

The Red Rover, Volume 2

James Fenimore Cooper

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The Red Rover, Volume 2

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CHAPTER I.

"Sit still, and hear the last of our sea sorrow."

—*Shakspeare.*

The weight of the tempest had been felt at that hapless moment when Earing and his unfortunate companions were precipitated from their giddy elevation into the sea. Though the wind continued to blow long after this fatal event, it was with a constantly diminishing power. As the gale decreased, the sea began to rise, and the vessel to labour in proportion. Then followed two hours of anxious watchfulness on the part of Wilder, during which the whole of his professional knowledge was needed, in order to keep the despoiled hull of the Bristol trader from becoming a prey to the greedy waters. His consummate skill, however, proved equal to the task that was required at his hands; and, just as the symptoms of day were becoming visible along the east, both wind and waves were rapidly subsiding together. During the whole of this doubtful period, our adventurer did not receive the smallest assistance from any of the crew, with the exception of two experienced seamen whom he had previously stationed at the wheel. But to this neglect he was indifferent; since little more was required than his own judgment, seconded, as it faithfully was, by the exertions of the mariners more immediately under his eye.

The day dawned on a scene entirely different from that which had marked the tempestuous deformity of the night. The whole fury of the winds appeared to have been expended in their precocious effort. From the moderate gale, to which they had fallen by the end of the middle watch, they further altered to a vacillating breeze; and, ere the sun had risen, the changeful air had subsided into a flat calm. The sea went down as suddenly as the power which had raised it vanished; and, by the time the broad golden light of the sun was shed fairly and fully upon the unstable element, it lay unruffled and polished, though still gently heaving in swells so long and heavy as to resemble the placid respiration of a sleeping infant.

The hour was still early, and the serene appearance of the sky and the ocean gave every promise of a day which might be passed in devising the expedients necessary to bring the ship again, in some measure, under the command of her people.

"Sound the pumps," said Wilder, observing that the crew were appearing from the different places in which they had bestowed their cares and their persons together, during the later hours of the night.

"Do you hear me, sir?" he added sternly, observing that no one moved to obey his order. "Let the pumps be sounded, and the ship cleared of every inch of water."

Nighthead, to whom Wilder had now addressed himself, regarded his Commander with an oblique and sullen eye, and then exchanged singularly intelligent glances with his comrades, before he saw fit to make the smallest motion towards compliance. But there was that, in the authoritative mien of his superior, which finally induced him to comply. The dilatory manner in which the seamen performed the duty was quickened, however, as the rod ascended, and the well-known signs of a formidable leak met their eyes. The experiment was repeated with greater activity, and with far more precision.

"If witchcraft can clear the hold of a ship that is already half full of water," said Nighthead, casting another sullen glance towards the attentive Wilder, "the sooner it is done the better; for the whole cunning of something more than a bungler in the same will be needed, in order to make the pumps of the 'Royal Caroline' suck!"

"Does the ship leak?" demanded his superior, with a quickness of utterance which sufficiently proclaimed how important he deemed the intelligence.

"Yesterday, I would have boldly put my name to the articles of any craft that floats the ocean; and, had the Captain asked me if I understood her nature and character, as certain as that my name is Francis Nighthead, I should have told him, yes. But I find that the oldest seaman may still learn something of the water; though it should be got in crossing a ferry in a flat."

"What mean you, sir?" demanded Wilder, who, for the first time, began to note the mutinous looks assumed by his mate, no less than the threatening manner in which he was seconded by the crew. "Have the pumps rigged without delay, and clear the ship of the water."

Nighthead slowly complied with the former part of this order; and, in a few moments, every thing was arranged to commence the necessary, and, as it would seem, urgent duty of pumping. But no man lifted his hand

to the laborious employment. The quick eye of Wilder, who had now taken the alarm, was not slow in detecting this reluctance; and he repeated the order more sternly, calling to two of the seamen, by name, to set the example of obedience. The men hesitated, giving an opportunity to the mate to confirm them, by his voice, in their mutinous intentions.

"What need of hands to work a pump in a vessel like this?" he said, with a coarse laugh, but in which secret terror struggled strangely with open malice. "After what we have all seen this night, none here will be amazed, should the vessel begin to spout out the brine like a breathing whale."

"What am I to understand by this hesitation, and by this language?" said Wilder, approaching Nighthead with a firm step, and an eye too proud to quail before the plainest symptoms of insubordination. "Is it you, sir, who should be foremost in exertion at a moment like this, who dare to set an example of disobedience?"

The mate recoiled a pace, and his lips moved; still he uttered no audible reply. Wilder once more bade him, in a calm and authoritative tone, lay his own hands to the brake. Nighthead then found his voice, in time to make a flat refusal; and, at the next moment, he was felled to the feet of his indignant Commander, by a blow he had neither the address nor the power to resist. This act of decision was succeeded by one single moment of breathless, wavering silence among the crew; and then the common cry, and the general rush of every man upon our defenceless and solitary adventurer, were the signals that open hostility had commenced. A shriek from the quarter-deck arrested their efforts, just as a dozen hands were laid violently upon the person of Wilder, and, for the moment, occasioned a truce. It was the fearful cry of Gertrude, which possessed even the influence to still the savage intentions of a set of beings so rude and so unnurtured as those whose passions had just been awakened into fierce activity. Wilder was released; and all eyes turned, by a common impulse, in the direction of the sound.

During the more momentous hours of the past night, the very existence of the passengers below had been forgotten by most of those whose duty kept them to the deck. If they had been recalled at all to the recollection of any, it was at those fleeting moments when the mind of the young mariner, who directed the movements of the ship, found leisure to catch stolen glimpses of softer scenes than the wild warring of the elements that was so actively raging before his eyes. Nighthead had named them, as he would have made allusion to a part of the cargo, but their fate had little influence on his hardened nature. Mrs Wyllys and her charge had therefore remained below during the whole period, perfectly unapprised of the disasters of the intervening time. Buried in the recesses of their births, they had heard the roaring of the winds, and the incessant washing of the waters; but these usual accompaniments of a storm had served to conceal the crashing of masts, and the hoarse cries of the mariners. For the moments of terrible suspense, while the Bristol trader lay on her side, the better informed governess had, indeed, some fearful glimmerings of the truth; but, conscious of her uselessness, and unwilling to alarm her less instructed companion, she had sufficient self-command to be mute. The subsequent silence, and comparative calm, induced her to believe that she had been mistaken in her apprehensions; and, long ere morning dawned, both she and Gertrude had sunk into sweet and refreshing slumbers. They had risen and mounted to the deck together, and were still in the first burst of their wonder at the desolation which met their gaze, when the long-meditated attack on Wilder was made.

"What means this awful change?" demanded Mrs Wyllys, with a lip that quivered, and a cheek which, notwithstanding the extraordinary power she possessed over her feelings, was blanched to the colour of death.

The eye of Wilder was glowing, and his brow was dark as those heavens from which they had just so happily escaped, as he answered, menacing his assailants with an arm,—

"It means mutiny, Madam; rascally, cowardly mutiny!"

"Could mutiny strip a vessel of her masts, and leave her a helpless log upon the sea?"

"Hark ye, Madam!" roughly interrupted the mate; "to you I will speak freely; for it is well known who you are, and that you came on board the 'Caroline' a paying passenger. This night have I seen the heavens and the ocean behave as I have never seen them behave before. Ships have been running afore the wind, light and buoyant as corks, with all their spars stepped and steady, when other ships have been shaved of every mast as close as the razor sweeps the chin. Cruisers have been fallen in with, sailing without living hands to work them; and, all together, no man here has ever before passed a middle watch like the one gone by."

"And what has this to do with the violence I have just witnessed? Is the vessel fated to endure every evil!—Can *you* explain this, Mr Wilder?"

"You cannot say, at least, you had no warning of danger," returned Wilder, smiling bitterly.

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"Ay, the devil is obliged to be honest on compulsion," resumed the mate. "Each of his imps sails with his orders; and, thank Heaven! however he may be minded to overlook the same, he has neither courage nor power to do it. Otherwise, a peaceful voyage would be such a rarity, in these unsettled times, that few men would be found hardy enough to venture on the water for a livelihood.—A warning! Ay, we will own you gave us open and frequent warning. It was a notice, that the consignee should not have overlooked, when Nicholas Nichols met with the hurt, as the anchor was leaving the bottom. I never knew an accident happen at such a time, and no evil come of it. Then, had we a warning with the old man in the boat; besides the neverfailing ill luck of sending the pilot violently out of the ship. As if all this wasn't enough, instead of taking a hint, and lying peaceably at our anchors, we got the ship under way, and left a safe and friendly harbour of a Friday, of all the days in a week! So far from being surprised at what has happened, I only wonder at finding myself still a living man; the reason of which is simply this, that I have given my faith where faith only is due, and not to unknown mariners and strange Commanders. Had Edward Earing done the same, he might still have had a plank between him and the bottom; but, though half inclined to believe in the truth, he had, after all, too much leaning to superstition and credulity."

This laboured and characteristic profession of faith in the mate, though sufficiently intelligible to Wilder, was still a perfect enigma to his female listeners. But Nighthead had not formed his resolution by halves, neither had he gone thus far, with any intention to stop short of the completion of his whole design. In a very few summary words, he explained to Mrs Wyllys the desolate condition of the ship, and the utter improbability that she could continue to float many hours; since actual observation had told him that her lower hold was already half full of water.

"And what is then to be done?" demanded the governess, casting a glance of bitter distress towards the pallid and attentive Gertrude. "Is there no sail in sight, to take us from the wreck? or must we perish in our helplessness!"

"God protect us from any more strange sails!" exclaimed the surly Nighthead. "There we have the pinnace hanging at the stern, and here must be land at some forty leagues to the north-west. Water and food are plenty, and twelve stout hands can soon pull a boat to the continent of America; that is, always provided, America is left where it was seen no later than at the sun-set of yesterday."

"You then propose to abandon the vessel?"

"I do. The interest of the owners is dear to all good seamen, but life is sweeter than gold."

"The will of heaven be done! But surely you meditate no violence against this gentleman, who, I am quite certain, has governed the vessel, in very critical circumstances, with a discretion far beyond his years!"

Nighthead muttered his intentions, whatever they might be, to himself; and then he walked apart, apparently to confer with the men, who already seemed but too well disposed to second any of his views, however mistaken or lawless. During the few moments of suspense that succeeded, Wilder stood silent and composed, a smile of something like scorn struggling about his lip, and maintaining the air rather of one who had power to decide on the fortunes of others, than of a man whose own fate was most probably at that very moment in discussion. When the dull minds of the seamen had arrived at their conclusion, the mate advanced to proclaim the result, Indeed, words were unnecessary, in order to make known a very material part of their decision; for a party of the men proceeded instantly to lower the stern-boat into the water, while others set about supplying it with the necessary means of subsistence.

"There is room for all the Christians in the ship to stow themselves in this pinnace," resumed Nighthead; "and as for those that place their dependance on any particular persons, why, let them call for aid where they have been used to receive it."

"From all which I am to infer that it is your intention," said Wilder, calmly, "to abandon the wreck, and your duty?"

The half-awed but still resentful mate returned a look in which fear and triumph struggled for the mastery, as he answered,—

"You, who know how to sail a ship without a crew, can never want a boat! Besides, you shall never say to your friends, whoever they may be, that we leave you without the means of reaching the land, if you are indeed a land-bird at all. There is the launch."

"There is the launch! but well do you know, that, without masts, all your united strengths could not lift it from the deck; else would it not be left."

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"They that took the masts out of the `Caroline' can put them in again," rejoined a grinning seaman; "it will not be an hour after we leave you, before a sheer-hulk will come alongside, to step the spars again, and then you may go cruise in company."

Wilder appeared to be superior to any reply. He began to pace the deck, thoughtful, it is true, but still composed, and entirely self-possessed. In the mean time, as a common desire to quit the wreck as soon as possible actuated all the men, their preparations advanced with incredible activity. The wondering and alarmed females had hardly time to think clearly on the extraordinary situation in which they found themselves, before they saw the form of the helpless Master borne past them to the boat; and, in another minute, they were summoned to take their places at his side.

Thus imperiously called upon to act, they began to feel the necessity of decision. Remonstrances, they feared, would be useless; for the fierce and malignant looks which were cast, from time to time, at Wilder, as the labour proceeded, proclaimed the danger of awakening such obstinate and ignorant minds into renewed acts of violence. The governess bethought her of an appeal to the wounded man; but the look of wild care which he had cast about him, on being lifted to the deck, and the expression of bodily and mental pain that gleamed across his rugged features, as he buried them in the blankets by which he was enveloped, but too plainly announced that little assistance was, in his present condition, to be expected from him.

"What remains for us to do?" she at length demanded of the seemingly insensible object of her concern.

"I would I knew!" he answered quickly, casting a keen but hurried glance around the whole horizon. "It is not improbable that they should reach the shore. Four-and-twenty hours of calm will assure it."

"And if otherwise?"

"A blow at north-west, or from any quarter off the land, will prove their ruin."

"But the ship?"

"If deserted, she must sink."

"Then will I speak in your favour to these hearts of flint! I know not why I feel such interest in your welfare, inexplicable young man, but much would I suffer rather than believe that you incurred this peril."

"Stop, dearest Madam," said Wilder, respectfully arresting her movement with his hand. "I cannot leave the vessel."

"We know not yet. The most stubborn natures may be subdued; even ignorance can be made to open its ears at the voice of entreaty. I may prevail."

"There is one temper to be quelled—one reason to convince—one prejudice to conquer, over which you have no power."

"Whose is that?"

"My own."

"What mean you, sir? Surely you are not weak enough to suffer resentment against such beings to goad you to an act of madness?"

"Do I seem mad?" demanded Wilder. "The feeling by which I am governed may be false, but, such as it is, it is grafted on my habits, my opinions; I will say, my principles. Honour forbids me to quit a ship that I command, while a plank of her is afloat."

"Of what use can a single arm prove at such a crisis?"

"None," he answered, with a melancholy smile.

"I must die, in order that others, who may be serviceable hereafter, should do their duty."

Both Mrs Wyllys and Gertrude stood regarding his kindling eye, but otherwise placid countenance, with looks whose concern amounted to horror. The former read, in the very composure of his mien, the unalterable character of his resolution; and the latter, shuddering as the prospect of the cruel fate which awaited him crowded on her mind, felt a glow about her own youthful heart that almost tempted her to believe his self-devotion commendable. But the governess saw new reasons for apprehension in the determination of Wilder. If she had hitherto felt reluctance to trust herself and her ward with a band such as that which now possessed the sole authority, it was more than doubly increased by the rude and noisy summons she received to hasten and take her place among them.

"Would to Heaven I knew in what manner to choose!" she exclaimed. "Speak to us, young man, as you would counsel mother and sister."

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"Were I so fortunate as to possess relatives so near and dear," returned the other, with emphasis, "nothing should separate us at a time like this."

"Is there hope for those who remain on the wreck?"

"But little."

"And in the boat?"

It was near a minute before Wilder made any answer. He again turned his look around the bright and broad horizon, and he appeared to study the heavens, in the direction of the distant Continent, with infinite care. No omen that could indicate the probable character of the weather escaped his vigilance, while his countenance reflected all the various emotions by which he was governed, as he gazed.

"As I am a man, Madam," he answered with fervour, "and one who is bound not only to counsel but to protect your sex, I distrust the time. I think the chance of being seen by some passing sail equal to the probability that those who adventure in the pinnace will ever reach the land."

"Then let us remain," said Gertrude, the blood, for the first time since her re-appearance on deck, rushing into her colourless cheeks, until they appeared charged to fulness. "I like not the wretches who would be our companions in that boat."

"Away, away!" impatiently shouted Nighthead. "Each minute of light is a week of life to us all, and every moment of calm, a year. Away, away, or we leave you!"

Mrs Wyllys answered not, but she stood the image of doubt and painful indecision. Then the splash of oars was heard in the water, and at the next moment the pinnace was seen gliding over the element, impelled by the strong arms of six powerful rowers.

"Stay!" shrieked the governess, no longer undetermined; "receive my child, though you abandon me!"

A wave of the hand, and an indistinct rumbling in the coarse tones of the mate, were the only answers given to her appeal. A long, deep, and breathing silence followed among the deserted. The grim countenances of the seamen in the pinnace soon became confused and indistinct; and then the boat itself began to lessen on the eye, until it seemed no more than a dark and distant speck, rising and falling with the flow and reflux of the blue waters. During all this time, not even a whispered word was spoken. Each of the party gazed, until sight grew dim, at the receding object; and it was only when his organs refused to convey the tiny image to his brain, that Wilder himself shook off the impression of the sort of trance into which he had fallen. His look became bent on his companions, and he pressed his hand upon his forehead, as though his brain were bewildered by the deep responsibility he had assumed in advising them to remain. But the sickening apprehension quickly passed away, leaving in its place a firmer mind, and a resolution too often tried, in scenes of doubtful issue, to be long or easily shaken from its calmness and self-possession.

"They are gone!" he exclaimed, breathing long and heavily, like one whose respiration had been unnaturally suspended.

"They are gone!" echoed the governess, turning an eye, that was contracting with the intensity of her care, on the marble-like and motionless form of her pupil. "There is no longer any hope."

The look that Wilder bestowed, on the same silent but lovely statue, was scarcely less expressive than the gaze of her who had nurtured the infancy of the Southern Heiress, in innocence and love. His brow grew thoughtful, and his lips became compressed, while all the resources of his fertile imagination and long experience gathered in his mind, in engrossing, intense reflection.

"Is there hope?" demanded the governess, who was watching the change of his working countenance, with an attention that never swerved.

The gloom passed away from his swarthy features, and the smile that lighted them was like the radiance of the sun, as it breaks through the blackest vapours of the drifting gust.

"There is!" he said with firmness; "our case is far from desperate."

"Then, may He who rules the ocean and the land receive the praise!" cried the grateful governess, giving vent to her long-suppressed agony in a flood of tears.

Gertrude cast herself upon the neck of Mrs Wyllys, and for a minute their unrestrained emotions were mingled.

"And now, my dearest Madam," said Gertrude, leaving the arms of her governess, "let us trust to the skill of Mr Wilder; he has foreseen and foretold this danger; equally well may he predict our safety."

"Foreseen and foretold!" returned the other, in a manner to show that her faith in the professional prescience of

the stranger was not altogether so unbounded as that of her more youthful and ardent companion. "No mortal could have foreseen this awful calamity; and least of all, foreseeing it, would he have sought to incur its danger! Mr Wilder, I will not annoy you with requests for explanations that might now be useless, but you will not refuse to communicate your grounds of hope."

Wilder hastened to relieve a curiosity that he well knew must be as painful as it was natural. The mutineers had left the largest, and much the safest, of the two boats belonging to the wreck, from a desire to improve the calm, well knowing that hours of severe labour would be necessary to launch it, from the place it occupied between the stumps of the two principal masts, into the ocean. This operation, which might have been executed in a few minutes with the ordinary purchases of the ship, would have required all their strength united, and that, too, to be exercised with a discretion and care that would have consumed too many of those moments which they rightly deemed to be so precious at that wild and unstable season of the year. Into this little ark Wilder proposed to convey such articles of comfort and necessity as he might hastily collect from the abandoned vessel; and then, entering it with his companions, to await the critical instant when the wreck should sink from beneath them.

"Call you this hope?" exclaimed Mrs Wyllys, when his short explanation was ended, her cheek again blanching with disappointment. "I have heard that the gulf, which foundering vessels leave, swallows all lesser objects that are floating nigh!"

"It sometimes happens. For worlds I would not deceive you; and I now say that I think our chance for escape equal to that of being engulfed with the vessel."

"This is terrible!" murmured the governess, "but the will of Heaven be done! Cannot ingenuity supply the place of strength, and the boat be cast from the decks before the fatal moment arrives?"

Wilder shook his head in an unequivocal negative.

"We are not so weak as you may think us," said Gertrude. "Give a direction to our efforts, and let us see what may yet be done. Here is Cassandra," she added—turning to the black girl already introduced to the reader, who stood behind her young and ardent mistress, with the mantle and shawls of the latter thrown over her arm, as if about to attend her on an excursion for the morning—"here is Cassandra, who alone has nearly the strength of a man."

"Had she the strength of twenty, I should despair of launching the boat without the aid of machinery. But we lose time in words; I will go below, in order to judge of the probable duration of our doubt; and then to our preparations. Even you, fair and fragile as you seem, lovely being, may aid in the latter."

He then pointed out such lighter objects as would be necessary to their comfort, should they be so fortunate as to get clear of the wreck, and advised their being put into the boat without delay. While the three females were thus usefully employed, he descended into the hold of the ship, in order to note the increase of the water, and make his calculations on the time that would elapse before the sinking fabric must entirely disappear. The fact proved their case to be more alarming than even Wilder had been led to expect. Stripped of her masts, the vessel had laboured so heavily as to open many of her seams; and, as the upper works began to settle beneath the level of the ocean, the influx of the element was increasing with frightful rapidity. As the young mariner gazed about him with an understanding eye, he cursed, in the bitterness of his heart, the ignorance and superstition that had caused the desertion of the remainder of the crew. There existed, in reality, no evil that exertion and skill could not have remedied; but, deprived of all aid, he at once saw the folly of even attempting to procrastinate a catastrophe that was now unavoidable. Returning with a heavy heart to the deck, he immediately set about those dispositions which were necessary to afford them the smallest chance of escape.

While his companions deadened the sense of apprehension by their light but equally necessary employment, Wilder stepped the two masts of the boat, and properly disposed of the sails, and those other implements that might be useful in the event of success. Thus occupied, a couple of hours flew by, as though minutes were compressed into moments. At the expiration of that period, his labour had ceased. He then cut the gripes that had kept the launch in its place when the ship was in motion, leaving it standing upright on its wooden beds, but in no other manner connected with the hull, which, by this time, had settled so low as to create the apprehension, that, at any moment, it might sink from beneath them. After this measure of precaution was taken, the females were summoned to the boat, lest the crisis might be nearer than he supposed; for he well knew that a foundering ship was, like a tottering wall, liable at any moment to yield to the impulse of the downward pressure. He then commenced the scarcely less necessary operation of selection among the chaos of articles with which the

ill-directed zeal of his companions had so cumbered the boat, that there was hardly room left in which they might dispose of their more precious persons. Notwithstanding the often repeated and vociferous remonstrances of the negress, boxes, trunks, and packages flew from either side of the launch, as though Wilder had no consideration for the comfort and care of that fair being in whose behalf Cassandra, unheeded, like her ancient namesake of Troy, lifted her voice so often in the tones of remonstrance. The boat was soon cleared of what, under their circumstances, was literally lumber; leaving, however, far more than enough to meet all their wants, and not a few of their comforts, in the event that the elements should accord the permission to use them.

Then, and not till then, did Wilder relax in his exertions. He had arranged his sails, ready to be hoisted in an instant; he had carefully examined that no straggling rope connected the boat to the wreck, to draw them under with the foundering mass; and he had assured himself that food, water, compass, and the imperfect instruments that were then in use to ascertain the position of a ship, were all carefully disposed of in their several places, and ready to his hand. When all was in this state of preparation, he disposed of himself in the stern of the boat, and endeavoured, by the composure of his manner, to inspire his less resolute companions with a portion of his own firmness.

The bright sun-shine was sleeping in a thousand places on every side of the silent and deserted wreck. The sea had subsided to such a state of utter rest, that it was only at long intervals that the huge and helpless mass on which the ark of the expectants lay was lifted from its dull quietude, to roll heavily, for a moment, in the washing waters, and then to settle lower into the greedy and absorbing element. Still the disappearance of the hull was slow, and even tedious, to those who looked forward with such impatience to its total immersion, as to the crisis of their own fortunes.

During these hours of weasy and awful suspense, the discourse, between the watchers, though conducted in tones of confidence, and often of tenderness, was broken by long intervals of deep and musing silence. Each forbore to dwell upon the danger of their situation, in consideration of the feelings of the rest; but neither could conceal the imminent risk they ran, from that jealous watchfulness of love of life which was common to them all. In this manner, minutes, hours, and the day itself, rolled by, and the darkness was seen stealing along the deep, gradually narrowing the boundary of their view towards the east, until the whole of the empty scene was limited to a little dusky circle around the spot on which they lay. To this change succeeded another fearful hour, during which it appeared that death was about to visit them, environed by its most revolting horrors. The heavy plunge of the wallowing whale, as he cast his huge form upon the surface of the sea, was heard, accompanied by the mimic blowings of a hundred imitators, that followed in the train of the monarch of the ocean. It appeared, to the alarmed and feverish imagination of Gertrude, that the brine was giving up all its monsters; and, notwithstanding the calm assurances of Wilder, that these accustomed sounds were rather the harbingers of peace than signs of any new danger, they filled her mind with images of the secret recesses over which they seemed suspended by a thread, and painted them replete with the disgusting inhabitants of the caverns of the great deep. The intelligent seaman himself was startled, when he saw, on the surface of the water, the dark fins of the voracious shark stealing around the wreck, apprised, by his instinct, that the contents of the devoted vessel were shortly to become the prey of his tribe. Then came the moon; with its mild and deceptive light, to throw the delusion of its glow on the varying but ever frightful scene.

"See," said Wilder, as the luminary lifted its pale and melancholy orb out of the bed of the ocean; "we shall have light for our hazardous launch!"

"Is it at hand?" demanded Mrs Wyllys, with all the resolution of manner she could assume in so trying a situation.

"It is—the ship has already brought her scuppers to the water. Sometimes a vessel will float until saturated with the brine. If ours sink at all, it will be soon."

"If at all! Is there then hope that she can float?"

"None!" said Wilder, pausing to listen to the hollow and threatening sounds which issued from the depths of the vessel, as the water broke through her divisions, in passing from side to side, and which sounded like the groaning of some heavy monster in the last agony of nature. "None; she is already losing her level!"

His companions saw the change; but, not for the empire of the world, could either of them have uttered a syllable. Another low, threatening, rumbling sound was heard, and then the pent air beneath blew up the forward part of the deck, with an explosion like that of a gun.

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"Now grasp the ropes I have given you!" cried Wilder, breathless with his eagerness to speak.

His words were smothered by the rushing and gurgling of waters. The vessel made a plunge like a dying whale; and, raising its stern high into the air, glided into the depths of the sea, like the leviathan seeking his secret places. The motionless boat was lifted with the ship, until it stood in an attitude fearfully approaching to the perpendicular. As the wreck descended, the bows of the launch met the element, burying themselves nearly to filling; but, buoyant and light, it rose again, and, struck powerfully on the stern by the settling mass, the little ark shot ahead, as thog it had been driven by the hand of man. Still, as the water rushed into the vortex, every thing within its influence yielded to the suction; and, at the next instant, the launch was seen darting down the declivity, as if eager to follow the vast machine, of which it had so long formed a dependant, through the same gaping whirlpool, to the bottom. Then it rose, rocking, to the surface; and, for a moment, was tossed and whirled like a bubble circling in the eddies of a pool. After which, the ocean moaned, and slept again; the moon-beams playing across its treacherous bosom, sweetly and calm, as the rays are seen to quiver on a lake that is embedded in sheltering mountains.

CHAPTER II.

—"Every day, some sailor's wife, The masters of some merchant, and the merchant, Have just our theme of woe."

Tempest.

"We are safe!" said Wilder, who had stood, amid the violence of the struggle, with his person firmly braced against a mast, steadily watching the manner of their escape. "Thus far, at least, are we safe; for which may Heaven alone be praised, since no art of mine could avail us a feather."

The females had buried their faces in the folds of the vestments and clothes on which they were sitting; nor did even the governess raise her countenance, until twice assured by her companion that the imminency of the risk was past. Another minute went by, during which Mrs Wyllys and Gertrude were rendering their thanksgivings, in a manner and in words less equivocal than the expression which had just broken from the lips of the young seaman. When this grateful duty was performed, they stood erect, as if emboldened, by the offering, to look their situation more steadily in the face.

On every side lay the seemingly illimitable waste of waters. To them, their small and frail tenement was the world. So long as the ship, sinking and dangerous as she was, remained beneath them, there had appeared to be a barrier between their existence and the ocean. But one minute had deprived them of even this failing support, and they now found themselves cast upon the sea in a vessel that might be likened to one of the bubbles of the element. Gertrude felt, at that instant, as though she would have given half her hopes in life for the mere sight of that vast and nearly untenanted Continent which stretched for so many thousands of miles along the west, and kept the world of waters to their limits.

But the rush of emotions that so properly belonged to their forlorn condition soon subsided, and their thoughts returned to the study of the means necessary to their further safety. Wilder had, however, anticipated these feelings; and, even before Mrs Wyllys and Gertrude had recovered their recollections, he was occupied, aided by the ready hands of the terrified but loquacious Cassandra, in arranging the contents of the boat in such a manner as would enable her to move through the element with the least possible resistance.

"With a well-trimmed ship, and a fair breeze," cried our adventurer, cheerfully, so soon as his little job was ended, "we may yet hope to reach the land in one day and another night. I have seen the hour when, in this good launch, I would not have hesitated to run the length of the American coast, provided"—

"You have forgotten your provided," said Gertrude, observing that he hesitated, probably from a reluctance to express any exception to the opinion, which might increase the fears of his companions.

"Provided it were two months earlier in the year," he added, in a tone of less confidence.

"The season, is, then, against us: It only requires the greater resolution in ourselves!"

Wilder turned his head to regard the fair speaker, whose pale and placid countenance, as the moon silvered her fine features, expressed any thing but the courage to endure the hardships he so well knew she was liable to encounter, before they might hope to gain the Continent. After musing a moment, he lifted his open hand towards the south-west, and held its palm some little time to the air of the night.

"Any thing is better than idleness, for people in our condition," he said. "There are some symptoms of the breeze coming in this quarter; I will be ready to meet it."

He then spread his two lug-sails; and, trimming aft the sheets, placed himself at the helm, like one who expected his services there might be shortly needed. The result did not disappoint his expectations. Ere long, the light canvas of the boat began to flutter; and then, as he brought the bows in the proper direction, the little vessel commenced moving slowly along its blind and watery path.

The wind soon came fresher upon the sails, heavily charged with the dampness of the hour. Wilder urged the latter reason as a motive for the females to seek their rest beneath a little canopy of tarpaulings, which his foresight had also provided, and on mattresses he had brought from the ship. Perceiving that their protector wished to be alone, Mrs Wyllys and her pupil did as desired; and, in a few minutes, if not asleep, no one could have told that any other than our adventurer had possession of the solitary launch.

The middle hour of the night went by, without any material change in the prospects of those whose fate so

much depended on the precarious influence of the weather. The wind had freshened to a smart breeze; and, by the calculations of Wilder, he had already moved across many leagues of ocean, directly in a line for the eastern end of that long and narrow isle that separates the waters which wash the shores of Connecticut from those of the open sea. The minutes flew swiftly by; for the time was propitious, and the thoughts of the young seaman were busy with the recollections of a short but adventurous life. At moments he leaned forward, as if he would catch the gentle respiration of one who slept beneath the dark and rude canopy, and as though he might distinguish the soft breathings of her slumbers from those of her companions. Then would his form fall back into its seat, and his lip curl, or even move, as he gave inward utterance to the wayward fancies of his imagination. But at no time, not even in the midst of his greatest abandonment to reverie and thought, did he forget the constant, and nearly instinctive, duties of his station. A rapid glance at the heavens, an oblique look at the compass, and an occasional, but more protracted, examination of the pale face of the melancholy moon, were the usual directions taken by his practised eyes. The latter was still in the zenith; and his brow began again to contract, as he saw that she was shining through an atmosphere without a haze. He would have liked better to have seen even those portentous and watery circles by which she is so often environed, and which are thought to foretel the tempest, than the hard and dry medium through which her beams fell so clear upon the face of the waters. The humidity with which the breeze had commenced was also gone; and, in its place, the quick, sensitive organs of the seaman detected the often grateful, though at that moment unwelcome, taint of the land. All these were signs that the airs from the Continent were about to prevail, and (as he dreaded, from certain wild-looking, long, narrow clouds, that were gathering over the western horizon) to prevail with a power conformable to the turbulent season of the year.

If any doubt had existed in the mind of Wilder as to the accuracy of his prognostics, it would have been solved about the commencement of the morning watch. At that hour the inconstant breeze began again to die; and, even before its last breathing was felt upon the flapping canvas, it was met by counter currents from the west. Our adventurer saw at once that the struggle was now truly to commence, and he made his dispositions accordingly. The square sheets of duck, which had so long been exposed to the mild airs of the south, were reduced to one third their original size, by double reefs; and several of the more cumbrous of the remaining articles, such as were of doubtful use to persons in their situation, were cast, without pausing to hesitate, into the sea. Nor was this care without a sufficient object. The air soon came sighing heavily over the deep from the north-west, bringing with it the chilling asperity of the inhospitable regions of the Canadas.

"Ah! well do I know you," muttered Wilder, as the first puff of this unwelcome wind struck his sails, and forced the little boat to bend to its power in passing; "well do I know you, with your fresh-water flavour and your smell of the land! Would to God you had blown your fill upon the lakes, without coming down to drive many a weary seaman back upon his wake, and to eke out a voyage, already too long, by your bitter colds and steady obstinacy!"

"Do you speak?" said Gertrude, half appearing from beneath her canopy, and then shrinking back, shivering, into its cover again, as she felt the influence in the change of air.

"Sleep, Lady, sleep," he answered, as though he liked not, at such a moment, to be disturbed by even her soft and silvery voice.

"Is there new danger?" asked the maiden, stepping lightly from the mattress, as if she would not disturb the repose of her governess. "You need not fear to tell me the worst: I am a soldier's child!"

He pointed to the signs so well comprehended by himself, but continued silent.

"I feel that the wind is colder than it was," she said, "but I see no other change."

"And do you know whither the boat is going?"

"To the land, I think. You assured us of that, and I do not believe you would willingly deceive."

"You do me justice; and, as a proof of it, I will now tell you that you are mistaken. I know that to your eyes all points of the compass, on this void, must seem the same; but I cannot thus easily deceive myself."

"And we are not sailing for our homes?"

"So far from it, that, should this course continue, we must cross the whole Atlantic before your eyes could again see land."

Gertrude made no reply, but retired, in sorrow, to the side of her governess. In the mean time, Wilder, again left to himself, began to consult his compass and the direction of the wind. Perceiving that he might approach nearer to the continent of America by changing the position of the boat, he wore round, and brought its head as

nigh up to the south-west as the wind would permit.

