction of the bay they had quitted, "I should scarcely venture an opinion on a subject of which I am obliged to confess utter ignorance."

"Ah, woman is nought but vanities! To see and to be seen, is the delight of the sex. Though we are a thousand times more comfortable in this wood than we should be in walking along the water-side, why, the sea-gulls and snipes lose the benefit of our company! The salt water, and all who live on it, are to be avoided by a wise man, Mr. Van Staats, except as they both serve to cheapen freight and to render trade brisk. You'll thank me for this care, niece of mine, when you reach the bluff, cool as a package of furs free from moth, and fresh and beautiful as a Holland tulip, with the dew on it."

"To resemble the latter, one might consent to walk blindfold, dearest uncle; and so we dismiss the subject. Francois, fais moi le plaisir de porter ce petit livre; malgré la fraîcheur de la forêt, j'ai besoin de m' évanter."

The valet took the book, with an empressement that defeated the more tardy politeness of the Patroon; and when he saw, by the vexed eye and flushed cheek of his young mistress, that she was incommoded rather by an internal than by the external heat, he whispered considerably,

"Que ma chère Mademoiselle Alide ne se fâche pas! Elle ne manquerait jamais d'admirateurs, dansun désrt. Ah! si Mam'selle allait voir la patrie de ses ancêtres! "

"Merci bien, mon cher; gardez les feuilles, fortement fermées. Il y a des papiers dedans."

"Monsieur Francois," said the Alderman, separating his niece, with little ceremony, from her nearly parental attendant, by the interposition of his own bulky person, and motioning for the others to proceed, "a word with thee in confidence. I have noted, in the course of a busy and I hope a profitable life, that a faithful servant is an honest counsellor. Next to Holland and England, both of which are great commercial nations, and the Indies, which are necessary to these colonies, together with a natural preference for the land in which I was born, I have always been of opinion, that France is a very good sort of a country. I think, Mr. Francis, that dislike to the seas has kept you from returning thither, since the decease of my late brother-in-law?"

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"Wid like for Mam'selle Alide, Monsieur, avec votre permission."

"Your affection for my niece, honest Francois, is not to be doubted. It is as certain as the payment of a good draft, by Crommeline, Van Stopper, and Van Gelt, of Amsterdam. Ah! old valet! she is fresh and blooming as a rose, and a girl of excellent qualities! 'Tis a pity that she is a little opinionated; a defect that she doubtless inherits from her Norman ancestors; since all of my family have ever been remarkable for listening to reason. The Normans were an obstinate race, as witness the siege of Rochelle, by which oversight real estate in that city must have lost much in value!"

"Mille excuses, Monsieur Bevre' ; more beautiful as de rose, and no opinâtre du tout. Mon Dieu! pour sa qualité, c' est une famille tres ancienne."

"That was weak point with my brother Barbérie, and, after all, it did not add a cipher to the sum-total of the assets. The best blood, Mr. Francois, is that which has been best fed. The line of Hugh Capet himself would fail, without the butcher; and the butcher would certainly fail, without customers that can pay. François, thou art a man who understands the value of a sure footing in the world; would it not be a thousand pities, that such a girl as Alida should throw herself away on one whose best foundation is no better than a rolling ship?"

"Certainement, Monsieur; Mam'selle be too good to roll in de ship."

"Obliged to follow a husband, up and down; among freebooters and dishonest traders; in fair weather and foul; hot and cold; wet and dry; bilge-water and salt-water; cramps and nausea; salt-junk and no junk; gales and calms, and all for a hasty judgment formed in sanguine youth."

The face of the valet had responded to the Alderman's enumeration of the evils that would attend so ill-judged a step in his niece, as faithfully as if each muscle had been a mirror, to reflect the contortions of one suffering under the malady of the sea.

"Parbleu, c' est horrible cette mer!" he ejaculated, when the other had done. "It is grand malheur, dere should be watair but for drink, and for la propreté, avec fosse to keep de carp round le château. Mais, Mam'selle be no haste judgement, and she shall have mari on la terre solide."

"'Twould be better, that the estate of my brother-in-law should be kept in sight, judicious Francois, than to be sent adrift on the high seas."

"Dere vas marin dans la famille de Barbérie, nevair."

"Bonds and balances! if the savings of one I could name, frugal François, were added in current coin, the sum-total would sink a common ship. You know it is my intention to remember Alida, in settling accounts with the world."

"If Monsieur de Barbérie vas 'live, Monsieur Alderman, he should say des choses convenables; mais, malheureusement, mon chère, maitre est mort; and, sair, I shall be bold to remercier pour lui, et pour toute sa famille."

"Women are perverse, and sometimes they have pleasure in doing the very thing they are desired not to do."

"Ma foi, oui!"

"Prudent men should manage them with soft words and rich gifts; with these, they become orderly as a pair of well-broke geldings."

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"Monsieur know," said the old valet, rubbing his hands, and laughing with the subdued voice of a well-bred domestic, though he could not conceal a jocular wink; "pourtant il est garçon! Le cadeau be good for de demoiselles, and bettair as for de dames."

"Wedlock and blinkers! it is we gâssons, as you call us, who ought to know. Your hen-pecked husband has no time to generalize among the sex, in order to understand the real quality of the article. Now, here is Van Staats of Kinderhook, faithful François; what think you of such a youth for a husband for Alida?"

"Pourtant, Mam'selle like de vivacité; Monsieur le Patroon be nevair trop vif."

"The more likely to be sure Hist, I hear a footstep. We are followed chased, perhaps, I should say, to speak in the language of these sea-gentry. Now is the time to show this Captain Ludlow, how a Frenchman can wind him round his finger, on terra-firma. Loiter in the rear, and draw our navigator on a wrong course. When he has run into a fog, come yourself, with all speed, to the oak on the bluff. There we shall await you."

Flattered by this confidence, and really persuaded that he was furthering the happiness of her heserved, the old valet nodded, in reply to the Alderman's wink and chuckle, and immediately relaxed his speed. The former pushed ahead; and, in a minute, he and those who followed had turned short to the left, and were out of sight.

Though faithfully and even affectionately attached to Alida, her servant had many of the qualifications of an European domestic. Trained in all the ruses of his profession, he was of that school which believes civilization is to be measured by artifice; and success lost some of its value, when it had been effected by the vulgar machinery of truth and common sense. No wonder then the retainer entered into the views of the Alderman, with more than a usual relish for the duty. He heard the cracking of the dried twigs beneath the footstep of him who followed; and in order that there might be no chance of missing the desired interview, the valet began to hum a French air, in so loud a key, as to be certain the sounds would reach any ear that was nigh. The twigs snapped more rapidly, the footsteps seemed nearer, and then the hero of the India-shawl sprang to the side of the expecting François.

The disappointment seemed mutual, and on the part of the domestic it entirely disconcerted all his pre-arranged schemes for misleading the commander of the Coquette. Not so with the bold mariner. So far from his self-possession being disturbed, it would have been no easy matter to restrain his audacity, even in situations far more trying than any in which he has yet been presented to the reader.

"What cheer, in thy woodland cruise, Monsieur Broad-Pennant?" he said, with infinite coolness, the instant his steady glance had ascertained they were alone. "This is safer navigation for an officer of thy draught of water, than running about the bay, in a periagua. What may be the longitude, and where-a-way did you part company from the consorts?"

"Sair, I valk in de vood for de plaisir, and I go on de bay for de parbleu, non! 'tis to follow ma jeune maitresse I go on de bay; and, sair, I wish dey who do love de bay and de sea, would not come into de vood, du tout."

"Well spoken, and with ample spirit; what, a student too! one in a wood should glean something from his labors. Is it the art of furling a main cue, that is taught in this pretty volume?"

As the mariner put his question, he very deliberately took the book from François, who, instead of resenting the liberty, rather offered the volume, in exultation.

"No, sair, it is not how to furl la queue, but how to touch de soul; not de art to haul over de calm, but oui, c'est plein de connoissance et d'esprit! Ah! ha! you know de Cid! le grand homme! l'homme de génie! If you read, Monsieur Marin, you shall see la vraie poésie! Not de big book and no single rhyme Sair, I do not vish to say vat is pénible, mais it is not one book widout rhyme; it was not écrit on de sea. Le diable! que le vrai génie, et les

nobles sentiments, se trouvent dans ce livre, la!"

"Ay, I see it is a log-book, for every man to note his mind in. I return you Master Cid, with his fine sentiments, in the bargain. Great as was his genius, it would seem he was not the man to write all that I find between the leaves."

"He not write him all! Yes, sair, he shall write him six time more dan all, if la France a besoin. Que l'envie de ces Anglais se découvre quand on parle des beaux génies de la France!"

"I will only say, if the gentleman wrote the whole that is in the book, and it is as fine as you would make a plain seafaring man believe, he did wrong not to print it."

"Print!" echoed François, opening his eyes, and the volume, by a common impulse. "Imprimé! ha! here is papier of Mam'selle Alide, assurément."

"Take better heed of it then," interrupted the seaman of the shawl. "As for your Cid, to me it is an useless volume, since it teaches neither the latitude of a shoal, nor the shape of a coast."

"Sair, it teach de morale; de rock of de passion, et les grands mouvements de l'ame! Oui, Sair; it teach all, un Monsieur vish to know. Tout le monde read him in la France; en province, comme en ville. If sa Majesté, le Grand Louis, be not so mal avisé, as to chasser Messieurs les Huguenots from his royaume, I shall go to Paris, to hear le Cid, moi-même!"

"A good journey to you, Monsieur Cue. We may meet on the road, until which time I take my departure. The day may come, when we shall converse with a rolling sea beneath us. Till then, brave cheer!"

"Adieu, Monsieur," returned François, bowing with a politeness that had become too familiar to be forgotten. "If we do not meet but in de sea, we shall not meet, nevaire. Ah, ha, ha! Monsieur le Marin n'aime pas à entendre parler de la gloire de la France! Je voudrais bien savoir lire ce f e Shak-a-spear, pour voir, combien l'immortel Corneille lui est supérieur. Ma foi, oui; Monsieur Pierre Corneille est vraiment un homme illustre!"

The faithful, self-complacent, and aged valet then pursued his way towards the large oak on the bluff; for as he ceased speaking, the mariner of the gay sash had turned deeper into the woods, and left him alone. Proud of the manner, in which he had met the audacity of the stranger, prouder still of the reputation of the author, whose fame had been known in France long before his own departure from Europe, and not a little consoled with the reflection that he had contributed his mite to support the honor of his distant and well-beloved country, the honest François pressed the volume affectionately beneath his arm, and hastened on after his mistress.

Though the position of Staten Island and its surrounding bays is so familiar to the Manhattanese, an explanation of the localities may be agreeable to readers who dwell at a distance from the scene of the tale.

It has already been said, that the principal communication between the bays of Raritan and York, is called the Narrows. At the mouth of this passage, the land on Staten Island rises in a high bluff, which overhangs the water, not unlike the tale-fraught cape of Misenum. From this elevated point, the eye not only commands a view of both estuaries and the city, but it looks far beyond the point of Sandy-Hook, into the open sea. It is here that, in our own days, ships are first noted in the offing, and whence the news of the approach of his vessel is communicated to the expecting merchant by means of the telegraph. In the early part of the last century, arrivals were too rare to support such an establishment. The bluff was therefore little resorted to, except by some occasional admirer of scenery, or by those countrymen whom business, at long intervals, drew to the spot. It had been early cleared of its wood, and the oak already mentioned was the only tree standing in a space of some ten or a dozen acres.

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It has been seen that Alderman Van Beverout had appointed this solitary oak, as the place of rendezvous with François. Thither then he took his way on parting from the valet, and to this spot we must now transfer the scene. A rude seat had been placed around the root of the tree, and here the whole party, with the exception of the absent domestic, were soon seated. In a minute, however, they were joined by the exulting François, who immediately related the particulars of his recent interview with the stranger.

"A clear conscience, with cordial friends, and a fair balance-sheet, may keep a man warm in January, even in this climate," said the Alderman, willing to turn the discourse; "but what with rebellious blacks, hot streets, and spoiling furs, it passeth mortal powers to keep cool in yonder overgrown and crowded town. Thou seest, Patroon, the spot of white on the opposite side of the bay. Breezes and fanning! that is the Lust in Rust, where cordial enters the mouth at every breath, and where a man has room to cast up the sum-total of his thoughts, any hour in the twenty-four."

"We seem quite as effectually alone on this hill, with the advantage of having a city in the view," remarked Alida, with an emphasis that showed she meant even more than she expressed.

"We are by ourselves, niece of mine," returned the Alderman, rubbing his hands as if he secretly felicitated himself that the fact were so. "That truth cannot be denied, and good company we are, though the opinion comes from one who is not a cipher in the party. Modesty is a poor man's wealth. but as we grow substantial in the world, Patroon, one can afford to begin to speak truth of himself, as well as of his neighbor."

"In which case, little, but good, will be uttered from the mouth of Alderman Van Beverout," said Ludlow, appearing so suddenly from behind the root of the tree, as effectually to shut the mouth of the burgher. "My desire to offer the services of the ship to your party, has led to this abrupt intrusion, and I hope will obtain its pardon."

"The power to forgive is a prerogative of the Governor, who represents the Queen," drily returned the Alderman. "If Her Majesty has so little employment for her cruisers, that their captains can dispose of them, in behalf of old men and young maidens why, happy is the age, and commerce should flourish!"

"If the two duties are compatible, the greater the reason why a commander should felicitate himself, that he may be of service to so many. You are bound to the Jersey Highlands, Mr. Van Beverout?"

"I am bound to a comfortable and very private abode, called the Lust in Rust, Captain Cornelius Van Cuyler Ludlow."

The young man bit his lip, and his healthful but brown cheek flushed a deeper red than common, though he preserved his composure.

"And I am bound to sea," he soon said. "The wind is getting fresh, and your boat, which I see, at this moment, standing in for the islands, will find it difficult to make way against its force. The Coquette's anchor will be aweigh, in twenty minutes; and I shall find two hours of an ebbing tide, and a top-gallant breeze, but too short a time for the pleasure of entertaining such guests. I am certain that the fears of la Belle will favor my wishes, whichever side of the question her inclinations may happen to be."

"And they are with her uncle;" quickly returned Alida. "I am so little of a sailor, that prudence, if not pusillanimity, teaches me to depend on the experience of older heads."

"Older I may not pretend to be," said Ludlow, coloring; "but Mr. Van Beverout will see no pretension in believing myself as good a judge of wind and tide, as even he himself can be."

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"You are said to command Her Majesty's sloop with skill, Captain Ludlow, and it is creditable to the colony, that it has produced so good an officer; though I believe your grandfather came into the province, so lately as on the restoration of King Charles the Second?"

"We cannot claim descent from the United Provinces, Alderman Van Beverout, on the paternal side; but whatever may have been the political opinions of my grandfather, those of his descendant have never been questioned. Let me entreat the fair Alida to take counsel of the apprehension I am sure she feels, and to persuade her uncle that the Coquette is safer than his periagua."

"It is said to be easier to enter than to quit your ship," returned the laughing Alida. "By certain symptoms that attended our passage to the island, your Coquette, like others, is fond of conquest. One is not safe beneath so malign an influence."

"This is a reputation given by our enemies. I had hoped for a different answer from la belle Barbérie."

The close of the sentence was uttered with an emphasis that caused the blood to quicken its movement in the veins of the maiden. It was fortunate that neither of their companions was very observant, or else suspicions might have been excited, that a better intelligence existed between the young sailor and the heiress, than would have comported with their wishes and intentions.

"I had hoped for a different answer from la belle Barbérie," repeated Ludlow, in a lower voice, but with even a still more emphatic tone than before.

There was evidently a struggle in the mind of Alida. She overcame it, before her confusion could be noted; and, turning to the valet, she said, with the composure and grace that became a gentlewoman

"Rends moi le livre, François."

"Le voici ah! ma chère Mam'selle Alide, que ce Monsieur le marin se fâchait à cause de la gloire, et des beaux vers de notre illustre M. Pierre Corneille!"

"Here is an English sailor, that I am sure will not deny the merit of an admired writer, even though he come of a nation that is commonly thought hostile, François," returned his mistress, smiling. "Captain Ludlow, it is now a month since I am your debtor, by promise, for a volume of Corneille, and I here acquit myself of the obligation. When you have perused the contents of this book, with the attention they deserve, I may hope "

"For a speedy opinion of their merits."

"I was about to say, to receive the volume again, as it is a legacy from my father," steadily rejoined Alida.

"Legacies and foreign tongues!" muttered the Alderman. "One is well enough; but for the other, English and Dutch are all that the wisest man need learn. I never could understand an account of profit and loss in any other tongue, Patroon; and even a favorable balance never appears so great as it is, unless the account be rendered in one or the other of these rational dialects. Captain Ludlow, we thank you for your politeness, but here is one of my fellows to tell us that my own periagua is arrived; and, wishing you a happy and a long cruise, as we say of lives, I bid you, adieu."

The young seaman returned the salutations of the party, with a better grace than his previous solicitude to persuade them to enter his ship, might have given reason to expect. He even saw them descend the hill, towards the water of the outer bay, with entire composure; and it was only after they had entered a thicket which hid them from view, that he permitted his feelings to have sway.

Then indeed he drew the volume from his pocket, and opened its leaves with an eagerness he could no longer control. It seemed as if he expected to read more, in the pages, than the author had caused to be placed there; but when his eye caught sight of a sealed billet, the legacy of M. de Barbérie fell at his feet; and the paper was torn asunder, with all the anxiety of one who expected to find in its contents a decree of life or death.

Amazement was clearly the first emotion of the young seaman. He read and re-read; struck his brow with his hand; gazed about him at the land and at the water; re-perused the note; examined the superscription, which was simply to 'Capt. Ludlow, of Her Majesty's ship Coquette:' smiled; muttered between his teeth; seemed vexed, and yet delighted; read the note again, word by word, and finally thrust it into his pocket, with the air of a man who had found reason for both regret and satisfaction in its contents.

CHAPTER VI.

"What, has this thing appeared again, to-night?"

"The face of man is the log-book of his thoughts, and Captain Ludlow's seems agreeable," observed a voice, that came from one, who was not far from the commander of the Coquette, while the latter was still enacting the pantomime described in the close of the preceding chapter.

"Who speaks of thoughts and log-books, or who dares to pry into my movements?" demanded the young sailor, fiercely.

"One who has trifled with the first and scribbled in the last too often, not to know how to meet a squall, whether it be seen in the clouds or only on the face of man. As for looking into your movements, Captain Ludlow, I have watched too many big ships in my time, to turn aside at each lightcruiser that happens to cross my course. I hope, Sir, you have an answer; every hail has its right to a civil reply."

Ludlow could scarce believe his senses, when, on turning to face the intruder, he saw himself confronted by the audacious eye and calm mien of the mariner who had, once before that morning, braved his resentment. Curbing his indignation, however, the young man endeavored to emulate the coolness which, notwithstanding his inferior condition, imparted to the air of the other something that was imposing, if it were not absolutely authoritative. Perhaps the singularity of the adventure aided in effecting an object, that was a little difficult of attainment in one accustomed to receive so much habitual deference from most of those who made the sea their home. Swallowing his resentment, the young commander answered

"He that knows how to face his enemies with spirit, may be accounted sufficiently bold; but he who braves the anger of his friends, is foolhardy."

"And he who does neither, is wiser than both," rejoined the reckless hero of the sash. "Captain Ludlow, we meet on equal terms, at present, and the parley may be managed with some freedom."

"Equality is a word that ill applies to men of stations so different."

"Of our stations and duties it is not necessary to speak. I hope that, when the proper time shall come, both may be found ready to be at the first, and equal to discharge the last. But Captain Ludlow, backed by the broadside of the Coquette and the cross-fire of his marines, is not Captain Ludlow alone, on a sea-bluff, with a crutch no better than his own arm, and a stout heart. As the first, he is like a spar supported by backstays and forestays, braces and standing rigging; while, as the latter, he is the stick, which keeps its head aloft by the soundness and quality of its

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timber. You have the appearance of one who can go alone, even though it blew heavier than at present, if one may judge of the force of the breeze, by the manner it presses on the sails of yonder boat in the bay."

"Yonder boat begins to feel the wind, truly!" said Ludlow, suddenly losing all other interest in the appearance of the periagua which held Alida and her friends, and which, at that instant, shot out from beneath the cover of the hill into the broad opening of Raritan bay. "What think you of the time, my friend? a man of your years should speak with knowledge of the weather."

"Women and winds are only understood, when fairly in motion," returned he of the sash; "now, any mortal who consulted comfort and the skies, would have preferred a passage in Her Majesty's ship *Coquette*, to one in yonder dancing periagua; and yet the fluttering silk we see, in the boat, tells us there is one who has thought otherwise."

"You are a man of singular intelligence," cried Ludlow, again facing the intruder; "as well as one of singular "

"Effrontery," rejoined the other, observing that the commander hesitated. Let the commissioned officer of the Queen speak boldly; I am no better than a top-man, or at most a quarter-master."

"I wish to say nothing disagreeable, but I find your knowledge of my offer to convey the lady and her friends to the residence of Alderman Van Beverout, a little surprising."

"And I see nothing to wonder at, in your offer to convey the lady anywhere, though the liberality to her friends is not an act of so clear explanation. When young men speak from the heart, their words are not uttered in whispers."

"Which would imply that you overheard our conversation. I believe it, for here is cover at hand to conceal you. It may be, Sir, that you have eyes, as well as ears."

"I confess to have seen your countenance, changing sides, like a member of parliament turning to a new leaf in his conscience, at the Minister's signal, while you overhauled a bit of paper "

"Whose contents you could not know!"

"Whose contents I took to be some private orders, given by a lady who is too much of a coquette herself, to accept your offer to sail in a vessel of the same name."

"By Heavens, the fellow has reason in his inexplicable impudence!" muttered Ludlow, pacing backward and forward beneath the shadow of the tree. "The language and the acts of the girl are in contradiction; and I am a fool to be trifled with, like a midshipman fresh broken loose from his mother's apron-string. Harkee, Master-a-a You've a name I suppose, like any other straggler on the ocean."

"Yes. When the hail is loud enough to be heard, I answer to the call of Thomas Tiller."

"Well then, Master Tiller, so clever a seaman should be glad to serve the Queen."

"Were it not for duty to another, whose claim comes first, nothing could be more agreeable than to lend a lady in distress a helping hand."

"And who is he, who may prefer a claim to your services, in competition with the majesty of these realms?" demanded Ludlow, with a little of the pretension that, when speaking of its privileges, is apt to distinguish the manner of one who has been accustomed to regard royalty with reverence.

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"Myself. When our affairs call us the same way, no one can be readier than I, to keep Her Majesty's company; but "

"This is presuming too far, on the trifling of a moment," interrupted Ludlow; "you know, sirrah, that I have the right to command your services, without entering into a parley for them; and which, notwithstanding your gay appearance, may, after all, be little worth the trouble."

"There is no need to push matters to extremity, between us, Captain Ludlow," resumed the stranger, who had appeared to muse for a moment, "If I have baffled your pursuit once to-day, it was perhaps to make my merit in entering the ship freely, less undeniable. We are here alone, and your Honor will account it no boasting, if I say that a man, well limbed and active, who stands six feet between plank and carline, is not likely to be led against his will, like a yawl towing at the stern of a four-and-forty. I am a seaman, Sir; and though the ocean is my home, I never venture on it without sufficient footing. Look abroad from this hill, and say whether there is any craft in view, except the cruiser of the Queen, which would be likely to suit the taste of a mariner of the long voyage?"

"By which you would have me understand, you are here in quest of service?"

"Nothing less; and though the opinion of a foremast Jack may be of little value, you will not be displeased to hear, that I might look further without finding a prettier sea-boat, or a swifter, than the one which sails under your own orders. A seaman of your station, Captain Ludlow, is not now to learn, that a man speaks differently, while his name is his own, and after he has given it away to the crown; and therefore I hope my present freedom will not be long remembered."

"I have met men of your humor before, my friend, and I have not now to learn, that a thorough man-of-war's man is as impudent on shore, as he is obedient afloat. Is that a sail, in the offing, or is it the wing of a sea-fowl, glittering in the sun?"

"It may be either," observed the audacious mariner, turning his eye leisurely towards the open ocean, "for we have a wide look-out from this windy bluff. Here are gulls sporting above the waves, that turn their feathers towards the light."

"Look more seaward. That spot of shining white should be the canvas of some craft, hovering in the offing!"

"Nothing more probable, in so light a breeze. Your coasters are in and out, like water-rats on a wharf, at any hour of the twenty-four and yet to me it seems the comb of a breaking sea."

"'Tis snow-white duck; such as your swift rover wears on his loftier spars!"

"A duck that is flown," returned the stranger drily, "for it is no longer to be seen. These fly-aways, Captain Ludlow, give us seamen many sleepless nights and idle chases. I was once running down the coast of Italy, between the island of Corsica and the main, when one of these delusions beset the crew, in a manner that hath taught me to put little faith in eyes, unless backed by a clear horizon and a cool head."

"I'll hear the circumstance," said Ludlow, withdrawing his gaze from the distant ocean, like one who was satisfied his senses had been deceived. "What of this marvel of the Italian seas?"

"A marvel truly, as your Honor will confess, when I read you the affair, much in the words I had it logged, for the knowledge of all concerned. It was the last hour of the second dog-watch, on Easter-Sunday, with the wind here at south-east, easterly. A light air filled the upper canvas, and just gave us command of the ship. The mountains of Corsica, with Monte Christo and Elba, had all been sunk some hours, and we were on the yards, keeping a

look-out for a land-fall on the Roman coast. A low, thick bank of drifting fog lay along the sea, in-shore of us, which all believed to be the sweat of the land, and thought no more of; though none wished to enter it, for that is a coast where foul airs rise, and through which the gulls and land-birds refuse to fly. Well, here we lay, the mainsail in the brails, the topsails beating the mast-heads, like a maiden fanning herself when she sees her lover, and nothing full, but the upper duck, with the sun fairly below the water in the western board. I was then young, and quick of eye, as of foot, and therefore among the first to see the sight!"

"Which was?" said Ludlow, interested in spite of his assumed air of indifference.

"Why, here just above the bank of foul air, that ever rests on that coast, there was seen an object, that looked like ribs of bright light, as if a thousand stars had quitted their usual berths in the heaven, to warn us off the land, by a supernatural beacon. The sight was in itself altogether out of nature and surprising. As the night thickened, it grew brighter and more glowing, as if 'twere meant in earnest to warn us from the coast. But when the word was passed to send the glasses aloft, there was seen a glittering cross on high, and far above the spars on which earthly ships carry their private signals."

"This was indeed extraordinary! and what did you, to come at the character of the heavenly symbol?"

"We wore off shore, and left it a clear berth for bolder mariners. Glad enough was I to see, with the morning sun, the snowy hills of Corsica, again!"

"And the appearance of that object was never explained?"

"Nor ever will be. I have since spoke with the mariners of that sea concerning the sight, but never found any who could pretend to have seen it. There was indeed one bold enough to say, there is a church, far inland, of height and magnitude sufficient to be seen some leagues at sea, and that, favored by our position and the mists that hung above the lowgrounds, we had seen its upper works, looming above the fogs, and lighted for some brilliant ceremony; but we were all too old in seaman's experience to credit so wild a tale. I know not but a church may loom, as well as a hill or a ship; but he, who pretends to say, that the hands of man can thus pile stones among the clouds, should be certain of believers, ere he pushes the tale too far."

"Your narrative is extraordinary, and the marvel should have been looked into closer. It may truly have been a church, for there stands an edifice at Rome, which towers to treble the height of a cruiser's masts."

"Having rarely troubled churches, I know not why a church should trouble me," said the mariner of the sash, while he turned his back on the ocean, as if indisposed to regard the waste of water longer. "It is now twelve years since that sight was seen, and though a seaman of many voyages, my eyes have not looked upon the Roman coast, from that hour to this. Will your Honor lead the way from the bluff, as becomes your rank?"

"Your tale of the burning cross and looming church, Master Tiller, had almost caused me to forget to watch the movements of yon periagua," returned Ludlow, who still continued to face the bay. "That obstinate old Dutchman I say, Sir, that Mr. Alderman Van Beverout has greater confidence in this description of craft than I feel myself. I like not the looks of yonder cloud, which is rising from out the mouth of Raritan; and here, seaward, we have a gloomy horizon. By Heaven! there is a sail playing in the offing, or my eye hath lost its use and judgment."

"Your Honor sees the wing of the sporting gull, again; it had been nigh to deceive my sight, which would be to cheat the look-out of a man that has the advantage of some ten or fifteen years' more practice in marine appearances. I remember once, when beating in among the islands of the China seas, with the trades here at south-east "

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"Enough of your marvels, friend; the church is as much as I can swallow, in one morning It may have been a gull! for I confess the object small; yet it had the steadiness and size of a distant sail! There is some reason to expect one on our coast, for whom a bright and seaman's watch must be had."

"This may then leave me a choice of ships," rejoined Tiller. "I thank your Honor for having spoken, before I had given myself away to the Queen; who is a lady that is much more apt to receive gifts of this nature, than to return them."

"If your respect aboard shall bear any proportion to your hardihood on shore, you may be accounted a model of civility! But a mariner of your pretension should have some regard to the character of the vessel in which he takes service."

"That of which your Honor spoke, is then a buccaneer?"

"If not a buccaneer, one but little better. A lawless trader, under the most favorable view; and there are those who think that he, who has gone so far, has not stopt short of the end. But the reputation of the 'Skimmer of the Seas' must be known to one who has navigated the ocean, long as you."

"You will overlook the curiosity of a seafaring man, in a matter of his profession," returned the mariner of the sash, with strong and evident interest in his manner. "I am lately from a distant ocean, and though many tales of the buccaneers of the islands have been narrated, I do not remember to have heard of that rover, before his name came into the discourse between me and the schipper of the boat, that plies between this landing and the city. I am not, altogether, what I seem, Captain Ludlow; and when further acquaintance and hard service shall have brought me more before the eyes of my commander, he may not repent having induced a thorough seaman to enter his ship, by a little condescension and good-nature shown while the man was still his own master. Your Honor will take no offence at my boldness, when I tell you, I should be glad to know more of this unlawful trader."

Ludlow riveted his eyes on the unmoved and manly countenance of his companion. There was a vague and undefined suspicion in the look; but it vanished, as the practised organs drank in the assurance, which so much physical promise afforded, of the aid of a bold and active mariner. Rather amused than offended by the freedom of the request, he turned upon his heel, and as they descended the bluff, on their way towards the place of landing, he continued the dialogue.

"You are truly from a distant ocean," said the young captain of the *Coquette*, smiling like a man who apologizes to himself for an act of what he thought undue condescension, "if the exploits of a brigantine known by the name of the 'Water-Witch,' and of him who commands her, under the fit appellation of the 'Skimmer of the Seas,' have not yet reached your ears. It is now five summers, since orders have been in the colonies for the cruisers to be on the alert to hunt the picaroon; and it is even said, the daring smuggler has often braved the pennants of the narrow seas. 'Twould be a bigger ship, if not knighthood, to the lucky officer who should catch the knave!"

"He must drive a money-gaining trade, to run these risks, and to brave the efforts of so many skilful gentlemen! May I add to a presumption that your Honor already finds too bold, if one may judge by a displeased eye, by asking if report speaks to the face and other particulars of the person of this free-trader, one must call him, though freebooter should be a better word."

"What matters the personal condition of a rogue?" said Captain Ludlow, who perhaps remembered, that the freedom of their intercourse had been carried as far as comported with prudence.

"What matter, truly! I asked because the description answers a little to that of a man I once knew, in the seas of farther India, and who has long since disappeared, though no one can say whither he has gone. But this 'Skimmer of the Seas' is some Spaniard of the Main, or perhaps a Dutchman come from the country that is awash, in order

to taste of terra-firma?"

"Spaniard of the southern coast never carried so bold a sail in these seas, nor was there ever known a Dutchman with so light a heel. The fellow is said to laugh at the swiftest cruiser out of England! As to his figure, I have heard little good of it. 'Tis said, he is some soured officer of better days, who has quitted the intercourse of honest men, because roguery is so plainly written on his face, that he vainly tries to hide it."

"Mine was a proper man, and one that need not have been ashamed to show his countenance among his fellows," said he of the sash. "This cannot be the same, if indeed there be any on the coast. Is't known, your Honor, that the man is truly here?"

"So goes a rumor; though so many idle tales have led me before to seek the smuggler where he was not, that I give but little faith to the report. The periagua has the wind more at west, and the cloud in the mouth of the Raritan is breaking into scud. The Alderman will have a lucky run of it!"

"And the gulls have gone more seaward a certain sign of pleasant weather;" returned the other, glancing a quick but keen look over the horizon, in the offing. "I believe our rover, with his light duck, has taken flight among them!"

"We will then go in pursuit. My ship is bound to sea; and it is time, Master Tiller, that I know in what berth you are willing to serve the Queen."

"God bless her Majesty! Anne is a royal lady, and she had a Lord High Admiral for her husband. As for a berth, Sir, one always wishes to be captain, even though he may be compelled to eat his rations in the lee-scutters. I suppose the first-lieutenancy is filled, to your Honor's liking?"

"Sirrah, this is trifling; one of your years and experience need not be told, that commissions are obtained by service."

"Under favor; I confess the error. Captain Ludlow, you are a man of honor, and will not deceive a sailor who puts trust in your word."

"Sailor, or landsman, he is safe who has the gage."

"Then, Sir, I ask it. Suffer me to enter your ship; to look into my future messmates, and to judge of their characters; to see if the vessel suits my humor; and then to quit her, if I find it convenient."

"Fellow," said Ludlow, "this impudence almost surpasseth patience!"

"The request is reasonable, as can be shown;" gravely returned the unknown mariner. "Now, Captain Ludlow of the Coquette would gladly tie himself, for better or worse, to a fair lady who is lately gone on the water, and yet there are thousands who might be had with less difficulty."

"Still deeper and deeper in thy effrontery and what if this be true?"

"Sir, a ship is a seaman's mistress nay, when fairly under a pennant, with a war declared, he may be said to be wedded to her, lawfully or not. He becomes 'bone of her bone, and flesh of her flesh, until death doth them part.' To such a longcompact, there should be liberty of choice. Has not your mariner a taste, as well as your lover? The harpings and counter of his ship are the waist and shoulders; the rigging, the ringlets; the cut and fit of the sails, the fashion of the millinery; the guns are always called the teeth, and her paint is the blush and bloom! Here is matter of choice, Sir; and, without leave to make it, I must wish your Honor a happy cruise, and the Queen a

better servitor."

"Why, Master Tiller," cried Ludlow, laughing, "you trust too much to these stunted oaks, if you believe it exceeds my power to hunt you out of their cover, at pleasure. But I take you at your word. The Coquette shall receive you on these conditions, and with the confidence that a first-rate city belle would enter a country ball-room."

"I follow in your Honor's wake, without more words," returned he of the sash, for the first time respectfully raising his canvas cap to the young commander. "Though not actually married, consider me a man betrothed."

It is not necessary to pursue the discourse between the two seamen any further. It was maintained, and with sufficient freedom on the part of the inferior, until they reached the shore, and came in full view of the pennant of the Queen; when, with the tact of an old man-of-war's man, he threw into his manner all the respect that was usually required by the difference of rank.

Half an hour later, the Coquette was rolling at a single anchor, as the puffs of wind came off the hills on her three topsails; and shortly after, she was seen standing through the Narrows, with a fresh south-westerly breeze. In all these movements, there was nothing to attract attention. Notwithstanding the sarcastic allusions of Alderman Van Beverout, the cruiser was far from being idle; and her passage outward was a circumstance of so common occurrence, that it excited no comment among the boatmen of the bay, and the coasters, who alone witnessed her departure.

