Bonfield; or, The Outlaw of the Bermudas. A Nautical Novel

J. H. Ingraham

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CHAPTER I. THE BOATMAN.

Still shorter was a short winter's day rendered by a heavy and gloomy mist that filled the atmosphere and made it murky twilight long before the sun went down. It had just ended, in blasts and pelting rain, when a Thames boatman, chilled and wet by exposure, and with a pair of oars upon his shoulder, entered the door of his humble abode by the river side.

His habitation, although wretched enough, seemed to be a palace of comfort in his eyes, as they met the cheerful blaze upon the hearth, with his good wife stooping down and cooking a warm supper for him, and beheld upon a few coals, seething most invitingly, a mug of egg flip. The sight made him smile with a cheery expression upon his dark, sun−browned face, which, as he first entered, looked sour and discomposed: and when his young wife, and handsome withal, rose up and turned to welcome him with `I am so glad you have come in, Martin!' spoken in the tones that only a loving wife can utter, his gloomy aspect disappeared entirely, and he responded with a kindliness of look and voice which showed that he not only loved his wife, but had his heart in the right place:

`And glad am I to come in, Martha, for the night is as cheerless and cold as I ever would care to be abroad in!' he said, placing his oars in beckets over the door.

`Then I am rejoiced that you havn't to go on the river! It is so rare that I have you at home with me so early, that I feel grateful to the storm and darkness that keeps travelers in their houses. How drenched your muffler is?' she added with a look of surprise and sympathy, as she untied it from his neck and hung it dripping upon a chair by the fire. `What a time you must have had!'

`Yes, and no fares at that, Martha,' he answered, removing his heavy, wet over−coat, the numerous patches upon which showed both the poverty of the husband and the tenderness and skill of the wife. It also revealed, suspended by a ribbon upon his breast, a silver medal.

`I have been since three o'clock pacing up and down the pier−head in the cold and mist that fairly penetrates the marrow of one's bones! Such an afternoon I haven't seen of late! But in it all, for three hours, have I been at my stand waiting for a fare; sometimes I would shelter myself in the nook of the stairs, and sometimes I would have to get under the coal−sheds; but I nearly perished with cold! This fire is so comfortable! Don't you think the flip is done?' he asked, as he took his seat before the fire in a chair which she placed for him with assiduous attention; for, from the moment of his coming in, she seemed to think of nothing but to make him forget his past discomforts in the comforts of the present. And she would have succeeded, but for a weight that was upon his heart, the weight of want and poverty, which he could not altogether throw off.

`You should have come home sooner, Martin. I am sorry you stayed so late. If you had thought you might have seen nobody would have wanted to go off such an evening! There!' she added, placing in his hands the mug of flip. which she had taken up from the fire, and was stirring and preparing for him while she was saying this; `there! drink part of this, and I know you will feel better and be warm in a minute!'

`It is very nice, Martha,' he answered as he took the mug from his lips. `You make flip better than any boatman's wife on the Thames. I ought to be happy and fling ugly thoughts to the winds when I think how good and loving a wife I've got! But one can't help feeling!'

`Yes, but perhaps to−morrow you will be more successful! You don't have to pay the money until to−morrow night at six o'clock, and between this and then who knows but you will get the money! Ten fares, at a shilling each, will make it up; and you know, last year, you have some days had as many as fifteen fares in a day!'

`But last year was somehow a better year, for I call to mind what will follow the want of the money I have been straining every nerve to earn by the time it is due. I cannot help feeling anxious. `Your father's life, dear Martha,' he added in an under tone, and glancing his eye to a door of an inner room, `may depend on it.'

`I feel this, Martin, I feel it as keenly as you do, for he is my own father, and yours only in being mine! But I do not despair.'

`You know how inexorable his creditor is, and that unless the whole sum is paid at the hour he will again be dragged to prison. And in his present feeble state, it would be to die there!'

`As he let him come out on your pledge to pay the debt of twenty pounds in sixty days, he may still extend the time, Martin.'

`He refuses to do so. I went to see him yesterday. He is immoveable. It was not real humanity that caused him to let your father come out, but because he feared he would die in prison, and he did not like very well to have such a thing as that said of him!'

`And he will still dislike it. He will not take him back, even if you cannot pay.'

`He will, assuredly. The old man is now much better, and we know is recovering his health and strength fast. He will see the change in him. He will remove him without hesitation.'

`Wont he take what we can raise?'

`I asked him yesterday if he would take eighteen pounds, if I could not raise the twenty. He answered me, that unless I paid the debt to the utmost farthing, your father should go back again to prison!'

`How can men be so cruel!'

`I accused him of cruelty, saying that if he were taken back to prison he would not live long. But he said that he was so far from being cruel he had on my simple word and bond to pay the debt, released him and given him up to us. Now if the debt is not paid and he goes back to prison and dies there, the world cannot blame me! I have done what no other man would have done! Such, Martha, was his stern reply.'

`I see,' said the young wife, sighing, `I see that we have no hope but in the favor of God. If we had not given this creditor in part security every thing we have got in this world, scarcely twelve pounds value as it is, we might sell something to make up the ten shillings. But we have no right to do this!'

`I am half tempted to do it. I have just been seriously thinking of the very way. If we pay him, he will not know of it; and the furniture, clothes and things will be ours as soon as the money is handed to him.'

`It don't seem to me right, Martin,' said the conscientious young wife.

`It may be wrong, but it will do no harm.'

`Harm is wrong, Martin,' she said, seriously.

`I will wait till the last minute I can, and then, if there is no other help I will pawn the beds and dresser−things, and get the balance.'

`Don't think of doing evil that good may come. I would rather my poor father, dearly as I love him, should be carback to prison and even die there than keep him by an unjust act. Trust in God and do good and verily it shall be well with thee, is the spirit of the good book we both profess to make our guide, Martin; and do not let us depart from it.'

`You are right, Martha; but I am resolved they shall not take the dear old man back his cell, if it can be helped. I will trust in Providence *till* the *last* moment.'

`And that is not trusting in Providence at all. Say you will not think of it again,' she said entreatingly and smiling upon him affectionately, and with a look of confidence in his integrity which he could not resist.

`Well, dear wife, I will, then, put my trust in a good and merciful Providence to send us that help which I can't see any way of getting except it do come from the skies.'

`Now we shall be sure to have it!' she cried with ingenuous delight. `Now be assured that we shall be assisted in some good way, now that you manfully and piously reject every temptation to do what is evil.'

`What a true faith you have, Martha. It seems to me that I can almost see the whole twenty pounds laying beside me on the table!'

More than once during this conversation their eyes had fallen upon the silver medal which hung upon his breast, but only for an instant. Each knew the thoughts of the other; but neither spoke.

`Hist! I hear voices at the door!' she cried, placing her hand upon her lip as if listening to hear them repeated.

Suddenly a sharp knock upon the door startled them both, and Martin sprung to his feet.

`Ho, wherryman, ho!' cried a man outside, at the same time endeavoring to get the door open which was latched within. The voice, though earnest, was low, as if the person did not wish to be overheard.

`It is some one who wants a boat,' said Martin, going to the door to unlatch it.

`I hope not, this dark and stormy night!' cried Martha, with wifely alarm, as she heard the storm drive loudly past the door as Martin opened it.

`It will be one fare, and every shilling helps, Martha,' he said, in reply, as he turned to admit the stranger, who was a tall man, wrapped to the eyes in a cloak, and wearing a hat slouched so closely over his eyes that Martin could not discern a feature.

`Are you a boatman?' demanded the stranger in a hurried, yet authoritative tone, which with the air and carriage of the individual convinced the humble boatman that he was a man of rank.

`Yes, sir.'

`Get your oars at once and take me off!'

`In what direction, sir?' asked Martin, putting on his cap and coat and eveloping his hands in his mittens.

`It is not a long pull. You shall know when I get into your boat.'

`Will you step in, sir. My husband will be ready in a moment,' said Martha, with a pleasant manner.

`Thank you,' answered the stranger, `I am in some haste. Your room looks comfortable enough, compared with the out−doors, to invite any one. Are you ready?'

Martin finished tying his muffler, took down his oars from their beckets above the door, and then answered,

`Yes, sir, as soon as I light my lantern. '

`I have a lantern here,' he answered, turning to a man whom Martin did not before discover in the darkness without. `Paul, open the slide.'

`Ah, Paul, how do you do to−night?' said Martin, recognising an acquaintance in the man, whose features, though almost hid under a huge collar and handkerchief, the name enabled him to recognise.

`Do not stop to talk,' cried the gen tleman, quickly. `Lead on to your boat. Be active, and I will reward you.'

`Good bye, Martin; I will be back in an hour or two I dare say. This may be a part of your Providence, so don't look sad.'

`It is so wild on the water!' she said. But he did not hear her. Closing the door after him, he was already on his way to the stairs by the river side, where his boat was secured.

The night was pitchy dark. A sharp, cold rain, as fine as mist, filled the air, and drifted swiftly past upon the whistling winds. The stones of the pier were slippery, and with the strength of the storm, it was difficult to keep the footing. The stairs were but a minute's walk from the door of Martin's abode. The man Paul went ahead with

the lantern Martin followed him closely with the oars upon his shoulder, and the tall stranger came on a step or two behind them.'

`It will be a wild night upon the river, sir,' said Martin, as he stopped at the top of the stairs and laid down his oars, while he descended to unlock his boat from the ring.

`Yes, but I am told you are are a skilful boatman, and I trust to your courage and tact.'

`I will do my best, sir; but I would rather that the wind blew less. The waves run high, by the dashing and the noise!'

`Yes,' said Paul, `it is an ugly time to be in a boat! I am glad I am not going off in her.'

`And are you not going?' asked Martin.

`No. I am to wait here till he returns! ' answered Paul, as he stooped to hold the light for Martin to unlock the boat, which was about seven steps lower than the top of the pier.

`Who is he, Paul?'

`Are you ready, boatman?' demanded the gentleman, descending the stairs, so that the question remained unanswered.

`All ready, sir!' responded Martin, springing into the light wherry, which the waves as they dashed against the stairs, tossed madly about, so that it was with difficulty he could steady her.

With some peril, the stranger at length placed himself in the stern of the boat, and Martin, letting go with his hook from the pier, took his oars and began to pull out into the dark river. Paul stood upon the stairs with his lantern, watching their departure; but in three minutes they were out of sight in the gloom, which his eyes could no longer penetrate.

`That boat would hardly live if any other man was its manager, but Martin Hart,' he said, ascending the steps to the pier, and wrapping his cape about his face, to shield it from the storm. `I wonder what my lord can be doing off on the river such a night as this. It must be a matter of life or death. But this is none of my business. I am well paid for what I have done, and I dare say Martin will be. I think I will just drop in and have a little gossip with Mistress Martha for a quarter of an hour or so! It is rather uncomfortable waiting here! The mist is fairly frozen, and pricks like needles. His Lordship wont be ashore, he said, under half an hour!'

With this resolution the man proceeded towards the door of Martin's house, and rapped for admittance.

`Who is it?' demanded Martha, in a firm voice from within.

`It is me, Paul!'

`Paul Layton?'

`Yes, Mistress Martha!'

The door opened, and the man was admitted, though not till he had permitted Martha to see his features, that she might be sure she was not deceived by any rogue, who, taking advantage of Martin's absence, might wish to rob.

`It is a hard storm, mistress,' said the man, shaking himself from the rain at the door, and then advancing into the room.

`Yes it is, Master Paul, and I am sorry that Martin has had to go out into it to−night. But a licensed boatman can never refuse. Rain or shine he must ply his oars at call!'

`That is true,' answered Paul, who upon opening his outer coat, and turning the collar back, and doffing his cap, showed himself to be a stout, good−looking man of thirty, in a handsome livery of blue and white. He had jet black hair and brows, and a very white, even set of teeth. He was of good height and figure, and his air was frank and bold. `That is a true word, Mistress, and therefore, I would not care to be a boatman. Mine is an easier life, though it does sometimes bring me abroad at such a time as this. I would not have gone on the water in that boat for fifty guineas! '

`Is it so dangerous, then?'

`I would'nt alarm you, Mistress,' he answered, taking a seat by the fire, `but I would rather be ashore to−night as simple Paul Layton, the lacquey, than in the boat as my lord.'

`And it was his lordship then?' exclaimed Martha, with surprise. `Dear me! and I asked him so familiarly to walk into this poor place and sit down! But I hope Martin will be careful. He is very expert with a boat!'

`That is his reputation the river up and down. When my lord came to me and asked me if I knew a safe and skilful boatman, who would venture out upon the river, I named Martin at once, though we had to pass half a score of wherry stands to get here. But I knew his Lordship would be safe with Martin at the oars!

`You were very kind to remember him, Master Paul; but I would rather he sat now where you sit, than he should be upon the dark waters to−night. But God will preseve him. Was he to go far?'

`That I can't say, mistress Martin. My lord did not make a confidant of me. I was in the hall just at dark chatting with the footman, when my lord rung for me. I was surprised, I assure you, for I supposed he was at the palace, where I knew he had gone an hour before. I hastened to him and found him in the library. He had on his cloak, but his hat lay upon the table. He seemed to looked as if something uncommon was upon his mind; for generally, mistress Martin, my lord is always cool and quiet. As soon as I came in, he said to me quickly

`Paul, do you know a skillful boatman near at hand who will take me safely upon the river to−night?'

`To−night, my lord!' I exclaimed; for I knew it was beginning to storm tremendously, and while I was speaking the wind made the casement rattle; for the mansion where my lord lives has been built this three hundred years and is not in the best condition; but he likes to reside in it when he is in town because his ancestors always did.'

`Yes, *to−night*,' he answered me sharply; to−night and *now!* ' I never knew him so peremptory.

`I know a man, my lord,' said I, seeing that he was so earnest, `who has the name of being the best boatman on the Thames. He got the medal in the last year's regatta.'

`Put on your weather−coat, take a lantern and conduct me along the shore to his boat,' said he at once.

I lost no time in making myself ready and in three minutes I was prepared to attend his lordship. On going out and not seeing the carriage, I was about to ask him if I should call it or a cab, when he said impatiently, `Go on! I proceed on foot. It is not far I trust.'

`No, my lord,' said I. `Not more than seven minutes walk. But your lordship will not go on foot?' I added.

`Not a word!' said he. `Open your lantern and lead the way.'

I said no more, and as the house where his lordship lives is within one square of fronting on the river, we had only to come down the Foley Street and so take our way along the pier row by the shore until we reached here! What his lordship has gone off in the boat for I don't know any more than you do, mistress Martha. I forgot to say he promised me an extra guinea for bringing me out at such a time!'

`I have no doubt then,' said Martha, impuvelsily, `he will give something more than the fare to Martin.'

`Be assured of that. His lordship pays freely. He always loves to give poor men that serve him more than they ask. It is his way.'

`And a very good way it is,' answered Martha, as she placed upon the dresser the last dish which had been used at the supper table, which she neatly wiped down and set against the wall. She then took her knitting from a basket and drawing a low chair near the fire−place began to count, by fire−light, the stitches upon the needles and then proceeded to ply them with nimble and industrious fingers. Paul was seated opposite to her drying his shoes with his legs stretched out to the fire. The room was cheerful with the flickering blaze reflected from the bright pewter dishes upon the dresser and the small panes of glass in the only window in front. There had been two other windows but they were both nailed up on account of the glass−tax, which would make merchandize of the free light of Heaven. The sense of comfort in the room was increased by the sound of the gale heard beating without. At one moment it would howl and shrilly whistle about the walls and seem almost to lift the roof. Then again the large driving rain would dash and rattle upon the door and window, and ever and anon the whole house would be shaken as if by an earthquake. The wind and waves could be heard too mingling their roar upon the river, the blast shrieking like spirits of the storm through the cordage of the numerous craft that lay at the wharves or were moored in the stream.

`Hark! what was that!' cried both, simultaneously, after they had been sometime silent and thoughtful.

It was a fearful crashing that rose above the increasing noise of the tempest, and with it loud cries reached their ears. Paul rose and sprung to the door. He threw it open and gazed out! But all was darkness as impenetrable as was ever the darkness of Egypt. Martha with fluttering heart stood out by his side. They could see nothing! The sounds had ceased save only the roar and wail of the storm.

`It must have been a vessel broke from its moorings and dashed against another,' he said in a fearful tone.

`And all perished!' exclaimed Martha, with alarm.

`Perhaps not. We should have heard the cries longer and louder.'

`Oh, what will become of Martin. He will assuredly be lost,' she cried, wringing her hands.

`If any boat can live on the river his will, be assured, Mistress Martha. Do not be alarmed.'

`I cannot feel otherwise. There is another accident. See, the lights quick ly moving to and fro. Hear the shouts.'

`It is two vessels driving against each other for I can hear them call to each other to fend off. What an awful time. There is a fearful crashing again! I wish, in my soul, Martin and my lord were both safely here!'

`Oh, I fear I shall never see my husband again!'

`What is it, Martha, dear? What is this great noise?' cried an old man of seventy, of dignified appearance, a head white as snow, and a countenance care−worn but singularly benevolent. He was half−dressed in an old surtout which he had thrown on as he came from the sleeping−room on the left, alarmed and awakened by the combined sounds of the crashing vessels, the outcries and the wild uproar of the storm.

`It is a fearful tempest, dear father, that has arisen since you went to bed, and vessels are driving against one another in the river! But do not get up!'

`Who is this?' he asked fixing his eyes upon the spruce body servant of the noble.

`It is master Paul Layton!' she answered.

`Where is Martin? I don't see him here!'

`He is gone upon the river, father!'

`Then he is lost,' answered the old man with startling emphasis.

CHAPTER II. THE BUCCANIER'S CRAFT.

The boat in which Martin had set off from the pier to encounter the dangers of the wind and waters, was a small wherry, about eighteen feet in length, and sharp both at the bows and stern.

It contained three seats, one for himself in the centre, the others being at each end for the passengers, of which the boat could carry four. It was a light fragile skiff, and admirably adapted for the purposes to which it was put, viz. conveying passengers, upon the river from shore to shore, or to and from vessels anchored in the stream.

Martin had not rowed many yards from the pier before he found that he had entered upon a perilous task. The waves dashed the little boat so wildly about that he could scarcely get any hold upon the water with his oars. Every moment or two the spray would fly over them drenching them to the skin. Still he rowed onward in a direct line as well as he could for the darkness; for the person who had employed him, and who sat silently in the stern, had commanded him as he launched from the pier to lay his course for the opposite shore. Every pull of the bending oars was attended with imminent danger. There lay in their way numerous small vessels, whose hawsers were run against in the darkness, and twice nearly overturned the boat.

`This is a perilous time to be on this river, sir,' said Martin, as they came sud denly against a coal−lugger that lay moored in their course, and which they struck with great violence.

`Yes, but unless you think it is impossible to proceed, keep on,' answered the gentleman calmly, as if the dangers to which he had exposed the boatman were not also shared by himself. `Are we in the middle of the river, yet?'

`Yes, sir, I should think so,' answered Martin, scarcely able to speak for the rain and sleet that beat into his face; for in rowing he could not protect himself from its violence.

`Then pull directly for the smuggler's schooner which has been two or three days laying off here. Do you know where she lays?'

`It may be hard to find her to−night, sir, but I know her position. Let me see! Those two lights astern are in the window of the Kings' tavern! I know them well, and excellent beacons they are to us boatmen in the night. The possition of the black schooner, sir, would be farther down so as to bring those two lights into one. For I noticed

that she lay in range of the frigate which bears so from the tavern.'

`Then try and find the frigate; and as the schooner lays under the frigate's guns, you will then fall aboard of her easily. Pull heartily, my brave fellow, and you shall have two guineas when you get back.'

Two guineas! The promise made his heart leap, and how his sinewy arms made his little bark leap too! He thought of Martha's joy, now that the twenty pounds could be more than made up, and her father be permitted to remain with them. He thought, too, of her faith, and words of trust and confidence in Providence, and tears of shame and gratitude come into his eyes. In his heart of hearts he blessed Martha for her teachings. He resolved never more to mistrust the morrow.

In a few moments his passenger, who was keenly on the watch for the frigate discovered its dark form painted upon the darkness close to them with scarcely visible outline. Yet he could see that it was a large vessel. Martin also beheld it, and rowed round it his little boat, wildly tossed upon the waves, and every moment in danger of being swamped. Having passed close under the frigate's stern, from one of the windows of which a light shone out brightly upon the water, they beheld also the schooner not fifty yards distant, her tall slender spars just perceptible through the gloom to their vigilant eyes, now more accustomed to the darkness. As they drew near it they discovered a lantern on her quarter−deck which had before been concealed by some intervening object. This object they discovered, when within twenty feet, to be a sentry, who, catching the sound of their oars, challenged them.

`Boat ahoy! keep off or I will fire into you!'

`I would see the lieutenant in command, ' said the gentleman in the boat speaking in a tone of authority.

At the same instant Martin after, by his order, pulling close aboard, shipped his oars, and sprang forward to prevent his boat from striking heavily against the schooner. He grasped a stay within his reach, for the main−chains of the schooners were not two feet from the water, and quickly secured his painter to it, while he kept the skiff from stav ing. The sentry in the meanwhile had come to the side with his lanthorn, the light of which he cast full upon the boat and those in it; when seeing there were only two men, he ordered them on board.

`I cannot leave my boat,' answered Martin, who with difficulty kept it clear of the side of the vessel, and whose presence in it was therefore necessary for its preservation; for the waves knocked it about like a feather.

`I don't hear you,' answered the sentry, shouting back. `Speak louder. Are you coming on board?'

`I am,' answered the stranger, going forward past Martin and leaping into the main chains.

`Shall I wait, sir?' asked the boatman, by no means relishing being on board, or even so near a vessel which had been a few days before seized in the river for piracy and smuggling, and was now with her crew all on board as prisoners, awaiting their fate. He was also anxious to return to Martha, whom he knew would feel constantly anxious about him, accustomed as she was to his frequent and long absences from home in his boat.

`You need not wait, my brave fellow,' he said. `Take these! I can go ashore in one of the schooner's boats.'

As he spoke, he placed in Martin's hand two guineas. The poor young man was almost overwhelmed with joy. These two guineas lifted at once from his heart and mind the heaviest load they had ever borne. He saw now liberty to his wife's father and happiness and peace once more a dweller by their hearth−stone.

`Thank you, sir. God bless you, sir,' he cried with emotion. `If you would rather I should wait for you, I will gladly, sir. Perhaps the crew of the vessel may not be able to find the pier in the dark, and I shall be sure to land

you right, if the storm don't blow worse than it has.'

`It can hardly do that, I should say,' answered the nobleman. `If you will remain, do so, for I think I shall be safer with you than in a heavier boat.'

`Thank you, sir,' answered the grateful Martin, who felt that he would do any thing to serve him; for he looked upon him as the deliverer of his wife's father from prison by his rich donation, and the author of all the joy that was now to be theirs.

`Come aboard, boatman, and drop your boat astern by the line and let her swing,' said a man coming to the side and casting to him a small line, which he caught and made fast to the ring of his wherry in the bows. He then leaped on board of the schooner and let his skiff fall astern till she swung clear. Here by the rays of the lantern which had lighted all these proceedings, he saw her dancing as lightly as a cockle shell upon the wild waves.

`Have you spoken to the lieutenant in charge?' asked the nobleman in that tone of command and self−possession which the soldier felt could only belong to one accustomed to authority. He, therefore, very respectfully replied,

`I have sent his man below into the cabin, sir, to inform him that you wish to see him. Here is the man returned.'

`The lieutenant says that I must show them down, if there are but two and their business is urgent,' answered the valet. `It is too stormy for him to come on deck, he says; and he wonders what should send any man in his senses aboard at this time.'

`My business *is* urgent. I alone wish to see him, soldier,' said the nobleman, all the while keeping his features strictly concealed; a sort of masking which the piercing storm rendered quite necessary, but which was evidently studied.

`This way, sir,' said the valet, who was evidently anxious to get under shelter.

And he hastily led the way to the companion−doors which he threw open and held back till the stranger descended. He then closed them to shut out the rain, and entering the cabin, announced the visitor. The lieutenant, who was placed temporarily in charge of the vessel, was laying at his length upon a settee in a handsome cabin, reading a book. Upon hearing his valet announce the person who had come off to see him, he without rising glanced impatiently towards him and said, without scarcely looking at him,

`Well, sir, you must have been confoundedly anxious to see me to put off in such a storm. None but a bum−baliff or a poor devil to borrow a guinea would have taken the river to−night. Whom have I the honor of addressing? You seem to keep covered and muffled here as if it stormed in the cabin!' and the officer, who was a hard featured seaman and blessed with not the most amiable physiognomy that ever was, got up from the lounge and stood upon his feet, facing and eyeing him sharply. He had been reading the Arabian Knights when his valet came down with the message, and as he was in the very crisis of the `Open sesame' of the Forty Thieves, he was not a little angry at being interrupted; and as he could not conceive that any decent person would be abroad in such a night, he took it for granted that the visitor was some fellow whom he might treat as petulantly as he felt

But as the stranger stepped into the cabin and displayed a figure, even the absence of the features, tall and commanding, and an air that of a gentleman, he began to eye him closely and with misgiving; for he began to mistrust that he had been speaking thus snappishly to a superior officer. At any rate he perceived plainly, without seeing his face, that he was certainly a person of consideration.

`Dismiss your valet, and I will converse with you freely,' answered the stranger in a tone of dignified self−command.

The officer, with his manner much changed, said to the man,

`Leave the cabin. Be seated, sir!'

`Are we where we can be unheard?' asked the gentleman, looking around.

`Yes, sir,' responded the lieutenant, all the while trying to penetrate the folds of the cloak, which concealed the visiter's face.

`Then I will make known to you who I am,' answered the stranger, `and the purpose of my visit.'

As he spoke he dropped the cloak from his face, when the lieutenant, with a look of surprise and profound respect, recognised the features of Lord Percival, one of the cabinet of the Crown.

`Pardon me, my lord, but I was not aware that I had such a distinguished visiter.' said the lieutenant, bowing with respect and at the same time coloring with confusion. `I did not expect to see any body aboard in such a tempest.'

`No apologies are necessary, lieutenant. I have come on board on business connected with the prisoner you have charge of.'

`The Captain Bonfield, my lord!'

`Yes. I wish to have an interview with him, and one strictly private. Where is he confined?'

`In the ward−room, with his two officers. '

`Will you have him brought here?'

`At once, your lordship,' answered the officer promptly; and taking a light, he passed out of the cabin by a door forward, and came to a part of the deck where three men in chains were confined. Near them stood a sentinel with a cutlass. Two of the men were lying down asleep upon a mattrass; but the other, a man of short stature and herculean breadth of shoulders, was pacing up and down the narrow space between them and the after hatchway. He was about forty years of age, with a dark countenance and piercing grey eyes. The expression of his face was pleasing, and yet remarkably resolute. He was dressed in a seaman's pilot−coat, closely buttoned to his neck. His wrists were ironed, and a heavy ball of iron was chained to his ankle.

As the officer approached him with the light, he bent his keen glance inquiringly upon him.

`Captain Bonfield, a gentleman desires to have some conversation with you in the cabin. Follow me!'

`I am your prisoner and must obey,' answered the outlaw; `but I would thank you to send one of your middies to carry my iron ball after me.'

`The hangman will soon relieve you of it, my man!' answered the lieutenant. `Are you coming, or shall I call a marine to help you?'

`I will spare you the trouble, sir. If I were captain again of this vessel, you would scarcely dare speak to me in this fashion. But I obey you,' he added, lifting in his hand the heavy thirty−two pound ball which was fastened to his leg by a chain three feet long, and walking after him. His countenance was stern and he looked as if he would gladly have swung the heavy iron at the head of his keeper. But prudence dictated forbearance. He was powerless and heavily ironed as well as guarded; and the twenty−one men who had been captured in the vessel with him

were, like himself, in chains forward; so that an attempt to recover his schooner would have been madness.

The lieutenant re−entered the cabin and led the pirate before the noblema who, after for a moment closely observing his countenance, said,

`You are Captain Bonfield!'

`I am!' responded the buccaneer firmly and haughtily.

`I am the Earl Percival. I am come on board to have a few moments' conversation with you.'

Bonfield bowed and remained steadily gazing with curiosity and deep interest upon the celebrated nobleman whose influence in the kingdom was second to that of no other man.

`I will now retire,' said the lieutenant. `He is so heavily chained, my lord, that you need not apprehend any mischief from him. But you had best have a pistol, as he is a desperate fellow! '

With these words the officer placed a loaded pistol in the hands of the noblebleman, who put it aside, saying, with a smile,

`I do not fear Captain Bonfield. There is no fear of our quarreling.'

The officer then, wrapping himself in his storm coat, went on deck and closed the cabin doors behind him, wondering much what important business with the pirate chief could have brought the first nobleman of England to an interview with him in such a night, and under circumstances so mysterious.