But there was little hope in this trifling change. At each minute, the power of the breeze was increasing, until it soon freshened to a degree that compelled him to furl his after-sail. The slumbering ocean was not long in awakening; and, by the time the launch was snug under a close-reefed fore-sail, the boat was rising on dark and ever-growing waves, or sinking into the momentary calm of deep furrows, whence it rose again, to feel the rapidly increasing power of the blasts. The dashing of the waters, and the rushing of the wind, which now began to sweep heavily across the blue waste, quickly drew the females to the side of our adventurer. To their hurried and anxious questions he made considerate but brief replies, like a man who felt that the time was far better suited to action than to words.

In this manner the last lingering minutes of the night went by, loaded with a care that each moment rendered heavier, and which each successive freshening of the breeze had a tendency to render doubly anxious. The day came, only to bestow more distinctness on the cheerless prospect. The waves were looking green and angrily, while, here and there, large crests of foam were beginning to break on their summits—the certain evidence that a conflict betwixt the elements was at hand. Then came the sun over the ragged margin of the eastern horizon, climbing slowly into the blue arch above, which lay clear, chilling, distinct, and entirely without a cloud.

Wilder noted all these changes of the hour with a closeness that proved how critical he deemed their case. He seemed rather to consult the signs of the heavens than to regard the tossings and rushings of the water, which dashed against the side of his little vessel in a manner that, to the eyes of his companions, often appeared to threaten their total destruction. To the latter he was too much accustomed, to anticipate the true moment of alarm, though to less instructed senses it might already seem so dangerous. It was to him as is the thunder, when compared to the lightning, in the mind of the philosopher; or rather he knew, that, if harm might come from the one on which he floated, its ability to injure must first be called into action by the power of the sister element.

"What think you of our case now?" asked Mrs Wyllys, keeping her look closely fastened on his countenance, as if she would rather trust its expression, than even to his words for the answer.

"So long as the wind continues thus, we may yet hope to keep within the route of ships to and from the great northern ports; but, if it freshen to a gale, and the sea begin to break with violence, I doubt the ability of this boat to lie-to."

"Then our resource must be in endeavouring to run before the gale."

"Then must we scud."

"What would be our direction, in such an event?" demanded Gertrude, to whose mind, in the agitation of the ocean and the naked view on every hand, all idea of places and distances was lost, in the most inextricable confusion.

"In such an event," returned our adventurer, regarding her with a look in which commiseration and indefinite concern were so singularly mingled, that her own mild gaze was changed into a timid and furtive glance, "in such an event, we should be leaving that land it is so important to reach."

"What 'em 'ere?" cried Cassandra, whose large dark eyes were rolling on every side of her, with a curiosity that no care or sense of danger could extinguish; "'em berry big fish on a water?"

"It is a boat!" cried Wilder, springing upon a thwart, to catch a glimpse of a dark object that was driving on the glittering crest of a wave, within a hundred feet of the spot where the launch itself was struggling through the brine. "What ho!—boat, ahoy!—holloa there!—boat, ahoy!"

The deep breathing of the wind swept by them, but no human sound responded to his shout. They had already fallen, between two seas, into a deep vale of water, where the narrow view extended no farther than the dark and rolling barriers on either side.

"Merciful Providence!" exclaimed the governess, "can there be others as unhappy as ourselves!"

"It was a boat, or my sight is not true as usual," returned Wilder, still keeping his stand, to watch the moment when he might catch another view. His wish was quickly realized. He had trusted the helm, for the moment, to the hands of Cassandra, who suffered the launch to vary a little from its course. The words were still on his lips, when the same black object came sweeping down the wave to windward, and a pinnacle, bottom upwards, washed past them in the trough. Then followed a shriek from the negress, who abandoned the tiller, and, sinking on her knees, hid her face in her hands. Wilder instinctively caught the helm, as he bent his face in the direction whence the revolting eye of Cassandra had been turned. A grim human form was seen, erect, and half exposed, advancing in

the midst of the broken crest which was still covering the dark declivity to windward with foam. For a moment, it stood with the brine dripping from the drenched locks, like some being that had issued from the deep to turn its frightful features on the spectators; and then the lifeless body of a drowned man drove past the launch, which, at the next minute, rose to the summit of the wave, to sink into another vale, where no such terrifying object floated.

Not only Wilder, but Gertrude and Mrs Wyllys, had seen this startling spectacle so nigh them as to recognize the countenance of Nighthead, rendered still more stern and forbidding than ever, in the impression left by death. But neither spoke, nor gave any other evidence of their intelligence. Wilder hoped that his companions had at least escaped the shock of recognizing the victim; and the females themselves saw, in the hapless fortune of the mutineer, too much of their own probable though more protracted fate, to be able to give vent to the horror each felt so deeply, in words. For some time, the elements alone were heard sighing a sort of hoarse requiem over the victims of their conflict.

"The pinnacle has filled!" Wilder at length observed, when he saw, by the pallid features and meaning eyes of his companions, it was in vain to affect reserve on the subject any longer. "Their boat was frail, and loaded to the water's edge."

"Think you all are lost?" observed Mrs Wyllys, in a voice that scarcely amounted to a whisper.

"There is no hope for any! Gladly would I part with an arm, for the assistance of the poorest of those misguided seamen, who have hurried on their evil fortune by their own disobedience and ignorance."

"And, of all the happy and thoughtless human beings who lately left the harbour of Newport, in a vessel that has so long been the boast of mariners, we alone remain!"

"There is not another: This boat, and its contents, are the sole memorials of the `Royal Caroline! ' "

"It was not within the ken of human knowledge to foresee this evil," continued the governess, fastening her eye on the countenance of Wilder, as though she would ask a question which conscience told her, at the same time, betrayed a portion of that very superstition which had hastened the fate of the rude being they had so lately passed.

"It was not."

"And the danger, to which you so often and so inexplicably alluded, had no reference to this we have incurred?"

"It had not."

"It has gone, with the change in our situation?"

"I hope it has."

"See!" interrupted Gertrude, laying a hand, in her haste, on the arm of Wilder. "Heaven be praised! yonder is something at last to relieve the view."

"It is a ship!" exclaimed her governess; but, an envious wave lifting its green side between them and the object, they sunk into a trough, as though the vision had been placed momentarily before their eyes, merely to taunt them with its image. The quick glance of Wilder had caught, however, a glimpse of the tracery against the heavens, as they descended. When the boat rose again, his look was properly directed, and he was enabled to be certain of the reality of the vessel. Wave succeeded wave, and moments followed moments, during which the stranger was given to their gaze, and as often disappeared, as the launch unavoidably fell into the troughs of the seas. These short and hasty glimpses sufficed, however, to convey all that was necessary to the eye of a man who had been nurtured on that element, where circumstances now exacted of him such constant and unequivocal evidences of his skill.

At the distance of a mile, there was in fact a ship to be seen, rolling and pitching gracefully, and without any apparent effort, on those waves through which the launch was struggling with such difficulty. A solitary sail was set, to steady the vessel, and that so reduced, by reefs, as to look like a little snowy cloud amid the dark maze of rigging and spars. At times, her long and tapering masts appeared pointing to the zenith, or even rolling as if inclining against the wind; and then, again, with slow and graceful sweeps, they seemed to fall towards the ruffled surface of the ocean, as though about to seek refuge from their endless motion, in the bosom of the agitated element itself. There were moments when the long, low, and black hull was seen distinctly resting on the summit of a sea, and glittering in the sun-beams, as the water washed from her sides; and then, as boat and vessel sunk together, all was lost to the eye, even to the attenuated lines of her tallest and most delicate spars.

Both Mrs Wyllys and Gertrude bowed their faces to their knees, when assured of the truth of their hopes, and

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poured out their gratitude in silent and secret thanksgivings. The joy of Cassandra was more clamorous, and less restrained. The simple negress laughed, shed tears, and exulted in the most touching manner, on the prospect that was now offered for the escape of her young mistress and herself from a death that the recent sight had set before her imagination in the most frightful form. But no answering look of congratulation was to be traced in the contracting and anxious eye of their companion.

"Now," said Mrs Wyllys, seizing his hand in both her own, "may we hope to be delivered; and then shall we be allowed, brave and excellent young man, some opportunity of proving to you how highly we esteem your services."

Wilder permitted the burst of her feelings with a species of bewildered care, but he neither spoke, nor in any other manner exhibited the smallest sympathy in her joy.

"Surely you are not grieved, Mr Wilder," added the wondering Gertrude, "that the prospect of escape from these awful waves is at length so mercifully held forth to us!"

"I would gladly die to shelter you from harm," returned the young sailor; "but"—

"This is not a time for any thing but gratitude and rejoicing," interrupted the governess; "I cannot hearken to any cold exceptions now; what mean you with that `but?'" "

"It may be not so easy as you think to reach yon ship—the gale may prevent—in short, many is the vessel that is seen at sea which cannot be spoken."

"Happily, such is not our cruel fortune. I understand, considerate and generous youth, your wish to dampen hopes that may possibly be yet thwarted; but I have too long, and too often, trusted this dangerous element, not to know that he who has the wind can speak, or not, as he pleases."

"You are right in saying we are to windward, Madam; and, were I in a ship, nothing would be easier than to run within hail of the stranger.—That ship is certainly lying—to, and yet the gale is not fresh enough to bring so stout a vessel to so short canvas."

"They see us, then, and await our arrival."

"No, no: Thank God, we are not yet seen! This little rag of ours is blended with the spray. They take it for a gull, or a comb of the sea, for the moment it is in view."

"And do you thank Heaven for this!" exclaimed Gertrude, regarding the anxious Wilder with a wonder that her more cautious governess had the power to restrain.

"Did I thank Heaven for not being seen! I may have mistaken the object of my thanks: It is an armed ship!"

"Perhaps a cruiser of the King's! We are the more likely to meet with a welcome reception! Delay not to hoist some signal, lest they increase their sail, and leave us."

"You forget that the enemy is often found upon our coast. This might prove a Frenchman!"

"I have no fears of a generous enemy. Even a pirate would give shelter, and welcome, to females in such distress."

A long and profound silence succeeded. Wilder still stood upon the thwart, straining his eyes to read each sign that a seaman understands; nor did he appear to find much pleasure in the task.

"We will drift ahead," he said, "and, as the ship is lying on a different tack, we may yet gain a position that will leave us masters of our future movements."

To this his companions knew not well how to make any objections. Mrs Wyllys was so much struck with the remarkable air of coldness with which he met this prospect of refuge against the forlorn condition in which he had just before confessed they were placed, that she was much more disposed to ponder on the cause, than to trouble him with questions which she had the discernment to see would be useless. Gertrude wondered, while she was disposed to think he might be right, though she knew not why. Cassandra alone was rebellious. She lifted her voice in loud objections against a moment's delay, assuring the abstracted and perfectly inattentive young seaman, that, should any evil come to her young mistress by his obstinacy, General Grayson would be angered; and then she left him to reflect on the results of a displeasure that to her simple mind teemed with all the danger that could attend the anger of a monarch. Provoked by his contumacious disregard of her remonstrances, the negress, forgetting all her respect, in blindness in behalf of her whom she not only loved, but had been taught to reverence, seized the boat-hook, and, unperceived by Wilder, fastened to it, with dexterity, one of the linen cloths that had been brought from the wreck, and exposed it, far above the diminished sail, for a couple of minutes, ere her device had caught the eyes of either of her companions. Then, indeed, she lowered the signal, in haste, before the

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dark and frowning look of Wilder. But, short as was the triumph of the negress, it was crowned with complete success.

The restrained silence, which is so apt to succeed a sudden burst of displeasure, was still reigning in the boat, when a cloud of smoke broke out of the side of the ship, as she lay on the summit of a wave; and then came the deadened roar of artillery, struggling heavily up against the wind.

"It is now too late to hesitate," said Mrs Wyllys; "we are seen, let the stranger be friend or enemy."

Wilder did not answer, but continued to profit, by each opportunity, to watch the movements of the stranger. In another moment, the spars were seen receding from the breeze, and, in a couple of minutes more, the head of the ship was changed to the direction in which they lay. Then appeared four or five broader sheets of canvas in different parts of the complicated machinery, while the vessel bowed to the gale, as though she inclined still lower before its power. At moments, as she mounted on a sea, her bows seemed issuing from the element altogether, and high jets of spray were cast into the air, glittering in the sun, as the white particles scattered in the breeze, or fell in gems upon the sails and rigging.

"It is now too late, indeed;" murmured our adventurer, bearing up the helm of his own little craft, and letting its sheet glide through his hands, until the sail was bagging with the breeze nearly to bursting. The boat, which had so long been labouring through the water, with a wish to cling as nigh as possible to the Continent, flew over the seas, leaving a long trail of foam behind it; and, before either of the females had regained their entire self-possession, she was floating in the comparative calm that was created by the hull of a large vessel. A light active form stood in the rigging of the ship, issuing the necessary orders to a hundred seamen; and, in the midst of the confusion and alarm that such a scene was likely to cause in the bosom of woman, Gertrude and Mrs Wyllys, with their two companions, were transferred in safety to the decks of the stranger. The moment they and their effects were secured, the launch was cut adrift, like useless lumber. Twenty mariners were then seen climbing among the ropes; and sail after sail was opened still wider, until, bearing the vast folds of all her canvas spread, the vessel was urged along the trackless course, like a swift cloud drifting through the thin medium of the upper air.

CHAPTER III.

"Now let it work: Mischief, thou art afoot, Take then what course thou wilt!"

—*Shakspeare.*

When the velocity with which the vessel flew before the wind is properly considered, the reader will not be surprised to learn, that, with the change of a week in the time from that with which the foregoing incidents close, we are enabled to open the scene of the present chapter in a very different quarter of the same sea. It is unnecessary to follow the "Rover" in the windings of that devious and apparently often uncertain course, during which his keel furrowed more than a thousand miles of ocean, and during which more than one cruiser of the King was skilfully eluded, and sundry less dangerous rencounters avoided, as much from inclination as any other visible cause. It is quite sufficient for our purpose to lift the curtain, which must conceal her movements for a time, to expose the gallant vessel in a milder climate, and, when the season of the year is considered, in a more propitious sea.

Exactly seven days after Gertrude and her governess became the inmates of a ship whose character it is no longer necessary to conceal from the reader, the sun rose upon her flapping sails, symmetrical spars, and dark hull, within sight of a few, low, small and rocky islands. The colour of the element would have told a seaman, had no mound of blue land been seen issuing out of the world of waters, that the bottom of the sea was approaching nigher than common to its surface, and that it was necessary to guard against the well-known and dreaded dangers of the coast. Wind there was none; for the vacillating and uncertain air which, from time to time, distended for an instant the lighter canvas of the vessel, deserved to be merely termed the breathings of a morning, which was breaking upon the main, soft, mild, and seemingly so bland as to impart to the ocean the placid character of a sleeping lake.

Every thing having life in the ship was already up and stirring. Fifty stout and healthy-looking seamen were hanging in different parts of her rigging, some laughing, and holding low converse with messmates who lay indolently on the neighbouring spars, and others leisurely performing the light and trivial duty that was the ostensible employment of the moment. More than as many others loitered carelessly about the decks below, somewhat similarly engaged; the whole wearing much the appearance of men who were set to perform certain immaterial tasks, more to escape the imputation of idleness than from any actual necessity that the same should be executed. The quarter-deck, the hallowed spot of every vessel that may pretend to either discipline or its semblance, was differently occupied, though by a set of beings who could lay no greater claim to activity or interest. In short, the vessel partook of the character of the ocean and of the weather, both of which seemed reserving their powers to some more suitable occasion for their display.

Three or four young (and, considering the nature of their service, far from unpleasant-looking) men appeared in a sort of undress nautical uniform, in which the fashion of no people in particular was very studiously consulted. Notwithstanding the apparent calm that reigned on all around them, each of these individuals bore a short straight dirk at his girdle; and, as one of them bent over the side of the vessel, the handle of a little pistol was discovered through an opening in the folds of his professional frock. There were, however, no other immediate signs of distrust, whence an observer might infer that this armed precaution was more than the usual custom of the vessel. A couple of grim and callous looking sentinels, who were attired and accoutred like soldiers of the land, and who, contrary to marine usage, were posted on the line which separated the resorting place of the officers from the forward part of the deck, bespoke additional caution. But, still, all these arrangements were regarded by the seamen with incurious eyes—a certain proof that use had long rendered them familiar.

The individual who has been introduced to the reader under the high-sounding title of "General," stood upright and rigid as one of the masts of the ship, studying, with a critical eye, the equipments of his two mercenaries, and apparently as regardless of what was passing around him as though he literally considered himself a fixture in the vessel. One form, however, was to be distinguished from all around it, by the dignity of its mien and the air of authority that breathed even in the repose of its attitude. It was the Rover, who stood alone, none presuming to approach the spot where he had chosen to plant his light but graceful and imposing person. There was ever an expression of stern investigation in his quick wandering eye, as it roved from object to object in the equipment of

the vessel; and at moments, as his look appeared fastened on some one of the light fleecy clouds that floated in the blue vacuum above him, there gathered about his brow a gloom like that which is thought to be the shadowing of intense thought. Indeed, so dark and threatening did this lowering of the eye become, at times, that the fair hair which broke out in ringlets from beneath a black velvet sea-cap, from whose top depended a tassel of gold, could no longer impart to his countenance the gentleness which it sometimes was seen to express. As though he disdained concealment, and wished to announce the nature of the power he wielded, he wore his pistols openly in a leathern belt, that was made to cross a frock of blue, delicately edged with gold, and through which he had thrust, with the same disregard of concealment, a light and curved Turkish yattagan, with a straight stiletto, which, by the chasings of its handle, had probably originally come from the manufactory of some Italian artisan.

On the deck of the poop, overlooking the rest, and retired from the crowd beneath them, stood Mrs Wyllys and her charge, neither of whom announced in the slightest degree, by eye or air, that anxiety which might readily be supposed natural to females who found themselves in a condition so critical as in the company of lawless freebooters. On the contrary, while the former pointed out to the latter the hillock of pale blue which rose from the water, like a dark and strongly defined cloud in the distance, hope was strongly blended with the ordinarily placid expression of her features. She also called to Wilder, in a cheerful voice; and the youth, who had long been standing, with a sort of jealous watchfulness, at the foot of the ladder which led from the quarter-deck, was at her side in an instant.

"I am telling Gertrude," said the governess, with those tones of confidence which had been created by the dangers they had incurred together, "that yonder is her home, and that, when the breeze shall be felt, we may speedily hope to reach it; but the wilfully timid girl insists that she cannot believe her senses, after the frightful risks we have run, until, at least, she shall see the dwelling of her childhood, and the face of her father. You have often been on this coast before, Mr Wilder?"

"Often, Madam."

"Then, you can tell us what is the distant land we see."

"Land!" repeated our adventurer, affecting a look of surprise; "is there then land in view?"

"Is there land in view! Have not hours gone by since the same was proclaimed from the masts?"

"It may be so: We seamen are dull after a night of watching, and often hear but little of that which passes."

There was a quick, suspicious glance from the eye of the governess, as if she apprehended, she knew not what, ere she continued,—

"Has the sight of the cheerful, blessed soil of America so soon lost its charm in your eye, that you approach it with an air so heedless? The infatuation of men of your profession, in favour of so dangerous and so treacherous an element, is an enigma I never could explain."

"Do seamen, then, love their calling with so devoted an affection?" demanded Gertrude, in a haste that she might have found embarrassing to explain.

"It is a folly of which we are often accused," rejoined Wilder, turning his eye on the speaker, and smiling in a manner that had lost every shade of reserve.

"And justly?"

"I fear, justly."

"Ay!" exclaimed Mrs Wyllys, with an emphasis that was remarkable for the tone of soft and yet bitter regret with which it was uttered; "often better than their quiet and peaceful homes!"

Gertrude pursued the idea no further; but her fine full eye fell upon the deck, as though she reflected deeply on a perversity of taste which could render man so insensible to domestic pleasures, and incline him to court the wild dangers of the ocean.

"I, at least, am free from the latter charge," exclaimed Wilder: "To me a ship has always been a home."

"And much of my life, too, has been wasted in one," continued the governess, who evidently was pursuing, in the recesses of her own mind, some images of a time long past. "Happy and miserable, alike, have been the hours that I have passed upon the sea! Nor is this the first King's ship in which it has been my fortune to be thrown. And yet the customs seem changed since those days I mention; or else memory is beginning to lose some of the impressions of an age when memory is apt to be most tenacious. Is it usual, Mr Wilder, to admit an utter stranger, like yourself, to exercise authority in a vessel of war?"

"Certainly not."

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"And yet have you been acting, as far as my weak judgment teaches, as second here, since the moment we entered this vessel, wrecked and helpless fugitives from the waves."

Our adventurer again averted his eye, and evidently searched for words, ere he replied,—

"A commission is always respected: Mine procured for me the consideration you have witnessed."

"You are then an officer of the Crown?"

"Would any other authority be respected in a vessel of the Crown? Death had left a vacancy in the second station of this—cruiser. Fortunately for the wants of the service, perhaps for myself, I was at hand to fill it."

"But, tell me farther," continued the governess, who appeared disposed to profit by the occasion to solve more doubts than one, "is it usual for the officers of a vessel of war to appear armed among their crew, in the manner I see here?"

"It is the pleasure of our Commander."

"That Commander is evidently a skilful seaman, but one whose caprices and tastes are as extraordinary as I find his mien. I have surely seen him before; and, it would seem, but lately."

Mrs Wyllys then became silent for several minutes. During the whole time, her eye never averted its gaze from the form of the calm and motionless being, who still maintained his attitude of repose, aloof from all that throng who he had the address to make so entirely dependant on his authority. It seemed, for these few minutes, that the organs of the governess drunk in the smallest peculiarity of his person, and as if they would never tire of their gaze. Then, drawing a heavy and relieving breath, she once more remembered that she was not alone, and that others were silently, but observantly, awaiting the operation of her secret thoughts. Without manifesting any embarrassment, however, at an absence of mind that was far too common to surprise her pupil, the governess resumed the discourse where she had herself dropped it, bending her look again on Wilder.

"Is Captain Heidegger, then, long of your acquaintance?" she demanded.

"We have met before."

"It should be a name of German origin, by the sound. Certain I am that it is new to me. The time has been when few officers, of his rank, in the service of the King, were unknown to me, at least in name. Is his family of long standing in England?"

"That is a question he may better answer himself," said Wilder, glad to perceive that the subject of their discourse was approaching them, with the air of one who felt that none in that vessel might presume to dispute his right to mingle in any discourse that should please his fancy. "For the moment, Madam, my duty calls me elsewhere."

Wilder evidently withdrew with reluctance; and, had suspicion been active in the breasts of either of his companions, they would not have failed to note the glance of distrust with which he watched the manner that his Commander assumed in paying the salutations of the morning. There was nothing, however, in the air of the Rover that should have given ground to such jealous vigilance. On the contrary, his manner, for the moment, was cold and abstracted, and he appeared to mingle in their discourse, much more from a sense of the obligations of hospitality, than from any satisfaction that he might have been thought to derive from the intercourse. Still, his deportment was kind, and his voice bland as the airs that were wafted from the healthful islands in view.

"There is a sight"—he said, pointing towards the low blue ridges of the land—"that forms the landsman's delight, and the seaman's terror."

"Are, then, seamen thus averse to the view of regions where so many millions of their fellow creatures find pleasure in dwelling?" demanded Gertrude, (to whom he more particularly addressed his words), with a frankness that would, in itself, have sufficiently proved no glimmerings of his real character had ever dawned on her own spotless and unsuspecting mind.

"Miss Grayson included," he returned, with a slight bow, and a smile, in which, perhaps, irony was concealed by playfulness. "After the risk you have so lately run, even I, confirmed and obstinate seamonster as I am, have no reason to complain of your distaste for our element. And yet, you see, it is not entirely without its charms. No lake, that lies within the limits of yon Continent, can be more calm and sweet than is this bit of ocean. Were we a few degrees more southward, I would show you landscapes of rock and mountain—of bays, and hill—sides sprinkled with verdure—of tumbling whales, and lazy fishermen, and distant cottages, and lagging sails—such as would make a figure even in pages that the bright eye of lady might love to read."

"And yet for most of this would you be indebted to the land. In return for your picture, I would take you north,

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and show you black and threatening clouds—a green and angry sea—shipwrecks and shoals—cottages, hill-sides, and mountains, in the imagination only of the drowning man—and sails bleached by waters that contain the voracious shark, or the disgusting polypus."

Gertrude had answered in his own vein; but it was too evident, by her pale cheek, and a slight tremour about her full, rich lip, that memory was also busy with its frightful images. The quick-searching eye of the Rover was not slow to detect the change. As though he would banish every recollection that might give her pain, he artfully, but delicately, gave a new direction to the discourse.

"There are people who think the sea has no amusements," he said. "To a pining, home-sick, sea-sick miserable, this may well be true; but the man who has spirit enough to keep down the qualms of the animal may tell a different tale. We have our balls regularly, for instance; and there are artists on board this ship, who, though they cannot, perhaps, make as accurate a right angle with their legs as the first dancer of a leaping ballet, can go through their figures in a gale of wind; which is more than can be said of the highest jumper of them all on shore."

"A ball, without females, would, at least, be thought an unsocial amusement, with us uninstructed people of terra firma."

"Hum! It might be better for a lady or two. Then, have we our theatre: Farce, comedy, and the buskin, take their turns to help along the time. Yon fellow, that you see lying on the fore-topsail-yard, like an indolent serpent basking on the branch of a tree, will roar you as gently as any sucking dove! And here is a votary of Momus, who would raise a smile on the lips of a sea-sick friar: I believe I can say no more in his commendation."

"All this is well in the description," returned Mrs Wyllys; "but something is due to the merit of the—poet, or, painter shall I term you?"

"Neither, but a grave and veritable chronologer. However, since you doubt, and since you are so new to the ocean"—

"Pardon me!" the lady gravely interrupted. "I am, on the contrary, one who has seen much of it."

The Rover, who had rather suffered his unsettled glances to wander over the youthful countenance of Gertrude than towards her companion, now bent his eyes on the last speaker, where he kept them fastened so long as to create some little embarrassment in the subject of his gaze.

"You seem surprised that the time of a female should have been thus employed," she observed, with a view to arouse his attention to the impropriety of his observation.

"We were speaking of the sea, if I remember," he continued, like a man that was suddenly awakened from a deep reverie. "Ay, I know it was of the sea; for I had grown boastful in my panegyrics: I had told you that this ship was faster than"—

"Nothing!" exclaimed Gertrude, laughing at his blunder. "You were playing Master of Ceremonies at a nautical ball!"

"Will you figure in a minuet? Shall I honour my boards with the graces of your person?"

"Me, sir? and with whom? the gentleman who knows so well the manner of keeping his feet in a gale?"

"You were about to relieve any doubts we might have concerning the amusements of seamen," said the governess, reproving the too playful spirit of her pupil, by a glance of her own grave eye.

"Ay, it was the humour of the moment, nor will I balk it."

He then turned towards Wilder, who had posted himself within ear-shot of what was passing, and continued,—

"These ladies doubt our gaiety, Mr Wilder. Let the boatswain give the magical wind of his call, and pass the word 'To mischief' among the people."

Our adventurer bowed his acquiescence, and issued the necessary order. In a few moments, the precise individual who has already made acquaintance with the reader, in the bar-room of the "Foul Anchor," appeared in the centre of the vessel, near the main hatchway, decorated, as before, with his silver chain and whistle, and accompanied by two mates, who were humbler scholars of the same gruff school. Then rose a long, shrill whistle from the instrument of Nightingale, who, when the sound had died away on the ear, uttered, in his deepest and least sonorous tones,—

"All hands to mischief, ahoy!"

We have before had occasion to liken these sounds to the muttering of a bull, nor shall we at present see fit to disturb the comparison, since no other similitude, so apt, presents itself. The example of the boatswain was

followed by each of his mates in turn, and then the summons was deemed sufficient. However unintelligible and grum the call might sound in the musical ears of Gertrude, they produced no unpleasant effects on the organs of a majority of those who heard them. When the first swelling and protracted note of the call mounted on the still air, each idle and extended young seaman, as he lay stretched upon a spar, or hung dangling from a ratling, lifted his head, to catch the words that were to follow, as an obedient spaniel pricks his ears to catch the tones of his master. But no sooner had the emphatic word, which preceded the long-drawn and customary exclamation with which Nightingale closed his summons, been pronounced, than the low murmur of voices, which had so long been maintained among the men, broke out in a simultaneous and common shout. In an instant, every symptom of lethargy disappeared in a general and extraordinary activity. The young and nimble topmen bounded, like leaping animals, into the rigging of their respective masts, and were seen ascending the shaking ladders of ropes as so many squirrels would hasten to their holes at the signal of alarm. The graver and heavier seamen of the fore-castle, the still more important quarter-gunners and quarter-masters, the less instructed and half-startled waisters, and the raw and actually alarmed after-guard, all hurried, by a sort of instinct, to their several points; the more practised to plot mischief against their shipmates, and the less intelligent to concert their means of defence.

In an instant, the tops and yards were ringing with laughter and loudly-uttered jokes, as each exulting mariner aloft proclaimed his device to his fellows, or urged his own inventions, at the expense of some less ingenious mode of annoyance. On the other hand, the distrustful and often repeated glances that were thrown upward, from the men who had clustered on the quarter-deck and around the foot of the mainmast, sufficiently proclaimed the diffidence with which the novices on deck were about to enter into the contest of practical wit that was about to commence. The steady and more earnest seamen forward, however, maintained their places, with a species of stern resolution which manifestly proved the reliance they had on their physical force, and their long familiarity with all the humours, no less than with the dangers, of the ocean.

There was another little cluster of men, who assembled, in the midst of the general clamour and confusion, with a haste and steadiness that announced, at the same time, both a consciousness of the entire necessity of unity on the present occasion, and the habit of acting in concert. These were the drilled and military dependants of the General, between whom, and the less artificial seamen, there existed not only an antipathy that might almost be called instinctive, but which, for obvious reasons, had been so strongly encouraged in the vessel of which we write, as often to manifest itself in turbulent and nearly mutinous broils. About twenty in number, they collected quickly; and, although obliged to dispense with their fire-arms in such an amusement, there was a sternness, in the visage of each of the whiskered worthies, that showed how readily he could appeal to the bayonet that was suspended from his shoulder, should need demand it. Their Commander himself withdrew, with the rest of the officers, to the poop, in order that no incumbrance might be given, by their presence, to the freedom of the sports to which they had resigned the rest of the vessel.

A couple of minutes might have been lost in producing the different changes we have just related. But, so soon as the topmen were sure that no unfortunate laggard of their party was within reach of the resentment of the different groupes beneath, they commenced complying literally with the summons of the boatswain, by plotting mischief.

Sundry buckets, most of which had been provided for the extinction of fire, were quickly seen pendant from as many whips on the outer extremity of the different yards descending towards the sea. In spite of the awkward opposition of the men below, these leathern vessels were speedily filled, and in the hands of those who had sent them down. Many was the gaping waister, and rigid marine, who now made a more familiar acquaintance with the element on which he floated than suited either his convenience or his humour. So long as the jokes were confined to these semi-initiated individuals, the topmen enjoyed their fun with impunity; but, the instant the dignity of a quarter-gunner's person was invaded, the whole gang of petty officers and fore-castle-men rose in a body to meet the insult, with a readiness and dexterity that manifested how much at home the elder mariners were with all that belonged to their art. A little engine was transferred to the head, and was then brought to bear on the nearest top, like a well-planted battery clearing the way for the opening battle. The laughing and chattering topmen were soon dispersed: some ascending beyond the power of the engine, and others retreating into the neighbouring top, along ropes, and across giddy heights, that would have seemed impracticable to any animal less agile than a squirrel.

The marines were now summoned, by the successful and malicious mariners, forward, to improve their advantage. Thoroughly drenched already, and eager to resent their wrongs, a half-dozen of the soldiers, led on by

a corporal, the coating of whose powdered poll had been converted into a sort of paste by too great an intimacy with a bucket of water, essayed to mount the rigging; an exploit to them much more arduous than to enter a breach. The waggish quarter-gunners and quarter-masters, satisfied with their own success, stimulated them to the enterprise; and Nightingale and his mates, while they rolled their tongues into their cheeks, gave forth, with their whistles, the cheering sound of "heave away!" The sight of these adventurers, slowly and cautiously mounting the rigging, acted very much, on the scattered topmen, in the manner that the appearance of so many flies, in the immediate vicinity of a web, is known to act on their concealed and rapacious enemies. The sailors aloft saw, by expressive glances from them below, that a soldier was considered legal game. No sooner, therefore, had the latter fairly entered into the toils, than twenty topmen rushed out upon them, in order to make sure of their prizes. In an incredibly short time, this important result was achieved. Two or three of the aspiring adventurers were lashed where they had been found, utterly unable to make any resistance in a spot where instinct itself seemed to urge them to devote both hands to the necessary duty of holding fast; while the rest were transferred, by the means of whips, to different spars, very much as a light sail or a yard would have been swayed into its place.

In the midst of the clamorous rejoicings that attended this success, one individual made himself conspicuous for the gravity and business-like air with which he performed his part of the comedy. Seated on the outer end of a lower yard, with as much steadiness as though he had been placed on an ottoman, he was intently occupied in examining into the condition of a captive, who had been run up at his feet, with an order from the waggish captain of the top, "to turn him in for a jewel-block;" a name that appears to have been taken from the precious stones that are so often seen pendant from the ears of the other sex.

"Ay, ay," muttered this deliberate and gravel-looking tar, who was no other than Richard Fid, "the stropping you've sent with the fellow is none of the best; and, if he squeaks so now, what will he do when you come to reeve a rope through him! By the Lord, masters, you should have furnished the lad a better outfit, if you meant to send him into good company aloft. Here are more holes in his jacket than there are cabin windows to a Chinese junk. Hilloa!—on deck there!—you Guinea, pick me up a tailor, and send him aloft, to keep the wind out of this waister's tarpauling."

The athletic African, who had been posted on the fore-castle for his vast strength, cast an eye upward, and, with both arms thrust into his bosom, he rolled along the deck, with just as serious a mien as though he had been sent on a duty of the greatest import. The uproar over his head had drawn a most helpless-looking mortal from a retired corner of the birth-deck, to the ladder of the forward hatch, where, with a body half above the combings, a skein of strong coarse thread around his neck, a piece of bees-wax in one hand, and a needle in the other, he stood staring about him, with just that sort of bewildered air that a Chinese mandarin would manifest, were he to be suddenly initiated in the mysteries of the ballet. On this object the eye of Scipio fell. Stretching out an arm, he cast him upon his shoulder; and, before the startled subject of his attack knew into whose hands he had fallen, a hook was passed beneath the waistband of his trowsers, and he was half way between the water and the spar, on his way to join the considerate Fid.