CHAPTER VII.

"I am no pilot; yet, wert thou as far

As that vast shore wash'd with the furthest sea,

I would adventure for such merchandise."

Romeo and Juliet

A HAPPY mixture of land and water, seen by a bright moon, and beneath the sky of the fortieth degree of latitude, cannot fail to make a pleasing picture. Such was the landscape which the reader must now endeavor to present to his mind.

The wide estuary of Raritan is shut in from the winds and billows of the open sea, by a long, low, and narrow cape, or point, which, by a medley of the Dutch and English languages, that is by no means rare in the names of places that lie within the former territories of the United Provinces of Holland, is known by the name of Sandy-Hook. This tongue of land appears to have been made by the unremitting and opposing actions of the waves, on one side, and of the currents of the different rivers, that empty their waters into the bay, on the other. It is commonly connected with the low coast of New-Jersey, to the south; but there are periods, of many years in succession, during which there exists an inlet from the sea, between what may be termed the inner end of the cape, and the main-land. During these periods, Sandy-Hook, of course, becomes an island. Such was the fact at the time of which it is our business to write.

The outer, or ocean side of this low and narrow bank of sand, is a smooth and regular beach, like that seen on most of the Jersey coast, while the inner is indented, in a manner to form several convenient anchoring-grounds, for ships that seek a shelter from easterly gales. One of the latter is a circular and pretty cove, in which vessels of a light draught are completely embayed, and where they may, in safety, ride secure from any winds that blow. The harbor, or, as it is always called, the Cove, lies at the point where the cape joins the main, and the inlet just named

communicates directly with its waters, whenever the passage is open. The Shrewsbury, a river of the fourth or fifth class, or in other words a stream of a few hundred feet in width, and of no great length, comes from the south, running nearly parallel with the coast, and becomes a tributary of the Bay, also, at a point near the Cove. Between the Shrewsbury and the sea, the land resembles that on the cape, being low and sandy, though not entirely without fertility. It is covered with a modest growth of pines and oaks, where it is not either subject to the labors of the husbandman, or in natural meadow. But the western bank of the river is an abrupt and high acclivity, which rises to the elevation of a mountain. It was near the base of the latter that Alderman Van Beverout, for reasons that may be more fully developed as we proceed in our tale, had seen fit to erect his villa, which, agreeably to a usage of Holland, he had called the Lust in Rust; an appellation that the merchant, who had read a few of the classics in his boyhood, was wont to say meant nothing more nor less than 'Otium cum dignitate.'

If a love of retirement and a pure air had its influence in determining the selection of the burgher of Manhattan, he could not have made a better choice. The adjoining lands had been occupied, early in the previous century, by a respectable family of the name of Hartshorne, which continues seated at the place, to the present hour. The extent of their possessions served, at that day, to keep others at a distance. If to this fact be added the formation and quality of the ground, which was, at so early a period, of trifling value for agricultural purposes, it will be seen there was as little motive, as there was opportunity, for strangers to intrude. As to the air, it was refreshed by the breezes of the ocean, which was scarcely a mile distant; while it had nothing to render it unhealthy, or impure. With this sketch of the general features of the scene where so many of our incidents occurred, we shall proceed to describe the habitation of the Alderman, a little more in detail.

The villa of the Lust in Rust was a low, irregular edifice, in bricks, whitewashed to the color of the driven snow, and in a taste that was altogether Dutch. There were many gables and weather-cocks, a dozen small and twisted chimneys, with numberless facilities that were intended for the nests of storks. These airy sites were, however, untenanted, to the great admiration of the honest architect, who, like many others that bring with them into this hemisphere habits and opinions that are better suited to the other, never ceased expressing his surprise on the subject, though all the negroes of the neighborhood united in affirming there was no such bird in America. In front of the house, there was a narrow but an exceedingly neat lawn, encircled by shrubbery; while two old elms, that seemed coeval with the mountain, grew in the rich soil of which the base of the latter was composed. Nor was there a want of shade on any part of the natural terrace, that was occupied by the buildings. It was thickly sprinkled with fruit-trees, and here and there was a pine, or an oak, of the native growth. A declivity that was rather rapid fell away in front, to the level of the mouth of the river. In short, it was an ample but an unpretending country-house, in which no domestic convenience had been forgotten; while it had little to boast of in the way of architecture, except its rusty vanes and twisted chimneys. A few out-houses, for the accommodation of the negroes, were nigh; and nearer to the river, there were barns and stables, of dimensions and materials altogether superior to those that the appearance of the arable land, or the condition of the small farm, would seem to render necessary. The periagua, in which the proprietor had made his passage across the outer bay, lay at a small wooden wharf immediately below.

For the earlier hours of the evening, the flashing of candles, and a general and noisy movement among the blacks, had denoted the presence of the master of the villa. But the activity had gradually subsided; and before the clock struck nine, the manner in which the lights were distributed, and the general silence, showed that the party, most probably fatigued with their journey, had already separated for the night. The clamor of the negroes had ceased, and the quiet of deep sleep was already prevailing among their humble dwellings.

At the northern extremity of the villa, which, it will be remembered, leaned against the mountain, and facing the east, or fronting the river and the sea, there stood a little wing, even more deeply embowered in shrubbery and low trees, than the other parts of the edifice, and which was constructed altogether in a different style. This was a pavilion, erected for the particular accommodation, and at the cost, of la belle Barbérie. Here the heiress of the two fortunes was accustomed to keep her own little ménage, during the weeks passed in the country; and here she amused herself, in those pretty and feminine employments that suited her years and tastes. In compliment to the

beauty and origin of its inhabitant, the gallant François had christened this particular portion of the villa, la Cour des Fées, a name that had gotten into general use, though somewhat corrupted in sound.

On the present occasion, the blinds of the principal apartment of the pavilion were open, and its mistress was still to be seen at one of the windows. Alida was at an age when the sex is most sensible of lively impressions, and she looked abroad on the loveliness of the landscape, and on the soft stillness of the night, with the pleasure that such a mind is wont to receive from objects of natural beauty.

There was a young moon, and a firmament glowing with a myriad of stars. The light was shed softly on the water, though, here and there, the ocean glittered with its rays. A nearly imperceptible, but what seamen call a heavy air came off the sea, bringing with it the refreshing coolness of the hour. The surface of the immense waste was perfectly unruffled, both within and without the barrier of sand that forms the cape; but the body of the element was heaving and setting heavily, in a manner to resemble the sleeping respiration of some being of huge physical frame. The roar of the surf, which rolled up in long and white curls upon the sands, was the only audible sound; but that was heavy and incessant, sometimes swelling on the air, hollow and threatening, and at others dying, in dull and distant murmurs, on the ear. There was a charm in these varieties of sound, and in the solemn stillness of such a night, that drew Alida into her little balcony; and she leaned forward, beyond its shadow of sweet-brier, to gaze at a part of the bay that was not visible, in the front view, from her windows.

La belle Barbérie smiled, when she saw the dim masts and dark hull of a ship, which was anchored near the end of the cape, and within its protection. There was the look of womanly pride in her darkeye, and haply some consciousness of womanly power in the swell of her rich lip, while a taper finger beat the bar of the balcony, rapidly, and without consciousness of its employment.

"The loyal Captain Ludlow has quickly ended his cruise!" said the maiden aloud, for she spoke under the influence of a triumph that was too natural to be suppressed. "I shall become a convert to my uncle's opinions, and think the Queen badly served."

"He who serves one mistress, faithfully, has no light task," returned a voice from among the shrubbery that grew beneath and nearly veiled the window; "but he, who is devoted to two, may well despair of success with both!"

Alida recoiled, and, at the next instant, she saw her place occupied by the commander of the Coquette. Before venturing to cross the low barrier that still separated him from the little parlor, the young man endeavored to read the eye of its occupant; and then, either mistaking its expression, or bold in his years and hopes, he entered the room.

Though certainly unused to have her apartment scaled with so little ceremony, there was neither apprehension, nor wonder, in the countenance of the fair descendant of the Huguenot. The blood mantled more richly on her cheek; and the brightness of an eye, that was never dull, increased, while her fine form became firm and commanding.

"I have heard that Captain Ludlow gained much of his renown by gallantry in boarding," she said, in a voice whose meaning admitted of no misconception; "but I had hoped his ambition was satisfied with laurels so fairly won from the enemies of his country!"

"A thousand pardons, fairest Alida," interrupted the youth; "you know the obstacles that the jealous watchfulness of your uncle opposes to my desire to speak with you."

"They are then opposed in vain, for Alderman Van Beverout has weakly believed the sex and condition of his ward would protect her from these coups-de-main."

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"Nay, Alida; this is being more capricious than the winds! You know, too well, how far my suit is unpleasant to your gardian, to torture a slight departure from cold observances into cause of serious complaint. I had hoped perhaps, I should say, I have presumed on the contents of your letter, for which I return a thousand thanks; but do not thus cruelly destroy expectations that have so lately been raised beyond the point, perhaps, which reason may justify."

The glow, which had begun to subside on the face of la belle Barbérie, again deepened, and for a moment it appeared as if her high self-dependence was a little weakened. After an instant of reflection, however, she answered steadily, though not entirely without emotion.

"Reason, Captain Ludlow, has limited female propriety within narrow limits," she said. "In answering your letter, I have consulted good-nature more than prudence; and I find that you are not slow in causing me to repent the error."

"If I ever cause you to repent confidence in me, sweet Alida, may disgrace in my profession, and the distrust of the whole sex, be my punishment! But, have I not reason to complain of this inconstancy, on your part? Ought I to expect so severe a reprimand severe, because cold and ironical for an offence, venial as the wish to proclaim my gratitude?"

"Gratitude!" repeated Alida, and this time her wonder was not feigned. "The word is strong, Sir; and it expresses more than an act of courtesy, so simple as that which may attend the lending a volume of popular poetry, can have any right to claim."

"I have strangely misconceived the meaning of the letter, or this has been a day of folly!" said Ludlow, endeavoring to swallow his discontent. "But, no; I have your own words to refute that averted eye and cold look; and, by the faith of a sailor! Alida, I will believe your deliberate and well-reflected thoughts, before these capricious fancies, which are unworthy of your nature. Here are the very words; I shall not easily part with the flattering hopes they convey!"

La belle Barbérie now regarded the young man in open amazement. Her color changed; for of the indiscretion of writing, she knew she was not guiltless, but of having written in terms to justify the confidence of the other, she felt no consciousness. The customs of the age, the profession of her suitor, and the hour, induced her to look steadily into his face, to see whether the man stood before her in all the decency of his reason. But Ludlow had the reputation of being exempt from a vice that was then but too common among seamen, and there was nothing in his ingenuous and really handsome features, to cause her to distrust his present discretion. She touched a bell, and signed to her companion to be seated.

"Francois," said his mistress, when the old valet, but half awake, entered the apartment, "fais moi le plaisir de m'apporter de cette eau de la fontaine du bosquet, et du vin le Capitaine Ludlow a soif; et rapelle-toi, bon Francois, il ne faut pas déranger mon oncle á cette heure; il doit être bien fatigué de son voyage."

When her respectful and respectable servitor had received his commission and departed, Alida took a seat herself, in the confidence of having deprived the visit of Ludlow of its clandestine character, and at the same time having employed the valet on an errand that would leave her sufficient leisure, to investigate the inexplicable meaning of her companion.

"You have my word, Captain Ludlow, that this unseasonable appearance in the pavilion, is indiscreet, not to call it cruel," she said, so soon as they were again alone; "but that you have it, in any manner, to justify your imprudence, I must continue to doubt, until confronted by proof."

"I had thought to have made a very different use of this," returned Ludlow, drawing a letter, we admit it with some reluctance in one so simple and so manly, from his bosom: "and even now, I take shame in producing it, though at your own orders."

"Some magic has wrought a marvel, or the scrawl has no such importance," observed Alida, taking a billet that she now began to repent having ever written. "The language of politeness and female reserve must admit of strange perversions, or all who read are not the best interpreters."

La belle Barbérie ceased speaking, for the instant her eye fell on the paper, an absorbing and intense curiosity got the better of her resentment. We shall give the contents of the letter, precisely in the words which caused so much amazement, and possibly some little uneasiness, to the fair creature who was perusing it.

"The life of a seaman," said the paper, in a delicate and beautiful female hand, "is one of danger and exposure. It inspires confidence in woman, by the frankness to which it gives birth, and it merits indulgence by its privations. She who writes this, is not insensible to the merit of men of this bold calling. Admiration for the sea, and for those who live on it, has been her weakness through life; and her visions of the future, like her recollections of the past, are not entirely exempt from a contemplation of its pleasures. The usages of different nations glory in arms change of scene with constancy in the affections, all sweetened by affluence, are temptations too strong for a female imagination, and they should not be without their influence on the judgment of man. Adieu."

This note was read, re-perused, and for the third time conned, ere Alida ventured to raise her eyes to the face of the expectant young man.

"And this indelicate and unfeminine rhapsody, Captain Ludlow has seen proper to ascribe to me!" she said, while her voice trembled between pride and mortification.

"To whom else can I impute it?" No other, lovely Alida, could utter language so charming, in words so properly chosen."

The long lashes of the maiden played quickly above their dark organs, and then, conquering feelings that were strangely in contradiction to each other, she said with dignity, turning to a little ebony *écritoire* which lay beside her dressing-box

"My correspondence is neither very important, nor very extensive; but such as it is, happily for the reputation of the writer's taste, if not for her sanity, I believe it is in my power to show the trifle I thought it decorous to write, in reply to your own letter. "Here is a copy," she added, opening what in fact was a draught, and reading aloud.

"I thank Capt. Ludlow for his attention in affording me an opportunity of reading a narrative of the cruel deeds of the buccaneers. In addition to the ordinary feelings of humanity, one cannot but regret, that men so heartless are to be found in a profession that is commonly thought to be generous and tender of the weak. We will, however, hope, that the very wicked and cowardly, among seamen, exist only as foils to render the qualities of the very bold and manly more conspicuous. No one can be more sensible of this truth than the friends of Captain Ludlow," the voice of Alida fell a little, as she came to this sentence, "who has not now to earn a reputation for mercy. In return, I send the copy of the *Cid*, which honest François affirms to be superior to all other poems, not even excepting Homer a book, which I believe he is innocent of calumniating, from ignorance of its contents. Again thanking Capt. Ludlow for this instance of his repeated attentions, I beg he will keep the volume, until he shall return from his intended cruise."

"This note is but a copy of the one you have, or ought to have," said the niece of the Alderman, as she raised her glowing face from leaning over the paper, "though it is not signed, like that, with the name of Alida de Barbérie."

When this explanation was over, both parties sat looking at each other, in silent amazement. Still Alida saw, or thought she saw, that, notwithstanding the previous professions of her admirer, the young man rejoiced he had been deceived. Respect for delicacy and reserve in the other sex is so general and so natural among men, that they who succeed the most in destroying its barriers, rarely fail to regret their triumph; and he who truly loves can never long exult in any violation of propriety, in the object of his affections, even though the concession be made in his own favor. Under the influence of this commendable and healthful feeling, Ludlow, while he was in some respects mortified at the turn affairs had taken, felt sensibly relieved from a load of doubt, to which the extraordinary language of the letter, he believed his mistress to have written, had given birth. His companion read the state of his mind, in a countenance that was frank as face of sailor could be; and though secretly pleased to gain her former place in his respect, she was also vexed and wounded that he had ever presumed to distrust her reserve. She still held the inexplicable billet, and her eyes naturally sought the lines. A sudden thought seemed to strike her mind, and returning the paper, she said coldly

"Captain Ludlow should know his correspondent better; I much mistake if this be the first of her communications."

The young man colored to the temples, and hid his face, for a moment, in the hollow of his hands.

"You admit the truth of my suspicions," continued la belle Barbérie, "and cannot be insensible of my justice, when I add, that henceforth "

"Listen to me, Alida," cried the youth, half breathless in his haste to interrupt a decision that he dreaded; "hear me, and as Heaven is my judge, you shall hear only truth. I confess this is not the first of the letters, written in the same hand perhaps I should say in the same spirit but, on the honor of a loyal officer, I affirm, that until circumstances led me to think myself so happy so very happy, "

"I understand you, Sir: the work was anonymous, until you saw fit to inscribe my name as its author. Ludlow! Ludlow! how meanly have you thought of the woman you profess to love!"

"That were impossible! I mingle little with those who study the finesse of life; and loving, as I do, my noble profession, Alida, was it so unnatural to believe that another might view it with the same eyes? But since you disavow the letter nay, your disavowal is unnecessary I see my vanity has even deceived me in the writing but since the delusion is over, I confess that I rejoice it is not so."

La belle Barbérie smiled, and her countenance grew brighter. She enjoyed the triumph of knowing that she merited the respect of her suitor, and it was a triumph heightened by recent mortification. Then succeeded a pause of more than a minute. The embarrassment of the silence was happily interrupted by the return of François.

"Mam'selle Alide, voici de l'eau de la fontaine," said the valet; "mais Monsieur votre oncle s'est couché, et il a mis la clé de la cave au vin dessous son oreiller. Ma foi, ce n'est pas facile d'avoir du bon vin du tout, en Amérique, mais après que Monsieur le maire s'est couché, c'est toujours impossible; voilà!"

"N'importe, mon cher; le capitaine va partir, et il n'a plus soif."

"Dere is assez de jin," continued the valet, who felt for the captain's disappointment, "mais, Monsieur Loodle, have du gout, an' he n'aime pas so strong liqueur."

"He has swallowed already more than was necessary for one occasion," said Alida, smiling on her admirer, in a manner that left him doubtful whether he ought most to repine, or to rejoice. "Thank you, good François; your duty for the night shall end with lighting the captain to the door."

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Then saluting the young commander, in a manner that would not admit of denial, la belle Barbérie dismissed her lover and the valet, together.

"You have a pleasant office, Monsieur François," said the former, as he was lighted to the outer door of the pavilion; "it is one that many a gallant gentleman would envy."

"Oui, Sair. It be grand plaisir to serve Mam'selle Alide. Je porte de fan, de book, mais quant au vin, Monsieur le Capitaine, parole d'honneur, c'est toujours impossible après que l'Aldermain s'est couché."

"Ay the book I think you had the agreeable duty, to-day, of carrying the book of la Belle?"

"Vraiment, oui! 'Twas ouvrage de Monsieur Pierre Corneille. On prétend, que Monsieur Shak-a-spear en a emprunté d'assez beaux sentiments!"

"And the paper between the leaves? you were charged also with that note, good François?"

The valet paused, shrugged his shoulders, and laid one of his long yellow fingers on the plane of an enormous aquiline nose, while he seemed to muse. Then shaking his head perpendicularly, he preceded the captain, as before, muttering, as usual, half in French and half in English,

"For le papier, I know, rien du tout; c'est bien possible, parceque, voyez vous, Monsieur le Capitaine, Mam'selle Alide did say, prenez-y garde; but I no see him, depuis. Je suppose 'twas beaux compliments écrits on de vers of M. Pierre Corneille. Quel génie que celui de cet homme là! n'est ce pas, Monsieur?"

"It is of no consequence, good François," said Ludlow, slipping a guinea into the hands of the valet. "If you should ever discover what became of that paper, however, you will oblige me by letting me know. Good night; mes devoirs à la Belle!"

"Bon soir, Monsieur le Capitaine; c'est un brave Monsieur que celui-là, et de très bonne famille! Il n'a pas de si grandes terres, que Monsieur le Patteroon, pourtant, on dip, qu'il doit avoir de jolies maisons et assez de rentes publiques! J'aime à servir un si généreux et loyal maitre, mais, malheureusement, il est marin! M. de Barbérie n'avait pas trop d'amitié pour les gens de cette profession là."

CHAPTER VIII.

" Well, Jessica, go in;

Perhaps, I will return immediately;

Do as I bid you,

Shut doors after you: Fast bind, fast find;

A proverb never stale, in thrifty mind."

Merchant of Venice

The decision, with which la demoiselle Barbérie had dismissed her suitor, was owing to some consciousness that she had need of opportunity to reflect on the singular nature of the events which had just happened, no less than to a sense of the impropriety of his visiting her at that hour, and in a manner so equivocal. But, like others who act

from feverish impulses, when alone the maiden repented of her precipitation; and she remembered fifty questions which might aid in clearing the affair of its mystery, that she would now gladly put. It was too late, however, for she had heard Ludlow take his leave, and had listened, in breathless silence, to his footstep, as he passed the shrubbery of her little lawn. François reappeared at the door, to repeat his wishes for her rest and happiness, and then she believed she was finally alone for the night, since the ladies of that age and country, were little apt to require the assistance of their attendants, in assuming, or in divesting themselves of, their ordinary attire.

It was still early, and the recent interview had deprived Alida of all inclination for sleep. She placed the lights in a distant corner of the apartment, and approached a window. The moon had so far changed its position, as to cast a different light upon the water. The hollow washing of the surf, the dull but heavy breathing of the air from the sea, and the soft shadows of the trees and mountain, were much the same. The *Coquette* lay, as before, at her anchor near the cape, and the *Shrewsbury* glittered towards the south, until its surface was concealed by the projection of a high and nearly perpendicular bluff.

The stillness was profound, for, with the exception of the dwelling of the family who occupied the estate nearest the villa, there was no other habitation within some miles of the place. Still the solitude of the situation was undisturbed by any apprehension of danger, or any tradition of violence from rude and lawless men. The peaceable character of the colonists, who dwelt in the interior country, was proverbial, and their habits simple; while the ocean was never entered by those barbarians, who then rendered some of the seas of the other hemisphere as fearful as they were pleasant.

Notwithstanding this known and customary character of tranquillity, and the lateness of the hour, Alida had not been many moments in her balcony, before she heard the sound of oars. The stroke was measured, and the noise low and distant, but it was too familiar to be mistaken. She wondered at the expedition of Ludlow, who was not accustomed to show such haste in quitting her presence, and leaned over the railing to catch a glimpse of his departing boat. Each moment she expected to see the little bark issue from out of the shadows of the land, into the sheet of brightness which stretched nearly to the cruiser. She gazed long, and in vain, for no barge appeared, and yet the sound had become inaudible. A light still hung at the peak of the *Coquette*, a sign that the commander was out of his vessel.

The view of a fine ship, seen by the aid of the moon, with its symmetry of spars, and its delicate tracery of cordage, and the heavy and grand movements of the hull as it rolls on the sluggish billows of a calm sea, is ever a pleasing and indeed an imposing spectacle. Alida knew that more than a hundred human beings slept within the black and silent mass, and her thoughts insensibly wandered to the business of their daring lives, their limited abode, and yet wandering existence, their frank and manly qualities, their devotion to the cause of those who occupied the land, their broken and interrupted connexion with the rest of the human family, and finally to those weakened domestic ties, and to that reputation for inconstancy, which are apparently a natural consequence of all. She sighed, and her eye wandered from the ship to that ocean on which it was constructed to dwell. From the distant, low, and nearly imperceptible shore of the island of Nassau, to the coast of New-Jersey, there was one broad and untenanted waste. Even the sea-fowl rested his tired wing, and slept tranquilly on the water. The broad space appeared like some great and unfrequented desert, or rather like a denser and more material copy of the firmament by which it was canopied.

It has been mentioned that a stunted growth of oaks and pines covered much of the sandy ridge that formed the cape. The same covering furnished a dark setting to the waters of the Cove. Above this outline of wood, which fringed the margin of the sea. Alida now fancied she saw an object in motion. At first, she believed some ragged and naked tree, of which the coast had many, was so placed as to deceive her vision, and had thrown its naked lines upon the back-ground of water, in a manner to assume the shape and tracery of a light-rigged vessel. But when the dark and symmetrical spars were distinctly seen, gliding past objects that were known to be stationary, it was impossible to doubt their character. The maiden wondered, and her surprise was not unmixed with apprehension. It seemed as if the stranger, for such the vessel must needs be, was recklessly approaching a surf,

that, in its most tranquil moments, was dangerous to such a fabric, and that he steered, unconscious of hazard, directly upon the land. Even the movement was mysterious and unusual. Sails there were none; and yet the light and lofty spars were soon hid behind a thicket that covered a knoll near the margin of the sea. Alida expected, each moment, to hear the cry of mariners in distress, and then, as the minutes passed and no such fearful sound interrupted the stillness of the night, she began to bethink her of those lawless rovers, who were known to abound among the Carribean isles, and who were said sometimes even to enter and to refit, in the smaller and more secret inlets of the American continent. The tales, coupled with the deeds, character, and fate of the notorious Kidd, were then still recent, and although magnified and colored by vulgar exaggerations, as all such tales are known to be, enough was believed, by the better instructed, to make his life and death the subject of many curious and mysterious rumors. At this moment, she would have gladly recalled the young commander of the *Coquette*, to apprise him of the enemy that was nigh; and then, ashamed of terrors that she was fain to hope savored more of woman's weakness than of truth, she endeavored to believe the whole some ordinary movement of a coaster, who, familiar with his situation, could not possibly be either in want of aid, or an object of alarm. Just as this natural and consoling conclusion crossed her mind, she very audibly heard a step in her pavilion. It seemed near the door of the room she occupied. Breathless, more with the excitement of her imagination, than with any actual fear created by this new cause of alarm, the maiden quitted the balcony, and stood motionless to listen. The door, in truth, was opened, with singular caution, and, for an instant, Alida saw nothing but a confused area, in the centre of which appeared the figure of a menacing and rapacious freebooter.

"Northern lights and moonshine!" growled Alderman Van Beverout, for it was no other than the uncle of the heiress, whose untimely and unexpected visit had caused her so much alarm. "This sky-watching, and turning of night into day, will be the destruction of thy beauty, niece; and then we shall see how plenty Patroons are for husbands! A bright eye and a blooming cheek are thy stock in trade, girl; and she is a spendthrift of both, who is out of her bed when the clock hath struck ten."

"Your discipline would deprive many a beauty of the means of using her power," returned la demoiselle, smiling, as much at the folly of her recent fears, as with affection for her reprove. "They tell me, that ten is the witching time of night, for the necromancy of the dames of Europe."

"Witch me no witches! The name reminds one of the cunning Yankees, a race that would outwit Lucifer himself, if left to set the conditions to their bargain. Here is the Patroon, wishing to let in a family of the knaves among the honest Dutchmen of his manor; and we have just settled a dispute between us, on this subject, by making the lawful trial."

"Which, it may be proper to hope, dearest uncle, was not the trial by battle?"

"Peace and olive-branches, no! The Patroon of Kinderhook is the last man in the Americas, that is likely to suffer by the blows of Myndert Van Bever-out. I challenged the boy to hold a fine eel, that the blacks have brought out of the river to help in breaking our morning fasts, that it might be seen if he were fit to deal with the slippery rogues. By the merit of the peaceable St. Nicholas! but the son of old Hendrick Van Staats had a busy time of it! The lad griped the fish, as the ancient tradition has it that thy uncle clenched the Holland florin, when my father put it between my fingers, within the month, in order to see if the true saving grace was likely to abide in the family for another generation. My heart misgave me for a moment; for young Oloff has the fist of a vice, and I thought the goodly names of the Harmans, and Rips, Corneliuses, and Dircks of the manor rent-roll were likely to be contaminated by the company of an Increase or a Peleg; but just as the Patroon thought he had the watery viper by the throat, the fish gave an unexpected twist, and slid through his fingers by the tail. Flaws and loop-holes! but that experiment has as much wisdom as wit in it!"

"And to me, it seemeth better, now that Providence has brought all the colonies under one government, that these prejudices should be forgotten. We are a people, sprung from many nations, and our effort should be to preserve the liberality and intelligence, while we forget the weaknesses, of all."

"Bravely said, for the child of a Huguenot! But I defy the man, who brings prejudice to my door. I like a merry trade, and a quick calculation. Let me see the man in all New-England, that can tell the color of a balance-sheet quicker than one that can be named, and I'll gladly hunt up the satchel and go to school again. I love a man the better for looking to his own interests, I; and, yet common honesty teaches us, that there should be a convention between men, beyond which none of reputation and character ought to go."

"Which convention shall be understood, by every man, to be the limits of his own faculties; by which means the dull may rival the quick of thought. I fear me, uncle, there should be an eel kept on every coast, to which a trader comes!"

"Prejudice and conceit, child, acting on a drowsy head; 'tis time thou seekest thy pillow, and in the morning we shall see if young Oloff of the Manor shall have better success with thy favor, than with the prototype of the Jonathans. Here, put out these flaring candles, and take a modest lamp to light thee to thy bed. Glaring windows, so near midnight, give a house an extravagant name, in the neighborhood."

"Our reputation for sobriety may suffer in the opinion of the eels," returned Alida, laughing, "but here are few others, I believe, to call us dissipated."

"One never knows one never knows " muttered the Alderman, extinguishing the two large candles of his niece, and substituting his own little hand-lamp in their place. "This broad light only invites to wakefulness, while the dim taper I leave is good as a sleeping draught. Kiss me, wilful one, and draw thy curtains close, for the negroes will soon rise to load the periagua, that they may go up with the tide to the city. The noise of the chattering black-guards may disturb thy slumbers!"

"Truly, it would seem there was little here to invite such active navigation," returned Alida, saluting the cheek of her uncle at his order. "The love of trade must be strong, when it finds the materials of commerce, in a solitude like this."

"Thou hast divined the reason, child. Thy father Monsieur de Barbérie had his peculiar opinions on the subject, and doubtless he did not fail to transmit some of them to his offspring. And yet, when the Huguenot was driven from his château and his clayey Norman lands, the man had no distaste, himself, for an account-current, provided the balance was in his own favor. Nations and characters! I find but little difference, after all, in trade; whether it be driven with a Mohawk for his pack of furs, or with a Seigneur, who has been driven from his lands. Each strives to get the profit on his own side of the account, and the loss on that of his neighbor. So rest thee well, girl; and remember that matrimony is no more than a capital bargain, on whose success depends the sum-total of a woman's comfort and so once more, good night."

La belle Barbérie attended her uncle, dutifully, to the door of her pavilion, which she bolted after him; and then, finding her little apartment gloomy by the light of the small and feeble lamp he had left, she was pleased to bring its flame in contact with the wicks of the two candles he had just extinguished. Placing the three, near each other, on a table, the maiden again drew nigh a window. The unexpected interview with the Alderman had consumed several minutes, and she was curious to know more of the unaccountable movements of the mysterious vessel.

The same deep silence reigned about the villa, and the slumbering ocean was heaving and setting as heavily as before. Alida again looked for the boat of Ludlow; but her eye ran over the whole distance of the bright and broad streak, between her and the cruiser, in vain. There was the slight ripple of the water in the glittering of the moon's rays, but no speck, like that the barge would make, was visible. The lantern still shone at the cruiser's peak. Once, indeed, she thought the sound of oars was again to be heard, and much nearer than before; and yet no effort of her quick and roving sight could detect the position of the boat. But to all these doubts succeeded an alarm which sprang from a new and very different source.

The existence of the inlet, which united the ocean with the waters of the Cove, was but little known, except to the few whose avocations kept them near the spot. The pass being much more than half the time closed, its varying character, and the little use that could be made of it under any circumstances, prevented the place from being a subject of general interest, with the coasters. Even when open, the depth of its water was uncertain, since a week or two of calms, or of westerly winds, would permit the tides to clean its channel, while a single easterly gale was sufficient to choke the entire inlet with sand. No wonder, then, that Alida felt an amazement which was not quite free from superstitious alarm, when, at that hour and in such a scene, she saw a vessel gliding, as it were unaided by sails or sweeps, out of the thicket that fringed the ocean side of the Cove, into its very centre.

The strange and mysterious craft was a brigantine of that mixed construction, which is much used, even in the most ancient and classical seas of the other hemisphere, and which is supposed to unite the advantages of both a square and of a fore-and-aft rigged vessel, but which is nowhere seen to display the same beauty of form, and symmetry of equipment, as on the coasts of this Union. The first and smallest of its masts had all the complicated machinery of a ship, with its superior and inferior spars, its wider reaching, though light and manageable yards, and its various sails, shaped and arranged to meet every vicissitude and caprice of the winds; while the latter, or larger of the two, rose like the straight trunk of a pine from the hull, simple in its cordage, and spreading a single sheet of canvas, that, in itself, was sufficient to drive the fabric with vast velocity through the water. The hull was low, graceful in its outlines, dark as the raven's wing, and so modelled as to float on its element like a sea-gull riding the billows. There were many delicate and attenuated lines among its spars, which were intended to spread broader folds of canvas to the light airs, when necessary; but these additions to the tracery of the machine, which added so much to its beauty by day, were now, seen as it was by the dimmer and more treacherous rays of the moon, scarcely visible. In short, as the vessel had entered the Cove floating with the tide, and it was so singularly graceful and fairy-like in form, that Alida, at first, was fain to discredit her senses, and to believe it no more than some illusion of the fancy. Like most others, she was ignorant of the temporary inlet, and, under the circumstances, it was not difficult to lend a momentary credence to so pleasing an idea.

But the delusion was only momentary. The brigantine turned in its course, and, gliding into the part of the Cove where the curvature of the shores offered most protection from the winds and waves, and perhaps from curious eyes, its motion ceased. A heavy plunge in the water was audible even at the villa, and Alida then knew that an anchor had fallen into the bay.

Although the coast of North America offered little to invite lawless depredation, and it was in general believed to be so safe, yet the possibility that cupidity might be invited by the retired situation of her uncle's villa, did not fail to suggest itself to the mind of the young heiress. Both she and her guardian were reputed to be wealthy; and disappointment, on the open sea, might drive desperate men to the commission of crimes that in more prosperous moments would not suggest themselves. The freebooters were said to have formerly visited the coast of the neighboring island, and men were just then commencing those excavations for hidden treasures and secreted booty, which have been, at distant intervals, continued to our own time.

There are situations in which the mind insensibly gives credit to impressions, that the reason in common disapproves. The present was one in which Alida de Barbérie, though of a resolute and even a masculine understanding, felt disposed to believe there might be truth in those tales, that she had hitherto heard, only to deride. Still keeping her eye on the motionless vessel, she drew back into her window, and wrapped the curtain round her form, undecided whether to alarm the family or not, and acting under a vague impression that, though so distant, her person might be seen. She was hardly thus secreted, before the shrubbery was violently agitated, a footstep was heard in the lawn beneath her window, and then one leaped so lightly into the balcony, and from the balcony into the centre of the room, that the passage of the figure seemed like the flitting of some creature of supernatural attributes.

CHAPTER IX.

"Why look you, how you stare!

I would be friends with you, and have your love."

Shylock.

The first impulse of Alida, at this second invasion of her pavilion, was certainly to flee. But timidity was not her weakness, and as natural firmness gave her time to examine the person of the individual who had so unceremoniously entered, curiosity aided in inducing her to remain. Perhaps a vague, but a very natural, expectation that she was again to dismiss the commander of the Coquette, had its influence on her first decision. In order that the reader may judge how far this boldness was excusable, we shall describe the person of the intruder.