`Now, Captain Bonfield, I wish to hold with you a few words of private conversation. I wish you to speak freely, as I shall, for it may be for your interest. '

`I will hear, my lord, what you have to say,' said the prisoner quietly.

The nobleman let his eyes rest for a few seconds upon the dark, intelligent, bold countenance of the pirate captain, as if to decide, from a close observation of his character, in what way he should open the matter for which he had sought this interview.

`If you will freely and frankly respond to my questions and unfold all the truth, I pledge to you my word that you shall be pardoned for the past, that is, if you are willing to serve me afterwards.'

`I am ready to listen to what your lordship has to propose,' answered Bonfield in the same quiet but respectful manner, which had marked his bearing since he entered. He looked indeed like a man of the most finished self−possession, who never betrayed his feelings by his features, or voice, or speech, but with the same equanimity could receive the intelligence of his execution or instant pardon and release. He had doubtless learned philosophy in a school of danger and of reverses, and seen too many exciting events to be easily moved by anything. Thus the idea of pardon did not cause him to change countenance or move a muscle, though to have freed himself and escaped the ignominious death that he knew was before him, he would have sacrificed his life, if possible, a hundred times.

`You seem to heed little the suggestion of pardon for your crimes, Captain Bonfield,' answered the nobleman, seeing with surprise his seeming, and only *seeming* indifference.

`It may cost me more, my lord, than I would be willing to pay,' he answered coldly; `but I can judge better when I hear what you have to say to me! If you will permit me, I will sit. My chains are not feathers, he added, as he took a chair opposite the nobieman, who, himself immediately stood up. Bonfield smiled with a look of derision at this sensitiveness in his lordship's refusal to sit at the same time with him.

`Captain,' said lord Percival after a moments thoughtful reflection, `I have come to see you upon a very delicate subject. Let me again repeat that your crimes shall be forgotten, yourself, men and vessel released, and a large reward be paid to you, if you relate the truth and enter fully into my views and plans.'

`I have nothing to prevent me, my lord! your proposals are generous! I will serve you if I can! It is for you to tell me what your wishes are.'

`You shall hear; but I must begin by desiring you to go back in memory, to a period twenty years since! I wish to recall to your mind a certain night in October; 181  when you were in command of a small smuggling schooner called the `Dart.'

`How did you know that, my lord?' cried Bonfield almost starting from his chair, his chains rattling with his movement of surprise.

`It is not important now to explain; I wish you to recall the night in question when, while anchored in the Thames, you received in charge an infant with the command to leave the kingdom with it, for which service you were enriched! Do you remember such a circumstance Captain Bonfield?' added the Earl, fixing his eyes upon the face of the bucanier, whose countenance betrayed the most extraordinary emotion.

`How have you learned these things, my lord?' he exclaimed with a flushed cheek.

`I have learned them only accidentally. I am now convinced that it is true. Your countenance betrays the truth. Will you be frank with me and without reserve or concealment tell me what you remember about this affair and also what you did with the infant, and further I wish to learn if you know who were the parents of that child. If you will reveal all you know about the matter you will receive a reward far beyond your expectations, besides pardon and freedom.'

`I don't know, my lord,' answered Bonfield, after a moment's silence, as if deciding how he should act, `in what manner you have come to the knowledge of an affair that I supposed was known only to myself and one or two others, parties concerned. But I see no reason why I should keep a secret that seems no longer to be such. It is not for my interest to be silent now, and in consideration of your promises to me, I am willing to reveal to you all that you wish to know!'

`I am gratified at this readiness on your part, Captain Bonfield, to be open and communicative. Now please to give me the circomstances as they occurred. It is important that I should know all the facts.'

`Your lordship spoke of my having been a smuggler; under what name did I smuggle in that day?'

`Under your own name, that of Vance'  was the reply. `You see I am in possession of enough to lead you to make known to me, without reserve, whatever remains!'

`I will do so, my lord!' answered Bonfield. `But I have only your lordship's word that I shall be pardoned and set at liberty for what I am about to communicate. I should be better satisfied to see it in writing. Words are but wind! Black and white are always alive to talk.'

`I wIll write my promise to you, then if you desire it,' returned the nobleman, without evincing any displeasure at this business mode of procedure on the part of the bucanier.

`Here we have pen and ink, my lord, and paper also,' said Bonfieid pushing the writing materials towards him.

The British Earl then took his pen and dipping it in the stand−dish said to him,

`I am ready to write! word it your own way, Captain, only be brief, for I have but a little while to remain with you.'

`You may then write down as follows giving the date:

`I, Edward de Lisle, Earl of Percival, in consideration that Captain Bonfield makes to me, a full, clear and truthful statement of an affair in which he was concerned, that occured on the night of October the in 181 , do hereby promise him his pardon, liberty, and the restoration of his vessel and crew, provided that also for one month afterward he engages in his service and keeps secret the subject of this agreement.'

The Earl wrote word for word as he dictated it, until he came to the expression `one month' when he stopped, and said,

`Captain Bonfield, this period of service cannot be limited, until I know something further. But we will say one year!'

`Then be it one year, my lord! But what shall be the pay to me and my men?'

`One thousand pounds a month, during the time!'

`That will do! But I have not said what shall be my pay for making my statement to you.'

`It shall be five hundred pounds, provided that the information shall prove such as I anticipate!'

`Well, that I will leave to your lordship. You will please finish and sign it!'

This the Earl did without any hesitation, and placed it in his hands. The bucanier carefully read it over, and then folding it up, drew from his bosom a silver tobacco box, and placed it in it!

`That is a beautiful box, Captain Bonfield, ' said the Earl, who thought he recognised it. `May I have the favor of looking at it!'

`Certainly, my lord!'

`Ah, this has been a gift!' he exclaimed, looking at the escutcheon upon it, with a glow of surprise and pleasure.

`Yes, my lord.'

`And from the party from whom you received the infant?'

`Yes, my lord.'

`I supposed so. This box is further evidence of the kind I want.'

`I should be glad to know how your lordship got wind of this affair!' said the Captain, putting the box back as well as he could for the chains on his wrists, into a pocket within the breast of his coat.'

`That you shall learn after you have given me your account of the whole of the circumstances so far as you were concerned, Captain,' answered the Earl.

`Then I will at once begin my story, my lord,' said Bonfield, seating himself again; `and it shall be a true one. For I have no motive now in keeping anything back.'

CHAPTER III. THE DESPATCHES. THE SMUGGLER AND THE ADMIRALS.

The bucanier, after glancing around the cabin, and satisfying himself that they were alone, the nobleman also making the same inspection, thus began his recital.

`You need not, I see, be told, my lord, that when I was a young man, I was a smuggler. How I came to be so, you will probably care little to hear; but I will say that it was not my own choice. I was very successful in my trips to France and Holland, and made money rapidly. I also got a name of some celebrity, as I was never taken though closely watched on land by the coast−guard, and often hotly pursued at sea. But I had a fast−sailing vessel, and I had friends ashore, who always gave me warning and helped me to land my goods. Perhaps, my lord, you will re collect when I escaped from a brig and schooner of war, both of which twice got within ball range of me!'

`I do. It made some noise at the time, and a large reward was then offered for your capture! Was it not so?'

`Yes, my lord. Eight hundred pounds if I was taken at sea with my vessel, and three hundred if I were captured on land. But I did not the less diligently pursue my vocation. I took pride in it, and exulted in being able to defeat the enemies of free−trade. I took pride in the speed of my vessel, the Dart, in the boldness and skill of my men, and the number and success of my trips. I was a smuggler and nothing else. But I had been brought up to the business from a boy. My first recollections are with the deck of the smuggler, and a cavern upon the coast where they concealed their goods. So far as I know, I was born on board a smuggler.'

`I only know that I found myself one as a boy, and have been one ever since. If ever a man thoroughly served his trade I did, my lord, for I was serving it all my life!'

`You served your trade under if I mistake not!'

`Your lordship is well informed! Yes, he was my master, and the only father I ever knew; though all the crew used to tell me that I was not his child. But he treated me as well as if I had been, and I shall always think well of him, though he was a man that would not hesitate to use the knife where other men would be content with the fist. With such a teacher I was soon perfect. By the time I was twenty, I was a Captain myself; and I soon began to take as much pride, my lord, in my occupation as if it had had the King's license. I always in bravado carried a flag on which was emblazoned the `broad−arrow. ' But I wont detain your lordship with reminiscences in which I now even take no little pleasure.

`About three weeks after my escape from the two vessels of war, hostilities commenced with France. The intercourse between the two nations soon ceased, and so vigilantly did the French fleets watch the ports of England that scarcely a vessel could get to sea. But I continued to run under the French flag, and landed almost as many goods on the coast as before the war.

`At length one day it became necessary to send some important intelligence to the English fleet off the coast of Holland. Not an English vessel could get out to carry the news; one having been captured by the French in the

attempt, and two others compelled to return to port, and restore the sealed packages to the Admiralty.

`I was on shore in a small inn which I used to stop at, at such times, in the suburbs of Dover, when about two hours before dark, some men came in, and seating themselves, called for beer; and while they were drinking it, I overheard them speaking about the failure of the vessels to get out of port.

`What vessels and where bound?' I asked, for being dressed as a gentleman's servant with powdered wig, I was thoroughly disguised.

`They then informed me of the attempts of the Admiralty to send a fast sailing vessel, but without success, with some important despatches to the fleet. They said a thousand guineas was offered to any skipper that would undertake it.

`An idea instantly flashed upon my mind. I was expecting my schooner in that very night, with a valuable cargo of lace goods, and distilled spirits; and I had been remaining behind secretly, to effect the sale of them to my buyers, and partly to keep a sharp look out upon the coast guard, upon whose movements I was acting as a spy in person; for they had of late got some new place of concealment on the coast, and I resolved to find it out. My schooner was in charge of my mate, a man who had learned his business under my own−eye.

Upon hearing the intelligence communicated by these men−of−war's men, I resolved that I would offer my services to the Admiralty on condition that the laws overlooked my past pecadilloes. I had no sooner come to this decision than I went up stairs, and, sitting down, wrote a note which I addressed to the first lord of the Admiralty, who was then at Dover, and offering my services as bearer of despatches.'

'This was exceedingly bold,' said Earl Percival, looking surprised.

`Yes, bold and impudent enough, too. But I was not a person to look at trifles, when I had decided upon my action.'

`Do you recollect what you wrote?'

`Yes, my lord. I will repeat the contents of the note, if you desire it.'

`I should like to hear them. A correspondence between the famous smuggler Vance and the Admiralty must possess interest,' added the nobleman, smiling. '

`Of that you can judge,' answered Bonfield. `My note ran thus:

`Roadside Inn, Sea Road. near Dover. − `My lord,

`I have just learned that you are desirous of communicating with the fleet under Admiral Nelson, and are looking for a fleet sailing vessel. I offer you mine, and my services at any time after twelve o'clock to−night. My schooner's sailing qualities I need not speak of as they are doubtless well−known to your lordship, for some of his Majesty's cruisers have of late tested them. I offer your lordship my services in good faith, and will perform my errand with punctuality and honesty. Though a smuggler by profession, I am an Englishman at heart. If your lordship will forget that I am the former, I will only remember that I am the latter. I pledge myself to reach Lord Nelson within eight and forty hours after I take the despatches on board if the present wind holds.

I am your lordship's faithful servant,

Vance.

P. S. I am at the Inn from which my note is dated. If your lordship should do me the honor to accept my offer you will please send me a note under the Admiralty seal to that effect. I shall wait here for your lordship's reply. I would further assure your lordship, that if you are disposed to take advantage of this note to attempt my arrest, you will take your trouble in vain; for I can command the approach of the house and be in a place of safety before the Inn could be even reached. I ought to apologise to your lordship for such a suspicion; but though I am a young man, I have learned the lesson of precaution.'

`And this was your note to the first Lord of the Admiralty,' exclaimed the Earl with surprise, and looking upon the smuggler with feelings of mingled curiosity and respect. `Your address to him was as well worded as bold; and did his lordship pay any attention to it?

`I sealed and sent it by a lad who sailed with me, who was remarkable for his intelligence and tact, and who had the faculty of assuming as many characters as a stage player. He was one of the most efficient and useful spies I had, and was always with me on land or sea. Dressed neatly as a young man−of−war's man, he took my note, went with it into town, and suceeded in getting it sent into his lordship, who was stopping, with some others of the Board, a few days in Dover.

`I will describe what followed, in the language of the lad Nickerson, or `little Nick,' as he used to be called by my men. He said that after giving the note to a sentry in waiting to be sent in, he waited at a little distance, so that he might be at hand if called for, and yet ready to escape if he saw that danger was to be apprehended. He soon saw a footman appear, and look about and then speak to the soldier who pointed to him. He saw by their manner that there was nothing to fear, so he advanced, and the footman hastened towards him, calling him to hurry at the same time.'

`Are you the lad that brought a note just now?' asked the lacquey.

`Yes,' responded Nick, touching his hat.

`Then come along with me. His lordship wants to speak with you.' were the powdered gentleman's words.

"I went in at once after him,' said Nick to me, `and he led me through two rooms full of officers and other people waiting to see the Admirals. I passed 'em all by, and the footman opening a farther door, pushed me in telling me to take off my hat. I did so, and found myself in a large chamber, in the centre of which was a green cloth table, at which sat four old gentlemen in bobs, rear−admirals, if I ever saw one,' observed Nick, with emphasis. `Upon seeing me one of them, an old white head in gold specs, called out to me,

`Come this way, my lad?'

`I went towards him, and made my best bow.

`Who are you?' he asked, looking at me as if he meant to make a gimblet hole in me.

`I am Nick Nickins, your lordship's honor,' said I.

`You just brought a nate to me, did you?'

,Yes, your lordship.'

`Do you know the man who gave it to you, for you don't look like a smuggler yourself.'

`Not I,' I said. He saw me going by a tavern down on the Sea Road, and told me if I was going to town, and would hand it to the Admiral's court he'd give me a French crown.

`This is not true,' said the old fellow at once to me. Then turning to the other *Ads* he added, `This Vance is too wise and acute to trust such a note as this to chance. No doubt the boy is one of the crew.'

`That matters not if he is!' answered one of the others. `It is my opinion that we accept this smuggler's offer. His vessel sails like the wind; and besides we have no vessel that is at all fleet.'

`The others entered into the discussion and very warmly,' replied Nick, `at length it was unanimously desided that I should be employed. The first lord then turned to Nick and said,

`Where is your Captain?'

`I left him at the inn,' innocently answered Nick, taken by surprise.

At this reply the Admirals all laughed and then Nick discovered that he had betrayed his connection with me. But he was never frightened.

`You are one of his smugglers, then,' said the old Admiral.

`I am, my lord,' was Nick's answer.

`And do you think your Captain is to be trusted to take private despatches to lord Nelson's fleet.'

`Yes, your lordships. If he says he'll take them, he'd take them if the devil was in his path!' responded Nick.

`You don't think be would take them to the French,' said one of the board.

`No, my lord, my Captain is too much of an Englishman to do this. Besides, he is a gentleman and a man of honor every inch of him.'

`At this speech the lord's laughed and the first lord, turning to the others, said,

`It is decided then, that we take up with this conveyance.'

`Yes, yes,' was the unanimous response. `There is no alternative.'

`Vance, I think, observed the first lord, `will take a pride in doing this service faithfully. Shall I write a note to him desiring him to come and see us under the seal?'

`Yes but he may not trust to it?' remarked one of the admirals.

`If your lordships give your promise in writing that he shall go and come safe,' said Nick pertly, `he is too much of a gentleman himself to doubt that your lordships will fulfil your word.'

`Then you think he will come to see us?' asked tha first lord of Nick.

`Yes, my lord,' was his confidant reply.

His lordship then pennnd a note to me and sealed it with the official signet and giving it to Nick said to him,

`Now, my lad, hasten with this to your captain, and tell him we shall be happy to see him here precisely at seven o'clock this evening. As it will then be dark he can oome without danger of detection.'

Nick was then shown out of the chamber, and dismissed at the outer door glad enough to have escaped so easily, when at one time he believed that he would not only be detained as a smuggler, arrested also, for wearing the naval button on his natty blue jacket. He said that he never felt more uneasy in his life than when under the keen, gimblet eye of the old lord, and at one period of their discussion of my proposition he thought it was all up, and that he would be compelled to turn informer against me, or swing for it. As it was, therefore, he was fortunate in getting off as he did.

`What was the purport of the note you received from the Admiral, Captain Bonfield?' asked the Earl Percival.

`I can repeat it. The note I have also but not with me. It was as follows, dated from the admiralty chambers and sealed with the court's seal:

`Sir: Your proposition is before the Board. In extraordinary emergencies it is often necessary to make use of extraordinary means. The lords of the Admiralty would be happy to see you early this evening, and do hereby insure to you security of person should you wait upon them. Your offer, I may say, will be accepted. But it is necessary to have an interview with you that you may receive verbal instructions. The sentry at the door is instructed to conduct to me whoever inquires for the `Admiral Collingwood.' '

`Did you comply with this request?' asked the Earl taking deep interest in his narrative of an event so unusual in the policy of governments.

`I resolved to do so without hesitation especially when I heard from Nick a detailed account of the proceedings. Before going I exchanged the costume of a valet which I wore, for a suit of plain, respectable citizen's dress. I passed through the streets of the town without suspicion and at dark reached the building where the Admirals held their sittings. A sentry was before the door above which hung a lantern that shone upon the face of all who approached.

`I wish to speak with Admiral Collingwood, ' said I in answer to the soldier's challenge.

`Then follow me,' was his reply, and leaving his post he crossed a hall and opening a door at the opposite side, added, `go in there sir, and you will find the Admiral, for I suppose you are the person he told me to send to him.'

`I entered a small apartment where to my surpriee, I saw two Admirals at their dinner, and now over their wine. One of them I recognized at once as the first lord, Collingwood. Upon seeing me enter he fixed a keen glance upon me, and the other also closely regarded me. But I saw from their looks that they were at fault. Evidently they thought I was quite another person from the smuggler Vance.

`Who do you wish to see?' demanded the Admiral in a vexed and disappointed tone.

`Admiral Collingwood!' I responded. `I am Vance the smuggler.'

`The devil you are!' exclaimed his lordship, looking at me with amazement. `You seem to be a very worthy citizen in your outside. Under false colors, hey!'

`I have to hoist them, my lord, I have so many kind friends on shore who would like to take me by the shoulder,' I answered.

`Well, you are welcome here, Captain Vance,' said his lordship very civilly and in the frank, hearty tone which characterised that brave seaman; `your person is safe. I am surprised, however, to find you such a quiet appearing person. Sit down, sir, and take a glass of wine.'

`Is it possible!' exclaimed the Earl Percival.

`Yes, my lord,' answered Bonfield; the Admiral treated me like a gentleman. I took the glass of wine standing, refusing to sit, and drank their healths. When I had set the glass down upon the board, his lordship said to me,

`Vance, I like your appearance. The Old Boy with the hoof isn't half so bad as he is painted. Your impudent note was received by us. It surprised us, I must confess; but after a little reflection we have concluded to accept your offer of service. I am willing to trust you. I am confident, the more I look at you, that I can do so. I feel assured you will, in this matter, act like a full blooded Englishman, and by a faithful discharge of your mission, atone in some measure for your past sins against the crown!'

`I shall do all I can to make such atonement, my lord,' I responded, with a low bow.

`I see you will, I believe you will!' he replied in a cordial, unhesitating manner that fairly made me love him. `Now hear what you have to do. It is of the utmost importance that these sealed despatches, ' he said, placing his hand upon a small packet before him, `should be placed in the hands of Nelson within three days. Information of the utmost importance in relation to a movement of one of the enemy's fleets, has reached me, and it is of vital importance that Lord Nelson should know it, that he may get under weigh and check−mate the French Admiral. I have despatched three, one after the other, of the only fast sailing vessels at command from the port with the despatches, but one was captured in two hours after leaving the harbor, and the other two could not get out. Here are the despatches made up again, for the captain of the vessel captured doubtless cast his overboard as he had orders to do, if he was likely to be taken. You see that these are in a leaden case. It is to sink them if you are likely to be captured.'

`If I take the despatches, my lord,' said I, `I shall not put them out of my hands, save into Lord Nelson's.'

`I like that speech,' said the other Admiral striking hs hand upon the table.

`Where is your schooner?' asked the first lord.

`She will be on the coast at midnight,' I answered. `I have a cargo to land,' I added, smiling, `and shall be ready to sail again on this expedition for your lordship at two o'clock!'

`You talk coolly enough, you rogue, of landing your cargoes of smuggled goods,' said his lordship, trying to look stern, yet laughing. `You must, for this time, let your cargo remain on board. There is not an hour to lose.'

`Very well, my lord,' I answered. `I will be ready to sail at twelve o'clock. My vessel being on the coast has an advantage. The French will only be watching the ports. Besides, I can run under the Frenchman's flag, as I do in smuggling.'

`Very well. You may run your own way so you get the despatches to Nelson, ' answered both Admirals at once.

`On condition you take them in safety and in time, Captain Vance,' said the first lord, `your past offences shall be overlooked by the crown; and you shall have one thousand guineas. And I would advise you to give up smuggling and take service in your country's ships.'

`I will think of it, my lord,' I answered.

`I hope you will. Here now, Captain Vance, are the despatches,' said Admiral Collingwood seriously and impressively, as he took the package from the table and laid it in my hand. `In committing this to you, we place confidence in you that, to a man of your pride and ambition, must be infinitely flattering. We treat you, sir, as a man of honor. We regard you as an Englishman who would disdain to betray his country to the enemy.'

`You judge me rightly, my lords,' I answered with emotion; `for this high trust elevated me in my own self−respect. I almost felt like becoming a good citizen and serving my country in the navy; but the freedom, the adventures, the perils and escapes of a smuggling life had too many charms for me.'

`I took the parcel and placed it in my bosom. and buttened it up. I then prepared to leave.

`Stay, Captain Vance,' said his lordship, filling my glass again; `one more glass of wine to the success of your enterprize. Your vessel's reputation as a fast sailer is too well known to us; and I have no doubt you will see Nelson in three days' time.'

`I will return at once and report my success to your lordships,' I answered. `If the winds hold good, you will see me in this room again in a week from this time.'

`That rings well! But we shall be in London then! Will you trust your self there to let us know the result? Besides you must receive your pay.'

`I have such confidence in the admirals! ' I responded, `that I shall have no hesitation in walking through London openly.'

`But you need not do that. We don't want to be called upon to protect you, captain,' answered the admiral, laughing. `We have no desire to be regarded as your patrons. This affair, from this moment, must be secret. We look upon you to hold it so.'

`I will do so, my lord. At least I shall never speak of it to do mischief. Nor will I ever avail myself of your confidence in me, so far as to appeal to you should I get into trouble hereafter for smuggling.'

`After some further instructions,' continued Bonfield to Lord Percival, `I took my leave of them and hastened to my inn in the suburbs. At half−past nine o'clock I saw the signal light of my vessel in the offing. Before twelve o'clock every box, bale, and cask, was landed and concealed in our hiding places on the coast; and by twelve o'clock I was on board and flying before a fresh nor' west wind towards the coast of Holland.

CHAPTER IV. THE MYSTERIOUS VISIT.

`I do not see, Captain Bonfield,' said the Earl of Percival, `how this narrative of your being employed by the Admiralty to take despatches to Lord Nelson bears upon the subject which I questioned you about. I mean the infant which you received. Your account is interesting, and I have listened to it with deep interest, but as I have little leisure, I will now hear you touching the immediate subject before us.'

`I related the account of my despatches, my lord,' answered Bonfield, `in order that you may understand fully how I came to be selected in this business concerning the child. It was through the despatches I got into the notice of the higher powers.'

`I now see your object, though it had been better to have been more brief. But you may tell me whether you reached Nelson or not; but I believe you did, for I think I recollect that he was enabled to surprise the French fleet under D'Eclair by means of an extraordinary express he received from England, informing him of this admiral's

movements. '

`That express, my lord,' answered Bonfield, with an air of pride, `was taken over by the Dart, and in less than forty−seven hours. I had a famous run. The wind was as fair as a lover flying to the arms of his mistress could wish it; and for the first thirty hours I never touched tack nor sheet. We went twelve knots every hour. I was chased by both English and French cruisers; but I laughed at them; for, as they could not overtake me as a smuggler, I had no idea of letting them catch me aow I was in the Admiralty's service. I found Nelson's fleet lying to off the coast, just where old Admiral Collingwood told me I should fall in with it. I ran straight for the English flag−ship under English colors, and coming to under her lea, got into my boat and went aboard. I was dressed as an English revenue officer, and doubtless they took the Dart for a vessel of that class, for she had a regular revenue rake to her masts.

`I asked to see Lord Nelson, and was sent aft by the officer of the deck, and passed along frem middy to call−boy, until I found myself in the state cabin. There was little Nel, in his short blue roundabout and white ducks busy writing letters, There were several officers round him. He looked up as the lieutenant who shewed me in said

`Here is the bearer of despatches. sir!'

`Well, my man, what have you for me?' asked the Admiral, extending his hand for the package which I was taking from my breast pocket.

`I left Dover, my lord, forty eight hours since,' I answered, `and bring you this package from Admiral Collingwood. It contains important intelligence. Having placed it in your hands, my lord, I have fulfilled my mission!'

`In forty eight hours from Dover!' repeated the Admiral, as he received the package. `What did you come in?' he asked, as he took it out of the leaden box and broke one of the seals.

`A small schooner, my lord,' I answered.

`Of the revenue service! I see, I see!' he said, glancing at my uniform.

You have beat the wind. Your diligence shall not be forgotten by me!'

His lordship then opened the package and took out a letter which he proceeded to read, his eyes running over the page with inconceivable rapidity. He seemed to read by sentences just as other men read by words. I watched the expression of his face as he read to see the effect of the news upon him. Every eye was also turned upon him. Suddenly he sprang to his feet. His face was flushed and his eyes sparkled with extraordinary brilliancy.

`Set the signal for the whole fleet to get underweigh!' he cried to his officers.

Other orders were rapidly given, and among them one for the Captains of all the ships to come on board of him. Nelson presented me with one hundred guineas before I left the cabin, and said he would take me from the revenue ser vice to his own ship and see me promoted. But I respectfully declined.

`And I am surprised you did, Bonfield, ' said lord Percival. `It was then the point for making your fortune which you should have seized. If you had accepted his liberal offer you would not now be here wearing these chains.'

`That is true, my lord,' answered Bonfield, with a slight frown; `but no man is a chooser of his own fate!'

`Every man's fate is in his own hands in early manhood. He can choose good or evil, honor or dishonor as he will.'

`It may be so; but I believe in destiny, my lord,' answered Bonfield, laughing. `Besides, I preferred to be captain of a band of smugglers! I was born and bred a smuggler. It was my element. I liked its freedom and hair breadth escapes. The restraints of a man of war I could never have endured. So I declined. When I got back to my own vessel and looked arond me, I saw the whole fleet, which consisted of five ships of the line, ten frigates and a score of sloops, brigs and schooners, already underweigh and standing off the land. From each vessel as it approached the Admiral's a boat put off for the flag−ship; and in less than an hour the Captains of all the larger vessels were on board in council with Nelson. I also made sail and bore eastward; and before night, although the fleet was sailing the same way, I was full two leagues in advance. reached Dover three days afterwards, found the Admiral's there, and reported my success, at the same time giving the Admiral a letter from lord Nelson. The thousand guineas were handsomely paid down to me, and I was suffered to go away with safety, though Collingwood tried to prevail upon me to give up smuggling, promising if I would do so he would give me command of one of the revenue cutters in the service. Doubtless he thought I should make a capital revenue officer on the principle of `take a rogue to catch a rogue.' Now, my lord, I will proceed to relate to you what you desire more particularly to hear! But you would have naturally asked how I come to be employed to take the infant aboard, and so I thought it best to begin at the beginning. Now we shall have all plain sailing the rest of the way.

As he spoke he took the slack of the heavy chain which united his hand−cuffs and suspended it upon a brass pin near him to ease the weight. This act was not unobserved by Lord Percival who for a moment felt like calling upon the officer in charge to remove the irons; for he had become very deeply interested in this lawless man, feeling that he possessand elements of character that under other circumstances of development might have made him a distinguished person. But seeing that Bonfield did not appear to be greatly incommoded by his irons, he thought it best to let them remain for the present. Bonfield seemed to define his thoughts, for he said smiling as he glanced at his wrists,

`These bracelets, my lord, are more showy than ornamental. But I have worn them before, and don't feel uneasy. Now about that affair in October twenty years ago. `Well, you see, my lord, when I left old Admiral Collingwood the last words he said to me were,

`My man, we shall not forget your services in this affair. Keep it secret, and perhaps we may employ you again. In the meanwhile lead an honest life, don't defraud the revenue, and keep yourself in readiness should you ever be wanted again.'

`I shall be at the sea−road inn, my lord,' I answered, `after the first of next month, but a note left there at any time will reach me early. It should be ad dressed to William Bonfield,' I told the Admiral, for that was the name I then sometimes went under on shore.