"Have a care lest you let the man fall into the sea!" cried Wilder sternly, from his stand on the distant poop.

"He'm tailor, masser Harry," returned the black, without altering a muscle; "if a clothes no 'trong, he nobody blame but heself."

During this brief parlance, the good-man Homespun had safely arrived at the termination of his lofty flight. Here he was suitably received by Fid, who raised him to his side; and, having placed him comfortably between the yard and the boom, he proceeded to secure him by a lashing that would give the tailor the proper disposition of his hands.

"Bouse a bit on this waister!" called Richard, when he had properly secured the good-man; "so; belay all that."

He then put one foot on the neck of his prisoner, and, seizing his lower member as it swung uppermost, he coolly placed it in the lap of the awe-struck tailor.

"There, friend," he said, "handle your needle and palm now, as if you were at job-work. Your knowing handicraft always begins with the foundation, wherein he makes sure that his upper gear will stand."

"The Lord protect me, and all other sinful mortals, from an untimely end!" exclaimed Homespun, gazing at the vacant view from his giddy elevation, with a sensation a little resembling that with which the aeronaut, in his first experiment, regards the prospect beneath.

"Settle away this waister," again called Fid; "he interrupts rational conversation by his noise; and, as his gear is

condemned by this here tailor, why, you may turn him over to the purser for a new outfit."

The real motive, however, for getting rid of his pendant companion was a twinkling of humanity, that still glimmered through the rough humour of the tar, who well knew that his prisoner must hang, where he did, at some little expense of bodily ease. As soon as his request was complied with, he turned to the good-man, to renew the discourse, with just as much composure as though they were both seated on the deck, or as if a dozen practical jokes, of the same character, were not in the process of enactment, in as many different parts of the vessel.

"What makes you open your eyes, brother, in this port-hole fashion?" commenced the topman. "This is all water that you see about you, except that hommoc of blue in the eastern board, which is a morsel of upland in the Bahamas, d'ye see."

"A sinful and presuming world is this we live in!" returned the good-man; "nor can any one tell at what moment his life is to be taken from him. Five bloody and cruel wars have I lived to see in safety, and yet am I reserved to meet this disgraceful and profane end at last."

"Well, since you've had your luck in the wars, you've the less reason to grumble at the bit of a surge you may have felt in your garments, as they run you up to this here yard-arm. I say, brother, I've known stouter fellows take the same ride, who never knew when or how they got down again."

Homespun, who did not more than half comprehend the allusion of Fid, now regarded him in a way that announced some little desire for an explanation, mingled with great admiration of the unconcern with which his companion maintained his position, without the smallest aid from any thing but his selfbalancing powers.

"I say, brother," resumed Fid, "that many a stout seaman has been whipt up to the end of a yard, who has started by the signal of a gun, and who has staid there just as long as the president of a courtmartial was pleased to believe might be necessary to improve his honesty!"

"It would be a fearful and frightful trifling with Providence, in the least offending and conscientious mariner, to take such awful punishments in vain, by acting them in his sports; but doubly so do I pronounce it in the crew of a ship on which no man can say at what hour retribution and compunction are to alight. It seems to me unwise to tempt Providence by such provoking exhibitions."

Fid cast a glance of far more than usual significance at the good-man, and even postponed his reply, until he had freshened his ideas by an ample addition to the morsel of weed which he had kept all along thrust into one of his cheeks. Then, casting his eyes about him, in order to see that none of his noisy and riotous companions, of the top, were within ear-shot, he fastened a still more meaning look on the countenance of the tailor, as he responded,—

"Hark ye, brother; whatever may be the other good points of Richard Fid, his friends cannot say he is much of a scholar. This being the case, he has not seen fit to ask a look at the sailing orders, on coming aboard this wholesome vessel. I suppose, howsomever, that they can be forthcoming at need, and that no honest man need be ashamed to be found cruising under the same."

"Ah! Heaven protect such unoffending innocents as serve here against their will, when the allotted time of the cruiser shall be filled!" returned Homespun. "I take it, however, that you, as a sea-faring and understanding man, have not entered into this enterprise without receiving the bounty, and knowing the whole nature of the service."

"The devil a bit have I entered at all, either in the 'Enterprise' or in the 'Dolphin,' as they call this same craft. There is master Harry, the lad on the poop there, he who hails a yard as soft as a bullwhale roars; I follow his signals, d'ye see; and it is seldom that I bother him with questions as to what tack he means to lay his boat on next."

"What! would you sell your soul in this manner to Beelzebub; and that, too, without a price?"

"I say, friend, it may be as well to overhaul your ideas, before you let them slip, in this no-man's fashion, from your tongue. I would wish to treat a gentleman, who has come aloft to pay me a visit, with such civility as may do credit to my top, though the crew be at mischief, d'ye see. But an officer like him I follow has a name of his own, without stop ping to borrow one of the person you've just seen fit to name. I scorn such a pitiful thing as a threat but a man of your years needn't be told, that it is just as easy to go down from this here spar as it was to come up to it."

The tailor cast a glance beneath him into the brine, and hastened to do away the unfavourable impression which his last unfortunate interrogation had so evidently left on the mind of his brawny associate.

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"Heaven forbid that I should call any one but by their given and family names, as the law commands," he said; "I meant merely to inquire, if you would follow the gentleman you serve to so unseemly and pernicious a place as a gibbet?"

Fid ruminated some little time, before he saw fit to reply to so sweeping a query. During this unusual process, he agitated the weed, with which his mouth was nearly gorged, with great industry; and then, terminating both processes, by casting a jet of the juice nearly to the sprit-sail-yard, he said, in a very decided tone,—

"If I wouldn't, may I be d—d! After sailing in company for four—and—twenty years, I should be no better than a sneak, to part company, because such a trifle as a gallows hove in sight."

"The pay of such a service should be both generous and punctual, and the cheer of the most encouraging character," the good-man observed, in a way that manifested he should not be displeased were he to receive a reply. Fid was in no disposition to balk his curiosity, but rather deemed himself bound, since he had once entered on the subject, to leave no part of it in obscurity.

"As for the pay, d'ye see," he said, "it is seaman's wages. I should despise myself to take less than falls to the share of the best foremast-hand in a ship, since it would be all the same as owning that I got my deserts. But master Harry has a way of his own in rating men's services; and if his ideas get jamm'd in an affair of this sort, it is no marlingspike that I handle which can loosen them. I once just named the propriety of getting me a quarter-master's berth; but devil the bit would he be doing the thing, seeing, as he says himself, that I have a fashion of getting a little hazy at times, which would only be putting me in danger of disgrace; since every body knows that the higher a monkey climbs in the rigging of a ship, the easier every body on deck can see that he has a tail. Then, as to cheer, it is seaman's fare; sometimes a cut to spare for a friend, and sometimes a hungry stomach."

"But then there are often divisions of the—a—a—the prize-money, in this successful cruiser?" demanded the good-man, averting his face as he spoke, perhaps from a consciousness that it might betray an unseemly interest in the answer. "I dare say, you receive amends for all your sufferings, when the purser gives forth the spoils."

"Hark ye, brother," said Fid, again assuming a look of significance, "can you tell me where the Admiralty Court sits which condemns her prizes?"

The good-man returned the glance, with interest; but an extraordinary uproar, in another part of the vessel, cut short the dialogue, just as there was a rational probability it might lead to some consolatory explanations between the parties.

As the action of the tale is shortly to be set in motion again, we shall refer the cause of the commotion to the opening of the succeeding chapter.

CHAPTER IV.

—"Come, and get thee a sword, though made of a lath: They have been up these two days."

—*King Henry VI.*

While the little by-play that we have just related was enacting on the fore-yard-arm of the Rover, scenes, that partook equally of the nature of tragedy and farce, were in the process of exhibition elsewhere. The contest between the possessors of the deck and those active tenants of the top, so often named, was far from having reached its termination. Blows had, in more than one instance, succeeded to angry words; and, as the former was a part of the sports in which the marines and waisters were on an equality with their more ingenious tormentors, the war was beginning to be waged with some appearances of a very doubtful success. Nightingale, however, was always ready to recall the combatants to their sense of propriety, with his well-known wind of the call, and his murmuring voice. A long, shrill whistle, with the words, "Good humour, ahoy!" had hitherto served to keep down the rising tempers of the different parties, when the joke bore too hard on the highspirited soldier, or the revengeful, though perhaps less mettlesome, member of the after-guard. But an oversight, on the part of him who in common kept so vigilant an eye on the movements of all beneath his orders, had nearly led to results of a far more serious nature.

No sooner had the crew commenced the different rough sports we have just related, than the vein which had induced the Rover to loosen the reins of discipline, for the moment, seemed suddenly to subside. The gay and cheerful air that he had maintained in his dialogue with his female guests (or prisoners, whichever he might be disposed to consider them) had disappeared, in a thoughtful and clouded brow. His eye no longer lighted with those glimmerings of wayward and sarcastic humour in which he much loved to indulge, but its expression became painfully settled and austere. It was evident that his mind had relapsed into one of those brooding reveries that so often obscured his playful and vivacious mien, as a shadow darkens the golden tints of the field of ripe and waving corn.

While most of those who were not actors in the noisy and humorous achievements of the crew steadily regarded the same, some with wonder, others with distrust, and all with more or less of the humour of the hour, the Rover, to all appearance, was quite unconscious of all that was going on before his face.

It is true, that at times he raised his eyes to the active beings who clung like squirrels to the ropes, or suffered them to fall on the duller movements of the men below; but it was always with a vacancy which proved that the image they carried to the brain was dim and illusory. The looks he cast, from time to time, on Mrs Wyllys and her fair and deeply interested pupil, betrayed the workings of the temper of the inward man. It was only in these brief but comprehensive glances that the feelings by which he was governed might have been, in any manner, traced to their origin. Still would the nicest observer have been puzzled, if not baffled, in endeavouring to pronounce on the entire character of the emotions uppermost in his mind. At instants, it might have been fancied that some unholy and licentious passion was getting the ascendancy; and then, as his eye ran rapidly over the chaste and matronly, though still attractive, countenance of the governess, no imagination was necessary to read the look of doubt, as well as respect, with which he gazed.

It was while thus occupied that the sports proceeded, sometimes humorous, and forcing smiles even from the lips of the half-terrified Gertrude, but always tending to that violence, and outbreaking of anger, which might, at any moment, set at naught the discipline of a vessel in which no other means to enforce authority existed, than such as its officers could, on the instant, command. Water had been so lavishly expended, that the decks were running with the fluid, even more than one flight of spray having invaded the privileged precincts of the poop. Every ordinary device of similar scenes had been resorted to, by the men aloft, to annoy their less advantageously posted shipmates beneath; and such means of retaliation had been adopted as use or facility rendered obvious. Here, a hog and a waister were seen swinging against each other, pendant beneath a top; there, a marine, lashed in the rigging, was obliged to suffer the manipulation of a pet monkey, which, drilled to the duty, and armed with a comb, was posted on his shoulder, with an air as grave, and an eye as observant, as though he had been regularly educated in the art of the perruquier; and, every where, some coarse and practical joke proclaimed the licentious liberty which had been momentarily accorded to a set of beings who were, in common, kept in that restraint which

comfort, no less than safety, requires for the well-ordering of an armed ship.

In the midst of the noise and turbulence, a voice was heard, apparently issuing from the ocean, hailing the vessel by name, with the aid of a speaking-trumpet, that had been applied to the outer circumference of a hawse hole.

"Who speaks the `Dolphin?' " demanded Wilder, in reply, when he perceived that the summons had fallen on the dull ears of his Commander, without recalling him to the recollection of what was in action.

"Father Neptune is under your fore-foot."

"What wills the God?"

"He has heard that certain strangers have come into his dominions, and he wishes leave to come aboard the saucy `Dolphin,' to inquire into their errands, and to overhaul the log-book of their characters."

"He is welcome. Show the old man aboard through the head; he is too experienced a sailor to wish to come in by the cabin windows."

Here the parlance ceased; for Wilder turned upon his heel, as though he were already disgusted with his part of the mummery.

An athletic seaman soon appeared, seemingly issuing from the element whose deity he aspired to personate. Mops, dripping with brine, supplied the place of hoary locks; gulf-weed, of which acres were floating within a league of the ship, composed a sort of negligent mantle; and in his hand he bore a trident made of three marlingspikes properly arranged, and borne on the staff of a half-pike. Thus accoutred, the God of the Ocean, who was no less a personage than the captain of the forecastle, advanced, with a suitable air of dignity, along the deck, attended by a train of bearded water-nymphs and naiades, in a costume no less grotesque than his own. Arrived on the quarter-deck, in front of the position occupied by the officers, the principal personage saluted the groupe with a wave of his sceptre, and resumed the discourse as follows; Wilder, from the continued abstraction of his Commander, finding himself under the necessity of maintaining one portion of the dialogue.

"A wholesome and prettily-rigged boat have you come out in this time, my son; and one well filled with a noble set of my children. How long might it be since you left the land?"

"Some eight days ago."

"Hardly time enough to give the green ones the use of their sea legs. I shall be able to find them, by the manner in which they hold on in a calm." [Here the General, who was standing with a scornful and averted eye, let go his hold of a mizzen-shroud, which he had grasped for no other visible reason than to render his person utterly immovable; Neptune smiled, and continued.] "I sha'n't ask concerning the port you are last from, seeing that the Newport soundings are still hanging about the flukes of your anchors. I hope you haven't brought out many fresh hands with you, for I smell the stock-fish aboard a Baltic-man, who is coming down with the trades, and who can't be more than a hundred leagues from this; I shall therefore have but little time to overhaul your people, in order to give them their papers."

"You see them all before you. So skilful a mariner as Neptune needs no advice when or how to tell a seaman."

"I shall then begin with this gentleman," continued the waggish head of the forecastle, turning towards the still motionless chief of the marines. "There is a strong look of the land about him; and I should like to know how many hours it is since he first floated over blue water."

"I believe he has made many voyages; and I dare say has long since paid the proper tribute to your Majesty."

"Well, well; the thing is like enough, tho'f I will say I have known scholars make better use of their time, if he has been so long on the water as you pretend. How is it with these ladies?"

"Both have been at sea before, and have a right to pass without a question," resumed Wilder, a little hastily.

"The youngest is comely enough to have been born in my dominions," said the gallant Sovereign of the Sea; "but no one can refuse to answer a hail that comes straight from the mouth of Old Neptune; so, if it makes no great difference in your Honour's reckoning, I will just beg the young woman to do her own talking." Then, without paying the least attention to the angry glance that shot from the eye of Wilder, the sturdy representative of the God addressed himself directly to Gertrude. "If, as report goes of you, my pretty damsel, you have seen blue water before this passage, you may be able to recollect the name of the vessel, and some other small particulars of the run?"

The face of our heroine changed its colour from red to pale, as rapidly, and as glowingly, as the evening sky flushes, and returns to its pearl-like loveliness; but she kept down her feelings sufficiently to answer, with an air

of entire self-possession,—

"Were I to enter into all these little particulars, it would detain you from more worthy subjects. Perhaps this certificate will convince you that I am no novice on the sea." As she spoke, a guinea fell from her white hand into the broad and extended palm of her interrogator.

"I can only account for my not remembering your Ladyship, by the great extent and heavy nature of my business," returned the audacious freebooter, bowing with an air of rude politeness as he pocketed the offering. "Had I looked into my books before I came aboard this here ship, I should have seen through the mistake at once; for I now remember that I ordered one of my limners to take your pretty face, in order that I might show it to my wife at home. The fellow did it well enough, in the shell of an East-India oyster; I will have a copy set in coral, and sent to your husband, whenever you may see fit to choose one."

Then, repeating his bow, with a scrape of the foot, he turned to the governess, in order to continue his examination.

"And you, Madam," he said, "is this the first time you have ever come into my dominions, or not?"

"Neither the first, nor the twentieth; I have often seen your Majesty before."

"An old acquaintance! In what latitude might it be that we first fell in with each other?"

"I believe I first enjoyed that honour, quite thirty years since, under the Equator."

"Ay, ay, I'm often there, looking out for Indiamen and your homeward-bound Brazil traders. I boarded a particularly great number that very season, but can't say I remember your countenance."

"I fear that thirty years have made some changes in it," returned the governess, with a smile, which, though mournful, was far too dignified in its melancholy, to induce the suspicion that she regretted a loss so vain as that of her personal charms. "I was in a vessel of the King, and one that was a little remarkable by its size, since it was of three decks."

The God received the guinea, which was now secretly offered, but it would seem that success had quickened his covetousness; for, instead of returning thanks, he rather appeared to manifest a disposition to increase the amount of the bribe.

"All this may be just as your Ladyship says," he rejoined; "but the interest of my kingdom, and a large family at home, make it necessary that I should look sharp to my rights. Was there a flag in the vessel?"

"There was."

"Then, it is likely they hoisted it, as usual, at the end of the jib-boom?"

"It was hoisted, as is usual with a Vice-Admiral, at the fore."

"Well answered, for petticoats!" muttered the Deity, a little baffled in his artifice. "It is d—d queer, saving your Ladyship's presence, that I should have forgotten such a ship: Was there any thing of the extraordinary sort, that one would be likely to remember?"

The features of the governess had already lost their forced pleasantry, in a shade of grave reflection, and her eye was evidently fastened on vacancy, as she answered, to all appearance like one who thought, aloud.—

"I can, at this moment, see the arch and roguish manner with which that wayward boy, who then had but eight years, over-reached the cunning of the mimic Neptune, and retaliated for his devices, by turning the laugh of all on board on his own head?"

"Was he but eight?" demanded a deep voice at her elbow.

"Eight in years, but maturer in artifice," returned Mrs Wyllys, seeming to awake from a trance, as she turned her eyes full upon the face of the Rover.

"Well, well," interrupted the captain of the fore-castle, who cared not to continue an inquiry in which his dreaded Commander saw fit to take a part, "I dare say it is all right. I will look into my journal; if I find it so, well—if not, why, it's only giving the ship a head-wind, until I've overhauled the Dane, and then it will be all in good time to receive the balance of the fee."

So saying, the God hurried past the officers, and turned his attention to the marine guard, who had grouped themselves in a body, secretly aware of the necessity each man might be under of receiving support from his fellows, in so searching a scrutiny. Perfectly familiar with the career each individual among them had run, in his present lawless profession, and secretly apprehensive that his authority might be forced suddenly from him, the chief of the fore-castle selected a raw landsman from among them, bidding his attendants to drag the victim forward, where he believed they might act the cruel revels he contemplated with less danger of interruption.

Already irritated by the laughs which had been created at their expense, and resolute to defend their comrade, the marines resisted. A long, clamorous, and angry dispute succeeded, during which each party maintained its right to pursue the course it had adopted. From words the disputants were not long in passing to the signs of hostilities. It was while the peace of the ship hung, as it were, suspended by a hair, that the General saw fit to express the disgust of such an outrage upon discipline, which had, throughout the whole scene, possessed his mind.

"I protest against this riotous and unmilitary procedure," he said, addressing himself to his still abstracted and thoughtful superior. "I have taught my men, I trust, the proper spirit of soldiers, and there is no greater disgrace can happen to one of them than to lay hands on him, except it be in the regular and wholesome way of a cat.—I give open warning to all, that, if a finger is put upon one of my bullies, unless, as I have said, in the way of discipline, it will be answered with a blow."

As the General had not essayed to smother his voice, it was heard by his followers, and produced the effect which might have been expected. A vigorous thrust from the fist of the sergeant drew mortal blood from the visage of the God of the Sea, and at once established his terrestrial origin. Thus compelled to support his manhood, in more senses than one, the stout seaman returned the salutation, with such additional embellishments as the exigencies of the moment seemed to require. Such an interchange of civilities, between two so prominent personages, was the signal of general hostilities among their respective followers. The uproar that attended the onset had caught the attention of Fid, who, the instant he saw the nature of the sports below, abandoned his companion on the yard, and slid downwards to the deck by the aid of a backstay, with about as much facility as that caricature of man, the monkey, could have performed the same manoeuvre. His example was followed by all the topmen; and, in less than a minute, there was every appearance that the audacious marines would be borne down by the sheer force of numbers. But, stout in their resolution, and bitter in their hostility, these drilled and resentful warriors, instead of seeking refuge in flight, fell back upon each other, for support. Bayonets were seen gleaming in the sun; while some of the seamen, in the exterior of the crowd, were already laying their hands on the half-pikes that formed a warlike ornament to the foot of the mast.

"Hold! stand back, every man of you!" cried Wilder, dashing into the centre of the throng, and forcing them aside, with a haste that was possibly quickened by the recollection of the increased danger that would surround the unprotected females, should the bands of subordination be once fairly broken among so lawless and desperate a crew. "On your lives, fall back, and obey. And you, sir, who claim to be so good a soldier, I call on you to bid your men refrain."

The General, however disgusted he might have been by the previous scene, had too many important interests involved in the interior peace of the vessel, not to exert himself at this appeal. He was seconded by all the inferior officers, who well knew that their lives, as well as their comfort, depended on staying the torrent that had so unexpectedly broken loose. But they only proved how hard it is to uphold an authority that is not established on the foundation of legitimate power. Neptune had cast aside his masquerade; and, backed by all his stout forecastle-men, was evidently preparing for a conflict that might speedily give him greater pretensions to immortal nature than those he had just rejected. Until now, the officers, partly by threats and partly by remonstrances, had so far controlled the outbreaking, that the time had been passed rather in preparations than in violence. But the marines had seized their arms; while two crowded masses of the mariners were forming on either side of the mainmast, abundantly provided with pikes, and such other weapons as the bars and handspikes of the vessel afforded. One or two of the cooler heads among the latter had even proceeded so far as to clear away a gun, which they were pointing inboard, and in a direction that might have swept a moiety of the quarter-deck. In short, the broil had just reached that pass when another blow, struck from either side, must have given up the vessel to plunder and massacre. The danger of such a crisis was heightened by the bitter taunts that broke forth from fifty profane lips, which were only opened to lavish the coarsest revilings on the persons and characters of their respective enemies.

During the five minutes that might have flown by in such sinister and threatening symptoms of insubordination, the individual who was chiefly interested in the maintenance of discipline had manifested the most extraordinary indifference, or rather unconsciousness, to all that was passing so near him. With his arms folded on his breast, and his eyes fastened on the placid sea, he stood motionless as the mast near which he had placed his person. Long accustomed to the noise of scenes similar to the one he had himself provoked, he heard, in the confused sounds which rose unheeded on his ear, no more than the commotion which ordinarily attended

the license of the hour.

His subordinates in command, however, were far more active. Wilder had already beaten back the boldest of the seamen, and a space was cleared between the hostile parties, into which his assistants threw themselves, with the haste of men who knew how much was required at their hands. This momentary success might have been pushed too far; for, believing that the spirit of mutiny was subdued, our adventurer was proceeding to improve his advantage, by seizing the most audacious of the offenders, when his prisoner was immediately torn from his grasp by twenty of his confederates.

"Who's this, that sets himself up for a Commodore aboard the `Dolphin!' " exclaimed a voice in the crowd, at a most unhappy moment for the authority of the new lieutenant. "In what fashion did he come aboard us? or, in what service did he learn his trade?"

"Ay, ay," continued another sinister voice, "where is the Bristol trader he was to lead into our net, and for which we lost so many of the best days in the season, at a lazy anchor?"

Then broke forth a general and simultaneous murmur, which, had such testimony been wanting, would in itself have manifested that the unknown officer was scarcely more fortunate in his present than in his recent service. Both parties united in condemning his interference; and from both sides were heard scornful opinions of his origin, mingled with certain fierce denunciations against his person. Nothing daunted by such palpable evidences of the danger of his situation, our adventurer answered to their taunts with the most scornful smiles, challenging a single individual of them all to dare to step forth, and maintain his words by suitable actions.

"Hear him!" exclaimed his auditors.—"He speaks like a King's officer in chase of a smuggler!" cried one.—"Ay, he's a bold'un in a calm," said a second.—"He's a Jonah, that has slipp'd into the cabin windows!" cried a third; "and, while he stays in the `Dolphin,' luck will keep upon our weather-beam."—"Into the sea with him! overboard with the upstart! into the sea with him! where he'll find that a bolder and a better man has gone before him!" shouted a dozen at once; some of whom immediately gave very unequivocal demonstrations of an intention to put their threat in execution. But two forms instantly sprang from the crowd, and threw themselves, like angry lions, between Wilder and his foes. The one, who was foremost in the rescue, faced short upon the advancing seamen, and, with a blow from an arm that was irresistible, levelled the representative of Neptune to his feet, as though he had been a mere waxen image of a man. The other was not slow to imitate his example; and, as the throng receded before this secession from its own numbers, the latter, who was Fid, flourished a fist that was as big as the head of a sizeable infant, while he loudly vociferated,—

"Away with ye, ye lubbers! away with ye! Would you run foul of a single man, and he an officer, and such an officer as ye never set eyes on before, except, mayhap, in the fashion that a cat looks upon a king? I should like to see the man, among ye all, who can handle a heavy ship, in a narrow channel, as I have seen master Harry here handle the saucy"—

"Stand back," cried Wilder, forcing himself between his defenders and his foes. "Stand back, I say, and leave me alone to meet the audacious villains."

"Overboard with him! overboard with them all!" cried the seamen, "he and his knaves together!"

"Will you remain silent, and see murder done before your eyes?" exclaimed Mrs Wyllys, rushing from her place of retreat, and laying a hand eagerly on the arm of the Rover.

He started like one who was awakened suddenly from a light sleep, looking her full and intently in the eye.

"See!" she added, pointing to the violent throng below, where every sign of an increased commotion was exhibiting itself. "See, they kill your officer, and there is none to help him!"

The look of faded marble, which had so long been seated on his features, vanished, as his eye passed quickly over the scene. The organs took in the whole nature of the action at the glance; and, with the intelligence, the blood came rushing into every vein and fibre of his indignant face. Seizing a rope, which hung from the yard above his head, he swung his person off the poop, and fell lightly into the very centre of the crowd. Both parties fell back, while a sudden and breathing silence succeeded to a clamour that a moment before would have drowned the roar of a cataract. Making a haughty and repelling motion with his arm, he spoke, and in a voice that, if any change could be noted, was even pitched on a key less high and threatening than common. But the lowest and the deepest of its intonations reached the most distant ear, and no one who heard was left to doubt its meaning.

"Mutiny!" he said, in a tone that strangely balanced between irony and scorn; "open, violent, and blood-seeking mutiny! Are ye tired of your lives, my men? Is there one, among ye all, who is willing to make

himself an example for the good of the rest? If there be, let him lift a hand, a finger, a hair: Let him speak, look me in the eye, or dare to show that life is in him, by sign, breath, or motion!"

He paused; and so general and absorbing was the spell produced by his presence and his mien, that, in all that crowd of fierce and excited spirits, there was not one so bold as to presume to brave his anger. Sailors and marines stood alike, passive, humbled, and obedient, as faulty children, when arraigned before an authority from which they feel, in every fibre, that escape is impossible. Perceiving that no voice answered, no limb moved, nor even an eye among them all was bold enough to meet his own steady but glowing look, he continued, in the same deep and commanding tone,—

"It is well: Reason has come of the latest; but, happily for ye all, it has returned. Fall back, fall back, I say; you taint the quarter-deck."—The men receded a pace or two on every side of him.—"Let those arms be stacked; it will be time to use them when I proclaim the need. And you, fellows, who have been so bold as to lift a pike without an order, have a care they do not burn your hands."—A dozen staves fell upon the deck together.—"Is there a drummer in this ship? let him appear!"

A terrified and cringing-looking being presented himself, having found his instrument by a sort of desperate instinct.

"Now speak aloud, and let me know at once whether I command a crew of orderly and obedient men, or a set of miscreants, that require some purifying before I trust them."

The first few taps of the drum sufficed to tell the men they heard the "beat to quarters." Without hesitating a reluctant moment, the crowd dissolved, and each of the delinquents stole silently to his station; the crew of the gun that had been turned inward managing to thrust it through its port again, with a dexterity that might have availed them greatly in time of combat. Throughout the whole affair, the Rover had manifested neither anger nor impatience. Deep and settled scorn, with a high reliance on himself, had, indeed, been exhibited in the proud curl of his lip, and in the swelling of his form, but not, for an instant, did it seem that he had suffered his ire to get the mastery of his reason. And, now that he had recalled his crew to their duty, he appeared no more elated with his success than he had been daunted by the storm which, a minute before, had threatened the utter dissolution of his authority. Instead of pursuing his further purpose in haste, he awaited the observance of the minutest form which etiquette, as well as use, had rendered customary on such occasions.

The officers approached, and reported their several divisions in readiness to engage, with exactly the same regularity as if an enemy had been in sight. The topmen and sail-trimmers were enumerated, and found prepared; shot-plugs and stoppers were handled; the magazine was even opened; the armchests emptied of their contents; and, in short, far more than the ordinary preparations of an every day exercise was observed.

"Let the yards be slung; the sheets and halyards stoppered," he said to the first lieutenant, who now displayed as intimate an acquaintance with the military as he had hitherto discovered with the nautical part of his profession; "Give the boarders their pikes and boarding-axes, sir; we will now show these fellows that we dare to trust them with arms!"

These several orders were obeyed to the letter; and then succeeded that deep and grave silence which renders a crew, at quarters, a sight so imposing, even to those who have witnessed it from their boyhood. In this manner, the skilful leader of this band of desperate marauders knew how to curb their violence with the fetters of discipline. When he believed their minds brought within the proper limits, by the situation of restraint in which he had placed them, where they well knew that a word, or even a look, of offence would be met by an instant as well as an awful punishment, he walked apart with Wilder, of whom he demanded an explanation of what had passed.

Whatever might have been the natural tendency of our adventurer to mercy, he had not been educated on the sea to look with lenity on the crime of mutiny. Had his recent escape from the wreck of the Bristol trader been already banished from his mind, the impressions of a whole life still remained to teach the necessity of keeping tight those cords which experience has so often proved are absolutely necessary to quell such turbulent bands, when removed from the pale of society, the influence of woman, and when excited by the constant collision of tempers rudely provoked, and equally disposed to violence. Though he "set down naught in malice," it is certain that he did "nothing extenuate," in the account he rendered. The whole of the facts were laid before the Rover in the direct, unvarnished language of truth.

"One cannot keep these fellows to their duty by preaching," returned the irregular chief, when the other had done. "We have no 'Execution Dock' for our delinquents, no 'yellow flag' for fleets to gaze at, no grave and

wise-looking courts to thumb a book or two, and end by saying, 'Hang him.'—The rascals knew my eye was off them. Once before, they turned my vessel into a living evidence of that passage in the Testament which teaches humility to all, by telling us, 'that the last shall be first, and the first last.' I found a dozen roundabouts drinking and making free with the liquors of the cabin, and all the officers prisoners forward—a state of things, as you will allow, a little subversive of decency as well as decorum!"

"I am amazed you should have succeeded in restoring discipline!"

"I got among them single-handed, and with no other aid than a boat from the shore; but I ask no more than a place for my foot, and room for an arm, to keep a thousand such spirits in order. Now they know me, it is rare we misunderstand each other."

"You must have punished severely!"

"There was justice done.—Mr Wilder, I fear you find our service a little irregular; but a month of experience will put you on a level with us, and remove all danger of such another scene." As the Rover spoke, he faced his recruit, with a countenance that endeavoured to be cheerful, but whose gaiety could force itself no further than a frightful smile. "Come," he quickly added, "this time, I set the mischief afoot myself; and, as you see we are completely masters, we may afford to be lenient. Besides," he continued, glancing his eyes towards the place where Mrs Wyllys and Gertrude still remained in deep suspense, awaiting his decision, "it may be well to consult the sex of our guests at such a moment."

Then, leaving his subordinate, the Rover advanced to the centre of the quarter-deck, whither he immediately summoned the principal offenders. The men listened to his rebukes, which were not altogether free from admonitory warnings of what might be the consequences of a similar transgression, like creatures who stood in presence of a being of a nature superior to their own. Though he spoke in his usual quiet tone, the lowest of his syllables went into the ears of the most distant of the crew; and, when his brief lesson was ended, the men stood before him not only like delinquents who had been reprov'd though pardoned, but with the air of criminals who were as much condemned by their own consciousness as by the general voice. Among them all was only one seaman who, perhaps from past service, was emboldened to venture a syllable in his own justification.

"As for the matter with the marines," he said, "your Honour knows there is little love between us, though certain it is a quarter-deck is no place to settle our begrudgings; but, as to the gentleman who has seen fit to step into the shoes of"—

"It is my pleasure that he should remain there," hastily interrupted his Commander. "Of his merit I alone can judge."

"Well, well, since it is your pleasure, sir, why, no man can dispute it. But no account has been rendered of the Bristol-man, and great expectations were had aboard here from that very ship. Your Honour is a reasonable gentleman, and will not be surprised that people, who are on the look-out for an outward-bound West-Indiaman, should be unwilling to take up with a battered and empty launch, in her stead."

"Ay, sir, if I will it, you shall take an oar, a tiller, a thole, for your portion. No more of this! You saw the condition of his ship with your own eyes; and where is the seaman who has not, on some evil day, been compelled to admit that his art is nothing, when the elements are against him? Who saved this ship, in the very gust that has robbed us of our prize? Was it your skill? or was it that of a man who has often done it before, and who may one day leave you to your ignorance to manage your own interests? It is enough that I believe him faithful. There is no time to convince your dulness of the propriety of all that's done. Away, and send me the two men who so nobly stepped between their officer and mutiny."

Then came Fid, followed by the negro, rolling along the deck, and thumbing his hat with one hand, while the other sought an awkward retreat in a part of his vestments.

"You have done well, my lad; you and your messmate"—

"No messmate, your Honour, seeing that he is a nigger," interrupted Fid. "The chap messes with the other blacks, but we take a pull at the can, now and then, in company."

"Your friend, then, if you prefer that term."

"Ay, ay, sir; we are friendly enough at odd times, though a breeze often springs up between us. Guinea has a d—d awkward fashion of luffing up in his talk; and your Honour knows it isn't always comfortable to a white man to be driven to leeward by a black. I tell him it is inconvenient. He is a good enough fellow in the main, howsoever, sir; and, as he is just an African bred and born, I hope you'll be good enough to overlook his little

failings."

"Were I otherwise disposed," returned the Rover, "his steadiness and activity to-day would plead in his favour."