The stranger was one in the very bud of young and active manhood. His years could not have exceeded two-and-twenty, nor would he probably have been thought so old, had not his features been shaded by a rich, brown hue, that in some degree served as a foil to a natural complexion, which, though never fair, was still clear and blooming. A pair of dark, bushy, and jet-black, silken whiskers, that were in singular contrast to eye-lashes and brows of almost feminine beauty and softness, aided also in giving a decided expression to a face that might otherwise have been wanting in some of that character which is thought essential to comeliness in man. The forehead was smooth and low; the nose, though prominent and bold in outline, of exceeding delicacy in detail; the mouth and lips full, a little inclined to be arch, though the former appeared as if it might at times be pensive; the teeth were even and unsullied; and the chin was small, round, dimpled, and so carefully divested of the distinguishing mark of the sex, that one could fancy nature had contributed all its growth to adorn the neighboring cheeks and temples. If to these features be added a pair of full and brilliant coal-black eyes, that appeared to vary their expression at their master's will, the reader will at once see, that the privacy of Alida had been invaded by one whose personal attractions might, under other circumstances, have been dangerous to the imagination of a female, whose taste was in some degree influenced by a standard created by her own loveliness.

The dress of the stranger was as unique as his personal attractions were extraordinary. The fashion of the garments resembled that of those already described as worn by the man who has announced himself as Master Tiller; but the materials were altogether richer, and, judging only from the exterior, more worthy of the wearer.

The light frock was of a thick purple silk, of an Indian manufacture, cut with exceeding care to fit the fine outlines of a form that was rather round, than square; active, than athletic. The loose trowsers were of a fine white jean, the cap of scarlet velvet, ornamented with gold, and the body was belted with a large cord of scarlet silk, twisted in the form of a ship's cable. At the ends of the latter, little anchors, wrought in bullion, were attached as gay and fitting appendages.

In contrast to an attire so whimsical and uncommon, however, a pair of small and richly-mounted pistols were at the stranger's girdle; and the haft of a curiously-carved Asiatic dagger was seen projecting, rather ostentatiously, from between the folds of the upper garment.

"What cheer! what cheer!" cried a voice, that was more in harmony with the appearance of the speaker, than with the rough, professional salutation he uttered, so soon as he had fairly landed in the centre of Alida's little saloon. "Come forth, my dealer in the covering of the beaver, for here is one who brings gold to thy coffers. Ha! now that this trio of lights hath done its office, it may be extinguished, lest it pilot others to the forbidden haven!"

"Your pardon, Sir," said the mistress of the pavilion, advancing from behind the curtain, with an air of coolness

that her beating heart had nigh betrayed to be counterfeit; "having so unexpected a guest to entertain, the additional candles are necessary."

The start, recoil, and evident alarm of the intruder, lent Alida a little more assurance; for courage is a quality that appears to gain force, in a degree proportioned to the amount in which it is abstracted from the dreaded object. Still, when she saw a hand on a pistol, the maiden was again about to flee; nor was her resolution to remain confirmed, until she met the mild and alluring eye of the intruder, as, quitting his hold of the weapon, he advanced with an air so mild and graceful, as to cause curiosity to take the place of fear.

"Though Alderman Van Beverout be not punctual to his appointment," said the gay young stranger, "he has more than atoned for his absence by the substitute he sends. I hope she comes authorized to arrange the whole of our treaty?"

"I claim no right to hear, or to dictate, in matters not my own. My utmost powers extend to expressing a desire, that this pavilion may be exempt from the discussion of affairs, as much beyond my knowledge as they are separated from my interests."

"Then why this signal?" demanded the stranger, pointing, with a serious air, to the lights that still burned near each other in face of an open window. "It is awkward to mislead, in transactions that are so delicate!"

"Your allusion, Sir, is not understood. These lights are no more than what are usually seen in my apartment at this hour with, indeed, the addition of a lamp, left by my uncle, Alderman Van Bever-out."

"Your uncle!" exclaimed the other, advancing so near Alida, as to cause her to retire a step, his countenance expressing a deep and newly-awakened interest "your uncle! This, then, is one far-famed and justly extolled; la belle Barbérie!" he added, gallantly lifting his cap, as if he had just discovered the condition and the unusual personal attractions of his companion.

It was not in nature for Alida to be displeased. All her fancied causes of terror were forgotten; for, in addition to their improbable and uncertain nature, the stranger had sufficiently given her to understand, that he was expected by her uncle. If we add, that the singular attraction and softness of his face and voice aided in quieting her fears, we shall probably do no violence either to the truth or to a very natural feeling. Profoundly ignorant of the details of commerce, and accustomed to hear its mysteries extolled as exercising the keenest and best faculties of man, she saw nothing extraordinary in those who were actively engaged in the pursuit having reasons for concealing their movements from the jealousy and rivalry of competitors. Like most of her sex, she had great dependence on the characters of those she loved; and, though nature, education, and habit, had created a striking difference between the guardian and his ward, their harmony had never been interrupted by any breach of affection.

"This then is la belle Barbérie!" repeated the young sailor, for such his dress denoted him to be, studying her features with an expression of face, in which pleasure vied with evident and touching melancholy. "Fame hath done no injustice, for here is all that might justify the folly or madness of man!"

"This is familiar dialogue for an utter stranger," returned Alida, blushing, though the quick dark eye that seemed to fathom all her thoughts, saw it was not in anger. "I do not deny that the partiality of friends, coupled with my origin, have obtained the appellation, which is given, however, more in playfulness than in any serious opinion of its being merited and now, as the hour is getting late, and this visit is at least unusual, you will permit me to seek my uncle."

"Stay!" interrupted the stranger "it is long very long, since so soothing, so gentle a pleasure has been mine! This is a life of mysteries, beautiful Alida, though its incidents seem so vulgar, and of every-day occurrence. There is mystery in its beginning and its end; in its impulses; its sympathies, and all its discordant passions. No, do not quit

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me. I am from off the sea, where none but coarse and vulgar-minded men have long been my associates; and thy presence is a balm to a bruised and wounded spirit."

Interested, if possible, more by the touching and melancholy tones of the speaker, than by his extraordinary language, Alida hesitated. Her reason told her that propriety, and even prudence, required she should apprise her uncle of the stranger's presence; but propriety and prudence lose much of their influence, when female curiosity is sustained by a secret and powerful sympathy. Her own eloquent eye met the open and imploring look of organs, that seemed endowed with the fabled power to charm; and while her judgment told her there was so much to alarm, her senses pleaded powerfully in behalf of the gentle mariner.

"An expected guest of my uncle will have leisure to repose, after the privations and hardships of so weary a voyage," she said. "This is a house whose door is never closed against the rites of hospitality."

"If there is aught about my person or attire, to alarm you," returned the stranger, earnestly, "speak, that it may be cast away. These arms these foolish arms, had better not have been here," he added, casting the pistols and dagger indignantly, through a window, into the shrubbery; "Ah! if you knew how unwillingly I would harm any and, least of all, a woman you would not fear me!"

"I fear you not," returned la Belle, firmly. "I dread the misconceptions of the world."

"What world is here to disturb us? Thou livest in thy pavilion, beautiful Alida, remote from towns and envy, like some favored damsel, over whose happy and charmed life presides a benignant genius. See, here are all the pretty materials, with which thy sex seeks innocent and happy amusement. Thou touchest this lute, when melancholy renders thought pleasing; here are colors to mock, or to eclipse, the beauties of the fields and the mountain, the flower, and the tree; and from these pages are culled thoughts, pure and rich in imagery, as thy spirit is spotless, and thy person lovely!"

Alida listened in amazement; for, while he spoke, the young mariner touched the different articles he named, with a melancholy interest, which seemed to say how deeply he regretted that fortune had placed him in a profession, in which their use was nearly denied.

"It is not common for those who live on the sea, to feel this interest in the trifles which constitute a woman's pleasure," she said, lingering, spite of her better resolution to depart.

"The spirit of our rude and boisterous trade is then known to you?"

"It were not possible for the relation of a merchant, so extensively known as my uncle, to be ignorant altogether of mariners."

"Ay, here is proof of it," returned the stranger, speaking so quick as again to betray how sensitively his mind was constructed. "The History of the American Buccaneers is a rare book to be found in a lady's library! What pleasure can a mind like that of la belle Barbérie find in these recitals of bloody violence?"

"What pleasure, truly!" returned Alida, half tempted, by the wild and excited eye of her companion, notwithstanding all the contradictory evidence which surrounded him, to believe she was addressing one of the very rovers in question. "The book was lent me by a brave seaman, who holds himself in readiness to repress their depredations; and while reading of so much wickedness, I endeavor to recall the devotion of those who risk their lives, in order to protect the weak and innocent. My uncle will be angered, should I longer delay to apprise him of your presence."

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"A single moment! It is long very long, since I have entered a sanctuary like this! Here is music! and there the frame for the gaudy tambour these windows look on a landscape, soft as thine own nature; and yonder ocean can be admired without dreading its terrific power, or feeling disgust at its coarser scenes. Thou shouldst be happy, here!"

The stranger turned, and perceived that he was alone. Disappointment was strongly painted on his handsome face; but, ere there was time for second thought, another voice was heard grumbling at the door of the saloon.

"Compacts and treaties! What, in the name of good faith, hath brought thee hither? Is this the way to keep a cloak on our movements? or dost suppose that the Queen will knight me, for being known as thy correspondent?"

"Lanterns and false-beacons!" returned the other, mimicking the voice of the disconcerted burgher, and pointing to the lights that still stood where last described. "Can the port be entered without respecting the land-marks and signals?"

"This comes of moonlight and sentiment! When the girl should have been asleep, she is up, gazing at the stars, and disconcerting a burgher's speculations. But fear thee not, Master Seadrift; my niece has discretion, and if we have no better pledge for her silence, there is that of necessity; since there is no one here for a confidant, but her old Norman valet, and the Patroon of Kinderhook, both of whom are dreaming of other matter than a little gainful traffic."

"Fear thee not, Alderman;" returned the other, still maintaining his air of mockery. "We have the pledge of character, if no other; since the uncle cannot part with reputation, without the niece sharing in the loss."

"What sin is there in pushing commerce a step beyond the limits of the law? These English are a nation of monopolists; and they make no scruple of tying us of the colonies, hand and foot, heart and soul, with their acts of Parliament, saying 'with us shalt thou trade, or not at all.' By the character of the best burgomaster of Amsterdam, and they came by the province, too, in no such honesty, that we should lie down and obey!"

"Wherein there is much comfort to a dealer in the contraband. Justly reasoned, my worthy Alderman. Thy logic will, at any time, make a smooth pillow, especially if the adventure be not without its profit. And now, having so commendably disposed of the moral of our bargain, let us approach its legitimate, if not its lawful, conclusion. There," he added, drawing a small bag from an inner pocket of his frock, and tossing it carelessly on a table; "there is thy gold. Eighty broad Johannes is no bad return for a few packages of furs; and even avarice itself will own, that six months is no long investment for the usury."

"That boat of thine, most lively Seadrift, is a marine humming-bird!" returned Myndert, with a joyful tremor of the voice, that betrayed his deep and entire satisfaction. "Didst say just eighty? But spare thyself the trouble of looking for the memorandum; I will tell the gold myself, to save thee the trouble. Truly, the adventure hath not been bad! A few kegs of Jamaica, with a little powder and lead, and a blanket or two, with now and then a penny bauble for a chief, are knowingly, ay! and speedily transmuted into the yellow metal, by thy good aid. This affair was managed on the French coast?"

"More northward, where the frost helped the bargain. Thy beavers and martens, honest burgher, will be flaunting in the presence of the Emperor, at the next holidays. What is there in the face of the Braganza, that thou studiest it so hard?"

"The piece seems none of the heaviest but, luckily, I have scales at hand, "

"Hold!" said the stranger, laying his hand, which, according to a fashion of that day, was clad in a delicate and scented glove, lightly on the arm of the other: "No scales between us, Sir! That was taken in return for thy

adventure; heavy or light, it must go down. We deal in confidence, and this hesitation offends me. Another such doubt of my integrity, and our connexion is at an end."

"A calamity I should deplore, quite or nearly as much as thyself," returned Myndert, affecting to laugh; though he slipped the suspected doubloon into the bag again, in a manner that at once removed the object of contention from view. "A little particularity in the balance part of commerce serves to maintain friendships. But a trifle shall not cause us to waste the precious time. Hast brought goods suited to the colonies?"

In plenty."

"And ingeniously assorted? Colonies and monopoly! But there is a two-fold satisfaction in this clandestine traffic! I never get the notice of thy arrival, Master Seadrift, but the heart within me leapeth of gladness! There is a double pleasure in circumventing the legislation of your London wiseacres!"

"The chiefest of which is ?"

"A goodly return for the investment, truly I desire not to deny the agency of natural causes; but, trust me, there is a sort of professional glory in thus defeating the selfishness of our rulers. What! are we born of woman, to be used as the instruments of their prosperity! Give us equal legislation, a right to decide on the policy of enactments, and then, like a loyal and obedient subject, "

"Thou wouldst still deal in the contraband!"

"Well, well, multiplying idle words is not multiplying gold. The list of the articles introduced can be forthcoming?"

"It is here, and ready to be examined. But there is a fancy come over me, Alderman Van Beverout, which, like others of my caprices, thou knowest must have its way. There should be a witness to our bargain."

"Judges and juries! Thou forgettest, man, that a clumsy galliot could sail through the tightest clause of these extra-legal compacts. The courts receive the evidence of this sort of traffic, as the grave receives the dead; to swallow all, and be forgotten."

"I care not for the courts, and little desire do I feel to enter them. But the presence of la belle Barbérie may serve to prevent any misconceptions, that might bring our connexion to a premature close. Let her be summoned."

"The girl is altogether ignorant of traffic, and it might unsettle her opinions of her uncle's stability. If a man does not maintain credit within his own doors, how can he expect it in the streets?"

"Many have credit on the highway, who receive none at home. But thou knowest my humor; no niece no traffic."

"Alida is a dutiful and affectionate child, and I would not willingly disturb her slumbers. Here is the Patroon of Kinderhook, a man who loves English legislation as little as myself; he will be less reluctant to see an honest shilling turned into gold. I will awake him: no man was ever yet offended at an offer to share in a profitable adventure."

"Let him sleep on. I deal not with your lords of manors and mortgages. Bring forth the lady, for there will be matter fit for her delicacy."

"Duty and the ten commandments! You never had the charge of a child, Master Seadrift, and cannot know the weight of responsibility "

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"No niece no traffic!" interrupted the wilful dealer in contraband, returning his invoice to his pocket, and preparing to rise from the table, where he had already seated himself. "The lady knows of my presence; and it were safer for us both, that she entered more deeply into our confidence."

"Thou art as despotic as the English navigation-law! I hear the foot of the child still pacing her chamber, and she shall come. But there need be no explanations, to recall old intercourse. The affair can pass as a bit of accidental speculation a by-play, in the traffic of life."

"As thou pleasest. I shall deal less in words than in business. Keep thine own secrets, burgher, and they are safe. Still, I would have the lady, for there is a presentiment that our connexion is in danger."

"I like not that word presentiment," grumbled the Alderman, taking a light, and snuffing it with deliberate care; "drop but a single letter, and one dreams of the pains and penalties of the Exchequer. Remember thou art a trafficker, who conceals his appearance on account of the cleverness of his speculations."

"That is my calling, to the letter. Were all others as clever, the trade would certainly cease. Go, bring the lady."

The Alderman, who probably saw the necessity of making some explanation to his niece, and who, it would seem, fully understood the positive character of his companion, no longer hesitated; but, first casting a suspicious glance out of the still open window, he left the room.

CHAPTER X.

" Alack, what heinous sin is it in me,

To be ashamed, to be my father's child!

But though I am a daughter to his blood,

I am not to his manners. "

The moment the stranger was again alone, the entire expression of his countenance underwent a change. The reckless and bold expression deserted his eye, which once more became soft, if not pensive, as it wandered over the different elegant objects that served to amuse the leisure of la belle Barbérie. He arose, and touched the strings of a lute, and then, like Fear, started back, as if recoiling at the sound he had made. All recollection of the object of his visit was evidently forgotten, in a new and livelier interest; and had there been one to watch his movements, the last motive imputed to his presence would probably have been the one that was true. There was so little of that vulgar and common character, which is usually seen in men of his pursuit, in the gentle aspect and subdued air of his fine features, that it might be fancied he was thus singularly endowed by nature, in order that deception might triumph. If there were moments when a disregard of opinion was seen in his demeanor, it rather appeared assumed than easy; and even when most disposed to display lawless indifference to the ordinary regulations of society, in his interview with the Alderman, it had been blended with a reserve of manner that was strangely in contrast with his humor.

On the other hand, it were idle to say that Alida de Barbérie had no unpleasant suspicions concerning the character of her uncle's guest. That baneful influence, which necessarily exerts itself near an irresponsible power, coupled with the natural indifference with which the principal regards the dependant, had caused the English Ministry to fill too many of their posts of honor and profit, in the colonies, with needy and dissolute men of rank,

or of high political connexions at home. The Province of New-York had, in this respect, been particularly unfortunate. The gift of it by Charles to his brother and successor, had left it without the protection of those charters and other privileges that had been granted to most of the governments of America. The connexion with the crown was direct, and, for a long period, the majority of the inhabitants were considered as of a different race, and of course as of one less to be considered, than that of their conquerors. Such was the laxity of the times on the subject of injustice to the people of this hemisphere, that the predatory expeditions of Drake and others against the wealthy occupants of the more southern countries, seem to have left no spots on their escutcheons; and the honors and favors of Queen Elizabeth had been liberally extended to men who would now be deemed freebooters. In short, that system of violence and specious morality, which commenced with the gifts of Ferdinand and Isabella, and the bulls of the Popes, was continued, with more or less of modification, until the descendants of those single-minded and virtuous men who peopled the Union, took the powers of government into their own hands, and proclaimed political ethics that were previously as little practised as understood.

Alida knew that both the Earl of Bellamont and the unprincipled nobleman who has been introduced in the earlier pages of this tale, had not escaped the imputation of conniving at acts on the sea, far more flagrant than any of an unlawful trade; and it will therefore create little surprise, that she saw reason to distrust the legality of some of her uncle's speculations, with less pain than might be felt by one of her sex and opinions at the present hour. Her suspicions, however, fell far short of the truth; for it were scarce possible to have presented a mariner, who bore about him fewer of those signs of his rude calling, than he whom she had so unexpectedly met.

Perhaps, too, the powerful charm, that existed in the voice and countenance of one so singularly gifted by nature, had its influence in persuading Alida to reappear. At all events, she was soon seen to enter the room, with an air, that manifested more of curiosity and wonder, than of displeasure.

"My niece has heard that thou comest from the old countries, Master Seadrift," said the wary Alderman, who preceded Alida, "and the woman is uppermost in her heart. Thou wilt never be forgiven, should the eye of any maiden in Manhattan get sight of thy finery before she has passed judgment on its merit."

"I cannot wish a more impartial or a fairer judge;" returned the other, doffing his cap in the gallant and careless manner of his trade. "Here are silks from the looms of Tuscany, and Lyonnois brocades, that any Lombard, or dame of France, might envy. Ribbons of every hue and dye, and laces that seem to copy the fret-work of the richest cathedral of your Fleming!"

"Thou hast journeyed much, in thy time, Master Seadrift, and speakest of countries and usages with understanding," said the Alderman. "But how stand the prices of these precious goods? Thou knowest the long war, and the moral certainty of its continuance; this German succession to the throne, and the late earthquakes in the country, too, have much unsettled prices, and cause us thoughtful burghers to be wary in our traffic. Didst inquire the cost of geldings, when last in Holland?"

"The animals go a-begging! As to the value of my goods, that you know is fixed; for I admit of no parley between friends."

"Thy obstinacy is unreasonable, Master Seadrift. A wise merchant will always look to the state of the market, and one so practised should know that a nimble sixpence multiplies faster than a slow-moving shilling. 'Tis the constant rolling of the ball that causes the snow to cleave! Goods that come light should not go heavy, and quick settlements follow sudden bargains. Thou knowest our York saying, that 'first offers are the best.'"

"He that likes may purchase, and he that prefers his gold to fine laces, rich silks, and stiff brocades, has only to sleep with his money-bags under his pillow. There are others who wait, with impatience, to see the articles; and I have not crossed the Atlantic, with a freight that scarcely ballasts the brigatine, to throw away the valuables on the lowest bidder."

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"Nay, uncle," said Alida, in a little trepidation, "we cannot judge of the quality of Master Seadrift's articles, by report. I dare to say, he has not landed without a sample of his wares?"

"Custom and friendships!" muttered Myndert; "of what use is an established correspondence, if it is to be broken on account of a little cheapening? But produce thy stores, Mr. Dogmatism; I warrant me the fashions are of some rejected use, or that the color of the goods be impaired by the usual negligence of thy careless mariners. We will, at least, pay thee the compliment to look at the effects."

"'Tis as you please," returned the other. "The bales are in the usual place, at the wharf, under the inspection of honest Master Tiller but if so inferior in quality, they will scarce repay the trouble of the walk."

"I'll go, I'll go," said the Alderman, adjusting his wig and removing his spectacles; "'twould not be treating an old correspondent well, to refuse to look at his samples, thou wilt follow, Master Seadrift, and so I will pay thee the compliment to examine the effects though the long war, the glut of furs, the over-abundance of the last year's harvests, and the perfect quiet in the mining districts, have thrown all commerce flat on its back. I'll go, however; lest thou shouldst say, thy interests were neglected. Thy Master Tiller is an indiscreet agent; he gave me a fright to-day, that exceeds any alarm I have felt since the failure of Van Halt, Balance, and Diddle."

The voice of Myndert became inaudible, for, in his haste not to neglect the interests of his guest, the tenacious trader had already quitted the room, and half of his parting speech was uttered in the antechamber of the pavilion.

"'Twould scarce comport with the propriety of my sex, to mingle with the seamen, and the others who doubtless surround the bales," said Alida, in whose face there was a marked expression of hesitation and curiosity.

"It will not be necessary," returned her companion. "I have, at hand, specimens of all that you would see. But, why this haste? We are yet in the early hours of the night, and the Alderman will be occupied long, ere he comes to the determination to pay the prices my people are sure to ask. I am lately from off the sea, beautiful Alida, and thou canst not know the pleasure I find in breathing even the atmosphere of a woman's presence."

La belle Barbérie retired a step or two, she knew not why; and her hand was placed upon the cord of the bell, before she was aware of the manner in which she betrayed her alarm.

"To me it does not seem that I am a creature so terrific, that thou need'st dread my presence," continued the gay mariner, with a smile that expressed as much of secret irony, as of that pensive character which had again taken possession of his countenance; "but ring, and bring your attendants to relieve fears that are natural to thy sex, and therefore seducing to mine. Shall I pull the cord? for this pretty hand trembles too much, to do its office."

"I know not that any would answer, for it is past the hour of attendance; it is better that I go to the examination of the bales."

The strange and singularly-attired being, who occasioned so much uneasiness to Alida, regarded her a moment with a kind and melancholy solicitude.

"Thus they are all, till altered by too much intercourse with a cold and corrupt world!" he rather whispered, than uttered aloud. "Would that thus they might all continue! Thou art a singular compound of thy sex's weakness, and of manly resolution, belle Barbérie; but trust me," and he laid his hand on his heart with an earnestness that spoke well for his sincerity; "ere word, or act, to harm or to offend thee, should proceed from any who obey will of mine, nature itself must undergo a change. Start not, for I call one to show the specimens you would see."

He then applied a little silver whistle to his lips, and drew a low signal from the instrument, motioning to Alida to await the result, without alarm. In half a minute, there was a rustling among the leaves of the shrubbery, a

moment of attentive pause, and then a dark object entered the window, and rolled heavily to the centre of the floor.

"Here are our commodities, and trust me the price shall not be dwelt on, between us," resumed Master Seadrift, undoing the fastenings of the little bale, that had entered the saloon, seemingly without the aid of hands. "These goods are so many gages of neutrality, between us; so approach, and examine, without fear. You will find some among them to reward the hazard."

The bale was now open, and as its master appeared to be singularly expert in suiting a female fancy, it became impossible for Alida to resist any longer. She gradually lost her reserve, as the examination proceeded; and before the owner of the treasures had got into the third of his packages, the hands of the heiress were as actively employed as his own, in gaining access to their view.

"This is a stuff of the Lombard territories," said the vender of the goods, pleased with the confidence he had succeeded in establishing between his beautiful customer and himself. "Thou seest, it is rich, flowery, and variegated as the land it came from. One might fancy the vines and vegetation of that deep soil were shooting from this labor of the loom nay, the piece is sufficient for any toilette, however ample; see, it is endless as the plains that reared the little animal who supplies the texture. I have parted of that fabric to many dames of England, who have not disdained to traffic with one that risks much in their behalf."

"I fear there are many who find a pleasure in these stuffs, chiefly because their use is forbidden."

"'Twould not be out of nature! Look; this box contains ornaments of the elephant's tooth, cut by a cunning artificer in the far Eastern lands; they do not disfigure a lady's dressing-table, and have a moral, for they remind her of countries where the sex is less happy than at home. Ah! here is a treasure of Mechlin, wrought in a fashion of my own design."

"'Tis beautifully fancied, and might do credit to one who professed the painter's art."

"My youth was much employed in these conceits," returned the trader, unfolding the rich and delicate lace, in a manner to show that he had still pleasure in contemplating its texture and quality. "There was a compact between me and the maker, that enough should be furnished to reach from the high church-tower of his town, to the pavement beneath; and yet, you see how little remains! The London dames found it to their taste, and it was not easy to bring even this trifle into the colonies."

"You chose a remarkable measure for an article that was to visit so many different countries, without the formalities of law!"

"We thought to start in the favor of the church, which rarely frowns on those who respect its privileges. Under the sanction of such authority, I will lay aside all that remains, certain it will be needed for thy use."

"So rare a manufacture should be costly?"

La belle Barbérie spoke hesitatingly, and as she raised her eyes, they met the dark organs of her companion, fixed on her face, in a manner that seemed to express a consciousness of the ascendancy he was gaining. Startled, at she knew not what, the maiden again added hastily

"This may be fitter for a court lady, than a girl of the colonies."

"None who have yet worn of it, so well become it; I lay it here, as a make-weight in my bargain with the Alderman. This is satin of Tuscany; a country where nature exhibits its extremes, and one whose merchants were

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princes. Your Florentine was subtle in his fabrics, and happy in his conceits of forms and colors, for which he stood indebted to the riches of his own climate. Observe the hue of this glossy surface is scarcely so delicate as I have seen the rosy light, at even, playing on the sides of his Apennines!"

"You have then visited the regions, in whose fabrics you deal?" said Alida, suffering the articles to fall from her hand, in the stronger interest she began to feel in their owner.

"'Tis my habit. Here have we a chain from the city of the Isles. The hand of a Venetian could alone form these delicate and nearly insensible links. I refused a string of spotless pearls for that same golden web."

"It was indiscreet, in one who trades at so much hazard."

"I kept the bauble for my pleasure! Whim is sometimes stronger than the thirst of gain; and this chain does not quit me, till I bestow it on the lady of my love."

"One so actively employed can scarcely spare time to seek a fitting object for the gift."

"Is merit and loveliness in the sex, so rare? La belle Barbérie speaks in the security of many conquests, or she would not deal thus lightly, in a matter that is so serious with most females."

"Among other countries your vessel hath visited a land of witchcraft, or you would not pretend to a knowledge of things, that, in their very nature, must be hidden from a stranger. Of what value may be those beautiful feathers of the ostrich?"

"They came of swarthy Africa, though so spotless themselves. The bunch was had, by secret traffic, from a Moorish man, in exchange for a few skins of Lachrymæ Christi, that he swallowed with his eyes shut. I dealt with the fellow, only in pity for his thirst, and do not pride myself on the value of the commodity. It shall go, too, to quicken love between me and thy uncle."

Alida could not object to this liberality, though she was not without a secret opinion that the gifts were no more than delicate and well-concealed offerings to herself. The effect of this suspicion was two-fold; it caused the maiden to become more reserved in the expression of her tastes, though it in no degree lessened her confidence in, and admiration of, the wayward and remarkable trader.

"My uncle will have cause to commend thy generous spirit," said the heiress, bending her head a little coldly, at this repeated declaration of her companion's intentions, "though it would seem that, in trade, justice is as much to be desired as generosity; this seemeth a curious design, wrought with the needle!"

"It is the labor of many a day, fashioned by the hand of a recluse. I bought it of a nun, in France, who passed years in toil, upon the conceit, which is of more value than the material. The meek daughter of solitude wept when she parted with the fabric, for, in her eyes, it had the tie of association and habit. A companion might be lost to one who lives in the confusion of the world, and it should not cause more real sorrow, than parting from the product of her needle, gave that mild resident of the cloisters!"

"And is it permitted for your sex to visit those places of religious retirement?" asked Alida. "I come of a race that pays little deference to monastic life, for we are refugees from the severity of Louis; but yet I never heard my father charge these females with being so regardless of their vows."

"The fact was so repeated to me; for, surely, my sex are not admitted to traffic, directly, with the modest sisters;" (a smile, that Alida was half-disposed to think bold, played about the handsome mouth of the speaker) "but it was so reported. What is your opinion of the merit of woman, in thus seeking refuge from the cares, and haply from

the sins, of the world, in institutions of this order."

"Truly the question exceedeth my knowledge. This is not a country to immure females, and the custom causes us of America little thought."

"The usage hath its abuses," continued the dealerin contraband, speaking thoughtfully; "but it is not without its good. There are many of the weak and vain, that would be happier in the cloisters, than if left to the seductions and follies of life. Ah! here is work of English hands. I scarcely know how the articles found their way into the company of the products of the foreign looms. My bales contain, in general, little that is vulgarly sanctioned by the law. Speak me, frankly, belle Alida, and say if you share in the prejudices against the character of us freetraders?"

"I pretend not to judge of regulations that exceed the knowledge and practices of my sex," returned the maiden, with commendable reserve. "There are some who think the abuse of power a justification of its resistance, while others deem a breach of law to be a breach of morals."

"The latter is the doctrine of your man of invested moneys and established fortune! He has entrenched his gains behind acknowledged barriers, and he preaches their sanctity, because they favor his selfishness. We skimmers of the sea "

Alida started so suddenly, as to cause her companion to cease speaking.

"Are my words frightful, that you pale at their sound?"

"I hope they were used rather in accident, than with their dreaded meaning. I would not have it said no! 'tis but a chance that springs from some resemblance in your callings. One, like you, can never be the man whose name has grown into a proverb!"

"One like me, beautiful Alida, is much as fortune wills. Of what man, or of what name, wouldst speak?"

"'Tis nothing," returned la belle Barbérie, gazing unconsciously at the polished and graceful features of the stranger, longer than was wont in maiden. "Proceed with your explanation; these are rich velvets!"

"They come of Venice, too; but commerce is like the favor which attends the rich, and the Queen of the Adriatic is already far on the decline. That which causes the increase of the husbandman, occasions the downfall of a city. The lagunes are filling with fat soil, and the keel of the trader is less frequent there than of old. Ages hence, the plow may trace furrows where the Bucentaur has floated! The outer India passage has changed the current of prosperity, which ever rushes in the widest and newest track. Nations might learn a moral, by studying the sleepy canals and instructive magnificence of that fallen town; but pride fattens on its own lazy recollections, to the last! As I was saying, we rovers deal little in musty maxims, that are made by the great and prosperous at home, and are trumpeted abroad, in order that the weak and unhappy should be the more closely riveted in their fetters."

"Methinks you push the principle further than is necessary, for one whose greatest offence against established usage is a little hazardous commerce. These are opinions, that might unsettle the world."

"Rather settle it, by referring all to the rule of right. When governments shall lay their foundations in natural justice, when their object shall be to remove the temptations to err, instead of creating them, and when bodies of men shall feel and acknowledge the responsibilities of individuals why, then the Water-Witch, herself, might become a revenue-cutter, and her owner an officer of the customs!"

The velvet fell from the hands of la bella Barbérie, and she arose from her seat with precipitation.

"Speak plainly," said Alida, with all her natural firmness. "With whom am I about to traffic?"

"An outcast of society a man condemned in the opinions of the world the outlaw the flagrant wanderer of the ocean the lawless 'Skimmer of the Seas!' " cried a voice, at the open window.

In another minute, Ludlow was in the room. Alida uttered a shriek, veiled her face in her robe, and rushed from the apartment.

CHAPTER XI.

" Truth will come to light;

Murder cannot be hid long, a man's son may;

But in the end, truth will out. "

Launcelot.

The officer of the Queen had leaped into the pavilion, with the flushed features and all the hurry of an excited man. The exclamations and retreat of la belle Barbérie, for a single moment, diverted his attention; and then he turned, suddenly, not to say fiercely, towards her companion. It is not necessary to repeat the description of the stranger's person, in order to render the change, which instantly occurred in the countenance of Ludlow, intelligible to the reader. His eye, at first, refused to believe there was no other present; and when it had, again and again, searched the whole apartment, it returned to the face and form of the dealer in contraband, with an expression of incredulity and wonder.

"Here is some mistake!" exclaimed the commander of the Coquette, after time had been given for a thorough examination of the room.

"Your gentle manner of entrance," returned the stranger, across whose face there had passed a glow, that might have come equally of anger or of surprise, "has driven the lady from the room. But as you wear the livery of the Queen, I presume you have authority for invading the dwelling of the subject?"

"I had believed nay, there was reason to be certain, that one whom all of proper loyalty execrate, was to be found here;" stammered the still-confused Ludlow. "There can scarce be a deception, for I plainly heard the discourse of my captors, and yet here is none!"

"I thank you for the high consideration you bestow on my presence."

The manner, rather than the words, of the speaker, induced Ludlow to rivet another look on his countenance. There was a mixed expression of doubt, admiration, and possibly of uneasiness, if not of actual jealousy, in the eye, which slowly read all his lineaments, though the former seemed the stronger sensation of the three.

"We have never met before!" cried Ludlow, when the organ began to grow dim, with the length and steadiness of its gaze.

"The ocean has many paths, and men may journey on them, long, without crossing each other."

"Thou hast served the Queen, though I see thee in this doubtful situation?"

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"Never, I am not one to bind myself to the servitude of any woman that lives," returned the free-trader, while a mild smile played about his lip, "though she wore a thousand diadems! Anne never had an hour of my time, nor a single wish of my heart."

"This is bold language, Sir, for the ear of her officer. The arrival of an unknown brigantine, certain incidents which have occurred to myself this night, your presence here, that bale of articles forbidden by the law, create suspicions that must be satisfied. Who are you?"

"The flagrant wanderer of the ocean the outcast of society the condemned in the opinions of the world the lawless 'Skimmer of the Seas!'"

"This cannot be! The tongues of men speak of the personal deformity of that wanderer, no less than of his bold disregard of the law. You would deceive me."

"If then men err so much in that which is visible and unimportant," returned the other, proudly, "is there not reason to doubt their accuracy in matters of more weight. I am surely what I seem, if I am not what I say."

"I will not credit so improbable a tale; give me some proof that what I hear is true."

"Look at that brigantine, whose delicate spars are almost confounded with the back-ground of trees," said the other, approaching the window, and directing the attention of his companion to the Cove: "'Tis the bark that has so often foiled the efforts of all thy cruisers, and which transports me and my wealth whither I will, without the fetters of arbitrary laws, and the meddling inquiries of venal hirelings. The scud, which floats above the sea, is not freer than that vessel, and scarcely more swift. Well is she named the Water-Witch! for her performances on the wide ocean have been such as seem to exceed all natural means. The froth of the sea does not dance more lightly above the waves, than yonder graceful fabric, when driven by the breeze. She is a thing to be loved, Ludlow; trust me, I never yet set affections on woman, with the warmth I feel for the faithful and beautiful machine!"

"This is little more than any mariner could say, in praise of a vessel that he admired."

"Will you say it, Sir, in favor of yon lumbering sloop of Queen Anne? Your Coquette is none of the fairest, and there was more of pretension than of truth, at her christening."