`Well, my lord,' continued Bonfield, `it ws not more than two weeks after that, when as I had just landed a cargo and sent it safely to a bale into the interior, and was regaling myself in the little back parlour of the sea−road inn, when the door opened and my landlady entered with a letter addressed to William Bonfield. I at once suspected that it came from the Admiral, and asked who left it? She said a man on horseback, who upon placing it in her hand put spurs to his horse and galloped away.

After she left the room I broke the seal and read the note. It was from the admiral sure enough, and dated at London. '

`Do you recollect the note?' asked Lord Percival.

`Every word of it. It runs thus:

"London, − *Sept. 30, 181*

`Well, you rogue, you are wanted again. You must be in London with your schooner within five days without fail. Come up under revenue colors in the day time until within ten miles of London, and then keep on after dark and anchor off a pier one mile and a half below the Tower. You will know the place by two large oaks that grow at the head of the pier and by a red light which you will see suspended in the branches of one of the oaks. You will answer this light by another in your rigging. Your motions must be secret and cautious. When you reach the place, which you must try to do at least two hours after dark (there will be a six days' moon), drop your anchor short and trail up, not furl. Lay there till you see a boat put off to you. It will hail you and ask the news from Nelson. This boat you will let come on board, when you will give yourself up to the services and interests of those who shall visit you. You will be well paid, and all you are desired to do in return is to be faithful and secret.'

`It was signed only with the letter O.'

`And did you obey the requisition upon you?' asked Lord Percival.

`Yes. I had nothing particular then to occupy me, and so I resolved to run into the Thames and see what was to be done. I began to feel myself quite of service to the state, smuggler as I was, my lord.'

`You had good reason to feel so; for a more extraordinary use of a smuggler was never made by any government.'

`I got into the mouth of the Thames on the morning of the 3d of October, and with a light breexe sailed up, but under shortened sail, as I did not care to reach too near London before dark. I was disguised as a revenue cutter and carried the revenue flag. At dark I was within eight miles of the pier of the two wo oaks, which I well knew the situation of, for I had more than once landed rich goods there which I had rowed up from the vessel at the mouth of the river. I knew it well and the region all about it. It was about a mile below the Tower.

`It was quite night. The moon was near the zenith when the sun went down and cast a good deal of light upon the river, as under a three−knot breeze I proceeded up the stream to the place pointed out.'

`Was this on the very night named in Admiral Collingwood's note to you?' asked Lord Percival.

`Yes, my lord, I had timed it exactly, though I was afterwards told they would have waited for me until I came, if it had been every night that week.'

`Then the admiral had great confidence in you?'

`Yes, my lord, I told him that when ever he sent for me to serve the crown again, I would obey the summons. He knew that he could depend upon me; and he knew that I was at the inn when he sent for me; for he had a spy watching for me. It was just half−past eight when I came in sight of two oaks, about a mile above me. I stood on, and soon saw the red light sparkling in the deep gloom of their shadows. I answered it as I had been directed to do, by hoisting a similar one in my main rigging. In a little while I came abreast of the little piet, and trailing up, dropped anchor with short cable. All was perfectly quiet on shore, which was not more than seventy yards distant. The tops of the dark trees which overhung the spot shone in the moon−beams, but beneath them the gloom was impenetrable. I could see a red light waving gently in it with the motion of the branch on which it hung in the wind.

`I had my men all stationed and ready to move at a moment's warning by slipping cable, if it should be a treacherous attempt to capture me!'

`And you had this suspicion, then?' asked Lord Percival.

`I thought of it, and felt that it would do no harm to be prepared. So I had all my men armed and was armed myself. My guns also were shotted and ready for use. I knew it was not best to trust great men too far, especially those connected with the government. Still, I did not really believe that the old admiral would play me false. And he did not.

`I had been anchored about three minutes when I saw the red signal light taken down and lowered into a boat, which pulled off from the shore straight into the stream. I watched the manoeuvres of it closely with my glass. It contained, indistinctly visible to me, four persons, two at the oars, and two dark figures in the stern.

`The boat came ahead of me, passed across the bows, and then one of them hailed and asked

`What news from Nelson?'

`I at once knew they were my men, and responding

"Good news,' invited them to come alongside.

`The boat at once pulled to the star−board gangway, and I cast those in it the man−rope, which was caught by one of the gentlemen, who immediately stepped on board.

`This is Captain Vance?' he said in a cautious, under tone.

`Yes,' I answered; `will you walk into the cabin?'

He followed me down and I handed him a chair, at the same time surveying him closely. He was dressed in a plain brown surtout, buttoned over his chest, and wore a sort of hunting cap. He was tall and well formed, and had a very aristocratic air. I set him down for a nobleman at once, as he proved to be.'

`Will you tell me who it proved to be?' asked Lord Percival, with the most absorbing interest.

`I will, my lord, for I have begun this story, for the purpose of unfolding every thing truly. It was the Marquis of Ross!'

`Go on; I see your story chimes well with what I was led to believe. Now, proceed!'

`After he was seated, seeing I remained standing, he immediately rose again, and for a moment seemed to be at a loss how to address to me what he had to say. At length he said, with a smile, though it was a smile which went no deeper than the muscles of his face, `I believe, Captain, you are the brave fellow who took the despatches to Nelson! '

`I had that honor, sir,' I answered.

`Admiral Collingwood has spoken highly of you.'

`I respect him greatly, sir,' I answered.

`Through his recommendations, Captain Vance,' said the Marquis, `you are about to be entrusted with a commission of great importance. I have no doubt you will acquit yourself with credit. It is, however, a matter of the strictest secresy, and must be conducted on your part with the most implicit obedience to those who employ you!'

`And who are those who employ me?' I asked. `And what is the nature of the business I am to be a party to. Though a smuggler by profession, I have certain ideas of honor and conscience.'

`Doubtless you have,' said the gentleman, smiling. `In the first place I am one who will employ you. I am the Marquis of Ross. But there are higher persons interested in this matter even than I! Hear from me, Captain Vance, what is required of you. There is in the boat a deaf and dumb person a woman who has with her a small child a few months old. You are to take this woman and child and convey them to the island of Bermuda. Upon reaching that destination, you will land by night upon the `Black Keys,' near the fortress that protects the harbour. By that fortress is a path which leads leads to ' Here the Marquis cast his eyes upon a memorandum, which he held in his hand, as if to read some minutes, and then proceeded `leads by a group of larch trees to a cottage, situated about a quarter of a mile from the fortress, and a short walk from the town. This cottage, which is very retired, yet commands a view of the sea, is inhabited by a man and woman by the name of Oakford. To these persons you will deliver this sealed package, and leave with them the woman and her babe. When you shall have accomplished this mission, an order signed by this Oakford upon the King's Treasury in the town for four thousand pounds sterling shall be paid to you there. Are you willing to undertake this duty, in good faith and secrecy, and receive at the end this large reward?'

`Who is the woman and her babe?' I asked of the Marquis.

`That is not necessary for you to know. It is of importance that she should be sent to Bermuda for the present. '

`Some State measures, my Lord Marquis? ' I asked.

`You are at liberty to guess, but not to know,' he responded. Shall I order them on board!'

`I will undertake it, my Lord Marquis, ' I answered, `for five thousand pounds, four thousand to be paid me when it is done, one thousand pounds down!'

`I agree to this,' answered the Marquis, without hesitation. You shall have the money in a Bank of England note. I have one purposely with me, for I anticipated some such demand!'

`The Marquis then took out of his pocket−book a note for that sum, and placed it in my hands. He then went on deck, and I followed him. He walked to the side, and stepping down into the boat, for it was but a step, my vessel was so low in the water, and touched the female on the arm. By a light which was held by the boy Nick, I saw that she was a small, delicate−looking person, with those large speaking eyes which deaf and dumb people have, and which cannot deceive one. She was wrapped in a cloak, and held enveloped in her arms the infant, though its face was not visible. The Marquis assisted her to the deck, and led her at once to the cabin.

`You have two cabins,' he said, as I went after him; `so that it wont put you out at all. The female can have the after cabin with the child. Now I will leave them to your charge.'

With this he went up to the young woman, and taking her hand, pressed it and touched her forehead. He also made certain unintelligible gestures with his fingers, and she replied to them in the same way, calmly, and as if she felt no emotion at going on the voyage, or leaving England in such a manner.

`You need not take any trouble to try and make her hear, Vance,' said the Marquis, `for she was born a deaf mute, and understands only the language of signs. Treat her kindly, I pray you, and the infant also. She will be able to state on her arrival to the man Oakford how she has been treated, and if you are rude or harsh to her, it may affect your reward in its aggregate amount.'

`I answered his Lordship that though a smuggler, I had no heart to treat a woman unkindly, especially a mute, and that I should, now that I had undertaken the affair, try and make her as happy as I could.

`At hearing me say this, the Marquis thanked me, shook me by the hand and wished me a pleasant voyage, and got over the side into his boat. He gave his men orders to put off, and in a few moments, as I watched his retiring form, he disappeared from my sight in the darkness of the silent shores. I soon after heard a carriage roll rapidly away along the river road, and the sound of one or two horsemen galloping along with it.

`Wondering much at the mystery connected with all these movements, and resolved to do my best some time or other to find out the whole secret, I gave orders to weigh anchor and make sail on the vessel. As soon as we were fairly under canvass I left the deck to my first officer and went below. I assure you, my lord, I felt not a little awkwardness in the presence of a young woman, for she was both young and very interesting looking, to whom I could not speak a word. I was at a loss how to communicate with her. At length I approached her and smiling pointed to the infant which she still held, and motioned for her to uncover its face. She did so, and I beheld as fine a looking little girl, about eleven months old, as you would wish to see. It was fast asleep; but awoke as the light flashed upon its eyes and looked up into my face smilingly. The dumb female, whom I then supposed to be its mother, pressed it to her bosom with affection in the act. I wanted to ask its name, and a thousand other questions, but there she was dumb and deaf! I was completely at fault for once in my life. I, however, put my curiosity under hatches for a while, and opening the door of the inner cabin, signified to her that she was to occupy it. She seemed to understand me, and bowed and looked gratified.

`The next morning, my lord, we were out of the river. In seven days afterwards I touched at Flores, in the western islands, for provisions, for I had come off on short allowance. The eighteenth day from the mouth of the Thames I made the Bermudas, which you will say was a quick passage, my lord'

`It was, indeed; then you *did* take the infant to Bermuda?' asked the earl earnestly.

`Yes, my lord.'

`That is important to have confirmation of, very. But proceed. I wish now to hear all you have to tell relating to the infant and the disposition of it. More is involved in this than you, perhaps, imagine; for it can hardly be that you really have a guess who that child was.'

`I think I shall be able to assure you that I am not far out of the way in my suspicions, my lord,' answered Bonfield with a significant smile. `But you shall hear and know all that I know of this odd affair.'

CHAPTER V. THE MUTE AND THE VOYAGE.

The pirate now proceeded with his narrative, while Percival, walking up and down the cabin, listened with deep attention.

`The eighteenth day, my lord,' resumed Bonfield, `I made the Bermudas, about two o'clock in the afternoon. At sun−set I was anchored off the Black Keys, and within range of the guns of the fort. I had English colors flying, and was no doubt taken for an English schooner of war. The time had now come for me to part with my two passengers; and though one of them was deaf and dumb, and the other but little better, being an infant a year old, unable to speak a word or understand one, I was not a little sorry that I must part with them. To the little girl I became very much attached. I couldn't have loved it any more had it been my own child, nor half so much, I believe, for if it had been mine it would not have been half so handsome nor so interesting. It took to me, too, after we had been three or four days out, just as if I had been its father. When I would come down into the cabin, after being on deck in my watch, it would hold out its little chubby arms, and almost fly from the dumb nurse's lap

to reach me; and its large blue eyes would sparkle and smile like an angels. I never knew, my lord, I had a proper human heart till that babe began to love me so.'

`Such a reflection, Captain Bonfield, does you honor,' answered the earl.

`I have done little worthy honor in this world, my lord, I am well aware of that. But the child did not alone interest me. There was the young woman. Her fair placid face, her large grey intelligent eyes which answered for ears and tongue, for she seemed to hear and speak with them as well as see; her lady−like gentleness; her amiable manners; her air of dependence and trust in me, altogether won me over completely. I would have cut my right hand off before I would have treated her unkindly. I felt too that she and the child were innocent victims of some state−policy, and that they demanded sympathy.'

`Then you began to suspect this,' said the earl, stopping in his walk and loking him fixedly in the face.

`Yes, my lord, from the very first, I knew that the Admiral would not send for me and my vessel, nor the great marquis nearest the throne, come on board on such business as brought him, unless the disposal of the infant had something to do with state matters. Though how it could be I did not know. I could not inquire, for the only two persons who could enlighten me were, as you have seen. I became, as I said, deeply interested in the young woman. Who she could be I was constantly conjecturing. Her manners were remarkably lady−like; her complexion fair, as if sun nor wind had ever visited it rudely; her hands white and soft, and exquisitely shaped. It was plain she was no common person. Her hair was the most beautiful I ever beheld. It was as soft as floss, a golden brown, and descended, when unbound, till it swept the deck. My crew swore she must be the queen of the Mermaids, and her being incapable of speech confirmed them in this opinion, which many of them entertained seriously.

`The first few days I believed the young woman was the mother of the child; but I was soon led to suspect that I was mistaken. She did not seem like a young mother. She treated the infant, indeed, with the kindest affection, and gave all her time to it. Still the more I dwelt upon the subject the more I was convinced in my own mind that she was not the child's mother. But I could not ascertain this from her. We had learned to converse together in a sort of language of the fingers, but only for the interchange of common−place ideas which could be illustrated by objects at hand to point to. Sometimes she would become quite animated, and seem to endeavor to make me comprehend something she desred to reveal. At such times her eyes would kindle and change their expression in a most wonderful manner; her face would be illumined with the soul within, which seemed to be painfully struggling to explain itself. I could almost understand her. I could comprehend a great deal; and if I had not been so dull in intellect, I might have talked with her and understood her; but my own mind was too dull to reflect the brilliancy of her own.'

`She must have been a very interesting person.'

`She was, indeed, my lord; and as I said, I felt regret at parting with her and the child; and not a man on board but was sad at the idea of their going. They seemed to think that good luck was with them while she was on board.'

`And have you no idea now who this deaf and dumb person was?' asked Earl Percival.

`I have my own guess, my lord,' responded Bonfield, resting his manacled hands upon his knees.

`Captain Bonfield, I wil give orders to have the manacles removed, if they incommode you,' said the earl benevolently.

`No, no, my good lord. I am used to 'em. It will be time enough whan I have earned my liberty by letting you know what you came on board in this storm to get from me! I don't think it blows quite so hard as it did. The

waves don't dash under the counter as they have done.'

`No, the wind seems lulling; and I shall not be sorry, for I assure you I was never in more peril than when I came off to−night to see you. If I had not had the most skilfull boatman on the Thames to row me, I should have been lost, or at least should have had to swim for it. By the by, the poor fellow is waiting for me on deck.'

`I will soon be through with what I have to say. I will be brief.'

`Do not omit anything that it is material; for it is important all the facts connected with this affair should be known to me. I am obliged to you for the minute manner in which you have related what you have done.'

`I might have made it still more particular, my lord, but was afraid of wearying your patience. I will try and pay off' with a short hawser the rest of it. It was just at sun−set as I dropped anchor and furled sails off the Rock, within half a mile of the shore. I had a handsome compliment paid to me for the manner in which I brought my schooner too, by the captain of the fort the next day; for though I came in under all sail, I had my anchor down and every thing snug alow and aloft in just one minute and three quarters by the watch. I did not time, nor think I was doing any thing very extraordinary; but the officer timed it.'

`Did he take you for a regular vessel of the service, then?' asked the earl.

`Yes, of the revenue service, sent out with despatches. I went ashore to the town in my revenue uniform the next day. But I am to tell your lordship what I did the same night of my arrival, and of the disposal of the infant.'

`That is what I chiefly desire to know.'

`From my deck, after we anchored, I could see, by the means of my spy−glass, the cottage retired among the woodlands on the hill−side where the Oakford's lived. I knew it at once by the description which the Marquis had given me of it. It was clear twilight for half an hour after the sun went down, and every thing was distinctly seen on the land. I had, before anchoring, by signs, notified the young woman, whose name, by the by, I could not even get at, if she ever had one, that she must begin to make ready to land. She understood me, and proceeded to pack up in trunks her own things and those of the infants; for both came aboard well supplied, the men who brought her and the Marquis off, having also brought two trunks which they put on deck while I was below. I also forgot to say that, at the suggestion of Lord Ross, I took on board a goat at Lowes, where I lay off for an hour on my passage for this purpose. Thus the child had plenty of milk on the voyage, and grew plump and fat upon it. When the boat was alongside, and it found it was to part from its goat, it began to grieve, so that I ordered the men to throw the goat into the bows and let it go with the child. So we all got in and pulled from the schooner towards the shore. It was already night−fall, so that when we reached the shore at the foot of the fort we could hardly have told a tree from a large rock. We landed at a few steps, from which wound a path up the steep. Leaving the boat and ordering my men to pull off a hundred rods from the shore, and keep quiet till they heard me hail, I took the little girl in my arms, and followed by two of my crew with the baggage, and the dumb girl resting upon my other arm, I went up the path. It would around the fort, though some distance from it; and after following it about a quarter of an hour we came to a wood which we passed through, though it was as black as night, and I could only discern the path from the lighter color of the sand in it. After getting out of the forest we came upon an open glade which scemed to be quite elevated above the sea. From it I could look down into the very area of the fort, and see the lights moving about in the windows of the soldiers' barracks. I could also discern about a mile and a half distant the star−like glimmer of the lantern in the rigging of my vessel.

`I now stopped and looked around to see where we were, and how we should find the house which I knew must be near us. After walking on again a little further, I beheld directly before us the rays of a light breaking through the foliage. We hastened on and in a few moments came in front of a small co:tage built directly under an overhanging rock, and sheltered by trees. It was a little ways to the left out of the path, which here made a bend to

the right to avoid the cliff, and thence passed down the hill side beyond in the direction of the town, the position of which I could also see by the sparkle of the numerous lights in the houses.

`Although, on account of the darkness, I could not see the cottage very well, yet I felt confident that it was where the Oakford's lived, as its situation answered perfectly to the description given me by the marquis, and which I had put into writing. I therefore boldly advanced to the door and knocked. The young woman let go my arm and seemed to be listening, as if she could hear and understand whatever was done. What astonished me was the perfect confidence in others, and total absence of suspicion with which she suffered herself to be led. This struck me at the time she came on board with Lord Ross and went into the cabin so quietly, and then so calmly let him depart to leave her with total strangers, and under circumstances which would have caused any other woman to shrink and tremble. Then she got into the boat so willingly, and suffered herself to be led, as it were, blindly, up the path to the house, when it was clear to me that she knew not where she was going, surprised me. There was no trembling, no drawing back, no hesitation or look of doubt. She behaved just like a child that had uo will but the will of those about it.'

`This seeming indifference is characteristic of the deaf and dumb. They always instinctively and beautifully trust, without fear or doubt, in their fellow be ings, to whom God has given senses, denied to themselves.'

`So I have thought it must be; and in thinking about it, it occurred to me, my lord,' said Bonfield, warmly, `that the man who could betray or abuse such confidence was unworthy the name of manhood he would be a monster!'

`You utter the sentiment of every honorable bosom, Captain Bonfield. I cannot withold my surprise that a person endowed by nature with a mind in which such sentiments find a place, should have given himself up to a lawless career, in which can be gained neither honor nor good name!'

`Pardon me, my lord; I did not give myself up to the life I have led! I was born a smuggler. I was raised a smuggler from the first lispings of infancy. It is my nature. Had I been born a lord I should now have been a lord. Had your lordship been born a smuggler, you doubtless would now have been a smuggler. Had some old gypsy exchanged us in our cradles if I ever had such a luxury, other than the rocking of the waves we should very likely have been at this moment in each other's places.'

`That is more than possible, Captain,' answered the nobleman smiling. `You have an excuse; but now that you know better, and have had opportunities of improving your condition, you are guilty. And I sincerely trust that your present close escape from an ignominous death will lead you to be more careful of yourself and your honor for the future.'

`I resolve to be, my lord. To tell you the truth, I am getting to feel as if I should like to have quiet. You see that my locks are grey already, and that the lines of age are deep in my face.'

`Be assured that you shall not want for my good will and aid if need be, Captain Bonfield. My conversation with you tonight has developed in your character attributes that irresistibly command my respect. You owe to yourself a worthier fame than that you have so long enjoyed as the most daring smuggler in the British waters!'

`Yet this fame is something, my lord! But I agree with you fully. But to my story. I knocked a second time before there was a reply, when the light which had been shining from the windows of a room on the right hand was removed, shone through the key−hole, and the door was slowly unlocked and carefully opened by a woman. As the light she held fell upon all our party, she drew back with an exclamation of alarm, and would have shut it in my face, but I placed my foot in the way, and then gently forcing it open said,

`Don't be alarmed, marm, we only wish to know if one Master Oakford lives here? If so, we have guests for him from England, and also messages.' I had no sooner spoken this name, than the woman shricked.

`Ha! what is that?' cried a man's voice within, and then we heard his quick step to the door, which he threw open, and taking the light from her hand, as it was ready to fall, looked upon us sharply. He was a tall, slender man, about forty years of age by the appearance of his face, but his hand was as white as the driven snow. He had bold, but handsome features, a keen black eye, and was altogether a very striking and respectable looking person, and evidently of birth and degree above his present state.

`Are you Master Oakford?' I asked, when I thought he had taken a sufficiently long inspection of our group. His gaze was partly inquisitive, partly suspicious.

`Come in and quickly, my friends!' he answered, with some trepidation, as once more I mentioned this name. `Come n, and I will answer all inquiries.' His face was as pale as that of the dead, and the hand which held the lamp shook, so that I expected to see it go out. The female recovered her self possession, and whispering something in his ear, of which the words `betray yourself,' she said smilingly to us, but I saw it was a forced smile

`Enter, friends. We are always glad to see people from England here.'

`We went into the house, being conducted to the room on the right, which was plainly, but comfortably furnished. Every thing about seemed to indicate that the occupants were above want, though by no means rich. The house was a one story cottage built of stone, with a thatched roof, it seemed to contain five or six rooms; had a pretty yard in front, a garden at the end, and commanded, as I saw in the morning, a wide and beautiful prospect. It was quite alone by itself, no other cottage being within half a mile; and the only access to it was by the footpath, which led past it from the fort, over the hill side round the cliff to the town; for the fort stood on one side of a sloping hill, and the town in the other, the cottage crossing the summit midway between. There was also a wheel road from the fort to the town by the shore.

`The woman gave us chairs, while the man directed the two of the boats' crew where to deposit their trunks. He then left the men at the door, and came into the little sitting−room. He stood by the door, as there were but few chairs, looking at me steadily, as if he expected me to speak and make known my business. His eyes also wandered with curiosity to the dumb female, and the infant which sat smiling in her lap, gazing round upon the things in the room, and upon the faces of the strangers.

`You are cold,' said the woman, to my dumb passenger, `sit nearer the fire.'

`The other replied by a smile only, and remained where she was.

`You asked for Robert Oakford,' said the man, approaching me and laying his hand upon the back of my chair, and looking at the woman they exchanged glances as if dreading some evil.

`I asked for Master Ooakford,' I responded, `and I trust that you are he; for I have made a long voyage to see you.'

`Yes, that is my name,' answered the man, with some hesitation. `What business have you with me?'

`That I will speedily make known to you, good Master Oakford,' said I, taking from my pocket the package which Lord Ross had commanded me to give him. `Here is a letter or two, which will tell you my business much sooner than I can do it.'

`I then gave him the package. He caught it quickly from my hand and read the superscription.

`All is safe!' he cried, looking at the woman, who was his sister, a maiden lady of about thirty−five, dressed very much like a quakeress, but with a face of remarkable sternness of expression.

`Thank God! was her fervent response.

`I instantly understood, my lord, from this by−play, that there was a mystery of some sort connected with these two persons, of which Lord Ross knew far more than I was ever likely to know. I saw that between him and them was some connection, but I had no clue to ascertain in what way. The expression of both their faces instantly changed on his seeing the hand−writing. They looked greatly relieved, as if some great weight had all at once, been taken from their minds.

`Excuse me, Captain Bonfield, as I see by the envelope you are,' he said, going out of the room with the package, which had that name on it as the bearer: for `Vance' would hardly have done; and I may as well say here, my lord, that from this time I took the name of Bonfield altogether. He had no sooner gone out than the woman disappeared by a side−door, and left us alone. The dumb woman gazed round placidly upon the house, and then asked me by signs if that was to be her home. I replied that it was, when she smiled and looked contented. While the occupants of the house was absent, I amused myself with the little girl, which I had named Flora, because she always reminded me of a flower. I began to feel quite sad at the idea of parting with it, for it had wound itself about my heart; but I resolved that, if I left it there I would come at least twice a year to see it, so that it should not forget me. Indeed I loved that child so, that I had half a mind not to obey Lord Ross, but keep it and bring it up; for I knew that it was cast off from its native country; but I did not wish to lose the reward, and besides, I had pledged myself to fulfil his instructions, and when I give my word, it becomes a sacred law to me.

`I felt sorry, also, at parting with the poor deaf and dumb girl, who, I had at length fully made up my mind was no more related to the child than I was.

There was not the least resemblance in its features to her, nor in hers to it.

Besides she had nothing of that matronly air about her which is so very apparent in young mothers.

`After about ten minutes absence the man returned into the room. His face wore an expression of pleasure and satisfaction. The gloom and suspicion and aspect of fear had given place to confidence and cherfulness. He came up to me and shook me by the hand very warmly.

`Captain,' said he, `I am happy to see you in Bermudas. I see by the letter of the Marquis of Ross that you are in his confidence. You have had a remarkable passage. I saw your schooner when it came to anchor at sun−down, and then wondered if it came direct from England, and who it might contain. You and your two passengers are welcome,' he contined, shaking the hand of the dumb maiden, and also that of the infant, though with an air of respect that, but for certain suspicions I had, would have seemed to me ridiculous.

`His sister at this time came in, her face also cheerful, and destitute of that air of apprehension which had at first been upon it. She also shook the hand of the dumb woman whom I called Mary, for she and the babe in her lap often reminded me of pictures of Mary the Virgin and her child, and so I called her Mary; for one must have a name even for a deaf and dumb person, my lord.

`This is my sister Sarah, Captain,' said Martin Oakford, introducing her.

`You are welcome, captain,' she said, with an hospitable air, `you have been very kind to bring us company to cheer our loneliness.'

`I fear that they will not be found very sociable, marm,' I answered, `but I assure you they will be found worthy of your love. The smile of Mary is sunlight enough for any house.'

`We then talked together a few minutes, about the speed of my passage out, the weather we had, and other things, when at a look from him, his sister took the babe and led Flora smiling from the room to one prepared for her.'

CHAPTER VI. THE PRIVATEER AND THE PRIZE.

`As soon as they had gone,' continued Bonfield, resuming his narration after thrusting into his cheek a quid of tobacco, `Martin Oakford looked carefully about him, and then buttoning the door which led into the entry, in the outer door of which my two men were left, he drew near to me, and said in an under tone,

`Captain Bonfield, I see by the letter of Lord Ross that you have faithfully executed the mission which he entrusted to you. From what he writes me you are entitled to the reward for your services of the large sum of four thousand pounds. This you shall have to−morrow! Did his lordship acquaint you with any of the circumstances connected with this business? ' he added, keenly regarding my countenance as he watched for my reply.

`I know only that I was to leave the female and child in your charge, and receive my money and depart,' I answered.

`He looked at me fixedly for a moment and then said,

`Very well, you shall have your money early in the morning. When do you set sail again?'

`Tomorrow afternoon, or the next day,' I answered, `I wish to look about the island a little.

`He said nothing more to me for some minutes, nor I to him. I was trying to devise some way without being too blunt to get at the truth of the mystery in which I had blindly borne my share. It was clear to me that the letters which Lord Ross had written to him unfolded the whole secret. This secret I was anxious to come at.

`You have seen this dumb lady before? ' I asked abruptly, hoping to throw him off his guard.

`No, never,' he answered firmly.

`Nor the child's relatives?'

`I do not know who they are, unless you do,' he answered. `It was this I wished to learn from you.'

`From me,' I repeated with surprise, seeing by his face that he was sincere. `I know no more about their parentage or friends than the man in the moon. I supposed it was all cut and dried between Lord Ross and yourself.'

`By no means,' he replied, with some hesitation, as if uncertain how far to go with me; `I have orders only to receive the woman and child and keep them faithfully until I receive further orders. I am to regard the young woman as my sister, and the child as my niece and so bring it up, giving it the name of Verginia. '

`And is this all?' I demanded.