"Yes, yes, sir, he is somewhat steady, which is more than I can always say in my own behalf. Then, as for seamanship, there are few men who are his betters; I wish your Honour would take the trouble to walk forward, and look at the heart he turned in the mainstay, no later than the last calm; it takes the strain as easy as a small sin sits upon a rich man's conscience."

"I am satisfied with your description; you call him Guinea?"

"Call him by any thing along that coast; for he is noway particular, seeing he was never christened, and knows nothing at all of the bearings and distances of religion. His lawful name is S'ip, or Shipio Africa, taken, as I suppose, from the circumstance that he was first shipp'd from that quarter of the world. But, as respects names, the fellow is as meek as a lamb; you may call him any thing, provided you don't call him too late to his grog."

All this time, the African stood, rolling his large dark eyes in every direction except towards the speakers, perfectly content that his long-tried shipmate should serve as his interpreter. The spirit which had, so recently, been awakened in the Rover seemed already to be subsiding; for the haughty frown, which had gathered on his brow, was dissipating in a look which bore rather the character of curiosity than any fiercer emotion.

"You have sailed long in company, my lads," he carelessly continued, addressing his words to neither of them in particular.

"Full and by, in many a gale, and many a calm, your Honour. 'Tis four-and-twenty years the last equinox, Guinea, since master Harry fell across our hawse; and, then, we had been together three years in the `Thunderer,' besides the run we made round the Horn, in the `Bay' privateer."

"Ah! you have been four-and-twenty years with Mr Wilder? It is not so remarkable that you should set a value on his life."

"I should as soon think of setting a price on the King's crown!" interrupted the straight-going seaman. "I overheard the lads, d'ye see, sir, just plotting to throw the three of us overboard, and so we thought it time to say something in our own favour; and, words not always being at hand, the black saw fit to fill up the time with something that might answer the turn quite as well. No, no, he is no great talker, that Guinea; nor, for that matter, can I say much in my own favour in this particular; but, seeing that we clapp'd a stopper on their movements, your Honour will allow that we did as well as if we had spoken as smartly as a young midshipman fresh from college, who is always for hailing a top in Latin, you know, sir, for want of understanding the proper language."

The Rover smiled, and he glanced his eye aside, apparently in quest of the form of our adventurer. Not seeing him at hand, he was tempted to push his covert inquiries a little further, though too much governed, by self-respect, to let the intense curiosity by which he was influenced escape him in any direct and manifest interrogation. But an instant's recollection recalled him to himself, and he discarded the idea as unworthy of his character.

"Your services shall not be forgotten. Here is gold," he said, offering a handful of the metal to the negro, as the one nearest his own person. "You will divide it, like honest shipmates; and you may ever rely on my protection."

Scipio drew back, and, with a motion of his elbow, replied,—

"His Honour will give 'em masser Harry."

"Your master Harry has it of his own, lad; he has no need of money."

"A S'ip no need 'em eider."

"You will please to overlook the fellow's manners, sir," said Fid, very coolly interposing his own hand, and just as deliberately pocketing the offering; "but I needn't tell as old a seaman as your Honour, that Guinea is no country to scrape down the seams of a man's behaviour in. Howsomever, I can say this much for him, which is, that he thanks your Honour just as heartily as if you had given him twice the sum. Make a bow to his Honour, boy, and do some credit to the company you have kept. And now, since this little difficulty about the money is gotten over, by my presence of mind, with your Honour's leave, I'll just step aloft, and cast loose the lashings of that bit of a tailor on the larboard fore-yard-arm. The chap was never made for a topman, as you may see, sir, by the fashion in which he crosses his lower stanchions. That fellow will make a carrick bend with his legs as easily as I could do the same with a yarn of white line!"

The Rover signed for him to retire; and, turning where he stood, he found himself confronted by Wilder. The

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eyes of the confederates met; and a slight colour bespoke the consciousness of the former. Regaining his self-possession on the instant, however, he smilingly alluded to the character of Fid; and then, with an air of authority, he directed his lieutenant to have the "retreat from quarters" beat.

The guns were secured, the stoppers loosened, the magazine closed, the ports lashed, and the crew withdrew to their several ordinary duties, like men whose violence had been completely subdued by the triumphant influence of a master spirit. The Rover then disappeared from the deck, which, for a time, was left to the care of an officer of the proper station.

CHAPTER V.

Thief. "'Tis in the malice of mankind, that he thus advises us; not to have us thrive in our mystery.'" —*Timon of Athens*.

Throughout the whole of that day, no change occurred in the weather. The sleeping ocean lay like a waving and glittering mirror, smooth and polished on its surface, though, as usual, the long rising and falling of a heavy ground-swell announced the commotion that was in action within some distant horizon. From the time that he left the deck, until the sun laved its burnished orb in the sea, the individual, who so well knew how to keep alive his authority among the untamed tempers that he governed, was seen no more. Satisfied with his victory, he no longer seemed to apprehend that it was possible any should be bold enough to dare to plot the overthrow of his power. This apparent confidence in himself did not fail to impress his people favourably. As no neglect of duty was overlooked, nor any offence left to go unpunished, an eye, that was not seen, was believed by the crew to be ever on them, and an invisible hand was thought to be at all times uplifted, ready to strike or to reward. It was by a similar system of energy in moments of need, and of forbearance when authority was irksome, that this extraordinary man had so long succeeded, as well in keeping down domestic treason, as in eluding the utmost address and industry of his open enemies.

When the watch was set for the night, however, and the ship lay in the customary silence of the hour, the form of the Rover was again seen walking swiftly to and fro across the poop, of which he was now the solitary occupant. The vessel had drifted in the stream of the Gulf so far to the northward, that the little mound of blue had long sunk below the edge of the ocean; and she was again surrounded, so far as human eye might see, by an interminable world of water. As not a breath of air was stirring, the sails had been handed, the tall and naked spars rearing themselves, in the gloom of the evening, like those of a ship which rested at her anchors. In short, it was one of those hours of entire repose that the elements occasionally grant to such adventurers as trust their fortunes to the capricious government of the treacherous and unstable winds.

Even the men, whose duty it was to be on the alert, were emboldened, by the general tranquillity, to become careless on their watch, and to cast their persons between the guns, or on different portions of the vessel, seeking that rest which the forms of discipline and good order prohibited them from enjoying in their hammocks. Here and there, indeed, the head of a drowsy officer was seen nodding with the lazy heaving of the ship, as he leaned against the bulwarks, or rested his person on the carriage of some gun that was placed beyond the sacred limits of the quarter-deck. One form alone stood erect, vigilant, and evidently maintaining a watchful eye over the whole: This was Wilder, whose turn to keep the deck had again arrived, in the regular division of the service of the officers.

For two hours, not the slightest communication occurred between the Rover and his lieutenant. Both rather avoided than sought the intercourse; for each had his own secret sources of serious meditation. At the end of that period of silence, the former stopped short in his walk, and looked long and steadily at the still motionless, figure on the deck beneath him.

"Mr Wilder," he at length said, "the air is fresher on this poop, and more free from the impurities of the vessel: Will you ascend?"

The other complied; and, for several minutes, they walked silently, and with even steps, together, as seamen are wont to move in the hours of deep night.

"We had a troublesome morning, Wilder," the Rover resumed, unconsciously betraying the subject of his thoughts, and speaking always in a voice so guarded, that no ears, but his to whom he addressed himself, might embrace the sound: "Were you ever so near that pretty precipice, a mutiny, before?"

"The man who is hit is nigher to danger than he who feels the wind of the ball."

"Ah! you have then been bearded in your ship! Give yourself no uneasiness on account of the personal animosity which a few of the fellows saw fit to manifest against yourself. I am acquainted with their most secret thoughts, as you shall shortly know."

"I confess, that, in your place, I should sleep on a thorny pillow, with such evidences of the temper of my men before my mind. A few hours of disorder might deliver the vessel, on any day, into the hands of the Government,

and your own life to"—

"The executioner! And why not yours?" demanded the Rover, so quickly, as to give, in a slight degree, an air of distrust to his manner. "But the eye that has often seen battles seldom winks. Mine has too often, and too steadily, looked danger in the face, to be alarmed at the sight of a King's pennant. Besides, it is not usual for us to be much on this ticklish coast; the islands, and the Spanish Main, are less dangerous cruising grounds."

"And yet have you ventured here at a time when success against the enemy has given the Admiral leisure to employ a powerful force in your pursuit."

"I had a reason for it. It is not always easy to separate the Commander from the man. If I have temporarily forgotten the obligations of the former, in the wishes of the latter, so far, at least, harm has not come of it. I may have tired of chasing your indolent Don, and of driving guarda costas into port. This life of ours is full of excitement which I love; to me, there is interest even in a mutiny!"

"I like not treason. In this particular, I confess myself like the boor who loses his resolution in the dark. While the enemy is in view, I hope you will find me true as other men; but sleeping over a mine is not an amusement to my taste."

"So much for want of practice! Hazard is hazard, come in what shape it may; and the human mind can as readily be taught to be indifferent to secret machinations as to open risk. Hush! Struck the bell six, or seven?"

"Seven. You see the men slumber, as before. Instinct would wake them, were their hour at hand."

"'Tis well. I feared the time had passed. Yes, Wilder, I love suspense; it keeps the faculties from dying, and throws a man upon the better principles of his nature. Perhaps I owe it to a wayward spirit, but, to me, there is enjoyment in an adverse wind."

"And, in a calm?"

"Calms may have their charms for your quiet spirits; but in them there is nothing to be overcome. One cannot stir the elements, though one may counteract their workings."

"You have not entered on this trade of yours"—

"Yours!"

"I might, now, have said 'of ours,' since I too have become a Rover."

"You are still in your noviciate," resumed the other, whose quick mind had already passed the point at which the conversation had arrived; "and high enjoyment had I in being the one who shrived you in your wishes. You manifested a skill in playing round your subject, without touching it, which gives me hopes of an apt scholar."

"But no penitent, I trust."

"That as it may be; we are all liable to our moments of weakness, when we look on life as bookmen paint it, and think of being probationers where we are put to enjoy. Yes, I angled for you as the fisherman plays with the trout. Nor did I overlook the danger of deception. You were faithful on the whole; though I protest against your ever again acting so much against my interests as to intrigue to keep the game from coming to my net."

"When, and how, have I done this? You have yourself admitted"—

"That the 'Royal Caroline' was prettily handled, and wrecked by the will of Heaven. I speak of nobler quarries, now, than such as any hawk may fly at. Are you a woman-hater, that you would fain have frightened the noble-minded woman, and the sweet girl, who are beneath our feet at this minute, from enjoying the high privilege of your company?"

"Was it treacherous, to wish to save a woman from a fate like that, for instance, which hung over them both this very day? For, while your authority exists in this ship, I do not think there can be danger, even to her who is so lovely."

"By heavens, Wilder, you do me no more than justice. Before harm should come to that fair innocent, with this hand would I put the match into the magazine, and send her, all spotless as she is, to the place from which she seems to have fallen."

Our adventurer listened greedily to these words, though he little liked the strong language of admiration with which the Rover was pleased to clothe his generous sentiment.

"How knew you of my wish to serve them?" he demanded, after a pause, which neither seemed in any hurry to break.

"Could I mistake your language? I thought it plain enough when spoken."

"Spoken!" exclaimed Wilder, in surprise. "Perhaps part of my confession was then made when I least believed

it."

The Rover did not answer; but his companion saw, by the meaning smile which played about his lip, that he had been the dupe of an audacious and completely successful masquerade. Startled, perhaps at discovering how intricate were the toils into which he had rushed, and possibly vexed at being so thoroughly over-reached, he made several turns across the deck before he again spoke.

"I confess myself deceived," he at length said, "and henceforth I shall submit to you as a master from whom one may learn, but who can never be surpassed. The landlord of the 'Foul Anchor,' at least, acted in his proper person, whoever might have been the aged seaman?"

"Honest Joe Joram! An useful man to a distressed mariner, you must allow. How liked you the Newport pilot?"

"Was he an agent too?"

"For the job merely. I trust such knaves no further than their own eyes can see. But, hist! Heard you nothing?"

"I thought a rope had fallen in the water."

"Ay, it is so. Now you shall find how thoroughly I overlook these turbulent gentlemen."

The Rover then cut short the dialogue, which was growing deeply interesting to his companion, and moved, with a light step, to the stern, over which he hung, for a few moments, by himself, like a man who found a pleasure in gazing at the dark surface of the sea. But a slight noise, like that produced by agitated ropes, caught the ear of his companion, who instantly placed himself at the side of his Commander, where he did not wait long without gaining another proof of the manner in which he, as well as all the rest of the crew, were circumvented by the devices of their leader.

A man was guardedly, and, from his situation, with some difficulty, moving round the quarter of the ship, by the aid of the ropes and mouldings, which afforded him sufficient means to effect his object. He, however, soon reached a stern ladder, where he stood suspended, and evidently endeavouring to discern which of the two forms, that were overlooking his proceedings, was that of the individual he sought.

"Are you there, Davis?" said the Rover, in a voice but little above a whisper, first laying his hand lightly on Wilder, as though he would tell him to attend. "I fear you have been seen or heard."

"No fear of that, your Honour. I got out at the port by the cabin bulkhead; and the after-guard are all as sound asleep as if they had the watch below."

"It is well. What news bring you from the people?"

"Lord! your Honour may tell them to go to church, and the stoutest sea-dog of them all wouldn't dare to say he had forgotten his prayers."

"You think them in a better temper than they were?"

"I know it, sir: Not but what the will to work mischief is to be found in two or three of the men; but they dare not trust each other. Your Honour has such winning ways with you, that one never knows when he is on safe grounds in setting up to be master."

"Ay, this is ever the way with your disorganizers," muttered the Rover, just loud enough to be heard by Wilder. "A little more honesty, than they possess, is just wanted, in order that each may enjoy the faith of his neighbour. And how did the fellows receive the lenity? Did I well? or must the morning bring its punishment?"

"It is better as it stands, sir. The people know whose memory is good, and they talk already of the danger of adding another reckoning to this they feel certain you have not forgotten. There is the captain of the forecastle, who is a little bitter, as usual, and the more so just now, on account of the knock-down he got from the fist of the black."

"Ay, he is ever troublesome; a settling day must come at last with the rogue."

"It will be a small matter to expend him in boatservice, sir; and the ship's company will be all the better for his absence."

"Well, well; no more of him," interrupted the Rover, a little impatiently, as if he liked not that his companion should look too deeply into the policy of his government, so early in his initiation. "I will see to him. If I mistake not, fellow, you over-acted your own part to-day, and were a little too forward in leading on the trouble."

"I hope your Honour will remember that the crew had been piped to mischief; besides, there could be no great harm in washing the powder off a few marines."

"Ay, but you pressed the point after your officer had seen fit to interfere. Be wary in future, lest you make the acting too true to nature, and you get applauded in a manner quite as well performed."

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The fellow promised caution and amendment; and then he was dismissed, with his reward in gold, and with an injunction to be secret in his return. So soon as the interview was ended, the Rover and Wilder resumed their walk; the former having made sure that no eavesdropper had been at hand to steal into his mysterious connexion with the spy. The silence was again long, thoughtful, and deep.

"Good ears" (recommended the Rover) "are nearly as important, in a ship like this, as a stout heart. The rogues forward must not be permitted to eat of the fruit of knowledge, lest we, who are in the cabins, die."

"This is a perilous service in which we are embarked," observed his companion, by a sort of involuntary exposure of his secret thoughts.

The Rover remained silent, making many turns across the deck, before he again opened his lips. When he spoke, it was in a voice so bland and gentle, that his words sounded more like the admonitory tones of a considerate friend, than like the language of a man who had long been associated with a set of beings so rude and unprincipled as those with whom he was now seen.

"You are still on the threshold of your life, Mr Wilder," he said, "and it is all before you to choose the path on which you will go. As yet, you have been present at no violation of what the world calls its laws; nor is it too late to say you never will be. I may have been selfish in my wish to gain you; but try me; and you will find that self, though often active, cannot, nor does not, long hold its dominion over my mind. Say but the word, and you are free; it is easy to destroy the little evidence which exists of your having made one of my crew. The land is not far beyond that streak of fading light; before to-morrow's sun shall set, your foot may tread it."

"Then, why not both? If this irregular life be evil for me, it is the same for you. Could I hope"—

"What would you say?" calmly demanded the Rover, after waiting sufficiently long to be sure his companion hesitated to continue. "Speak freely your words are for the ears of a friend."

"Then, as a friend will I unbosom myself. You say, the land is here in the west. It would be easy for you and I, men nurtured on the sea, to lower this boat into the water; and, profiting by the dark ness, long ere our absence could be known, we should be lost to the eye of any who might seek us.

"Whither would you steer?"

"To the shores of America, where shelter and peace might be found in a thousand secret places.

"Would you have a man, who has so long lived a prince among his followers, become a beggar in a land of strangers?"

"But you have gold. Are we not masters here? Who is there that might dare even to watch our movements, until we were pleased ourselves to throw off the authority with which we are clothed? Ere the middle watch was set, all might be done."

"Alone! Would you go alone?"

"No—not entirely—that is—it would scarcely become us, as men, to desert the females to the brutal power of those we should leave behind."

"And would it become us, as men, to desert those who put faith in our fidelity? Mr Wilder, your proposal would make me a villain! Lawless, in the opinion of the world, have I long been; but a traitor to my faith and plighted word, never! The hour may come when the beings whose world is in this ship shall part; but the separation must be open, voluntary, and manly. You never knew what drew me into the haunts of man, when we first met in the town of Boston?"

"Never," returned Wilder, in a tone of deep disappointment.

"Listen, and you shall hear. A sturdy follower had fallen into the hands of the minions of the law. It was necessary to save him. He was a man I little loved, but he was one who had ever been honest, after his opinions. I could not desert the victim; nor could any but I effect his escape. Gold and artifice succeeded; and the fellow is now here, to sing the praises of his Commander to the crew. Could I forfeit a good name, obtained at so much hazard?"

"You would forfeit the good opinions of knaves, to gain a reputation among those whose commendations are an honour."

"I know not. You little understand the nature of man, if you are now to learn that he has pride in maintaining a reputation for even vice, when he has once purchased notoriety by its exhibition. Besides, I am not fitted for the world, as it is found among your dependant colonists."

"You claim your birth, perhaps, in the mother country?"

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"I am no better than a poor provincial, sir; an humble satellite of the mighty sun. You have seen my flags, Mr Wilder:—but there was one wanting among them all; ay, and one which, had it existed, it would have been my pride, my glory, to have upheld with my heart's best blood!"

"I know not what you mean."

"I need not tell a seaman, like you, how many noble rivers pour their waters into the sea along this coast of which we have been speaking—how many wide and commodious havens abound there—or how many sails whiten the ocean, that are manned by men who first drew breath on that spacious and peaceful soil."

"Surely I know the advantages of the country you mean."

"I fear not!" quickly returned the Rover. "Were they known, as they should be, by you and others like you, the flag I mentioned would soon be found in every sea; nor would the natives of our country have to succumb to the hirelings of a foreign prince."

"I will not affect to misunderstand your meaning; for I have known others as visionary as yourself in fancying that such an event may arrive."

"May!—As certain as that star will settle in the ocean, or that day is to succeed to night, it *must*. Had that flag been abroad, Mr Wilder, no man would have ever heard the name of the Red Rover."

"The King has a service of his own, and it is open to all his subjects alike."

"I could be a subject of a King; but to be the subject of a subject, Wilder, exceeds the bounds of my poor patience. I was educated, I might almost have said born, in one of his vessels; and how often have I been made to feel, in bitterness, that an ocean separated my birth-place from the footstool of his throne! Would you think it, sir? one of his Commanders dared to couple the name of my country with an epithet I will not wound your ear by repeating!"

"I hope you taught the scoundrel manners."

The Rover faced his companion, and there was a ghastly smile on his speaking features, as he answered,—

"He never repeated the offence! 'Twas his blood or mine; and dearly did he pay the forfeit of his brutality!"

"You fought like men, and fortune favoured the injured party?"

"We fought, sir.—But I had dared to raise my hand against a native of the holy isle!—It is enough, Mr Wilder; the King rendered a faithful subject desperate, and he has had reason to repent it. Enough for the present; another time I may say more.—Good night."

"Wilder saw the figure of his companion descend the ladder to the quarter-deck; and then was he left to pursue the current of his thoughts, alone, during the remainder of a watch which, to his impatience, seemed without an end.

CHAPTER VI.

"She made good view of me; indeed so much, That sure, methought, her eyes had lost her tongue, For she did speak in starts, distractedly."

Twelfth Night.

Though most of the crew of the "Dolphin" slept, either in their hammocks or among the guns, there were bright and anxious eyes still open in a different part of the vessel. The Rover had relinquished his cabin to Mrs Wyllys and Gertrude, from the moment they entered the ship; and we shall shift the scene to that apartment, (already sufficiently described to render the reader familiar with the objects it contained), resuming the action of the tale at an early part of the discourse just related in the preceding chapter.

It will not be necessary to dwell upon the feelings with which the female inmates of the vessel had witnessed the disturbances of that day; the conjectures and suspicions to which they gave rise may be apparent in what is about to follow. A mild, soft light fell from the lamp of wrought and massive silver, that was suspended from the upper deck, obliquely upon the painfully pensive countenance of the governess, while a few of its strongest rays lighted the youthful bloom, though less expressive because less meditative lineaments, of her companion. The back-ground was occupied, like a dark shadow in a picture, by the dusky form of the slumbering Cassandra. At the moment when we see fit to lift the curtain on this quiet scene of our drama, the pupil was speaking, seeking, in the averted eyes of her instructress, that answer to her question which the tongue of the latter appeared reluctant to accord.

"I repeat, my dearest Madam," said Gertrude, "that the fashion of these ornaments, no less than their materials, is extraordinary in a ship."

"And what would you infer from the same?"

"I know not. Still I would that we were safe in the house of my father."

"God grant it! It may be imprudent to be longer silent—Gertrude, frightful, horrible suspicions have been engendered in my mind by what we have this day witnessed."

The cheek of the maiden blanched, and the pupil of her soft eye contracted, with alarm, while she seemed to demand an explanation with every disturbed lineament of her countenance.

"I have long been familiar with the usages of a vessel of war," continued the governess, who had only paused in order to review the causes of her suspicions in her own mind; "but never have I seen such customs as, each hour, unfold themselves in this vessel."

"Of what do you suspect her?"

The look of deep, engrossing, maternal anxiety, that the lovely interrogator received in reply to this question, might have startled one whose mind had been more accustomed to muse on the depravity of human nature than the spotless being who received it; but to Gertrude it conveyed no more than a general and vague sensation of alarm.

"Why do you thus regard me, my governess—my mother?" she exclaimed, bending forward, and laying a hand imploringly on the arm of the other, as if she would arouse her from a trance.

"Yes, I will speak: It is safer that you know the worst, than that your innocence should be liable to be abused. I distrust the character of this ship, and of all that belong to her."

"All!" repeated her pupil, gazing fearfully, and a little wildly, around.

"Yes; of all."

"There may be wicked and evil-intentioned men in his Majesty's fleet; but we are surely safe from them, since fear of punishment, if not fear of disgrace, will be our protector."

"I dread lest we find that the lawless spirits, who harbour here, submit to no laws except those of their own enacting, nor acknowledge any authority but that which exists among themselves."

"This would make them pirates!"

"And pirates, I fear, we shall find them."

"Pirates? What! all?"

"Even all. Where one is guilty of such a crime, it is clear that the associates cannot be free from suspicion."

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"But, dear Madam, we know that one among them, at least, is innocent; since he came with ourselves, and under circumstances that will not admit of deception."

"I know not. There are different degrees of turpitude, as there are different tempers to commit it! I fear that all who may lay claim to be honest, in this vessel, are here assembled."

The eyes of Gertrude sunk to the floor, and her lips quivered, partly in a tremour she could not control, and perhaps in part through an emotion that she found inexplicable to herself.

"Since we know whence our late companion came," she said, in an under tone, "I think you do him wrong, however right your suspicions may prove as to the rest."

"I may be wrong as to him, but it is important that we know the worst. Command yourself, my love; our attendant ascends; some knowledge of the truth may be gained from him."

Mrs Wyllys gave her pupil an expressive sign to compose her features, while she herself resumed her usual, pensive air, with a calmness of mien that might have deceived one far more practised than the boy, who now came slowly into the cabin. Gertrude buried her face in a part of her attire, while the former addressed the individual who had just entered, in a tone equally divided between kindness and concern.

"Roderick, child," she commenced, "your eyelids are getting heavy. This service of a ship must be new to you?"

"It is so old as to keep me from sleeping on my watch," coldly returned the boy.

"A careful mother would be better for one of your years, than the school of the boatswain. What is your age, Roderick?"

"I have seen years enough to be both wiser and better," he answered, not without a shade of thought settling on his brow. "Another month will make me twenty."

"Twenty! you trifle with my curiosity, urchin."

"Did I say twenty, Madam! Fifteen would be nearer to the truth."

"I believe you well. And how many of those years have you passed upon the water?"

"But two, in truth; though I often think them ten; and yet there are times when they seem but a day!"

"You are romantic early, boy. And how like you the trade of war?"

"War!"

"Of war. I speak plainly, do I not? Those who serve in a vessel that is constructed expressly for battle, follow the trade of war."

"Oh! yes; war is certainly our trade."

"And have you yet seen any of its horrors? Has this ship been in combat since your service?"

"This ship!"

"Surely this ship: Have you ever sailed in another?"

"Never."

"Then, it is of this ship that one must question you. Is prize—money plenty among your crew?"

"Abundant; they never want."

"Then the vessel and Captain are both favourites. The sailor loves the ship and Commander that give him an active life."

"Ay, Madam; our lives are active here. And some there are among us, too, who love both ship and Commander."

"And have you mother, or friend, to profit by your earnings?"

"Have I"—

Struck with the tone of stupor with which the boy responded to her queries, the governess turned, her head, to read, in a rapid glance, the language of his countenance. He stood in a sort of senseless amazement, looking her full in the face, but with an eye far too vacant to prove that he was sensible of the image that filled it.

"Tell me, Roderick," she continued, careful not to alarm his jealousy by any sudden allusion to his manner; "tell me of this life of yours. You find it merry?"

"I find it sad."

"'Tis strange. The young ship—boys are ever among the merriest of mortals. Perhaps your officer treats you with severity."

No answer was given.

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"I am then right: Your Captain is a tyrant?"

"You are wrong: Never has he said harsh or unkind word to me."

"Ah! then he is gentle and kind. You are very happy, Roderick."

"I—happy, Madam!"

"I speak plainly, and in English—happy."

"Oh! yes; we are all very happy here."

"It is well. A discontented ship is no paradise. And you are often in port, Roderick, to taste the sweets of the land?"

"I care but little for the land, Madam, could I only have friends in the ship that love me."

"And have you not? Is not Mr Wilder your friend?"

"I know but little of him; I never saw him before"—

"When, Roderick?"

"Before we met in Newport."

"In Newport?"

"Surely you know we both came from Newport, last."

"Ah! I comprehend you. Then, your acquaintance with Mr Wilder commenced at Newport? It was while your ship was lying off the fort?"

"It was. I carried him the order to take command of the Bristol trader. He had only joined us the night before."

"So lately! It was a young acquaintance indeed. But I suppose your Commander knew his merits?"

"It is so hoped among the people. But"—

"You were speaking, Roderick."

"None here dare question the Captain for his reasons. Even *I* am obliged to be mute."

"Even *you!*" exclaimed Mrs Wyllys, in a surprise that for the moment overcame her self-restraint. But the thought in which the boy was lost appeared to prevent his observing the sudden change in her manner. Indeed, so little did he know what was passing, that the governess touched the hand of Gertrude, and silently pointed out the insensible figure of the lad, without the slightest apprehension that the movement would be observed.

"What think you, Roderick," continued his interrogator, "would he refuse to answer *us* also?"

The boy started; and, as consciousness shot into his glance, it fell upon the soft and speaking countenance of Gertrude.

"Though her beauty be so rare," he answered with vehemence, "let her not prize it too highly. Woman cannot tame his temper!"

"Is he then so hard of heart? Think you that a question from this fair one would be denied?"

"Hear me, Lady," he said, with an earnestness that was no less remarkable than the plaintive softness of the tones in which he spoke; "I have seen more, in the last two crowded years of my life, than many youths would witness between childhood and the age of man. This is no place for innocence and beauty. Oh! quit the ship, if you leave it as you came, without a deck to lay your head under!"

"It may be too late to follow such advice," Mrs Wyllys gravely replied, glancing her eye at the silent Gertrude as she spoke. "But tell me more of this extraordinary vessel. Roderick, you were not born to fill the station in which I find you?"

The boy shook his head, but remained with downcast eyes, apparently not disposed to answer further on such a subject.

"How is it that I find the `Dolphin' bearing different hues to-day from what she did yesterday? and why is it that neither then, nor now, does she resemble, in her paint, the slaver of Newport harbour?"

"And why is it," returned the boy, with a smile, in which melancholy struggled powerfully with bitterness, "that none can look into the secret heart of him who makes those changes at will? If all remained the same, but the paint of the ship, one might still be happy in her!"

"Then, Roderick, you are not happy: Shall I intercede with Captain Heidegger for your discharge?"

"I could never wish to serve another."

"How! Do you complain, and yet embrace your fetters?"

"I complain not."

The governess eyed him closely; and, after a moment's pause, she continued,—

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"Is it usual to see such riotous conduct among the crew as we have this day witnessed?"

"It is not. You have little to fear from the people; he who brought them under knows how to keep them down."

"They are enlisted by order of the King?"

"The King! Yes, he is surely a King who has no equal."

"But they dared to threaten the life of Mr Wilder. Is a seaman, in a King's ship, usually so bold?"

The boy glanced a look at Mrs Wyllys; as if he would say, he understood her affected ignorance of the character of the vessel, but again he chose to continue silent.

"Think you, Roderick," continued the governess, who no longer deemed it necessary to pursue her covert inquiries on that particular subject; "think you, Roderick, that the Rov— that is, that Captain Heidegger will suffer us to land at the first port which offers?"

"Many have been passed since you reached the ship."

"Ay, many that are inconvenient; but, when one shall be gained where his pursuits will allow his ship to enter?"

"Such places are not common."

"But, should it occur, do you not think he will permit us to land? We have gold to pay him for his trouble."

"He cares not for gold. I never ask him for it, that he does not fill my hand."

"You must be happy, then. Plenty of gold will compensate for a cold look at times."

"Never!" returned the boy, with quickness and energy. "Had I the ship filled with the dross, I would give it all to bring a look of kindness into his eye."

Mrs Wyllys started, no less at the fervid manner of the lad than at the language. Rising from her seat, she approached nigher to him, and in a situation where the light of the lamp fell full upon his lineaments. She saw the large drop that broke out from beneath a long and silken lash, to roll down a cheek which, though embrowned by the sun, was deepening with a flush that gradually stole into it, as her own gaze became more settled; and then her eyes fell slowly and keenly along the person of the lad, until they reached even the delicate feet, that seemed barely able to uphold him. The usually pensive and mild countenance of the governess changed to a look of cold regard, and her whole form appeared to elevate itself, in chaste matronly dignity, as she sternly asked,—

"Boy, have you a mother?"

"I know not," was the answer that came from lips that scarcely severed to permit the smothered sounds to escape.

"It is enough; another time I will speak further to you. Cassandra will in future do the service of this cabin; when I have need of you, the gong shall be touched."

The head of Roderick fell nearly to his bosom. he shrunk from before that cold and searching eye which followed his form, until it had disappeared through the hatch, and whose look was then bent rapidly, and not without a shade of alarm, on the face of the wondering but silent Gertrude.

A gentle tap at the door broke in upon the flood of reflection which was crowding on the mind of the governess. She gave the customary answer; and, before time was allowed for any interchange of ideas between her and her pupil, the Rover entered.

CHAPTER VII.

"I melt, and am not of stronger earth than others."—

Coriolanus.

The females received their visiter with a restraint, which will be easily understood when the subject of their recent conversation is recollected. The sinking of Gertrude's form was deep and hurried, but her governess maintained the coldness of her air with greater self-composure. Still, there was a gleaming of powerful anxiety in the watchful glance that she threw towards her guest, as though she would divine the motive of the visit by the wanderings of his changeful eye, even before his lips had parted in the customary salute.

The countenance of the Rover himself was thoughtful to gravity. He bowed as he came within the influence of the lamp, and his voice was heard muttering some low and hasty syllables, that conveyed no meaning to the ears of his listeners. Indeed, so great was the abstraction in which he was lost, that he had evidently prepared to throw his person on the vacant divan, without explanation or apology, like one who took possession of his own; though recollection returned just in time to prevent this breach of decorum. Smiling, and repeating his bow, with a still deeper inclination, he advanced with perfect self-possession to the table, where he expressed his fears that Mrs Wyllys might deem his visit unseasonable, or perhaps not announced with sufficient ceremony. During this short introduction his voice was bland as woman's, and his mien courteous, as though he actually felt himself an intruder in the cabin of a vessel in which he was literally a monarch.

"But, unseasonable as is the hour," he continued, "I should have gone to my cott with a consciousness of not having discharged all the duties of an attentive and considerate host, had I forgotten to reassure you of the tranquillity of the ship, after the scene you have this day witnessed. I have pleasure in saying, that the humour of my people is already expended, and that lambs, in their nightly folds, are not more placid than they are at this minute in their hammocks."

"The authority that so promptly quelled the disturbance is happily ever present to protect us," returned the cautious governess; "we repose entirely on your discretion and generosity."

"You have not misplaced your confidence. From the danger of mutiny, at least, you are exempt."

"And from all others, I trust."

"This is a wild and fickle element we dwell on," he answered, while he bowed an acknowledgment for the politeness, and took the seat to which the other invited him by a motion of the hand; "but you know its character, and need not be told that we seamen are seldom certain of any of our movements. I loosened the cords of discipline myself to-day," he added, after a moment's pause, "and in some measure invited the broil that followed: But it is passed, like the hurricane and the squall; and the ocean is not now smoother than the tempers of my knaves."

"I have often witnessed these rude sports in vessels of the King; but I do not remember to have known any more serious result than the settlement of some ancient quarrel, or some odd freak of nautical humour, which has commonly proved as harmless as it has been quaint."

"Ay; but the ship which often runs the hazards of the shoals gets wrecked at last," muttered the Rover. "I rarely give the quarter-deck up to the people, without keeping a vigilant watch on their humours; but—to-day"—

"You were speaking of to-day."

"Neptune, with his coarse devices, is no stranger to you, Madam."

"I have seen the God in times past."

"'Twas thus I understood it;—under the line?"

"And elsewhere."