"By the title of my royal mistress, young beardless, but there is an insolence in this language, that might become him you wish to represent! My ship, heavy or light of foot, as she may be, is fated to bring yonder false trader to the judgment."

"By the craft and qualities of the Water-Witch! but this is language that might become one who was at liberty to act his pleasure," returned the stranger, tauntingly imitating the tone, in which his angry companion had spoken. "You would have proof of my identity: listen. There is one who vaunts his power, that forgets he is a dupe of my agent, and that even while his words are so full of boldness, he is a captive!"

The brown cheek of Ludlow reddened, and he turned toward the lighter and far less vigorous frame of his companion, as if about to strike him to the earth, when a door opened, and Alida appeared in the saloon.

The meeting, between the commander of the Coquette and his mistress, was not without embarrassment. The anger of the former and the confusion of the latter, for a moment, kept both silent; but as la belle Barbérie had not returned without an object, she was quick to speak.

"I know not whether to approve, or to condemn, the boldness that has prompted Captain Ludlow to enter my pavilion, at this unseasonable hour, and in so unceremonious a manner," she said, "for I am still ignorant of his

motive. When he shall please to let me hear it, I may judge better of the merit of the excuse."

"True, we will hear his explanation before condemnation," added the stranger, offering a seat to Alida, which she coldly declined. "Beyond a doubt, the gentleman has a motive."

If looks could have destroyed, the speaker would have been annihilated. But as the lady seemed indifferent to the last remark, Ludlow prepared to enter on his vindication.

"I shall not attempt to conceal that an artifice has been practised," he said, "which is accompanied by consequences that I find awkward. The air and manner of the seaman, whose bold conduct you witnessed in the boat, induced me to confide in him more than was prudent, and I have been rewarded by deception."

"In other words, Captain Ludlow is not as sagacious as he had reason to believe," said an ironical voice, at his elbow.

"In what manner am I to blame, or why is my privacy to be interrupted, because a wandering seaman has deceived the commander of the *Coquette*?" rejoined Alida. "Not only that audacious mariner, but this this person," she added, adopting a word that use has appropriated to the multitude, "is a stranger to me. There is no other connexion between us, than that you see."

"It is not necessary to say why I landed," continued Ludlow; "but I was weak enough to allow that unknown mariner to quit my ship, in my company; and when I would return, he found means to disarm my men, and make me a prisoner."

"And yet, art thou, for a captive, tolerably free!" added the ironical voice.

"Of what service is this freedom, without the means of using it? The sea separates me from my ship, and my faithful boat's-crew are in fetters. I have been little watched, myself; but though forbidden to approach certain points, enough has been seen to leave no doubts of the character of those whom Alderman Van Beverout entertains."

"Thou wouldst also say, and his niece, Ludlow?"

"I would say nothing harsh to, or disrespectful of, Alida de Barbérie. I will not deny that a harrowing idea possessed me, but I see my error, and repent having been so hasty."

"We may then resume our commerce," said the trader, coolly seating himself before the open bale, while Ludlow and the maiden stood regarding each other in mute surprise. "It is pleasant to exhibit these forbidden treasures to an officer of the Queen! It may prove the means of gaining the royal patronage. We were last among the velvets, and on the lagunes, of Venice. Here is one of a color and quality to form a bridal dress for the Doge himself, in his nuptials with the sea! We men of the ocean look upon that ceremony as a pledge Hymen will not forget us, though we may wander from his altars. Do I justice to the faith of the craft, Captain Ludlow? or are you a sworn devotee of Neptune, and content to breathe your sighs to Venus, when afloat? Well, if the damps and salt air of the ocean rust the golden chain, it is the fault of cruel nature! Ah! here is "

A shrill whistle sounded among the shrubbery, and the speaker became mute. Throwing his cloths carelessly on the bale, he arose again, and seemed to hesitate. Throughout the interview with Ludlow, the air of the free-trader had been mild, though, at times, it was playful; and not for an instant had he seemed to return the resentment which the other had so plainly manifested. It now became perplexed, and, by the workings of his features, it would seem that he vacillated in his opinions. The sounds of the whistle were heard, again.

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"Ay, ay, Master Tom!" muttered the dealer in contraband. "Thy note is audible, but why this haste? Beautiful Alida, this shrill summons is to say, that the moment of parting is arrived!"

"We met with less of preparation," returned la belle Barbérie, who preserved all the distant reserve of her sex, under the jealous eyes of her admirer.

"We met without a warning, but shall our separation be without a memorial? Am I to return with all these valuables to the brigantine, or, in their place, must I take the customary golden tribute?"

"I know not that I dare make a traffic which is not sanctioned by the law, in presence of a servitor of the Queen," returned Alida, smiling. "I will not deny that you have much to excite a woman's envy; but our royal mistress might forget her sex, and show little pity, were she to hear of my weakness."

"No fear of that, lady. 'Tis they who are most stern in creating these harsh regulations, that show most frailty in their breach. By the virtues of honest Leadenhall itself, but I should like to tempt the royal Anne, in her closet, with such a display of goodly laces and heavy brocades!"

"That might be more hazardous than wise!"

"I know not. Though seated on a throne, she is but woman. Disguise nature as thou wilt, she is a universal tyrant, and governs all alike. The head that wears a crown dreams of the conquests of the sex, rather than of the conquests of states; the hand that wields the sceptre is fitted to display its prettiness, with the pencil, or the needle; and though words and ideas may be taught and sounded forth with the pomp of royalty, the tone is still that of woman."

"Without bringing into question the merits of our present royal mistress," said Alida, who was a little apt to assert her sex's rights, "there is the example of the glorious Elizabeth, to refute his charge."

"Ay, we have had our Cleopatras in the sea-fight, and fear was found stronger than love! The sea has monsters, and so may have the land. He, that made the earth gave it laws that 'tis not good to break. We men are jealous of our qualities, and little like to see them usurped; and trust me, lady, she that forgets the means that nature bestows, may mourn in sorrow over the fatal error. But, shall we deal in velvet, or is your taste more leaning to brocade?"

Alida and Ludlow listened in admiration to the capricious and fanciful language of the unaccountable trader, and both were equally at a loss to estimate his character. The equivocal air was in general well maintained, though the commander of the Coquette had detected an earnestness and feeling in his manner, when he more particularly addressed la belle Barbérie, that excited an uneasiness he was ashamed to admit, even to himself. That the maiden herself observed this change, might also be inferred, from a richer glow which diffused itself over her features, though it is scarce probable that she was conscious of its effects. When questioned as to her determination concerning his goods, she again regarded Ludlow, doubtingly, ere she answered.

"That you have not studied woman in vain," she laughingly replied, "I must fain acknowledge. And yet, ere I make a decision, suffer me to consult those who, being more accustomed to deal with the laws, are better judges of the propriety of the purchases."

"If this request were not reasonable in itself, it were due to your beauty and station, lady, to grant it. I leave the bale in your care; and, before to-morrow's sun has set, one will await the answer. Captain Ludlow, are we to part in friendship, or does your duty to the Queen proscribe the word."

"If what you seem," said Ludlow, "you are a being inexplicable! If this be some masquerade, as I half suspect, 'tis well maintained, at least, though not worthily assumed."

The Water-Witch, Volume 1

"You are not the first who has refused credit to his senses, in a manner wherein the Water-Witch and her commander have been concerned. Peace, honest Tom thy whistle will not hasten Father Time! Friend, or not, Captain Ludlow need not be told he is my prisoner."

"That I have fallen into the power of a miscreant "

"Hist! if thou hast love of bodily ease and whole bones. Master Thomas Tiller is a man of rude humor, and he as little likes contumely as another. Besides, the honest mariner did but obey my orders, and his character is protected by a superior responsibility."

"Thy orders!" repeated Ludlow, with an expression of eye and lip that might have offended one more disposed to take offence than him he addressed, "The fellow who so well succeeded in his artifice, is one much more likely to command than to obey. If any here be the 'Skimmer of the Seas,' it is he."

"We are no more than the driving spray, which goes whither the winds list. But in what hath the man offended, that he finds so little favor with the Queen's captain? He has not had the boldness to propose a secret traffic with so loyal a gentleman!"

"'Tis well, Sir; you choose a happy occasion for this pleasantry. I landed to manifest the respect that I feel for this lady, and I care not if the world knows the object of the visit. 'Twas no silly artifice that led me hither."

"Spoken with the frankness of a seaman!" said the inexplicable dealer in contraband, though his color lessened and his voice appeared to hesitate. "I admire this loyalty in man to woman; for, as custom has so strongly fettered them in the expression of their inclinations, it is due from us to leave as little doubt as possible of our intentions. It is difficult to think that la belle Barbérie can do wiser than to reward so much manly admiration!"

The stranger cast a glance, which Alida fancied betrayed solicitude, as he spoke, at the maiden, and he appeared to expect she would reply.

"When the time shall come for a decision," returned the half-pleased and yet half-offended subject of his allusion, "it may be necessary to call upon very different counsellors for advice. I hear the step of my uncle. Captain Ludlow, I leave it to your discretion to meet him, or not."

The heavy footstep was approaching through the outer rooms of the pavilion. Ludlow hesitated; cast a reproachful look at his mistress; and then he instantly quitted the apartment, by the place through which he had entered. A noise in the shrubbery sufficiently proved that his return was expected, and that he was closely watched.

"Noah's Ark, and our grandmothers!" exclaimed Myndert, appearing at the door with a face red with his exertions. "You have brought us the cast-off finery of our ancestors, Master Seadrift. Here are stuffs of an age that is past, and they should be bartered for gold that hath been spent."

"What now! what now!" responded the free-trader, whose tone and manner seemed to change, at will, in order to suit the humor of whomsoever he was brought to speak with. "What now, pertinacious burgher, that thou shouldst cry down wares that are but too good for these distant regions! Many is the English duchess who pines to possess but the tithe of these beautiful stuffs I offer thy niece, and, faith rare is the English duchess that would become them half so well!"

"The girl is seemly, and thy velvets and brocades are passable, but the heavy articles are not fit to offer to a Mohawk Sachem. There must be a reduction of prices, or the invoice cannot pass."

The Water-Witch, Volume 1

"The greater the pity. But if sail we must, sail we will! The brigantine knows the channel over the Nantucket sands; and, my life on it! the Yankees will find others than the Mohawks for chapmen."

"Thou art as quick in thy motions, Master Sea-drift, as the boat itself. Who said that a compromise might not be made, when discussion was prudently and fairly exhausted? Strike off the odd florins, leave the balance in round thousands, and thy trade is done for the season!"

"Not a stiver. Here, count me back the faces of the Braganza; throw enough of thin ducats into the scales to make up the sum, and let thy slaves push inland with the articles, before the morning light comes to tell the story. Here has been one among us, who may do mischief, if he will; though I know not how far he is master of the main secret."

Alderman Van Beverout stared a little wildly about him, adjusted his wig, like one fully conscious of the value of appearances in this world, and then cautiously drew the curtains before the windows.

"I know of none more than common, my niece excepted;" he said, when all these precautions had been observed. "'Tis true the Patroon of Kinderhook is in the house, but as the man sleeps, he is a witness in our favor. We have the testimony of his presence, while his tongue is silent."

"Well, be it so;" rejoined the free-trader, reading, in the imploring eyes of Alida, a petition that he would say no more. "I knew by instinct there was one unusual, and it was not for me to discover that he sleeps. There are dealers on the coast, who, for the sake of insurance, would charge his presence in their bills."

"Say no more, worthy Master Seadrift, and take the gold. To confess the truth, the goods are in the periagua and fairly out of the river. I knew we should come to conclusions in the matter, and time is precious, as there is a cruiser of the Queen so nigh. The rogues will pass the pennant, like innocent market-people, and I'll risk a Flemish gelding against a Virginia nag, that they inquire if the captain has no need of vegetables for his soup! Ah!ha-ha-ha! That Ludlow is a simpleton, niece of mine, and he is not yet fit to deal with men of mature years. You'll think better of his qualities, one day, and bid him be gone like an unwelcome dun."

"I hope these proceedings may be legally sanctioned, uncle?"

"Sanctioned! Luck sanctions all. It is in trade as in war: success gives character and booty, in both. Your rich dealer is sure to be your honest dealer. Plantations and Orders in Council! What are our rulers doing at home, that they need be so vociferous about a little contraband? The rogues will declaim, by the hour, concerning bribery and corruption, while more than half of them get their seats as clandestinely ay, and as illegally, as you get these rare Mechlin laces. Should the Queen take offence at our dealings, Master Seadrift, bring me another season, or two, as profitable as the last, and I'll be your passenger to London, go on 'change, buy a seat in Parliament, and answer to the royal displeasure from my place, as they call it. By the responsibility of the States General! but I should expect, in such a case, to return Sir Myndert, and then the Manhattanese might hear of a Lady Van Beverout, in which case, pretty Alida, thy assets would be sadly diminished! so go to thy bed, child, and dream of fine laces, and rich velvets, and duty to old uncles, and discretion, and all manner of agreeable things kiss me, jade, and to thy pillow."

Alida obeyed, and was preparing to quit the room, when the free-trader presented himself before her with an air at once so gallant and respectful, that she could scarce take offence at the freedom.

"I should fail in gratitude," he said, "were I to part from so generous a customer, without thanks for her liberality. The hope of meeting again, will hasten my return."

"I know not that you are my debtor for these thanks," returned Alida, though she saw that the Alderman was carefully collecting the contents of the bale, and that he had already placed three or four of the most tempting of its articles on her dressing-table. "We cannot be said to have bargained."

"I have parted with more than is visible to vulgar eyes," returned the stranger, dropping his voice, and speaking with an earnestness that caused his auditor to start. "Whether there will be a return for the gift, or perhaps I had better call it loss, time and my stars must show!"

He then took her hand, and raised it to his lips, by an action so graceful and so gentle, as not to alarm the maiden, until the freedom was done. La belle Barbérie reddened to her forehead, seemed disposed to condemn the liberty, frowned, smiled, and curtsying in confusion, withdrew.

Several minutes passed in profound silence, after Alida had disappeared. The stranger was thoughtful, though his bright eye kindled, as if merry thoughts were uppermost; and he paced the room, entirely heedless of the existence of the Alderman. The latter, however, soon took occasion to remind his companion of his presence.

"No fear of the girl's prating," exclaimed the Alderman, when his task was ended. "She is an excellent and dutiful niece; and here, you see, is a balance on her side of the account, that would shut the mouth of the wife of the First Lord of the Treasury. I disliked the manner in which you would have the child introduced; for, look you, I do not think that either Monsieur Barbérie, or my late sister, would altogether approve of her entering into traffic, so very young; but what is done, is done; and the Norman himself could not deny that I have made a fair set-off, of very excellent commodities, for his daughter's benefit. When dost mean to sail, Master Seadrift?"

"With the morning tide. I little like the neighborhood of these meddling guarda-costas."

"Bravely answered! Prudence is a cardinal quality in a private trader; and it is a quality that I esteem in Master Skimmer, next to his punctuality. Dates and obligations! I wish half of the firms, of three and four names, without counting the Co.'s, were as much to be depended on. Dost not think it safer to repass the inlet, under favor of the darkness?"

"'Tis impossible. The flood is entering it like water rushing through a race-way, and we have the wind at east. But, fear not; the brigantine carries no vulgar freight, and your commerce has given us a swept hold. The Queen and the Braganza, with Holland ducats, might show their faces even in the Royal Exchequer itself! We have no want of passes, and the Miller's-Maid is just as good a name to hail by, as the 'Water-witch.' We begin to tire of this constant running, and have half a mind to taste the pleasures of your Jersey sports, for a week. There should be shooting on the upper plains?"

"Heaven forbid! Heaven forbid! Master Seadrift. I had all the deer taken for the skins, ten years ago; and as to birds, they deserted us, to a pigeon, when the last tribe of the savages went west of the Delaware. Thou hast discharged thy brigantine to better effect, than thou couldst ever discharge thy fowling-pieces. I hope the hospitality of the Lust in Rust is no problem but, blushes and curiosity! I could wish to keep a fair countenance, among my neighbors. Art sure the impertinent masts of the brigantine will not be seen above the trees, when the day comes? This Captain Ludlow is no laggard, when he thinks his duty actually concerned."

"We shall endeavor to keep him quiet. The cover of the trees, and the berth of the boat, make all snug, as respects his people. I leave worthy Tiller to settle balances between us; and so, I take my leave. Master Alderman a word at parting. Does the Viscount Cornbury still tarry in the Provinces?"

"Like a fixture! There is not a mercantile house in the colony more firmly established."

"There are unsettled affairs between us. A small premium would buy the obligations "

"Heaven keep thee, Master Seadrift, and pleasant voyages, back and forth! As for the Viscount's responsibility the Queen may trust him with another Province, but Myndert Van Beverout would not give him credit for the tail of a marten; and so, again, Heaven preserve thee!"

The dealer in contraband appeared to tear himself from the sight of all the little elegancies that adorned the apartment of la belle Barbérie, with reluctance. His adieus to the Alderman were rather cavalier, for he still maintained a cold and abstracted air; but as the other scarcely observed the forms of decorum, in his evident desire to get rid of his guest, the latter was finally obliged to depart. He disappeared by the low balcony, where he had entered.

When Myndert Van Beverout was alone, he shut the windows of the pavilion of his niece, and retired to his own part of the dwelling. Here the thrifty burgher first busied himself in making sundry calculations, with a zeal that proved how much his mind was engrossed by the occupation. After this preliminary step, he gave a short but secret conference to the mariner of the India-shawl, during which there was much clinking of gold pieces. But when the latter retired, the master of the villa first looked to the trifling securities which were then, as now, observed in the fastenings of an American country-house; when he walked forth upon the lawn, like one who felt the necessity of breathing the open air. He cast more than one inquiring glance at the windows of the room which was occupied by Oloff Van Staats, where all was happily silent; at the equally immovable brigantine in the Cove; and at the more distant and still motionless hull of the cruiser of the crown. All around him was in the quiet of midnight. Even the boats, which he knew to be plying between the land and the little vessel at anchor, were invisible; and he re-entered his habitation, with the security one would be apt to feel, under similar circumstances, in a region so little tenanted, and so little watched, as that in which he lived.

CHAPTER XII.

"Come on, Nerissa; I have work in hand, That you, yet, know not of. "

Merchant of Venice

Notwithstanding the active movements which had taken place in and around the buildings of the Lust in Rust, during the night which ended with our last chapter, none but the initiated were in the smallest degree aware of their existence. Oloff Van Staats was early afoot; and when he appeared on the lawn, to scent the morning air, there was nothing visible, to give rise to a suspicion that aught extraordinary had occurred during his slumbers. La Cour des Fées was still closed, but the person of the faithful Francois was seen, near the abode of his young mistress, busied in some of those pretty little offices, that can easily be imagined would be agreeable to a maiden of her years and station. Van Staats of Kinderhook had as little of romance in his composition, as could well be in a youth of five-and-twenty, who was commonly thought to be enamoured, and who was not altogether ignorant of the conventional sympathies of the passion. The man was mortal, and as the personal attractions of la belle Barbérie were sufficiently obvious, he had not entirely escaped the fate, which seems nearly inseparable from young fancy, when excited by beauty. He drew nigh to the pavilion, and, by a guarded but decisive manœuvre, he managed to come so close to the valet, as to render a verbal communication not only natural, but nearly unavoidable.

"A fair morning and a healthful air, Monsieur François;" commenced the young Patroon, acknowledging the low salute of the domestic, by gravely lifting his own beaver. "This is a comfortable abode for the warm months, and one it might be well to visit oftener."

"When Monsieur le Patteron shall be de lor' of ce manoir, aussi, he shall come when he shall have la volonté," returned François, who knew that a pleasantry of his ought not to be construed into an engagement on the part of her he served, while it could not fail to be agreeable to him who heard it. "Monsieur de Van Staats, est grand

propriétaire sur la rivière, and one day, peut-être, he shall be propriétaire sur la mèr!"

"I have thought of imitating the example of the Alderman, honest Francis, and of building a villa on the coast; but there will be time for that, when I shall find myself more established in life! Your young mistress is not yet moving, Francis?"

"Ma foi, non Mam'selle Alide sleep! 'tis good symptôme, Monsieur Patteron, pour les jeunes personnes, to tres bien sleep. Monsieur, et toute la famille de Barbérie sleep à merveille! Oui, c'est toujours une famille remarquable, pour le sommeil!"

"Yet one would wish to breathe this fresh and invigorating air, which comes from off the sea, like a balm, in the early hours of the day."

"Sans doute, Monsieur. C'est un miracle, how Mam'selle love de air! Personne do not love air more, as Mam'selle Alide. Bah! It was grand plaisir to see how Monsieur de Barbérie love de air!"

"Perhaps, Mr. Francis, your young lady is ignorant of the hour. It might be well to knock at the door, or perhaps at the window. I confess, I should much admire to see her bright face, smiling from that window, on this soft morning scene."

It is not probable that the imagination of the Patroon of Kinderhook ever before took so high a flight; and there was reason to suspect, by the wavering and alarmed glance that he cast around him after so unequivocal an expression of weakness, that he already repented his temerity. François, who would not willingly disoblige a man that was known to possess a hundred thousand acres of land, with manorial rights, besides personals of no mean amount, felt embarrassed by the request; but was enabled to recollect in time, that the heiress was known to possess a decision of character that might choose to control her own pleasures.

"Well, I shall be too happy to knock; mais, Monsieur sais, dat sleep est si agréable, pour les jeunes personnes! On n'a jamais knock, dans la famille de Monsieur de Barbérie, and je suis sûr, que Mam'selle Alide, do not love to hear de knock pourtant, si Monsieur le Patteron le veut, I shall consult ses Voila! Monsieur Bevre, qui vient sans knock à la fenêtre. J'ai l'honneur de vous laisser avec Monsieur Al'erman."

And so the complaisant but still considerate valet bowed himself out of a dilemma, that he found, as he muttered to himself, while retiring, 'tant soit peu ennuyant.'

The air and manner of the Alderman, as he approached his guest, were, like the character of the man, hale, hearty, and a little occupied with his own enjoyments and feelings. He hemmed thrice, ere he was near enough to speak; and each of the strong expirations seemed to invite the admiration of the Patroon, for the strength of his lungs, and for the purity of the atmosphere around a villa which acknowledged him for its owner.

"Zephyrs and Spas! but this is the abode of health, Patroon!" cried the burgher, as soon as these demonstrations of his own bodily condition had been sufficiently repeated. "One sometimes feels in this air equal to holding a discourse, across the Atlantic, with his friends at Scheveling, or the Helder. A broad and deep chest, air like this from the sea, with a clear conscience, and a lucky hit in the way of trade, cause the lungs of a man to play as easily and as imperceptibly as the wings of a humming-bird. Let me see; there are few four-score men in thy stock. The last Patroon closed the books at sixty-six; and his father went but a little beyond seventy. I wonder, there has never been an inter-marriage, among you, with the Van Courtlandts; that blood is as good as an insurance to four-score and ten, of itself."

"I find the air of your villa, Mr. Van Beverout, a cordial that one could wish to take often," returned the other, who had far less of the brusque manner of the trader, than his companion. "It is a pity that all who have the

choice, do not profit by their opportunities to breathe it."

"You allude to the lazy mariners in you vessel! Her Majesty's servants are seldom in a hurry; and as for this brigantine in the Cove, the fellow seems to have gotten in by magic! I warrant me, now, the rogue is there for no good, and that the Queen's Exchequer will be none the richer for his visit. Harkee, you Brom," calling to an aged black, who was working at no great distance from the dwelling, and who was deep in his master's confidence, "hast seen anyboats plying between yonder roguish-looking brigantine and the land?"

The negro shook his head, like the earthen image of a mandarin, and laughed loud and heartily.

"I b'rieve he do all he mischief among a Yankee, an' he only come here to take he breat'," said the wily slave. "Well, I wish, wid all a heart, dere would come free-trader, some time, along our shore. Dat gib a chance to poor black man, to make an Lonest penny!"

"You see, Patroon, human nature itself rises against monopoly! That was the voice of instinct, speaking with the tongue of Brom; and it is no easy task, for a merchant, to keep his dependants obedient to laws, which, in themselves, create so constant a temptation to break them. Well, well; we will always hope for the best, and endeavor to act like dutiful subjects. The boat is not amiss, as to form and rig, let her come from where she will. Dost think the wind will be off the land this morning?"

"There are signs of a change in the clouds. One could wish that all should be out in the air, to taste this pleasant sea-breeze while it lasts."

"Come, come," cried the Alderman, who had for a moment studied the state of the heavens with a solicitude, that he feared might attract his companion's attention. "We will taste our breakfast. This is the spot to show the use of teeth! The negroes have not been idle during the night, Mr. Van Staats he-e-em I say, Sir, they have not been idle: and we shall have a choice among the dainties of the river and bay. That cloud above the mouth of the Raritan appears to rise, and we may yet have a breeze at west!"

"Yonder comes a boat in the direction of the city," observed the other, reluctantly obeying a motion of the Alderman to retire to the apartment where they were accustomed to break their fasts. "To me, it seems to approach with more than ordinary speed."

"There are stout arms at its oars! Can it be a messenger for the cruiser? no it rather steers more for our own landing. These Jersey-men are often overtaken by the night, between York and their own doors. And now, Patroon, we will to our knives and forks, like men who have taken the best stomachics."

"And are we to refresh ourselves alone?" demanded the young man, who ever and anon cast a sidelong and wistful glance at the closed and immovable shutters of la Cour des Fées.

"Thy mother hath spoilt thee, young Oloff; unless the coffee comes from a pretty female hand, it loses its savor. I take thy meaning, and think none the worse of thee; for the weakness is natural at thy years. Celibacy and independence! A man must get beyond forty, before he is ever sure of being his own master. Come hither, Master Francis. It is time my niece had shaken off this laziness, and shown her bright face to the sun. We wait for her fair services at the table. I see nothing of that lazy hussy, Dinah, any more than of her mistress."

"Assurément non, Monsieur," returned the valet. "Mam'selle Dinah do not love trop d'activité. Mais, Monsieur Al'erman, elles sont jeunes, toutes les deux! Le sommeil est bien salulaire, pour la jeunesse."

"The girl is no longer in her cradle, Francis, and it is time to rattle at the windows. As for the black minx, who should have been up and at her duty this hour, there will be a balance to settle between us. Come, Patroon: the

appetite will not await the laziness of a wilful girl; we will to the table. Dost think the wind will stand at west this morning?"

Thus saying, the Alderman led the way into the little parlor, where a neat and comfortable service invited them to break their morning fast. He was followed by Oloff Van Staats, with a lingering step, for the young man really longed to see the windows of the pavilion open, and the fair face of Alida smiling amid the other beautiful objects of the scene. Francois proceeded to take such measures to arouse his mistress, as he believed to comport with his duty to her uncle, and his own ideas of bienséance. After some little delay, the Alderman and his guest took their seats at the table; the former loudly protesting against the necessity of waiting for the idle, and throwing in an occasional moral concerning the particular merit of punctuality in domestic economy, as well as in the affairs of commerce.

"The ancients divided time," said the somewhat pertinacious commentator, "into years, months, weeks, days, hours, minutes, and moments, as they divided numbers into units, tens, hundreds, thousands, and tens of thousands; and both with an object. If we commence at the bottom, and employ well the moments, Mr. Van Staats, we turn the minutes into tens, the hours into hundreds, and the weeks and months into thousands ay! and when there is a happy state of trade, into tens of thousands! Missing an hour, therefore, is somewhat like dropping an important figure in a complex calculation, and the whole labor may be useless, for want of punctuality in one, as for want of accuracy in the other. Your father, the late Patroon, was what may be called a minute-man. He was as certain to be seen in his pew, at church, at the stroke of the clock, as to pay a bill, when its items had been properly examined. Ah! it was a blessing to hold one of his notes, though they were far scarcer than broad pieces, or bullion. I have heard it said, Patroon, that the manor is backed by plenty of Johannes and Dutch ducats!"

"The descendant has no reason to reproach his ancestors with want of foresight."

"Prudently answered; not a word too much, nor too little a principle on which all honest men settle their accounts. By proper management, such a foundation might be made to uphold an estate that should count thousands with the best of Holland or England. Growth and majority! Patroon; but we of the colonies must come to man's estate in time, like our cousins on the dykes of the Low Countries, or our rulers among the smithies of England. Erasmus, look at that cloud over the Raritan, and tell me if it rises."

The negro reported that the vapor was stationary; and, at the same time, by way of episode, he told his master that the boat which had been seen approaching the land had reached the wharf, and that some of its crew were ascending the hill towards the Lust in Rust.

"Let them come of all hospitality," returned the Alderman, heartily; "I warrant me, they are honest farmers from the interior, a-hungred with the toil of the night. Go tell the cook to feed them with the best, and bid them welcome. And harkee, boy; if there be among them any comfortable yeoman, bid the man enter and sit at our table. This is not a country, Patroon, to be nice about the quality of the cloth a man has on his back, or whether he wears a wig or only his own hair. What is the fellow gaping at?"

Erasmus rubbed his eyes, and then showing his teeth to the full extent of a double row, that glittered like pearls, he gave his master to understand, that the negro, introduced to the reader under the name of Euclid, and who was certainly his own brother of the half-blood, or by the mother's side, was entering the villa. The intelligence caused a sudden cessation of the masticating process in the Alderman, who had not, however, time to express his wonder, ere two doors simultaneously opened, and François presented himself at the one, while the shining and doubting face of the slave from town darkened the other. The eyes of Myndert rolled first to this side, and then to that, a certain misgiving of the heart preventing him from speaking to either; for he saw, in the disturbed features of each, omens that bade him prepare himself for unwelcome tidings. The reader will perceive, by the description we shall give, that there was abundant reason for the sagacious burgher's alarm.

The Water-Witch, Volume 1

The visage of the valet, at all times meagre and long, seemed extended to far more than its usual dimensions, the under jaw appearing fallen and trebly attenuated. The light-blue protruding eyes were open to the utmost, and then expressed a certain confused wildness, that was none the less striking, for the painful expression of mental suffering, with which it was mingled. Both hands were raised, with the palms outward; while the shoulders of the poor fellow were elevated so high, as entirely to destroy the little symmetry that Nature had bestowed on that particular part of his frame.

On the other hand, the look of the negro was guilty, dogged, and cunning. His eye leered askance, seeming to wish to play around the person of his master, as, it will be seen, his language endeavored to play around his understanding. The hands crushed the crown of a woolen hat between their fingers, and one of his feet described semicircles with its toe, by performing nervous evolutions on its heel.

"Well!" ejaculated Myndert, regarding each in turn. "What news from the Canadas? Is the Queen dead, or has she restored the colony to the United Provinces?"

"Mam'selle Alide!" exclaimed, or rather groaned, François.

"The poor dumb beast!" muttered Euclid.

The knives and the forks fell from the hands of Myndert and his guest, as it were by a simultaneous paralysis. The latter involuntarily arose; while the former planted his solid person still more firmly in its seat, like one who was preparing to meet some severe and expected shock, with all the physical resolution he could muster.

"What of my niece? What of my geldings? You have called upon Dinah?"

"Sans doute, Monsieur!"

"And you kept the keys of the stable?"

"I nebbber let him go, at all!"

"And you bade her call her mistress?"

"She no make answeer, de tout."

"The animals were fed and watered, as I ordered?"

"Em nebbber take he food, better!"

"You entered the chamber of my niece, yourself, to awake her?"

"Monsieur a raison."

"What the devil has befallen the innocent?"

"He lose he stomach quite, and I t'ink it great time 'fore it ebber come back."

"Mister Francis, I desire to know the answer of Monsieur Barbérie's daughter."

"Mam'selle no répond, Monsieur; pas un syllabe!"

The Water-Witch, Volume 1

"Drenchers and fleams! The beauty should have been drenched and blooded "

"He'm too late for dat, Masser, on honor."

"The obstinate hussy! This comes of her Huguenot breed, a race that would quit house and lands rather than change its place of worship!"

"La famille de Barbérie est honorable, Monsieur, mais le Grand Monarque fut un peu trop exigeant. Vraiment, la dragonade était mal avisée, pour faire des chrétiens!"

"Apoplexies and hurry! you should have sent for the farrier to administer to the sufferer, thou black hound!"

"Em go for a butcher, Masser, to save he skin; for he war' too son dead."

The word dead produced a sudden pause. The preceding dialogue had been so rapid, and question and answer, no less than the ideas of the principal speaker, had got so confused, that, for a moment, he was actually at a loss to understand, whether the last great debt of nature had been paid by la belle Barbérie, or one of the Flemish geldings. Until now, consternation, as well as the confusion of the interview, had constrained the Patroon to be silent, but he profited by the breathing-time to interpose.

"It is evident, Mr. Van Beverout," he said, speaking with a tremor in the voice, which betrayed his own uneasiness, "that some untoward event has occurred. Perhaps the negro and I had better retire, that you may question Francis concerning that which hath befallen Mademoiselle Barbérie, more at your leisure."

The Alderman was recalled from a profound stupor, by this gentlemanlike and considerate proposal. He bowed his acknowledgments, and permitted Mr. Van Staats to quit the room; but when Euclid would have followed, he signed to the negro to remain.

"I may have occasion to question thee farther," he said, in a voice that had lost most of that compass and depth for which it was so remarkable. "Stand there, sirrah, and be in readiness to answer. And now, Mr. Francis, I desire to know why my niece declines taking the breakfast with myself and my guest?"

"Mon Dieu, Monsieur, it is not possible y répondre. Les sentiments des demoiselles are nevair décidés!"

"Go then, and say to her, that my sentiments are decided to curtail certain bequests and devises, which have consulted her interests more than strict justice to others of my blood ay, and even of my name, might dictate."

"Monsieur y réfléchira. Mam'selle Alide be so young personne!"

"Old or young, my mind is made up; and so to your Cour des Fées, and tell the lazy minx as much. Thou hast ridden that innocent, thou scowling imp of darkness!"

"Mais, pensez-y, je vous en prie, Monsieur. Mam'selle shall nevair se sauver encore; jamais, je vous en répond."

"What is the fellow jabbering about?" exclaimed the Alderman, whose mouth fell nearly to the degree that rendered the countenance of the valet so singularly expressive of distress. "Where is my niece, Sir? and what means this allusion to her absence?"

"La fille de Monsieur de Barbérie n'y est pas!" cried François, whose heart was too full to utter more. The aged and affectionate domestic laid his hand on his breast, with an air of acute suffering; and then, remembering the presence of his superior, he turned, bowed with a manner of profound condolence, struggled manfully with his

own emotion, and succeeded in getting out of the room with dignity and steadiness.

It is due to the character of Alderman Van Beverout, to say, that the blow occasioned by the sudden death of the Flemish gelding, lost some of its force, in consequence of so unlooked-for a report concerning the inexplicable absence of his niece. Euclid was questioned, menaced, and even anathematized, more than once, during the next ten minutes; but the cunning slave succeeded in confounding himself so effectually with the rest of his connexions of the half-blood, during the search which instantly followed the report of François, that his crime was partially forgotten.

On entering la Cour des Fées, it was, in truth, found to want her whose beauty and grace had lent its chief attraction. The outer rooms, which were small, and ordinarily occupied during the day by François and the negress called Dinah, and in thenight by the latter only, were in the state in which they might be expected to be seen. The apartment of the attendant furnished evidence that its occupant had quitted it in haste, though there was every appearance of her having retired to rest at the usual hour. Clothes were scattered carelessly about; and though most of her personal effects had disappeared, enough remained to prove that her departure had been hurried and unforeseen.