`All, save that Here he hesitated; and then added quickly, `but I suppose I may as well be free with you, Captain Bonfield, as you are also in his lordship's employ and confidence save that he pays me a certain sum yearly; but I have no objections, Captain Bonfield, to allow you to read the letter; but on condition you never address me by the name of Oakford; nor to speak of the name again.'

`Then what shall I call you?' I asked.

`I am known here in the Bermudas by the name of Blackburn only.'

`Then, Mr. Blackburn be it,' I answered.

He then took from his coat the pacquet with the seal broken, and drawing from it a letter addressed to `William Oakford, Esq., handed it to me. By the `Esq.' I knew that he was of good birth, and had once been a gentleman as his air bespoke him, though he was now in an humble sphere.

`I read it, and if you would like to hear the contents, my lord, they are in my memory.'

`I have the greatest curiosity to know them,' answered lord Percival with animation.

`The letter was dated at London, October second, and ran as follows:

`To Robert Oakford, Esq. −

`Sir, The bearer of this is Captain Bonfield. He takes out as passengers, a young woman and child. The female is deaf and dumb. You are hereby desired to receive them into, your house, and take care of them, maintaing and providing for them as for members of your own household. She is to pass for your sister, and the child as your niece. For their expenses you will draw two hundred and fifty pounds a year in addition to your present allowance, and from the same source. On no account must the woman or child be permitted to leave the island. For their safe detention you will be answerable. You will be watched. Be faithful, therefore, to those who have it in their power to injure you. Ask no questions. Preserve silence, and be discreet, and your conduct will meet with recompense. The bearer after leaving them safely in your hands, is empowered by me to receive four thousand pounds; for which an order is enclosed on which you will endorse and present for payment. The child's name is Virginia, to which you may add your own family name; as it will henceforward grow up and be regarded as one of your own family. As soon as possible you may forget that she has ever been otherwise. The woman who is deaf and dumb you will treat with kindness and respect, and provide for all her wants, seeing that she lacks nothing for her comfort. Upon the exact and faithful performance of all these requisitions will depend your own future interests.

I am yours, with due consideration,'

Ross.'

`This man Oakord,' said lord Percival, `must have been I conceive a political offender sent out of England instead of suffering a worse punishment. It would seem that he was in the power of lord Ross in some manner. This is my opinion because state's prisoners were sent to the Bermudas and to Jamaica at that period.'

`I supposed he was in some way in the power of the Marquis, my lord,' resumed Captain Bonfield, `and hinted as much to him as I give him back the letter. He did not deny it; but did not volunteer any explanation's, nor did I ask him for any. I saw by his letter that he was no wiser than I was, and so rising and telling him I would call in the morning I bade him good night and left the house. With my two men at my back I soon reached my boat and pulled on board. Early the next morning I was ashore again, having promised Master Oakford that I would take my breakfast with him. When I came in sight of the cottage Mary saw me, and flying to meet me, almost threw her arms about my neck in her joy at beholding me again; and with her animated gestures she gave me to understand that she feared I should not return again; and I could see traces of tears on her checks. I have often thought, my lord, that the persons who could send far away to sea, such a poor helpless creature without friends, and leave her among strangers must have harder hearts than we smugglers if they were lords of the realm, begging your lordship's pardon.'

`No doubt you will find many men with unfeeling hearts among the nobility as well as otherwheres, Captain Bonfield,' responded the Earl, slightly smiling. `It was, indeed a cruel act from beginning to end as you will believe when you shall know all; for I have resolved when I have heard what more you have to tell, to make you a full confident of the great and iniquitous scheme to which you were at the time innocently made a party. My knowledge of your true charecter betrayed in your recital has won my confidence; and especially are you entitled to a full revelation of all the circumstances to which you are yet in the dark, by your generous manifestation of sympathy for the young woman and the child and your kindness. But proceed, for I wish to know the exact situation of these parties when you left them and know when you last saw the child.'

`Well, you shall learn, my lord, for I take a pleasure in unfolding all these matters to you, because I see you are a friend to the two helpless things that were sent so cruelly over the sea. I took breakfast with them, with the little Flora on my knee. I could not help envying the persons with whom I was to leave them, as I knew what a treasure of affection and love they were. I watched Master Oakford and his sister narrowly and it seemed to me that they would be kind. The brother had an air of quiet respectability about him and a very fine smile which looked as if it came from a heart in the right place I did not fear for him so much as I did for the sister. She looked very austere, and I thought would not love my two *proteges* , for such I look upon them, as they ought to be loved; but I resolved to visit them often and see how they flourished. From the letter of lord Ross I saw that they were cast out upon the world and would, perhaps, never be heard of in England or inquired for again. So I felt that I was, as it were, their only friend. They seemed to look upon me with the earnest eyes of dependence and trust. I swore, in my heart, that I would look after them both as if I were their father; for both seemed infants to me, for both seemed equally helpless and blameless.'

`Captain,' said Earl Percival, `you have a good heart.'

`My lord to be a smuggler is not to be a devil!' answered Bonfield, with a slight flush upon his fourrowed brow.

`I shall think better of smugglers all my life for your sake, Captain.'

`And I of lords for your lordship's sake,' responded the smuggler. `After breakfast I went down the hill into the tour with Oakford. He went to a house with me where my money was to be got and there it was paid me in gold. I ordered it to be put into a keg and sent on board the Dart, which was done. I then strolled down by the quay and here met an officer who introducing himself to me as Captain of the fort, inquired the news from England and then complimented me on the manner in which I had come in with every thing set, and dropped anchor, furled my courses and had all snug in less than two minutes by watch.'

`Who was the person who paid the order, Captain?' asked the Earl.

`It was the crown's treasurer, a certain George Raithe, Esq. I believe.'

`I know him,' remarked the Earl. `He is still living in Sussex, he is now Sir George! All your accounts confirm facts. In relating these events to me, Captain Bonfield, you not only do me a service but many others. And in the end you may do a great service to the object of your deep interest if she be still living, which I have reason to hope.'

`And I to know, my lord. If I can do anything to serve her, I am heart and hand yours.'

`You can, Captain Bonfield. When did you see her last? Is she still in Ber muda?'

`You shall hear my lord. After I got my money, I went and took leave of them. Mary understood plainly that it was a parting, and she clung to me as if she had been my sister or daughter, She wept and I almost thought she would cry out and speak, she felt so at heart. But the poor creature's tongue had no power to articulate. I never

pitied any body so in my life, nor suffered so badly myself. The child too little Flora! It understood all about it, that I was going away and when I took it up in my arms it clung so about my neck that I was more than half a mind to take them both back aboard my vessel, marry the pretty Mary if she would have me, and go and settle down in some far off land, and then live and be happy with them. I knew I could soon learn to talk with her, and the child she had already begun to teach a language of signs, so that it understood her perfectly.

`But I felt that it would be doing injustice to the marquis who had ordered me to leave them there, and so tearing myself away from them, I hastened almost blinded with the tears which somehow had got into my eye, to my vessel. I was soon under weigh and steered to the northword the wind blowing off the shore. As long as I could distinguish objects on the land, I kept my glass at eye watching the cottage. I seemed to leave my heart and all that was good for anything about me there. As it faded away in the dim haze of the distance I put up my glass with the internal reso lution that before three months I would be there again.

`I was bound to no particular place I had a fine crew and was well armed, and having heard on the island of the war between Mexico and Spain, I now resolved that I would run for the Gulf of Mexico, get a letter of marque commission at Vera Cruz and capture, for pastime, two or three of the richly laden Spanish ships. Upon proposing this to my crew, they assented to it without a dissenting voice, and so tacking ship, I laid my course southwardly.

`But I am not to give your lordship a history of my cruize. I wish however to state what would show you that I have never been a pirate, though I have been outlawed as such and am now under arrest and capture with my vessel as such. I cruized for three years under the Mexican flag with success, and became rich. Three times a year I touched at Bermuda, to visit my *proteges* whom I found happy, the babe growing finely. It always recollected me, and called me uncle, which I had taught it to do. One third of my money I regularly invested for the child, another third for Mary; whose countenance always shone like the sun when she saw me return. I will now tell your lordship how I first got the name of a buccanier. There was a French vessel brought into the island a prize. It was at the beginning of the war with France. It lay close along side of me, I being under the revenue flag as usual. I went on board and discovered that the captain and one of his officers were former friends of mine, who had been my assistants in smuggling goods to the English coast. I liked the captain much he had done me many favors, and now when I saw him about to be taken ashore a prisoner, I resolved to try and effect his escape He had recognized me at once and flown into my arms, calling me `Vance.' The recognition was observed and the name heard by the English prize lieutenant, who wondered much to see me, an English revenue officer as I was supposed to be, in his majesty's service, on such intimate terms with a French officer. The name of Vance also sounded rather lawless to his nice ear. But he said nothing then nor did I. I conversed awhile with the Gascon Captain, told him that I intended to cut out his vessel that night at all risks. He grasped my hand with grateful emotion, for he had a wife and three lovely children awaiting him in France.

`I effected my object by getting under weigh, laying the Dart along side the French brig, and throwing my men on her decks. The Englishman was driven below and the prisoners released, and sail at once made upon the prize. The English prize officer and his crew of fourteen men were put into a boat and permitted to pull to the shore and in ten minutes both vessels were standing seaward with a fresh breeze and beyond reach of the guns.'

`This was an imprudent act, captain,' said the earl.

`It was one of friendship, my lord. The news was soon told me in the town by the officer, and two vessels of war slipped their cables and pursued us. But we saw nothing of them. My name soon became associated with that of a buccanier at Bermudas. It was ascertained at home that there was no such person as Captain Bonfield in the revenue service, and I was pronounced to be a pirate. At Bermuda I was outlawed, and large rewards were offered for my capture. Not long after this certain piracies occurred in the seas between Bermuda and Nova Scotia, and the credit of them was publicly given to me, while I was quietly cruising under the Mexican flag in the Gulf of Mexico.

`At length, after an absence of nearly a year, I resolved to visit Bermuda and see what had become of my proteges. I altered my schooner into an hermaphrodite brig, stepped her masts a little more perpendicularly, and disguised her with paint like an ordinary West Indian trader. I bent old sails, stowed my guns in the hold, and showed but eight hands on deck. I entered the port unsuspected, and anchored near the town, telling the Custom−house officer that I had touched at the island for water and fresh provisions, and showing him forged papers, on which I called myself Kelly and the brig `The Frances.' I was unsuspected, and when night came I privately landed and hastened to the cottage. I was received with joy. I found them both well, and Flora now in her sixth year, looking like an angel. She could talk, I found, much better with Mary than with me. Indeed with her fingers she was as fluent as speech could be to her; while she could scarcely talk at all with her tongue. I did not then understand this. With them I was perfectly happy. They oved me dearly.'

`And had no suspicion attached to Oakford, on your account?'

`No, my lord. He had never been seen with me but once; and my visits to the cottage had always been in the night and secret, after the first time. I asked Oakford if he had heard from lord Ross. He said he had not, but his pay had been regularly received. He seemed to be greatly attached to the child and also to Mary. He told me, confidently, that he was convinced and had been from the first, that the child was of very high birth. This I assented to as my own belief; but we could neither of us enlighten the other upon the subject. At this time I tried to earn from him why he had left England and why he kept so quiet there; for he told me he knew scarcely any one, and that his house was seldom visited by the islanders, save those of the humblest degree, who like him, were tillers of the soil. But I could never draw anything from him relating to himself, further than that he was under the greatest obligatiens to the Marquis of Ross, and could refuse nothing to his request or demand.

`After leaving some Mexican presents with my two friends, and satisfying myself that they were happy I was about to go, when it occurred to me that I had some books of colored prints on board which might please Flora; so I told Oakford if he would go with me, it being only a little past nine, to the shore, I would send them to him after I went on board; for I intended to sail before day for fear of accidents. To my surprise he told me that she was forbidden books.

`Forbidden to have books!' I repeated.

`Yes; I should have told you, but forgot it, that two years ago I received a brief note from Lord Ross, though it bore no signature, in which I was forbidden to teach the child its letters, or learn it to read or place books within its reach!'

`And have you obeyed the order?' I asked.

`Yes. I am in their power in England and can do no otherwise!' was his answer in a tone of bitterness.

`And Flora is ignorant of her letters even?' said I.

`Yes, totally so!'

`They would have forbidden her to learn to speak, if it could have been possible, ' I cried indignantly.

`The note stated,' said Oakford, `that all the teaching or instruction whatsoever the child got should be from the nurse; for the woman is not the child's mother. The marquis also desired us to speak as seldom to the child as was possible.'

`This, then, accounts for her embarrassed speech with me. I wonder at it no longer. This is barbarous,' I cried indignantly. `I hope,' I added, `I hope you will disobey this order, Mr. Oakford.'

`I dare not; but do not call me Oakford again!' he added, earnestly.

`Well, perhaps you dare not,' said I. `It is a strange affair all round.'

`It is indeed,' he answered. `I have no alternative but to obey. I live upon the bounty of the man who sent them to my charge.'

`We then parted; but I resolved that I would circumvent this nobleman in his inhuman scheme, to prevent the development of this beautiful child's faculties. As I sat in the stern of my boat I tried to imagine what object could be attained by Ross in placing this innocent little girl first in the charge of a mute, then exiling both among strangers, then forbidding knowledge and speech to the child, as if he would make it dumb also, and ignorant as a brute animal. But I could arrive at no clue in my own mind; but as I ascended the deck of my vessel and gave orders to get underweigh, I resolved that it should not be long before Flora should not only see pictures but read books.'

CHAPTER VII. THE LANDING AT OAKFORD'S COTTAGE.

The smuggler having changed his position, so as to render the weight of his chains easier to bear, and drank a glass of wine which the Earl handed him from the side−board, thus resumed his narrative:

`I had got about ten leagues from the island, when I hove my vessel too, and began to deliberate what steps I should take with reference to the lovely child, which had taken such a hold upon my heart, and also, its mute nurse, Mary. For hours I walked the deck, and formed first one scheme, and then another, but rejected each. To take possession of them both in the night by the aid of my men, I felt would be easy enough; but when I got them on board my vessel, what was to be done with them? This was the difficulty. To keep them constantly with me at sea, in all my cruises, I saw would not do; it would be inconvenient, and expose them to all the dangers, to which I myself was exposed. I loved them both too well, not to render their situation, should I take them into my hands, as pleasant as possible. I thought seriously of proposing marriage to Mary, after I got them on board; and I meant to do it by showing her the picture of the marriage ceremony in an old prayer−book I always carried, in case of accidents. As my wife, I intended to settle with her in the United States, and there bring up the little Flora as onr daughter. But the idea of binding myself to a wife, was rather startling to a man who had so long had his freedom; and then I felt afraid I should not make Mary happy.'

`Such a reflection was very honorable to your feelings, Captain,' said Lord Percival.

`I do not think any man is entitled to credit for doing what is right, my lord. I cogitated a long time what I should do. At length in my perplexity, I called to my councils my young friend, Nickerson, who alwas lived in the cabin with me, and who was at all times in my confidence. I had frequent evidences of his intelligence, judgment and readiness of wit. He was now no longer a boy, but a young man in his twentieth year, and my second officer. He had seen that something was on my mind, and more than once asked me as we lay too, and I was pacing up and down the deck, what was the matter. At length I called him into the cabin, and told him all about my perplexity.

`After a few minutes reflection he said,

`I think, Captain, that I can relieve you of the dilemma, and make all fair and above board.'

`If you can do so, Harry,' said I, `I will give you fifty guineas; for what to do with our dear friends I know not.'

`You know,' said he, `that when I last went ashore in England, that I found my father and mother had emigrated to America. Well, I found out last year by an American sailor I met in Kingston where they were, for he had come

from the same place and knew them well. It was near Boston, at a place called Dorchester. My father was gardenering for a gentleman of wealth, whose estate lay near the waters of the harbour, or Bay of Boston. Now if we can get Flora and mute Mary on board, all we shall have to do will be to set sail for Yankee−land, and place them under charge of my father, who for a small recompense, will take the best of care of them. My father is a kind old man, and my mother the best of women; and the wonder is, how they ever came to have such a reprobate son as Harry Nickerson!'

`Your proposition is the very thing!' I exclaimed, giving my hand to Harry. `It is just what I wanted. The thing is done. Towards night, we will stand in again for the island, lay off and go ashore for them!'

`And this now is what I wish to hear about,' said the Earl, with additional interest. I have had such information as to cause me to believe that the child lived, but where, or in what part of the world she was, could not be told!'

`Your Lordship will not longer remain ignorant,' responded Bonfield; `for I see that you are Flora's friend!'

`Of that you will be convinced by and by,' answered the Earl earnestly.

`I came within sight of the island again about four o'clock, and the wind being favorable, I stood in with both sheets hauled aft, and as the sun went down I was within five miles of the fort. I continued to stand on, shortening sail every little while, until I came too under the fore−top−sail, only within about a mile of the shore. It was a dark night, and at this distance, with the little canvass I displayed, I knew I should not be discovered from the fortress. I then manned my boat, took a sufficient number of pistols, and cutlasses to arm my men, for I determined not to be prevented in accomplishing my purpose by any alarm that Oakford might give, and pulled ashore with muffled oars. I landed at the foot of the path, and landing my men in strict silence proceeded with seven of them well armed and accompanied by Harry, towards the cottage.

`As we had to wind around one of the bastions of the fort, upon the battlements of which was a sentinel, within half musket shot distance, the least noise would have betrayed us. But we passed the bastion without being discovered and soon gained the elevated plateau where the cottage stood. A light, as at the time when I first saw it, sparkled through the foliage of lotus and accacia trees in the little yard. I approached it within a few feet of the gate in the paling, and stationed my men, two of whom carried between them a large arm−chair with straps crossed over their shoulders to support it. I then advanced to the door with Harry, and knocking waited for it to be opened; for I meant to do what I had set myself to do, quietly if possible, forcibly if I must!

`What! Captain Bonfield again back!' cried the sister of Robert Oakford, appearing at the door.

`Yes,' I answered; `where is your brother?'

`He is in the town, but will soon return. He will be surprised to see you!' and she spoke as if she was quite as unwilling to see me as she was surprised; for since my affair of cutting out the French brig, both she and her brother had regarded me with less favor than before. But I know they dared not inform against me, as this would necessarily lead to an inquiry into matters which doubtless they would prefer should remain quiet. So they suffered my visits; but there was an absence of cordiality in their reception of me, and they always seemed to be pleased to have me take my departure.

`When will your brother return?' I asked.

`I expect him by eight o'clock,' she answered, looking with misgiving at the cutlass I held in my hand, and which I had used as a walking−stick to climb the path; and I saw also that she looked timidly at the pistols stuck in Harry's belt.

`It is now half−past seven,' said I; `I cannot well wait to see him. Where are Flora and Mary?'

`But I had no need to inquire, my lord. Before the words were out of my mouth they were both in my arms. Flora in the room had heard my voice and made Mary acquainted with my presence, and both fled to meet me.

`Flora,' I said, `run and get your bonnet and shawl and your aunt Mary's, and tell her that I have come to take you both away with me!'

`At this the child clapped her hands with joy, and instantly began with rapid fingers to make known to her nurse what I had said. Mary bent forward towards her as if listening with her eyes. A happy expression at once animated her countenance, and taking my hand she smiled and pressed it warmly. The next instant she and Flora left me to get ready. All this while the sister of Robert Oakford stood bewildered. She seemed as if unable to realize what was passing before her eyes, for she had heard what I had said to Flora.

`Do you really intend to take them away?' she demanded between surprise and doubt.

`Yes; I shall at once place them on board my vessel,' I replied.

`And by what authority?' she demanded.

`What means this?' cried Robert Oakford, coming into the house; `I could hardly get into my own dwelling for an armed party outside! You here, Captain Bonfield? So your men there said, but I could hardly credit it!'

As he spoke he came close to me and looking at me and my weapons said to his sister.

`What was this I heard about having authority? What has Captain Bonfield come for?'

`To take away Flora and Mary,' I answered firmly. `They are now gone to get ready. You will oblige me by aiding them all you can to hurry their preperations, ' I added to his sister.

`Take them away! Has Lord Ross sent for them?' he asked.

`I shall make no explanations,' I answered. `They both are to go with me on board at once. Your power over them terminates now. Make no resistance nor attempt to prevent it. I have an armed party without, as you saw!'

`Will you tell me if you have instructions from the Earl of Ross to do this?' he asked, hardly able to command his surprise.

`I have not I should not ask him!' was my reply. `He has cast them upon the world friendless. No one truly loves them but me. You take care of them because you fear, from some reason or other, the Earl of Ross; and because you are well paid for it. I am sorry to interrupt you in the receipt of your income from this source; but Flora shall not on this account be brought up in ignorance and by a refinement of cruelty, almost as speechless as if she were a born mute. This iniquity shall not be perpetrated. You will, therefore, at once permit me to take them and be their protector. '

`Good God!' cried Oakford with looks of alarm and grief, as he turned to his sister, `what shall we answer to Lord Ross?'

`Oh, Captain Bonfield!' she cried with singular earnestness, `spare my brother! You know not what evil will become his if you take them away! It will be our ruin you know not how my brother is in his power!'

`I indeed am ignorant,' I answered, `of the singular connection that seems to exist between his lordship and your brother; but if he apprehends evil to himself from the step I am taking I will fully acquit him to his lordship. I will write a letter to Lord Ross, and also give you a receipt for the young woman and little Flora.'

`I am in no situation to resist this aggression on your part,' answered Oakford. `Draw up the papers in a shape that will clear me, that his lordship will see that I have been compelled to give them up.'

`This I will do,' I answered; and seating myself at the table in the next room I wrote as follows, for I remember it nearly word for word:

`My lord,

`This night I have landed with an armed party and invested the cottage of Robert Oakford, where the two passengers you entrusted to me six years ago are placed under his protection. I have, by force of arms, taken the two out of his possession, and am about to convey them on board my vessel and sail with them from the island. Believe me that your agents, Robert Oakford and sister, have done all that they were able to prevent me from taking them away; but as I was determined at all risks to get them both into my possession, they have had no other alternative but submission.

`My object in taking this step, my lord, is influenced by a holy indignation against that barbarous policy adopted by you which would, by giving the child a deaf and dumb muse, and forbidding your agents to speak with it, have made it grow up both a heathen and little better than a natural mute. What your lordship's object is in pursuing this extraordinary course towards a helpless child, I am not sufficiently skilled in wickedness in high places to conceive; but be assured that your infernal policy has met in me an adversary who intends signally to defeat it. I love the child! It endeared itself to me in its infancy, and I have not ceased to watch over both it and the interesting young woman to whose care it has been committed. Your lordship will never hear of the child again. I shall sail to the United States, and there in some retirement where your power nor your spies can reach it, I shall watch her growth from childhood to girlhood, and leave nothing undone to render her life, began so inauspiciously, happy and cloudless.

`I am your lordship's `Obedient servant,

VANCE.'

`This was an extraordinary letter, Captain Bonfield,' said lord Percival, with an expression of wonder upon his face at the boldness of the smuggler. `You are as daring with your pen as with your sword, I see.'

`I fear no man, my lord. In a bath there is no difference between a king and a beggar. The common people of England that now bow their necks to the yoke of the aristocracy, will, ere another generation, learn this lesson. But, I beg your lordship's pardon. When I had read what I had written, to Oakford, I folded and sealed it with the hilt of my cutlass. He was satisfied with it; and set quietly down letting me do as I chose.

`So I got the trunks belonging to my protoges, helped to pack them, locked them and gave them to my men, and then wrapping both Flora and Mary in cloaks, for it was a sharp night, I sat the latter in the arm chair between the two sailors, and folded Flora in my arms covering her with my over−coat. Oakford and his sister took a tearful leave of them, for it was impossible they should not have been attached to them, for they were angels and would have won any body's hearts, except such as Lord Ross carried in his guilty breast.'

`His Lordship amply deserves the severe reflections you cast upon him, Captain Bonfield.'

`I am glad to hear you say so, Lord Percival,' answered the smuggler, in a hearty tone. `It shows me more and more that you are a friend to Flora; and so I take pleasure in telling you all that occurred.'

`And I hope that you will be able to tell me that she is alive, and can be found.'

`I will tell your Lordship all I know. After we left the cottage, we proceeded to the boat as rapidly as we could move, and had just placed the chair with Mary in it, in the stern, when we were hailed by a sentry. I instantly told my men to leap into the boat, and take to their oars. I sprung to the after part of it, and placed my person between Mary and the little girl and the fort, so that if the soldier fired, they should not be hit.'

`Captain Bonfield, I can almost forget that you have been a smuggler,' cried the Earl. `Every moment my admiration of you, as a man, is increased!'

`We had hardly pushed off, and the men taken the first stroke with their oars, when the sentinel hailed a second time, and then fired. It was well I had taken the position I had, for a ball struck me in the upper part of the shoulder, and glancing upward, passed through the corner of Mary's straw hat, as she sat before me, holding Flora on her lap. If I had not stopped the bullet, it would have struck her in the breast and killed her. The wound I got was pretty severe, for I was not able to use my arm for three months. We got safely on board through a pretty smart fire which was opened upon us from a six pounder; but the night was so dark, we did not offer them a very good target. But the flash of their guns showed them my vessel, and I had hardly struck her deck with my foot, when the fortress opened a broad−side upon us. But we were under sail in a moment, and in ten minutes were beyond reach of her guns, though with the loss of one man killed and three wounded, and a wound in our foremast by a spent ball. But under the circumstances I got off pretty well, my lord.'

`Yes, it was a very narrow escape for you. Did you sail at once for the United States?'

`Yes, and in five days I was in Boston harbour, one of the handsomest harbours in the world, with its beautiful green islands, its surrounding country, and noble city in the distance, crowning the whole. It was my second visit there, and I was not, therefore, wholly a stranger. I showed my papers to the customhouse officer, who pronounced them all regular; and so I had nothing to do but to look out for a home for Mary and Flora!'

`If I loved the child, my Lord, when it was an infant but a year old, I loved it now that it had grown to a sweet little angel of a child in her seventh year. She endeared herself to me so on this last passage, that if I had had a thousand lives, I would have given them all for her; if I had had the riches of Mexico, I would have laid them all by for her. She was so beautiful to look upon and so good and sweet−tempered. Her eyes, which were large and as blue as the sea off soundings, seemed to dance always with joy, or sparkle with mirth, or glisten with emotion. Her smile fairly warmed my heart. It was better than sunshine; indeed it might have been never so cloudy and stormy on deck, so long as I could look at her beautiful countenance, it was as if the sun shone down through the sky−light. Her laugh too, my lord! It was better than the singing of any tropical birds I ever listened to! I would rather have heard Flora laugh than a hundred canaries and mocking birds in full chorus of a spring morning. She would make more music than all of them put together! You can't conceive, my lord, how that was loved by me! And Mary too! If possible I loved her quite as well as I did Flora. I never saw two persons so much alike as they were. By means of Flora I could talk with Mary, almost perfectly. The little child could translate every word I uttered. Well, my lord, I reached Boston harbour, and anchored in the stream. Harry now took it upon himself to find out his father. He went ashore in the morning and about noon came aboard, and told me that he had been successful. He had seen both his father and mother, who had received him as if he had risen from the dead. He told me that they were very comfortably situated, his father being part farmer, and sole gardener to a gentleman, who had let him have a neat cottage on one corner of his estate, not a hundred yards from the water side.

`To them, after the joy of the first meeting was over, Harry made known his business, telling that his Captain had a young deaf and dumb friend and child, for whom he wished to procure an asylum, until he had done following

the sea. He told them that if they would take them, they would be made independent. They consented, and said that they had a spare room, which would just answer for the two guests.'

`When Harry had related all to me concerning his visit, I resolved without delay to go ashore with my proteges. It was about half an hour before sunset when, with both on board and Harry as a guide, I pulled into the shore directly opposite the cottage of the old gardener. I could see it from the boat, and I was pleased with its situation in the midst of a garden, and overshadowed by trees, which now, however, were rapidly losing their leaves. It was just such a place as would tempt me, whensoever I left the sea, to cast anchor there for life. Well, my lord, I found the old people precisely the sort of persons Harry had represented. They were kind, and hospitable, and simple. They hardly knew how to show themselves sufficiently grateful to me, for restoring them, as they were pleased to say it, their son again. Many and Flora soon understood the new relation they were to hold to these worthy persons, and seemed greatly pleased with them and every thing they saw about them. They would have been perfectly happy if I was to remain with them. This I should be glad enough to do; but after three days stay I got anxious to be off and at sea again; for though I loved to be with my *proteges*, I also was happy away from them, knowing they were safe and agreeably situated. So, after the fourth day, my lord, I took a tender leave of them, left with old Mr. Nickerson one hundred and fifty pounds, and, with Harry, pulled out to my vessel which I had hauled in nearly abreast of the cottage. I soon made sail and steered out to sea.