"Elsewhere!" repeated the other, in a tone of disappointment. "Ay, the sturdy despot is to be found in every sea; and hundreds of ships, and ships of size too, are to be seen scorching in the calms of the equator. It was idle to give the subject a second thought."

"You have been pleased to observe something that has escaped my ear."

The Rover started; for he had rather muttered than spoken the preceding sentence aloud. Casting a swift and searching glance around him, as it might be to assure himself that no impertinent listener had found means to pry

into the mysteries of a mind he seldom saw fit to lay open to the free examination of his associates, he regained his self-possession on the instant, and resumed the discourse with a manner as undisturbed as if it had received no interruption.

"Yes, I had forgotten that your sex is often as timorous as it is fair," he added, with a smile so insinuating and gentle, that the governess cast an involuntary and uneasy glance towards her charge, "or I might have been earlier with my assurance of safety."

"It is welcome even now."

"And your young and gentle friend," he continued, bowing openly to Gertrude, though he still addressed his words to the governess; "her slumbers will not be the heavier for what has passed."

"The innocent seldom find an uneasy pillow."

"There is a holy and unsearchable mystery in that truth: The innocent pillow their heads in quiet! Would to God the guilty might find some refuge, too, against the sting of thought! But we live in a world, and a time, when men cannot be sure even of themselves."

He then paused, and looked about him, with a smile so haggard, that the anxious governess unconsciously drew nigher to her pupil, like one who sought, and was willing to yield, protection against the uncertain designs of a maniac. Her visiter, however, remained in a silence so long and deep, that she felt the necessity of removing the awkward embarrassment of their situation, by speaking herself.

"Do you find Mr Wilder as much inclined to mercy as yourself?" she asked. "There would be merit in his forbearance, since he appeared to be the particular object of the anger of the mutineers."

"And yet you saw he was not without his friends. You witnessed the devotion of the men who stood forth in his behalf?"

"I did; and find it remarkable that he should have been able, in so short a time, to conquer thus completely two so stubborn natures."

"Four-and-twenty years make not an acquaintance of a day!"

"And does their friendship bear so old a date?"

"I have heard that time counted between them. It is very certain the youth is bound to those uncouth companions of his by some extraordinary tie. Perhaps this is not the first of their services."

Mrs Wyllys looked grieved. Although prepared to believe that Wilder was a secret agent of the Rover, she had endeavoured to hope his connexion with the freebooters was susceptible of some explanation more favourable to his character. However he might be implicated in the common guilt of those who pursued the hazards of the reckless fortunes of that proscribed ship, it was evident he bore a heart too generous to wish to see her, and her young and guileless charge, the victims of the licentiousness of his associates. His repeated and mysterious warnings no longer needed explanation. Indeed, all that had been dark and inexplicable, both in the previous and unaccountable glimmerings of her own mind, and in the extraordinary conduct of the inmates of the ship, was at each instant becoming capable of solution. She now remembered, in the person and countenance of the Rover, the form and features of the individual who had spoken the passing Bristol trader, from the rigging of the slaver—a form which had unaccountably haunted her imagination, during her residence in his ship, like an image recalled from some dim and distant period. Then she saw at once the difficulty that Wilder might prove in laying open a secret in which not only his life was involved, but which, to a mind that was not hardened in vice, involved a penalty not less severe—that of the loss of their esteem. In short, a good deal of that which the reader has found no difficulty in comprehending was also becoming clear to the faculties of the governess, though much still remained obscured in doubts, that she could neither solve nor yet entirely banish from her thoughts. On all these several points she had leisure to cast a rapid glance; for her guest, or host, whichever he might be called, seemed in nowise disposed to interrupt her short and melancholy reverie.

"It is wonderful," Mrs Wyllys at length resumed, "that beings so uncouth should be influenced by the same attachments as those which unite the educated and the refined."

"It is wonderful, as you say," returned the other, like one awakening from a dream. "I would give a thousand of the brightest guineas that ever came from the mint of George II. to know the private history of that youth."

"Is he then a stranger to you?" demanded Gertrude, with the quickness of thought.

The Rover turned an eye on her, that was vacant for the moment, but into which consciousness and expression began to steal as he gazed, until the foot of the governess was visibly trembling with the nervous excitement that

pervaded her entire frame.

"Who shall pretend to know the heart of man!" he answered, again inclining his head as it might be in acknowledgment of her perfect right to far deeper homage. "All are strangers, till we can read their most secret thoughts."

"To pry into the mysteries of the human mind, is a privilege which few possess," coldly remarked the governess. "The world must be often tried, and thoroughly known, before we may pretend to judge of the motives of any around us."

"And yet it is a pleasant world to those who have the heart to make it merry," cried the Rover, with one of those startling transitions which marked his manner. "To him who is stout enough to follow the beat of his humour, all is easy. Do you know, that the true secret of the philosopher is not in living for ever, but in living while you may. He who dies at fifty, after a fill of pleasure, has had more of life than he who drags his feet through a century, bearing the burden of the world's caprices, and afraid to speak above his breath, lest, forsooth, his neighbour should find that his words were evil."

"And yet are there some who find their pleasure in pursuing the practices of virtue."

"'Tis lovely in your sex to say it," he answered, with an air that the sensitive governess fancied was gleaming with the growing licentiousness of a freebooter. She would now gladly have dismissed her visiter; but a certain flashing of the eye, and a manner that was becoming gay by a species of unnatural effort, admonished her of the danger of offending one who acknowledged no law but his own will. Assuming a tone and a manner that were kind, while they upheld the dignity of her sex, and pointing to sundry instruments of music that formed part of the heterogeneous furniture of the cabin, she adroitly turned the discourse, by saying,—

"One whose mind can be softened by harmony, and whose feelings are so evidently alive to the influence of sweet sounds, should not decry the pleasures of virtue. This flute, and you guitar, both call you master."

"And, because of these flimsy evidences about my person, you are willing to give me credit for the accomplishments you mention! Here is another mistake of miserable mortality! Seeming is the every-day robe of honesty. Why not give me credit for kneeling, morning and night, before you glittering bauble?" he added, pointing to the diamond crucifix which hung, as usual, near the door of his own apartment.

"I hope, at least, that the Being, whose memory is intended to be revived by that image, is not without your homage. In the pride of his strength and prosperity, man may think lightly of the consolations that can flow from a power superior to humanity; but those who have oftenest proved their value feel deepest the reverence which is their due."

The look of the governess had been averted from her companion; but, filled with the profound sentiment she uttered, her mild reflecting eye turned to him again, as, in a tone that was subdued, in respect for the mighty Being whose attributes filled her mind, she uttered the above simple sentiment. The gaze she met was earnest and thoughtful as her own. Lifting a finger, he laid it on her arm, with a motion so light as to be scarcely perceptible, while he asked,—

"Think you we are to blame, if our temperaments incline more to evil than power is given to resist?"

"It is only those who attempt to walk the path of life alone that stumble. I shall not offend your manhood, if I ask, do you never commune with your God?"

"It is long since that name has been heard in this vessel, Lady, except to aid in that miserable scoffing and profanity which simpler language made too dull. But what is He, that unknown Deity, more than what man, in his ingenuity, has seen fit to make him?"

"`The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God,' " she answered, in a voice so firm, that it startled even the ears of one so long accustomed to the turbulence and grandeur of his wild profession. "`Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou hast understanding.' "

The Rover gazed long and silently on the flushed countenance of the speaker. Bending his face in an unconscious manner aside, he said aloud, evidently rather giving utterance to his thoughts than pursuing the discourse,—

"Now, is there nothing more in this than what I have often heard, and yet does it come over my feelings with the freshness of native air!" Then rising, he approached his mild and dignified companion, adding, in tones but little above a whisper, "Lady, repeat those words; change not a syllable, nor vary the slightest intonation of the

voice, I pray thee."

Though amazed, and secretly alarmed at the request, Mrs Wyllys complied; delivering the holy language of the inspired writers with a fervour that found its support in the strength of her own emotions. Her auditor listened like a being enthralled. For near a minute, neither eye nor attitude was changed, but he stood at the feet of her who had so simply and so powerfully asserted the majesty of God, as motionless as the mast that rose behind him through the decks of that vessel which he had so long devoted to the purposes of his lawless life. It was long after her accents had ceased to fall on his ear, that he drew a deep respiration, and once again opened his lips to speak.

"This is re-treading the path of life at a stride," he said, suffering his hand to fall upon that of his companion. "I know not why pulses, which in common are like iron, beat so wildly and irregularly now. Lady, this little and feeble hand might check a temper that has so often braved the power of"—

His words suddenly ceased; for, as his eye unconsciously followed his hand, it rested on the still delicate, but no longer youthful, member of the governess. Drawing a sigh, like one who felt himself awakened from an agreeable though complete illusion, he turned away, leaving his sentence unfinished.

"You would have music!" he recklessly exclaimed aloud. "Then music shall be heard, though its symphony be rung upon a gong!"

As he spoke, the wayward and vacillating being we have been attempting to describe struck the instrument he named three blows, so quick and powerfully, as to drown all other sensations in the confusion produced by the echoing din. Though deeply mortified that he had so quickly escaped from the influence she had partially acquired, and secretly displeased at the unceremonious manner in which he had seen fit to announce his independence again, the governess was aware of the necessity of concealing her sentiments.

"This is certainly not the harmony I invited," she said, so soon as the overwhelming sounds had ceased to fill the ship; "nor do I think it of a quality to favour the slumbers of those who seek their rest."

"Fear nothing for them. The seaman sleeps with his ear near the port whence the cannon bellows, and awakes at the call of the boatswain's whistle. He is too deeply schooled in habit, to think he has heard more than a note of the flute; stronger and fuller than common, if you will, but still a sound that has no interest for him. Another tap would have sounded the alarm of fire; but these three touches say no more than music. It was the signal for the band. The night is still, and favourable for their art, and we will listen to sweet sounds awhile."

His words were scarcely uttered before the low chords of wind instruments were heard without, where the men had probably stationed themselves by some previous order of their Captain. The Rover smiled, as if he exulted in this prompt proof of the sort of despotic or rather magical power he wielded; and, throwing his form on the divan, he sat listening to the sounds which followed.

The strains which now rose upon the night, and which spread themselves soft and melodiously abroad upon the water, would in truth have done credit to far more regular artists. The air was wild and melancholy, and perhaps it was the more in accordance with the present humour of the man for whose ear it was created. Then, losing the former character, the whole power of the music was concentrated in softer and still gentler sounds, as if the genius who had given birth to the melody had been pouring out the feelings of his soul in pathos. The temper of the Rover's mind answered to the changing expression of the music; and, when the strains were sweetest and most touching, he even bowed his head like one who wept.

Though secretly under the influence of the harmony themselves, Mrs Wyllys and her pupil could but gaze on the singularly constituted being into whose hands their evil fortune had seen fit to cast them. The former was filled with admiration at the fearful contrariety of those passions which could reveal themselves, in the same individual, under so very different and so dangerous forms; while the latter, judging with the indulgence and sympathy of her years, was willing to believe that a man whose emotions could be thus easily and kindly excited was rather the victim of circumstances than the creator of his own luckless fortune.

"There is Italy in those strains," said the Rover, when the last chord had died upon his ear; "sweet, indolent, luxurious, forgetful Italy! It has never been your chance, Madam, to visit that land, so mighty in its recollections, and so potent in its actual condition?"

The governess made no reply; but, bowing her head, in turn, her companions believed she was submitting also to the influence of the music. At length, as though impelled by another changeful impulse, the Rover advanced towards Gertrude, and, addressing her with a courtesy that would have done credit to a very different scene, he said, in the laboured language that characterised the politeness of the age,—

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"One who in common speaks music should not have neglected the gifts of nature. You sing?"

Had Gertrude possessed the power he affected to believe, her voice would have denied its services at his call. Bending to his compliment, she murmured her apologies in words that were barely audible. He listened intently; but, without pressing a point that it was easy to see was unwelcome, he turned away, and gave the gong a light but startling tap.

"Roderick," he continued, when the gentle footstep of the lad was heard upon the stairs that led into the cabin below, "do you sleep?"

The answer was slow and smothered; and, of course, in the negative.

"Apollo was not absent at the birth of Roderick, Madam. The lad can raise such sounds as have been known to melt the stubborn feelings of a seaman. Go, place yourself by the cabin door, good Roderick, and bid the music run a low accompaniment to your words."

The boy obeyed, stationing his slight form so much in shadow, that the expression of his working countenance was not visible to these who sat within the stronger light of the lamp. The instruments then commenced a gentle symphony, which was soon ended; and twice had they begun the air, but still no voice was heard to mingle in the harmony.

"Words, Roderick, words; we are but dull interpreters of the meaning of yon flutes."

Thus admonished of his duty, the boy began to sing in a full, rich contralto voice, which betrayed a tremour, however, that evidently formed no part of the air. His words, so far as they might be distinguished, ran as follows:—

"The land was lying broad and fair
Behind the western sea;
And holy solitude was there,
And sweetest liberty.
The ling'ring sun, at ev'ning, hung
A glorious orb, divinely beaming
On silent lake and tree;
And ruddy light was o'er all streaming,
Mark, man! for thee;
O'er valley, lake, and tree!
And now a thousand maidens stray,
Or range the echoing groves;
While, flutt'ring near, on pinions gay.
Fan twice ten thousand loves.
In that soft clime, at even time,
Hope says"—

"Enough of this, Roderick," impatiently interrupted his master. "There is too much of the Corydon in that song for the humour of a mariner. Sing us of the sea and its pleasures, boy; and roll out the strains in such a fashion as may suit a sailor's fancy."

The lad continued mute, perhaps in disinclination to the task, perhaps from utter inability to comply.

"What, Roderick! does the muse desert thee? or is memory getting dull? You see the child is wilful in his melody, and must sing of loves and sun—shine, or he fails. Now touch us a stronger chord, my men, and put life into your cadences, while I troll a sea air for the honour of the ship."

The band took the humour of the moment from their master, (for surely he well deserved the name), sounding a powerful and graceful symphony, to prepare the listeners for the song of the Rover. Those treacherous and beguiling tones which so often stole into his voice when speaking, did not mislead expectation as to its powers. It proved to be at the same time rich, full, deep, and melodious. Favoured by these material advantages, and aided by an exquisite ear, he rolled out the following stanzas in a manner that was singularly divided between that of the reveller and the man of sentiment. The words were probably original; for they both smacked strongly of his own profession, and were not entirely without a touch of the peculiar taste of the individual.

All hands, unmoor! unmoor!

Hark to the hoarse, but welcome sound,

Startling the seaman's sweetest slumbers,
The groaning capstan's labouring round,
The cheerful fife's enliv'ning numbers;
And ling'ring idlers join the brawl,
And merry ship-boys swell the call,
All hands, unmoor! unmoor!
The cry's, "A sail! a sail!"
Brace high each nerve to dare the fight,
And boldly steer to seek the foeman;
One secret prayer to aid the right,
And many a secret thought to woman!
Now spread the flutt'ring canvas wide,
And dash the foaming sea aside;
The cry's, "A sail! a sail!"
Three cheers for victory!
Hush'd be each plaint o'er fallen brave;
Still ev'ry sigh to messmate given;
The seaman's tomb is in the wave;
The hero's latest hope is heaven!
High lift the voice in revelry!
Gay raise the song, the shout, the glee;
Three cheers for victory!

So soon as he had ended this song, and without waiting to listen if any words of compliment were to succeed an effort that might lay claim to great excellence both in tones and execution, he arose; and, desiring his guests to command the services of his band at pleasure, he wished them "soft repose and pleasant dreams," and then coolly descended into the lower apartments, apparently for the night. Mrs Wyllys and Gertrude, notwithstanding both had been amused, or rather seduced, by the interest thrown around a manner that was so wayward, while it was never gross, felt a sensation, as he disappeared, like that produced by breathing a freer air, after having been too long compelled to respire the pent atmosphere of a dungeon. The former regarded her pupil with eyes in which open affection struggled with deep inward solicitude; but neither spoke, since a slight movement near the door of the cabin reminded them they were not alone.

"Would you have further music, Madam?" asked Roderick, in a smothered voice, stealing timidly out of the shadow as he spoke; "I will sing you to sleep, if you will; but I am choaked when he bids me thus be merry against my feelings."

The brow of the governess had already contracted, and she was evidently preparing herself to give a stern and repulsive answer; but, as the plaintive tones, and shrinking, submissive form of the other, pleaded strongly to her heart, the frown passed away, leaving in its place a mild reproving look, like that which chastens the frown of maternal concern.

"Roderick," she said, "I thought we should have seen you no more to-night!"

"You heard the gong. Although he can be so gay, and can raise such thrilling sounds in his pleasanter moments, you have never yet listened to him in anger."

"And is his anger, then, so very fearful?"

"Perhaps to me it is more frightful than to others; but I find nothing so terrible as a word of his, when his mind is moody."

"He is then harsh to you?"

"Never."

"You contradict yourself, Roderick. He is, and he is not. Have you not said how terrible you find his moody language?"

"Yes; for I find it changed. Once he was never thoughtful, or out of humour, but latterly he is not himself."

Mrs Wyllys did not answer. The language of the boy was certainly much more intelligible to herself than to her young and attentive, but unsuspecting, companion; for, while she motioned to the lad to retire, Gertrude

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manifested a desire to gratify the curious interest she felt in the life and manners of the freebooter. The signal, however, was authoritatively repeated, and the lad slowly, and quite evidently with reluctance, withdrew.

The governess and her pupil then retired into their own state-room; and, after devoting many minutes to those nightly offerings and petitions which neither ever suffered any circumstances to cause them to neglect, they slept in the consciousness of innocence and in the hope of an all-powerful protection. Though the bell of the ship regularly sounded the hours throughout the watches of the night, scarcely another sound arose, during the darkness, to disturb the calm which seemed to have settled equally on the ocean and all that floated on its bosom.

CHAPTER VIII.

—"But, for the miracle, I mean our preservation, few in millions Can speak like us."

—*Tempest.*

The "Dolphin" might well have been likened to a slumbering beast of prey, during those moments of treacherous calm. But as nature limits the period of repose to the creatures of the animal world, so it would seem that the inactivity of the freebooters was not doomed to any long continuance. With the morning sun a breeze came over the water, breathing the flavour of the land, to set the sluggish ship again in motion. Throughout all that day, with a wide reach of canvas spreading along her booms, her course was held towards the south. Watch succeeded watch, and night came after day, and still no change was made in her direction. Then the blue islands were seen heaving up, one after another, out of the sea. The prisoners of the Rover, for thus the females were now constrained to consider themselves, silently watched each hillock of green that the vessel glided past, each naked and sandy key, or each mountain side, until, by the calculations of the governess, they were already steering amid the western Archipelago.

During all this time no question was asked which in the smallest manner betrayed to the Rover the consciousness of his guests that he was not conducting them towards the promised port of the Continent. Gertrude wept over the sorrow her father would feel, when he should believe her fate involved in that of the unfortunate Bristol trader; but her tears flowed in private, or were freely poured upon the sympathizing bosom of her governess. Wilder she avoided, with an intuitive consciousness that he was no longer the character she had wished to believe; but to all in the ship she struggled to maintain an equal air and a serene eye. In this deportment, far safer than any impotent entreaties might have proved, she was strongly supported by her governess, whose knowledge of mankind had early taught her that virtue was never so imposing, in the moments of trial, as when it knew best how to maintain its equanimity. On the other hand, both the Commander of the ship and his lieutenant sought no other communication with the inmates of the cabin, than courtesy appeared absolutely to require.

The former, as though repenting already of having laid so bare the capricious humours of his mind, drew gradually into himself, neither seeking nor permitting familiarity with any; while the latter appeared perfectly conscious of the constrained mien of the governess, and of the altered though still pitying eye of her pupil. Little explanation was necessary to acquaint Wilder with the reasons of this change. Instead of seeking the means to vindicate his character, however, he rather imitated their reserve. Little else was wanting to assure his former friends of the nature of his pursuits; for even Mrs Wyllys admitted to her charge, that he acted like one in whom depravity had not yet made such progress as to have destroyed that consciousness which is ever the surest test of innocence.

We shall not detain the narrative, to dwell upon the natural regrets in which Gertrude indulged, as this sad conviction forced itself upon her understanding, nor to relate the gentle wishes in which she did not think it wrong to indulge, that one, who certainly was master of so many manly and generous qualities, might soon be made to see the error of his life, and to return to a course for which even her cold and nicely judging governess allowed nature had so eminently endowed him. Perhaps the kind emotions that had been awakened in her bosom, by the events of the last fortnight, were not content to exhibit themselves in wishes alone, and that petitions more personal, and even more fervent than common, mingled in her prayers; but this is a veil which it is not our province to raise, the heart of one so pure and so ingenuous being the best repository for its own gentle feelings.

For several days the ship had been contending with the unvarying winds of those regions. Instead of struggling, however, like a cumbered trader, to gain some given port, the "Rover" suddenly altered her course, and glided through one of the many passages that offered, with the ease of a bird that is settling swiftly to its nest. A hundred different sails were seen steering among the islands, but all were avoided alike; the policy of the freebooters teaching them the necessity of moderation, in a sea so crowded with vessels of war. After the vessel had shot through one of the straits which divide the chain of the Antilles, she issued in safety on the more open sea which separates them from the Spanish Main. The moment the passage was effected, and a broad and clear horizon was seen stretching on every side of them, a manifest alteration occurred in the mien of every individual of the crew. The brow of the Rover himself lost its contraction; and the look of care, which had wrapped the

whole man in a mantle of reserve, disappeared, leaving him the reckless, wayward being we have more than once described. Even the men, whose vigilance had needed no quickening in running the gauntlet of the cruisers which were known to swarm in the narrower seas, appeared to breathe a freer air, and sounds of merriment and thoughtless gaiety were once more heard in a place over which the gloom of distrust had been so long and so heavily cast.

On the other hand, the governess saw new ground for uneasiness in the course the vessel was taking. While the islands were in view, she had hoped, and surely not without reason, that their captor only awaited a suitable occasion to place them in safety within the influence of the laws of some of the colonial governments. Her own observation told her there was so much of what was once good, if not noble, mingled with the lawlessness of the two principal individuals in the vessel, that she saw nothing that was visionary in such an expectation. Even the tales of the time, which recounted the desperate acts of the freebooter, with not a little of wild and fanciful exaggeration, did not forget to include numberless striking instances of marked, and even chivalrous generosity. In short, he bore the character of one who, while he declared himself the enemy of all, knew how to distinguish between the weak and the strong, and who often found as much gratification in repairing the wrongs of the former, as in humbling the pride of the latter.

But all her agreeable anticipations from this quarter were forgotten when the last island of the groupe sunk into the sea behind them, and the ship lay alone on an ocean which showed not another object above its surface. As if now ready to lay aside the mask, the Rover ordered the sails to be reduced, and, neglecting the favourable breeze, the vessel to be brought to the wind. In a word, as if no object called for the immediate attention of her crew, the "Dolphin" came to a stand, in the midst of the water, her officers and people abandoning themselves to their pleasures, or to idleness, as whim or inclination dictated.

"I had hoped that your convenience would have permitted us to land in some of his Majesty's islands," said Mrs Wyllys, speaking for the first time since her suspicions had been awakened on the subject of her quitting the ship, and addressing her words to the self-styled Captain Heidegger, just after the order to heave—to the vessel had been obeyed. "I fear you find it irksome to be so long dispossessed of your cabin."

"It cannot be better occupied," he rather evasively replied; though the observant and anxious governess fancied his eye was bolder, and his air under less restraint, than when she had before dwelt on the same topic. "If custom did not require that a ship should wear the colours of some people, mine should always sport those of the fair."

"And, as it is?"—

"As it is, I hoist the emblems that belong to the service I am in."

"In fifteen days, that you have been troubled with my presence, it has never been my good fortune to see those colours set."

"No!" exclaimed the Rover, glancing his eye at her, as if to penetrate her thoughts: "Then shall the uncertainty cease on the sixteenth.—Who's there, abaft?"

"No one better nor worse than Richard Fid," returned the individual in question, lifting his head from out a locker, into which it had been thrust, as though its owner searched for some mislaid implement, and who added a little quickly, when he ascertained by whom he was addressed, "and always at your Honour's orders."

"Ah! 'Tis the friend of *our* friend," the Rover observed to Mrs Wyllys, with an emphasis which the other understood. "He shall be my interpreter. Come hither, lad; I have a word to exchange with you."

"A thousand at your service, sir," returned Richard, unhesitatingly complying; "for, though no great talker, I have always something uppermost in my mind, which can be laid hold of at need."

"I hope you find that your hammock swings easily in my ship?"

"I'll not deny it, your Honour; for an easier craft, especially upon a bow-line, might be hard to find."

"And the cruise?—I hope you also find the cruise such as a seaman loves."

"D'ye see, sir, I was sent from home with little schooling, and so I seldom make so free as to pretend to read the Captain's orders."

"But still you have your inclinations," said Mrs Wyllys, firmly, as though determined to push the investigation even further than her companion had intended.

"I can't say that I'm wanting in natural feeling, your Ladyship," returned Fid, endeavouring to manifest his admiration of the sex, by the awkward bow he made to the governess as its representative, "tho'f crosses and mishaps have come athwart me as well as better men. I thought as strong a splice was laid, between me and Kate

Whiffle, as was ever turned into a sheet-cable; but then came the law, with its regulations and shipping articles, luffing short athwart my happiness, and making a wreck at once of all the poor girl's hopes, and a Flemish account of my comfort."

"It was proved that she had another husband?" said the Rover, nodding his head, understandingly.

"Four, your Honour. The girl had a love of company, and it grieved her to the heart to see an empty house: But then, as it was seldom more than one of us could be in port at a time, there was no such need to make the noise they did about the trifle. But envy did it all, sir; envy, and the greediness of the land-sharks. Had every woman in the parish as many husbands as Kate, the devil a bit would they have taken up the precious time of judge and jury, in looking into the manner in which a wench like her kept a quiet household."

"And, since that unfortunate repulse, you have kept yourself altogether out of the hands of matrimony?"

"Ay, ay; *since*, your Honour," returned Fid, giving his Commander another of those droll looks, in which a peculiar cunning struggled with a more direct and straight-going honesty; "*since*, as you say rightly, sir; though they talked of a small matter of a bargain that I had made with another woman, myself; but, in overhauling the affair, they found, that, as the shipping articles with poor Kate wouldn't hold together, why, they could make nothing at all of me; so I was white-washed like a queen's parlour, and sent adrift."

"And all this occurred after your acquaintance with Mr Wilder?"

"Afore, your Honour; afore. I was but a younker in the time of it, seeing that it is four-and-twenty years, come May next, since I have been towing at the stern of master Harry. But then, as I have had a sort of family of my own, since that day, why, the less need, you know, to be birthing myself again in any other man's hammock."

"You were saying, it is four-and-twenty years," interrupted Mrs Wyllys, "since you made the acquaintance of Mr Wilder?"

"Acquaintance! Lord, my Lady, little did he know of acquaintances at that time; though, bless him! the lad has had occasion to remember it often enough since."

"The meeting of two men, of so singular merit, must have been somewhat remarkable," observed the Rover.

"It was, for that matter, remarkable enough, your Honour; though, as to the merit, notwithstanding master Harry is often for overhauling that part of the account, I've set it down for just nothing at all."

"I confess, that, in a case where two men, both of whom are so well qualified to judge, are of different opinions, I feel at a loss to know which can have the right. Perhaps, by the aid of the facts, I might form a truer judgment."

"Your Honour forgets the Guinea, who is altogether of my mind in the matter, seeing no great merit in the thing either. But, as you are saying, sir, reading the log is the only true way to know how fast a ship can go; and so, if this Lady and your Honour have a mind to come at the truth of the affair, why, you have only to say as much, and I will put it all before you in creditable language."

"Ah! there is reason in your proposition," returned the Rover, motioning to his companion to follow to a part of the poop where they were less exposed to the observations of inquisitive eyes. "Now, place the whole clearly before us; and then you may consider the merits of the question disposed of definitively."

Fid was far from discovering the smallest reluctance to enter on the required detail; and, by the time he had cleared his throat, freshened his supply of the weed, and otherwise disposed himself to proceed, Mrs Wyllys had so far conquered her reluctance to pry clandestinely into the secrets of others, as to yield to a curiosity which she found unconquerable, and to take the seat to which her companion invited her by a gesture of his hand.

"I was sent early to sea, your Honour, by my father," commenced Fid, after these little preliminaries had been duly observed, "who was, like myself, a man that passed more of his time on the water than on dry ground; though, as he was nothing more than a fisherman, he generally kept the land aboard; which is, after all, little better than living on it altogether. Howsomever, when I went, I made a broad offing at once, fetching up on the other side of the Horn, the very first passage I made; which was no small journey for a new beginner; but then, as I was only eight years old"—

"Eight! you are now speaking of yourself," interrupted the disappointed governess.

"Certain, Madam; and, though genteeler people might be talked of, it would be hard to turn the conversation on any man who knows better how to rig or how to strip a ship. I was beginning at the right end of my story; but, as I fancied your Ladyship might not choose to waste time in hearing concerning my father and mother, I cut the matter short, by striking in at eight years old, overlooking all about my birth and name, and such other matters as

are usually logged, in a fashion out of all reason, in your every-day sort of narratives."

"Proceed," she rejoined, with a species of compelled resignation.

"My mind is pretty much like a ship that is about to slip off its ways," resumed Fid. "If she makes a fair start, and there is neither jam nor dry-rub, smack see goes into the water, like a sail let run in a calm; but, if she once brings up, a good deal of labour is to be gone through to set her in motion again. Now, in order to wedge up my ideas, and to get the story slushed, so that I can slip through it with case, it is needful to overrun the part which I have just let go; which is, how my father was a fisherman, and how I doubled the Horn—Ah! here I have it again, clear of kinks, fake above fake, like a well-coiled cable; so that I can pay it out as easily as the boatswain's yeoman can lay his hand on a bit of ratling stuff. Well, I doubled the Horn, as I was saying, and might have been the matter of four years cruising about among the islands and seas of those parts, which were none of the best known then, or, for that matter, now. After this, I served in his Majesty's fleet a whole war, and got as much honour as I could stow beneath hatches. Well, then, I fell in with the Guinea—the black, my Lady, that you see turning in a new clue-garnet-block for the starboard clue of the fore-course."

"Ay; then you fell in with the African," said the Rover.

"Then we made our acquaintance; and, although his colour is no whiter than the back of a whale, I care not who knows it, after master Harry, there is no man living who has an honester way with him, or in whose company I take greater satisfaction. To be sure, your Honour, the fellow is something contradictory, and has a great opinion of his strength, and thinks his equal is not to be found at a weatherearing, or in the bunt of a topsail; but then he is no better than a black, and one is not to be too particular in looking into the faults of such as are not actually his fellow creatures."

"No, no; that would be uncharitable in the extreme."

"The very words the chaplain used to let fly aboard the `Brunswick!' It is a great thing to have schooling, your Honour; since, if it does nothing else, it fits a man for a boatswain, and puts him in the track of steering the shortest course to heaven. But, as I was saying, there was I and Guinea shipmates, and in a reasonable way friends, for five years more; and then the time arrived when we met with the mishap of the wreck in the West-Indies."

"What wreck?" demanded his officer.

"I beg your Honour's pardon; I never swing my head-yards till I'm sure the ship won't luff back into the wind; and, before I tell the particulars of the wreck, I will overrun my ideas, to see that nothing is forgotten that should of right be first mentioned."

The Rover, who saw, by the uneasy glances that she cast aside, and by the expression of her countenance, how impatient his companion was becoming for a sequel that approached so tardily, and how much she dreaded an interruption, made a significant sign to her to permit the straight-going tar to take his own course, as the best means of coming at the facts they both longed so much to hear. Left to himself, Fid soon took the necessary review of the transactions, in his own quaint manner; and, having happily found that nothing which he considered as germane to the present relation was omitted, he proceeded at once to the more material, and what was to his auditors by far the most interesting, portion of his narrative.

"Well, as I was telling your Honour," he continued, "Guinea was then a maintopman, and I was stationed in the same place aboard the `Proserpine,' a quick-going two-and-thirty, when we fell in with a bit of a smuggler, between the islands and the Spanish Main; and so the Captain made a prize of her, and ordered her into port; for which I have always supposed, as he was a sensible man, he had his orders. But this is neither here nor there, seeing that the craft had got to the end of her rope, and foundered in a heavy hurricane that came over us, mayhap a couple of days' run to leeward of our haven. Well, she was a small boat; and, as she took it into her mind to roll over on her side before she went to sleep, the master's mate in charge, and three others, slid off her decks to the bottom of the sea, as I have always had reason to believe, never having heard any thing to the contrary. It was here that Guinea first served me the good turn; for, though we had often before shared hunger and thirst together, this was the first time he ever jumped overboard to keep me from taking in salt water like a fish."

"He kept you from drowning with the rest?"

"I'll not say just that much, your Honour; for there is no knowing what lucky accident might have done the same good turn for me. Howsoever, seeing that I can swim no better nor worse than a double-headed shot, I have always been willing to give the black credit for as much, though little has ever been said between us on the

subject; for no other reason, as I can see, than that settling-day has not yet come. Well, we contrived to get the boat afloat, and enough into it to keep soul and body together, and made the best of our way for the land, seeing that the cruise was, to all useful purposes, over in that smuggler. I needn't be particular in telling this lady of the nature of boat-duty, as she has lately had some experience in that way herself; but I can tell her this much: Had it not been for that boat in which the black and myself spent the better part of ten days, she would have fared but badly in her own navigation."

"Explain your meaning."

"My meaning is plain enough, your Honour, which is, that little else than the handy way of master Harry in a boat could have kept the Bristol trader's launch above water, the day we fell in with it."

"But in what manner was your own shipwreck connected with the safety of Mr Wilder?" demanded the governess, unable any longer to await the dilatory explanation of the prolix seaman.

"In a very plain and natural fashion, my Lady, as you will say yourself, when you come to hear the pitiful part of my tale. Well, there were I and Guinea, rowing about in the ocean, on short allowance of all things but work, for two nights and a day, heading-in for the islands; for, though no great navigators, we could smell the land, and so we pulled away lustily, when you consider it was a race in which life was the wager, until we made, in the pride of the morning, as it might be here, at east-and-by-south, a ship under bare poles; if a vessel can be called bare that had nothing better than the stumps of her three masts standing, and they without rope or rag to tell one her rig or nation. Howsomever, as there were three naked sticks left, I have always put her down for a full-rigged ship; and, when we got night enough to take a look at her hull, I made bold to say she was of English build."

"You boarded her," observed the Rover.