On the other hand, the little saloon, with the dressing-room and bed-room of la belle Barbérie, were in a state of the most studied arrangement. Not an article of furniture was displaced, a door ajar, or a window open. The pavilion had evidently been quitted by its ordinary passage, and the door had been closed in the customary manner, without using the fastenings. The bed had evidently not been entered, for the linen was smooth and untouched. In short, so complete was the order of the place, that, yielding to a powerful natural feeling, the Alderman called aloud on his truant niece, by name, as if he expected to see her appear from some place, in which she had secreted her person, in idle sport. But this touching expedient was vain. The voice sounded hollow through the deserted rooms; and though all waited long to listen, there came no playful or laughing answer back.

"Alida!" cried the burgher, for the fourth and last time, "come forth, child; I forgive thee thy idle sport, and all I have said of disinheritance was but a jest. Come forth, my sister's daughter, and kiss thy old uncle!"

The Patroon turned aside, as he heard a man so known for his worldliness yielding to the power of nature; and the lord of a hundred thousand acres forgot his own disappointment, in the force of sympathy.

"Let us retire," he said, gently urging the burgher to quit the place. "A little reflection will enable us to decide what should be done."

The Alderman complied. Before quitting the place, however, its closets and drawers were examined; and the search left no further doubts of the step which the young heiress had taken. Her clothes, books, utensils for drawing, and even the lighter instruments of music, had disappeared.

CHAPTER XIII.

" Ay, that way goes the game,

Now I perceive that she hath made compare

Between our statures "

Midsummer-Night's Dream

The tide of existence floats downward, and with it go, in their greatest strength, all those affections that unite

families and kindred. We learn to know our parents in the fullness of their reason, and commonly in the perfection of their bodily strength. Reverence and respect both mingle with our love; but the affection, with which we watch the helplessness of infancy, the interest with which we see the ingenuous and young profiting by our care, the pride of improvement, and the magic of hope, create an intensity of sympathy in their favor, that almost equals the identity of self-love. There is a mysterious and double existence, in the tie that binds the parent to the child. With a volition and passions of its own, the latter has power to plant a sting in the bosom of the former, that shall wound as acutely as the errors which arise from mistakes, almost from crimes, of its own. But, when the misconduct of the descendant can be traced to neglect, or to a vicious instruction, then, indeed, even the pang of a wounded conscience may be added to the sufferings of those who have gone before. Such, in some measure, was the nature of the pain that Alderman Van Beverout was condemned to feel, when at leisure to reflect on the ill-judged measure that had been taken by la belle Barbérie.

"She was a pleasant and coaxing minx, Patroon," said the burgher, pacing the room they occupied, with a quick and heavy step, and speaking unconsciously of his niece, as of one already beyond the interests of life; "and as wilful and headstrong as an unbroken colt. Thou hard-riding imp! I shall never find a match for the poor disconsolate survivor. But the girl had a thousand agreeable and delightful ways with her, that made her the delight of my old days. She has not done wisely, to desert the friend and guardian of her youth, ay, even of her childhood, in order to seek protection from strangers. This is an unhappy world, Mr. Van Staats! All our calculations come to nought; and it is in the power of fortune to reverse the most reasonable and wisest of our expectations. A gale of wind drives the richly-freighted ship to the bottom; a sudden fall in the market robs us of our gold, as the November wind strips the oak of its leaves; and bankruptcies and decayed credit often afflict the days of the oldest houses, as disease saps the strength of the body: Alida! Alida! thou hast wounded one that never harmed thee, and rendered my age miserable!"

"It is vain to contend with the inclinations," returned the proprietor of the manor, sighing in a manner that did no discredit to the sincerity of his remark. "I could have been happy to have placed your niece in the situation that my respected mother filled with so much dignity and credit, but it is now too late "

"We don't know that; we don't know that;" interrupted the Alderman, who still clung to the hope of effecting the first great wish of his heart, with the pertinacity with which he would have clung to the terms of any other fortunate bargain. "We should never despair, Mr. Van Staats, as long as the transaction is left open."

"The manner in which Mademoiselle Barbérie has expressed her preference, is so very decided, that I see no hope of completing the arrangement."

"Mere coquetry, Sir, mere coquetry! The girl has disappeared in order to enhance the value of her future submission. One should never regard a treaty at an end, so long as reasonable hopes remain that it may be productive to the parties."

"I fear, Sir, there is more of the coquette in this step of the young lady, than a gentleman can overlook," returned the Patroon a little dryly, and with far more point than he was accustomed to use. "If the commander of Her Majesty's cruiser be not a happy man, he will not have occasion to reproach his mistress with disdain!"

"I am not certain, Mr. Van Staats, that in the actual situation of our stipulations, I ought to overlook an innuendo that seems to reflect on the discretion of my ward. Captain Ludlow well, sirrah! what is the meaning of this impertinence?"

"He'm waiting to see Masser," returned the gaping Erasmus, who stood with the door in his hand, admiring the secret intelligence of his master, who had so readily anticipated his errand.

"Who is waiting? What does the simpleton mean?"

"I mean 'a gentle'um Masser say."

"The fortunate man is here to remind us of his success," haughtily observed Van Staats of Kinderhook. "There can be no necessity of my presence, at an interview between Alderman Van Beverout and his nephew."

The justly-mortified Patroon bowed ceremoniously to the equally disappointed burgher, and left the room the moment he had done speaking. The negro took his retreat as a favorable symptom for one who was generally known to be his rival; and he hastened to inform the young captain, that the coast was clear.

The meeting, that instantly succeeded, was sufficiently constrained and awkward. Alderman Van Beverout assumed a manner of offended authority and wounded affection; while the officer of the Queen wore an air of compelled submission to a duty that he found to be disagreeable. The introduction of the discourse was consequently ceremonious, and punctiliously observant of courtesy.

"It has become my office," continued Ludlow, after the preliminaries had been observed, to express the surprise I feel, that a vessel of the exceedingly equivocal appearance of the brigantine, that is anchored in the Cove, should be found in a situation to create unpleasant suspicions concerning the commercial propriety of a merchant so well known as Mr. Alderman Van Beverout."

"The credit of Myndert Van Beverout is too well established, Captain Cornelius Ludlow, to be affected by the accidental position of ships and bays. I see two vessels anchored near the Lust in Rust, and if called upon to give my testimony before the Queen in Council, I should declare that the one which wears her royal pennant had done more wrong to her subjects than the stranger. But what harm is known of the latter?"

"I shall not conceal any of the facts; for I feel that this is a case, in which a gentleman of your station has the fullest right to the benefit of explanations "

"Hem " interrupted the burgher, who disliked the manner in which his companion had opened the interview, and who thought he saw the commencement of a forced compromise in the turn it was taking; "Hem I commend your moderation, Captain Ludlow. Sir, we are flattered in having a native of the Province in so honorable a command on the coast. Be seated, I pray you, young gentleman, that we may converse more at leisure. The Ludlows are an ancient and well-established family in the colonies; and though they were no friends of King Charles, why we have others here in the same predicament. There are few crowns in Europe that might not trace some of their discontented subjects to these colonies; and the greater the reason, say I, why we should not be too hasty in giving faith to the wisdom of this European legislation. I do not pretend, Sir, to admire all the commercial regulations which flow from the wisdom of Her Majesty's counsellors. Candor forbids that I should deny this truth: but what of the brigantine in the Cove?"

"It is not necessary to tell one so familiar with the affairs of commerce, of the character of a vessel called the Water-Witch, nor of that of its lawless commander, the notorious 'Skimmer of the Seas.'"

"Captain Ludlow is not about to accuse Alderman Van Beverout of a connexion with such a man!" exclaimed the burgher, rising as it were involuntarily, and actually recoiling a foot or two, apparently under the force of indignation and surprise.

"Sir, I am not commissioned to accuse any of the Queen's subjects. My duty is to guard her interests on the water, to oppose her open enemies, and to uphold her royal prerogatives."

"An honorable employment, and one I doubt not that is honorably discharged. Resume your seat, Sir; for I foresee that the conference is likely to end as it should, between a son of the late very respectable King's counsellor and his father's friend. You have reason then for thinking that this brigantine, which has so suddenly appeared in the

Cove, has some remote connexion with the Skimmer of the Seas?"

"I believe the vessel to be the famous Water-Witch itself, and her commander to be, of course, that well-known adventurer."

"Well, Sir well, Sir this may be so. It is impossible for me to deny it but what should such a reprobate be doing here, under the guns of a Queen's cruiser?"

"Mr. Alderman, my admiration of your niece is not unknown to you."

"I have suspected it, Sir;" returned the burgher, who believed the tenor of the compromise was getting clearer, but who still waited to know the exact value of the concessions the other party would make, before he closed a bargain, in a hurry, of which he might repent at his leisure "Indeed, it has even been the subject of some discourse between us."

"This admiration induced me to visit your villa, the past night, "

"This is a fact too well established, young gentleman."

"Whence I took away " Ludlow hesitated, as if anxious to select his words

"Alida Barbérie."

"Alida Barbérie!"

"Ay, Sir; my niece, or perhaps I should say my heiress, as well as the heiress of old Etienne de Barbérie. The cruise was short, Captain Cornelius Ludlow; but the prize-money will be ample unless, indeed, a claim to neutral privileges should be established in favor of part of the cargo!"

"Sir, your pleasantry is amusing, but I have little leisure for its enjoyment. That I visited the Cour des Fées, shall not be denied. I think la belle Barbérie will not be offended, under the circumstances, with this acknowledgment."

"If she is, the jade has a rare squeamishness, after what has passed!"

"I pretend not to judge of more than my duty. The desire to serve my royal mistress had induced me, Mr. Van Beverout, to cause a seaman of odd attire and audacious deportment to enter the Coquette. You will know the man, when I tell you that he was your companion in the island ferry-boat."

"Yes, yes, I confess there was a mariner of the long voyage there, who caused much surprise, and some uneasiness, to myself and niece, as well as to Van Staats of Kinderhook."

Ludlow smiled, like one not to be deceived, as he continued.

"Well, Sir, this man so far succeeded, as to tempt me to suffer him to land, under the obligation of some half-extorted promise we came into the river together, and entered your grounds in company."

Alderman Van Beverout now began to listen like a man who dreaded, while he desired to catch, each syllable. Observing that Ludlow paused, and watched his countenance with a cool and steady eye, he recovered his self-command, and affected a mere ordinary curiosity, while he signed to him to proceed.

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"I am not sure I tell Alderman Van Beverout any thing that is new," resumed the young officer, "when I add, that the fellow suffered me to visit the pavilion, and then contrived to lead me into an ambush of lawless men, having previously succeeded in making captives of my boat's-crew."

"Seizures and warrants!" exclaimed the burgher, in his natural strong and hasty manner of speaking. "This is the first I have heard of the affair. It was ill-judged, to call it by no other term."

Ludlow seemed relieved, when he saw, by the undisguised amazement of his companion, that the latter was, in truth, ignorant of the matter in which he had been detained.

"It might not have been, Sir, had our watch been as vigilant as their artifice was deep," he continued. "But I was little guarded, and having no means to reach my ship, I "

"Ay, ay, Captain Ludlow; it is not necessary to be so circumstantial; you proceeded to the wharf, and "

"Perhaps, Sir, I obeyed my feelings, rather than my duty," observed Ludlow, coloring high, when he perceived that the burgher paused to clear his throat. "I returned to the pavilion, where "

"You persuaded a niece to forget her duty to her uncle and protector."

"This is a harsh and most unjustifiable charge, both as respects the young lady and myself. I can distinguish between a very natural desire to possess articles of commerce that are denied by the laws, and a more deliberate and mercenary plot against the revenue of the country. I believe there are few of her years and sex, who would refuse to purchase the articles I saw presented to the eyes of la belle Barbérie, especially when the utmost hazard could be no more than their loss, as they were already introduced into the country."

"A just discrimination, and one likely to render the arrangement of our little affairs less difficult! I was sure that my old friend the counsellor would not have left a son of his ignorant of principles, more especially as he was about to embark in a profession of so much responsibility. And so, my niece had the imprudence to entertain a dealer in contraband?"

"Alderman Van Beverout, there were boats in motion on the water, between this landing and the brigantine in the Cove. A periagua even left the river for the city, at the extraordinary hour of midnight!"

"Sir, boats will move on the water, when the hands of man set them in motion; but what have I to answer for in the matter? If goods have entered the Province, without license, why, they must be found and condemned; and if free-traders are on the coast, they should be caught. Would it not be well to proceed to town, and lay the fact of this strange brigantine's presence before the Governor, without delay?"

"I have other intentions. If, as you say, goods have gone up the bay, it is too late for me to stop them; but it is not too late to attempt to seize yon brigantine. Now, I would perform this duty in a manner as little likely to offend any of reputable name, as my allegiance will admit."

"Sir, I extol this discretion not that there is any testimony to implicate more than the crew, but credit is a delicate flower, and it should be handled tenderly. I see an opening for an arrangement but, we will, as in duty bound, hear your propositions first, since you may be said to speak with the authority of the Queen. I will merely surmise that terms should be moderate, between friends; perhaps I should say, between connexions, Captain Ludlow."

"I am flattered by the word, Sir," returned the young sailor, smiling with an expression of delight. "First suffer me to be admitted to the charming Cour des Féés, but for a moment."

"That is a favor which can hardly be refused you, who may be said to have a right, now, to enter the pavilion at pleasure," returned the Alderman, unhesitatingly leading the way through the long passage to the deserted apartments of his niece, and continuing the blind allusions to the affairs of the preceding night, in the same indirect manner as had distinguished the dialogue during the whole interview. "I shall not be unreasonable, young gentleman, and here is the pavilion of my niece; I wish I could add, and here also is its mistress!"

"And is la belle Barbérie no longer a tenant of la Cour des Fées!" demanded Ludlow, in a surprise too natural to be feigned.

Alderman Van Beverout regarded the young man in wonder; pondered a moment, to consider how far denying a knowledge of the absence of his niece might benefit the officer, in the pending negotiation; and then he dryly observed, "Boats passed on the water, during the night. If the men of Captain Ludlow were at first imprisoned, I presume they were set at liberty at the proper time."

"They are carried I know not whither the boat itself is gone, and I am here alone."

"Am I to understand, Captain Ludlow, that Alida Barbérie has not fled my house, during the past night, to seek a refuge in your ship?"

"Fled!" echoed the young man, in a voice of horror. "Has Alida de Barbérie fled from the house of her uncle, at all?"

"Captain Ludlow, this is not acting. On the honor of a gentleman, are you ignorant of my niece's absence?"

The young commander did not answer; but, striking his head fiercely, he smothered words that were unintelligible to his companion. When this momentary burst of feeling was past, he sunk into a chair, and gazed about him in stupid amazement. All this pantomime was inexplicable to the Alderman, who, however, began to see that more of the conditions of the arrangement in hand were beyond the control of his companion, than he had at first believed. Still the plot thickened, rather than grew clear; and he was afraid to speak, lest he might utter more than was prudent. The silence, therefore, continued for quite a minute; during which time, the parties sat gazing at each other in dull wonder.

"I shall not deny, Captain Ludlow, that I believed you had prevailed on my niece to fly aboard the Coquette; for, though a man who has always kept his feelings in his own command, as the safest manner of managing particular interests, yet I am not to learn that rash youth is often guilty of folly. I am now equally at a loss with yourself, to know what has become of her, since here she is not."

"Hold!" eagerly interrupted Ludlow. "A boat left your wharf, for the city, in the earlier hours of the morning. Is it not possible that she may have taken a passage in it?"

"It is not possible. I have reasons to know in short, Sir, she is not there."

"Then is the unfortunate the lovely the indiscreet girl for ever lost to herself and us!" exclaimed the young sailor, actually groaning under his mental agony. "Rash, mercenary man! to what an act of madness has this thirst of gold driven one so fair would I could say, so pure and so innocent!"

But while the distress of the lover was thus violent, and caused him to be so little measured in his terms of reproach, the uncle of the fair offender appeared to be lost in surprise. Though la belle Barbérie had so well preserved the decorum and reserve of her sex, as to leave even her suitors in doubt of the way her inclinations tended, the watchful Alderman had long suspected that the more ardent, open, and manly commander of the Coquette was likely to triumph over one so cold in exterior, and so cautious in his advances, as the Patroon of

Kinderhook. When, therefore, it became apparent Alida had disappeared, he quite naturally inferred that she had taken the simplest manner of defeating all his plans for favoring the suit of the latter, by throwing herself, at once, into the arms of the young sailor. The laws of the colonies offered few obstacles to the legality of their union; and when Ludlow appeared that morning, he firmly believed that he beheld one, who, if he were not so already, was inevitably soon to become his nephew. But the suffering of the disappointed youth could not be counterfeited; and, prevented from adhering to his first opinion, the perplexed Alderman seemed utterly at a loss to conjecture what could have become of his niece. Wonder, rather than pain, possessed him; and when he suffered his ample chin to repose on the finger and thumb of one hand, it was with the air of a man that revolved, in his mind, all the plausible points of some knotty question.

"Holes and corners!" he muttered, after a long silence; "the wilful minx cannot be playing at hide-and-seek with her friends! The hussy had ever too much of la famille de Barbérie, and her high Norman blood about her, as that silly old valet has it, to stoop to such childish trifling. Gone she certainly is," he continued, looking, again, into the empty drawers and closets, "and with her the valuables have disappeared. The guitar is missing the lute I sent across the ocean to purchase, an excellently-toned Dutch lute, that cost every stiver of one hundred guilders, is also wanting, and all the hem the recent accessions have disappeared. And there, too, are my sister's jewels, that I persuaded her to bring along, to guard against accidents while our backs are turned, they are not to be seen. Francois! Francois! Thou long-trying servitor of Etienne Barbérie, what the devil has become of thy mistress?"

"Mais, Monsieur," returned the disconsolate valet, whose decent features exhibited all the signs of unequivocal suffering, "she no tell le pauvre François! En supposant, que Monsieur ask le capitaine, he shall probablement know."

The burgher cast a quick suspicious glance at Ludlow, and shook his head, to express his belief that the young man was true.

"Go; desire Mr. Van Staats of Kinderhook to favor us with his company."

"Hold," cried Ludlow, motioning to the valet to withdraw. "Mr. Beverout, an uncle should be tender of the errors of one so dear as this cruel, unreflecting girl. You cannot think of abandoning her to so frightful a fortune!"

"I am not addicted to abandoning any thing, Sir, to which my title is just and legal. But you speak in enigmas. If you are acquainted with the place where my niece is secreted, avow it frankly, and permit me to take those measures which the case requires."

Ludlow reddened to his forehead, and he struggled powerfully with his pride and his regrets.

"It is useless to attempt concealing the step which Alida Barbérie has been pleased to take," he said, a smile so bitter passing over his features, as to lend them the expression of severe mockery; "she has chosen more worthily than either of us could have believed; she has found a companion more suited to her station, her character, and her sex, than Van Staats of Kinderhook, or a poor commander of a Queen's ship!"

"Cruisers and manors! What in the name of mysteries is thy meaning? The girl is not here; you declare she is not on board of the Coquette, and there remains only "

"The brigantine!" groaned the young sailor uttering the word by a violent effort of the will.

"The brigantine!" repeated the Alderman, slowly. "My niece can have nothing to do aboard a dealer in contraband. That is to say, Alida Barbérie is not a trader."

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"Alderman Van Beverout, if we wish to escape the contamination of vice, its society must be avoided. There was one in the pavilion, of a mien and assurance, the past night, that might delude an angel. Ah! woman! woman! thy mind is composed of vanities, and thy imagination is thy bitterest foe!"

"Women and vanities!" echoed the amazed burgher. "My niece, the heiress of old Etienne Marie de Barbérie, and the sought of so many of honorable names and respectable professions, to be a refugee with a rover! always supposing your opinions of the character of the brigantine to be just. This is a conjecture too improbable to be true."

"The eye of a lover, Sir, may be keener than that of a guardian call it jealousy, if you will, would to Heaven my suspicions were untrue! but if she be not there, where is she?"

The opinion of the Alderman seemed staggered. If la belle Barbérie had not yielded to the fascinations of that wayward, but seductive, eye and smile, to that singular beauty of face, and to the secret and often irresistible charm that encircles eminent personal attractions, when aided by mystery, to what had she yielded, and whither had she fled?

These were reflections that now began to pass through the thoughts of the Alderman, as they had already planted stings in the bosom of Ludlow. With reflection, conviction began slowly to assert its power. But the truth did not gleam upon the mind of the calculating and wary merchant, with the same instinctive readiness that it had flashed upon the jealous faculties of the lover. He pondered on each circumstance of the interview between the dealer in contraband and his niece; recalled the manner and discourse of the former; drew certain general and vague conjectures concerning the power which novelty, when coupled with circumstances of romance, might exercise over a female fancy; and dwelt long and secretly on some important facts that were alone known to himself, before his judgment finally settled down into the same opinion, as that which his companion had formed, with all the sensitiveness of jealous alarm.

"Women and vagaries!" muttered the burgher, after his study was ended. "Their conceits are as uncertain as the profits of a whaling voyage, or the luck of a sportsman. Captain Ludlow, your assistance will be needed in this affair; and, as it may not be too late, since there are few priests in the brigantine always supposing her character to be what you affirm my niece may yet see her error, and be disposed to reward so much assiduity and attachment."

"My services shall always be ready, so long as they can be useful to Alida Barbérie," returned the young officer with haste, and yet a little coldly. "It will be time enough to speak of the reward, when we shall have succeeded."

"The less noise that is made about a little domestic inconvenience like this, the better; and I would therefore suggest the propriety of keeping our suspicions of the character of the vessel a secret, until we shall be better informed."

The captain bowed his assent to the proposal.

"And now that we are of the same mind in the preliminaries, we will seek the Patroon of Kinderhook, who has a claim to participate in our confidence."

Myndert then led the way from the empty and melancholy Cour des Fées, with a step that had regained its busy and firm tread, and a countenance that expressed far more of vexation and weariness, than of real sorrow.

CHAPTER XIV.

" I'll give thee a wind.

" Thou art kind.

" And I another.

" I myself have all the other."

Macbeth

The cloud above the mouth of the Raritan had not risen. On the contrary, the breeze still came from off the sea; and the brigantine in the Cove, with the cruiser of the Queen, still lay at their anchors, like two floating habitations that were not intended to be removed. The hour was that at which the character of the day becomes fixed; and there was no longer any expectation that a land-wind would enable the vessel of the free-trader to repass the inlet, before the turn of the tide, which was again running swiftly on the flood.

The windows of the Lust in Rust were open, as when its owner was present; and the menials were employed, in and about the villa, in their customary occupations; though it was evident, by the manner in which they stopped to converse, and by the frequent conferences which had place in secret corners, that they wondered none the less at the unaccountable disappearance of their young mistress. In all other respects, the villa and its grounds were, as usual, quiet and seemingly deserted.

But there was a group collected beneath the shade of an oak on the margin of the Cove, and at a point where it was rare for man to be seen. This little party appeared to be in waiting for some expected communication from the brigantine; since they had taken post on the side of the inlet, next the cape, and in a situation so retired, as to be entirely hid from any passing observation of those who might enter or leave the mouth of the Shrewsbury. In short, they were on the long, low, and narrow barrier of sand, that now forms the projection of the Hook, and which, by the temporary breach that the Cove had made between its own waters and that of the ocean, was then an island.

"Snug should be the motto of a merchant," observed one of these individuals, whose opinions will sufficiently announce his name to the reader. "He should be snug in his dealings, and snug in his manner of conducting them; snug in his credits, and, above all, snug in his speculations. There is as little need, gentlemen, in calling in the aid of a posse-comitatus for a sensible man to keep his household in order, as that a discreet trader should go whistling through the public markets, with the history of his operations. I gladly court two so worthy assistants, as Captain Cornelius Ludlow and Mr. Oloff Van Staats; for I know there will be no useless gossip concerning the trifling derangement that hath occurred. Ah! the black hath had communications with the free-trader always supposing the opinion of Mr. Ludlow concerning the character of the vessel to be just and he is quitting the brigantine."

Neither of the companions of the Alderman made any reply. Each watched the movement of the skiff that contained their messenger, and each seemed to feel an equal interest in the result of his errand. Instead, however, of approaching the spot where his master and his two friends expected him, the negro, though he knew that his boat was necessary to enable the party to recross the inlet, pulled directly for the mouth of the river, a course that was exactly contrary to the one he was expected to take.

"Rank disobedience!" grumbled the incensed master. "The irreverent dog is deserting us, on this neck of barren sand, where we are cut off from all communication with the interior, and are as completely without intelligence of

the state of the market, and other necessities, as men in a desert!"

"Here comes one that seems disposed to bring us to a parley," observed Ludlow, whose practised eye had first detected a boat quitting the side of the brigantine, as well as the direction it was about to steer.

The young commander was not deceived; for a light cutter, that played like a bubble on its element, was soon approaching the shore, where the three expectants were seated. When it was near enough to render sight perfectly distinct, and speech audible without an effort, the crew ceased rowing, and permitted the boat to lie in a state of rest. The mariner of the India-shawl then arose in the stern-sheets, and examined the thicket behind the party, with a curious and suspicious eye. After a sufficient search, he signed to his crew to force the cutter still nigher to the land, and spoke:

"Who has affairs with any of the brigantine?" he coolly demanded, wearing the air of one who had no reason to anticipate the object of their visit. "She has little left that can turn to profit, unless she parts with her beauty."

"Truly, good stranger," returned the Alderman, laying a sufficient emphasis on the latter word, "here are none disposed to a traffic, which might not be pleasing to the authorities of the country, were its nature known. We come with a desire to be admitted to a conference with the commander of the vessel, on a matter of especial but private concern."

"Why send a public officer on the duty? I see one, there, in the livery of Queen Anne. We are no lovers of Her Majesty's servants, and would not willingly form disagreeable acquaintances."

Ludlow nearly bit through his lip, in endeavoring to repress his anger, at the cool confidence of one who had already treated him with so little ceremony, and then momentarily forgetting his object, in professional pride, and perhaps we might add in the habits of his rank, he interrupted the dialogue

"If you see the livery of the royal authority," he said, haughtily, "you must be sensible it is worn by one who is commissioned to cause its rights to be respected. I demand the name and character of yon brigantine?"

"As for character, she is, like any other beauty, something vituperated; nay, some carry their envy so far as to call it cracked! But we are jolly mariners that sail her, and little heed crazy reports at the expense of our mistress. As for a name, we answer any hail that is fairly spoken, and well meant. Call us 'Honesty,' if you will, for want of the register."

"There is much reason to suspect your vessel of illegal practices; and, in the name of the Queen, I demand access to her papers, and the liberty of a free search into her cargo and crew. Else will there be necessity to bring her under the guns of the cruiser, which lies at no great distance, waiting only for orders."

"It takes no scholar to read our documents, Captain Ludlow; for they are written by a light keel on the rolling waters, and he who follows in our wake may guess at their authority. If you wish to overhaul our cargo, you must look sharply into the cuffs and aprons, the negligées and stomachers of the Governor's lady, at the next ball at the fort; or pry into the sail that is set above the farthingales of the wife and daughters of your Admiralty Judge! We are no cheesemongers, to break the shins of a boarding officer among boxes and butter-tubs."

"Your brigantine has a name, sirrah; and, in Her Majesty's authority, I demand to know it."

"Heaven forbid that any here should dispute the Queen's right! You are a seaman, Captain Ludlow, and have an eye for comeliness in a craft, as well as in a woman. Look at those harpings! There is no fall of a shoulder can equal that curve, in grace or richness; this shear surpasses the justness and delicacy of any waist; and there you see the transoms, swelling and rounded like the outlines of a Venus. Ah! she is a bewitching creature; and no

wonder that, floating as she does, on the seas, they should have called her "

"Water-Witch!" said Ludlow, finding that the other paused.

"You deserve to be one of the sisterhood yourself, Captain Ludlow, for this readiness in divination!"

"Amazement and surprise, Patroon!" exclaimed Myndert, with a tremendous hem. "Here is a discovery to give a respectable merchant more uneasiness than the undutiful conduct of fifty nieces! This vessel is then the famous brigantine of the notorious 'Skimmer of the Seas!' a man whose misdeeds in commerce are as universally noted, as the stoppage of a general dealer! Pray, Master Mariner, do not distrust our purposes. We do not come, sent by any authority of the country, to pry into your past transactions, of which it is quite unnecessary for you to speak; and far less to indulge in any unlawful thirst of gain, by urging a traffic that is forbidden by the law. We wish solely to confer with the celebrated free-trader and rover, who must, if your account be true, command the vessel, for a few minutes, on an affair of common interest to the three. This officer of the Queen is obliged, by his duty, to make certain demands of you, with which you will comply, or not, at your own good discretion; and since Her Majesty's cruiser is so far beyond reach of bullet, it cannot be expected you will do otherwise; but further than that, he has no present intention to proceed. Parleys and civilities! Captain Ludlow, we must speak the man fair, or he will leave us to get over the inlet, and back to the Lust in Rust, as we may; and that, too, as empty-handed as we came. Remember our stipulations, without observing which I shall withdraw from the adventure, altogether."

Ludlow bit his lip, and continued silent. The seaman of the shawl, or Master Tiller, as he has been more than once called, again narrowly examined the back-ground, and caused his boat to approach so near the land, that it was possible to step into it, by the stern.

"Enter," he said to the Captain of the Coquette, who needed no second invitation; "enter, for a valuable hostage is a safe-pledge, in a truce. The Skimmer is no enemy to good company; and I have done justice to the Queen's servitor, by introducing him already, by name and character."

"Fellow, the success of your deception may cause you to triumph for a time; but remember that the Coquette "

"Is a wholesome boat, whose abilities I have taken, to the admeasurement of her moment-glass;" observed Tiller, very coolly taking the words out of the other's mouth. "But as there is business to be done with the Skimmer, we will speak more of this anon."

The mariner of the shawl, who had maintained his former audacious demeanor, now became grave; and he spoke to his crew with authority, bidding them pull the boat to the side of the brigantine.

The exploits, the mysterious character, and the daring of the Water-Witch, and of him who sailed her, were, in that day, the frequent subjects of anger, admiration, and surprise. Those who found pleasure in the marvellous, listened to the wonders that were recounted of her speed and boldness, with pleasure; they who had been so often foiled in their attempts to arrest the hardy dealers in contraband, reddened at her name; and all wondered at the success and intelligence with which her movements were controlled. It will, therefore, create no astonishment when we say, that Ludlow and the Patroon drew near to the light and graceful fabric, with an interest that deepened at each stroke of the oars. So much of a profession which, in that age, was particularly marked and apart from the rest of mankind in habits and opinions, had been interwoven into the character of the former, that he could not see the just proportions, the graceful outlines of the hull, or the exquisite symmetry and neatness of the spars and rigging, without experiencing a feeling somewhat allied to that which undeniable superiority excites in the heart of even a rival. There was also a taste in the style of the merely ornamental parts of the delicate machine, which caused as much surprise as her model and rig.

Seamen, in all ages, and in every state of their art, have been ambitious of bestowing on their floating habitations, a style of decoration which, while appropriate to their element, should be thought somewhat analogous to the architectural ornaments of the land. Piety, superstition, and national usages, affect these characteristic ornaments, which are still seen, in different quarters of the world, to occasion broad distinctions between the appearances of vessels. In one, the rudder-head is carved with the resemblance of some hideous monster; another shows goggling eyes and lolling tongues from its cat-heads; this has the patron saint, or the ever-kind Marie, embossed upon its mouldings or bows; while that is covered with the allegorical emblems of country and duty. Few of these efforts of nautical art are successful, though a better taste appears to be gradually redeeming even this branch of human industry from the rubbish of barbarism, and to be elevating it to a state which shall do no violence to the more fastidious opinions of the age. But the vessel of which we write, though constructed at so remote a period, would have done credit to the improvements of our own time.

It has been said that the hull of this celebrated smuggler was low, dark, moulded with exquisite art, and so justly balanced as to ride upon its element like a sea-fowl. For a little distance above the water, it showed a blue that vied with the color of the deep ocean, the use of copper being then unknown; while the more superior parts were of a jet black, delicately relieved by two lines, of a straw-color, that were drawn, with mathematical accuracy, parallel to the plane of her upper works, and consequently converging slightly towards the sea, beneath her counter. Glossy hammock-cloths concealed the persons of those who were on the deck, while the close bulwarks gave the brigantine the air of a vessel equipped for war. Still the eye of Ludlow ran curiously along the whole extent of the two straw-colored lines, seeking in vain some evidence of the weight and force of her armament. If she had ports at all, they were so ingeniously concealed as to escape the keenest of his glances. The nature of the rig has been already described. Partaking of the double character of brig and schooner, the sails and spars of the forward-mast being of the former, while those of the after-mast were of the latter construction, seamen have given to this class of shipping the familiar name of Hermaphrodites. But, though there might be fancied, by this term, some want of the proportions that constitute seemliness, it will be remembered that the departure was only from some former rule of art, and that no violence had been done to those universal and permanent laws which constitute the charm of nature. The models of glass, which are seen representing the machinery of a ship, are not more exact or just in their lines than were the cordage and spars of this brigantine. Not a rope varied from its true direction; not a sail, but it resembled the neat folds of some prudent house-wife; not a mast or a yard was there, but it rose into the air, or stretched its arms, with the most fastidious attention to symmetry. All was airy, fanciful, and full of grace, seeming to lend to the fabric a character of unreal lightness and speed. As the boat drew near her side, a change of the air caused the buoyant bark to turn, like a vane, in its current; and as the long and pointed proportions of her head-gear came into view, Ludlow saw beneath the bowsprit an image that might be supposed to make, by means of allegory, some obvious allusions to the character of the vessel. A female form, fashioned with the carver's best skill, stood on the projection of the cut-water. The figure rested lightly on the ball of one foot, while the other was suspended in an easy attitude, resembling the airy posture of the famous Mercury of the Bolognese. The drapery was fluttering, scanty, and of a light sea-green tint, as if it had imbibed a hue from the element beneath. The face was of that dark bronzed color which human ingenuity has, from time immemorial, adopted as the best medium to portray a superhuman expression. The locks were dishevelled, wild, and rich; the eye, full of such a meaning as might be fancied to glitter in the organs of a sorceress; while a smile so strangely meaning and malign played about the mouth, that the young sailor started, when it first met his view, as if a living thing had returned his look.

"Witchcraft and necromancy!" grumbled the Alderman, as this extraordinary image came suddenly on his vision also. "Here is a brazen-looking hussy! and one who might rob the Queen's treasury, itself, without remorse! Your eyes are young, Patroon; what is that the minx holds so impudently above her head?"

"It seems an open book, with letters of red, written on its pages. One need not be a conjuror, to divine it is no extract from the Bible."

The Water-Witch, Volume 1

"Nor from the statute-books of Queen Anne. I warrant me, 'tis a leger of profit gained in her many wanderings. Goggling and leers! the bold air of the confident creature is enough to put an honest man out of countenance!"

"Wilt read the motto of the witch?" demanded he of the India-shawl, whose eye had been studying the detail of the brigantine's equipment, rather than attending to the object which so much attracted the looks of his companions. "The night air has taut'ned the cordage of that flying-jib-boom, fellows, until it begins to lift its nose like a squeamish cockney, when he holds it over salt-water! See to it, and bring the spar in line; else shall we have a reproof from the sorceress, who little likes to have any of her limbs deranged. Here, gentlemen, the opinions of the lady may be read, as clearly as woman's mind can ever be fathomed."

While speaking to his crew, Tiller had changed the direction of the boat; and it was soon lying, in obedience to a motion of his hand, directly beneath the wild and significant-looking image, just described. The letters in red were now distinctly visible; and when Alderman Van Beverout had adjusted his spectacles, each of the party read the following sentence:

"Albeit, I neither lend nor borrow,

By taking, nor by giving of excess,

Yet to supply the ripe wants of my friend,

I'll break a custom."