From that time, my lord, I have seen my protege every year until the present one, and I assure you she has grown up to be the most beautiful young lady that your eyes, or those of any man, ever looked upon. And she is well educated too. I spared no expense for this. I was on my way to visit her from the Mediterranean, where I had been helping the Greeks against the Turks, when it occurred to me before I crossed the Atlantic I would pay my old smuggling haunts a visit. It was on this unlucky visit my vessel was taken by surprise by two revenue cutters, while I was arrested on shore; for I had been recognized by an old enemy, information given, and I had thus fell into the hands of the government. I was taken as a smuggler only, my lord, but when I was brought up here to London in my vessel they had me put in chains as a pirate; bringing up against me the old affair of the French brig I had cut out of Bermuda, and also charging me with a score of piracies which other men had committed, not I; for I plainly declare to you, my lord, I have never committed an act of piracy since I sailed the blue sea. The worst that can be said of me is that I have been a smuggler.

CHAPTER VIII. THE GENEROUS NOBLEMAN AND HIS BOATMAN.

As Bonfield ended his narration, which we have embodied into, and made a part of our Romance of the Sea and Shore, he stood before the nobleman with his manacled arms folded upon his chest and his bearing at once bold and respectful.

The Earl had listened to his narration with the deepest attention, and with the strongest interest manifested in the changing expression of his countenance. There was a silence of a few minutes, which was broken only by the low gurgle of the waters under the rudder of the vessel. At length the Earl spoke:

`I have listened to your recital, Captaid Bonfield, with no little attention. It has deeply interested me and also led me to think better of you. It also bears upon its face throughout the air of truth. It corroborates what I had, in part, already heard, and which led me to seek the interview with you. I am sorry you are a prisoner, and that you should have been captured under the circumstances you have just stated. But it will, doubtless, result to your advantage, and that of the young person in whom you have taken so deep an interest.'

`In that case, my lord,' answered Captain Bonfield, `I am glad I have been taken; and if it will benefit Flora I would be willing to wear heavier chains than these. I know well, my lord, that that child came of no ordinary parentage. This is clear from the fact that the First Lord of the Admiralty interested himself to have me employed in the affair of spiriting her away from the island, and in that so great a nobleman as the Marquis of Ross should

have come on board in person, and delivered the infant into my hands. It is also evident from the large sum, four thousand pounds, paid me for my services, and the annual amount drawn by Oakford for their maintenance. Who the parents of the child are, I have no positive opinion; but I believe that it is an illegitimate daughter of the Earl of Ross himself, for I could scarcely go higher unless I went to one of the royal Dukes themselves. She bears, my lord, the impress of high birth upon her features. She looks every inch a lady; a princess, for that matter. I wish the lord Ross could see her now. England would be proud of her.

`I hope England will see her yet, my worthy Captain,' said the Earl with warmth. `I have no doubt, too, that the lord of Ross may yet behold her, also. Now, Captain Bonfield, it remains to learn whether she is alive and can be found.'

`She was alive four months ago, my lord, and well, for at Smyrna I had letters from her step−father, the old man, Harry's father. She wrote to me every three months regularly. But, my lord, you have not informed me why you came to see me to−night. I should like to know the cause which induced you to come, and how it is you heard anything about this matter.'

`I will let you know all this fully tomorrow, Captain; for it is my intention to have you a guest at my mansion to breakfast with me. There I wish you to see me or two others who are interested in the affair, and there you will receive such instructions as may be prepared for you in reference to the young person whom you have been so faithful to. It is already very late; and as the storm seems to have lulled I will leave you, first giving orders to the lieutenant in command to remove your irons. I will send a boat for you early in the morning.'

`I shall be happy to wait upon your lordship,' answered Bonfield.

The Earl then opened the companion−door and spoke to the officer in charge; and as he did so, Bonfield saw through the opening that the cloud had broken away and stars were glittering in the deep blue vault across which fleecy clouds were swiftly driven by the wind.

`Lieutenant Duff,' said the Earl to the bluff British sailor, `I beg your pardon for so long holding possession of your quarters here; but I had particular business with your prisoner. You will, if you please, remove his irons, and give him full liberty of the deck. Early in the morning I shall send on board for him to come on shore when you will also ac company him. You will find a carriage at the water−stairs, which you will get into with the prisoner, and you will be driven to my hotel.'

`You shall be obeyed, my lord,' answered the officer, touching his storm−cap, and partly raising it from his forehead with respect

`Good night, Captain Bonfield,' said the Earl, in a familiar manner.

`Good night, my lord,' responded the smuggler, as the Earl left the cabin wrapped in his cloak, and went upon deck.

Here he found Martin the boatman, who had been passing the two hours his lord Percival had spent in the cabin in listening, under the lee of the long boat, to the long yarns of two old tars who were recounting their exploits and escapes, and strange adventures in out−landish seas and countries. To these interesting narratives of the experienced old seamen the simple boatman of the Thames listened with such deep interest that he was quite unaware how rapidly the time was flying. The roar of the storm about their sheltered nook only made the stories more worth the hearing, and by no means lessened the animation of those telling them. At the first call of the officer of the deck for the `Wherryman, ahoy! Bear ahand with your oars for shore,' he sprung to his feet and hastened to the side.

`Well, my brave fellow,' said the earl, `I have kept you full long, but you shall not go unrewarded. I am now ready.'

`And so am I, sir,' answered Martin, jumping into his boat, which he had already drawn up from the stern along side, and into which he now sprung. The nobleman stepped in and took his seat, waving his hand to the lieutenant in adieu. Martin bent his body to his light oars and the little skiff shot rapidly away from the dark looking vessel towards the shores of the silent town.

`We have a better time, boatman, returning, ' said the earl, as the boat danced rapidly along.

`Yes, sir,' answered Martin, who was not sure that his passenger was a nobleman, though he suspected it, and therefore did not address him as `my lord'; `the river is almost quiet again, and the storm has blown down towards the channel. The stars shine out between the broken sky−drift as if they were glad to look down upon their faces, shining in the rivers and seas again. There is more wind in the clouds than on the land now, sir. This is a sign of a long spell of fair weather. But we did have a perilous time going on board, sir. I should have turned back more than once, but when I saw you so fearless, I was ashamed, a boatman as I was, to be out−done by a gentleman on my own element. I have a pride, sir, in my profession. '

`That is praiseworthy. Every man should feel a proper ambition in his pursuit, however humble it is. It is the sign of a well−regulated mind, and stability of character. How much do you earn in a week, by your oars?' inquired the earl, who was inclined to beguile the passage by conversing with the brave young boatman, who, as he pulled at his oars with steady stroke and his face towards him, was able to talk and hear both.

`About twenty shillings when the season is good, sir. But some weeks I do well to take thirteen shillings. Do you know, sir, that your coming off to−night has been of the greatest service to me; for I feel so grateful that I can't help telling you, sir. But what I get for this service is to make me and all my family happy. I was sad enough just before you came to my door.'

`Indeed! So small a trifle. I am glad, then, for your sake, I had business on the schooner. But how is it you, with a good boat, health, and a strong pair of arms and industrious, are in such case as to need a guinea so much that your happiness is secured by its possession?'

`I will tell you, sir. My wife's father, who was a stocking weaver, and an honest thrifty old man, in his old days got involved by going surety for a friend for fifty pounds. This friend died before he could pay it, and the creditor sold for thirty pounds all his goods, and cast him into prison till he should pay the other twenty. In prison he took the fever and would have died there, if I had not seen the creditor and bound myself to him to pay the money within sixty days. On this bond, which I secured by a mortgage to him of all I had to the Sunday clothes of my wife and myself, he set my father−in−law at liberty, and we took him home to our humble dwelling and made him as comfortable as we could, and he soon began to recover.'

`Did your chattels amount to more than the debt?' asked the earl.

`No, sir. They fell, as he rated them, at three pounds five shillings under; but he well knew I was an honest man and would pay every penny, so he let me give my bond for the rest. But a few days afterwards, he came and said he must have further security, and so I gave him in writing authority to take possession of my wherry and oars at the end of the sixty days, if the whole twenty pounds were not paid punctually down. Twenty pounds, sir, though a trifle to you, perhaps, was a large sum for a boatman to get altogether in two months, and have all the time to pay his own rent and support his wife and her invalid father. But I undertook it cheerfully; yet somehow the season seems to have been the worst I have had for a long time. Still, by eating but one meal a day, and that light, by stinting ourselves in coal and other ways, and Martha being diligent with her needle besides, we had made up the sum to within eleven shillings to−night, when you came; and how the rest was to be got, I could not see,

though Martha bade me trust in Providence, for, sir, she is one of those who acts precisely as if she was God's child, and believed he would provide for her a great deal sooner and better than an earthly father.'

`When are the sixty days up?'

`To−morrow, or rather to−day, sir, for I just hear the old St. Giles striking the first hour after midnight. Well, sir, as I was desponding, for I had been to Mr. Harrell and asked him if we could not get the whole of the money if he would take a part, but he had said nothing would be received but the utmost penny; and if it was not paid our poor father should be sent back to prison. I begged him to take me instead; but he, seeing it would favor me, refused, demanding either the money or my father's body at the time appointed.'

`What did you say was the name of this creditor?' asked the Earl, as the skiff passed close under the stern of a large ship.

`Harrell, sir.'

`Is he a brewer?'

`He was, sir, but now is a landlord. He lives opposite here, nearly, and I have often ferried him over, till he put the old man in prison, since when he always takes some other wherryman.'

`I know the man. What time to−morrow are you to pay him?'

`At six o'clock, sir. And I am thankful as I said to you, sir, that I can by this night's work, have more than enough. I shall always trust in Providence after this, as Martha says.'

The boat now came near the stairs, and Martin, trailing his oars which were secured in the rowlocks by iron pivots, sprung forward to fend off and fasten the skiff. He then with his boat−hook brought the stern round, and offering his arm assisted his passenger to alight upon the steps.

The Earl looked round for his valet, and discovering the faint glimmer of a light under a coal shed, he pointed it out to Martin, who opened the door and saw the lacquey fast asleep, with the lantern hugged in his arms.

`Come, Paul Layton,' cried Martin, giving him a shake, at which the sleeper sprung to his feet. `Here is your master. A fine watchman you are to show us the pier−stairs with you lantern. But we fortunately did'nt need it, as the stars are out bright enough.'

`I beg pardon, my lord.'

`No matter. Go before with the lantern, ' said the Earl. `Proceed directly to the house of the boatman, as I shall stop there an instant. Have you pen and ink, good Martin?'

`I have, your Lordship,' answered Martin, who now saw from Paul's words, who had been his passenger.

`I wish to write a line. Hasten and get it for me.'

Paul ran forward, and finding his door fast, called, `Martha, Martha. Open quickly. I am returned in safety.'

`Thank God,' answered his young wife, throwing herself fairly into his arms, and kissing him on both cheeks with joy at seeing him. `I trembled, but I knew you would come back.'

`Here is his lordship close by. He wants pen and paper, dear wife,' said Martin. `Don't let him wait.'

`Not a moment,' she answered hastening to a desk and opening it.

At the same moment the Earl came in, and addressing Martin, said:

`My brave fellow, here is your reward for the services you have done me tonight, ' and as he spoke he placed in his hands a bank−note.

`My Lord, you are mistaken. It is for fifty pounds. Besides, you have given me a guinea, and you promised me only two.'

`I know the value of the note I have given you, my honest fellow,' replied the Earl. `It is none too much for your merit. Take it, and make yourself and your family more comfortable.'

`My good, generous, noble benefactor,' cried Martin, with emotion. `See, Martha. Here is a gift of fifty pounds. Let us thank his Lordship on our knees.'

`No, my good fellow, no. If you speak more about it, you will offend me. Take and use it. I know you will use it well. Have you the ink and pen, good mistress?'

`It is here, your Lordship,' answered the happy, bewildered Martha, placing a chair at a small table, on which she had neatly spread pen, ink and paper.

The Earl sat down and wrote for a few moments, during which time Martin and his wife were whispering, smiling together behind him, and looking the very picture of happiness and gratitude.

In the door of the inner room was visible, the venerable form of the father, gazing with surprise upon the scene; and upon the hearth was Paul, in his stout weather−coat, and with the lantern in his hand, looking as if he participated in the happiness of the waterman and his wife. Martha seeing her father, ran softly to him, so as not to interrupt the generous nobleman, and displayed to him the guinea and fifty pound note. The old man looked at them with surprise, rubbing his eyes, as if to make sure that he saw rightly. And when she whispered as she embraced him `They are ours, dear father; you are free and we are all to be happy together,' he clasped his hands and raised his eyes in thankful adoration to Heaven.

`There, honest Martin. When six o'clock to−morrow comes, remain you at home here, quietly. This creditor, finding you are not at his house, will not be long in coming here, hoping, no doubt, to have the satisfaction of again throwing your father into prison; for he would rather do this than have the money. I know Mr. Harrell well. He would never have consented to his release, if he had not hoped to have you in his power also. He is a hard man, and delights in the exercise of a cruel disposition. He would rather extract a scene of tears from a poor man's eyes, than so many pearls from his purse. The man hoped by temporarily surrendering one victim, to get three. Keep this paper. To−morrow when he comes, just simply present it to him. It will be all sufficient. You will see its effects.'

Thus speaking, Lord Percival, who had so truthfully given proof of his claim to be called a nobleman, placed the paper in Martin's hand, and then nodding to his servant to precede him, bade them all a kind good night and left the house. Martin followed him with his eyes till he saw the lantern disappear at the corner of a street, when closing his door he turned towards Martha and said fervently,

`God bless that good nobleman, Martha! '

`Amen to that as often as you will say it, dear Martin;" answered his wife warmly. `I can scarcely realize it! Fifty pounds!'

`And a guinea,' added Martin.

`What have you done to earn it? But you never could have earned it.'

`No; it was a free gift, Martha. Somehow I got to telling his lordship about my business, and then I told him what happiness he had brought to us by his coming to call for the boat and paying so largely; and so when he put questions to me I told him all about your father's imprisonment, and what we have to pay to−morrow. So he has presented us, in the benevolence of his noble heart, with this large sum.'

`It was God put it into his heart, Martin, and don't let us forget to thank him for this wonderful providence and care over us.'

`That I will not. But will it be any harm to read what his lordship has written? '

`No; it isn't sealed, Martin,' said his wife. `Look, it isn't even folded. He meant we should read it.'

`Then I will read it,' he answered, approaching the light, while Martha leaned over his shoulder, and their father, resting on his staff, bent his white head forward to listen, with his best ear turned towards Martin. The boatman then read aloud as follows:

`To Mr. Thomas Harrell, −

Sir, The bearer of this has informed me, in an accidental manner, of his obligations to you, and the circumstances under which they were entered into. I need not say I am surprised at hearing the facts. They are characteristic of yourself. You will, upon reading this, give him a receipt in full for all and whatsoever claim upon him or the father you may hold; the incarceration and long illness consequent thereupon having in equity fully cancelled your debt.

I am, &c. &c.

Percival.'

`Was there ever!' exclaimed Martha, raising both hands in amazement and gratitude. `How wonderfully things do turn out!'

`It is very extraordinary,' cried Martin.

`That man is in Lord Percival's power,' said the old man. `Perhaps his lordship has given him business, which it would ruin him if he should take it from him.'

`No matter, father no matter how it be,' said Martin with a thick voice and a full heart; `we are blessed, and I see the finger of Providence in it.'

`I am glad to hear you confess a Providence at last, Martin,' said his young wife.

`I should be a heathen not to do it! But this blessing comes of your faith, and I share in it when I should have been punished for my unbelief. But I will never despair again!'

`It makes me as happy as the fifty pounds and the guinea to hear you say that, Martin,' said Martha joyfully. `Now let us not retire this night without giving thanks to the source of every good gift.'

It was a grateful sacrifice that ascended from around that humble hearth−stone. It was an offering of gratitude and praise from hearts overflowing with peace and joy. The trembling words of the venerable father as he lifted up his voice in thanksgiving, and acknowledged the dependence of all creatures upon his Divine Bounty, were living with faith and piety. The instrument which God had made use of the noble lord to bless them, was not forgotten. Blessings without number were invoked upon his head.

The next day how cheerfully Martin went to his labors upon the water. His wherry seemed to partake of the bounding joy of his heart, and literally to fly over the surface of the river. Every fellow craftsman was distanced that day; and louder and more cheerry than any other's was Martin's oar−song.

At six o'clock that day he was at home and sat down to his supper. He had earned but five shillings during the day, so that he saw, with tearful gratitude as he thought of Lord Percival's gift, that but for him he would have been unable to have made up the twenty pounds.

He had half got through supper, each one listening with beating hearts beating with joy not with fear for the least sound! Suddenly the door was thrown open and the creditor, a small, thin man, with a sharp nose and little whity blue eyes, a cruel and avaricious visage, entered. He was closely followed by an officer.

`Well, Master Martin, no money, hey! Come then old man!' and he proceeded to lay his hand upon the shoulder of his late victim.

CHAPTER IX. THE MARQUIS AND HIS CONFESSION.

Martin at once placed himself between the brewer and his father−in−law, and said with a firm and calm countenance,

`Do not be too much in a hurry, sir. My father intends to remain with us.'

`Then where is your money for me?' asked Harrell with a smile of surprize and anger. `But I see you have not got it, and only want to gain time. Officer, do your duty, and take that old man to prison.'

`Not so fast, not so fast, Mr Harrell,' said the boatman with a smile of contempt and conscious power. `Here is a paper that will probably change the face of things a little.'

As he spoke he placed the paper that the Earl had left with him, in the creditor's hands. Harrell took it with a sneer, doubtless regarding it as some note or renewed bond. But no sooner had he glanced at the writing and cast his eyes upon the signature, than his color fled, and an expression of mingled fear and shame took possession of his feat ures. Martin and Martha fixed their eyes upon him, and noticed his emotion wtth no little pleasure. It assured them that they had no longer any reason to fear their enemy. He read rapidly the few lines and then with a brow fearfully scowling, turned upon them.

`Where did you get this? How came you to see Lord Percival?' he demanded trembling with rage.

`He wrote it here, last night,' answered Martin. `I took him off to, and brought him back from a vessel in the river. I told him of your oppression and he wrote that at the table there in the corner, and desired me to give it to you when you came for the money.'

`Very well. It is expedient for certain reasons that I comply with his lordship's request. But you have made me your enemy beware how you fall into my power, you or the old man.'

`I shall take good care of that,' answered Martin, as Harrell accompanied by the officer, left the house muttering vengeance against those he had hoped to have in his hands.

`Now thank God for this, Martha,' exclaimed the boatman as he closed the door after their departure. `We have escaped as it were from the hands of the Philistines.'

`I fear some other poor persons will suffer for our exemption. He is sure to vent his spite upon somebody. How grateful we ought to be indeed. How truly noble is Lord Percival.'

The nobleman to whom they were in the fulness of their hearts offering tribtes of gratitude, after he quitted the humble abode of the waterman, walked rapidly along the quay preceded by Paul with a lantern. After passing the entrance of one street, they came to a narrow winding lane, which led by a serpentine course between rows of lofty dingy buildings towards one of the most elegant thoroughfares in the city.

`We will take this way, Paul,' said the Earl, `it is nigher.

Paul turned into it, and on account of the narrowness of the sidewalks, they were both compelled to take the middle of the alley. After a few hundred yards they emerged upon a broad street, dimly lighted with lamps at long intervals. the ediflces upon it were of a large and uniform choracter. They were chiefly occupied by the nobleman of the House of Lords and their families during the session of Parliament, In their immediate vicinity was the Palace.

The Earl and his servant passed along this street a few rods, until they came to a very noble mansion, above the portico of which was suspended a lamp that shed its beams upon a flight of marble steps that ascended to the main entrance. This house was immediately contiguous to the palace itself, before which could be seen passing to and fro, the indistinct form of the sentry on guard. Up the steps Paul conducted the Earl and with a pass−key opened the door for him, and stood aside to let him enter.

`I shall not need your services further to night, Paul! You can go to bed and sleep but on your way to your room you can rouse up Julian and send him into the library to me.'

Paul closed and locked the street door and bowing in obedience to his master's commands disappeared by a door at the end of the hall. His lordship then ascended the stairs which were winding spacious and ornamented with niches in which stood statues and by pictures hung upon the walls. A candle or two burning in a chandelier that hung in the elegant and lofty hall cast the light upon them with just sufficient strength to show that they were exquisite works of art. Half way to the left of the flight was a landing place where was a door ajar. This the Earl opened and through it passed into a large and superb library, furnished with all the luxuries for literary indulgence, with all those elegancies which a man of highly cultivated tastes loves to gather around him in his retirement, A silver lamp with a beaked tube, burned upon a marble table. Upon the rug before the grate, in which still glowed a cheerful fire, crouched a large brown Newfoundland dog in an attitude at once graceful and dignified.

Upon hearing the earl's step, he raised his majestic head and turning upon him a sleepy but affectionate glance, he gently wagged his tail and resumed again his former attitude with his nose resting upon his fore−paws. In a velvet arm−chair opposite the grate, sat, or rather reclined, a youth of sixteen or seventeen years of age, fast asleep; his head fallen upon one shoulder, one foot hanging over the arm of the chair and the other resting upon the shaggy back of the dog. He was a very handsome boy, with brown, flowing curls shading his cheek and neck; and lips so ruby that a maiden might have envied them. His dress was very rich and tasteful, consisting of a green spencer of

silk, embroidered with gold thread, a deep collar of the finest mecklin lace turned back over his shoulder; trowsers, or rather short clothes of lemon colored velvet, tied at the knee with green and orange tinted ribbons; his stockings were snowy white and fastened below the knee by a garter studded with emeralds; and in his shoes sparkled a pair of diamond buckles. Upon the table by his side lay a jaunty scarlet cap with a snow−white feather in it, the brim of the cap looped up in front and fastened by a diamond. Altogether he was a very gay and agreeable pattern of a page to a nobleman of the reign of which we write. Upon discovering him the earl ejaculated,

`Ah, Julian is here. He has sat up for me and gone to sleep watching. I will let him sleep it out. It is now three o'clock. I will not go to the palace until sun−rise. I need repose also. The information I have obtained to−night can be communicated in the morning.'

Leaving the nobleman to seek brief repose after the exciting scenes and events of the night, we will now go back a few hours and explain the circumstances which led him to go off to the smuggling schooner and seek his interview with the crown's prisoner, Bonfield.

About four hours previous to the time when he applied to the door of Martin the boatman in the storm, desiring him to launch his boat upon the wild waters, he was seated in the very library where we now find him returned, when a messenger came in and seemingly in great disturbance handed him a note. He tore it open and read simply as follows:

`My lord,

`I have but a few hours to live. I must see you before I die. Let nothing prevent your hastening to me without a moment's delay.

`Yours, in great suffering,

`ROSS.'

`What means this, sir?' demanded the earl of the bearer, who wore the livery of the nobleman who had written to him. `Can it be possible lord Ross is at the point of death? This is sudden. What has happened to him?'

`He ruptured a blood vessel after dinner, as he was getting in his carriage to go to the House,' answered the bearer. `The surgeons say he cannot live through the night.'

`Say to my lord that I will follow you at once,' answered the earl.

The man had no sooner departed than earl Percival called to his page, who was quietly amusing himself at a game of solitare in the window recess.

`My lord,' answered the lad, coming forward.

`Fly to the Duke of with this note which I am writing, and make no delay.' What he wrote was as follows:

`I hasten to inform your Royal Highness that lord Ross has ruptured a blood vessel and lies at the point of death. He has sent for me to see him without delay. What the nature of his communication with me may be I cannot even surmise, especially as we have not been on any terms for years. After the interview I will wait on your Royal Highness.

Percival.'

The page took the note and instantly departed with it. The earl then ordered his carriage, and in a few moments was driving towards the residence of the dying nobleman. As he went he cast over in his mind what could be the object of this urgent demand to see him. The two noblemen had been for years in opposite parties, and at one time leaders of the opposition. Lord Ross had many years ago been the chief man of the realm in political influence and power. The national will was guided and controlled by his. His voice decided the fate of millions. He was second only to the crown, yet more powerful than the throne itself. The nation bowed to his supremacy and committed itself confidingly into his hands. By his own talents he had elevated himself to this dizzy height, and by his own commanding intellect he held it in the face of opposition. His political enemies called him deceitful, a traitor, a base man. His friends, the warmest among which was the throne itself, upon which he leaned and at the same time upheld, pronounced him the conservative spirit of the realm. Such was the character and splendid elevation of the marquis of Ross.

The Earl of Percival came into power some few years subsequent to the period when lord Ross was at the summit of his. They belonged to opposite parties. The fall of lord Ross was at length mainly brought about by the influence of lord Percival. The latter rose upon the ruins of his rival, and with him rose a new ministry, while the former, with their chief, retired almost altogether from public life. There were one or two exceptions, and one of these was the marquis himself, who still endeavored to fan into flame the dying embers of the late dominant faction. But he failed; and at length wholly withdrew from political contests, simply contenting himself with his seat and opposition vote in the House of Lords.

Between him and the Earl of Percival there had been no intercourse for many years, save a formal bow of recognition when meeting in public. The Earl was therefore surprised to get from him the note which he had received, containing so urgent a request to see him. He was also grieved to learn the imminent danger he was in; for the Earl was a man who never carried his political feelings so far as to change them into personal animosities.

The carriage at length stopped in front of the mansion of the Marquis, and the Earl alighting, was received by a footman, who replied in a low voice to his inquiry, that his master was rapidly failing. The nobleman followed him into the bed−chamber of the ambitious politician, now about to pass through the last scene of man's life. The large and sumptuous apartment was darkened, and the absence of the light of day was supplied by a lamp shaded and softened by a globe of ground glass. There was a surgeon seated by the bedside, and one or two attendants standing near.

`Who is it? Is it Percival?' asked the Marquis carnestly, as the Earl entered, and speaking in a tone that showed how anxious he was for his arrival.

`Yes, my lord,' answered the surgeon, Sir Edward , rising; `but do not suffer yourself to speak with such earnestness. You must talk but little, and very low.'

`My dear sir Edward,' said the Marquis, when seeing that it was the Earl Percival, `I pray you leave me and call again in an hour. My servants will also leave the chamber.'

`I obey your lordship,' answered the surgeon; `but I beg you will not talk too much. A few minutes only at the farthest.'

`Do not dictate to me,' answered the Marquis in an impatient tone. `My lord,' he added to the Earl, as the latter slowly advanced towards the bed, `I am glad you are come. This is no time for ceremonies. Please to be seated, and let me talk with you a little while. Good by, Sir Edward. In an hour you may drop in again.'

`Do not suffer him to talk much, my lord,' said the surgeon to the Earl, as he went out. `He cannot live many hours, and excitement might put him out all at once like a candle.'

`I will try to comply with your wish, doctor,' said the Earl, `but I did not come on an idle visit, having been sent for. But I trust, as he is so low, to be detained for a few minutes.'

The Earl and the Marquis, the two once great leaders of national parties; the one fallen and near to his end, the other still in the splendor of his power.

`My lord,' said the Marquis, `sit down. This is a strange meeting for us. But the approach of death alters one's feelings wonderfully. I am obliged to you for coming to see me so promptly. I have something upon my mind which I cannot die without revealing, and in some way opening a way for atonement to the innocent and wronged. I have selected you as the most suitable person to make the confession to; for I have always done homage in my heart to your wisdom, your worth, and your integrity. Nay, my lord, for these high qualities which so adorn your administration, I have hated you. But let all this pass. The surgeon says I shall not last till morning. My last breath shall be devoted to an effort to right the wronged.'

`I fear your lordship will exert yourself too much; yet I am prepared to hear what you wish to say.'

`If I turn over and die with the last words of my confession on my lips, my lord, I shall die happy, and have lived to−night to better purpose than if without revealing it to you, I should linger for years.'

The Marquis then raised himself in his bed without an effort, and sat up; his face pale and haggard, and his dark somrer eyes, bright with the light that comes from beyond the grave, turned upon the sympathizing countenance of the Earl.

`My lord,' he said firmly, yet in a hollow tone of voice, I wish you to understand that what I am about to say is every word truth. Believe it all, for I shall not feel myself able to enter into any particular explanations. But these will suggest themselves to your mind. You were not yet prominently in political life twenty years ago, when I was at the head of affairs, but, doubtless are familiar with the history of my administration? of the iniquity of some parts of that period of power may Almighty God pardon me when I appear before him. But you shall hear all, my lord. I had been a few months in the high position which I held, and which you now so honorably fill, when I was sent for by the king to hasten to the palace. As it was near the time of the Queen's accouchment which was hourly looked for, I supposed that this event was at hand, especially, as I saw the messenger proceed to the palace of a nobleman next door, who, with myself and others, were the persons distinguished to be present on that occasion, as is customary.

I at once hastened to the palace, and met the king in the first ante−room. He was pale as death, and looked as if he was under the strongest excitement. Taking hold of me by the arm he led me without saying a word into his cabinet, and closing the door, said,

`My lord, an event has occurred that will involve England in trouble after I am no more. The Queen has been suddenly taken in labour, and not half an hour ago gave birth to twins! She is doing well and I have despatched messengers to the court physicians, &c. But before they arrive it is expedient that one of the children be secretly removed. The birth of two is known only to the nurse who was with the Queen, and to myself.'