"A small task that, your Honour, since a starved dog was the whole crew she could muster to keep us off. It was a solemn sight when we got on her decks, and one that bears hard on my manhood," continued Fid, with an air that grew more serious as he proceeded, "whenever I have occasion to overhaul the log-book of memory."

"You found her people suffering of want!"

"We found a noble ship, as helpless as a hallibut in a tub. There she lay, a craft of some four hundred tons, water-logged, and motionless as a church. It always gives me great reflection, sir, when I see a noble vessel brought to such a strait; for one may liken her to a man who has been docked of his fins, and who is getting to be good for little else than to be set upon a cat-head to look out for squalls."

"The ship was then deserted?"

"Ay, the people had left her, sir, or had been washed away in the gust that had laid her over. I never could come at the truth of them particulars. The dog had been mischievous, I conclude, about the decks; and so he had been lashed to a timberhead, the which saved his life, since, happily for him, he found himself on the weather-side when the hull righted a little, after her spars gave way. Well, sir, there was the dog, and not much else, as we could see, though we spent half a day in rummaging round. in order to pick up any small matter that might be useful; but then, as the entrance to the hold and cabin was full of water, why, we made no great affair of the salvage, after all."

"And then you left the wreck?"

"Not yet, your Honour. While knocking about among the bits of rigging and lumber above board. says Guinea, says he, 'Mister Dick, I hear some one making their complaints below.' Now, I had heard the same noises myself, sir; but had set them down as the spirits of the people moaning over their losses, and had said nothing of the same, for fear of stirring up the superstition of the black; for the best of them are no better than superstitious niggers, my Lady; so I said nothing of what I had heard, until he saw fit to broach the subject himself. Then we both turned-to to listening with a will; and sure enough the groans began to take a human sound. It was a good while, howsomever, before I could make up whether it was any thing more than the complaining of the hulk itself; for you know, my Lady, that a ship which is about to sink makes her lamentations just like any other living thing."

"I do, I do," returned the governess, shuddering. "I have heard them, and never will my memory lose the recollection of the sounds."

"Ay, I thought you might know something of the same; and solemn groans they are: But, as the hulk kept rolling on the top of the sea, and no further signs of her going down, I began to think it best to cut into her abaft, in order to make sure that some miserable wretch had not been caught in his hammock, at the time she went over. Well, good will, and an axe, soon let us into the secret of the moans."

"You found a child?"

"And its mother, my Lady. As good luck would have it, they were in a birth on the weather-side, and as yet the water had not reached them. But pent air and hunger had nearly proved as bad as the brine. The lady was in the agony when we got her out; and as to the boy, proud and strong as you now see him there on yonder gun, my Lady, he was just so miserable, that it was no small matter to make him swallow the drop of wine and water that the Lord had left us, in order, as I have often thought since, to bring him up to be, as he at this moment is, the pride of the ocean!"

"But, the mother?"

"The mother had given the only morsel of biscuit she had to the child, and was dying, in order that the urchin might live. I never could get rightly into the meaning of the thing, my Lady, why a woman, who is no better than a Lascar in matters of strength, nor any better than a booby in respect of courage, should be able to let go her hold of life in this quiet fashion, when many a stout mariner would be fighting for each mouthful of air the Lord might see fit to give. But there she was, white as the sail on which the storm has long beaten, and limber as a pennant in a calm, with her poor skinny arm around the lad, holding in her hand the very mouthful that might have kept her own soul in the body a little longer."

"What did she, when you brought her to the light?"

"What did she!" repeated Fid, whose voice was getting thick and husky, "why, she did a d—d honest thing; she gave the boy the crumb, and motioned, as well as a dying woman could, that we should have an eye over him, till the cruise of life was up."

"And was that all?"

"I have always thought she prayed; for something passed between her and one who was not to be seen, if a man might judge by the fashion in which her eyes were turned aloft, and her lips moved. I hope, among others, she put in a good word for one Richard Fid; for certain she had as little need to be asking for herself as any body. But no man will ever know what she said, seeing that her mouth was shut from that time for ever after."

"She died!"

"Sorry am I to say it. But the poor lady was past swallowing when she came into our hands, and then it was but little we had to offer her. A quart of water, with mayhap a gill of wine, a biscuit, and a handful of rice, was no great allowance for two hearty men to pull a boat some seventy leagues within the tropics. Howsoever, when we found no more was to be got from the wreck, and that, since the air had escaped by the hole we had cut, she was settling fast, we thought it best to get out of her; and sure enough we were none too soon, seeing that she went under just as we had twitched our jollyboat clear of the suction."

"And the boy—the poor deserted child!" exclaimed the governess, whose eyes had now filled to overflowing.

"There you are all aback, my Lady. Instead of deserting him, we brought him away with us, as we did the only other living creature to be found about the wreck. But we had still a long journey before us, and, to make the matter worse, we were out of the track of the traders. So I put it down as a case for a council of all hands, which was no more than I and the black, since the lad was too weak to talk, and little could he have said otherwise in our situation. So I begun myself, saying, says I, `Guinea, we must eat either this here dog, or this here boy. If we eat the boy, we shall be no better than the people in your own country, who, you know, my Lady, are cannibals; but if we eat the dog, poor as he is, we may make out to keep soul and body together, and to give the child the other matters.'—So Guinea, he says, says he, `I've no occasion for food at all; give 'em to the boy,' says he, `seeing that he is little, and has need of strength.' Howsoever, master Harry took no great fancy to the dog, which we soon finished between us; for the plain reason that he was so thin. After that, we had a hungry time of it ourselves; for, had we not kept up the life in the lad, you know, it would have slipt through our fingers."

"And you fed the child, though fasting yourselves?"

"No, we wer'n't altogether idle, my Lady, seeing that we kept our teeth jogging on the skin of the dog, though I will not say that the food was over savoury. And then, as we had no occasion to lose time in eating, we kept the oars going so much the livelier. Well, we got in at one of the islands after a time, though neither I nor the nigger had much to boast of as to strength or weight when we made the first kitchen we fell in with."

"And the child?"

"Oh! he was doing well enough; for, as the doctors afterwards told us, the short allowance on which he was put did him no harm."

"You sought his friends?"

"Why, as for that matter, my Lady, so far as I have been able to discover, he was with his best friends already. We had neither chart nor bearings by which we knew how to steer in search of his family. His name he called master Harry, by which it is clear he was a gentleman born, as indeed any one may see by looking at him; but not another word could I learn of his relations or country, except that, as he spoke the English language, and was found in an English ship, there is a natural reason to believe he is of English build himself."

"Did you not learn the name of the ship?" demanded the attentive Rover, in whose countenance the traces of a lively interest were very distinctly discernible.

"Why, as to that matter, your Honour, schools were scarce in my part of the country; and in Africa, you know, there is no great matter of learning; so that, had her name been out of water, which it was not, we might have been bothered to read it. Howsomever, there was a horse-bucket kicking about her decks, and which, as luck would have it, got jammed-in with the pumps in such a fashion that it did not go overboard until we took it with us. Well, this bucket had a name painted on it; and, after we had leisure for the thing, I got Guinea, who has a natural turn at tattooing, to rub it into my arm in gunpowder, as the handiest way of logging these small particulars. Your Honour shall see what the black has made of it."

So saying, Fid very coolly doffed his jacket, and laid bare, to the elbow, one of his brawny arms, on which the blue impression was still very plainly visible. Although the letters were rudely imitated, it was not difficult to read, in the skin, the words "Ark, of Lynnhaven."

"Here, then, you had a clue at once to find the relatives of the boy," observed the Rover, after he had deciphered the letters.

"It seems not, your Honour; for we took the child with us aboard the `Proserpine,' and our worthy Captain carried sail hard after the people; but no one could give any tidings of such a craft as the `Ark, of Lynnhaven;' and, after a twelvemonth, or more, we were obliged to give up the chase."

"Could the child give no account of his friends?" demanded the governess.

"But little, my Lady; for the reason he knew but little about himself. So we gave the matter over altogether; I, and Guinea, and the Captain, and all of us, turning-to to educate the boy. He got his seamanship of the black and myself, and mayhap some little of his manners also; and his navigation and Latin of the Captain, who proved his friend till such a time as he was able to take care of himself, and, for that matter, some years afterwards."

"And how long did Mr Wilder continue in a King's ship?" asked the Rover, in a careless and apparently indifferent manner.

"Long enough to learn all that is taught there, your Honour," was the evasive reply.

"He came to be an officer, I suppose?"

"If he didn't, the King had the worst of the bargain.— But what is this I see hereaway, atween the backstay and the vang? It looks like a sail; or is it only a gull flapping his wings before he rises?"

"Sail, ho!" called the look-out from the mast head. "Sail, ho!" was echoed from a top and from the deck; the glittering though distant object having struck a dozen vigilant eyes at the same instant. The Rover was compelled to lend his attention to a summons so often repeated; and Fid profited by the circumstance to quit the poop, with the hurry of one who was not sorry for the interruption. Then the governess arose too, and, thoughtful and melancholy, she sought the privacy of her cabin.

CHAPTER IX.

"Their preparation is to-day by sea."

—*Anthony and Cleopatra*

"Sail, ho!" in the little frequented sea in which the "Rover" lay, was a cry that quickened every dull pulsation in the bosoms of her crew. Many weeks had now, according to their method of calculation, been entirely lost in the visionary and profitless plans of their chief. They were not of a temper to reason on the fatality which had forced the Bristol trader from their toils; it was enough, for their rough natures, that the rich spoil had escaped them. Without examining for the causes of this loss, as has been already seen, they had been but too well disposed to visit their disappointment on the head of the innocent officer who was charged with the care of a vessel that they already considered a prize. Here, then, was at length an opportunity to repair their loss. The stranger was about to encounter them in a part of the ocean where succour was nearly hopeless, and where time might be afforded to profit, to the utmost, by any success that the freebooters should obtain. Every man in the ship seemed sensible of these advantages; and, as the words sounded from mast to yard, and from yard to deck, they were taken up in cheerful echos from fifty mouths, which repeated the cry, until it was heard issuing from the inmost recesses of the vessel.

The Rover himself manifested more than usual satisfaction at this prospect of a capture. He was quite aware of the necessity of some brilliant or of some profitable exploit, to curb the rising tempers of his men; and long experience had taught him that he could ever draw the cords of discipline the tightest in moments that appeared the most to require the exercise of his own high courage and consummate skill. He walked forward, therefore, among his people, with a countenance that was no longer buried in reserve, speaking to several, whom he addressed by name, and of whom he did not even disdain to ask opinions concerning the character of the distant sail. When a sort of implied assurance that their recent offences were overlooked had thus been given, he summoned Wilder, the General, and one or two others of the superior officers, to the poop, where they all disposed themselves to make more particular and more certain observations, by the aid of a halfdozen excellent glasses.

Many minutes were now passed in silent and intense scrutiny. The day was cloudless, the wind fresh, without being heavy, the sea long, even, and far from high, and, in short, all things combined, as far as is ever seen on the restless ocean, not only to aid their examination, but to favour those subsequent evolutions which each instant rendered more probable would become necessary.

"It is a ship!" exclaimed the Rover, lowering his glass, the first to proclaim the result of his long and close inspection.

"It is a ship!" echoed the General, across whose disciplined features a ray of something like animated satisfaction was making an effort to display itself.

"A full-rigged ship!" continued a third, relieving his eye in turn, and answering to the grim smile of the soldier.

"There must be something to hold up all those lofty spars," resumed their Commander. "A hull of price is beneath.—But you say nothing, Mr Wilder! You make her out"—

"A ship of size," returned our adventurer, who, though hitherto silent, had been far from the least interested in his investigations. "Does my glass deceive me—or"—

"Or what, sir?"

"I see her to the heads of her courses."

"You see her as I do. It is a tall ship on an easy bow-line, with every thing set that will draw. And she is standing hitherward. Her lower sails have lifted within five minutes."

"I thought as much. But"—

"But what, sir? There can be little doubt but she is heading north—and—east. Since she is so kind as to spare us the pains of a chase, we will not hurry our movements. Let her come on. How like you the manner of the stranger's advance, General?"

"Unmilitary, but enticing! There is a look of the mines about her very royals."

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"And you, gentlemen, do you also see the fashion of a galleon in her upper sails?"

"'Tis not unreasonable to believe it," answered one of the inferiors. "The Dons are said to run this passage often, in order to escape speaking us gentlemen, who sail with roving commissions."

"Ah! your Don is a prince of the earth! There is charity in lightening his golden burden, or the man would sink under it, as did the Roman matron under the pressure of the Sabine shields. I think you see no such gilded beauty in the stranger, Mr Wilder."

"It is a heavy ship!"

"The more likely to bear a noble freight. You are new, sir, to this merry trade of ours, or you would know that size is a quality we always esteem in our visitors. If they carry pennants, we leave them to meditate on the many 'slips which exist between the cup and the lip;' and, if stored with metal no more dangerous than that of Potosi, they generally sail the faster after passing a few hours in our company."

"Is not the stranger making signals?" demanded Wilder, thoughtfully.

"Is he so quick to see us! A good look-out must be had, when a vessel, that is merely steadied by her stay-sails, can be seen so far. Vigilance is a neverfailing sign of value!"

A pause succeeded, during which all the glasses, in imitation of that of Wilder, were again raised in the direction of the stranger. Different opinions were given; some affirming, and some doubting, the fact of the signals. The Rover himself was silent, though his observation was keen, and long continued.

"We have wearied our eyes till sight is getting dim," he said. "I have found the use of trying fresh organs when my own have refused to serve me. Come hither, lad," he continued, addressing a man who was executing some delicate job in seamanship on the poop, at no great distance from the spot where the groupe of officers had placed themselves; "come hither: Tell me what you make of the sail in the south-western board."

The man proved to be Scipio, who had been chosen, for his expertness, to perform the task in question. Placing his cap on the deck, in a reverence even deeper than that which the seaman usually manifests toward his superior, he lifted the glass in one hand, while with the other he covered the eye that had at the moment no occasion for the use of its vision. But no sooner did the wandering instrument fall on the distant object, than he dropped it again, and fastened his look, in a sort of stupid admiration, on Wilder.

"Did you see the sail?" demanded the Rover.

"Masser can see him wid he naked eye."

"Ay, but what make you of him by the aid of the glass?"

"He'm ship, sir."

"True. On what course?"

"He got he starboard tacks aboard, sir."

"Still true. But has he signals abroad?"

"He'm got t'ree new cloths in he maintop-gallant-royal, sir."

"His vessel is all the better for the repairs. Did you see his flags?"

"He'm show no flag, masser."

"I thought as much myself. Go forward, lad— stay—one often gets a true idea by seeking it where it is not thought to exist. Of what size do you take the stranger to be?"

"He'm just seven hundred and fifty tons, masser."

"How's this! The tongue of your negro, Mr Wilder, is as exact as a carpenter's rule. The fellow speaks of the size of a vessel, that is hull down, with an air as authoritative as a runner of the King's customs could pronounce on the same, after she had been submitted to the office admeasurement."

"You will have consideration for the ignorance of the black; men of his unfortunate state are seldom skilful in answering interrogatories."

"Ignorance!" repeated the Rover, glancing his eye uneasily, and with a rapidity peculiar to himself, from one to the other, and from both to the rising object in the horizon: "Skilful! I know not: The man has no air of doubt.—You think her tonnage to be precisely that which you have said?"

The large dark eyes of Scipio rolled, in turn, from his new Commander to his ancient master, while, for a moment, his faculties appeared to be lost in inextricable confusion. But the uncertainty continued only for a moment. He no sooner read the frown that was gathering deeply over the brow of the latter, than the air of confidence with which he had pronounced his former opinion vanished in a look of obstinacy so settled, that one

might well have despaired of ever driving, or enticing, him again to seem to think.

"I ask you, if the stranger may not be a dozen tons larger or smaller than what you have named?" continued the Rover, when he found his former question was not likely to be soon answered.

"He'm just as masser wish 'em," returned Scipio.

"I wish him a thousand; since he will then prove the richer prize."

"I s'pose he'm quite a t'ousand, sir."

"Or a snug ship of three hundred, if lined with gold, might do."

"He look berry like a t'ree hundred."

"To me it seems a brig."

"I t'ink him brig too, masser."

"Or possibly, after all, the stranger may prove a schooner, with many lofty and light sails."

"A schooner often carry a royal," returned the black, resolute to acquiesce in all the other said.

"Who knows it is a sail at all! Forward there! It may be well to have more opinions than one on so weighty a matter. Forward there! send the foretopman that is called Fid upon the poop. Your companions are so intelligent and so faithful, Mr Wilder, that you are not to be surprised if I shew an undue desire for their information."

Wilder compressed his lips, and the rest of the groupe manifested a good deal of amazement; but the latter had been too long accustomed to the caprice of their Commander, and the former was too wise, to speak at a moment when his humour seemed at the highest. The topman, however, was not long in making his appearance, and then the chief saw fit again to break the silence.

"And you think it questionable whether it be a sail at all?" he continued.

"He'm sartain nothing but a fly-away," returned the obstinate black.

"You hear what your friend the negro says, master Fid; he thinks that yonder object, which is lifting so fast to leeward, is not a sail."

As the topman saw no sufficient reason for concealing his astonishment at this wild opinion, it was manifested with all the embellishments with which the individual in question usually set forth any of his more visible emotions. After casting a short glance in the direction of the sail, in order to assure himself there had been no deception, he turned his eyes in great disgust on Scipio, as if he would vindicate the credit of the association at the expense of some little contempt for the ignorance of his companion.

"What the devil do you take it for, Guinea? a church?"

"I t'ink he'm church," responded the acquiescent black.

"Lord help the dark-skinned fool! Your Honour knows that conscience is d—nab—y overlooked in Africa, and will not judge the nigger hardly for any little blunder he may make in the account of his religion. But the fellow is a thorough seaman, and should know a top-gallant-sail from a weathercock. Now, look you, S'ip, for the credit of your friends. if you've no great pride on your own behalf, just tell his"—

"It is of no account," interrupted the Rover. "Take you this glass, and pass an opinion on the sail in sight yourself."

Fid scraped his foot, and made a low bow, in acknowledgment of the compliment; and then, depositing his little tarpaulin hat on the deck of the poop, he very composedly, and, as he flattered himself, very understandingly, disposed of his person to take the desired view. The gaze of the topman was far longer than had been that of his black companion; and it is to be presumed, in consequence, much more accurate. Instead, however, of venturing any sudden opinion, when his eye was wearied, he lowered the glass, and with it his head, standing long in the attitude of one whose thoughts had received some subject of deep cogitation. During the process of thinking, the weed was diligently rolled over his tongue, and one hand was stuck a-kimbo into his side, as if he would brace all his faculties to support some extraordinary mental effort.

"I wait your opinion," resumed his attentive Commander, when he thought sufficient time had been allowed to mature the opinion even of Richard Fid.

"Will your Honour just tell me what day of the month this here may be, and mayhap, at the same time, the day of the week too, if it shouldn't be giving too much trouble?"

His two questions were directly answered.

"We had the wind at east—with-southing, the first day out, and then it chopped in the night, and blew great guns at north-west, where it held for the matter of a week. After which there was an Irishman's hurricane, right up

and down, for a day; then we got into these here trades, which have stood as steady as a ship's chaplain over a punch bowl, ever since."—

Here the topman closed his soliloquy, in order to agitate the tobacco again, it being impossible to conduct the process of chewing and talking at one and the same time.

"What of the stranger?" demanded the Rover, a little impatiently.

"It's no church, that's certain, your Honour," said Fid, very decidedly.

"Has he signals flying?"

"He may be speaking with his flags, but it needs a better scholar than Richard Fid to know what he would say. To my eye, there are three new cloths in his main—top—gallant—royal, but no bunting abroad."

"The man is happy in having so good a sail. Mr Wilder, do *you* too see the darker cloths in question?"

"There is certainly something which might be taken for canvas newer than the rest. I believe I first mistook the same, as the sun fell brightest on the sail, for the signals I named."

"Then we are not seen, and may lie quiet for a while, though we enjoy the advantage of measuring the stranger, foot by foot—even to the new cloths in his royal!"

The Rover spoke in a tone that was strangely divided between sarcasm and thought. He then made an impatient gesture to the seamen to quit the poop. When they were alone, he turned to his silent and respectful officers, continuing, in a manner that was grave, while it was conciliatory,—

"Gentlemen," he said, "our idle time is past, and fortune has at length brought activity into our track. Whether the ship in sight be of just seven hundred and fifty tons, is more than I can pretend to pronounce, but something there is which any seaman may know. By the squareness of her upper—yards, the symmetry with which they are trimmed, and the press of canvas she bears on the wind, I pronounce her to be a vessel of war. Do any differ from my opinion? Mr Wilder, speak."

"I feel the truth of all your reasons, and think with you."

A shade of gloomy distrust, which had gathered over the brow of the Rover during the foregoing scene, lighted a little as he listened to the direct and frank avowal of his lieutenant.

"You believe she bears a pennant? I like this manliness of reply. Then comes another question: Shall we fight her?"

To this interrogatory it was not so easy to give a decisive answer. Each officer consulted the opinions of his comrades, in their eyes, until their leader saw fit to make his application still more personal.

"Now, General, this is a question peculiarly fitted for your wisdom," he resumed: "Shall we give battle to a pennant? or shall we spread our wings, and fly?"

"My bullies are not drilled to the retreat. Give them any other work to do, and I will answer for their steadiness."

"But shall we adventure, without a reason?"

"The Spaniard often sends his bullion home under cover of a cruiser's guns," observed one of the inferiors, who rarely found pleasure in any risk that did not infer its correspondent benefit. "We may feel the stranger; if he carries more than his guns, he will betray it by his reluctance to speak; but if poor, we shall find him fierce as a half-fed tiger."

"There is sense in your counsel, Brace, and it shall be regarded. Go then, gentlemen, to your several duties. We'll pass the half hour that may be needed, before his hull shall rise, in looking to our gear, and overhauling the guns. As it is not decided to fight, let what is done be done without display. My people must see no receding from a resolution taken."

The groupe then separated, each man preparing to undertake the task that more especially belonged to the situation that he filled in the ship. Wilder was about to retire with the rest, but a significant sign drew him to the side of his chief, who continued on the poop alone with his new confederate.

"The monotony of our lives is now likely to be interrupted, Mr Wilder," commenced the former, first glancing his eye around, to make sure they were alone. "I have seen enough of your spirit and steadiness, to be sure, that, should accident disable me to conduct the fortunes of these people, my authority will fall into firm and able hands."

"Should such a calamity befall us, I hope it may be found that your expectations shall not be deceived."

"I have confidence, sir; and, where a brave man reposes his confidence, he has a right to hope it will not be

abused. I speak in reason."

"I acknowledge the justice of your words."

"I would, Wilder, that we had known each other earlier. But what matters vain regrets! These fellows of yours are keen of sight to note those cloths so soon!"

"'Tis just the observation of people of their class. The nicer distinctions which marked the cruiser came first from yourself!"

"And then the `seven hundred and fifty tons' of the black!—It was giving an opinion with great decision."

"It is the quality of ignorance to be positive."

"You say truly. Cast an eye at the stranger, and tell me how he comes on."

Wilder obeyed, seemingly glad to be relieved from a discourse that he might have found embarrassing. Many moments were passed before he dropped the glass, during which time not a syllable fell from the lips of his companion. When he turned, however, to deliver the result of his observations, he met an eye, that seemed to pierce his soul, fastened on his countenance. Colouring highly, as if he resented the suspicion betrayed by the act, Wilder closed his half-open lips, and continued silent.

"And the ship?" deeply demanded the Rover.

"The ship has already raised her courses; in a few more minutes we shall see the hull."

"It is a swift vessel! She is standing directly for us."

"I think not. Her head is lying more at east."

"It may be well to make certain of that fact. You are right," he continued, after taking a look himself at the approaching cloud of canvas; "you are very right. As yet we are not seen. Forward there! haul down that head stay-sail; we will steady the ship by her yards. Now let him look with all his eyes; they must be good to see these naked spars at such a distance."

Our adventurer made no reply, assenting to the truth of what the other had said by a simple inclination of his head. They then resumed the walk to and fro in their narrow limits, neither manifesting, however, any anxiety to renew the discourse.

"We are in good condition for the alternative of flight or combat," the Rover at length observed, while he cast a rapid look over the preparations which had been unostentatiously in progress from the moment when the officers dispersed. "Now will I confess, Wilder, a secret pleasure in the belief that yonder audacious fool carries the boasted commission of the German who wears the Crown of Britain. Should he prove more than man may dare attempt, I will flout him; though prudence shall check any further attempts; and, should he prove an equal, would it not gladden your eyes to see St. George come drooping to the water?"

"I thought that men in our pursuit left honour to silly heads, and that we seldom struck a blow that was not intended to ring on a metal more precious than iron."

"'Tis the character the world gives; but I, for one, would rather lower the pride of the minions of King George than possess the power of unlocking his treasury! Said I well, General?" he added, as the individual he named approached; "said I well, in asserting there was glorious pleasure in making a pennant trail upon the sea?"

"We fight for victory," returned the martinet. "I am ready to engage at a minute's notice."

"Prompt and decided, as a soldier.—Now tell me, General, if Fortune, or Chance, or Providence, whichever of the powers you may acknowledge for a leader, were to give you the option of enjoyments, in what would you find your deepest satisfaction?"

The soldier seemed to ruminate, ere he answered,—

"I have often thought, that, were I commander of things on earth, I should, backed by a dozen of my stoutest bullies, charge at the door of that cave which was entered by the tailor's boy, him they call Aladdin."

"The genuine aspirations of a freebooter! In such a case, the magic trees would soon be disburdened of their fruit. Still it might prove an inglorious victory, since incantations and charms are the weapons of the combatants. Call you honour nothing?"

"Hum! I fought for honour half of a reasonably long life, and found myself as light at the close of all my dangers as at the beginning. Honour and I have shaken hands, unless it be the honour of coming off conqueror. I have a strong disgust of defeat, but am always ready to sell the mere honour of the victory cheap."

"Well, let it pass. The quality of the service is much the same, find the motive where you will.— How now! who has dared to let yonder top-gallant-sail fly?"

The Red Rover, Volume 2

The startling change in the voice of the Rover caused all within hearing of his words to tremble. Deep, anxious, and threatening displeasure was in all its tones, and each man cast his eyes upwards, to see on whose devoted head the weight of the dreaded indignation of their chief was about to fall. As there was little but naked spars and tightened ropes to obstruct the view, all became, at the same instant, apprized of the truth. Fid was standing on the head of that topmast which belonged to the particular portion of the vessel where he was stationed, and the sail in question was fluttering, with all its gear loosened, far and high in the wind. His hearing had probably been drowned by the heavy flapping of the canvas; for, instead of lending his ears to the deep powerful call just mentioned, he rather stood contemplating his work, than exhibiting any anxiety as to the effect it might produce on the minds of those beneath him. But a second warning came in tones too terrible to be any longer disregarded by ears even as dull as those of the offender.

"By whose order have you dared to loosen the sail?" demanded the Rover.

"By the order of King Wind, your Honour. The best seaman must give in, when a squall gets the upper hand."

"Furl it! away aloft, and furl it!" shouted the excited leader. "Roll it up; and send the fellow down who has been so bold as to own any authority but my own in this ship, though it were that of a hurricane."

A dozen nimble topmen ascended to the assistance of Fid. In another minute, the unruly canvas was secured, and Richard himself was on his way to the poop. During this brief interval, the brow of the Rover was dark and angry as the surface of the element on which he lived, when blackened by the tempest. Wilder, who had never before seen his new Commander thus excited, began to tremble for the fate of his ancient comrade, and drew nigher, as the latter approached, to intercede in his favour, should the circumstances seem to require such an interposition.

"And why is this?" the still stern and angry leader demanded of the offender. "Why is it that you, whom I have had such recent reason to applaud, should dare to let fly a sail, at a moment when it is important to keep the ship naked?"

"Your Honour will admit that his rations sometimes slips through the best man's fingers, and why not a bit of canvas?" deliberately returned the delinquent. "If I took a turn too many of the gasket off the yard, it is a fault I am ready to answer for."

"You say true, and dearly shall you pay the forfeit. Take him to the gangway, and let him make acquaintance with the cat."

"No new acquaintance, your Honour, seeing that we have met before, and that, too, for matters which I had reason to hide my head for; whereas, here, it may be many blows, and little shame."

"May I intercede in behalf of the offender?" interrupted Wilder, with earnestness and haste. "He is often blundering, but rarely would he err, had he as much knowledge as good-will."

"Say nothing about it, master Harry," returned the topman, with a peculiar glance of his eye. "The sail has been flying finely, and it is now too late to deny it; and so, I suppose, the fact must be scored on the back of Richard Fid, as you would put any other misfortune into the log."

"I would he might be pardoned. I can venture to promise, in his name, 'twill be the last offence"—

"Let it be forgotten," returned the Rover, struggling powerfully to conquer his passion. "I will not disturb our harmony at such a moment, Mr Wilder, by refusing so small a boon: but you need not be told to what evil such negligence might lead. Give me the glass again; I will see if the fluttering canvas has escaped the eye of the stranger."

The topman bestowed a stolen but exulting glance on Wilder, and then the latter motioned the other hastily away, turning himself to join his Commander in the examination.

CHAPTER X.

"As I am an honest man, he looks pale: Art thou sick, or angry?"

Much ado about Nothing.

The approach of the strange sail was becoming rapidly more and more visible to the naked eye. The little speck of white, which had first been seen on the margin of the sea, resembling some gull floating on the summit of a wave, had gradually arisen during the last half hour, until a tall pyramid of canvas was reared on the water. As Wilder bent his look again on this growing object, the Rover put a glass into his hands, with an expression of feature which the other understood to say, "You may perceive that the carelessness of your dependant has already betrayed us!" Still the look was one rather of regret than of reproach; nor did a single syllable of the tongue confirm the meaning language of the eye. On the contrary, it would seem that his Commander was anxious to preserve their recent amicable compact inviolate; for, when the young mariner attempted an awkward explanation of the probable causes of the blunder of Fid, he was met by a quiet gesture, which said, in a sufficiently intelligible language, that the offence was already pardoned.

"Our neighbour keeps a good look-out, as you may see," observed the other. "He has tacked, and is laying boldly up across our fore-foot. Well, let him come on; we shall soon get a look at his battery, and then may we come to our conclusion as to the nature of the intercourse we are to hold."

"If you permit the stranger to near us, it might be difficult to throw him off the chase, should we be glad to get rid of him."

"It must be a fast-going vessel to which the `Dolphin' cannot spare a top-gallant-sail."

"I know not, sir. The sail in sight is swift on the wind, and it is to be believed that she is no duller off. I have rarely known a vessel rise so rapidly as she has done since first we made her."

The youth spoke with such earnestness, as to draw the attention of his companion from the object he was studying to the countenance of the speaker.

"Mr Wilder," he said quickly, and with an air of decision, "you know the ship?"

"I'll not deny it. If my opinion be true, she will be found too heavy for the `Dolphin,' and a vessel that offers little inducement for us to attempt to carry."

"Her size?"

"You heard it from the black."

"Your followers know her also?"

"It would be difficult to deceive a topman in the cut and trim of sails among which he has passed months, nay years."

"I understand the `new cloths' in her top-gallant-royal! Mr Wilder, your departure from that vessel has been recent?"

"As my arrival in this."

The Rover continued silent for several minutes, communing with his own thoughts. His companion made no offer to disturb his meditations; though the furtive glances, he often cast in the direction of the other's musing eye, betrayed some little anxiety to learn the result of his self-communication.

"And her guns?" at length his Commander abruptly demanded.

"She numbers four more than the `Dolphin.'"

"The metal?"

"Is still heavier. In every particular is she a ship a size above your own."

"Doubtless she is the property of the King?"

"She is."

"Then shall she change her masters. By heaven, she shall be mine!"

Wilder shook his head, answering only with an incredulous smile.

"You doubt it," resumed the Rover. "Come hither, and look upon that deck. Can he whom you so lately quitted muster fellows like these, to do his biddings?"

The crew of the `Dolphin' had been chosen, by one who thoroughly understood the character of a seaman, from

among all the different people of the Christian world. There was not a maritime nation in Europe which had not its representative among that band of turbulent and desperate spirits. Even the descendant of the aboriginal possessors of America had been made to abandon the habits and opinions of his progenitors, to become a wanderer on that element which had laved the shores of his native land for ages, without exciting a wish to penetrate its mysteries in the bosoms of his simple-minded ancestry. All had been suited, by lives of wild adventure, on the two elements, for their present lawless pursuits; and, directed by the mind which had known how to obtain and to continue its despotic ascendancy over their efforts, they truly formed a most dangerous and (considering their numbers) resistless crew. Their Commander smiled in exultation, as he watched the evident reflection with which his companion contemplated the indifference, or fierce joy, which different individuals among them exhibited at the appearance of an approaching conflict. Even the rawest of their numbers, the luckless waisters and after-guard, were apparently as confident of victory as those whose audacity might plead the apology of uniform and often repeated success.

"Count you these for nothing?" asked the Rover, at the elbow of his lieutenant, after allowing him time to embrace the whole of the grim band with his eye. "See! here is a Dane, ponderous and steady as the gun at which I shall shortly place him. You may cut him limb from limb, and yet will he stand like a tower, until the last stone of the foundation has been sapped. And, here, we have his neighbours, the Swede and the Russ, fit companions for managing the same piece; which, I'll answer, shall not be silent, while a man of them all is left to apply a match, or handle a sponge. Yonder is a square-built athletic mariner, from one of the Free Towns. He prefers our liberty to that of his native city; and you shall find that the venerable Hanseatic institutions shall give way sooner than he be known to quit the spot I give him to defend. Here, you see a brace of Englishmen; and, though they come from the island that I love so little, better men at need will not be often found. Feed them, and flog them, and I pledge myself to their swaggering, and their courage. D'ye see that thoughtful-looking, bony miscreant, that has a look of godliness in the midst of all his villany? That fellow fish'd for herring till he got a taste of beef, when his stomach revolted at its ancient fare; and then the ambition of becoming rich got uppermost. He is a Scot. from one of the lochs of the North."

"Will he fight?"

"For money—the honour of the Macs—and his religion. He is a reasoning fellow, after all: and I like to have him on my own side in a quarrel. Ah! yonder is the boy for a charge. I once told him to cut a rope in a hurry, and he severed it above his head, instead of beneath his feet, taking a flight from a lower yard into the sea, as a reward for the exploit. But, then, he always extols his presence of mind in not drowning! Now are his ideas in a hot ferment; and, if the truth could be known, I would wager a handsome venture, that the sail in sight is, by some mysterious process, magnified to six in his fertile fancy."