Merchant of Venice

"The brazen!" exclaimed Myndert, when he had got through this quotation from the immortal bard. "Ripe or green, one could not wish to be the friend of so impudent a thing; and then to impute such sentiments to any respectable commercial man, whether of Venice or of Amsterdam! Let us board the brigantine, friend mariner, and end the connexion, ere foul mouths begin to traduce our motives for the visit."

"The over-driven ship plows the seas too deep, for speed; we shall get into port, in better season, without this haste. Wilt take another look into the dark lady's pages? A woman's mind is never known, at the first answer!"

The speaker raised the rattan he still carried, and caused a page of painted metal to turn on hinges that were so artfully concealed as not to be visible. A new surface, with another extract, was seen.

"What is it, what is it, Patroon?" demanded the burgher, who appeared greatly to distrust the discretion of the sorceress. "Follies and rhymes! but this is the way of the whole sex; when nature has denied them tongues, they invent other means of speech."

"Porters of the sea and land,

Thus do go about, about;

Thrice to thine, and thrice to thine,

And thrice again to make up nine."

"Rank nonsense!" continued the burgher! "It is well for those who can, to add thrice and thrice to their stores; but look you, Patroon it is a thriving trade that can double the value of the adventure, and that with reasonable risks, and months of patient watching."

The Water-Witch, Volume 1

"We have other pages," resumed Tiller, "but our affairs drag for want of attending to them. One may read much good matter in the book of the sorceress, when there is leisure and opportunity. I often take occasion, in the calms, to look into her volume; and it is rare to find the same moral twice told, as these brave seamen can swear."

The mariners at the oars confirmed this assertion, by their grave and believing faces; while their superior caused the boat to quit the place, and the image of the Water-Witch was left floating in solitude above her proper element.

The arrival of the cutter produced no sensation among those who were found on the deck of the brigantine. The mariner of the shawl welcomed his companions, frankly and heartily; and then he left them for a minute to make their observations, while he discharged some duty in the interior of the vessel. The moments were not lost, as powerful curiosity induced all the visitors to gaze about them, in the manner in which men study the appearance of any celebrated object, that has long been known only by reputation. It was quite apparent that even Alderman Van Beverout had penetrated farther into the mysteries of the beautiful brigantine, than he had ever before been. But it was Ludlow who gathered most from this brief opportunity, and whose understanding glances so rapidly and eagerly ran over all that a seaman could wish to examine.

An admirable neatness reigned in every part. The planks of the deck resembled the work of the cabinet-maker, rather than the coarser labor which is generally seen in such a place; and the same excellence of material, and exactness in the finish, were visible in the ceilings of the light bulwarks, the railings, and all the other objects which necessarily came conspicuously into view, in the construction of such a fabric. Brass was tastefully rather than lavishly used, on many of those parts where metal was necessary; and the paint of the interior was everywhere a light and delicate straw-color. Armament there was none, or at least none visible; nor did the fifteen or twenty grave-looking seamen, who were silently lounging, with folded arms, about the vessel, appear to be those who would find pleasure in scenes of violence. They were, without an exception, men who had reached the middle age, of weather-worn and thoughtful countenances, many of them even showing heads that had begun to be grizzled more by time than even by exposure. Thus much Ludlow had been enabled to ascertain, ere they were rejoined by Tiller. When the latter again came on deck, he showed, however, no desire to conceal any of the perfections of his habitation.

"The wilful sorceress is no niggard in accommodating her followers," said the mariner, observing the manner in which the Queen's officer was employed. "Here, you see, the Skimmer keeps room enough for an admiral, in his cabins; and the fellows are berthed aft, far beyond the foremast; wilt step to the hatch, and look below?"

The captain and his companions did as desired, and to the amazement of the former, he perceived that, with the exception of a sort of room fitted with large and water-tight lockers, which were placed in full view, all the rest of the brigantine was occupied by the accommodations of her officers and crew.

"The world gives us the reputation of free-traders," continued Tiller, smiling maliciously; "but if the Admiralty-Court were here, big wigs and high staffs, judge and jury, it would be at a loss to bring us to conviction. There is iron to keep the lady on her feet, and water, with some garnish of Jamaica, and the wines of old Spain and the islands, to cheer the hearts and cool the mouths of my fellows, beneath that deck; and more than that, there is not. We have stores for the table and the breeze, beyond you bulk-head; and here are lockers beneath you, that are empty! See, one is open; it is neat as any drawer in a lady's bureau. This is no place for your Dutchman's strong waters, or the coarse skins of your tobacconist. Odd's my life! He who would go on the scent of the Water-Witch's lading, must follow your beauty in her satins, or your parson in his band and gown. There would be much lamentation in the church, and many a heavy-hearted bishop, were it known that the good craft had come to harm!"

"There must be an end to this audacious trifling with the law," said Ludlow; "and the time may be nearer than you suppose."

"I look at the pages of the lady's book, in the pride of each morning; for we have it aboard here, that when she intends to serve us foul, she will at least be honest enough to give a warning. The mottoes often change, but her words are ever true. 'Tis hard to overtake the driving mist, Captain Ludlow, and he must hold good way with the wind itself, who wishes to stay long in our company."

"Many a boastful sailor has been caught. The breeze that is good for the light of draught, and the breeze that is good for the deep keel, are different. You may live to learn what a stout spar, a wide arm, and a steady hull, can do."

"The lady of the wild eye and wicked smile protect me! I have seen the witch buried fathoms deep in brine, and the glittering water falling from her tresses like golden stars; but never have I read an untruth in her pages. There is good intelligence between her and some on board; and, trust me, she knows the paths of the ocean too well, ever to steer a wrong course. But we prate like gossiping rivermen. Wilt see the Skimmer of the Seas?"

"Such is the object of our visit," returned Ludlow, whose heart beat violently at the name of the redoubtable rover. "If you are not he, bring us where he is."

"Speak lower; if the lady under the bowsprit hear such treason against her favorite, I'll not answer for her good-will. If I am not he!" added the hero of the India-shawl, laughing freely. "Well, an ocean is bigger than a sea, and a bay is not a gulf. You shall have an opportunity of judging between us, noble captain, and then I leave opinions to each man's wisdom. Follow."

He quitted the hatchway, and led his companions toward the accommodations in the stern of the vessel.

CHAPTER XV.

"God save you, Sir!"

"And you, Sir; you are welcome.

"Travel you, Sir, or are you at the furthest?"

Taming of the Shrew

If the exterior of the brigantine was so graceful in form and so singular in arrangement, the interior was still more worthy of observation. There were two small cabins beneath the main-deck, one on each side of, and immediately adjoining, the limited space that was destined to receive her light but valuable cargoes. It was into one of these that Tiller had descended, like a man who freely entered into his own apartment; but partly above, and nearer to the stern, were a suite of little rooms that were fitted and furnished in a style altogether different. The equipments were those of a yacht, rather than those which might be supposed suited to the pleasures of even the most successful dealer in contraband.

The principal deck had been sunken several feet, commencing at the aftermost bulk-head of the cabins of the subordinate officers, in a manner to give the necessary height, without interfering with the line of the brigantine's shear. The arrangement was consequently not to be seen, by an observer who was not admitted into the vessel itself. A descent of a step or two, however, brought the visitors to the level of the cabin-floor and into an ante-room that was evidently fitted for the convenience of the domestics. A small silver hand-bell lay on a table, and Tiller rung it lightly, like one whose ordinary manner was restrained by respect. It was answered by the appearance of a boy, whose years could not exceed ten, and whose attire was so whimsical as to merit description.

The Water-Witch, Volume 1

The material of the dress of this young servitor of Neptune, was a light rose-colored silk, cut in a fashion to resemble the habits formerly worn by pages of the great. His body was belted by a band of gold, a collar of fine thread lace floated on his neck and shoulders, and even his feet were clad in a sort of buskins, that were ornamented with fringes of real lace and tassels of bullion. The form and features of the child were delicate, and his air as unlike as possible to the coarse and brusque manner of a vulgar ship-boy.

"Waste and prodigality!" muttered the Alderman, when this extraordinary little usher presented himself, in answer to the summons of Tiller. "This is the very wantonness of cheap goods and an unfettered commerce! There is enough of Mechlin, Patroon, on the shoulders of that urchin, to deck the stomacher of the Queen. 'Fore George, goods were cheap in the market, when the young scoundrel had his livery!"

The surprise was not confined, however, to the observant and frugal burgher. Ludlow and Van Staats of Kinderhook manifested equal amazement, though their wonder was exhibited in a less characteristic manner. The former turned short to demand the meaning of this masquerade, when he perceived that the hero of the India-shawl had disappeared. They were then alone with the fantastic page, and it became necessary to trust to his intelligence for directions how to proceed.

"Who art thou, child? and who has sent thee hither?" demanded Ludlow. The boy raised a cap of the same rose-colored silk, and pointed to an image of a female, with a swarthy face and a malign smile, painted, with exceeding art, on its front.

"I serve the sea-green lady, with the others of the brigantine."

"And who is this lady of the color of shallow water, and whence come you, in particular?"

"This is her likeness if you would speak with her, she stands on the cut-water, and rarely refuses an answer."

"'Tis odd that a form of wood should have the gift of speech!"

"Dost think her then of wood?" returned the child, looking timidly, and yet curiously, up into the face of Ludlow. "Others have said the same; but those who know best, deny it. She does not answer with a tongue, but the book has always something to say."

"Here is a grievous deception practised on the superstition of this boy! I have read the book, and can make but little of its meaning."

"Then read again. 'Tis by many reaches that the leeward vessel gains upon the wind. My master has bid me bring you in "

"Hold Thou hast both master and mistress? You have told us of the latter, but we would know something of the former. Who is thy master?"

The boy smiled and looked aside, as if he hesitated to answer.

"Nay, refuse not to reply. I come with the authority of the Queen."

"He tells us that the sea-green lady is our Queen, and that we have no other."

"Rashness and rebellion!" muttered Myndert; "but this foolhardiness will one day bring as pretty a brigantine as ever sailed in the narrow seas, to condemnation; and then will there be rumors abroad, and characters cracked, till every lover of gossip in the Americas shall be tired of defamation."

The Water-Witch, Volume 1

"It is a bold subject, that dares say this!" rejoined Ludlow, who heeded not the by-play of the Alderman; "Your master has a name?"

"We never hear it. When Neptune boards us, under the tropics, he always hails the 'Skimmer of the Seas,' and then they answer. The old God knows us well, for we pass his latitude oftener than other ships, they say."

"You are then a cruiser of some service, in the brigantine no doubt you have trod many distant shores, belonging to so swift a craft."

"I! I never was on the land!" returned the boy, thoughtfully. "It must be droll to be there; they say, one can hardly walk, it is so steady! I put a question to the sea-green lady before we came to this narrow inlet, to know when I was to go ashore."

"And she answered?"

"It was some time, first. Two watches were past before a word was to be seen; but at last I got the lines. I believe she mocked me, though I have never dared show it to my master, that he might say."

"Hast the words, here? perhaps we might assist thee, as there are some among us who know most of the sea-paths."

The boy looked timidly and suspiciously around, and thrusting a hand hurriedly into a pocket, he drew forth two bits of paper, each of which contained a scrawl, and both of which had evidently been much thumbed and studied.

"Here," he said, in a voice that was suppressed nearly to a whisper. "This was on the first page. I was so frightened, lest the lady should be angry, that I did not look again till the next watch; and then," turning the leaf, "I found this."

Ludlow took the bit of paper first offered, and read, written in a child's hand, the following extract:

"I pray thee

Remember, I have done thee worthy service;

Told thee no lies, made no mistakings, serv'd

Without or grudge or grumblings."

"I thought that 'twas in mockery," continued the boy, when he saw by the eye of the young captain that he had read the quotation; "for 'twas very like, though more prettily worded, than that which I had said, myself!"

"And that was the second answer?"

"This was found in the first morning-watch," the child returned, reading the second extract himself:

"Thou think'st

It much to tread the ooze of the salt deep,

And run upon the sharp wind of the north!"

The Water–Witch, Volume 1

"I never dared to ask again. But what matters that? They say, the ground is rough and difficult to walk on; that earthquakes shake it, and make holes to swallow cities; that men slay each other on the highways for money, and that the houses I see on the hills must always remain in the same spot. It must be very melancholy to live always in the same spot; but then it must be odd, never to feel a motion!"

"Except the occasional rocking of an earthquake! Thou art better afloat, child; but thy master, this Skimmer of the Seas "

"Hist!" whispered the boy, raising a finger for silence. "He has come up into the great cabin. In a moment, we shall have his signal to enter."

"A few light touches on the strings of a guitar followed, and then a symphony was rapidly and beautifully executed, by one in the adjoining apartment.

"Alida, herself, is not more nimble–fingered," whispered the Alderman; "and I never heard the girl touch the Dutch lute, that cost a hundred Holland guilders, with a livelier movement!"

Ludlow signed for silence. A fine, manly voice, of great richness and depth, was soon heard, singing to an accompaniment on the same instrument. The air was grave, and altogether unusual for the social character of one who dwelt upon the ocean, being chiefly in recitative. The words, as near as might be distinguished, ran as follows:

My brigantine!

Just in thy mould, and beauteous in thy form,

Gentle in roll, and buoyant on the surge,

Light as the sea–fowl, rocking in the storm,

In breeze and gale, thy onward course we urge;

My Water–Queen!

Lady of mine!

More light and swift than thou, none thread the sea,

With surer keel, or steadier on its path;

We brave each waste of ocean–mystery,

And laugh to hear the howling tempest's wrath!

For we are thine!

My brigantine!

Trust to the mystic power that points thy way,

Trust to the eye that pierces from afar,

CHAPTER XV.

Trust the red meteors that around thee play,

And fearless trust the sea-green lady's star;

Thou bark divine!

"He often sings thus," whispered the boy, when the song was ended; "for they say, the sea-green lady loves music that tells of the ocean, and of her power. Hark! he has bid me enter."

"He did but touch the strings of the guitar, again, boy."

"'Tis his signal, when the weather is fair. When we have the whistling of the wind, and the roar of the water, then he has a louder call."

Ludlow would have gladly listened longer; but the boy opened a door, and, pointing the way to those he conducted, he silently vanished himself, behind a curtain.

The visitors, more particularly the young commander of the *Coquette*, found new subjects of admiration and wonder, on entering the main cabin of the brigantine. The apartment, considering the size of the vessel, was spacious and high. It received light from a couple of windows in the stern, and it was evident that two smaller rooms, one on each of the quarters, shared with it in this advantage. The space between these state-rooms, as they are called in nautical language, necessarily formed a deep alcove, which might be separated from the outer portion of the cabin, by a curtain of crimson damask, that now hung in festoons from a beam fashioned into a gilded cornice. A luxuriously-looking pile of cushions, covered with red morocco, lay along the transom, in the manner of an eastern divan; and against the bulk-head of each state-room, stood an agrippina of mahogany, that was lined with the same material. Neat and tasteful cases for books were suspended, here and there; and the guitar which had so lately been used, lay on a small table of some precious wood, that occupied the centre of the alcove. There were also other implements, like those which occupy the leisure of a cultivated but perhaps an effeminate rather than a vigorous mind, scattered around, some evidently long neglected, and others appearing to have been more recently in favor.

The outer portion of the cabin was furnished in a similar style, though it contained many more of the articles that ordinarily belong to domestic economy. It had its agrippina, its piles of cushions, its chairs of beautiful wood, its cases for books, and its neglected instruments, intermixed with fixtures of a more solid and permanent appearance, which were arranged to meet the violent motion that was often unavoidable in so small a bark. There was a slight hanging of crimson damask around the whole apartment; and, here and there, a small mirror was let into the bulk-heads and ceilings. All the other parts were of a rich mahogany, relieved by panels of rose-wood, that gave an appearance of exquisite finish to the cabin. The floor was covered with a mat of the finest texture, and of a fragrance that announced both its freshness, and the fact that the grass had been the growth of a warm and luxuriant climate. The place, as was indeed the whole vessel, so far as the keen eye of Ludlow could detect, was entirely destitute of arms, not even a pistol, or a sword, being suspended in those places where weapons of that description are usually seen, in all vessels employed either in war or in a trade that might oblige those who sail them to deal in violence.

In the centre of the alcove stood the youthful-looking and extraordinary person who, in so unceremonious a manner, had visited la Cour de Fées the preceding night. His dress was much the same, in fashion and material, as when last seen; still, it had been changed; for on the breast of the silken frock was painted an image of the sea-green lady, done with exquisite skill, and in a manner to preserve the whole of the wild and unearthly character of the expression. The wearer of this singular ornament leaned lightly against the little table, and as he bowed with entire self-possession to his guests, his face was lighted with a smile, that seemed to betray melancholy, no less than courtesy. At the same time he raised his cap, and stood in the rich jet-black locksmith

which Nature had so exuberantly shaded his forehead.

The manner of the visitors was less easy. The deep anxiety with which both Ludlow and the Patroon had undertaken to board the notorious smuggler, had given place to an amazement and a curiosity that caused them nearly to forget their errand; while Alderman Van Beverout appeared shy and suspicious, manifestly thinking less of his niece, than of the consequences of so remarkable an interview. They all returned the salutation of their host, though each waited for him to speak.

"They tell me I have the pleasure to receive a commander of Queen Anne's service, the wealthy and honorable Patroon of Kinderhook, and a most worthy and respectable member of the city corporation, known as Alderman Van Beverout," commenced the individual who did the honors of the vessel on this occasion. "It is not often that my poor brigantine is thus favored, and, in the name of my mistress, I would express our thanks."

As he ceased speaking, he bowed again with ceremonious gravity, as if all were equally strangers to him; though the young men saw plainly that a smothered smile played about a mouth that even they could not refuse the praise of being of rare and extraordinary attraction.

"As we have but one mistress," said Ludlow, "it is our common duty to wish to do her pleasure."

"I understand you, Sir. It is scarce necessary to say, however, that the wife of George of Denmark has little authority here. Forbear, I pray you," he added quickly, observing that Ludlow was about to answer. "These interviews with the servants of that lady are not unfrequent; and as I know other matters have sent you hither, we will imagine all said that a vigilant officer and a most loyal subject could utter, to an outlaw and a trifler with the regulations of the customs. That controversy must be settled between us under our canvas, and by virtue of our speed, or other professional qualities, at proper time and in a proper place. We will now touch on different matters."

"I think the gentleman is right, Patroon. When matters are ripe for the Exchequer, there is no use in worrying the lungs with summing up the testimony, like a fee'd advocate. Twelve discreet men, who have bowels of compassion for the vicissitudes of trade, and who know how hard it is to earn, and how easy it is to spend, will deal with the subject better than all the idle talkers in the Provinces."

"When confronted to the twelve disinterested Daniels, I shall be fain to submit to their judgment," rejoined the other, still suffering the wilful smile to linger round his lips. "You, Sir, I think, are called Mr. Myndert Van Beverout. To what fall in peltry, or what rise in markets, do I owe the honor of this visit?"

"It is said that some from this vessel were so bold as to land on my grounds, during the past night, without the knowledge and consent of their owner. you will observe the purport of our discourse, Mr. Van Staats, for it may yet come before the authorities as I said, Sir, without their owner's knowledge, and that there were dealings in articles that are contraband of law, unless they enter the provinces purified and embellished by the air of the Queen's European dominions God bless Her Majesty!"

"Amen. That which quitteth the Water-Witch commonly comes purified by the air of many different regions. We are no laggards in movement, here; and the winds of Europe scarcely cease to blow upon our sails, before we scent the gales of America. But this is rather Exchequer matter, to be discussed before the twelve merciful burghers, than entertainment for such a visit."

"I open with the facts, that there may be no errors. But in addition to so foul an imputation on the credit of a merchant, there has a great calamity befallen me and my household, during the past night. The daughter and heiress of old Etienne de Barbérie has left her abode, and we have reason to think that she has been deluded so far as to come hither. Faith and correspondence! Master Seadrift; but I think this is exceeding the compass of even a

trader in contraband! I can make allowances for some errors in an account; but women can be exported and imported without duty, and when and where one pleases, and therefore the less necessity for running them out of their old uncle's habitation, in so secret a manner."

"An undeniable position, and a feeling conclusion! I admit the demand to be made in all form, and I suppose these two gentlemen are to be considered as witnesses of its legality."

"We have come to aid a wronged and distressed relative and guardian, in searching for his misguided ward," Ludlow answered.

The free-trader turned his eyes on the Patroon, who signified his assent by a silent bow.

"'Tis well, gentlemen; I also admit the testimony. But though in common believed so worthy a subject for justice, I have hitherto had but little direct communication with the blind deity. Do the authorities usually give credit to these charges, without some evidence of their truth?"

"Is it denied?"

"You are still in possession of your senses, Captain Ludlow, and may freely use them. But this is an artifice to divert pursuit. There are other vessels beside the brigantine, and a capricious fair may have sought a protector, even under a pennant of Queen Anne!"

"This is a truth that has been but too obvious to my mind, Mr. Van Beverout," observed the sententious Patroon. "It would have been well to have ascertained whether she we seek has not taken some less exceptionable course than this, before we hastily believe that your niece would so easily become the wife of a stranger."

"Has Mr. Van Staats any hidden meaning in his words, that he speaks ambiguously?" demanded Ludlow.

"A man, conscious of his good intentions, has little occasion to speak equivocally. I believe, with this reputed smuggler, that la belle Barbérie would be more likely to fly with one she has long known, and whom I fear she has but too well esteemed, than with an utter stranger, over whose life there is cast a shade of so dark mystery."

"If the impression that the lady could yield her esteem with too little discretion, be any excuse for suspicions, then may I advise a search in the manor of Kinderhook!"

"Consent and joy! The girl need not have stolen to church to become the bride of Oloff Van Staats!" interrupted the Alderman. "She should have had my benediction on the match, and a fat gift to give it unction."

"These suspicions are but natural, between men bent on the same object," resumed the free-trader. "The officer of the Queen thinks a glance of the eye, from a wilful fair, means admiration of broad lands and rich meadows; and the lord of the manor distrusts the romance of warlike service, and the power of an imagination which roams the sea. Still may I ask, what is there here, to tempt a proud and courted beauty to forget station, sex, and friends?"

"Caprice and vanity! There is no answering for a woman's mind! Here we bring articles, at great risk and heavy charges, from the farther Indies, to please their fancies, and they change their modeseasier than the beaver casts his coat. Their conceits sadly unsettle trade, and I know not why they may not cause a wilful girl to do any other act of folly."

"This reasoning seems conclusive with the uncle. Do the suitors assent to its justice?"

The Patroon of Kinderhook had stood gazing, long and earnestly, at the countenance of the extraordinary being who asked this question. A movement, which bespoke, equally, his conviction and his regret, escaped him, but he continued silent. Not so Ludlow. Of a more ardent temperament, though equally sensible of the temptation which had caused Alida to err, and as keenly alive to all the consequences to herself, as well as to others, there was something of professional rivalry, and of an official right to investigate, which still mingled with his feelings. He had found time to examine more closely the articles that the cabin contained, and when their singular host put his question, he pointed, with an ironical but mournful smile, to a footstool richly wrought in flowers of tints and shades so just as to seem natural.

"This is no work of a sail-maker's needle!" said the captain of the *Coquette*. "Other beauties have been induced to pass an idle hour in your gay residence, hardy mariner; but, sooner or later, judgment will overtake the light-heeled craft."

"On the wind, or off, she must some day lag, as we seamen have it! Captain Ludlow, I excuse some harshness of construction, that your language might imply; for it becomes a commissioned servant of the crown, to use freedom with one who, like the lawless companion of the princely Hal, is but too apt to propose to 'rob me the King's Exchequer.' But, Sir, this brigantine and her character are little known to you. We have no need of truant damsels, to let us into the mystery of the sex's taste; for a femalespirit guides all our humors, and imparts something of her delicacy to all our acts, even though it be the fashion among burghers to call them lawless. See," throwing a curtain carelessly aside, and exhibiting, behind, it, various articles of womanly employment, "here are the offspring of both pencil and needle. The sorceress," touching the image on his breast, "will not be entertained, without some deference to her sex."

"This affair must be arranged, I see, by a compromise," observed the Alderman. "By your leave, gentlemen, I will make proposals in private to this bold trader, who perhaps will listen to the offers I have to propose."

"Ah! This savors more of the spirit of trade than of that of the sea-goddess I serve," cried the other, causing his fingers to run lightly over the strings of the guitar. "Compromise and offers are sounds that become a burgher's lips. My tricky spirit, commit these gentlemen to the care of bold Thomas Tiller, while I confer with the merchant. The character of Mr. Van Beverout, Captain Ludlow, will protect us both from the suspicion of any designs on the revenue!"

Laughing at his own allusion, the free-trader signed to the boy, who had appeared from behind a curtain, to show the disappointed suitors of la belle Barbérie into another part of the vessel.

"Foul tongues and calumnies! Master Seadrift, this unlawful manner of playing round business, after accounts are settled and receipts passed, may lead to other loss besides that of character. The commander of the *Coquette* is not more than half satisfied of my ignorance of your misdoings in behalf of the customs, already; and these jokes are like so many punches into a smouldering fire, on a dark night. They only give light, and cause people to see the clearer: though, Heaven knows, no man has less reason to dread an inquiry into his affairs than myself! I challenge the best accountant in the colonies to detect a false footing, or a doubtful entry, in any book I have, from the Memorandum to the Leger."

"The Proverbs are not more sententious, nor the Psalms half as poetical, as your library. But why this secret parley? The brigantine has a swept hold."

"Swept! Brooms and Van Tromp! Thou hast swept the pavilion of my niece of its mistress, no less than my purse of its johannes. This is carrying a little innocent barter into a most forbidden commerce, and I hope the joke is to end, before the affair gets to be sweetening to the tea of the Province gossips. Such a tale would affect the autumn importation of sugars!"

"This is more vivid than clear. You have my laces and velvets; my brocades and satins are already in the hands of the Manhattan dames; and your furs and johannes are safe where no boarding officer from the Coquette "

"Well, there is no need of speaking—trumpets, to tell a man what he knows already, to his cost! I should expect no less than bankruptcy from two or three such bargains, and you wish to add loss of character to loss of gold. Bulk—heads have ears in a ship, as well as walls in houses. I wish no more said of the trifling traffic that has been between us. If I lose a thousand florins by the operation, I shall know how to be resigned. Patience and afflictions! Have I not buried as full-fed and promising a gelding this morning, as ever paced a pavement, and has any man heard a complaint from my lips? I know how to meet losses, I hope; and so no more of an unlucky purchase."

"Truly, if it be not for trade, there is little uncommon between the mariners of the brigantine and Alderman Van Beverout."

"The greater the necessity thou shouldst end this silly joke, and restore his niece. I am not sure the affair can be at all settled with either of these hot-headed young men, though I should even offer to throw in a few thousands more, by way of make-weight. When female reputation gets a bad name in the market, 'tis harder to dispose of than falling stock; and your young lords of manors and commanders of cruisers have stomachs like usurers; no per centage will satisfy them; it must be all, or nothing! There was no such foolery in the days of thy worthy father! The honest trafficker brought his cutter into port, with as innocent a look as a mill-boat. We had our discourses on the qualities of his wares, when here was his price, and there was my gold. Odd or even! It was all a chance which had the best of the bargain. I was a thriving man in those days, Master Seadrift; but thy spirit seems the spirit of extortion itself!"

There was momentarily contempt on the lip of the handsome smuggler, but it disappeared in an expression of evident and painful sadness.

"Thou hast softened my heart, ere now, most liberal burgher," he answered, "by these allusions to my parent; and many is the doubloon that I have paid for his eulogies."

"I speak as disinterestedly as a parson preaches! What is a trifle of gold between friends? Yes, there was happiness in trade during the time of thy predecessor. He had a comely and a deceptive craft, that might be likened to an untrimmed racer. There was motion in it, at need, and yet it had the air of a leisurely Amsterdammer. I have known an Exchequer cruiser hail him, and ask the news of the famous free-trader, with as little suspicion as he would have in speaking the Lord High Admiral! There were no fooleries in his time; no unseemly hussies stuck under his bowsprit, to put an honest man out of countenance; no high-fliers in sail and paint; no singing and luting but all was rational and gainful barter. Then, he was a man to ballast his boat with something valuable. I have known him throw in fifty ankers of gin, without a farthing for freight, when a bargain has been struck for the finer articles ay, and finish by landing them in England, for a small premium, when the gift was made!"

"He deserves thy praise, grateful Alderman; but to what conclusion does this opening tend?"

"Well, if more gold must pass between us," continued the reluctant Myndert, "we shall not waste time in counting it; though, Heaven knows, Master Seadrift, thou hast already drained me dry. Losses have fallen heavy on me, of late. There is a gelding, dead, that fifty Holland ducats will not replace on the boom-key of Rotterdam, to say nothing of freight and charges, which come particularly heavy "

"Speak to thy offer!" interrupted the other, who evidently wished to shorten the interview.

"Restore the girl, and take five—and—twenty thin pieces."

The Water-Witch, Volume 1

"Half-price for a Flemish gelding! La Belle would blush, with honest pride, did she know her value in the market!"

"Extortion and bowels of compassion! Let it be a hundred, and no further words between us."

"Harkee, Mr. Van Beverout; that I sometimes trespass on the Queen's earnings, is not to be denied, and least of all to you; for I like neither this manner of ruling a nation by deputy, nor the principle which says that one bit of earth is to make laws for another. 'Tis not my humor, Sir, to wear an English cotton when my taste is for the Florentine; nor to swallow beer, when I more relish the delicate wines of Gascony. Beyond this, thou knowest I do not trifle, even with fancied rights; and had I fifty of thy nieces, sacks of ducats should not purchase one!"

The Alderman stared, in a manner that might have induced a spectator to believe he was listening to an incomprehensible proposition. Still his companion spoke with a warmth that gave him no small reason to believe he uttered no more than he felt, and, inexplicable as it might prove, that he valued treasure less than feeling.

"Obstinacy and extravagance!" muttered Myndert; "what use can a troublesome girl be to one of thy habits? If thou hast deluded "

"I have deluded none. The brigantine is not an Algerine, to ask and take ransom."

"Then let it submit to what I believe it is yet a stranger. If thou hast not enticed my niece away, by, Heaven knows, a most vain delusion! let the vessel be searched. This will make the minds of the young men tranquil, and keep the treaty open between us, and the value of the article fixed in the market."

"Freely: but mark! If certain bales containing worthless furs of martens and beavers, with other articles of thy colony trade, should discover the character of my correspondents, I stand exonerated of all breach of faith."

"There is prudence in that. Yes, there must be no impertinent eyes peeping into bales and packages. Well, I see, Master Seadrift, the impossibility of immediately coming to an understanding; and therefore I will quit thy vessel, for truly a merchant of reputation should have no unnecessary connexion with one so suspected."

The free-trader smiled, partly in scorn and yet much in sadness, and passed his fingers over the strings of the guitar.

"Show this worthy burgher to his friends, Zephyr," he said; and, bowing to the Alderman, he dismissed him in a manner that betrayed a singular compound of feeling. One quick to discover the traces of human passion, might have fancied, that regret, and even sorrow, were powerfully blended with the natural or assumed recklessness of the smuggler's air and language.

CHAPTER XVI.

"This will prove a brave kingdom to me;

Where I shall have my music, for nothing!"

During the time past in the secret conference of the cabin, Ludlow and the Patroon were held in discourse on the quarter-deck, by the hero of the India-shawl. The dialogue was professional, as Van Staats maintained his ancient reputation for taciturnity. The appearance of Myndert, thoughtful, disappointed, and most evidently

perplexed, caused the ideas of all to take a new direction. It is probable that the burgher believed he had not yet bid enough to tempt the free-trader to restore his niece; for, by his air, it was apparent his mind was far from being satisfied that she was not in the vessel. Still, when questioned by his companions concerning the result of his interview with the free-trader, for reasons best understood by himself, he was fain to answer evasively.

"Of one thing rest satisfied," he said; "the misconception in this affair will yet be explained, and Alida Barbérie return unfettered, and with a character as free from blemish as the credit of the Van Stoppers of Holland. The fanciful-looking person in the cabin denies that my niece is here, and I am inclined to think the balance of truth is on his side. I confess, if one could just look into the cabins, without the trouble of rummaging lockers and cargo, the statement would give more satisfaction; but hem gentlemen, we must take the assertion on credit, for want of more sufficient security.

Ludlow looked at the cloud above the mouth of the Raritan, and his lip curled in a haughty smile.

"Let the wind hold here, at east," he said, "and we shall act our pleasure, with both lockers and cabins."

"Hist! the worthy Master Tiller may overhear this threat and, after all, I do not know whether prudence does not tell us, to let the brigantine depart."

"Mr. Alderman Van Beverout," rejoined the Captain, whose cheek had reddened to a glow, "my duty must not be gauged by your affection for your niece. Though content that Alida Barbérie should quit the country, like an article of vulgar commerce, the commander of this vessel must get a passport of Her Majesty's cruiser, ere she again enter the high sea."

"Wilt say as much to the sea-green lady?" asked the mariner of the shawl, suddenly appearing at his elbow.

The question was so unexpected and so strange, that it caused an involuntary start; but, recovering his recollection on the instant, the young sailor haughtily replied

"Or to any other monster thou canst conjure!"

"We will take you at the word. There is no more certain method of knowing the past or the future, the quarter of the heavens from which the winds are to come, or the season of the hurricanes, than by putting a question to our mistress. She who knows so much of hidden matters, may tell us what you wish to know. We will have her called, by the usual summons."

Thus saying, the mariner of the shawl gravely quitted his guests, and descended into the inferior cabins of the vessel. It was but a moment, before there arose sounds from some secret though not distant quarter of the brigantine, that caused, in some measure, both surprise and pleasure to Ludlow and the Patroon. Their companion had his motives for being insensible to either of these emotions.

After a short and rapid symphony, a wind-instrument took up a wild strain, while a human voice was again heard chanting to the music, words which were so much involved by the composition of the air, as to render it impossible to trace more than that their burthen was a sort of mysterious incantation of some ocean deity.

"Squeaking and flutes!" grumbled Myndert, ere the last sounds were fairly ended. "This is down-right heathenish; and a plain-dealing man, who does business above-board, has good reason to wish himself honestly at church. What have we to do with land-witches, or water-witches, or any other witch-craft, that we stay in the brigantine, now it is known that my niece is not to be found aboard her; and, moreover, even admitting that we were disposed to traffic, the craft has nothing in her that a man of Manhattan should want. The deepest bog of thy manor, Patroon, is safer ground to tread on, than the deck of a vessel that has got a reputation like that of this craft."

The scenes of which he was a witness, had produced a powerful effect on Van Staats of Kinderhook. Of a slow imagination, but of a powerful and vast frame, he was not easily excited, either to indulge in fanciful images, or to suffer personal apprehension. Only a few years had passed since men, who in other respects were enlightened, firmly believed in the existence of supernatural agencies in the control of the affairs of this life; and though the New-Netherlanders had escaped the infatuation which prevailed so generally in the religious provinces of New-England, a credulous superstition, of a less active quality, possessed the minds of the most intelligent of the Dutch colonists, and even of their descendants so lately as in our own times. The art of divination was particularly in favor; and it rarely happened, that any inexplicable event affected the fortunes or comforts of the good provincialists, without their having recourse to some one of the more renowned fortune-tellers of the country, for an explanation. Men of slow faculties love strong excitement, because they are insensible to less powerful impulses, as men of hard heads find most enjoyment in strong liquors. The Patroon was altogether of the sluggish cast; and to him there was consequently a secret, but deep pleasure, in his present situation.