`Which was the eldest, your Majesty?' I asked, as soon as I could recover from my surprise.

`The female. Now, my lord, let this infant be at once taken away, before it is discovered that the Queen has twin children. Let it be tenderly nurtured; but the knowledge of its birth for ever kept from it. Seek out without delay a suitable person to take it from its mother, who with the nurse, shall be made to suppose that it is dead. Will you agree to this? The peace of the realm seems to require it, my lord. For when they grow up, there will be factions about their succession, and England will again be deluged with blood on account of its kings.'

`I will obey your Majesty,' I answered; for I saw, with the King, that the existence of twins both equal claimants t the throne would, if they were both acknowledged, unquestionably lead to civil wars in another generation, precisely like the hundred other civil wars about the succession of which, England has been the theatre. I saw that the King was wise in taking this view of the matter, and at once, without hesitation assented to his suggestion. His Majesty then pressed my hand in token of his gratitude, and going into the next room in a few moments returned, bearing in his arms the female infant closely wrapped.

`Take it my lord, and without delay bear it to the house, No. Albermarle street, where lives a woman who applied yesterday to the palace to be one of the wet nurses, when the Queen should be confined. She will gladly take the child; but by no means let her know whence it comes. For the safety of the child afterwards, I shall carefully look, for though policy commands me to take this painful step, I shall never forget that I am the helpless infant's parent. It shall never suffer aught of evil, save the loss of the crown.'

`I then, my Lord Percival,' resumed the Marquis, `carefully bore the child to my carriage, and drove to the house designated, which was about five minutes ride. I fortunately found the woman at home and placed the child, with a purse of fifty guineas in her lap, saying to her,

`Protect and nourish this infant, and in a few days you will hear from me again.'

`I then hastened to the palace. By this time the rumour that the Queen had been prematurely confined, and that a prince was born, had flown throughout the palace. All was excitement and joy, and congratulations, I met the two Court physicians who arrived as I did, and also saw two of the lords whose duty it was to have been present at the accouchment. I found his Majesty in his cabinet with two or three noblemen. Upon seeing me he looked inquiringly, and upon my answering his glance in the affirmative, he smiled and appeared relieved from deep anxiety. In a short time I was enabled to see the King alone. He then informed me that he had made known to the nurse, that she must keep the birth of the female infant a secret, as it might not live, and that he had taken it away to give it to a nurse in waiting, to take charge of it. The woman promised secrecy; and `as for the Queen' continued his Majesty, `she paid no attention to what I did. The nurse will be faithful, of that be assured,' he said, impressively.

`I will not detain your Lordship,' said the dying Marquis, `with entering into details. Suffice it to say, that the secret was faithfully kept by the nurse; and as she was made to understand a few days after, that the female infant had not lived, there was nothing more to be feared from that quarter. The Queen was also led to believe the same; and the people at large only knew of the birth of a prince.'

Here the Marquis paused, and for some moments rested to recover energy sufficient to proceed. The Earl watched him with deep anxiety; for having heard so much of this singular revelation, he was deeply interested to hear all that remained to be revealed. His surprise at the confession of the Marquis thus far, cannot be adequately expressed in words.

`What became of the infant, my Lord Marquis? Did it die?' he asked with much earnestness.

`No, my Lord. After remaining with the woman to whom I had taken it about six weeks, by the King's order I removed it into the country and gave it in charge to a young married woman, whose husband used to be an under park−keeper to the crown. This female the King had personally, yet privately selected; though she was ignorant whose child she received to nurture. The woman who first took it also, was wholly unsuspicious; for, as I have said, there was no suspicion anywhere, that a princess had been born twin with the Prince. The nurse and the Queen both believed it dead, and by the King's request, were ever after silent, upon the subject. The King, who felt that he was doing the infant a wrong, though from what he considered the best of motives, peace and tranquility to the kingdom, was deeply solicitous to have the infant carefully nurtured, and told me that he believed in his heart that he should love it after all, better than he ever should the Prince. The child thrived

wonderfully. It was my part to visit it once a month at the King's desire, which I did do, disguised as a London merchant, in which character I had placed it with the park−keeper. The King would often ride out, ostensibly to hunt, and passing by the cottage, stop to look at the child, covering his parental curiosity and affection, under a request for a glass of water, or some message for the Park−keeper. But now, my lord, comes the deep guilt which I have to confess, and which must be spoken out before I can die.' This was said with a bitter moan, and with a look of deep contrition.

CHAPTER X. THE CONFESSION OF THE MARQUIS.

The Marquis remained for a few minutes silent, as if greatly exhausted with talking; but, at length, with a strong effort he gathered strength, and thus resumed his confession to Lord Percival.

`I have said, my lord, that I have to reveal to you an act of deep guilt that weighs upon my conscience and will not let me die in peace. You shall hear what it was, and I hope that yet atonement may in some degree be made, if the object of my wicked cruelty and ambition yet lives. I have already said that the king was deeply, painfully interested in the safety and comfort of the cast off princess. He seemed daily to love it more and more, and I could perceive, at length, that it was in his thoughts and heart far more than the prince. He never spoke of it without some epithet of pity and love, such as `the poor little one' `the sweet exile' `the unfortunate princess!' I could see that he was becoming exceedingly nervous upon the subject; and finally one day when I came into the cabinet I found him greatly agitated. I respectfully asked him the cause of his grief, when he answered almost sternly,

`Do you ask me such a question, my lord Marquis? Am I not miserable on account of my poor little one? I cannot sleep, my lord. The prince is almost hateful in my sight. I have no affection save for the princess. I have resolved.'

`What has your majesty resolved?' I asked apprehensively, beginning to have a suspicion of the truth.

`To acknowledge the princess before the nation and the world. I can endure this torture of conscience no longer.'

`Judge my amazement and consternation, my lord Percival,' added the marquis, `at these words. I endeavored to dissuade the king from a step so fatal to his honor, to his character, to the peace of the realm. I assured him that all men would stamp him with ignominy; that his present acknowledgement of the princess could not make the people forget or think less of the act, of which he had been deliberately guilty, of disinheriting her from her birth. But his majesty was deaf to all my entreaties, arguments and appeals. He had firmly made up his mind, and I saw that it would be impossible to move him from his purpose.

`This determination, my lord, I have now to confess,' continued the Marquis, `was the more disagreeable to me from the fact that I had already formed in my own mind a bold and ambitious project with reference to this friendless child; and the king's resolution would over−throw it, as well as involve me in the infamy which would attach to himself from the public recognition he contemplated; for I knew the world would blame me for concealing the birth of the princess, and attribute the whole proceeding to my advice and influence. On this account alone, therefore, I would resolutely have opposed the course now meditated by his majesty. But, as I have hinted, I had a profounder motive. Ambition lay at the bottom of it. I had a son, my lord Percival, who was then in his seventh year. I one day cast my eyes upon him and in contemplating his future career through life, an idea suddenly flashed upon me. I cherished it, fed it, thought upon it night and day, at length fully matured it and resolved to direct all my energies to bring about the ambitious result which it held out to me. My project was to take an opportunity of spiriting away the infant princess, conveying it to some remote place and there bringing her up in ignorance of her birth. I intended that the king should be led to believe that it died in the cottage of the park−keeper. When the princess should have reached her sixteenth birth day I intended to solemnize a marriage between her and my son, whom I should previously inform of the rank of his bride, and whom I intended to educate for a throne. The princess, on the contrary, I intended to have brought up until her tenth year in total

ignoranee even of the letters of the alphabet, and perfectly secluded from all intercourse with others. At that age I intended to remove her from those I should place her with to my own house and personally begin her education. By this time the king would not suspect she was his child even if he saw her at my house, as I intended to pass her off as an orphan whom I had adopted. My object in keeping her from books and the society of others was that when she came into my hands her mind might be a perfect blank upon which I could write what I pleased. I intended to educate her in my own way in politics, in religion and in every thing which would bear in my favor in the future destiny I had marked out for her and my son. In a word, my lord, I intended through her when the king should die to raise up a powerful rival to the Prince Royal and by means of a revolution place the crown jointly upon her head and that of my son. You look astounded, my lord!'

`And well I may. And did you carry out any portion of this scheme of ambition, my lord marquis?' asked the earl, with a countenance marked with the profoundest surprise, not unmingled with horror at the wickedness which was being developed in the dying confession of the marquis.

`You shall hear, my lord. Finding that I could not persuade the King to give up his fatal purpose, I made up my mind. I appeared to assent, and then subtlely asked his Majesty to give me a writing, under his own royal hand, that, if I brought the princess back to the palace, and the public recognition was promulgated, he would clear me of all blame in the original act of disinheritance. This he said he would do. I suggested that he should write it then, and he at once sat down and penned the instrument, which you will see here, my lord. As the King is no more, I shall do him no wrong in showing it.

Here the marquis drew from beneath his pillow a paper, which he placed in the hands of the astonished Lord Percival. The earl opened it and read as follows:

`I hereby do exonerate Edgar, Marquis of Ross, from all and every blame in the matter touching the wicked disinheritance of the Princess Virginia, who I acknowledge to be the twin sister of the prince royal, and I, with great joy, am this day to invest in all her rights and privileges as eldest born heir to the crown.'

`This instrument was signed and sealed by the late King; and when the earl had read it, he folded it up with looks of amazement and replaced it in the trembling hand of the marquis, who anxiously extended it for its return.

"That instrument,' he resumed, `the King wrote from my lips. My object in getting it from him, my lord, was not to clear myself, for I had resolved the child should never be acknowledged. It was to show to the people some fifteen years afterwards, in proof of the legitimacy of the princess in whose behalf I was to rouse the nation to arms. I had also the testimony of the nurse, which I artfully obtained the same night I left the King's presence. Upon quitting the King, I hastened to an apothecary's and purchased a harmless medicine, and, with it in my pocket−book, hastened to the house of the park−keeper. I found the infant princess in blooming health. It was then about nine months old, and a very lovely child it was. Taking advantage of the nurse's confidence in me, I took it in my arms and walked into the garden with it, the park−keeper's wife supposing me to be a London merchant, its father; as I had represented myself to her to be such, and a widower who could not take care of so young a child myself. While in the garden I placed a lozenge in the mouth of the child, and let it suck it for a few moments. I then removed it, and soon after, returning the babe to the woman, left to ride up to the palace at Windsor. At the end of three hours I returned. As I anticipated, the woman called to me in great distress, and said that the child was taken suddenly very ill an hour before, and she was alarmed for its life. I returned to London and informed the King that the child was too ill to be removed. He was greatly afflicted, and resolved to visit it himself. He went down the same night to Windsor, and thence, in disguise, hastened to the cottage. He found my report corroborated. The next day, while the King was in his bed−chamber, and was preparing to visit the princess, I brought him the report of the child's death. He took it very bitterly, and at the moment resolved he would still acknowledge it, and it should be buried with royal honors. This I firmly opposed, assuring him that no good could now come from such a step, and that only disgrace before his people would result. He at length saw the matter in this light, and bade me have the child decently buried and never speak to him of it again. I had accomplished my

object, though with not a little difficulty. I hastened to the house of the under park−keeper and found the child as I had left it an hour before, in a state of torpor like that of death. The woman was weeping over it. I told her I should take it up to London in my carriage, and have it placed in my tomb there. I rewarded her largely. I took the child away wrapped in my cloak, and drove off for the town.'

`And did the child survive?' asked the earl with painful and deep interest.

`Your lordship shall learn. I had been a few days before this to an exhibition of the Deaf and Dumb Asylum. I had been interested in the intelligence and reason they displayed, and I was particularly struck with one young woman, who, I was told, was an orphan and much beloved for her sweetness of disposition. When a man is forming a project, my lord, every advantage that belongs naturally to his purpose comes to his mind. He seizes readily and instincttvely upon ideas that hours of inventive meditation would not have suggested to him. When I decided upon abducting the child to make it, at some future day, the stepping−stone to the throne of my own family, I conceived the idea of placing it in charge of a mute nurse. This notion was suggested to me by my visit to the institution; for the mind, when active, makes use of everything that falls within the scope of its observation. I saw in such a nurse the seal of secresy. I saw also the very person who could bring up the child in ignorance, and almost without intelligence, until the time came for me to take the plastic and unworked material and mould it at my will.

`The idea had no sooner been conceived than I resolved to carry it out. When, therefore, I got the child into my hands, I drove it over to my residence in London. It revived, however, ere I reached town, as I made use of the antidote to the medicament I had given it, as soon as I got it into the carriage. When I reached my house it was living, thongh pale; for it had been suffering. I left the child in charge of my house−keeper, saying I had found it on the road and should in the morning send it to the Asylum for refuge. I then drove to the Institutien for mutes, entered into an engagement with the principal to be the future protector of the orphan young woman, who had so much interested me before.'

`Did you give her name, my Lord?' asked the Earl.

`Yes. I took the young woman away with me, but previously desiring the principal to inform her, that she was to take charge of an infant, and perhaps go upon the sea. At this the young woman seemed to be gratified, and willingly went with me. In the vicinity of London was a small farm house, the tenant of which was an old man who had once been my father's coachman. I took the young woman and child to his abode, and left them in charge of the old man and his wife.

`Still I was uneasy. I was fearful that by some reasons, the fact might get abroad, and reach the ears of the King; for as with all guilty men, I believed that I was suspected. The old man, too, seemed to be inquisitive about the young woman and child; and I have no doubt her being deaf and dumb, only prevented the secret that she was *not* her own child, as I had represented, from having been divulged. But as she was deaf and dumb, I could easily pass the child off whenever I pleased as hers! for she could never deny it!'

`This was a deep and acutely laid scheme, my Lord! But I beg you will proceed; for I have the greatest desire to know the end of this extraordinary affair! '

`I will not be long in coming to it, my lord!' answered the Marquis with a deep groan. `My fears at length became so lively, lest the King should discover what I had done, and thus defeat all my ambitious hopes, as well as disgrace me, that I came to the determination, which I had before often thought upon, of sending the child out of England. At length an opportunity was offered, and I proceeded to put my plan into execution. There was residing in the Bermudas, my Lord, a man who had been guilty of high treason, and had forfeited his life to the crown. It was Sir Robert Oakford!'

`The man who betrayed to the French the destination of the fleet under Collingwood? ' exclaimed Lord Percy.

`Yes!'

`I supposed he had died in the tower, the day before he was to have been executed! '

`So all men supposed. He was pardoned by the King at the earnest appeal of his wife and children; and his sentence was privately commuted to banishment from England to the island of Bermuda. His wife and family remained on his estate under the King's eye, and were securities for his submission to the sentence of exile, and his constant residence in the island. He was led to understand before he was secretly taken from the tower to embark, that any attempt on his part to escape, would be visited upon his wife and children, to whom we knew he was tenderly attached. He had been gone but two months, when his only sister followed him, resolved to share his exile. He was allowed from his own estate, three hundred a year for his support. His penitence and his submission being for a period of three years fairly tested, I employed him to act as a spy upon certain persons in Bermuda, and he faithfully executed the confidential missions entrusted to him. He had good cause to be true to me, for at any moment he knew he might be called to England and executed. Upon this man I fixed for the future protector of the infant princess! About the same time I had heard through Admiral Collingwood, of certain services the notorious smuggler Vance, since, better known as the outlaw Bonfield, had done the Admiralty by taking despatches over to Nelson's fleet. This information was not lost upon me. I desired Collingwood to send the man to me, as I had secret services also, in which I should like to employ such a man. I told the Admiral to send him with his vessel to the Thames, on a certain day. The smuggler was there. I boarded him by night, and after a brief interview with him, engaged him for five thousand pounds to take the woman and child to Bermuda, and leave it in charge of the Oakfords. They were conveyed on board, and the same night he set sail.'

`And did he got to Bermuda?' asked the Earl, earnestly, as the Marquis paused to recover breath, for he was growing weaker momently.

`Yes. He faithfully executed the trust imposed upon him. The child remained under Oakford's care until its sixth year, and during the interval I had often heard from it, and that it was doing well. I also ascertained that Vance regularly visited it, which I by no means liked; for I wished him to forget the child. But it seems he had taken a great fancy to it, and came to see it from pure affection. At length, apprehending that evil would come of it, by and by, to my plans, I wrote to Oakford, saying, he must secretly remove from the island and go to Jamaica, so that Vance might lose all clue to the child. But my letter had not been a week gone on its way, when I was thrown into consternation by receiving one from Oakford, informing me that the night before he wrote, the buccanier, Bonfield, had landed with a strong party, and forcibly carried off the infant and the mute nurse, leaving at the same time a note for me, which he enclosed. Judge of my surprise, my rage, my alarm! I immediately conceived the suspicion that Vance had some idea who the child was, suspected my object, and stole it away, with the intention of defeating it.'

`This same buccaneer is now captured and his vessel is in the river!' cried the Earl.

`I heard so to−day, and it was this news that so agitated me as to bring on the attack which will end my life, my lord. I was told he was captured and yesterday brought up to the city. I had not heard from the infant princess from the time she was stolen from Oakford up to this day; and when I heard of the arrest of the man who only could tell me her fate. I became greatly excited, and resolved that I would visit him as soon as night came. But night finds me here, dying!'

`What reason have you to suppose she still lives, my lord?' asked the Earl; for you said a short while since you had reason to believe she was alive!'

`From what was told me by Oakford. I sent for him to come to England and let me know personally all the facts connected with her disappearance. He then told me that I once said so long as she lives I should not hear from her; but whenever she died information should be sent to me. This is my only hope, my lord. Oh, that she were living that I might make some atonement to the innocent victim of my ambition. But for me she would now have been on the throne of the realm. I fear I shall never be forgiven this iniquity, my lord. But, what I have sent to thee for is, not to confess to thee, but to urge thee to hasten to this Bonfield and learn from him what has become of the child. I implore you, my lord, to urge him to revcal. Perhaps something yet may be done, through you, to undo the evil I have contemplated. And my son too for whom I did this wrong is dead. He was killed as you know by a fall from a horse in a hunt. All I wish to live for is to see this wronged princess restored to her rights. But I can never live to see it. I shall die ere midnight. I am sinking fast, my lord. I have spent my last strength in confessing to you. Leave no means untried, my lord, to find out and do justice to the princess.'

`Believe me, my lord, when I solemnly assure you, that I will make every human effort to bring about this desirable end. But she is probably no more.'

`Say not so, my lord,' cried the Marquis in great anguish and horror of mind. `Destroy not in my soul the hope that she lives and will yet by your agency be restored to her own. The king is dead. Through me only could the knowledge of her birth reach the nation.' Here his utterance became thick and laboured. He was death−struck. `In making it to you I have done all *I* can do! My lord, fare−well! Do not forget! My salvation hangs upon her be−being *alive!*'

The unhappy nobleman threw out his arms as if to save himself, like a person falling from a height, and then fell back ward and, struggling for a moment convulsively, died!

Lord Percival regarded him for a few seconds with pity not unmixed with horror. At length he turned away, saying,

`So die the wicked! If my prayer be not too late may God have mercy upon his soul.'

The Earl then took from his hand the paper which the king had signed, crossed the room to the door, and opening it called to the attendants, saying,

`Your lord has just expired!'

`The interview was too much for him,' said the surgeon, coming in from the opposite apartment; `I found it would hasten his exit to to talk much. But he could not have lived longer than morning. In what a tempest of wind and rain his spirit has flown. There died a man who has long held a distinguished place in the affairs of the nation, my lord.'

`Yes,' answered the Earl, as he left the chamber of death.

He at once hastened to his own palace, and notwithstanding the violence of the storm, which we have already described in the opening of this story, he resolved at once to put off to the schooner where the bucanier or, more properly, the *smuggler* was confined awaiting the order to be removed to prison. But before going he sat down and wrote two or three notes, one of which was addressed to the King.

We have seen the Earl arrive at the abode of Martin the boatman attended by his valet Paul and his departure under the guidance of Martin for the schooner, amid one of the most violent storms that ever swept over the waters of the Thames.

We have seen his arrival on board, and witnessed his long interview with Bonfield; and returned with him again to the abode of the boatman. Here we have noticed his benevolence and the exercise of his power over the wicked creditor of the young waterman. From thence we have followed him to his own abode and to the retirement of his private apartment.

We shall now proceed with our story in an unbroken chain, advancing the scenes to the following morning, when the Earl rising hastened to the palace.

CHAPTER XI. THE KING AND THE SMUGGLER.

The mansion of the Earl of Percival communicated with the palace by a private passage, by means of which the prime minister could at all times have easy access to the cabinet of the king. He passed from his own rooms through the hall, opened a door which led into a narrow entry, and thence by a flight of stairs to a long stone passage. At the extremity of this the nobleman came to a door which he opened with a key that he took from his pocket. It opened upon a flight of steps well lighted by a gothic window, and after passing along a paved corridor, he found himself in the palace and near the door of the ante−room to the king's chamber.

As he was about to enter it he was met by a large, noble−looking man, with grey hair, and an aspect of command. It was the Duke of , to whom he had written his note the night before.

`Good morning, my lord Duke,' he said, as the latter stopped to address him.

`We are well met, my dear Earl,' answered his royal highness. `What is this news that you have, that you desired me to meet you here so early? What said Ross to you that he sent for you? How is he?'

`He is dead, my lord Duke,' answered the earl. `He unfolded to me an extraordinary confession, which I feel it my duty to lay before the king, and in your royal highness's presence.'

`Then let us enter, my lord,' said the duke, opening the door and going into the ante−chamber. They had no sooner entered than the king came from the inner room and advanced with a smile towards them. He was a princely−looking monarch, tall and well−made, with an air of royalty and dominion. He was young, yet looked some years older than he really was; for his countenance was habitually grave and thoughtful.

`My royal cousin, you are welcome, and you, my noble lord,' he said to them. `You are come early to council; but I have been expecting you, my dear Earl, since I received the line from you last evening. It was certainly mysterious enough. I hope now we shall have it explained. '

`I received, your majesty, a note something similar with a message to meet his lordship in the king's cabinet at half past seven! I also feel some curiosity to learn the meaning of it.'

`I suppose, gentlemen, you have heard of the sudden death of the Marquis of Ross,' said the King in a tone of regret.

`Yes, your majesty,' answered Earl Percival. `I was present at his death. I was sent for by him to receive some communication which he said he could not die without making. And, your majesty, a most wonderful communication it was.'

`Pray do not be long in making it known to us! Some development of old wicked intrigues of state I doubt not,' said the king, as he seated himself, while he made a gesture for the two noblemen also to sit.

`Your majesty shall be made acquainted with the facts, and I have no doubt that you will be the first to propose that justice be done to the innocent.'

`The innocent shall never receive wrong in all my realm, my lord, if the king can make it right,' answered his majesty with warmth and an expression of benevolent resolution.

`Your majesty and you, my noble Duke, will listen with amazement and perhaps incredulity at what I am now about to reveal; but I assure your majesty that I have, before coming to you, substantiated the confession of lord Ross by proofs that are incontrovertible.'

The Earl then proceeded in a clear and minute manner to relate to the young monarch all that had been confessed to him by the Marquis of Ross, and the subsequent developments of Bonfield in attestation of the truth of the dying noble's account.

When he had finished, the king, who had not listened without many interrupting questions, rose up and for some moments seemed to be lost in the astounding thoughts with which this relation had overwhelmed his mind. The Duke seemed in the greatest agitation, and more than once in the course of the Earl's account of Ross's confession he had pronounced it a false fabrication of that nobleman's, to sow the seeds of dissention in the kingdom after his death. To this idea the king was also inclined. But when lord Percival began to relate his interview with Bonfield, who corroborated fully the story of the marquis, then they felt bound to believe the relation, incredible as it seemed. But they listened with strong emotion and profound amazement.

When the earl ended, there reigned for full two minutes the most painful silence. At length the marquis exclaimed,

`My lord Percival, this seems incredible. It cannot be true. It *is* not true!

`We shall soon see,' answered the king calmly and coming forward. `My lord you spoke of a paper which the marquis said he obtained from the late king, my honored father. Have you the paper?'

`It is here, your majesty,' answered the carl, placing the paper which he had taken from the hand of the dead marquis in the king's hands.

`It is my father's writing, cousin,' he said to the duke.

`It is, your majesty, like it. But rather than believe it was written by the king, I will give the devil credit for it. It is a conspiracy of this Ross to over−throw your majesty's throne!'

`If it be a conspiracy, couzin,' answered the king in the same firm and quiet way, `we must sift it and prove it so; but if it be true, we must bow to the power of truth. God forbid that I should stand on the throne of England in the place of another better entitled to it! My lord Percival, I know not how I shall thank you for this promptness in making this known to me. It is complimentary to my integrity as a man. It causes me to feel that you believed I would do justice where facts convinced me that I was doing injustice to another. I shall be rejoiced to recover such a sister! My heart already is moved with affection to her unknown.'

`But, your majesty,' said the Duke, with high color, `you do not mean seriously to investigate this singular affair? What would be the good of it to her, brought up in ignorance of her birth, or to your majesty. Indeed, it would be ruin to your reign, and bring, perhaps, great mischief upon the land. It is my advice, your majesty, that you have this pirate Bonfield executed at once, and let the memory of the facts he is witness to perish with him. The peace of the Empire demands this of your majesty. The people of England would not thank you to abdicate the throne to a stranger, and that stranger a woman. Half the nation would deny her title, deny that she was *bona fide* the very twin princess that was cast forth from the palace!'

`Not a word, cousin!' said the king severely. `I will do right, whatever be the issue. Still there is some doubt on my mind. This doubt I will remove at once by application to the Queen dowager, my honored mother. Excuse me, my noble lords, for a few moments, and I will soon return to you. I go to the queen. Her testimony will decide this affair.'

The King then left the apartment. The Duke turning to the Earl Percival bitterly censured him for divulging the matter at all to his majesty.

`You have done wrong, a grevious wrong, my lord,' he repeated for the third time.

`Right can never be pronounced wrong I have but done my duty. It was a duty I owed to the innocent victim if she be alive a duty I owed to Lord Ross, for he confessed only that I might be instrumental in lessening his guilt by restoring her to her rights; it was a duty I owed to the king! for I knew he would thank me for the revelation; and lastly it was a duty, my lord duke, that I owed to my own conscience.'

`Mischief will come of it. The king is too confoundedly honest. I hope and pray the child may not be alive, or that she can never be found! Bonfield you say last saw her in America. So! we may get home as good as a Yankee girl on the British throne! for with her American education she will be unfit for an English princess. You have done all wrong, my lord! But here comes his majesty. If the queen says no, then this paper of the king's is a forgery; for this is all the evidence we have, in my mind, that lord Ross has not invented the whole to leave a fire−brand behind him. But hither comes his majesty again. His step is firm. His face is exceedingly grave. I fear the worst.'

As the king re−entered both of the noblemen watched the expression of his face with deep interest.

`I hope your majesty has found that the whole is false,' said the Duke.

`No, my noble cousin,' answered the king. `I have spoken with the Queen. I asked her if she had given birth to twins when I was born. She answered without hesitation `yes;' yet asked me why I asked and how I heard of it. I waived the questions and inquired what became of my twin−sister. She answered that it died a few hours after it was born! Thus you see that the account of my lord Ross is fully sustained.'

`I do believe it did die, since we must now take it for granted there were twins,' cried the duke. `I am firmly of the opinion that the infant Ross gave in charge to Bonfield and sent to the Bermudas was some other child.'

`I cannot think so, my noble duke,' said the king. `There is no doubt of the birth of the princess, and as little doubt but that it was removed secretly, as lord Ross has stated. This is my firm opinion, as I see it is that of lord Percival. '

`There is deception somewhere, be assured, your majesty,' said the duke, who was greatly excited.

`If there be, I will detect it, my cousin. I am resolved to have the whole affair investigated.'

`And if your majesty discovers this person, you will no doubt vacate the throne to her, for being some five minutes elder−born!'

`You forget you stand in the king's presence, cousin Duke!' said his majesty mildly reproving him. `Captain Bonfield must be sent for, my lord Percival. I must see him in person. You say he has no suspicion who the infant, his protege, is!'

`No, your majesty. He believes her to be of high birth, but has not the most distant conception of the truth.'

`This is all the better. Will you arrange it, my lord, so that I can see this man without delay?'

`Anticipating this wish on the part of your majesty, I have invited him to breakfast with me. Before I left my house to come hither I gave instructions to have him brought hither from the schooner. He is no doubt awaiting me in my library, where I gave orders to those who went for him to have him conducted. Neither my servants, nor even Manning who went for him, suspect who my guest is!'

`You must have another guest at your table, my lord, whom Bonfield must not suspect, nor any of your household. I will breakfast with you.'

The smuggler, at eight o'clock, landed at the stairs in the boat which the earl ordered to go for him; and Manning, the earl's secretary, received him, and taking him into his carriage, drove to the earl's residence with him. Bonfield was dressed in a plain, neat suit of blue, with bright buttons, and looked like a very respectable citizen.