"He must be thinking, then, of escape."

"Far from it; he is rather plotting the means of surrounding them with the 'Dolphin.' To your true Hibernian, escape is the last idea that gives him an uneasy moment. You see the pensive-looking, sallow mortal, at his elbow. That is a man who will fight with a sort of sentiment. There is a touch of chivalry in him, which might be worked into heroism, if one had but the opportunity and the inclination. As it is, he will not fail to show a spark of the true Castilian. His companion has come from the Rock of Lisbon; I should trust him unwillingly, did I not know that little opportunity of taking pay from the enemy is given here. Ah! here is a lad for a dance of a Sunday. You see him, at this moment, with foot and tongue going together. That is a creature of contradictions. He wants for neither wit nor good-nature, but still he might cut your throat on an occasion. There is a strange medley of ferocity and bonhomie about the animal. I shall put him among the boarders; for we shall not be at blows a minute before his impatience will be for carrying every thing by a coup-de-main."

"And who is the seaman at his elbow, that apparently is occupied in divesting his person of some superfluous garments?" demanded Wilder, irresistibly attracted, by the manner of the Rover, to pursue the subject.

"An economical Dutchman. He calculates that it is just as wise to be killed in an old jacket as in a new one; and has probably said as much to his Gascon neighbour, who is, however, resolved to die decently, if die he must. The former has happily commenced his preparations for the combat in good season, or the enemy might defeat us before he would be in readiness. Did it rest between these two worthies to decide this quarrel, the mercurial Frenchman would defeat his neighbour of Holland, before the latter believed the battle had commenced; but, should he let the happy moment pass, rely on it, the Dutchman would give him trouble. Forget you, Wilder, that

the day has been when the countrymen of that slow-moving and heavy-moulded fellow swept the narrow seas with a broom at their mast-heads?"

The Rover smiled wildly as he spoke, and what he said he uttered with bitter emphasis. To his companion, however, there appeared no such grounds of unnatural exultation, in recalling the success of a foreign enemy, and he was content to assent to the truth of the historical fact with a simple inclination of his head. As if he even found pain in this confession, and would gladly be rid of the mortifying reflection altogether, he rejoined, in some apparent haste,—

"You have overlooked the two tall seamen, who are making out the rig of the stranger with so much gravity of observation."

"Ay, those are men that came from a land in which we both feel some interest. The sea is not more unstable than are those rogues in their knavery. Their minds are but half made up to piracy.—'Tis a coarse word, Mr Wilder, but I fear we earn it. But these rascals make a reservation of grace in the midst of all their villany."

"They regard the stranger as if they saw reason to distrust the wisdom of letting him approach so near."

"Ah! they are renowned calculators. I fear they have detected the four supernumerary guns you mentioned; for their vision seems supernatural in affairs which touch their interests. But you see there is brawn and sinew in the fellows; and, what is better, there are heads which teach them to turn those advantages to account."

"You think they fail in spirit?"

"Hum! It might be dangerous to try it on any point they deemed material. They are no quarrellers about words, and seldom lose sight of certain musty maxims, which they pretend come from a volume that I fear you and I do not study too intently. It is not often that they strike a blow for mere chivalry; and, were they so inclined, the rogues are too much disposed to logic, to mistake, like your black, the 'Dolphin' for a church. Still, if they see reason, in their puissant judgments, to engage, mark me, the two guns they command will do better service than all the rest of the battery. But, should they think otherwise, it would occasion no surprise were I to receive a proposition to spare the powder for some more profitable adventure. Honour, forsooth! the miscreants are too well grounded in polemics to mistake the point of honour in a pursuit like ours. But we chatter of trifles, when it is time to think of serious things. Mr Wilder, we will now show our canvas."

The manner of the Rover changed as suddenly as his language. Losing the air of sarcastic levity in which he had been indulging, in a mien better suited to maintain the authority he wielded, he walked aside, while his subordinate proceeded to issue the orders necessary to enforce his commands. Nightingale sounded the usual summons, lifting his hoarse voice in the cry of "All hands make sail, ahoy!"

Until now, the people of the "Dolphin" had made their observations on the sail, that was growing so rapidly above the waters, according to their several humours. Some had exulted in the prospect of a capture; others, more practised in the ways of their Commander, had deemed the probability of their coming in collision at all with the stranger a point far from settled; while a few, more accustomed to reflection, shook their heads as the stranger drew nigher, as if they believed he was already within a distance that might be attended with too much hazard. Still, as they were ignorant alike of those secret sources of information which the chief had so frequently proved he possessed, to an extent that often seemed miraculous, the whole were content patiently to await his decision. But, when the cry above mentioned was heard, it was answered by an activity so general and so cheerful, as to prove it was entirely welcome. Order now followed order in quick succession, from the mouth of Wilder, who, in virtue of his station, was the proper executive officer for the moment.

As both lieutenant and crew appeared animated by the same spirit, it was not long before the naked spars of the "Dolphin" were clothed in vast volumes of spotless snow-white canvas. Sail had fallen after sail, and yard after yard had been raised to the summit of its mast, until the vessel bowed before the breeze, rolling to and fro, but still held stationary by the position of her yards. When all was in readiness to proceed, on whichever course might be deemed necessary, Wilder ascended again to the poop, in order to announce the fact to his superior. He found the Rover attentively considering the stranger, whose hull had by this time risen out of the sea, and exhibited a long, dotted, yellow line, which the eye of every man in the ship well knew to contain the ports whence the guns that marked her particular force were made to issue. Mrs Wyllys, accompanied by Gertrude, stood nigh, thoughtful, as usual, but permitting no occurrence of the slightest moment to escape her vigilance.

"We are ready to gather way on the ship," said Wilder; "we wait merely for the course."

The Rover started, and drew closer to his subordinate, before he gave an answer. Then, looking him full and

intently in the eye, he demanded,—

"You are certain that you know your vessel, Mr Wilder?"

"Certain," was the calm reply.

"It is a royal cruiser," said the governess, with the swiftness of thought.

"It is. I have already pronounced her to be so."

"Mr Wilder," resumed the Rover, "we will try her speed. Let the courses fall, and fill your forward sails."

The young mariner made an acknowledgment of obedience, and proceeded to execute the wishes of his Commander. There was an eagerness, and perhaps a trepidation, in the voice of Wilder, as he issued the necessary orders, that was in remarkable contrast to the deep-toned calmness which characterized the utterance of the Rover. The unusual intonations did not entirely escape the ears of some of the elder seamen; and looks of peculiar meaning were exchanged among them, as they paused to catch his words. But obedience followed these unwonted sounds, as it had been accustomed to succeed the more imposing utterance of their own long-dreaded chief. The head-yards were swung, the sails were distended with the breeze, and the mass, which had so long been inert, began to divide the waters, as it heavily overcame the state of rest in which it had reposed. The ship soon attained its velocity; and then the contest between the two rival vessels became one of deep and engrossing interest.

By this time the stranger was within a half league, directly under the lee of the "Dolphin." Closer and more accurate observation had satisfied every understanding eye in the latter ship of the force and character of their neighbour. The rays of a bright sun fell clear upon her broadside, while the shadow of her sails was thrown far across the waters, in a direction opposite to their own. There were moments when the eye, aided by the glass, could penetrate through the open ports into the interior of the hull, catching fleeting and delusory glimpses of the movements within. A few human forms were distinctly visible in different parts of her rigging; but, in all other respects, the repose of high order and perfect discipline was discernible on all about her.

When the Rover heard the sounds of the parted waters, and saw the little jets of spray that the bows of his own gallant ship cast before her, he signed to his lieutenant to ascend to the place which he still occupied on the poop. For many minutes, his eye was on the strange sail, in close and intelligent contemplation of her powers.

"Mr Wilder," he at length said, speaking like one whose doubts on some perplexing point were finally removed, "I have seen that cruiser before."

"It is probable; she has roamed over most of the waters of the Atlantic."

"Ay, this is not the first of our meetings! a little paint has changed her exterior, but I think I know the manner in which they have stepped her masts."

"They are thought to rake more than is usual."

"They are thought to do it, with reason. Did you serve long aboard her?"

"Years."

"And you left her"—

"To join you."

"Tell me, Wilder, did they treat you, too, as one of an inferior order? Ha! was your merit called `provincial'? Did they read America in all you did?"

"I left her, Captain Heidegger."

"Ay, they gave you reason. For once they have done me an act of kindness. But you were in her during the equinox of March?"

Wilder made a slight bow of assent.

"I thought as much. And you fought a stranger in the gale? Winds, ocean, and man were all at work together."

"It is true. We knew you, and thought for a time that your hour had come."

"I like your frankness. We have sought each other's lives like men, and we shall prove the truer friends, now that amity is established between us. I will not ask you further of that adventure, Wilder; for favour, in my service, is not to be bought by treachery to that you have quitted. It is sufficient that you now sail under my flag."

"What is that flag?" demanded a mild but firm voice, at his elbow.

The Rover turned suddenly, and again met the riveted, calm, and searching eye of the governess. The gleamings of some strangely contradictory passions crossed his features, and then his whole countenance changed to that look of bland courtesy which he most affected when addressing his captives.

"Here speaks a female, to remind two mariners of their duty!" he exclaimed. "We have forgotten the civility of

showing the stranger our hunting. Let it be set, Mr Wilder, that we may omit none of the observances of nautical etiquette."

"The ship in sight carries a naked gaft."

"No matter; we shall be foremost in courtesy. Let the colours be shown."

Wilder opened the little locker which contained the flags most in use, but hesitated which to select, out of a dozen that lay in large rolls within the different compartments.

"I hardly know which of these ensigns it is your pleasure to show," he said, in a manner that appeared sufficiently like putting a question.

"Try him with the heavy-moulded Dutchman. The Commander of so noble a ship should understand all Christian tongues."

The lieutenant made a sign to the quarter-master on duty; and, in another minute, the flag of the United Provinces was waving at the peak of the "Dolphin." The two officers narrowly watched its effect on the stranger, who refused, however, to make any answering sign to the false signal they had just exhibited.

"The stranger sees we have a hull that was never made for the shoals of Holland. Perhaps he knows us?" said the Rover, glancing at the same time a look of inquiry at his companion.

"I think not. Paint is too freely used in the 'Dolphin,' for even her friends to be certain of her countenance."

"She is a coquettish ship, we will allow," returned the Rover, smiling. "Try him with the Portuguese: Let us see if Brazil diamonds have favour in his eyes."

The colours already set were lowered, and, in their place, the emblem of the house of Braganza was loosened to the breeze. Still the stranger pursued his course in sullen inattention, eating closer and closer to the wind, as it is termed in nautical language, in order to lessen the distance between him and his chase as much as possible.

"An ally cannot move him," said the Rover. "Now let him see the taunting drapeau blanc."

Wilder complied in silence. The flag of Portugal was hauled to the deck, and the white field of France was given to the air. The ensign had hardly fluttered in its elevated position, before a broad glossy blazonry, rose, like some enormous bird taking wing, from the deck of the stranger, and opened its folds in graceful waves at his gaft. The same instant, a column of smoke issued from his bows, and had sailed backward through his rigging, ere the report of the gun of defiance found its way, against the fresh breeze of the trades, to the ears of the "Dolphin's" crew.

"So much for national amity!" dryly observed the Rover. "He is mute to the Dutchman, and to the crown of Braganza; but the very bile is stirred within him at the sight of a table-cloth! Let him contemplate the colours he loves so little, Mr Wilder; when we are tired of showing them, our lockers may furnish another."

It would seem, however, that the sight of the flag, which the Rover now chose to bear, produced some such effect on his neighbour as the moleta of the nimble banderillo is known to excite in the enraged bull. Sundry smaller sails, which could do but little good, but which answered the purpose of appearing to wish to quicken his speed, were instantly set aboard the stranger; and not a brace, or a bow-line, was suffered to escape without an additional pull. In short, he wore the air of the courser who receives the useless blows of the jockey, when already at the top of his speed, and when any further excitement is as fruitless as his own additional exertions. Still there seemed but little need of such supererogatory efforts. By this time, the two vessels were fairly trying their powers of sailing, and with no visible advantage in favour of either. Although the "Dolphin" was renowned for her speed, the stranger manifested no inferiority that the keenest scrutiny might detect. The ship of the freebooter was already bending to the breeze, and the jets of spray before her were cast still higher and further in advance; but each impulse of the wind was equally felt by the stranger, and her movement over the heaving waters seemed to be as rapid and as graceful as that of her rival.

"Yon ship parts the water as a swallow cuts the air," observed the chief of the freebooters to the youth, who still kept at his elbow, endeavouring to conceal an uneasiness which was increasing at each instant. "Has she a name for speed?"

"The curlew is scarcely faster. Are we not already nigh enough, for men who cruise with commissions no better than our own pleasure?"

The Rover glanced a look of impatient suspicion at the countenance of his companion; but its expression changed to a smile of haughty audacity, as he answered,—

"Let him equal the eagle in his highest and swiftest flight, he shall find us no laggards on the wing! Why this

reluctance to be within a mile of a vessel of the Crown?"

"Because I know her force, and the hopeless character of a contest with an enemy so superior," returned Wilder, firmly. "Captain Heidegger, you cannot fight your ship with success; and, unless instant use be made of the distance which still exists between us, you cannot escape her. Indeed, I know not but it is already too late to attempt the latter."

"Such, sir, is the opinion of one who overrates the powers of his enemy, because use, and much talking, have taught him to reverence it as something more than human. Mr Wilder, none are so daring, or so modest, as those who have long been accustomed to place their dependance on their own exertions. I have been nigher to a flag even, and yet you see I continue to keep on this mortal coil."

"Hark! 'Tis a drum. The stranger is going to his guns."

The Rover listened a moment, and was able to catch the well-known beat which calls the people of a vessel of war to quarters. First casting a glance upward at his sails, and then throwing a general and critical look on all and every thing which came within the influence of his command, he calmly answered,—

"We will imitate his example, Mr Wilder. Let the order be given."

Until now, the crew of the "Dolphin" had either been occupied in such necessary duties as had been assigned them, or were engaged in gazing with curious eyes at the ship which so eagerly sought to draw as near as possible to their own dangerous vessel. The low but continued hum of voices, sounds such alone as discipline permitted, had afforded the only evidence of the interest they took in the scene; but, the instant the first tap on the drum was heard, each groupe severed, and every man repaired, with bustling activity, to his well-known station. The stir among the crew was but of a moment's continuance, and it was succeeded by the breathing stillness which has already been noticed in our pages on a similar occasion. The officers, however, were seen making hasty, but strict, inquiries into the conditions of their several commands; while the munitions of war, that were quickly drawn from their places of deposit, announced a preparation more serious than ordinary. The Rover himself had disappeared; but it was not long before he was again seen at his elevated look-out, accoutred for the conflict that appeared to approach, and employed, as ever, in studying the properties, the force, and the evolutions of his advancing antagonist. Those who knew him best, however, said that the question of combat was not yet decided in his mind; and hundreds of eager glances were thrown in the direction of his contracting eye, as if to penetrate the mystery in which he still chose to conceal his purpose. He had thrown aside the sea-cap, and stood with the fair hair blowing about a brow that seemed formed to give birth to thoughts far nobler than those which apparently had occupied his life; while a species of leathern helmet lay at his feet, the garniture of which was of a nature to lend an unnatural fierceness to the countenance of its wearer. Whenever this boarding-cap was worn, all in the ship were given to understand that the moment of serious strife was at hand; but, as yet, that neverfailing evidence of the hostile intention of their leader was unnoticed.

In the mean time, each officer had examined into, and reported, the state of his division; and then, by a sort of implied permission on the part of their superiors, the death-like calm, which had hitherto reigned among the people, was allowed to be broken by suppressed but earnest discourse; the calculating chief permitting this departure from the usual rules of more regular cruisers, in order to come at the temper of the crew, on which so much of the success of his desperate enterprises so frequently depended.

CHAPTER XI.

—"For he made me mad, To see him shine so brisk, and smell so sweet, And talk so like a waiting gentlewoman."—

King Henry IV.

The moment was now one of high and earnest excitement. Each individual, who was charged with a portion of the subordinate authority of the ship, had examined into the state of his command, with that engrossing care which always deepens as responsibility draws nigher to the proofs of its being worthily bestowed. The voice of the harsh master had ceased to inquire into the state of those several ropes and chains that were deemed vital to the safety of the vessel; each chief of a battery had assured and re-assured himself that his artillery was ready for instant, and the most effective, service; extra ammunition had already issued from its dark and secret repository; and even the hum of dialogue had ceased, in the more engrossing and all-absorbing interest of the scene. Still the quick and ever-changing glance of the Rover could detect no reason to distrust the firmness of his people. They were grave, as are ever the bravest and steadiest in the hour of trial; but their gravity was mingled with no signs of concern. It seemed rather like the effect of desperate and concentrated resolution, such as braces the human mind to efforts which exceed the ordinary daring of martial enterprise. To this cheering exhibition of the humour of his crew the wary and sagacious leader saw but three exceptions; they were found in the persons of his lieutenant and his two remarkable associates.

It has been seen that the bearing of Wilder was not altogether such as became one of his rank in a moment of great trial. The keen, jealous glances of the Rover had studied and re-studied his manner, without arriving at any satisfactory conclusion as to its real cause. The colour was as fresh on the cheeks of the youth, and his limbs were as firm as in the hours of entire security; but the unsettled wandering of his eye, and an air of doubt and indecision which pervaded a mien that ought to display qualities so opposite, gave his Commander cause for deep reflection. As if to find an explanation of the enigma in the deportment of the associates of Wilder, his look sought the persons of Fid and the negro. They were both stationed at the piece nearest to the place he himself occupied, the former filling the station of captain of the gun.

The ribs of the ship itself were not firmer in their places than was the attitude of the topman, as he occasionally squinted along the massive iron tube over which he was placed in command; nor was that familiar and paternal care, which distinguishes the seaman's interest in his particular trust, wanting in his manner. Still, an air of broad and inexplicable surprise had possession of his rugged lineaments; and ever, as his look wandered from the countenance of Wilder to their adversary, it was not difficult to discover that he marvelled to find the two in opposition. He neither commented on, nor complained, however, of an occurrence he evidently found so extraordinary, but appeared perfectly disposed to pursue the spirit of that well-known maxim of the mariner which teaches the obedient tar "to obey orders, though he break owners." Every portion of the athletic form of the negro was motionless, except his eyes. These large, jet-black orbs, however, rolled incessantly, like the more dogmatic organs of the topman, from Wilder to the strange sail, seeming to drink in fresh draughts of astonishment at each new look.

Struck by these evident manifestations of some extraordinary and yet common sentiment between the two, the Rover profited by his own position, and the distance of the lieutenant, to address them. Leaning over the slight rail that separated the break of the poop from the quarter-deck, he said, in that familiar manner which the Commander is most wont to use to his inferiors when their services are becoming of the greatest importance,—

"I hope, master Fid, they have put you at a gun that knows how to speak."

"There is not a smoother bore, nor a wider mouth, in the ship, your Honour, than these of 'Blazing Billy,' " returned the topman, giving the subject of his commendations an affectionate slap. "All I ask is a clean sponge and a tight wad. Guinea, score a foul anchor, in your own fashion, on a half dozen of the shot; and, after the matter is all over, they who live through it may go aboard the enemy, and see in what manner Richard Fid has planted his seed."

"You are not new in action, master Fid?"

"Lord bless your Honour! gunpowder is no more than dry tobacco in my nostrils! tho'f I will say"—

"You were going to add"—

"That sometimes I find myself shifted over, in these here affairs," returned the topman, glancing his eye first at the flag of France, and then at the distant emblem of England, "like a jib—boom rigged, abaft, for a jury to the spanker. I suppose master Harry has it all in his pocket, in black and white; but this much I will say, that, if I must throw stones, I should rather see them break a neighbour's crockery, than that of my own mother.—I say, Guinea, score a couple more of the shot; since, if the play is to be acted, I've a mind the `Blazing Billy' should do something creditable for the honour of her good name."

The Rover drew back, thoughtful and silent. He then caught a look from Wilder, whom he again beckoned to approach.

"Mr Wilder," he said, in a tone of kindness, "I comprehend your feelings. All have not offended alike in yonder vessel, and you would rather your service against that haughty flag should commence with some other ship. There is little else but empty honour to be gained in the conflict—in tenderness to your feelings, I will avoid it."

"It is too late," said Wilder, with a melancholy shake of the head.

"You shall see your error. The experiment may cost us a broadside, but it shall succeed. Go, descend with our guests to a place of safety; and, by the time you return, the scene shall have undergone a change."

Wilder eagerly disappeared in the cabin, whither Mrs Wyllys had already withdrawn; and, after communicating the intentions of his Commander to avoid an action, he conducted them into the depths of the vessel, in order that no casualty might arrive to imbitter his recollections of the hour. This grateful duty promptly and solicitously performed, our adventurer again sought the deck, with the velocity of thought.

Notwithstanding his absence had seemed but of a moment, the scene had indeed changed in all its hostile images. In place of the flag of France, he found the ensign of England floating at the peak of the "Dolphin," and a quick and intelligible exchange of lesser signals in active operation between the two vessels. Of all that cloud of canvas which had so lately borne down the vessel of the Rover, her topsails alone remained distended to the yards; the remainder was hanging in festoons, and fluttering loosely before a favourable breeze. The ship itself was running directly for the stranger, who, in turn, was sullenly securing his lofty sails, like one who was disappointed in a high—prized and expected object.

"Now is yon fellow sorry to believe him a friend whom he had lately supposed an enemy," said the Rover, directing the attention of his lieutenant to the confiding manner with which their neighbour suffered himself to be deceived by his surreptitiously obtained signals. "It is a tempting offer; but I pass it, Wilder, for your sake."

The gaze of the lieutenant seemed bewildered, but he made no reply. Indeed, but little time was given for deliberation or discourse. The "Dolphin" rolled swiftly along her path, and each moment dissipated the mist in which distance had enveloped the lesser objects on board the stranger. Guns, blocks, ropes, bolts, men, and even features, became plainly visible, in rapid succession, as the water that divided them was parted by the bows of the lawless ship. In a few short minutes, the stranger, having secured most of his lighter canvas, came sweeping up to the wind; and then, as his after—sails, squared for the purpose, took the breeze on their outer surface, the mass of his hull became stationary.

The people of the "Dolphin" had so far imitated the confiding credulity of the deceived cruiser of the Crown, as to furl all their loftiest duck, each man employed in the service trusting implicitly to the discretion and daring of the singular being whose pleasure it was to bring their ship into so hazardous a proximity to a powerful enemy—qualities that had been known to avail them in circumstances of even greater delicacy than those in which they were now placed. With this air of audacious confidence, the dreaded Rover came gliding down upon her unsuspecting neighbour, until within a few hundred feet of her weather—beam, when she too, with a graceful curve in her course, bore up against the breeze, and came to a state of rest. But Wilder, who regarded all the movements of his superior in silent amazement, was not slow in observing that the head of the "Dolphin" was laid a different way from that of the other, and that her progress had been arrested by the counteracting position of her head—yards; a circumstance that afforded the advantage of a quicker command of the ship, should need require a sudden recourse to the guns.

The "Dolphin" was still drifting slowly under the last influence of her recent motion, when the customary hoarse and nearly unintelligible summons came over the water, demanding her appellation and character. The Rover applied his trumpet to his lips, with a meaning glance that was directed towards his lieutenant, and returned

the name of a ship, in the service of the King, that was known to be of the size and force of his own vessel.

"Ay, ay," returned a voice from out of the other ship, "'twas so I made out your signals."

The hail was then reciprocated, and the name of the royal cruiser given in return, followed by an invitation from her Commander, to his brother in authority, to visit his superior.

Thus far, no more had occurred than was usual between seamen in the same service; but the affair was rapidly arriving at a point that most men would have found too embarrassing for further deception. Still the observant eye of Wilder detected no hesitation or doubt in the manner of his chief. The beat of the drum was heard from the cruiser, announcing the "retreat from quarters;" and, with perfect composure, he directed the same signal to be given for his own people to retire from their guns. In short, five minutes established every appearance of entire confidence and amity between two vessels which would have soon been at deadly strife, had the true character of one been known to the other. In this state of the doubtful game he played, and with the invitation still ringing in the ears of Wilder, the Rover motioned his lieutenant to his side.

"You hear that I am desired to visit my senior in the service of his Majesty," he said, with a smile of irony playing about his scornful lip. "Is it your pleasure to be of the party?"

The start with which Wilder received this hardy proposal was far too natural to proceed from any counterfeited emotion.

"You are not so mad as to run the risk!" he exclaimed, when words were at command.

"If you fear for yourself, I can go alone."

"Fear!" echoed the youth, a bright flush giving an additional glow to the flashing of his kindling eye. "It is not fear, Captain Heidegger, but prudence, that tells me to keep concealed. My presence would betray the character of this ship. You forget that I am known to all in yonder cruiser."

"I had indeed forgotten that portion of the plot. Then remain, while I go to play upon the credulity of his Majesty's Captain."

Without waiting for an answer, the Rover led the way below, signing for his companion to follow. A few moments sufficed to arrange the fair golden locks that imparted such a look of youth and vivacity to the countenance of the former. The undress, fanciful frock he wore in common was exchanged for the attire of one of his assumed rank and service, which had been made to fit his person with the nicest care, and with perhaps a coxcomical attention to the proportions of his really fine person; and in all other things was he speedily equipped for the disguise he chose to affect. No sooner were these alterations in his appearance completed, (and they were effected with a brevity and readiness that manifested much practice in similar artifices), than he disposed himself to proceed on the intended experiment.

"Truer and quicker eyes have been deceived," he coolly observed, turning his glance from a mirror to the countenance of his lieutenant, as he spoke, "than those which embellish the countenance of Captain Bignall."

"You know him, then?"

"Mr Wilder, my business imposes the necessity of knowing much that other men overlook. Now is this adventure, which, by your features, I perceive you deem so forlorn in its hopes of success, one of easy achievement. I am convinced that not an officer or man on board the 'Dart' has ever seen the ship whose name I have chosen to usurp. She is too fresh from the stocks to incur that risk. Then is there little probability that I, in my other self, shall be compelled to acknowledge acquaintance with any of her officers; for you well know that years have passed since your late ship has been in Europe; and, by running your eye over these books, you will perceive I am that favoured mortal, the son of a Lord, and have not only grown into command, but into manhood, since her departure from home."

"These are certainly favouring circumstances, and such as I had not the sagacity to detect.—But why incur the risk at all?"

"Why! Perhaps there is a deep-laid scheme to learn if the prize would repay the loss of her capture; perhaps—it is my humour. There is fearful excitement in the adventure."

"And there is fearful danger."

"I never count the price of these enjoyments.—Wilder," he added, turning to him with a look of frank and courteous confidence, "I place life and honour in your keeping; for to me it would be dishonour to desert the interests of my crew."

"The trust shall be respected," repeated our adventurer, in a tone so deep and choaked as to be nearly

unintelligible.

Regarding the still ingenuous countenance of his companion intently for an instant, the Rover smiled, as if he approved of the pledge, waved his hand in adieu, and, turning, was about to leave the cabin; but a third form, at that moment, caught his wandering glance. Laying a hand lightly on the shoulder of the boy, whose form was placed somewhat obtrusively in his way, he demanded, a little sternly,—

"Roderick, what means this preparation?"

"To follow my master to the boat."

"Boy, thy service is not needed."

"It is rarely wanted of late."

"Why should I add unnecessarily to the risk of lives, where no good can attend the hazard?"

"In risking your own, you risk all to me," was the answer, given in a tone so resigned, and yet so faltering, that the tremulous and nearly smothered sounds caught no ears but those for whom they were intended.

The Rover for a time replied not. His hand still kept its place on the shoulder of the boy, whose working features his riveted eye read, as the organ is sometimes wont to endeavour to penetrate the mystery of the human heart.

"Roderick," he at length said, in a milder and a far kinder voice, "your lot shall be mine; we go together."

Then, dashing his hand hastily across his brow, the wayward chief ascended the ladder, attended by the lad, and followed by the individual in whose faith he reposed so great a trust. The step with which the Rover trod his deck was firm, and the bearing of his form as steady as though he felt no hazard in his undertaking. His look passed, with a seaman's care, from sail to sail; and not a brace, yard, or bow-line escaped the quick understanding glances he cast about him, before he proceeded to the side, in order to enter a boat which he had already ordered to be in waiting. A glimmering of distrust and hesitation was now, for the first time, discoverable through the haughty and bold decision of his features. For a moment, his foot lingered on the ladder. "Davis," he said sternly to the individual whom, by his own experience, he knew to be so long practised in treachery, "leave the boat. Send me the gruff captain of the fore-castle in his place. So bold a talker, in common, should know how to be silent at need."

The exchange was instantly made; for no one, there, was ever known to dispute a mandate that was uttered with the air of authority he then wore. A deeply intent attitude of thought succeeded, and then every shadow of care vanished from that brow, on which a look of high and generous confidence was seated, as he added,—

"Wilder, adieu! I leave you Captain of my people, and master of my fate: Certain I am that both trusts are reposed in worthy hands."

Without waiting for reply, as if he scorned the vain ceremony of idle assurances, he descended swiftly to the boat, which at the next instant was pulling boldly towards the King's cruiser. The brief interval which succeeded, between the departure of the adventurers and their arrival at the hostile ship, was one of intense and absorbing suspense on the part of all whom they had left behind. The individual most interested in the event, however, betrayed neither in eye nor movement any of the anxiety which so intently beset the minds of his followers. He mounted the side of his enemy amid the honours due to his imaginary rank, with a self-possession and ease that might readily have been mistaken, by those who believe these fancied qualities have a real existence, for the grace and dignity of lofty recollections and high birth. His reception, by the honest veteran whose long and hard services had received but a meager reward in the vessel he commanded, was frank, manly, and seaman-like. No sooner had the usual greetings passed, than the latter conducted his guest into his own apartments.

"Find such a birth, Captain Howard, as suits your inclination," said the unceremonious old seaman, seating himself as frankly as he invited his companion to imitate his example. "A gentleman of your extraordinary merit must be reluctant to lose time in useless words, though you are so young—young for the pretty command it is your good fortune to enjoy!"

"On the contrary, I do assure you I begin to feel myself quite an antediluvian," returned the Rover, coolly placing himself at the opposite side of the table, where he might, from time to time, look his half-disgusted companion full in the eye; "Would you imagine it, sir? I shall have reached the age of three-and-twenty, if I live through the day."

"I had given you a few more years, young gentleman; but London can ripen the human face as speedily as the Equator."

"You never said truer words, sir. Of all cruising grounds, Heaven defend me from that of St. James's! I do assure you, Bignall, the service is quite sufficient to wear out the strongest constitution. There were moments when I really thought I should have died that humble, disagreeable mortal—a lieutenant!"

"Your disease would then have been a galloping consumption!" muttered the indignant old seaman. "They have sent you out in a pretty boat at last, Captain Howard."

"She's bearable, Bignall, but frightfully small. I told my father, that, if the First Lord didn't speedily regenerate the service, by building more comfortable vessels, the navy would get altogether into vulgar hands. Don't you find the motion excessively annoying in these single-deck'd ships, Bignall?"

"When a man has been tossing up and down for five—and—forty years, Captain Howard," returned his host, stroking his gray locks, for want of some other manner of suppressing his ire, "he gets to be indifferent whether his ship pitches a foot more or a foot less."

"Ah! that, I dare say, is what one calls philosophical equanimity, though little to my humour. But, after this cruise, I am to be posted; and then I shall make interest for a guard-ship in the Thames; every thing goes by interest now—a—days, you know, Bignall."

The honest old tar swallowed his displeasure as well as he could; and, as the most effectual means of keeping himself in a condition to do credit to his own hospitality, he hastened to change the subject.

"I hope, among other new fashions, Captain Howard," he said, "the flag of Old England continues to fly over the Admiralty. You wore the colours of Louis so long this morning, that another half hour might have brought us to loggerheads."

"Oh! that was an excellent military ruse! I shall certainly write the particulars of that deception home."

"Do so; do so, sir; you may get knighthood for the exploit."

"Horrible, Bignall! my Lady mother would faint at the suggestion. Nothing so low has been in the family, I do assure you, since the time when chivalry was genteel."

"Well, well, Captain Howard, it was happy for us both that you got rid of your Gallic humour so soon; for a little more time would have drawn a broadside from me. By heavens, sir, the guns of this ship would have gone off of themselves, in another five minutes!"

"It is quite happy as it is.—What do you find to amuse you (yawning) in this dull quarter of the world, Bignall?"

"Why, sir, what between his Majesty's enemies, the care of my ship, and the company of my officers, I find few heavy moments."

"Ah! your officers: True, you *must* have officers on board; though, I suppose, they are a little oldish to be agreeable to *you*. Will you favour me with a sight of the list?"

The Commander of the `Dart' did as he was requested, putting the quarter-bill of his ship into the hands of his unknown enemy, with an eye that was far too honest to condescend to bestow even a look on a being so much despised.

"What a list of thorough 'mouthers! All Yarmouth, and Plymouth, and Portsmouth, and Exmouth names, I do affirm. Here are Smiths enough to do the iron-work of the whole ship. Ha! here is a fellow that might do good service in a deluge. Who may be this Henry Ark, that I find rated as your first lieutenant?"

"A youth who wants but a few drops of your blood, Captain Howard, to be one day at the head of his Majesty's fleet."

"If he be then so extraordinary for his merit, Captain Bignall, may I presume on your politeness to ask him to favour us with his society. I always give my lieutenant half an hour of a morning—if he be genteel."

"Poor boy! God knows where he is to be found at this moment. The noble fellow has embarked, of his own accord, on a most dangerous service, and I am as ignorant as yourself of his success. Remonstrance, and even entreaties, were of no avail. The Admiral had great need of a suitable agent, and the good of the nation demanded the risk; then, you know, men of humble birth must earn their preferment in cruising elsewhere than at St. James's; for the brave lad is indebted to a wreck, in which he was found an infant, for the very name you find so singular."

"He is, however, still borne upon your books as first lieutenant?"

"And I hope ever will be, until he shall get the ship he so well merits.—Good Heaven! are you ill, Captain Howard? Boy, a tumbler of grog here."

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"I thank you, sir," returned the Rover, smiling calmly, and rejecting the offered beverage, as the blood returned into his features, with a violence that threatened to break through the ordinary boundaries of its currents. "It is no more than an ailing I inherit from my mother. We call it, in our family, the `de Vere ivory;' for no other reason, that I could ever learn, than that one of my female ancestors was particularly startled, in a delicate situation, you know, by an elephant's tooth. I am told it has rather an amiable look, while it lasts."