"What important results may flow from this adventure, we know not, Mr. Alderman Van Beverout," returned Oloff Van Staats; "and I confess a desire to see and hear more, before we land. This 'Skimmer of the Sea's' is altogether a different man from what our rumors in the city have reported; and, by remaining, we may set public opinion nearer to the truth. I have heard my late venerable aunt "

"Chimney-corners and traditions! The good lady was no bad customer of these gentry, Patroon; and it is lucky that they got no more of thy inheritance, in the way of fees. You see the Lust in Rust against the mountain there; well, all that is meant for the public is on the outside, and all that is intended for my own private gratification is kept within-doors. But here is Captain Ludlow, who has matters of the Queen on his hands, and the gentleman will find it disloyal to waste the moments in this juggling."

"I confess the same desire to witness the end," dryly returned the commander of the Coquette. "The state of the wind prevents any immediate change in the positions of the two vessels; and why not get a farther insight into the extraordinary character of those who belong to the brigantine?"

"Ay, there it is!" muttered the Alderman between his teeth. "Your insights and outsights lead to all the troubles of life. One is never snug with these fantastics, which trifle with a secret, like a fly fluttering round a candle, until his wings get burnt."

As his companions seemed resolved to stay, however, there remained no alternative for the burgher, but patience. Although apprehension of some indiscreet exposure was certainly the feeling uppermost in his mind, he was not entirely without some of the weakness which caused Oloff Van Staats to listen and to gaze with so much obvious interest and secret awe. Even Ludlow, himself, felt more affected than he would have willingly owned, by the extraordinary situation in which he was placed. No man is entirely insensible to the influence of sympathy, let it exert its power in what manner it will. Of this the young sailor was the more conscious, through the effect that was produced on himself, by the grave exterior and attentive manner of all the mariners of the brigantine. He was a seaman of no mean accomplishments; and, among other attainments that properly distinguish men of his profession, he had learned to know the country of a sailor, by those general and distinctive marks which form the principal difference between men whose common pursuit has in so great a degree created a common character. Intelligence, at that day, was confined to narrow limits among those who dwelt on the ocean. Even the officer was but too apt to be one of rude and boisterous manners, of limited acquirements, and of deep and obstinate prejudices. No wonder, then, that the common man was, in general, ignorant of most of those opinions which gradually enlighten society. Ludlow had seen, on entering the vessel, that her crew was composed of men of different countries. Age and personal character seemed to have been more consulted, in their selection, than national distinctions. There was a Finlander, with a credulous and oval physiognomy, sturdy but short frame, and a light vacant eye; and a dark-skinned seaman of the Mediterranean, whose classical outline of feature was often disturbed by uneasy and sensitive glances at the horizon. These two men had come and placed themselves near the group on the quarter-deck, when the last music was heard; and Ludlow had ascribed the circumstance to a

sensibility to melody, when the child Zephyr stole to their side, in a manner to show that more was meant by the movement than was apparent in the action itself. The appearance of Tiller, who invited the party to re-enter the cabin, explained its meaning, by showing that these men, like themselves, had business with the being, who, it was pretended, had so great an agency in controlling the fortunes of the brigantine.

The party, who now passed into the little anteroom, was governed by very different sensations. The curiosity of Ludlow was lively, fearless, and a little mingled with an interest that might be termed professional; while that of his two companions was not without some inward reverence for the mysterious power of the sorceress. The two seamen manifested dull dependence, while the boy exhibited, in his ingenuous and half-terrified countenance, most unequivocally the influence of childish awe. The mariner of the shawl was grave, silent, and, what was unusual in his deportment, respectful. After a moment's delay, the door of the inner apartment was opened by Seadrift himself, and he signed for the whole to enter.

A material change had been made in the arrangement of the principal cabin. The light was entirely excluded from the stern, and the crimson curtain had been lowered before the alcove. A small window, whose effect was to throw a dim obscurity within, had been opened in the side. The objects on which its light fell strongest, received a soft coloring from the hues of the hangings.

The free-trader received his guests with a chastened air, bowing silently, and with less of levity in his mien than in the former interview. Still Ludlow thought there lingered a forced but sad smile about his handsome mouth; and the Patroon gazed at his fine features, with the admiration that one might feel for the most favored of those who were believed to administer at some supernatural shrine. The feelings of the Alderman were exhibited only by some half-suppressed murmurs of discontent, that from time to time escaped him, notwithstanding a certain degree of reverence, that was gradually prevailing over his ill-concealed dissatisfaction.

"They tell me, you would speak with our mistress," said the principal personage of the vessel, in a subdued voice. "There are others, too, it would seem, who wish to seek counsel from her wisdom. It is now many months since we have had direct converse with her, though the book is ever open to all applicants for knowledge. You have nerves for the meeting?"

"Her Majesty's enemies have never reproached me with their want," returned Ludlow, smiling incredulously. "Proceed with your incantations, that we may know."

"We are not necromancers, Sir, but faithful mariners, who do their mistress's pleasure. I know that you are sceptical; but bolder men have confessed their mistakes, with less testimony. Hist! we are not alone. I hear the opening and shutting of the brigantine's transoms."

The speaker then fell back nearly to the line in which the others had arranged themselves, and awaited the result in silence. The curtain rose to a low air on the same wind-instrument; and even Ludlow felt an emotion more powerful than interest, as he gazed on the object that was revealed to view.

A female form, attired, as near as might be, like the figure-head of the vessel, and standing in a similar attitude, occupied the centre of the alcove. As in the image, one hand held a book with its page turned towards the spectators, while a finger of the other pointed ahead, as if giving to the brigantine its course. The sea-green drapery was floating behind, as if it felt the influence of the air; and the face had the same dark and unearthly hue, with its malign and remarkable smile.

When the start and the first gaze of astonishment were over, the Alderman and his companions glanced their eyes at each other, in wonder. The smile on the look of the free-trader became less hidden, and it partook of triumph.

The Water-Witch, Volume 1

"If any here has aught to say to the lady of our bark, let him now declare it. She has come far, at our call, and will not tarry long."

"I would then know," said Ludlow, drawing a heavy breath, like one recovering from some sudden and powerful sensation, "if she I seek be within the brigantine?"

He who acted the part of mediator in this extraordinary ceremony, bowed and advanced to the book, which, with an air of deep reverence, he consulted, reading, or appearing to read, from its pages.

"You are asked here, in return for that you inquire, if she you seek is sought in sincerity?"

Ludlow reddened; the manliness of the profession to which he belonged, however, overcame the reluctance natural to self-esteem; and he answered, firmly

"She is."

"But you are a mariner; men of the sea place their affections, often, on the fabric in which they dwell. Is the attachment for her you seek, stronger than love of wandering, of your ship, your youthful expectations, and the glory that forms a young soldier's dreams?"

The commander of the *Coquette* hesitated. After a moment of pause, like that of self-examination, he said

"As much so, as may become a man."

A cloud crossed the brow of his interrogator, who advanced and again consulted the pages of the book.

"You are required to say, if a recent event has not disturbed your confidence in her you seek?"

"Disturbed but not destroyed."

The sea-green lady moved, and the pages of the mysterious volume trembled, as if eager to deliver their oracles.

"And could you repress curiosity, pride, and all the other sentiments of your sex, and seek her favor, without asking explanation, as before the occurrence of late events?"

"I would do much to gain a kind look from Alida de Barbérie; but the degraded spirit, of which you speak, would render me unworthy of her esteem. If I found her as I lost her, my life should be devoted to her happiness; and if not, to mourning that one so fair should have fallen!"

"Have you ever felt jealousy?"

"First let me know if I have cause?" cried the young man, advancing a step towards the motionless form, with an evident intent to look closer into its character.

The hand of the mariner of the shawl arrested him, with the strength of a giant.

"None trespass on the respect due our mistress," coolly observed the vigorous seaman, while he motioned to the other to retreat.

A fierce glance shot from his eye; and then therecollection of his present helplessness came, in season, to restrain the resentment of the offended officer.

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"Have you ever felt jealousy?" continued his undisturbed interrogator.

"Would any love, that have not?"

A gentle respiration was heard in the cabin, during the short pause that succeeded, though none could tell whence it came. The Alderman turned to regard the Patroon, as if he believed the sigh was his; while the startled Ludlow looked curiously around him, at a loss to know who acknowledged, with so much sensibility, the truth of his reply.

"Your answers are well," resumed the free-trader, after a pause longer than usual. Then, turning to Oloff Van Staats, he said, "Whom, or what, do you seek?"

"We come on a common errand."

"And do you seek in all sincerity?"

"I could wish to find."

"You are rich in lands and houses; is she you seek, dear to you as this wealth?"

"I esteem them both, since one could not wish to tie a woman he admired to beggary."

The Alderman hemmed so loud as to fill the cabin, and then, startled at his own interruption, he involuntarily bowed an apology to the motionless form in the alcove, and regained his composure.

"There is more of prudence than of ardor in your answer. Have you ever felt jealousy?"

"That has he!" eagerly exclaimed Myndert. "I've known the gentleman raving as a bear that has lost its cub, when my niece has smiled, in church, for instance, though it were only in answer to a nod from an old lady. Philosophy and composure, Patroon! Who the devil knows, but Alida may hear of this questioning? and then her French blood will boil, to find that your love has always gone as regularly as a town-clock."

"Could you receive her, without inquiring into past events?"

"That would he that would he!" returned the Alderman. "I answer for it, that Mr. Van Staats complies with all engagements, as punctually as the best house in Amsterdam, itself."

The book again trembled, but it was with a waving and dissatisfied motion.

"What is thy will with our mistress?" demanded the free-trader, of the fair-haired sailor.

"I have bargained with some of the dealers of my country, for a wind to carry the brigantine through the inlet."

"Go. The Water-Witch will sail when there is need; and you?"

"I wish to know whether a few skins I bought last night, for a private venture, will turn to good account?"

"Trust the sea-green lady for your profits. When did she ever let any fail, in a bargain. Child, what has brought thee hither?"

The boy trembled, and a little time elapsed before he found resolution to answer.

"They tell me it is so queer to be upon the land!"

"Sirrah! thou hast been answered. When others go, thou shalt go with them."

"They say 'tis pleasant to taste the fruits from off the very trees "

"Thou art answered. Gentlemen, our mistress departs. She knows that one among you has threatened her favorite brigantine with the anger of an earthly Queen; but it is beneath her office to reply to threats so idle. Hark! her attendants are in waiting!"

The wind-instrument was once more heard, and the curtain slowly fell to its strains. A sudden and violent noise, resembling the opening and shutting of some massive door, succeeded and then all was still. When the sorceress had disappeared, the free-trader resumed his former ease of manner, seeming to speak and act more naturally. Alderman Van Beverout drew a long breath, like one relieved; and even the mariner of the gay shawl stood in an easier and more reckless attitude than while in her presence. The two seamen and the child withdrew.

"Few who wear that livery have ever before seen the lady of our brigantine," continued the free-trader, addressing himself to Ludlow; "and it is proof that she has less aversion to your cruiser, than she in common feels to most of the long pennants that are abroad on the water."

"Thy mistress, thy vessel, and thyself, are alike amusing!" returned the young seaman, again smiling incredulously, and with some little official pride. "It will be well, if you maintain this pleasantry much longer, at the expense of Her Majesty's customs."

"We trust to the power of the Water-Witch. She has adopted our brigantine as her abode, given it her name, and guides it with her hand. 'Twould be weak to doubt, when thus protected."

"There may be occasion to try her virtues. Were she a spirit of the deep waters, her robe would be blue. Nothing of a light draught can escape the Coquette!"

"Dost not know that the color of the sea differs in different climes? We fear not, but you would have answers to your questions. Honest Tiller will carry you all to the land, and, in passing, the book may again be consulted. I doubt not she will leave us some further memorial of her visit."

The free-trader then bowed, and retired behind the curtain, with the air of a sovereign dismissing his visitors from an audience; though his eye glanced curiously behind him, as he disappeared, as if to trace the effect which had been produced by the interview. Alderman Van Beverout and his friends were in the boat again, before a syllable was exchanged between them. They had followed the mariner of the shawl, in obedience to his signal; and they quitted the side of the beautiful brigantine, like men who pondered on what they had just witnessed.

Enough has been betrayed, in the course of the narrative, perhaps, to show that Ludlow distrusted, though he could not avoid wondering at, what he had seen. He was not entirely free from the superstition that was then so common among seamen; but his education and native good sense enabled him, in a great measure, to extricate his imagination from that love of the marvellous, which is more or less common to all. He had fifty conjectures concerning the meaning of what had passed, and not one of them was true; though each, at the instant, seemed to appease his curiosity, while it quickened his resolution to pry further into the affair. As for the Patroon of Kinderhook, the present day was one of rare and unequalled pleasure. He had all the gratification which strong excitement can produce in slow natures; and he neither wished a solution of his doubts, nor contemplated any investigation that might destroy so agreeable an illusion. His fancy was full of the dark countenance of the sorceress; and when it did not dwell on a subject so unnatural, it saw the handsome features, ambiguous smile, and attractive air, of her scarcely less admirable minister.

As the boat got to a little distance from the vessel, Tiller stood erect, and ran his eye complacently over the perfection of her hull and rigging.

"Our mistress has equipped and sent upon the wide and unbeaten sea, many a bark," he said; "but never a lovelier than our own! Captain Ludlow, there has been some double-dealing between us; but that which is to follow, shall depend on our skill, seamanship, and the merits of the two crafts. You serve Queen Anne, and I the sea-green lady. Let each be true to his mistress, and Heaven preserve the deserving! Wilt see the book, before we make the trial?"

Ludlow intimated his assent, and the boat approached the figure-head. It was impossible to prevent the feeling, which each of our three adventurers, not excepting the Alderman, felt when they came in full view of the motionless image. The mysterious countenance appeared endowed with thought, and the malign smile seemed still more ironical than before.

"The first question was yours, and yours must be the first answer," said Tiller, motioning for Ludlow to consult the page which was open. "Our mistress deals chiefly in verses from the old writer, whose thoughts are almost as common to us all, as to human nature."

"What means this?" said Ludlow, hastily

"She, Claudio, that you wrong'd, look, you restore.

love her Angelo;

I have confess'd her, and I know her virtue."

"These are plain words; but I would rather that another priest should shrive her whom I love!"

"Hist! Young blood is swift and quickly heated. Our lady of the bark will not relish hot speech, over her oracles. Come, Master Patroon, turn the page with the rattan, and see what fortune will give."

Oloff Van Staats raised his powerful arm, with the hesitation, and yet with the curiosity, of a girl. It was easy to read in his eye, the pleasure his heavy nature felt in the excitement; and yet it was easy to detect the misgivings of an erroneous education, by the seriousness of all the other members of his countenance. He read aloud

"I have a motion much imports your good;

Whereto, if you'll a willing ear incline,

What's mine is yours, and what is yours is mine:

So bring us to our palace, where we'll show,

What's yet behind, that's meet you all should know."

Measure For Measure.

"Fair-dealing, and fairer speech! 'What's yours is mine, and what is mine is yours,' is Measure for Measure, truly, Patroon!" cried the Alderman. "A more equitable bargain cannot be made, when the assets are of equal value. Here is encouragement, in good sooth; and now, Master Mariner, we will land and proceed to the Lust in Rust, which must be the place meant in the verses. 'What's yet behind,' must be Alida, the tormenting baggage! who has

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been playing hide-and-seek with us, for no other reason than to satisfy her womanish vanity, by showing how uncomfortable she could make three grave and responsible men. Let the boat go, Master Tiller, since that is thy name; and many thanks for thy civilities."

"'Twould give grave offence to leave the lady, without knowing all she has to say. The answer now concerns you, worthy Alderman; and the rattan will do its turn, in your hand, as well as in that of another."

"I despise a pitiful curiosity, and content myself with knowing what chance and good luck teach," returned Myndert. "There are men in Manhattan ever prying into their neighbors' credit, like frogs lying with their noses out of water; but it is enough for me to know the state of my books, with some insight into that of the market."

"It will not do. This may appease a quiet conscience, like your own, Sir; but we of the brigantine may not trifle with our mistress. One touch of the rattan will tell you, whether these visits to the Water-Witch are likely to prove to your advantage."

Myndert wavered. It has been said, that, like most others of his origin in the colony, he had a secretleaning to the art of divination: and the words of the hero of the shawl contained a flattering allusion to the profits of his secret commerce. He took the offered stick, and, by the time the page was turned, his eyes were ready enough to consult its contents. There was but a line, which was also quoted as coming from the well-known comedy of 'Measure for Measure.'

"Proclaim it, Provost, round about the city."

In his eagerness Myndert read the oracle aloud, and then he sunk into his seat, affecting to laugh at the whole as a childish and vain conceit.

"Proclamation, me, no proclamations! Is it a time of hostilities, or of public danger, that one should go shouting with his tidings through the streets? Measure for Measure, truly! Harkee, Master Tiller, this sea-green trull of thine is no better than she should be; and unless she mends her manner of dealing, no honest man will be found willing to be seen in her company. I am no believer in necromancy though the inlet has certainly opened this year, altogether in an unusual manner and therefore I put little faith in her words; but as for saying aught of me or mine, in town or country, Holland or America, that can shake my credit, why I defy her! Still, I would not willingly have any idle stories to contradict; and I shall conclude by saying, you will do well to stop her mouth."

"Stop a hurricane, or a tornado! Truth will come in her book, and he that reads must expect to see it Captain Ludlow, you are master of your movements, again; for the inlet is no longer between you and your cruiser. Behind you hillock is the boat and crew you missed. The latter expect you. And now, gentlemen, we leave the rest to the green lady's guidance, our own good skill, and the winds! I salute you."

The moment his companions were on the shore, the hero of the shawl caused his boat to quit it; and in less than five minutes it was seen swinging, by its tackles, at the stern of the brigantine.

CHAPTER XVII.

" like Arion on the dolphin's back,

I saw him hold acquaintance with the waves,

So long as I could see."

There was one curious though half-confounded observer of all that passed in and around the Cove, on the morning in question. This personage was no other than the slave called Bonnie, who was the factotum of his master, over the demesnes of the Lust in Rust, during the time when the presence of the Alderman was required in the city; which was, in truth, at least four-fifths of the year. Responsibility and confidence had produced their effect on this negro, as on more cultivated minds. He had been used to act in situations of care; and practice had produced a habit of vigilance and observation, that was not common in men of his unfortunate condition. There is no moral truth more certain, than that men, when once accustomed to this species of domination, as readily submit their minds, as their bodies, to the control of others. Thus it is, that we see entire nations maintaining so many erroneous maxims, merely because it has suited the interests of those who do the thinking, to give forth these fallacies to their followers. Fortunately, however, for the improvement of the race and the advancement of truth, it is only necessary to give a man an opportunity to exercise his natural faculties, in order to make him a reflecting, and, in some degree, an independent being. Such, though to a very limited extent, certainly, had been the consequence, in the instance of the slave just mentioned.

How far Bonnie had been concerned in the proceedings between his master and the mariners of the brigantine, it is unnecessary to say. Little passed at the villa, of which he was ignorant; and as curiosity, once awakened, increases its own desire for indulgence, could he have had his wish, little would have passed anywhere, near him, without his knowing something of its nature and import. He had seen, while seemingly employed with his hoe in the garden of the Alderman, the trio conveyed by Erasmus across the inlet; had watched the manner in which they followed its margin to the shade of the oak, and had seen them enter the brigantine, as related. That this extraordinary visit on board a vessel which was in common shrouded by so much mystery, had given rise to much and unusual reflection in the mind of the black, was apparent by the manner in which he so often paused in his labor, and stood leaning on the handle of his hoe, like one who mused. He had never known his master so far overstep his usual caution, as to quit the dwelling, during the occasional visits of the free-trader; and yet he had now gone as it were into the very jaws of the lion, accompanied by the commander of a royal cruiser himself. No wonder, then, that the vigilance of the negro became still more active, and that not even the slightest circumstance was suffered to escape his admiring eye. During the whole time consumed by the visit related in the preceding chapter, not a minute had been suffered to pass, without an inquiring look in the direction, either of the brigantine, or of the adjacent shore.

It is scarcely necessary to say how keen the attention of the slave became, when his master and his companions were seen to return to the land. They immediately ascended to the foot of the oak, and then there was a long and apparently a serious conference between them. During this consultation, the negro dropped the end of his hoe, and never suffered his gaze, for an instant, to alter its direction. Indeed, he scarcely drew breath, until the whole party quitted the spot together, and buried themselves in the thicket that covered the cape, taking the direction of its outer or northern extremity, instead of retiring by the shore of the Cove, towards the inlet. Then Bonnie respired heavily, and began to look about him at the other objects that properly belonged to the interest of the scene.

The brigantine had run up her boat, and she now lay, as when first seen, a motionless, beautiful, and exquisitely graceful fabric, without the smallest sign about her of an intention to move, or indeed without exhibiting any other proof, except in her admirable order and symmetry, that any of human powers dwelt within her hull. The royal cruiser, though larger and of far less aerial mould and fashion, presented the same picture of repose. The distance between the two was about a league; and Bonnie was sufficiently familiar with the formation, of the land and of the position of the vessels, to be quite aware that this inactivity on the part of those whose duty it was to protect the rights of the Queen, proceeded from their utter ignorance of the proximity of their neighbor. The thicket which bounded the Cove, and the growth of oaks and pines that stretched along the narrow sandy spit of land quite to its extremity, sufficiently accounted for the fact. The negro, therefore, after gazing for several minutes at the two immovable vessels, turned his eye askance on the earth, shook his head, and then burst into a laugh, which was so noisy that it caused his sable partner to thrust her vacant and circular countenance through an open window of the

scullery of the villa, to demand the reason of a merriment that to her faithful feelings appeared to be a little unsocial.

"Hey! you alway' keep 'e queer t'ing to heself, Bonnie, but!" cried the vixen. "I'm werry glad to see old bones like a hoe; an' I wonner dere ar' time to laugh, wid 'e garden full of weed!"

"Grach!" exclaimed the negro, stretching out an arm in a forensic attitude; "what a black woman know of politic! If a hab time to talk, better cook a dinner. Tell one t'ing, Phyllis, and that be dis; vy 'e ship of Captain Ludlow no lif' 'e anchor, an' come take dis rogue in 'e Cove? can a tell dat much, or no? If no, let a man, who understan' heself, laugh much as he like. A little fun no harm Queen Anne, nor kill 'e Gubbenor!"

"All work and no sleep make old bone ache, Bonnie, but!" returned the consort. "Ten o'clock twelve o'clock t'ree o'clock, and no bed; vell I see 'e sun afore a black fool put 'e head on a pillow! An' now a hoe go all 'e same as if he sleep a ten hour. Masser Myn'ert got a heart, and he no wish to kill he people wid work, or old Phyllis war' dead, fifty year, next winter."

"I t'ink a wench's tongue nebber satisfy! What for tell a whole world, when Bonnie go to bed? He sleep for herself, and he no sleep for 'e neighborhood! Dere! A man can't t'ink of ebery t'ing, in a minute. Here a ribbon long enough to hang heself take him, and den remem'er, Phyllis, dat you be 'e wife of a man who hab care on he shoul'er."

Bonnie then set up another laugh, in which his partner, having quitted her scullery to seize the gift, which in its colors resembled the skin of a garter-snake, did not fail to join, through mere excess of animal delight. The effect of the gift, however, wasto leave the negro to make his observations, without any further interruption from one who was a little too apt to disturb his solitude.

A boat was now seen to pull out from among the bushes that lined the shore; and Bonnie was enabled to distinguish, in its stern-sheets, the persons of his master, Ludlow, and the Patroon. He had been acquainted with the seizure of the Coquette's barge, the preceding night, and of the confinement of the crew. Its appearance in that place, therefore, occasioned no new surprise. But the time which past while the men were rowing up to the sloop-of-war, was filled with minutes of increasing interest. The black abandoned his hoe, and took a position on the side of the mountain, that gave him a view of the whole bay. So long as the mysteries of the Lust in Rust had been confined to the ordinary combinations of a secret trade, he had been fully able to comprehend them; but now that there apparently existed an alliance so unnatural as one between his master and the cruiser of the crown, he felt the necessity of double observation and of greater thought.

A far more enlightened mind than that of the slave, might have been excited by the expectation, and the objects which now presented themselves, especially if sufficiently prepared for events, by a knowledge of the two vessels in sight. Though the wind still hung at east, the cloud above the mouth of the Raritan had at length begun to rise. The broad fleeces of white vapor, that had lain the whole morning over the continent, were rapidly uniting; and they formed already a dark and dense mass, that floated in the bottom of the estuary, threatening shortly to roll over the whole of its wide waters. The air was getting lighter, and variable; and while the wash of the surf sounded still more audible, its roll upon the beach was less regular than in the earlier hours of the day. Such was the state of the two elements, when the boat touched the side of the ship. In a minute it was hanging by its tackles, high in the air; and then it disappeared, in the bosom of the dark mass.

It far exceeded the intelligence of Bonnie to detect, now, any further signs of preparation, in either of the two vessels, which absorbed the whole of his attention. They appeared to him to be alike without motion, and equally without people. There were, it is true, a few specks in the rigging of the Coquette, which might be men; but the distance prevented him from being sure of the fact; and, admitting them to be seamen busied aloft, there were no visible consequences of their presence, that his uninstructed eye could trace. In a minute or two, even these

scattered specks were seen no longer; though the attentive black thought that the mast-heads and the rigging beneath the tops thickened, as if surrounded by more than their usual mazes of ropes. At that moment of suspense, the cloud over the Raritan emitted a flash, and the sound of distant thunder rolled along the water. This seemed to be a signal for the cruiser; for when the eye of Bonnie, which had been directed to the heavens, returned towards the ship, he saw that she had opened and hoisted her three topsails, seemingly with as little exertion as an eagle would have spread his wings. The ship now became uneasy; for the wind came in puffs, and the vessel rolled lightly, as if struggling to extricate itself from the hold of its anchor; and then, precisely at the moment when the shift of wind was felt, and the breeze came from the cloud in the west, the cruiser whirled away from its constrained position, and appearing, for a short space, restless as a steed that had broken from its fastenings, it came up heavily to the wind, and lay balanced by the action of its sails. There was another minute, or two, of seeming inactivity, after which the broad surfaces of the topsails were brought in parallel lines. One white sheet was spread after another, upon the fabric; and Bonnie saw that the Coquette, the swiftest cruiser of the crown in those seas, was dashing out from the land, under a cloud of canvas.

All this time, the brigantine, in the Cove, lay quietly at her anchor. When the wind shifted, the light hull swang with its currents, and the image of the sea-green lady was seen offering her dark cheek to be fanned by the breeze. But she alone seemed to watch over the fortunes of her followers; for no other eye could be seen, looking out on the danger that began so seriously to threaten them, both from the heavens, and from a more certain and intelligible foe.

As the wind was fresh, though unsteady, the Coquette moved through the water with a velocity that did no discredit to her reputation for speed. At first, it seemed to be the intention of the royal cruiser to round the cape, and gain an offing in the open sea; for her head was directed northwardly; but no sooner had she cleared the curve of the little bight which from its shape is known by the name of the Horse-Shoe, than she was seen shooting directly into the eye of the wind, and falling off with the graceful and easy motion of a ship in stays, her head looking towards the Lust in Rust. Her design on the notorious dealer in contraband was now too evident to admit of doubt.

Still, the Water-Witch betrayed no symptoms of alarm. The meaning eye of the image seemed to study the motions of her adversary, with all the understanding of an intelligent being; and occasionally the brigantine turned slightly in the varying currents of the air, as if volition directed the movements of the little fabric. These changes resembled the quick and slight movements of the hound, as he lifts his head in his lair, to listen to some distant sound, or to scent some passing taint in the gale.

In the mean time, the approach of the ship was so swift as to cause the negro to shake his head, with a meaning that exceeded even his usually important look. Every thing was propitious to her progress; and, as the water of the Cove, during the periods that the inlet remained open, was known to be of a sufficient depth to admit of her entrance, the faithful Bonnie began to anticipate a severe blow to the future fortunes of his master. The only hope, that he could perceive, for the escape of the smuggler, was in the changes of the heavens.

Although the threatening cloud had now quitted the mouth of the Raritan, and was rolling eastward with fearful velocity, it had not yet broken. The air had the unnatural and heated appearance which precedes a gust; but, with the exception of a few large drops, that fell seemingly from a clear sky, it was as yet what is called a dry squall. The water of the bay was occasionally dark, angry, and green; and there were moments when it would appear as if heavy currents of air descended to its surface, wantonly to try their power on the sister element. Notwithstanding these sinister omens, the Coquette stood on her course, without lessening the wide surfaces of her canvas, by a single inch. They who governed her movements were no men of the lazy Levant, nor of the mild waters of the Mediterranean, to tear their hair, and call on saints to stand between their helplessness and harm; but mariners trained in a boisterous sea, and accustomed to place their first dependence on their own good manhood, aided by the vigilance and skill of a long and severely-exercised experience. A hundred eyes on board that cruiser watched the advance of the rolling cloud, or looked upon the play of light and shade, that caused the color of the water to

vary; but it was steadily, and with an entire dependence on the discretion of the young officer who controlled the movements of the ship.

Ludlow himself paced the deck, with all his usual composure, so far as might be seen by external signs; though, in reality, his mind was agitated by feelings that were foreign to the duties of his station. He too had thrown occasional glances at the approaching squall, but his eye was far oftener riveted on the motionless brigantine, which was now distinctly to be seen from the deck of the *Coquette*, still riding at her anchor. The cry of 'a stranger in the cove!' which, a few moments before, came out of one of the tops, caused no surprise in the commander; while the crew, wondering but obedient, began, for the first time, to perceive the object of their strange manœuvres. Even the officer, next in authority to the captain, had not presumed to make any inquiry, though, now that the object of their search was so evidently in view, he felt emboldened to presume on his rank, and to venture a remark.

"It is a sweet craft!" said the staid lieutenant, yielding to an admiration natural to his habits, "and one that might serve as a yacht for the Queen! This is some trifler with the revenue, or perhaps a buccaneer from the islands. The fellow shows no ensign!"

"Give him notice, Sir, that he has to do with one who hears the royal commission," returned Ludlow, speaking from habit, and half-unconscious of what he said. "We must teach these rovers to respect a pennant."

The report of the cannon startled the absent man, and caused him to remember the order.

"Was that gun shotted?" he asked, in a tone that sounded like rebuke.

"Shotted, but pointed wide, Sir; merely a broad hint. We are no dealers in dumb show, in the *Coquette*, Captain Ludlow."

"I would not injure the vessel, even should it prove a buccaneer. Be careful, that nothing strikes her, without an order."

"Ay, 'twill be well to take the beauty alive, Sir; so pretty a boat should not be broken up, like an old hulk. Ha! there goes his bunting, at last! He shows a white field can the fellow be a Frenchman, after all?"

The lieutenant took a glass, and for a moment applied it to his eye, with the usual steadiness. Then he suffered the instrument to fall, and it would seem that he endeavored to recall the different flags that he had seen during the experience of many years.

"This joker should come from some terra incognita;" he said. "Here is a woman in his field, with an ugly countenance, too, unless the glass play me false as I live, the rogue has her counterpart for a figure-head! Will you look at the ladies, Sir?"

Ludlow took the glass, and it was not without curiosity that he turned it toward the colors the hardy smuggler dared to exhibit, in presence of a cruiser. The vessels were, by this time, sufficiently near each other, to enable him to distinguish the swarthy features and malign smile of the sea-green lady, whose form was wrought in the field of the ensign, with the same art as that which he had seen so often displayed in other parts of the brigantine. Amazed at the daring of the free-trader, he returned the glass, and continued to pace the deck in silence. There stood near the two speakers an officer whose head and form began to show the influence of time, and who, from his position, had unavoidably been an auditor of what passed. Though the eye of this person, who was the sailing-master of the sloop, was rarely off the threatening cloud, except to glance along the wide show of canvas that was spread, he found a moment to take a look at the stranger.

"A half-rigged brig, with her fore-top-gallant-mast fiddled abaft, a double martingale, and a standing gaff;" observed the methodical and technical mariner, as another would have recounted the peculiarities of complexion, or of feature, in some individual who was the subject of a personal description. "The rogue has no need of showing his brazen-faced trull to be known! I chased him, for six-and-thirty hours, in the chops of St. George's, no later than the last season; and the fellow ran about us, like a dolphin playing under a ship's fore-foot. We had him, now on our weather bow, and now crossing our course, and, once in a while, in our wake, as if he had been a Mother Carey's chicken looking for our crumbs. He seems snug enough in that cove, to be sure, and yet I'll wager the pay of any month in the twelve, that he gives us the slip. Captain Ludlow, the brigantine under our lee, here, in *Spermaceti*, is the well-known Skimmer of the Seas!"

"The Skimmer of the Seas!" echoed twenty voices, in a manner to show the interest created by the unexpected information.

"I'll swear to his character before any Admiralty Judge in England, or even in France, should there be occasion to go into an outlandish court but no need of an oath, when here is a written account I took, with my own hands, having the chase in plain view, at noon-day." While speaking, the sailing-master drew a tobacco-box from his pocket, and removing a coil of pig-tail, he came to a deposit of memorandums, that vied with the weed itself in colors. "Now, gentlemen," he continued, "you shall have her build, as justly as if the master-carpenter had laid it down with his rule. 'Remember to bring a muff of marten's fur from America, for Mrs. Trysail buy it in London, and swear' this is not the paper I let your boy, Mr. Luff, stow away the last entry of tobacco for me, and the young dog has disturbed every document I own. This is the way the government accounts get jammed, when Parliament wants to overhaul them. But I suppose young blood will have its run! I let a monkey into a church of a Saturday night myself, when a youngster, and he made such stowage of the prayer-books, that the whole parish was by the ears for six months; and there is one quarrel between two old ladies, that has not been made up to this hour. Ah! here we have it: 'Skimmer of the Seas. Full-rigged forward, with fore-and-aft mainsail, abaft; a gaff-top-sail; taut in his spars, with light top-hamper; neat in his gear, as any beauty Carries a ring-tail in light weather; main-boom like a frigate's top-sail-yard, with a main-top-mast-stay-sail as big as a jib. Low in the water, with a woman figure-head; carries sail more like a devil than a human being, and lies within five points, when jammed up hard on a wind.' Here are marks by which one of Queen Anne's maids of honor might know the rogue; and there you see them all, as plainly as human nature can show them in a ship!"

"The Skimmer of the Seas!" repeated the young officers, who had crowded round the veteran tar, to hear this characteristic description of the notorious free-trader.

"Skimmer or flyer, we have him now, dead under our lee, with a sandy beach on three of his sides, and the wind in his eye!" cried the first-lieutenant. "You shall have an opportunity, Master Trysail, of correcting your account, by actual measurement."

The sailing-master shook his head, like one who doubted, and again turned his eye on the approaching cloud.