`If you will remain here and amuse yourself awhile with the prints and books, sir,' said Manning as he left him in the earl's library, `his lordship will soon be in.'

Bonfield bowed and the secretary retired, wondering not a little who it was that the earl had taken such pains to bring to his house so early in the morning; but as he knew he came from the captured smuggling schooner, he took it for granted he was some man who was wanted in evidence against the smuggler, whom all London looked upon as some hideous monster in form; for his reputation had filled their imaginations with the most extravagant notions of the celebrated rover.

The earl, soon after leaving the king, returned to his own chambers.

`Is the person arrived, Manning?' he asked of his secretary, whom he had encountered in the hall.

`Yes, my lord. He is in the library.'

The earl, upon entering and seeing a well−dressed, stout−looking gentleman of fifty looking carelessly over a book of prints, supposed he was some stranger, and he looked round for the smuggler. But as Bonfield raised his face and he caught his dark, deep−set eyes, he recognised him at once.

`I am glad to see you, Captain Bonfield, ' he said. `I am happy, too, to see you without your irons.'

`I thank you, my lord, for the favor you have done me in ordering them to be removed.'

`I have been thinking much upon your recital last night, Captain Bonfield, and I have communicated it to one or two gentlemen who I thought would be able to furnish a clue to the mystery you have been so many years involved in. They will be to breakfast with me; and I beg you will be quite as frank and open with them in replying to their questions as you have been with me.'

`It will give me pleasure to do so, my lord. But will your lordship tell me how you knew about the matter at all?' he asked, with eager inquiry, lighting up his eyes.

`With great pleasure.' answered the Earl. He then began to state how that the Marquis of Ross on his dying bed had sent for him, and unfolded to him the whole of the circumstances as far as he was acquainted with them. He gave the smuggler a brief but distinct accoum of the Marquis's confession and also informed him of his having expired immediately after making it,

`And did the Marquis tell your lordship who the child's parents were?' asked Bonfield quickly add earnestly.

`I can form an opinion,' answered the Earl evasively. `As you guessed, I have no doubt of her rank being very high.'

`Well my lord, it is my opinion that it is a natural child of the Marquis which he wished to get rid of in some way without being guilty of murder and he took the method that he did.'

`Be satisfied to know that it is not the Marquis' child but further than this do not at present seek to learn. So that I can put you in the way of seeing your protege happily restored to the birth right she has so long been deprived of, I presume you will be content.'

`That I shall be, my lord!' answered Bonfield very decided!y. `I am as interested now in my dear little Flora's welfare as ever I was, though she is not little now, but grown up to be a beautiful young lady.'

`I suppose it would make you happy to be commissioned to go for her, and bring her back to England since you took her away?'

`It would be the crowing happiness and triumph of my life, my lord,' he answered with animation. `If it is on this condition I have my liberty given me, the act is done, provided I can find her and find her alive and well. But I bepelieve I shall my lord, for Heaven wont let me die till she has her own, that I am sure of.'

As he spoke the King and the Duke of came into the library, both disguised as country gentlemen, in broad hats, huge wigs, broad skirted coats and top boots, with whips in their hands. It would have required one very well ac quainted with his majesty's features to have recognized him or the Duke either. The Earl would have been at fault had he not more than once seen the King in precisely the same costume when in the country; for it was his majesty's custom to ride on short journeys from one place to another dressed as a citizen, that he might observe without being observed.

`Gentleman,' said the Earl, `this is the worthy Captain Bonfield of whom you heard me speak.'

The King stared with surprise. Bonfield bowed with a respectful, formal air as he would have done to two genuine country squires, friends of the Earl. The party then proceeded to the breakfast room. The coffee urn being placed before the Earl he dispensed with the attendance of his servants and dismissing them locked the doors.

To relate the conversation that now passed would be to give a detail of what has already been made known. The King heard from Bonfield in answer to his leading questions the same account he had given the Earl. The result was that both were convinced that the confession of the dying Marquis was true, and that the infant which he had intrusted to the smuggler was the twin−princess.

`Your account, Captain,' said the king after he had finished asking questions and had drawn all the facts from the smuggler, `your account bears evidence of the truth. I am satisfied with it!'

`So am I!' answered the Duke; `and I must add that I consider it as one of the most remarkable things that ever occurred. '

`You deserve great credit and much praise, Captain Bonfield,' said the King, `for your care of the child and your devoted attachment to it throughout. By your means it was saved from a horrible fate eternal silence with the gift of speech!'

`I could not help loving it, sir. Its love for me in return was all the reward I cared for.'

`Be assured the friends of the child will wish to reward you more fully, Captain, when they shall see it again see it restored to them by your own hnad!'

`Sir,' said Bonfield, who had been fixedly observing the countenance of the king for some minutes; `sir, I beg your pardon, but I perceive such a strong likeness in you to Flora that I cannot be mistaken when I say, that I believe you are nearly related! You have the same eyes and the same expression about the mouth when you speak!'

At hearing this remark the Earl uttered an exclamation of gratified surprise. The king clapped his hands together in wonder and astonishment, while the duke, striking his fist upon the table, exclaimed in a sort of emphasis of despair,

`It is up now! There cannot be another word said!'

`Then I am right, sir!' cried Bonfield with some agitation, as he bent eagerly toward the king. `I feel that I am right, sir! If you were her own father but you are too young for that were you her own brother, sir, you could not look more like her. If I have indeed found a relative of Flora, I shall call this the happiest day of my life!'

The earl looked at the king to see if he would reveal himself. The duke also watched him, looking as if he feared that he would do so. Both saw that he was deeply agitated that his eyes were moist.

`You are right, Captain Bonfield,' said the king at length; `in me you do find a near relative of Flora! She is, I have reason to believe, my twin−sister.'

`Then, sir, let me grasp your hand!' cried the smuggler with animation and warmth, stretching across the table his hard hand to seize that of the king. The earl was about to interfere to check this movement, but the king put his arm back and grasped the palm of the friend of the exiled princess.

`There is my hand,' he said, pressing it. `You have shown yourself to have a generous heart, Captain Bonfield. I rejoice in taking by the hand one who has befriended my sister in her banishment from the land of her birth. Now, sir, are you willing, for fair recompense, to sail this very night from London in search of the maiden!'

`This hour, sir, and without reward!' responded Bonfield. `How like her you are, sir! I love you already, for her sake! I would have sworn you were Flora's brother in India. I know not your rank, sir,' he added bluntly, `but I can easily tell neither you nor your friend are country squires. I can tell a nobleman easily under false colors. I *know* Flora is noble therefore *you* must be!'

CHAPTER XII. THE LOVERS.

The king and the earl smiled at the confident assertions of the smuggler, and the latter said in reply

`You are right, captain, my guest *is* noble. He came in this costume merely as a matter of taste. Be assured that your little friend Flora will prove to be of a rank quite equal to your expectations.'

`I am glad of this, my lord,' answered Bonfield. `I am glad of this, for she deserves to be happy. I should love her just the same, though, had I been told by you she was a common peasant's daughter; but for her sake I want to see her proved noble. How strange it is, my lord, that you should have seen lord Ross, and all this should have come out as it has, and I should have been here in London at the very time of all others when most wanted. Now, my lord, say the word and I will be off after Flora. I do not care how soon! But if you would only tell me who are the parents of the dear child, that I may inform her?'

`Perhaps it would be best to surprise her,' said the king.

`Yes, you are right; and though I should be glad to know myself, I will wait till she knows it.'

`This is best, captain,' said the king. Now we will have you away as speedily as possible. Instead of going out in your own vessel, I think it best you should go over to Portsmouth and there take a fast−sailing government vessel, which shall be placed at your service. Can it not be, earl?' asked the king suddenly, as if he feared he should have betrayed himself by taking so much upon him.

`Yes, my lord,' answered the earl. `This I will have arranged as you desire.'

`If it please your lordship,' said Bonfield, `I would rather go in my own vessel. It sails quite as well as the old Dart, for I had it built on the same model. I know her points I know my crew. I shall accomplish the passage in a third less time than in any other craft.'

`But your crew are bucaniers, and it could be hardly safe to entrust the maiden in a vessel so manned;' said the Duke, who at length began to take an interest in the affair.

`They are not bucaniers, sir, or, my lord,' answered Bonfield. `The worst I have been is a smuggler, and a privateersman. If I am willing to trust her you should be, for she is as dear to me as she can be to either of your lordships here.' This was spoken warmly as if his feelings were touched. `Besides, my lord, if I go and leave my men, what guarantee have I that they will not be hanged? If I am to go free they are to go with me. This I will promise to do, my lords. When I reach the States I will agree to come home with Flora, if I find her, in a ship from Halifax, giving my vessel and crew up to my lieutenant Nickerson who is now in irons on board of her. I will willingly come home in a government vessel.

After some few moments consideration between the Earl and the king, the former informed Bonfield that he might pursue his own course, only speedily either return with Flora, or bring certain intelligence of her fate.

In half an hour more Bonfield was once more on the deck of his schooner. The Earl accompanied him, and ordered Harry and his men to be released. Lord Perry then placed in the smuggler's hands a letter to the commander at Halifax, ordering him to place a fast sailing sloop−of−war at the bearer's services to sail for England. The same evening, the day having been spent in getting on board stores, the schooner Sea−Shell, for this was the name Bonfield had given his vessel, dropped down past the tower and docks, not a little to the surprise of the Captain of the vessel of war which had had her in charge. But as the orders came from the king to let her depart, there was nothing to be said. About midnight with a strong breeze from the north−east Bonfield left the river, and laid his course through the channel in the direction of the Atlantic. During the next day he passed Cowes and was chased by a revenue schooner, but outsailed her. If he had been taken he had papers furnished by the Earl, which would have prevented any detention. On the third morning the land was no longer seen, and the little schooner with everything drawing went flying like a bird over the ocean.

We will now take the reader, in ancipation, to the distant shores of New England, to which the Sea−Shell was swiftly sailing in search of the exiled maiden, in whose fate nobles and kings had begun to take so deep an interest.

It was a calm, roseate, autumnal sun−set. The sky in the west seemed to be an arching ocean of gold, into which the richest purple and orange colours were infused. Clouds like painted barks hung in the gorgeous sea of crimson light, and upon the horizon reposed a dark azure wall, its summit towering grandly and sublime, its edge fringed with dazzling silver. It was an American autumnal evening in all its characteristic splendor. The woodlands robed in the most brilliant dyes of the rainbow, seemed to vie with the clouds, and with the atmosphere, in the lavish opulence of their display.

Upon a gentle eminence that sloped on one side towards a shaded dell, through which flowed a sparkling brook, and on another side towards the snowy beach of the blue sea, stood a youth and a maiden gazing upon the scenes around them. They had just reached the summit by a path that led from the left through a beautiful garden, beyond which, through the purple and scarlet foliage of the frosttinted trees, was visible the humble roof of a gardner's cottage; while, farther distant upon another hill, crowned with a grove of noble oaks and elms, rose imposingly, and in fine taste with the surrounding scenery; an elegant villa, with a lawn in front, and extensive cultivated grounds. Farther still, the needlelike tower of a church pierced the roseate heavens while many roofs dispersed here and there in the country, betrayed the elegant homes of wealth and taste. Before them stretched the spacious waters of the harbour, with its islands, some green as emeralds, others brown like topaz, and others frowning with snow−white or grey fortifications. Between the islands were glimpses of the ocean dotted with sails. There were numerous vessels steering towards the city of Boston, which was visible less than two leagues distant at the left, the twin hills of Dorchester rising between, and partly hiding its northern extremity. The whole prospect about them was varied, beautiful, and full of life and interest.

`I could stand here, Flora, by your side, and gaze on such a fair prospect as this, till I thought paradise were returned, ' said the youth bending earnestly yet modestly upon her his dark, fathomless eyes, while his hand gently stole and held hers unresisting. `You should be my Eve the fairest among women.'

`Nay, Edgar,' answered the maiden with a smile; `were I Eve I should certainly fall into Eve's temptation, and so destroy the fair paradise you have imagined. '

`You shall be to me only Flora, then, he answered with animation. `Yet, methinks, that were this paradise, and you Eve, should tempt me to eat the forbidden fruit, I should at once take it from your hand and eat; for seeing that you were lost I would hasten to share with you your fall.'

`Say not so, Edgar. Your love for me is too impetuous. You should not love me so as to do wrong for my sake.'

`I would be whatever thou art, Flora. But thou canst never be otherwise than good and true. In being like thee, I shall ensure happiness forevermore. But see, hither comes the silent Mary to join us. How dreadful must be the privation of speech and hearing. She can not hear the sound of the brook in the dell, the low sweeping of the wind among the trees, the musical dash of the surges upon the beach, the songs of the birds, and lovelier than all your own voice, Flora. How much is she deprived of. Yet she is ever cheerful; seems always happy−hearted and at peace within. The expression of her face is the beautiful index of intellectual serenity.'

`She is an angel, Edgar. She has a heart full of feeling and generous emotions. She is intelligent beyond many of those who have the sense of hearing and of speech. Her mind is of a high order; but her heart is goodness and truth itself.'

`I wish that I could converse with her as you do, Flora! How I have stood by and wondered to witness your conversation together. I could almost read her ideas upon her speaking features. Is it possible you can converse with her upon every subject?'

`Yes, as perfectly, Edgar, as with you. Gestures and signs are but the ruder outline of our communication. The eye, the lip, the brows express the most conceptions of her mind. I have taught her all that I know, and what it has taken me months to acquire she comprehends by a few general ideas explained to her. She seems to have the power of reading what is on my memory, as if it were a book. I believe she would detect always whether any person's countenance precisely or not reflected the thoughts of his heart. Her penetration is almost spiritual!'

`How beautiful she seems, as she stops and fixes her eyes upon the setting sun, and the glorious world of clouds about it. She does not seem more than twenty−two or three, and yet you told me she was nearly forty.

`Yes, but she looks always the same to me from my childhood.'

`How strange the mystery about your birth. She has made known to you all she knows, I doubt not, from what you have told me.

`Yes, Edgar, I have closely at differtimes inquired, and she could only tell me that she was ignorant of who placed me as an infant in her charge. She says that he came to the institution where she was and took her away and placed me in her charge, and both of us in the vessel of my benefactor, who took us to the Bermudas.'

`Do you remember when you left the Bermudas?'

`Perfectly. I was in my seventh year. Previous to that we had been with a man and woman, whose names I have long forgotten, but whose faces I can recall. They were not always kind to us. The only person who ever loved us, was my good uncle Captain Dart. But Mary says he is not my uncle, but only the Captain who was to take us, and who became so much attached to me on the voyage, that he always visited me at the island when he could. Mary must have learned this by her acuteness of observation! You were not here when my uncle came to visit me last year?'

`Xo; I was then in Cambridge. Then I had not seen you, Flora, at least to know and love you. I had heard of the beautiful grand−daughter of my father's gardener, but only heard of you. I shall not forget the first time I saw you. Hearing about you, I resolved I would make an effort to behold you, for you kept yourself so retired here that I was told by my sister, that unless I actually came to the old gardener's cottage, I should never see you. So one evening just ten months ago, a few days before my connection with the University ceased, I boldly took a walk to your grandfather's on the pretence of bringing him a new kind of flower−seed, which at much trouble I had obtained for this very ruse. I found him in the garden trimming a rose−tree, and you were standing by him, in a straw hat, holding your apron to receive the buds and roses he was cutting off. I came upon you all at once. Our eyes met, and from that moment, Flora, I was wounded beyond cure. But here is Mary coming on again. She smiles to see how rosily you blush. Your cheeks are quite as rich in hue, as when we then saw each other. That moment I wish never to forget. I wish I could speak to aunt Mary as you call her, and just say `good evening,' if nothing more!'

At this moment the mute Mary came near them, and Flora flying to meet her, embraced and kissed her forehead, although they had not been an hour parted; and Edgar, who was a fine−looking young man, with dark brown hair, and black expressive eyes, extended his hand, and with respectful kindness took hers, and smiled in her eyes. She returned the look with wonderful depth of expression and affection, and then turning to Flora, tapped her cheeks, looked with sympathy at Edgar, touched their hearts, and then joined their hands together with a laugh full of roguish sweetness. Flora blushed, if possible deeper than she had done when Edgar was describing their first meeting. The lover pressed his lips upon the little hand he held, and the three interchanged looks of the present happiness.

And they were happy each and all. Edgar Channing was the only son of a wealthy retired merchant, upon whose estate the father of Harry Nickerson lived, as gardener. He was a young man of an ardent temperament, pure principles, and high moral feelings. He was a promising young man, and his father looked to him to reflect honor upon his name and family. He had been but little at home during his boyhood and collegiate course, and although he might have heard that the old gentleman Nickerson, had a pretty grand−child, he gave the part no thought. It was not until his last visit at home, before he was to leave the University, that his attention was drawn particularly to the fact by the remarks of his sister, Margaret, who upon looking at a picture in an annual of English beauties, exclaimed on seeing one of the Dutchess of , how like Flora the old gar dener's grand−daughter!'

`If the Flora you speak of is half as handsome as this, sister,' he said, `she is extremely beautiful!'

`Have you never seen her?'

`Not to notice her particularly. You know I spend all my vacations travelling and have hardly been at home ten days in the last four years.'

`I should like to have you see her, just to see how wonderfully she resembles this. But for the world don't tell her so, for I dare say she is vain enough as she is. All poor girls that are pretty are spoiled by flattery.'

`But Flora has never been flattered,' answered her gouty father, who was reading near the window, with his bandaged foot on a chair, and now looked up. `Let me see the portrait. It is remarkably like her, as you say. This Duchess might, so far as looks go, have been her moiher! What name is that under it?'

`The Duchess of . the sister of the late Queen, it says. For the world, Edgar,' continued his handsome, proud and aristocratic sister, `do not tell her so. I am sorry I mentioned it. It would make her toss her head for something. '

`I never saw her toss her head, Margaret, ' said her father. `She always seems modest and unassuming. It is true she carries herself with an air of dignity; but it becomes her!'

`Dignity! It is vanity.'

`Why, Margaret, how can you speak so enviously,' said her brother. `I see that the maid is really pretty, or you would not be so warm about it. But you are so handsome yourself you can afford to have others pretty. I wonder at your talking so. I shall at once try to see her, for my curiosity is awakened. It is a pleasant half mile's walk to the old gardener's cottage, and I will go down and see this beauty.'

`I hope, Edgar, you will not condescend to speak to her.'

`I don't know that she will condescend to speak to me, if she is so beautiful and vain as you represent,' he answered, smiling; `but I shall not run away from her. I ought to pay the old man a visit, and will now do so.'

`Don't mention the resemblance if you are so foolish as to suffer yourself to speak to her!' cried his sister not a little vexed at her brother for wishing to go and see one whom she acknowledged her own superior in beauty, manners and intelligence; for Margaret Channing knew Flora very well, but only to envy and dislike her for her superior attainments and excellence in every thing.

The visit which Edgar made has already been alluded to and the important result. He lost his heart to her at once; and the attachment became mutual and complete. He did not make known to his sister the impression Flora had made upon him; for he saw that she envied and disliked her. Thus for many months their love grew in secret. Their interviews were stolen. Flora told him all her history so far as she knew it. They betrothed themselves to each other. Flora, then, desired that he would no longer keep their attachment from his parents and sister. Reluctant as he was to reveal it, he promised to do so. It received the approbation of the old gardener, (his wife was no longer living), and of many; but Edgar knew that his father's wishes in reference to him were for a rich and consequental match; and that his sister would flash her eyes with scorn at the revelation that he had betrothed himself to the humble grand−daughter, as people termed her, of the old English gardener.

But still it was necessary that he should reveal the truth. He did so; and, as he anticipated, was severely reproached and blamed by his father, and almost insulted by the severe and bilter language of his sister.

`Nevertheless,' he answered calmly; `it is done. It cannot be revoked, nor do I wish it to be. Flora is worthy any man's love. She would do honor to any man's choice. She has not her peer among any females that I know. She has been thoroughly educated by the old gardener who has done his duty by her. If you refuse to receive her as a

daughter and sister,' he said warmly, `I shall regret it.'

`I will disinherit you, sir,' cried his father, greatly excited, and shaking his crutch at him. `A son of mine, the heir of a hundred thousand dollars, marry my gardener's daughter. It is not to be borne!'

`I would have them sent off at once, father!' said Margaret. `It is all their planning, her's and the old man's. She is artful enongh, I dare say, for any thing, and Nickerson wicked enough. A fine thing for them, truly, to catch the rich heir, Edgar Channing. You are a fool, brother! You have suffered yourself to be caught in a net set for you.'

`I can patiently hear no more,' answered Edgar firmly. `I shall marry Flora Nickerson, even if my father disinherits me and my sister refuses to recognise me as a brother. I do not fear but at the bar I can maintain myself as other young men have done.'

With this reply Edgar left the house and hastened, in the bright presence of Flora and the cheerful silence of Mary to recover that peace and equanimity which the violence of his family had driven from his bosom.

This scene occurred but a few days previous to our present introduction of them, viewing the prospect around from an eminence near the gardener's house. Indifferent to the opposition of his father and sister, yet deeply regretting it, for he loved and esteemed them both, he still openly visited Flora. His father would have sent Nickerson away if he had not feared that Edgar would precipitate the match, that he might be their protector and go with them whenever they should go. This Edgar had resolutely said that he would do, should this step be taken by his father. The latter, therefore, forbore, hoping that some means might yet be successfully applied to break off the engagement.

The afternoon which we now see them together was that preceding the day upon which they were to be married. Edgar had established himself in a law−office in the city, and had taken pleasant rooms for himself and bride. Their happiness, therefore, at this time, was calm and deep. Mary entered into it with all the gladness of her pure spirit, for she sympathised always in the enjoyments of those about her.

The three interchanged looks of mutual tenderness and joy, and once more turned to gaze upon the beautiful prospect over which the shades of twilight were gently stealing. Suddenly Mary uttered an exclamation of delight and intense surprise, at the same time pointing in the direction of a small but graceful vessel, schooner rigged, that had steered out of the usual channel to the city and was standing towards the beach at the foot of the hill.

`What does she say, Flora?' asked Edgar, as he saw the two exchange signs with eager rapidity and the face of the latter light up with joy.

`That the vessel coming this way is the Sea−Shell.'

CHAPTER XIII. THE SEA−SHELL.

It was indeed the `Sea−Shell,' the little warlike−looking schooner in which Captain Bonfield had left the shores of England eighteen days before. After coming into the outer−roads of the harbour she had hauled her wind and stood across the bay in the direction of the shores of Dorchester. She had got within two miles of the land when Mary's quick recognising eye descried her. To a mute who is accustomed to make the eye subserve the uses of other senses, resemblances are readily perceived, and the memory, even of the most minute particulars, is wonderfully acute. Thus at the distance of two miles, and after many months absence, Mary was able at a glance to see that the stranger was the Sea−Shell. When the vessel was pointed out by her to Flora, the latter also recognized it, and her face was as bright with joy as Mary's, for both of them equally loved the smuggler. He had from the first been their only and best friend. They looked upon him as a father; and his conduct towards them

had always been like that of a find parent. Of his profession or real character and name they knew nothing. To Flora he had always called himself after the name of his vessel, Capt. `Dart,' and by this name alone she knew him. To this address she sent all her letters. She supposed that he was a merchant−captain. The fact that he was an outlaw she was ignorant of; nor, had she known it, is it probable that she would have loved him less. What ever he was, he was dear to her as her first, and only, and oldest friend and protector. Mary showed all her feelings of attachment for the smuggler, though with more sedateness and gravity.

Their joy at seeing the vessel approaching was communicated to the heart and countenance of Edgar. He had long felt a curiosity to see the man who seemed to be the only link between Flora and her unknown parents. The three now watched the vessel, as it approached, with the deepest interest. Half a mile from the shore on account of the shallowness of the water, it rounded to drop her anchor, and in a minute and a half everything was snug.

`How quick she took in sails,' cried Edgar; `but a moment ago she was moving in with everything packed on, and now she is motionless, with every sail furled upon the yards: your uncle is a skilful seaman, Flora. From the looks of the vessel she must be in the English naval service. As it is after sun−down, he shows no colours.'

`See a boat has put off, Edgar. In a few minutes, and I shall see him, and embrace him. Let us hasten to the shore to meet him as soon as he lands.

They immediately descended the eminence, and by a path, on one side, bordered by a hedge of fir−trees, on the other open to the lawn, they reached the beach just as the boat also struck it. Before getting to the water−side Flora had recognized the form of her uncle, as she affectionately termed the smuggler, standing in the stern of his boat. He had also seen the party coming down to the landing, and had waved his hand to them.

The next moment he leaped upon the sand, and Flora and Mary were both together clasped to his heart. He kissed them both with deep affection upon the check, and holding them off, looked them each steadily in the face, as if to see what changes time had continued to make.

`You are, if possible, more beautiful than ever, Flora, and you, Mary, more like an angel. Tell her so Flora.'

`She understands you, uncle; oh, how happy I am to see you once more. Mary wishes me to tell you that she expected you to−day, for she has dreamed about you three nights and the dreams of mutes always come true, she says.'

`She looks happy and so do you, and I know you are both glad to see me. What a reward is mine for taking care of you when no one cared for you,' said Bonfield, with delighted looks, in which were mingled emotions of pride and gratitude in being so loved by creatures so good and beautiful as the two were. `But who is this?' he asked, glancing at Edgar, who stood a few feet off looking upon the scene of the happy meeting with the air of one who secretly wished, but feared, to participate in it.

`You will soon know, and be glad to know him, uncle,' onswered Flora blushing. `It is Mr. Edgar Channing, the son of the gentleman who is the proprietor of the estate. And but well, I won't be foolish about it, dear uncle;' she said after a moment's beautiful confusion, durin which Mary, who perfectly understood he whole, went up to Edgar; `you must know some time. We are to be married to−morrow.'

Mary at the same instant placed in Edgar's hand that of Flora, and, joining them together, looked in the Captain's face with one of those sweet smiles which shed over her features perfect sunshine.

`I see, I see,' said Bonfield. `If Mary consents to it, all will be right, and so will I. There is no deceiving her. Mr. Channing, there is my hand! I am glad to see any one that loves those I love. You show your good sense and make me respect your judgment in choosing my little rose here. None but the good could love her, nor could she love

any one who was not worthy of her. But, I think you are to be married a little too soon. We will, however, talk about that when we get up to the cottage. How is the old gardener?'

`Quite well, dear uncle, and he will be most glad to see you back. My heart is so full of joy that I don't know how to keep from weeping.'

`I shall scold you, for getting married before I came back. But, so long as it has'nt taken place I'll forgive you. What say you to putting it off young gentleman and lady until we get to England? '

`To England?' she repeated.

`Are you going to take Flora to England, sir?' he asked with surprise.

`What is it?' asked Mary of Flora, with signs, seeing their surprised and troubled looks.

Flora instantly explained. Mary looked pleased at the idea of going to England.

`Yes, Flora, said the Captain. `I have come to America on purpose to take you to your native land.'

`When, uncle? Why?' she asked eagerly.

`At once. If possible I would have you on board my vessel and be away before midnight. Nay, do not look alarmed; I will not interfere with any of your love engagements, Flora. You shall marry Mr. Edgar before you go, and he will go too, I dare say.'

They were now all four walking slowly towards the old gardener's cottage. Flora fell back a little with her uncle at a hint from him, and he briefly informed her how that he had discovered her brother in England, who was at least a nobleman, and that he had sent him for her to bring her to England without delay.

`Uncle,' she said, `I cannot go and leave Edgar. His happiness and mine are woven in one thread for life. If I postpone my marriage it may be to be forced, if it were possible, into another there. It would be to make him wretched. First let us be married, and when you tell him you have discovered my relatives, he will gladly go with us. He marries me, uncle, against much opposition. He has been disinherited by his father and repudiated by his family for his attachment to me; for he is rich and I am poor and humble. But, for all that, he loves me and I live only in his love. Consent to our union and we will both go with you!'

`Well, I will say no more. I suppose it can't be helped now it is gone so far. So smile again, my child. You shall be married and I and all my crew will dance at your wedding. But only on the condition that you and your young husband, a fine looking fellow though, sail at once with me for England. I like him already, partly because you like him; partly because Mary does; partly because he is so confoundedly good−looking; and partly because, being rich and you poor, he loves you for yourself. It shows he is a man of sense. Let us go on ahead and overtake him and see what he says.'

The proposal, though at first a little startling to Edgar to sail at once to England, he gladly embraced. It was decided ere they reached the old man's house, that the wedding should take place the next morning on board the Sea−Shell. The evening was spent in preparations. Edgar had to go to the city to leave in structions about his affairs for a three months' absence, as he said; but he was back again by ten o'clock. All was bustle and joy and hope with some gladness. The old gardener was sad that Flora and Mary were to leave him; but his tears were soon dried up when he was invited by Bonfield to make one of the party to England, where the Captain told him that on Flora's account, he would have his fortune made. As his son Harry was all that was left to him, and he was the first officer of the SeaShell, the old man gladly embraced the proposal to accompany those who for many

years had seemed to him as his own children. At eleven o'clock at night Bonfield went on board taking all the baggage belonging to his passengers. He then got every thing ready for them to come on board the next morning. At the prospect of a wedding on board, the whole of the crew were in great glee, and everything went forward with cheerfulness and activity. Fresh water and fresh provisions were taken on board, late as it was, and by morning all was ready both for the wedding and for sailing again. The smuggler had not lost a moment in delay. At six bells two boats deeorated with flags were sent on shore for the bridal party. A clergyman, an intimate friend of Edgar, accompanied them to the vessel. Before eight o'clock the ceremony was performed. Flora looked perfectly lovely. Edgar perfectly happy. Mary seemed the very picture of peaceful joy. Her countenance beamed with serenity and happiness. The Captain appeared to enjoy the whole with pride and satisfaction. Flora seemed to him like a very daughter; and he deeply participated in her joy. He knew she was happy and this made him so.

At the end of the ceremony the generous smuggler placed a roleau of gold ounces in the hand of the young minister. All hands were piped aft to dance as Bonfield had pledged, and taking Mary for his partner, he whistled in the reel till fairly driven from the field by Flora's laughter.

At eight o'clock the crew of the cutter was piped to the side, and the clergyman took his leave. As soon as the boat got back, the anchor was weighed, the top−sail loosened, the mainsail hoisted, and the schooner gradually moved from her moorings with a five−knot breeze from the West. In a few minutes she spread all her canvas and gallantly ploughed her way down the harbor, passing one after the other a fleet of outward−bound coasters, taking the lead of the whole, and stretching away alone into the open sea.

Her departure was watched by wondering eyes from the villa of Mr. Channing; for, as she was getting under weigh, a servant who had lived with the gardener arrived at the house and preclaimed that the old gardener had gone to England in the black vessel anchored off there, and had not only taken Flora and Mary, but that Edgar had gone on board also.

The father and daughter, and a spendthrift nephew the old man had taken into his family under the pretence of making him his heir, hoping thereby to alarm Edgar, one and all hastened to the piazza to look at the vessel. Upon closely questioning the man, they got from him a general notion of what had occurred; though every thing had been kept carefully from his knowledge as far as possible.

`Edgar has now fairly thrown himself away,' said his father. `I rue the day that villainous runaway English gardener ever was employed by me.'

`We ought to have made a scullion of the girl, and then this folly of Edgar's would not have been committed,' said Margaret. `Disgraced! He has ran away with a gardener's daughter.'

`Let him go, cousin. He ant worth the thought, if he takes up with one so low,' said the young heir in expectation, who felt that he ought to be very much indebted to Flora, and in his heart would not have had things otherwise than they were for the world.

`There is a boat coming ashore,' said Margaret, who never kept her eyes off of the vessel. `I wonder what new.'

`Go and see who lands,' said Mr. Channing to the servant, who hastened to obey.

`The vessel is spreading her sails and going again,' exclaimed Margaret. `Is it possible that my brother has gone to England?'

`Here comes Terry, running, with a note in his hand,' said the heir.

Margaret flew to meet him and took it from him.

`Who gave it to you?' she demanded.

`The young praast, miss.'

`What young praast,' she added, opening it; for she recognised her brother's hand−writing.

`Here he coomes to spake for hisself, miss,' answered Terry, as the clergyman Edgar's friend, came walking towards the house.

Margaret looked up to see him, and then commenced reading aloud to her father with a voice which increased each moment in indignation:

`My dear Sister,

`I am married. The noble and amiable Flora is *mine*. Her relatives in England have sent for her, and we leave in the vessel which is anchored near the gardens. On board this vessel I was united to Flora at eight o'clock this morning. I go to England with my *dear wife* to gratify her; for you must know she is no relative of the old gardener, but is an orphan, who was placed under his charge in a mysterious way with money in plenty for him to educate her. This he has done. Tbe captain of the vessel says that her relatives have been discovered in England, and that they have sent him express for her. He has just told me that they are certainly noble. But this assurance does not make me think more of Flora. I have loved her in her humility. I could love her no more were she a princess. No title of nobility could make her nobler than she is in my eyes. But as the captain is not sure even of the name of her relatives, who seem to have kept him in the same kind of mystery which from childhood has hung about Flora, it may be that they are of humble degree. But should I find that they were of the peasantry, and dwelt in earthen hovels, I should think no less of Flora. To me she would always be Flora. I shall probably return after an absence of three months. Present my regards to my father. Still and ever, whatever you may be to me, Margaret,

`Your affectionate brother,

`Edgar.'

`I could die with shame. My brother married to our gardener's daughter!' cried the proud girl.

`Good morning, Mr. Channing,' said the young clergyman. `I have had the pleasure of performing the marriage ceremony this morning, which makes the lovely Flora Nickerson the wife of your son. He gave me a line to send to you, but after giving it to your servant, I concluded to call by in person and inform you.'

`You are a villain, sir,' cried Mr. Channing in great excitement. `How dare you marry my son, sirrah? How *dared* you do it?' And the old man shook his crutch as if he would gladly lay it upon the `cloth' of the clergyman, who stood before him calmly eyeing him, yet with surprise at his vehemence.

`I did it, sir, at the request of the parties most interested, Mr. Channing, and also, what is more to the purpose, I did it in the line of my duty. I could not refuse any application of the kind without just cause; and I saw no reason why I could not legally join together in marriage these two persons.'

`Have you dene, sir? I shall go I say I shall go mad, sirrah! I hardly know how keep my patience!' And the rich man shook with rage, while Margaret, the proud and beautiful heiress, stood by with a lip of scorn, and a brow of anger, muttering at intervals as she darted glances ot at the young clergyman.

`Impertinence! What audacity! To attempt to excuse such uncalled−for interference in domestic affairs.'

`I do defend myself, lady! and further, permit me to say,' answered the clergyman firmly, and he turned to leave them, seeing that his stay only provoked them.

`You had better go!' cried the merchant, `for you are at the bottom of the whole. I have lost my son through you. What have you further to say to that, sir!' and he looked daggers at the young minister.

CHAPTER XIV. THE MINISTER.

The minister who had nearly reached the door, turned and confronted the two angry foes he had made by uniting Edgar and Flora, and answered calmly but firmly

`I have further to say, Mr. Channing and Miss Channing, that in opposing this union as you have done, you have been guilty of a great wrong, both to your son and to yourselves. He could not find anywhere's a better wife, than this fair gardener's daughter. Besides beauty in an unusual degree, as you have yourselves borne witness, she possessed a purity of heart, an integrity of character, rarely to be met with in the higher walks of life!'

The spendthrift nephew looked black, and twirled his mustache fiercely.

Miss Margaret curled her pretty lip in the most scornful derision, and a smile of bitter irony played about the dimples of her cheek. The merchant gave only a rough, surly grunt, by way of expressing his contempt for the pretensions of the lowly gardener's daughter; pretensions that caused her even to be compared with themselves, who represented `the higher walks of life,' to which the young clergyman's words referred. He did not, however, pay any attention to their expressions of dislike at his words, but thus resumed with dignity and firmness.

`You will one day regret the course you have pursued, and I would advise you as a friend, to be reconciled to an event, which it is no longer in your power to avert. You will believe me, you will feel proud by and by of your daughter−in−law. '

`Daughter−in−law! Humph,' growled the gouty old man.

`Did ever one listen to such audacity?' ejaculated the nephew, who with his eyeglass stood looking at the minature over Margaret's chair.

`I will never call Flora Nickerson sister−in−law, be assured Mr. Upstart,' (the clergyman's name was Upshur) cried Margaret.' She has disgraced us!' and here the young Prinsess put her cambric kerchief to her eyes and walked up and down the room with a stamping sort of tramp that one would hardly beleive her elegant little feet could execute.

`Uncle,' said the nephew,' shall I'orse vip 'im?'

`I will not hear another word out of your mouth, sir!' cried Mr. Channing, looking terribly belligerent and grasping the handle of his crutch a little lower down, as if he meant to use it ere much space elasped; leave my house, sir, and never enter it again!

`I would not send for you if I was dead! I'll be buried by a Roman Catholic first! It is all a conspiracy between you and my depraved son and that trollop of Nickerson's! You are a conspirator, sir! you you Leave my house, sir! Your cloth only protects you from the weight of my crutch!'

`To have the imprudence to marry them, and then to have the insuperable, unparralleled boldness to come openly into the house and tell us of it!' cried Margaret, as she looked after him with tones of anger and grief shining in

her dark fine eyes.

Slowly and deliberately he walked from the room and down the steps and so up the avenue to the gate.

`He is gone and I hope he may break his neck!' exclaimed Mrs Channing.

`Shall I go after 'im and slap his face for 'im, cousin?' asked the nephew, Mr. Frederick Kipper, twirling his rose−scented kid gloves in his fingers and looking as if he felt quite courageous enough to slap the cheek of a man whom he was pretty well assured would not return the blow; for he recollected reading somewhere, he believed in Shakespeare, that Ministers when struck on one cheek turned the other also. He thought it was a very odd sort of a custom, indeed and wondered at; for he believed that one cheek was quite enough to have smitten at the time. But his cousin Margaret did not see fit to put his courage to the test, and perhaps it was very well for Mr. Frederick Kipper that she did not; for there are brave hearts and noble spirits beneath the cloth of the clergy, and insult will by such be resented with manliness, not borne with cowardly submission. There are instences in which if the clergyman may forget `the cloth,' in the recollection that he is also a man; and if Mr Kipper had mustered courage enough to test the non−combatting principles of the young minister, there is little doubt but that the *other* cheek smitten would have been his own!

There was a few moments' silence in the apartment after the departure of the minister. The old man's eyes were bent seaward in the direction of the receding vessel, his face gloomy and morose as hatred and rage and disappointment would make it. If the devil, in his coursing up and down the earth had peeped into the rich merchants' hut he would have found such pleasant company there amid his coil−a−waked passions that he would have entered at once and found himself quite at home.

Margaret, on her part, felt no more amiable than her father. Their pride of family had been stricken in a tender point! That Edgar, her handsome, noble, high−splrited brother, should have ever deigned even to notice one so humble as the gardener's daughter, was amazing to her; but that he should have not only noticed, but spoken and visited and formed an acquaintance, which matured to an intimacy that led to such a final catastrophe, overwhelmed her soul with shame. Besides, she loved not the maiden at all! Flora's beauty was a rival to her own Flora's virtues were shining foils to her we wont say her vices but foils to her *negative* virtues. She therefore hated her; and if she hated her before, what must have been the fierce emotions blazing in her breast to feel forced upon her mind the irresistible conviction that that humble, lovely, good, *hated* girl, was now her sister! She could hardly decide, as she rapidly ran her thoughts over the painful subject, which was to injure `the family' most the descent of Edgar or the elevation to its level of Flora Nickerson. Either way she felt they were equally degraded, and in both conjoined, doubly were they disgraced. As she arrived, in her thoughts, to this crisis of reflection, she burst into tears and threw herself into a rocking−chair, and began to sob and to rock with great violence.

`How is this?' cried the old man, turning round at this sudden out−burst.  `What what is the matter? Any thing *worse* happened?'

`Nothing worse *can* happen, father,' she exclaimed, uncovering her tear−wet face, and looking at him with all the bitterness of grief and wounded pride.  `Nothing *worse* can be imagined! We shall never get over it! I am sure *I* shall not. We shall never hear the last of it. The Acres, the Quinceys, the Adamses, the the '

`The Seareses,' suggested Mr. Frederick, seeing she was at a loss to fill up her list of great people, that, by the by, she never visited.

`The Searses, the Appletons, the Sawrences! Oh dear! they will all hear of it, and I shall never be thought of. Every body will despise me and *cut* me because I have a brother who has married a gardener's daughter! I hope the sea may swallow her up, and drown her into its deepest depths!'

`Don't take on so, sweet cousin,' said Mr. Frederick, coming softly up to the rocking−chair, and tenderly laying his hand upon her wrist; `if your brother has thus forgotten himself and the respectability of *the family*, believe me that *I* never shall.'

Here Mr. Frederick Kepper placed his hand very emphatically upon that portion of his buff waistcoat which enveloped his heart, or the place where his heart may have been safely suppose! to be. But Miss Channing was in no mood for consolation, and so she struck his hand away very petulantly.

Frederick Kepper was a nephew of the rich merchant, the only son of a widowed sister, whose husband had been a poor lawyer, and died leaving her a very small pittance. The widow struggled on for a few years as well as she could, but finally her health failed her, and unable to educate her son as she wished to do, she was compelled, for his sake, to apply to her brother, avaricious and selfish as she knew him to be.

He at first received her with great anger, and then only consented to let her have double price if she would make his shirts and do the sewing generally for the family. This she consented to do, and for three years continued to school her son and support herself, when death kindly released her from a responsibility which had so long been maintained through so many trials.

The merchant was not sorry when she died. The rich are always secretly pleased to see poor relations die off. They seem, to them, to be their natural enemies, watching for *them* to drop off into the grave, that they may riot in their riches. `There is one who will be no better for my money after I am dead,' were the pleasing reflections which followed the knowledge of his sister's death in the selfish mind of the rich merchant!

CHAPTER XV. THE NEPHEW.

The condition of young master Frederick as an orphan was all at once very much improved. The opulent uncle took him into his house, and as the lad was naturally artful, sycophantic and selfish, he succeeded in ingratiating himself into the good graces of the only man on earth by whom he hoped one day to see his pecuniary circumstances benefitted.

Mr. Channing took a great fancy to him, and as Frederick took care never to anger him and to pay particular attention to him when he told any of his long stories and waited upon him like a servant, he began soon to think he should supplant even his more modest, manly and admirable cousin, the true heir apparent. The merchant, in the largeness of his heart, flattered by the attentions of his nephew, which he referred to a greater degree of affection than Edgar had for him, resolved to send him to the University at Cambridge and give him a liberal education. This he resolved upon the more obstinately in as much as he fancied that his son did not like his cousin and was jealous of him.

But Edgar never was jealous. He had no room for such a feeling in his generous bosom; but he knew well the meanness of the mind and heart of his cousin, and seeing through the motives of his conduct, he despised him. But he did not hold him in estimation enough to be jealous of him. Master Frederick, however, conscious of the baseness of his notoriety and aware that Edgar thoroughly understood them and him, hated him, and would not have hesitated to have done him an injury.

Mr. Channing at length sent his nephew to college, and supplied him liberally with money. Edgar was also at the University, but two years his senior. There was no congeniality of feeling or of tastes between the two cousins; and they seldom met and never voluntarily associated. Edger's companions were the young men of the highest order of talent and character, while those of his couzin were the most dissolute.

Edger graduated with the highest honor in his class; and his cousin left college about the same time in disgrace.

He had been detected in purloining a purse of gold from the desk of one of his class−mates.

To the rich merchant, his uncle, he denied his guilt and was believed; and he even went so far as to say, that there was no money lost, and that the story was a fabrication of his cousin Edgar's to degrade him. `For you know, uncle, said the hypocrite, `that I had no motive to steal when your generosity so largely supplied me with money!'

`It would be very odd if you did,' ejaculated the merchant.

`You know that my cousin Edgar is jealous of me because he thinks you love me more than you do him; though I should be most happy to be loved a tenth part as much as he is by you, sir. You know he would be glad to see me disgraced. Indeed, I have not the least doubt, whatever, that this whole matter was planned by him and his friends, fellows I wouldn't speak to, on purpose to destroy me in your good opinion, which I value above all the gold purses in the world! Indeed, sir, I am as innocent as the child of the charge for which the faculty, doubtless influenced by Edger, who was a great favorite with them, dismissed me.'

`Well, neffee, never mind 'em,' answered the merchant. `I dare say that it was some such thing; but don't let my son know I said so. There! I have got another twinge of this confounded gout! Just move the stool a little this way. Lift the foot gently that's it! Now hand me my snuff−box. This snuff is rather strong, neffee; I must have it aired; don't forget to pour it all out on a plate and put in the sun for an hour, and stir it with a stick all the time!'

`Yes, uncle, I will do exactly as you want. Is there any other thing I can do for my dear uncle?'

`Hand me the spittoon; hold it higher: I can't spit so far that's it! Now take this sponge and wipe this off my chin. That is a good boy; if Edgar was half as attentive as you are, I should feel happy!'

The `neffee' thus meanly made his way and kept it in favor with his opulent uncle, while Edgar was wholly indifferent to any such efforts for conciliating his father, content with fulfilling his relalations as a son as became an affectionate and dutiful one, and devoted to study al his time. While he was industriously pursuing the knowledge of his profession Frederick was playing the fashionable idler on an allowance of five hundred a year, allowed him by his uncle for his services as his *lacquey*. But he managed to spend very easily twice this sum; and the bills were paid by the rich merchant, though always with a threat, which terminated in a request to have his snuff−box handed to him. In a word, the young man held his uncle completely under his finger, as the phrase is. He knew his weaknesses and foibles, and catered to them with all the skill of a successfully educated sycophant. And all this was done with a definite aim, not for the present benefit alone. The young man from the first had an eye to supplanting his cousin in the inheritance; and towards this every act of his life was performed. He gradually insinuated suspicions of Edgar's love for his father, into his thoughts, and by and by caused him to look upon him rather as if he were an enemy than the affectionate son he really was.

Edgar was not blind to this change in his father's manner towards him, and was perfectly aware of the cause of it. He despised his cousin too heartily to say any thing to him upon the subject, but he resolved to take an oppoetunity when Frederick, who was his shadow, was absent, to lay the matter before him, and uphold to him the true character of his cousin.

But his father refused to listen, after he began to display the treachery of his nephew's character in its true light; and angrily charging his son with jealousy, and reproaching him with neglecting him, he bade him leave his presence, saying

`If you were the half so attentive to me as your cousin, he could not have opportunity to do what he does. Why do you not do it for me?'

`I cannot, sir, always be with you. You have a faithful attendant in your footman Robert Jeffrey, whose proper duty my cousin takes upon hfmself. He has nothing to do, and can be here. I have my profession to pursue, and can only be with you occasionally. And, besides, sir, you ask my cousin to do things you would not ask your son to do.'

Such was the termination of the first and only interview Edgar had with his father touching his cousin. After this he let him go on as he pleased, perfectly indifferent to the result.

In the meanwhile he had attained his profession, and Frederick, also, had attained the reputation of being the most dissolute young gentleman in the metropolis of the Commonwealth.

At length, as we have seen, Edgar met with the lovely Flora, our heroine, and love took possession of his heart. A little while before this, Margaret, his sister had returned from a boarding−school, and was now at home. Mr. Frederick had no sooner put eyes on his handsome cousni ihan he conceived in his mind the ambitious project to secure the *whole* fortune of his uncle by falling in love with his fair coustn, and marrying her; for he had made up his mind to supplant his cousin Edgar in his fortune at all events.

We have seen the character of the female cousin as exhibited in reference to Flora; and we have seen that it was by no means of the most amiable kind. She had watched her brother's intimacy with Flora, with deep and angry solicitude, and more than one confidential conversation had she with her cousin Frederick as to the best plan to get him to abandon his visits to the gardner's.

These conversations led to an intimacy and sort of co−partnership of feelings between him and his cousin, which materially paved the way to that more tender confidence which he was adroitly playing his cards to establish in her bosom with reference to himself. But they could bring no scheme to maturity, for this very reason that it was far from Master Frederick's intention or desire to any bar in the way of his couzin Edgar's marriage with the gardener's daughter; inasmuch as he very well knew, such an event would materially contribute to the accomplishment of his ambitious projects, viz: the possession in his own proper person of the inheritance which would be perfected by Edgar in such a marriage.

CHAPTER XVI. THE DENOUEMENT.

The presence of his nephew in his house suggested to the rich old man an expedient for endeavoring to prevent the union of Edgar with Flora, the gardener's daughter, and so he plainly gave his son to understand that if he pursued his aftentions to the lowly maiden, his cousin should stand in his place. Thus it became greatly for Master Frederick's interest to have the little affair between his cousin and Flora go on without interruption. In the meanwhile, he did his best to ingratiate himself with his fair cousin, who was as indifferent to his tender looks and tenderer expressions as if he were but a speaking automaton. She had penetration enough to see his shallowness of mind and obliquity of heart: and, while she endured his society, she felt a hearty contempt for him.

So when he would now have consoled her in her grief at Edgar's marriage, by assuring her that *he* would *himself* build up what family greatness his cousin had thrown down, he was received with petulant contempt and an expression of the eye of the fair heiress anything but amiable or loving.

`Do not vex me, sir; I am in no mood to play with monkeys.' These were the cutting words of her reply.

`Monkeys! Who calls monkeys, eh?' called out her father.

`My very beautiful cousin, sir, is very witty on me, uncle,' responded the young man, immediately coloring to the eyes and looking very much as if he would like to strike her in the face; but feeling that it would not be politic to

show his anger before an heiress, whose haud he was aiming at, he laughed very awkwardly indeed, but still it *was* a laugh, and seemed to take the answer very pleasantly.

The gone humor of the parties was not reoovered that day, nor, indeed, for many days afterwards, was there any friendly intercourse between the cousins. Master Frederick had wit enough to see that he was heartily despised, greatly to his amazement, by his cousin, and that it was in vain for him to hope for more than half of the fortune of his uncle; and this half he felt himself very sure of becoming heir to.

SEQUEL;

The scene of our story now re−opens in `merrie England,' the land which is the fountain of all our romance, the source of all our ideas of the past, our *mother* indeed, whom we still love, though separated and independent of her. What American heart throbs not with pride and pleasure at the name of England? What Amertcan loves not to talk of his old English ancestors, whether noble or simple, tenants of the palace or the cot? What American loves not England next to his own native land? She is dear to us for a thousand associations. Her language is our language. Her poets are ours. So are the painters and historirians. Scott belongs as much to us as to her, and to the lyre of Moore our hearts respond as if he were an American. We love England, her palaces and castles, and parks; her nobles and knights, and country gentlemen; her great men by sea and land her Wellington and her Nelson are ours as well.

Let us go to England then from where we and our fathers have all come, and follow over the sea our hero and heroine and witness the issue of their various and adventurous fortunes.

The return voyage of the beautiful vessel `The Sea−Shell,' was as prosperous as her outward passage. Fair winds and smooth seas seemed to combine to waft in safety and with celerity the overhappy voyagers to their destination.

On the nineteenth day after leaving the harbor and lights of the Portsmouth head and before night, was safely anchored in port. At the sight, once more, of the shores of her nativity, the heart of Flora bounded with the most joyful emotions, in which her husband sympathized. The Sea−Shell had no sooner come to anchor than a boat from a revenue schooner, and another from a frigate on the starboard quarter, boarded her almost simultaneously. Bonfield quickly showed his papers of protection signed by Lord Percival, and endorsed at the Admiralty office, when he was left alone. He immediately landed with his party, leaving the old man on board with his son, who had charge of the vessel until he should return. A post−chaise took them at once to London, where they arrived at ten the next morning. Bonfield drove directly to a hotel, and then wrote a note as follows to Lord Percival:

S Hotel, H Square. − My Lord,

I have just arrived in London with Flora. I wait your orders.

Yours,

Bonfield.

The Earl was with the King when this note was sent into him by his page. He had no sooner opened it than he gave utterance to an exclamation of joy, and cried with enthusiasm,

`Your Majesty, Bonfield has found her, and is at the S hotel.'

`Is it possible. This is new indeed,' exclaimed the King with surprise and deep emotion. Go to him at once, my

lord, I pray you, and bring them hither In the meanwhile I will go and communicate the information to my mother, who has already heard from me all the previous circumstances. If you see the Duke do not at once tell him. I would like to have him here, and see her. If she resembles me, his grace will detect it; and thus be convinced.'

`It is a good idea, your majesty,' answered lord Percival as he hurried much excited from the presence.

Without delay or hesitation he sprang into one of the royal carriages in waiting and drove to the hotel. He had no need to inquire for those he sought, as Bonfield met him at the carriage−window.

`You have done well, Captain,' he cried. `Have you been to America?'

`Yes, my lord, and not quite six weeks absent.'

`And have you brought her with you?'

`Yes. You shall see her.'

The earl alighted and followed him to the drawing−room. Instantly upon seeing Flora he started back with an exclamation of astonishment.

`It is both the king and the Dutchess of !'

`This, Flora, is the earl of Percival,' said the captain. `He is a friend of your brother.'

`You need not introduce me, captain. I should know her from the resemblance anywhere's!'

As he spoke he bowed with great respect and taking her hand said,

`Permit me to conduct you to your brother, lady!' As he said this he looked inquisitively at Edgar.

`This is my husband, my lord!' she said with sweet dignity and the slight blush that became a bride.

`Are you then married?' exclaimed the earl, and looking at Bonfield with an air of diappointment.

`It couldn't be helped, my lord. They had settled the whole matter before I got there. She wouldn't come without her lover and so I had them married the day we sailed. But your lordship can see for yourself that they are well−mated!'

The king was in his cabinet. Near him sat the queen−mother, with a look earnest and pale. The Duke, who knew not what was expected, was reading the morning Times quite unconcerned. Suddenly the earl entered, leading in the surprised, bewildered Flora, alone. Instantly upon beholding her the king exclaimed, `It is the face of my aunt the Dutchess! It must be my sister.'

The duke looked up and seeing her gazed for an instant in amazement. He looked from her to the earl, caught a glimpse of Bonfield through the half open door, and cried,

`If this be the maiden, she is the king's sister. Never was such a likeness!'

The king hastened towards her and folded her to his heart.

`My sister my long−lost, dear sister! '

The Queen−mother embraced her child with deep−hearted language of recogninition. The duke knelt and kissed her hand. Edgar, Bonfield, and Mary witnessed this scene with surprise. The earl led them into the Cabinet, and in a few minutes Flora and all were made to understand that the long lost and found was a King's sister a royal princess.

Who shall describe the amazed wonder and joy of Bonfield? The deep gratitude of Mary? The hopes and fears of the young bridegroom?

The whole story of her life was now told to the whole party by the earl. Flora was offered the crown by the King; but refused it, disclaiming it altogether. The young husband was offered an earldom and estates in keeping with his rank, but he begged leave to decline them. Both he and Flora preferred the retirement of private life. The King settled upon his sister one hundred thousand pounds, and she in a few weeks returned to the United Statss with her republican husband. The secret, at Flora's request, was hept by the King and all present. It was only divulged at Bonfield's death, who had written the whole story and left it among his papers. He was enriched by the King, and died at Boston under the name of Captain Sart. Mary returned to America with Flora, and still shines like a pleasant spirit−star upon her domestic hearth.

The royal bride and bridegroom returned to the United States under the name of Mr. and Mrs. Channing simply, and put up in the Exchange, in that day the fashionable and best hotel in the city of Boston.

The old merchant soon learned that his son and wife had got back again after four months' absence, and he stoutly resolved that he would not receive him into his house, if he came out to pay him a visit. Master Frederick met him the day after his arrival and gave him a decided *cut*. Margaret sat down and addressed to her brother the following note:

`Mr. Edgar Channing,

`I write to say that you need not take the trouble to visit Hawthorn Lodge, for we have resolved to disown our relationship with one who has shown himself unworthy to belong to the best society. As for your wife, I trust that you will see that she never presumes to speak to me, should I be so unfortunate as to meet her in the street.

`My father desires me to add, that he has resolved to make his will in favor of your cousin, who, though a despicable wretch, I would rather should enjoy his fortune than yourself. I write this that you need not take the trouble to intrude upon us.

`Margaret Channing.'

This letter caused both Edgar and his wife to smile sadly; but, as the reader may well suppose, it gave them no uneasiness. They were, fortunately, above the need of his father's estate.

It was not many days before it leaked out that Edgar Channing was a noble of high rank, and his fair wife allied closely to the royal family of England. This rumor was at length fully authenticated, and attentions from the `first people' poured in upon them. Parties were given, and although Edgar and Flora would gladly have kept retired from the gay whirl of society, they were compelled for a few days to give themselves up to it.

`What! an English nobleman? Is it possible?' exclaimed the old merchant when, pale and eager with the news, Frederick bore it to his ears and those of Margaret.

Their chastisement was severe for all they had done, for not an invitation reached Hawthorn Lodge from any of the palatial mansions wherein Edgar and his bride were entertained.

At length our hero and heroine, wearied with the attentions they received, and sighing for retirement, removed to a beautiful suborban villa, where they passed their days in elegant seclusion.

Edgar with that native generosity of character which always distinguished his conduct, understanding fully his sister's motives in writing her note to him and pitying her chagrin, called and was reconciled to her and to his father. Frederick was exiled from the house, and ordered to seek a livelihood, and so following the natural bent of his character, he took to the high−way to replenish a purse filled by his uncle, and emptied in riotous living.

Edgar and Flora are still living at their country−house, and are something in the decline of life. They are surrounded by a family of noble sons and fair daughters, who little suspect that they are the grand children of a King!

THE END.