The *Coquette*, by this time, had run so far as to have the entrance of the Cove open; and she was separated from her object, only by a distance of a few cables'-length. In obedience to an order given by Ludlow, all the light canvas of the ship was taken in, and the vessel was left under her three topsails and gib. There remained, however, a question as to the channel; for it was not usual for ships of the *Coquette*'s draught, to be seen in that quarter of the bay, and the threatening state of the weather rendered caution doubly necessary. The pilot shrunk from a responsibility which did not properly belong to his office, since the ordinary navigation had no concern with that secluded place; and even Ludlow, stimulated as he was by so many powerful motives, hesitated to incur a risk which greatly exceeded his duty. There was something so remarkable in the apparent security of the smuggler, that it naturally led to the belief he was certain of being protected by some known obstacle, and it was decided to sound before the ship was hazarded. An offer to carry the free-trader with the boats, though plausible in itself, and perhaps the wisest course of all, was rejected by the commander, on an evasive plea of its being of uncertain

issue, though, in truth, because he felt an interest in one whom he believed the brigantine to contain, which entirely forbade the idea of making the vessel the scene of so violent a struggle. A yawl was therefore lowered into the water, the main-topsail of the ship was thrown to the mast; and Ludlow himself, accompanied by the pilot and the master, proceeded to ascertain the best approach to the smuggler. A flash of lightning, with one of those thunder-claps that are wont to be more terrific on this continent than in the other hemisphere, warned the young mariner of the necessity of haste, if he would regain his ship, before the cloud, which still threatened them, should reach the spot where she lay. The boat pulled briskly into the Cove, both the master and the pilot sounding on each side, as fast as the leads could be cast from their hands and recovered.

"This will do;" said Ludlow, when they had ascertained that they could enter. "I would lay the ship as close as possible to the brigantine, for I distrust her quiet. We will go nearer."

"A brazen witch, and one whose saucy eye and pert figure might lead any honest mariner into contraband, or even into a sea-robbery!" half-whispered Trysail, perhaps afraid to trust his voice, within hearing of a creature that seemed almost endowed with the faculties of life. "Ay, this is the hussy! I know her by the book, and her green jacket! But where are her people? The vessel is as quiet as the royal vault on a coronation-day, when the last king, and those who went before him, commonly have the place to themselves. Here would be a pretty occasion to throw a boat's-crew on her decks, and haul down yon impudent ensign, which bears the likeness of this wicked lady, so bravely in the air, if "

"If what?" asked Ludlow, struck with the plausible character of the proposal.

"Why, if one were sure of the nature of such a minx, Sir; for to own the truth, I would rather deal with a regularly-built Frenchman, who showed his guns honestly, and kept such a jabbering aboard that one might tell his bearings in the dark. The creature spoke!"

Ludlow did not reply, for a heavy crash of thunder succeeded the vivid glow of a flash of lightning, and glared so suddenly across the swarthy lineaments as to draw the involuntary exclamation from Trysail. The intimation that came from the cloud, was not to be disregarded. The wind, which had so long varied, began to be heard in the rigging of the silent brigantine; and the two elements exhibited unequivocal evidence, in their menacing and fitful colors, of the near approach of the gust. The young sailor, with an absorbing interest, turned his eyes on his ship. The yards were on the caps, the bellying canvas was fluttering far to leeward, and twenty or thirty human forms on each spar, showed that the nimble-fingered topmen were gathering in and knotting the sails down to a close reef.

"Give way, men, for your lives!" cried the excited Ludlow.

A single dash of the oars was heard, and the yawl was already twenty feet from the mysterious image. Then followed a desperate struggle to regain the cruiser, ere the gust should strike her. The sullen murmur of the wind, rushing through the rigging of the ship, was audible some time before they reached her side; and the struggles between the fabric and the elements, were at moments so evident, as to cause the young commander to fear he would be too late.

The foot of Ludlow touched the deck of the Coquette, at the instant the weight of the squall fell upon her sails. He no longer thought of any interest but that of the moment; for, with all the feelings of a seaman, his mind was now full of his ship.

"Let run every thing!" shouted the ready officer, in a voice that made itself heard above the roar of the wind. "Clue down, and hand! Away aloft, you topmen! lay out! furl away!"

These orders were given in rapid succession, and without a trumpet, for the young man could, at need, speak loud as the tempest. They were succeeded by one of those exciting and fearful minutes that are so familiar to mariners. Each man was intent on his duty, while the elements worked their will around him, as madly as if the hand by which they are ordinarily restrained was for ever removed. The bay was a sheet of foam, while the rushing of the gust resembled the dull rumbling of a thousand chariots. The ship yielded to the pressure, until the water was seen gushing through her lee-scuppers, and her tall line of masts inclined towards the plane of the bay, as if the ends of the yards were about to dip into the water. But this was no more than the first submission to the shock. The well-moulded fabric recovered its balance, and struggled through its element, as if conscious that there was security only in motion. Ludlow glanced his eye to leeward. The opening of the Cove was favorably situated, and he caught a glimpse of the spars of the brigantine, rocking violently in the squall. He spoke to demand if the anchors were clear, and then he was heard, shouting again from his station in the weather gangway

"Hard a-weather! "

The first efforts of the cruiser to obey her helm, stripped as she was of canvas, were labored and slow. But when her head began to fall off, the driving scud was scarce swifter than her motion. At that moment, the sluices of the cloud opened, and a torrent of rain mingled in the uproar, and added to the confusion. Nothing was now visible but the lines of the falling water, and the sheet of white foam through which the ship was glancing.

"Here is the land, Sir!" bellowed Trysail, from a cat-head, where he stood resembling some venerable sea-god, dripping with his native element. "We are passing it, like a race-horse!"

"See your bowers clear!" shouted back the captain.

"Ready, Sir, ready "

Ludlow motioned to the men at the wheel, to bring the ship to the wind; and when her way was sufficiently deadened, two ponderous anchors dropped, at another signal, into the water. The vast fabric was not checked without a further and tremendous struggle. When the bows felt the restraint, the ship swung head to wind, and fathom after fathom of the enormous ropes were extracted, by surges so violent as to cause the hull to quiver to its centre. But the first-lieutenant and Trysail were no novices in their duty, and, in less than a minute, they had secured the vessel steadily at her anchors. When this important service was performed, officers and crew stood looking at each other, like men who had just made a hazardous and fearful experiment. The view again opened, and objects on the land became visible through the still falling rain. The change was like that from night to day. Men who had passed their lives on the sea drew long and relieving breaths, conscious that the danger was happily passed. As the more pressing interest of their own situation abated, they remembered the object of their search. All eyes were turned in quest of the smuggler; but, by some inexplicable means, he had disappeared.

'The Skimmer of the Seas!' and 'What has become of the brigantine?' were exclamations that the discipline of a royal cruiser could not repress. They were repeated by a hundred mouths, while twice as many eyes sought to find the beautiful fabric. All looked in vain. The spot where the Water-Witch had so lately lain, was vacant, and no vestige of her wreck lined the shores of the Cove. During the time the ship was hauling her sails, and preparing to enter the Cove, no one had leisure to look for the stranger; and after the vessel had anchored, until that moment, it was not possible to see her length, on any side of them. There was still a dense mass of falling water moving seaward; but the curious and anxious eyes of Ludlow made fruitless efforts to penetrate its secrets. Once indeed, more than an hour after the gust had reached his own ship, and when the ocean in the offing was clear and calm, he thought he could distinguish, far to seaward, the delicate tracery of a vessel's spars, drawn against the horizon, without any canvas set. But a second look did not assure him of the truth of the conjecture.

There were many extraordinary tales related that night, on board Her Britannic Majesty's ship Coquette. The boatswain affirmed that, while piping below in order to overhaul the cables, he had heard a screaming in the air,

that sounded as if a hundred devils were mocking him, and which he told the gunner, in confidence, he believed was no more than the winding of a call on board the brigantine, who had taken occasion, when other vessels were glad to anchor, to get under way, in her own fashion. There was also a fore-top-man named Robert Yarn, a fellow whose faculty for story-telling equalled that of Scheherazade, and who not only asserted, but who confirmed the declaration by many strange oaths, that while he lay on the lee-fore-top-sail-yard-arm, stretching forth an arm to grasp the leech of the sail, a dark-looking female fluttered over his head, and caused her long hair to whisk into his face, in a manner that compelled him to shut his eyes, which gave occasion to a smart reprimand from the reefer of the top. There was a feeble attempt to explain this assault, by the man who lay next to Yarn, who affected to think the hair was no more than the end of a gasket whipping in the wind; but his shipmate, who had pulled one of the oars of the yawl, soon silenced this explanation, by the virtue of his long-established reputation for veracity. Even Trysail ventured several mysterious conjectures concerning the fate of the brigantine, in the gun-room; but, on returning from the duty of sounding the inlet, whither he had been sent by his captain, he was less communicative and more thoughtful than usual. It appeared, indeed, from the surprise that was manifested by every officer that heard the report of the quarter-master, who had given the casts of the lead on this service, that no one in the ship, with the exception of Alderman Van Beverout, was at all aware that there was rather more than two fathoms of water in that secret passage.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Sirs, take your places, and be vigilant."

Henry IV.

The succeeding day was one in which the weather had a fixed character. The wind was east, and, though light, not fluctuating. The air had that thick and hazy appearance, which properly belongs to the Autumn in this climate, but which is sometimes seen at midsummer, when a dry wind blows from the ocean. The roll of the surf, on the shore, was regular and monotonous, and the currents of the air were so steady as to remove every apprehension of a change. The moment to which the action of the tale is transferred, was in the earlier hours of the afternoon.

At that time the Coquette lay again at her anchors, just within the shelter of the cape. There were a few small sails to be seen passing up the bay; but the scene, as was common at that distant day, presented little of the activity of our own times, to the eye. The windows of the Lust in Rust were again open, and the movement of the slaves, in and about the villa, announced the presence of its master.

The Alderman was in truth, at the hour named, passing the little lawn in front of la Cour des Fées, accompanied by Oloff Van Staats and the commander of the cruiser. It was evident, by the frequent glances which the latter threw in the direction of the pavilion, that he still thought of her who was absent; while the faculties of the two others were either in better subjection, or less stimulated by anxiety. One who understood the character of the individual, and who was acquainted with the past, might have suspected, by this indifference on the part of the Patroon, placed as it was in such a singular contrast to a sort of mysterious animation which enlivened a countenance whose ordinary expression was placid content, that the young suitor thought less than formerly of the assets of old Etienne, and more of the secret pleasure he found in the singular incidents of which he had been a witness.

"Propriety and discretion!" observed the burgher, in reply to a remark of one of the young men "I say again, for the twentieth time, that we shall have Alida Barbérie back among us, as handsome, as innocent, ay, and as rich, as ever! perhaps I should also say, as wilful. A baggage, to worry her old uncle, and two honorable suitors, in so thoughtless a manner! Circumstances, gentlemen," continued the wary merchant, who saw that the value of the hand of which he had to dispose, was somewhat reduced in the market, "have placed you on a footing, in my esteem. Should my niece, after all, prefer Captain Ludlow for a partner in her worldly affairs, why it should not

weaken friendship between the son of old Stephanus Van Staats and Myndert Van Beverout. Our grandmothers were cousins, and there should be charities in the same blood."

"I could not wish to press my suit," returned the Patroon, "when the lady has given so direct a hint that it is disagreeable "

"Hint me no hints! Do you call this caprice of a moment, this trifling, as the captain here would call it, with the winds and tides, a hint! The girl has Norman blood in her veins, and she wishes to put animation into the courtship. If bargains were to be interrupted by a little cheapening of the buyer, and some affectation of waiting for a better market in the seller, Her Majesty might as well order her custom-houses to be closed at once, and look to other sources for revenue. Let the girl's fancy have its swing, and the profits of a year's peltry against thy rent-roll, we shall see her penitent for her folly, and willing to hear reason. My sister's daughter is no witch, to go journeying for ever about the world, on a broomstick!"

"There is a tradition in our family," said Oloff Van Staats, his eye lighting with a mysterious excitement, while he affected to laugh at the folly he uttered, "that the great Poughkeepsie fortune-teller foretold, in the presence of my grandmother, that a Patroon of Kinderhook should intermarry with a witch. So, should I see la Belle in the position you name, it would not greatly alarm me."

"The prophecy was fulfilled at the wedding of thy father!" muttered Myndert, who, notwithstanding the outward levity with which he treated the subject, was not entirely free from secret reverence for the provincial soothsayers, some of whom continued in high repute, even to the close of the last century. "His son would not else have been so clever a youth! But here is Captain Ludlow looking at the ocean, as if he expected to see my niece rise out of the water, in the shape of a mermaid."

The commander of the Coquette pointed to the object which attracted his gaze, and which, appearing as it did at that moment, was certainly not of a nature to lessen the faith of either of his companions in supernatural agencies.

It has been said that the wind was dry and the air misty, or rather so pregnant with a thin haze, as to give it the appearance of a dull, smoky light. In such a state of the weather, the eye, more especially of one placed on an elevation, is unable to distinguish what is termed the visible horizon at sea. The two elements become so blended, that our organs cannot tell where the water ends, or where the void of the heavens commences. It is a consequence of this indistinctness, that any object seen beyond the apparent boundary of water, has the appearance of floating in the air. It is rare for the organs of a landsman to penetrate beyond the apparent limits of the sea, when the atmosphere exhibits this peculiarity, though the practised eye of a mariner often detects vessels, which are hid from others, merely because they are not sought in the proper place. The deception may also be aided by a slight degree of refraction.

"Here;" said Ludlow, pointing in a line that would have struck the water some two or three leagues in the offing. "First bring the chimney of yonder low building on the plain, in a range with the dead oak on the shore, and then raise your eyes slowly, till they strike a sail."

"That ship is navigating the heavens!" exclaimed Myndert! "Thy grandmother was a sensible woman, Patroon; she was a cousin of my pious progenitor, and there is no knowing what two clever old ladies, in their time, may have heard and seen, when such sights as this are beheld in our own!"

"I am as little disposed as another, to put faith in incredible things," gravely returned Oloff Van Staats; "and yet, if required to give my testimony, I should be reluctant to say, that yonder vessel is not floating in the heavens!"

"You might not give it to that effect, in safety; said Ludlow. "It is no other than a half-rigged brigantine, on a taut bowline, though she bears no great show of canvas. Mr. Van Beverout, Her Majesty's cruiser is about to put to

sea."

Myndert heard this declaration in visible dissatisfaction. He spoke of the virtue of patience, and of the comforts of the solid ground; but when he found the intention of the Queen's servant was not to be shaken, he reluctantly professed an intention of repeating the personal experiment of the preceding day. Accordingly, within half an hour, the whole party were on the banks of the Shrewsbury, and about to embark in the barge of the Coquette.

"Adieu, Monsieur François;" said the Alderman, nodding his head to the ancient valet, who stood with a disconsolate eye on the shore. "Have a care of the movables in la Cour des Fées; we may have further use for them."

"Mais, Monsieur Beevre, mon devoir, et, ma foi, suppose la mèr was plus agréable, mon désir shall be to suivre Mam'selle Alide. Jamais personne de la famille Barbérie love de sea; mais, Monsieur, comment faire? I shall die sur la mèr de douleur; and I shall die d'ennui, to rester ici, bien sûr!"

"Come then, faithful François," said Ludlow. "You shall follow your young mistress; and perhaps, on further trial, you may be disposed to think the lives of us seamen more tolerable than you had believed."

After an eloquent expression of countenance, in which the secretly-amused though grave-looking boat's-crew thought the old man was about to give a specimen of his powers of anticipation, the affectionate domestic entered the barge. Ludlow felt for his distress, and encouraged him by a look of approbation. The language of kindness does not always need a tongue; and the conscience of the valet smote him with the idea that he might have expressed himself too strongly, concerning a profession to which the other had devoted life and hopes.

"La mer, Monsieur le Capitaine," he said, with an acknowledging reverence, "est un vaste théâtre de la gloire. Voilà Messieurs de Tourville et Dougay Trouin; ce sont des hommes, vraiment remarquables! mais Monsieur, quant à toute la famille de Barbérie, we have toujours un sentiment plus favorable pour la terre."

"I wish your whimsical jade of a mistress, Master François, had found the same sentiment," dryly observed Myndert: "for let me tell you, this cruising about in a suspicious vessel is as little creditable to her judgment as cheer up, Patroon; the girl is only putting thy mettle to the trial, and the sea air will do no damage to her complexion or her pocket. A little predilection for salt water must raise the girl in your estimation, Captain Ludlow!"

"If the predilection goes no further than to the element, Sir;" was the caustic answer. "But, deluded or not, erring or deceived, Alida Barbérie is not to be deserted, the victim of a villain's arts. I did love your niece, Mr. Van Beverout, and pull with a will, men; fellows, are you sleeping on the oars?"

The sudden manner in which the young man interrupted himself, and the depth of tone in which he spoke to the boat's-crew, put an end to the discourse. It was apparent that he wished to say no more, and that he even regretted the weakness which had induced him to say so much. The remainder of the distance, between the shore and the ship, was passed in silence.

When Queen Anne's cruiser was seen doubling Sandy-Hook, past meridian on the 6th June (sea-time) in the year 17, the wind, as stated in an ancient journal, which was kept by one of the midshipmen, and is still in existence, was light, steady at south, and by-west-half-west. It appears, by the same document, that the vessel took her departure at seven o'clock, P. M., the point of Sandy-Hook bearing west-half-south, distant three leagues. On the same page which contains these particulars, it is observed, under the head of remarks "Ship under starboard steering-sails, forward and aft, making six knots. A suspicious half-rigged brigantine lying-to in the eastern board, under her mainsail, with foretopsail to the mast; light and lofty sails and jib loose; foresail in the brails. Her starboard steering-sail-booms appear to be rigged out, and the gear rove, ready for a run. This vessel is supposed

to be the celebrated hermaphrodite, the Water-Witch, commanded by the notorious 'Skimmer of the Seas,' and the same fellow who gave us so queer a slip, yesterday. The Lord send us a cap-full of wind, and we'll try his heels, before morning! Passengers, Alderman Van Beverout, of the second ward of the City of New-York, in Her Majesty's province of the same name; Oloff Van Staats, Esq. commonly called the Patroon of Kinderhook, of the same colony; and a qualmish-looking old chap, in a sort of marine's jacket, who answers when hailed as Francis. A rum set taken altogether, though they seem to suit the Captain's fancy. Mem. Each lipper of a wave works like tartar emetic on the lad in marine gear."

As no description of ours can give a more graphic account of the position of the two vessels in question, at the time named, than that which is contained in the foregoing extract, we shall take up the narrative at that moment, which the reader will see must, in the 43d degree of latitude, and in the month of June, have been shortly after the close of the day.

The young votary of Neptune, whose opinions have just been quoted, had indeed presumed on his knowledge of the localities, in affirming the distance and position of the cape, since the low sandy point was no longer visible from the deck. The sun had set, as seen from the vessel, precisely in the mouth of the Raritan; and the shadows from Navesink, or Neversink as the hills are vulgarly called, were thrown far upon the sea. In short, the night was gathering round the mariners, with every appearance of settled and mild weather, but of a darkness deeper than is common on the ocean. Under such circumstances, the great object was to keep on the track of the chase, during the time when she must necessarily be hid from their sight.

Ludlow walked into the lee-gangway of his ship, and, leaning with his elbow on the empty hammock-cloths, he gazed long and in silence at the object of his pursuit. The Water-Witch was lying in the quarter of the horizon most favorable to being seen. The twilight, which still fell out of the heavens, was without glare in that direction; and for the first time that day, he saw her in her true proportions. The admiration of a seaman was blended with the other sensations of the young man. The brigantine lay in the position that exhibited her exquisitely-moulded hull and rakish rig to the most advantage. The head, having come to the wind, was turned towards her pursuer; and as the bows rose on some swell that was heavier than common, Ludlow saw, or fancied he saw, the mysterious image still perched on her cut-water, holding the book to the curious, and ever pointing with its finger across the waste of water. A movement of the hammock-cloths caused the young sailor to bend his head aside, and he then saw that the master had drawn as near to his person as discipline would warrant. Ludlow had a great respect for the professional attainments that his inferior unquestionably possessed; and he was not without some consideration for the chances of a fortune, which had not done much to reward the privations and the services of a seaman old enough to be his father. The recollection of these facts always disposed him to be indulgent to a man who had little, beyond his seaman-like character and long experience, to recommend him.

"We are likely to have a thick night, Master Trysail," said the young captain, without deeming it necessary to change his look, "and we may yet be brought on a bowline, before yonder insolent is overhauled."

The master smiled, like one who knew more than he expressed, and gravely shook his head.

"We may have many pulls on our bowlines, and some squaring of yards, too, before the Coquette (the figure-head of the sloop-of-war was also a female) gets near enough to the dark-faced woman, under the bowsprit of the brigantine, to whisper her mind. You and I have been nigh enough to see the white of her eyes, and to count the teeth she shows, in that cunning grin of hers, and what good has come of our visit? I am but a subordinate, Captain Ludlow, and I know my duty too well not to be silent in a squall, and I hope too well not to know how to speak when my commander wishes the opinions of his officers at a council; and therefore mine, just now, is perhaps different from that of some others in this ship, that I will not name, who are good men, too, though none of the oldest."

"And what is thy opinion, Trysail? the ship is doing well, and she carries her canvas bravely."

The Water-Witch, Volume 1

"The ship behaves like a well-bred young woman in the presence of the Queen; modest, but stately but, of what use is canvas, in a chase where witch-craft breeds squalls, and shortens sail in one vessel, while it gives flying kites to another! If Her Majesty, God bless her! should be ever persuaded to do so silly a thing as to give old Tom Trysail a ship, and the said ship lay, just here—a-way, where the Coquette is now getting along so cleverly, why then, as in duty bound, I know very well what her commander would do "

"Which would be ?"

"To, in all studding-sails, and bring the vessel on the wind."

"That would be to carry you to the southward, while the chase lies here in the eastern board!"

"Who can say, how long she will lie there? They told us, in York, that there was a Frenchman, of four burthen and metal, rummaging about among the fishermen, lower down on the coast. Now, Sir, no man knows that the war is half over better than myself, for not a ha'penny of prize-money has warmed my pocket, these three years; but, as I was saying, if a Frenchman will come off his ground, and will run his ship into troubled water, why whose fault is it but his own? A pretty affair might be made out of such a mistake, Captain Ludlow; whereas running after yonder brigantine, is flapping out the Queen's canvas for nothing. The vessel's bottom will want new sheathing, in my poor opinion, before you catch him."

"I know not, Trysail," returned his captain, glancing an eye aloft; "every thing draws, and the ship never went along with less trouble to herself. We shall not know which has the longest legs, till the trial is made."

"You may judge of the rogue's speed by his impudence. There he lies, waiting for us, like a line-of-battle ship lying—to for an enemy to come down. Though a man of some experience in my way, I have never seen a lord's son more sure of promotion, than that same brigantine seems to be of his heels! If this old Frenchman goes on with his faces much longer, he will turn himself inside-out, and then we shall get an honest look at him, for these fellows never carry their true characters above-board, like a fair-dealing Englishman. Well, Sir, as I was remarking, yon rover, if rover he be, has more faith in his canvas than in the church. I make no doubt, Captain Ludlow, that the brigantine went through the inlet, while we were handing our topsails yesterday; for I am none of those who are in a hurry to give credit to any will-o'-the-wisp tale; besides which, I sounded the passage with my own hands, and know the thing to be possible, with the wind blowing heavy over the taffrail; still, Sir, human nature is human nature, and what is the oldest seaman, after all, but a man? And so to conclude, I would rather any day chase a Frenchman, whose disposition is known to me, than have the credit of making traverses, for eight-and-forty hours, in the wake of one of these flyers, with little hope of getting him within hail."

"You forget, Master Trysail, that I have been aboard the chase, and know something of his build and character."

"They say as much aboard, here," returned the old tar, drawing nearer to the person of his captain, under an impulse of strong curiosity; "though none presume to be acquainted with the particulars. I am not one of those who ask impertinent questions, more especially under Her Majesty's pennant; for the worst enemy I have will not say I am very womanish. One would think, however, that there was neat work on board a craft that is so prettily moulded about her water-lines?"

"She is perfect as to construction, and admirable in gear."

"I thought as much, by instinct! Her commander need not, however, be any the more sure of keeping her off the rocks, on that account. The prettiest young woman in our parish was wrecked, as one might say, on the shoals of her own good looks, having cruised once too often in the company of the squire's son. A comely wench she was, though she luffed athwart all her old companions, when the young lord of the manor fell into her wake. Well, she did bravely enough, Sir, as long as she could carry her flying kites, and make a fair wind of it; but when the squall

of which I spoke, overtook her, what could she do but keep away before it? and as others, who are snigger in their morals hove—to as it were, under the storm—sails of religion and such matters as they had picked up in the catechism, shedrifted to leeward of all honest society! A neatly—built and clean—heeled hussy was that girl; and I am not certain, by any means, that Mrs. Trysail would this day call herself the lady of a Queen's officer, had the other known how to carry sail in the company of her betters."

The worthy master drew a long breath, which possibly was a nautical sigh, but which certainly had more of the north wind than of the zephyr in its breathing; and he had recourse to the little box of iron, whence he usually drew consolation.

"I have heard of this accident before;" returned Ludlow, who had sailed as a midshipman in the same vessel with, and indeed as a subordinate to, his present inferior. "But, from all accounts, you have little reason to regret the change, as I hear the best character of your present worthy partner."

"No doubt, Sir, no doubt. I defy any man in the ship to say that I am a backbiter, even against my wife, with whom I have a sort of lawful right to deal candidly. I make no complaints, and am a happy man at sea, and I piously hope Mrs. Trysail knows how to submit to her duty at home. I suppose you see, Sir, that the chase has hauled his yards, and is getting his fore—tack aboard?" Ludlow, whose eye did not often turn from the brigantine, nodded assent; and the master, having satisfied himself, by actual inspection, that every sail in the *Coquette* did its duty, continued "The night is coming on thick, and we shall have occasion for all our eyes to keep the rogue in view, when he begins to change his bearings but, as I was saying, if the commander of yonder half—rig is too vain of her good looks, he may yet wreck her, in his pride! The rogue has a desperate character as a smuggler, though, for my own part, I cannot say that I look on such men with as unfavorable an eye as some others. This business of trade seems to be a sort of chase between one man's wits and another's wits, and the dullest goer must be content to fall to leeward. When it comes to be a question of revenue, why, he who goes free is lucky, and he who is caught, a prize. I have known a flag—officer look the other way, Captain Ludlow, when his own effects were passing duty—free; and as to your admiral's lady, she is a great patroness of the contraband. I do not deny, Sir, that a smuggler must be caught, and when caught, condemned, after which there must be a fair distribution among the captors; but all that I mean to say is, that there are worse men in the world than your British smuggler such, for instance, as your Frenchman, your Dutchman, or your Don."

"These are heretodox opinions for a Queen's servant;" said Ludlow, as much inclined to smile as to frown.

"I hope I know my duty too well to preach them to the ship's company, but a man may say that, in a philosophical way, before his captain, that he would not let run into a midshipman's ear. Though no lawyer, I know what is meant by swearing a witness to the truth and nothing but the truth. I wish the Queen got the last, God bless her! several wornout ships would then be broken up, and better vessels sent to sea in their places. But, Sir, speaking in a religious point of view, what is the difference between passing in a trunk of finery, with a duchess's name on the brass plate, or in passing in gin enough to fill a cutter's hold?"

"One would think a man of your years, Mr. Trysail, would see the difference between robbing the revenue of a guinea, and robbing it of a thousand pounds."

"Which is just the difference between retail and wholesale, and that is no trifle, I admit, Captain Ludlow, in a commercial country, especially in genteel life. Still, Sir, revenue is the country's right, and therefore I allow a smuggler to be a bad man, only not so bad as those I have just named, particularly your Dutchman! The Queen is right to make those rogues lower their flags to her in the narrow seas, which are her lawful property; because England, being a wealthy island, and Holland no more than a bit of bog turned up to dry, it is reasonable that we should have the command afloat. No, Sir, though none of your outcriers against a man, because he has had bad luck in a chase with a revenue—cutter, I hope I know what the natural rights of an Englishman are. We must be masters, here, Captain Ludlow, will—ye—nill—ye, and look to the main chances of trade and manufactures!"

"I had not thought you so accomplished a statesman, Master Trysail!"

"Though a poor man's son, Captain Ludlow, I am a free-born Briton, and my education has not been entirely overlooked. I hope I know something of the constitution, as well as my betters. Justice and honor being an Englishman's mottoes, we must look manfully to the main chance. We are none of your flighty talkers, but a reasoning people, and there is no want of deep thinkers on the little island; and therefore, Sir, taking all together, why England must stick up for her rights! Here is your Dutchman, for instance, a ravenous cormorant; a fellow with a throat wide enough to swallow all the gold of the Great Mogul, if he could get at it; and yet a vaga-bond who has not even a fair footing on the earth, if the truth must be spoken! Well, Sir, shall England give up her rights to a nation of such blackguards? No, Sir; our venerable constitution and mother church itself forbid, and therefore I say, dam'me, lay them aboard, if they refuse us any of our natural rights, or show a wish to bring us down to their own dirty level!"

"Reasoned like a countryman of Newton, and with an eloquence that would do credit to Cicero! I shall endeavor to digest your ideas at my leisure, since they are much too solid food to be disposed of in a minute. At present we will look to the chase, for I see, by the aid of my glass, that he has set his studding-sails, and is beginning to draw ahead."

This remark closed the dialogue, between the captain and his subordinate. The latter quitted the gangway with that secret and pleasurable sensation, which communicates itself to all who have reason to think they have delivered themselves creditably of a train of profound thought.

It was, in truth, time to lend every faculty to the movements of the brigantine; for there was great reason to apprehend, that by changing her direction in the darkness, she might elude them. The night was fast closing on the Coquette, and at each moment the horizon narrowed around her, so that it was only at uncertain intervals the men aloft could distinguish the position of the chase. While the two vessels were thus situated, Ludlow joined his guests on the quarter-deck.

"A wise man will trust to his wits, what cannot be done by force;" said the Alderman. "I do not pretend to be much of a mariner, Captain Ludlow, though I once spent a week in London, and I have crossed the ocean seven times to Rotterdam. We did little in our passages, by striving to force nature. When the nights came in dark, as at present, the honest schippers were content to wait for better times; by which means we were sure not to miss our road, and of finally arriving at the destined port in safety."

"You saw that the brigantine was opening his canvas, when last seen; and he that would move fast, must have recourse to his sails."

"One never knows what may be brewing, up there in the heavens, when the eye cannot see the color of a cloud. I have little knowledge of the character of the 'Skimmer of the Seas,' beyond that which common fame gives him; but, in the poor judgment of a landsman, we should do better by showing lanterns in different parts of the ship, lest some homeward-bound vessel do us an injury, and waiting until the morning, for further movements."

"We are spared the trouble, for look, the insolent has set a light himself, as if to invite us to follow! This temerity exceeds belief! To dare to trifle thus with one of the swiftest cruisers in the English fleet! See that every thing draws, gentlemen, and take a pull at all the sheets. Hail the tops, Sir, and make sure that every thing is home."

The order was succeeded by the voice of the officer of the watch, who inquired, as directed, if each sail was distended to the utmost. Force was applied to some of the ropes, and then a general quiet succeeded to the momentary activity.

The Water-Witch, Volume 1

The brigantine had indeed showed a light, as if in mockery of the attempt of the royal cruiser. Though secretly stung by this open contempt of their speed, the officers of the *Coquette* found themselves relieved from a painful and anxious duty. Before this beacon was seen, they were obliged to exert their senses to the utmost, in order to get occasional glimpses of the position of the chase; while they now steered in confidence for the brilliant little spot, that was gently rising and falling with the waves.

"I think we near him," half-whispered the eager captain; "for, see, there is some design visible on the sides of the lantern. Hold! Ah! 'tis the face of a woman, as I live!"

"The men of the yawl report that the rover shows this symbol in many parts of his vessel, and we know he had the impudence to set it yesterday in our presence, even on his ensign."

"True true; take you the glass, Mr. Luff, and tell me if there be not a woman's face sketched in front of that light we certainly near him fast let there be silence, fore and aft the ship. The rogues mistake our bearings!"

"A saucy-looking jade, as one might wish to see!" returned the lieutenant. "Her impudent laugh is visible to the naked eye."

"See all clear for laying him aboard! Get a party to throw on his decks, Sir! I will lead them myself."

These orders were given in an under tone, and rapidly. They were promptly obeyed. In the mean time, the *Coquette* continued to glide gently ahead, her sails thickening with the dew, and every breath of the heavy air acting with increased power on their surfaces. The boarders were stationed, orders were given for the most profound silence, and as the ship drew nearer to the light, even the officers were commanded not to stir. Ludlow stationed himself in the mizen channels, to cun the ship; and his directions were repeated to the quarter-master, in a loud whisper.

"The night is so dark, we are certainly unseen!" observed the young man to his second in command, who stood at his elbow. "They have unaccountably mistaken our position. Observe how the face of the painting becomes more distinct one can see even the curls of the hair. Luff, Sir! luff we will run him aboard! on his weather-quarter."

"The fool must be lying-to!" returned the lieutenant. "Even your witches fail of common sense, at times! Do you see which way he has his head, Sir?"

"I see nothing but the light. It is so dark that our own sails are scarcely visible and yet I think here are his yards, a little forward of our lee beam."

"'Tis our own lower boom. I got it out, in readiness for the other tack, in case the knave should ware. Are we not running too full?"

"Luff you may, a little, luff, or we shall crush him!"

As this order was given, Ludlow passed swiftly forward. He found the boarders ready for a spring, and he rapidly gave his orders. The men were told to carry the brigantine at every hazard, but not to offer violence, unless serious resistance was made. They were thrice enjoined not to enter the cabins, and the young man expressed a generous wish that, in every case, the '*Skimmer of the Seas*' might be taken alive. By the time these directions were given, the light was so near that the malign countenance of the sea-green lady was seen in every lineament. Ludlow looked, in vain, for the spars, in order to ascertain in which direction the head of the brigantine lay; but, trusting to luck, he saw that the decisive moment was come.

The Water-Witch, Volume 1

"Starboard, and run him aboard! Away there, you boarders, away! Heave with your grapnels; heave, men, with a long swing, heave! Meet her, with the helm hard down meet her steady!" was shouted in a clear, full, and steady voice, that seemed to deepen at each mandate which issued from the lips of the young captain.

The boarders cheered heartily, and leaped into the rigging. The Coquette readily and rapidly yielded to the power of her rudder. First inclining to the light, and then sweeping up towards the wind again, in another instant she was close upon the chase. The irons were thrown, the men once more shouted, and all on board held their breaths in expectation of the crash of the meeting hulls. At that moment of high excitement, the woman's face rose a short distance in the air, seemed to smile in derision of their attempt, and suddenly disappeared. The ship passed steadily ahead, while no noise but the sullen wash of the waters was audible. The boarding-irons were heard falling heavily into the sea; and the Coquette rapidly overrun the spot where the light had been seen, without sustaining any shock. Though the clouds lifted a little, and the eye might embrace a circuit of a few hundred feet, there certainly was nothing to be seen, within its range, but the unquiet element, and the stately cruiser of Queen Anne floating on its bosom.

Though its effects were different on the differently-constituted minds of those who witnessed the singular incident, the disappointment was general. The common impression was certainly unfavorable to the earthly character of the brigantine; and when opinions of this nature once get possession of the ignorant, they are not easily removed. Even Trysail, though experienced in the arts of those who trifle with the revenue-laws, was much inclined to believe that this was no vulgar case of floating lights or false beacons, but a manifestation that others, besides those who had been regularly trained to the sea, were occasionally to be found on the waters. If Captain Ludlow thought differently, he saw no sufficient reason to enter into an explanation with those who were bound silently to obey. He paced the quarter-deck, for many minutes; and then issued his orders to the equally-disappointed lieutenants. The light canvas of the Coquette was taken in, the studding-sail-gear unrove, and the booms secured. The ship was then brought to the wind, and her courses having been hauled up, the fore-topsail was thrown to the mast. In this position the cruiser lay, waiting for the morning light, in order to give greater certainty to her movements.

END OF VOL.I.