"It has the look of a man who is fitter for his mother's nursery than a gale of wind. But I am glad it is so soon over."

"No one wears the same face long now—a-days, Bignall.—And so this Mr Ark is not any body, after all!"

"I know not what you call `any body,' sir; but, if sterling courage, great professional merit, and stern loyalty, count for any thing on your late cruising grounds, Captain Howard, Henry Ark will soon be in command of a frigate."

"Perhaps, if one only knew exactly on what to found his claims," continued the Rover, with a smile so kind, and a voice so insinuating, that they half counteracted the effect of his assumed manner, "a word might be dropped, in a letter home, that should do the youth no harm."

"I would to Heaven I dare but reveal the nature of the service he is on!" eagerly returned the warm-hearted old seaman, who was as quick to forget, as he was sudden to feel, disgust. "You may, however, safely say, from his general character, that it is honourable, hazardous, and has the entire good of his Majesty's subjects in view. Indeed, an hour has scarcely gone by since I thought that it was completely successful.—Do you often set your lofty sails, Captain Howard, while the heavier canvas is rolled upon the yards? To me, a ship clothed in that style looks something like a man with his coat on, before he has cased his legs in the lower garment."

"You allude to the accident of my maintop—gallant—sail getting loose when you first made me?"

"I mean no other. We had caught a glimpse of your spars with the glass; but had lost you altogether, when the flying duck met the eye of a look-out. To say the least, it was remarkable, and it might have proved an awkward circumstance."

"Ah! I often do things in that way, in order to be odd. It is a sign of cleverness to be odd, you know.— But I, too, am sent into these seas on a special errand."

"Such as what?" bluntly demanded his companion, with an uneasiness about his frowning eye that he was far too simple-minded to conceal.

"To look for a ship that will certainly give me a famous lift, should I have the good luck to fall in with her. For some time, I took you for the very gentleman I was in search of; and I do assure you, if your signals had not been so very unexceptionable, something serious might have happened between us."

"And pray, sir, for whom did you take me?"

"For no other than that notorious knave the Red Rover."

"The devil you did! And do you suppose, Captain Howard, there is a pirate afloat who carries such hamper above his head as is to be found aboard the `Dart?' Such a set to her sails—such a step to her masts—and such a trim to her hull? I hope, for the honour of your vessel, sir, that the mistake went no further than the Captain?"

"Until we got within reading distance of the signals, at least a moiety of the better opinions in my ship was dead against you, Bignall, I give you my declaration. You've really been so long from home, that the `Dart' is getting quite a roving look. You may not be sensible of it, but I assure you of the fact merely as a friend."

"And, perhaps, since you did me the honour to mistake my vessel for a freebooter," returned the old tar, smothering his ire in a look of facetious irony, which changed the expression of his mouth to a grim grin, "you might have conceited this honest gentleman here to be no other than Beelzebub."

As he spoke, the Commander of the ship, which had borne so odious an imputation, directed the eyes of his companion to the form of a third individual, who had entered the cabin with the freedom of a privileged person, but with a tread so light as to be inaudible. As this unexpected form met the quick, impatient glance of the pretended officer of the Crown, he arose involuntarily, and, for half a minute, that admirable command of muscle and nerve, which had served him so well in maintaining his masquerade, appeared entirely to desert him. The loss of self-possession, however, was but for a time so short as to attract no notice; and he coolly returned the salutations of an aged man, of a meek and subdued look, with that air of blandness and courtesy which he so well knew how to assume.

"This gentleman is your chaplain, sir, I presume, by his clerical attire," he said, after he had exchanged bows

with the stranger.

"He is, sir—a worthy and honest man, whom I am not ashamed to call my friend. After a separation of thirty years, the Admiral has been good enough to lend him to me for the cruise; and, though my ship is none of the largest, I believe he finds himself as comfortable in her as he would aboard the flag.—This gentleman, Doctor, is the *honourable* Captain Howard, of his Majesty's ship `Antelope.' I need not expatiate on his remarkable merit, since the command he bears, at his years, is a sufficient testimony on that important particular."

There was a look of bewildered surprise in the gaze of the divine, when his glance first fell upon the features of the pretended scion of nobility; but it was far less striking than had been that of the subject of his gaze, and of much shorter continuance. He again bowed meekly, and with that deep reverence which long use begets, even in the best-intentioned minds, when brought in contact with the fancied superiority of hereditary rank; but he did not appear to consider the occasion one that required he should say more than the customary words of salutation. The Rover turned calmly to his veteran companion, and continued the discourse.

"Captain Bignall," he said, again wearing that grace of manner which became him so well, "it is my duty to follow your motions in this interview. I will now return to my ship; and if, as I begin to suspect, we are in these seas on a similar errand, we can concert at our leisure a system of co-operation, which, properly matured by your experience, may serve to bring about the common end we have in view."

Greatly mollified by this concession to his years and to his rank, the Commander of the "Dart" pressed his hospitalities warmly on his guest, winding up his civilities by an invitation to join in a marine feast at an hour somewhat later in the day. All the former offers were politely declined, while the latter was accepted; the invited making the invitation itself an excuse that he should return to his own vessel, in order that he might select such of his officers as he should deem most worthy of participating in the dainties of the promised banquet. The veteran and really meritorious Bignall, notwithstanding the ordinary sturdy blustering of his character, had served too long in indigence and comparative obscurity, not to feel some of the longings of human nature for his hard-earned and protracted preferment. He consequently kept, in the midst of all his native and manly honesty, a saving-eye on the means of accomplishing this material object. It is to occasion no surprise, therefore, that his parting from the supposed son of a powerful champion at Court was more amicable than had been the meeting. The Rover was bowed, from the cabin to the deck, with at least an appearance of returning good-will. On reaching the latter, a hurried, suspicious, and perhaps an uneasy glance was thrown from his restless eyes on all those faces that were grouped around the gangway, by which he was about to leave the ship; but their expression instantly became calm again, and a little supercilious withal, in order to do no discredit to the part in the comedy which it was his present humour to enact. Then, shaking the worthy and thoroughly-deceived old seaman heartily by the hand, he touched his hat, with an air half-haughty, half-condescending, to his inferiors. He was in the act of descending into the boat, when the chaplain was seen to whisper something, with great earnestness, in the ear of his Captain. The Commander hastened to recall his departing guest, desiring him, with startling gravity, to lend him his private attention for another moment. Suffering himself to be led apart by the two, the Rover stood a waiting their pleasure, with a coolness of demeanour that, under the peculiar circumstances of his case, did signal credit to his nerves.

"Captain Howard," resumed the warm-hearted Bignall, "have you a gentleman of the cloth in your vessel?"

"Two, sir," was the ready answer.

"Two! It is rare to find a supernumerary priest in a man of war! But, I suppose, Court influence could give the fellow a bishop," muttered the other. "You are fortunate in this particular, young gentleman, since I am indebted to inclination, rather than to custom, for the society of my worthy friend here. He has, however, made a point that I should include the reverend gentleman—I should say *gentlemen*— in the invitation."

"You shall have all the divinity of my ship, Bignall, on my faith."

"I believe I was particular in naming your first lieutenant."

"Oh! dead or alive, he shall surely be of your party," returned the Rover, with a suddenness and vehemence of utterance that occasioned both his auditors to start with surprise. "You may not find him an ark to rest your weary foot on; but, such as he is, he is entirely at your service. And now, once more, I salute you."

Bowing again, he proceeded, with his former deliberate air, over the gangway, keeping his eye riveted on the lofty gear of the "Dart," as he descended her side, with much that sort of expression with which a *petit-maître* is apt to regard the fashion of the garments of one newly arrived from the provinces. His superior repeated his

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invitation with warmth, and waved his hand in a frank but temporary adieu; thus unconsciously suffering the man to escape him whose capture would have purchased the long postponed and still distant advantages for whose possession he secretly pined, with all the withering longings of a hope cruelly deferred.

CHAPTER XII.

"Let them accuse me by invention; I will answer in mine honour."

—*Coriolanus*.

"Yes!" muttered the Rover, with bitter irony, as his boat rowed under the stern of the cruiser of the Crown; "yes! I, and my officers, will taste of your banquet! But the viands shall be such as these hirelings of the King shall little relish!—Pull with a will, my men, pull; in an hour, you shall rummage the store-rooms of that fool, for your reward!"

The greedy freebooters who manned the oars could scarcely restrain their shouts, in order to maintain that air of moderation which policy still imposed; but they gave vent to their excitement, in redoubled efforts in propelling the pinnace. In another minute, the adventurers were all in safety again under the sheltering guns of the "Dolphin."

His people gathered, from the haughty gleamings that were flashing from the eyes of the Rover, as his foot once more touched the deck of his own ship, that the period of some momentous action was at hand. For an instant, he lingered on the quarter-deck, surveying, with a sort of stern joy, the sturdy materials of his lawless command; and then, without speaking, he abruptly entered his proper cabin, either forgetful that he had conceded its use to others, or, in the present excited state of his mind, utterly indifferent to the change. A sudden and tremendous blow on the gong announced to the alarmed females, who had ventured from their secret place, under the present amicable appearances between the two ships, not only his presence, but his humour.

"Let the first lieutenant be told I await him," was the stern order that followed the appearance of the attendant he had summoned.

During the short period which elapsed before his mandate could be obeyed, the Rover seemed struggling with an emotion that choked him. But when the door of the cabin was opened, and Wilder stood before him, the most suspicious and closest observer might have sought in vain any evidence of the fierce passion which in reality agitated the inward man. With the recovery of his self-command, returned a recollection of the manner of his intrusion into a place which he had himself ordained should be privileged. It was then that he first sought the shrinking forms of the females, and hastened to relieve the terror that was too plainly to be seen in their countenances, by words of apology and explanation.

"In the hurry of an interview with a friend," he said, "I may have forgotten that I am host to even such guests as it is my happiness to entertain, though it be done so very indifferently."

"Spare your civilities, sir," said Mrs Wyllys, with dignity: "In order to make us less sensible of any intrusion, be pleased to act the master here."

The Rover first saw the ladies seated; and then, like one who appeared to think the occasion might excuse any little departure from customary forms, he signed, with a smile of high courtesy, to his lieutenant to imitate their example.

"His Majesty's artisans have sent worse ships than the 'Dart' upon the ocean, Wilder," he commenced, with a significant look, as if he intended that the other should supply all the meaning that his words did not express; "but his ministers might have selected a more observant individual for the command."

"Captain Bignall has the reputation of a brave and an honest man."

"Ay! He should deserve it; for, strip him of these qualities, and little would remain. He gives me to understand that he is especially sent into this latitude in quest of a ship that we have all heard of, either in good or in evil report; I speak of the 'Red Rover!'"

The involuntary start of Mrs Wyllys, and the sudden manner in which Gertrude grasped the arm of her governess, were certainly seen by the last speaker, but in no degree did his manner betray the consciousness of such an observation. His self-possession was admirably emulated by his male companion, who answered, with a composure that no jealousy could have seen was assumed,—

"His cruise will be hazardous, not to say without success."

"It may prove both. And yet he has lofty expectations of the results."

"He probably labours under the common error as to the character of the man he seeks."

"In what does he mistake?"

"In supposing that he will encounter an ordinary freebooter—one coarse, rapacious, ignorant, and inexorable, like others of"—

"Of what, sir?"

"I would have said, of his class; but a mariner like him we speak of forms the head of his own order."

"We will call him, then, by his popular name, Mr Wilder—a rover. But, answer me, is it not remarkable that so aged and experienced a seaman should come to this little frequented sea in quest of a ship whose pursuits should call her into more bustling scenes?"

"He may have traced her through the narrow passages of the islands, and followed on the course she has last been seen steering."

"He may indeed," returned the Rover, musing intently. "Your thorough mariner knows how to calculate the chances of winds and currents, as the bird finds its way in air. Still a description of the ship should be needed for a clue."

The eyes of Wilder, notwithstanding every effort to the contrary, sunk before the piercing gaze they encountered, as he answered,—

"Perhaps he is not without that knowledge, too."

"Perhaps not. Indeed, he gave me reason to believe he has an agent in the secrets of his enemy. Nay, he expressly avowed the same, and acknowledged that his prospects of success depended on the skill and information of that individual, who no doubt has his private means of communicating what he learns of the movements of those with whom he serves."

"Did he name him?"

"He did."

"It was?"—

"Henry—Ark, *alias* Wilder."

"It is vain to attempt denial," said our adventurer, rising, with an air of pride that he intended should conceal the uneasy sensation that in truth beset him; "I find you know me."

"For a false traitor, sir."

"Captain Heidegger, you are safe, here, in using these reproachful terms."

The Rover struggled, and struggled successfully, to keep down the risings of his temper; but the effort lent to his countenance gleamings of fierce and bitter scorn.

"You will communicate that fact also to your superiors," he said, with taunting irony. "The monster of the seas, he who plunders defenceless fishermen, ravages unprotected coasts, and eludes the flag of King George, as other serpents steal into their caves at the footstep of man, is safe in speaking his mind, backed by a hundred and fifty freebooters, and in the security of his own cabin. Perhaps he knows, too, that he is breathing in the atmosphere of peaceful and peace-making woman."

But the first surprise of the subject of his scorn had passed, and he was neither to be goaded into retort, nor terrified into entreaties. Folding his arms with calmness, Wilder simply replied,—

"I have incurred this risk, in order to drive a scourge from the ocean, which had baffled all other attempts at its extermination. I knew the hazard, and shall not shrink from its penalty."

"You shall not, sir!" returned the Rover, striking the gong again with a finger that appeared to carry in its touch the weight of a giant. "Let the negro, and the topman his companion, be secured in irons, and, on no account, permit them to communicate, by word or signal, with the other ship."—When the agent of his punishments, who had entered at the well-known summons, had retired, he again turned to the firm and motionless form that stood before him, and continued: "Mr Wilder, there is a law which binds this community, into which you have so treacherously stolen, together, that would consign you, and your miserable confederates, to the yard-arm, the instant your true character should be known to my people. I have but to open that door, and to pronounce the nature of your treason, in order to give you up to the tender mercies of the crew."

"You will not! no, you will not!" cried a voice at his elbow, which thrilled on even all his iron nerves. "You have forgotten the ties which bind man to his fellows, but cruelty is not natural to your heart. By all the recollections of your earliest and happiest days; by the tenderness and pity which watched your childhood; by that holy and omniscient Being who suffers not a hair of the innocent to go unrevenged, I conjure you to pause, before

you forget your own awful responsibility. No! you will not—cannot—dare not be so merciless!"

"What fate did he contemplate for me and my followers, when he entered on this insidious design?" hoarsely demanded the Rover.

"The laws of God and man are with him," continued the governess, quailing not, as her own contracting eye met the stern gaze which she confronted. "'Tis reason that speaks in my voice; 'tis mercy which I know is pleading at your heart. The cause, the motive, sanctify his acts; while your career can find justification in the laws neither of heaven nor earth."

"This is bold language to sound in the ears of a blood-seeking, remorseless pirate!" said the other, looking about him with a smile so proud and conscious, that it seemed to proclaim how plainly he saw that the speaker relied on the very reverse of the qualities he named.

"It is the language of truth; and ears like yours cannot be deaf to the sounds. If"—

"Lady, cease," interrupted the Rover, stretching his arm towards her with calmness and dignity. "My resolution was formed on the instant; and no remonstrance, nor apprehension of the consequence, can change it. Mr Wilder, you are free. If you have not served me as faithfully as I once expected, you have taught me a lesson in the art of physiognomy, which shall leave me a wiser man for the rest of my days."

The conscious Wilder stood self-condemned and humbled. The strugglings which stirred his inmost soul were easily to be read in the workings of a countenance that was no longer masked in artifice, but which was deeply charged with shame and sorrow. The conflict lasted, however, but for a moment.

"Perhaps you know not the extent of my object, Captain Heidegger," he said; "it embraced the forfeit of your life, and the destruction, or dispersion, of your crew."

"According to the established usages of that portion of the world which, having the power, oppresses the remainder, it did. Go, sir; rejoin your proper ship; I repeat, you are free."

"I cannot leave you, Captain Heidegger, without one word of justification."

"What! can the hunted, denounced, and condemned freebooter command an explanation! Is even his good opinion necessary to a virtuous servant of the Crown!"

"Use such terms of triumph and reproach as suit your pleasure, sir," returned the other, reddening to the temples as he spoke; "to me your language can now convey no offence; still would I not leave you without removing part of the odium which you think I merit."

"Speak freely. Sir, you are my guest."

Although the most cutting revilings could not have wounded the repentant Wilder so deeply as this generous conduct, he so far subdued his feelings as to continue,—

"You are not now to learn," he said, "that vulgar rumour has given a colour to your conduct and character which is not of a quality to command the esteem of men."

"You may find leisure to deepen the tints," hastily interrupted his listener, though the emotion which trembled in his voice plainly denoted how deeply he felt the wound which was given by a world he affected to despise.

"If called upon to speak at all, my words shall be those of truth, Captain Heidegger. But is it surprising, that, filled with the ardour of a service that you once thought honourable yourself, I should be found willing to risk life, and even to play the hypocrite, in order to achieve an object that would not only have been rewarded, but approved, had it been successful? With such sentiments I embarked on the enterprise; but, as Heaven is my judge, your manly confidence had half disarmed me before my foot had hardly crossed your threshold."

"And yet you turned not back?"

"There might have been powerful reasons to the contrary," resumed the defendant, unconsciously glancing his eyes at the females as he spoke. "I kept my faith at Newport; and, had my two followers then been released from your ship, foot of mine should never have entered her again."

"Young man, I am willing to believe you. I think I penetrate your motives. You have played a delicate game; and, instead of repining, you will one day rejoice that it has been fruitless. Go, sir; a boat shall attend you to the 'Dart'."

"Deceive not yourself, Captain Heidegger, in believing that any generosity of yours can shut my eyes to my proper duty. The instant I am seen by the Commander of the ship you name, you: character will be betrayed."

"I expect it."

"Nor will my hand be idle in the struggle that must follow. I may die, here, a victim to my mistake, if you

please; but, the moment I am released, I become your enemy."

"Wilder!" exclaimed the Rover, grasping his hand, with a smile that partook of the wild peculiarity of the action, "we should have been acquainted earlier! But regret is idle. Go; should my people learn the truth, any remonstrances of mine would be like whispers in a whirlwind."

"When last I joined the `Dolphin,' I did not come alone."

"Is it not enough," rejoined the Rover, coldly recoiling for a step, "that I offer liberty and life?"

"Of what service can a being, fair, helpless, and unfortunate as this, be in a ship devoted to pursuits like those of the `Dolphin?' "

"Am I to be cut off for ever from communion with the best of my kind! Go, sir; leave me the image of virtue, at least, though I may be wanting in its substance."

"Captain Heidegger, once, in the warmth of your better feelings, you pronounced a pledge in favour of these females, which I hope came deep from the heart."

"I understand you, sir. What I then said is not, and shall not, be forgotten. But whither would you lead your companions? Is not one vessel on the high seas as safe as another? Am I to be deprived of every means of making friends unto myself? Leave me, sir—go—you may linger until my permission to depart cannot avail you."

"I shall never desert my charge," said Wilder, firmly.

"Mr. Wilder—or I should rather call you Lieutenant Ark, I believe"—returned the Rover, "you may trifle with my good nature till the moment of your own security shall be past."

"Act your will on me: I die at my post, or go accompanied by those with whom I came."

"Sir, the acquaintance of which you boast is not older than my own. How know you that they prefer you for their protector? I have deceived myself, and done poor justice to my own intentions, if they have found cause for complaints, since their happiness or comfort has been in my keeping. Speak, fair one; which will you for a protector?"

"Leave me, leave me!" exclaimed Gertrude, veiling her eyes, in terror, from the insidious smile with which he approached her, as she would have avoided the attractive glance of a basilisk. "Oh! if you have pity in your heart, let us quit your ship!"

Notwithstanding the vast self-command which the being she so ungovernably and spontaneously repelled had in common over his feelings, no effort could repress the look of deep and humiliating mortification with which he heard her. A cold and haggard smile gleamed over his features, as he murmured, in a voice which he in vain endeavoured to smother,—

"I have purchased this disgust from all my species, and dearly must the penalty be paid!—Lady, you and your lovely ward are the mistresses of your own acts. This ship, and this cabin, are at your command; or, if you elect to quit both, others will receive you."

"Safety for our sex is only to be found beneath the fostering protection of the laws," said Mrs Wyllys. "Would to God!"—

"Enough!" he interrupted, "you shall accompany your friend. The ship will not be emptier than my heart, when all have left me."

"Did you call?" asked a low voice at his elbow, in tones so plaintive and mild, that they could not fail to catch his ear.

"Roderick," he hurriedly replied, "you will find occupation below. Leave us, good Roderick. For a while, leave me.

Then, as if anxious to close the scene as speedily as possible, he gave another of his signals on the gong. An order was given to convey Fid and the black into a boat, whither he also sent the scanty baggage of his female guests. So soon as these brief arrangements were completed, he handed the governess, with studied courtesy, through his wondering people, to the side, and saw her safely seated, with her ward and Wilder, in the pinnace. The oars were manned by the two seamen, and a silent adieu was given by a wave of his hand; after which he disappeared from those to whom their present release seemed as imaginary and unreal as had appeared their late captivity.

The threat of the interference of the crew of the "Dolphin" was, however, still ringing in the ears of Wilder. He made an impatient gesture to his attendants to ply their oars, cautiously steering the boat on such a course as should soonest lead her from beneath the guns of the freebooters. While passing under the stern of the "Dolphin,"

a hoarse hail was sent across the waters, and the voice of the Rover was heard speaking to the Commander of the "Dart."

"I send you a party of your guests," he said; "and, among them, all the divinity of my ship."

The passage was short; nor was time given for any of the liberated to arrange their thoughts, before it became necessary to ascend the side of the cruiser of the Crown.

"Heaven help us!" exclaimed Bignall, catching a glimpse of the sex of his visitors through a port; "Heaven help us both, Parson! That young hairbrained fellow has sent us a brace of petticoats aboard; and these the profane reprobate calls his divinities! One may easily guess where he has picked up such quality; but cheer up, Doctor; one may honestly forget the cloth in five fathom water, you know."

The facetious laugh of the old Commander of the "Dart" betrayed that he was more than half disposed to overlook the fancied presumption of his audacious inferior; furnishing a sort of pledge, to all who heard it, that no undue scruples should defeat the hilarity of the moment. But when Gertrude, flushed with the excitement of the scene through which she had just passed, and beaming with a loveliness that derived so much of its character from its innocence, appeared on his deck, the veteran rubbed his eyes in an amazement which could not have been greatly surpassed, had one of that species of beings the Rover had named actually fallen at his feet from the skies.

"The heartless scoundrel!" cried the worthy tar, "to lead astray one so young and so lovely! Ha! as I live, my own lieutenant! How's this, Mr Ark! have we fallen on the days of miracles?"

An exclamation, which came deep from the heart of the governess, and a low and mournful echo from the lips of the divine, interrupted the further expression of his indignation and his wonder.

"Captain Bignall," observed the former, pointing to the tottering form which was leaning on Wilder for support, "on my life, you are mistaken in the character of this lady. It is more than twenty years since we last met, but I pledge my own character for the purity and truth of hers."

"Lead me to the cabin," murmured Mrs Wyllys. "Gertrude, my love, where are we? Lead me to some secret place."

Her request was complied with; the whole groupe retiring in a body from before the sight of the spectators who thronged the deck. Here the deeply agitated governess regained a portion of her self-command, and then her wandering gaze sought the meekconcerned countenance of the chaplain.

"This is a tardy and heart-rending meeting," she said, pressing the hand he gave her to her lips. "Gertrude, in this gentleman you see the divine that united me to the man who once formed the pride and happiness of my existence."

"Mourn not his loss," whispered the reverend priest, bending over her chair, with the interest of a parent. "He was taken from you at an early hour; but he died as all who loved him might have wished.

"And none was left to bear, in remembrance of his qualities, his proud name to posterity! Tell me, good Merton, is not the hand of Providence visible in this dispensation? Ought I not to humble myself before it, as a just punishment of my disobedience to an affectionate, though too obdurate, parent?"

"None may presume to pry into the mysteries of the righteous government that orders all things. Enough for us, that we learn to submit to the will of Him who rules, without questioning his justice."

"But," continued the governess, in tones so husky as to betray how powerfully she felt the temptation to forget his admonition, "would not one life have sufficed? was I to be deprived of all?"

"Madam, reflect! What has been done was done in wisdom, as I trust it was in mercy."

"You say truly. I will forget all of the sad events, but their application to myself. And you, worthy and benevolent Merton, where and how have been passed your days, since the time of which we speak?"

"I am but a low and humble shepherd of a truant flock," returned the meek chaplain, with a sigh. "Many distant seas have I visited, and many strange faces, and stranger natures, has it been my lot to encounter in my pilgrimage. I am but lately returned, from the east, into the hemisphere where I first drew breath; and, by permission of our superiors, I came to pass a month in the vessel of a companion, whose friendship bears even an older date than our own."

"Ay, ay, Madam," returned the worthy Bignall, whose feelings had been not a little disturbed by the previous scene; "it is near half a century since the Parson and I were boys together, and we have been rubbing up old recollections on the cruise. Happy am I that a lady of so commendable qualities has come to make one of our party."

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"In this lady you see the daughter of the late Captain —, and the relict of the son of our ancient Commander, Rear-Admiral de Lacey," hastily resumed the divine, as though he knew the wellmeaning honesty of his friend was more to be trusted than his discretion.

"I knew them both; and brave men and thorough seamen were the pair! The lady was welcome as your friend, Merton; but she is doubly so, as the widow and child of the gentlemen you name."

"De Lacey!" murmured an agitated voice in the ear of the governess.

"The law gives me a title to bear that name," returned she whom we shall still continue to call by her assumed appellation, folding her weeping pupil long and affectionately to her bosom. "The veil is unexpectedly withdrawn, my love, nor shall concealment be longer affected. My father was the Captain of the flag-ship. Necessity compelled him to leave me more in the society of your young relative than he would have done, could he have foreseen the consequences. But I knew both his pride and his poverty too well, to dare to make him arbiter of my fate, after the alternative became, to my inexperienced imagination worse than even his anger. We were privately united by this gentleman, and neither of our parents knew of the connexion. Death"—

The voice of the widow became choaked, and she made a sign to the chaplain, as if she would have him continue the tale.

"Mr de Lacey and his father-in-law fell in the same battle, within a short month of the ceremony," added the subdued voice of Merton. "Even you, dearest Madam, never knew the melancholy particulars of their end. I was a solitary witness of their deaths; for to me were they both consigned, amid the confusion of the battle. Their blood was mingled; and your parent, in blessing the young hero, unconsciously blessed his son."

"Oh! I deceived his noble nature, and dearly have I paid the penalty!" exclaimed the self-abased widow. "Tell me, Merton, did he ever know of my marriage?"

"He did not. Mr de Lacey died first, and upon his bosom, for he loved him ever as a child; but other thoughts than useless explanations were then uppermost in their minds."

"Gertrude," said the governess, in hollow, repentant tones, "there is no peace for our feeble sex but in submission; no happiness but in obedience."

"It is over now," whispered the weeping girl; "all over, and forgotten. I am your child—your own Gertrude—the creature of your formation."

"Harry Ark!" exclaimed Bignall, clearing his throat with a hem so vigorous as to carry the sound to the outer deck, seizing the arm of his entranced lieutenant, and dragging him from the scene while he spoke. "What the devil besets the boy! You forget that, all this time, I am as ignorant of your own adventures as is his Majesty's prime minister of navigation. Why do I see you, here, a visiter from a royal cruiser, when I thought you were playing the mock pirate? and how came that harum-scarum twig of nobility in possession of so goodly a company, as well as of so brave a ship?"

Wilder drew a long and deep breath, like one that awakes from a pleasing dream, reluctantly suffering himself to be forced from a spot where he fondly felt that he could have continued, without weariness, for ever.

CHAPTER XIII.

"Let them achieve me, and then sell my bones."

—Henry V.

The Commander of the "Dart," and his bewildered lieutenant, had gained the quarter-deck before either spoke again. The direction first taken by the eyes of the latter was in quest of the neighbouring ship; nor was the look entirely without that unsettled and vague expression which seems to announce a momentary aberration of the faculties. But the vessel of the Rover was in view, in all the palpable and beautiful proportions of her admirable construction. Instead of lying in a state of rest, as when he left her, her head-yards had been swung, and, as the sails filled with the breeze, the stately fabric had begun to move gracefully, though with no great velocity, along the water. There was not the slightest appearance, however, of any attempt at escape in the evolution. On the contrary, the loftier and lighter sails had all been furled, and men were at the moment actively employed in sending to the deck those smaller spars which were absolutely requisite in spreading the canvas that would be needed in facilitating her flight. Wilder turned from the sight with a sickening apprehension; for he well knew that these were the preparations that skilful mariners are wont to make, when bent on desperate combat.

"Ay, yonder goes your St. James's seaman, with his three topsails full, and his mizzen out, as if he had already forgotten he is to dine with me, and that his name is to be found at one end of the list of Commanders, and mine at the other," grumbled the displeased Bignall. "But we shall have him coming round all in good time, I suppose, when his appetite tells him the dinner hour. He might wear his colours in presence of a senior, too, and no disgrace to his nobility. By the Lord, Harry Ark, he handles those yards beautifully! I warrant you, now, some honest man's son is sent aboard his ship for a dry nurse, in the shape of a first lieutenant, and we shall have him vapouring, all dinner time, about 'how my ship does this,' and 'I never suffer that.' Ha! is it not so, sir? He has a thorough seaman for his First?"

"Few men understand the profession better than does the Captain of yonder vessel himself," returned Wilder.

"The devil he does! You have been talking with him, Mr Ark, about these matters, and he has got some of the fashions of the 'Dart.' I see into a mystery as quick as another!"

"I do assure you, Captain Bignall, there is no safety in confiding in the ignorance of yonder extraordinary man."

"Ay, ay, I begin to overhaul his character. The young dog is a quiz, and has been amusing himself with a sailor of what he calls the old school. Am I right, sir? He has seen salt water before this cruise?"

"He is almost a native of the seas; for more than thirty years has he passed his time on them."

"There, Harry Ark, he has done you handsomely. Now, I have his own assertion for it, that he will not be three-and-twenty until to-morrow."

"On my word, he has deceived you, sir."

"I don't know, Mr Ark; that is a task much easier attempted than performed. Threescore and four years add as much weight to a man's head as to his heels! I may have undervalued the skill of the youngster, but, as to his years, there can be no great mistake. But where the devil is the fellow steering to? Has he need of a pinafore from his lady mother to come on board of a man-of-war for his dinner?"

"See! he is indeed standing from us!" exclaimed Wilder, with a rapidity and delight that would have excited the suspicions of one more observant than his Commander.

"If I know the stern from the bows of a ship, what you say is truth," returned the other, with some austerity. "Hark ye, Mr Ark, I've a mind to furnish the coxcomb a lesson in respect for his superiors, and give him a row to whet his appetite. By the Lord, I will; and he may write home an account of this manoeuvre, too, in his next despatches. Fill away the after-yards, sir; fill away. Since this *honourable* youth is disposed to amuse himself with a sailing-match, he can take no offence that others are in the same humour."

The lieutenant of the watch, to whom the order was addressed, complied; and, in another minute, the "Dart" was also beginning to move a-head, though in a direction directly opposite to that taken by the "Dolphin." The old man highly enjoyed his own decision, manifesting his self-satisfaction by the infinite glee and deep chuckling of his manner. He was too much occupied with the step he had just taken, to revert immediately to the subject that

had so recently been uppermost in his mind; nor did the thought of pursuing the discourse occur to him, until the two ships had left a broad field of water between them, as each moved, with ease and steadiness, on its proper course.

"Let him note that in his log-book, Mr Ark," the irritable old seaman then resumed, returning to the spot which Wilder had not left during the intervening time. "Though my cook has no great relish for a frog, they who would taste of his skill must seek him. By the Lord, boy, he will have a pull of it, if he undertake to come—to on that tack.—But how happens it that you got into his ship? All that part of the cruise remains untold."

"I have been wrecked, sir, since you received my last letter."

"What! has Davy Jones got possession of the red gentleman at last?"

"The misfortune occurred in a ship from Bristol, aboard which I was placed as a sort of prize-master.— He certainly continues to stand slowly to the northward!"

"Let the young coxcomb go! he will have all the better appetite for his supper. And so you were picked up by his Majesty's ship the 'Antelope.' Ay, I see into the whole affair. You have only to give an old sea-dog his course and compass, and he will find his way to port in the darkest night. But how happened it that this Mr Howard affected to be ignorant of your name, sir, when he saw it on the list of my officers?"

"Ignorant! Did he seem ignorant? perhaps"—

"Say no more, my brave fellow, say no more," interrupted Wilder's considerate but choleric Commander. "I have met with such rebuffs myself; but we are above them, sir, far above them and their impertinences together. No man need be ashamed of having earned his commission, as you and I have done, in fair weather and in foul. Zounds, boy, I have fed one of the upstarts for a week, and then had him stare at a church across the way, when I have fallen in with him in the streets of London, in a fashion that might make a simple man believe the puppy knew for what it had been built. Think no more of it, Harry; worse things have happened to myself, I do assure you."

"I went by my assumed name while in yonder ship," Wilder forced himself to add. "Even the ladies, who were the companions of my wreck, know me by no other."

"Ah! that was prudent; and, after all, the young sprig was not pretending genteel ignorance. How now, master Fid; you are welcome back to the 'Dart.' "

"I've taken the liberty to say as much already to myself, your Honour," resumed the topman, who was busying himself, near his two officers, in a manner that seemed to invite their attention. "A wholesome craft is yonder, and boldly is she commanded, and stoutly is she manned; but, for my part, having a character to lose, it is more to my taste to sail in a ship that can shew her commission, when properly called on for the same."

The colour on Wilder's cheeks went and came, like the flushings of the evening sky, and his eyes were turned in every direction but that which would have encountered the astonished gaze of his veteran friend.

"I am not quite sure that I understand the meaning of the lad, Mr Ark. Every officer, from the Captain to the boatswain, in the King's fleet, that is, every man of common discretion, carries his authority to act as such with him to sea, or he might find himself in a situation as awkward as that of a pirate."

"That is just what I said, sir; but schooling and long use have given your Honour a better outfit in words. Guinea and I have often talked the matter over together, and serious thoughts has it given to us both, more than once, Captain Bignall. 'Suppose,' says I to the black, 'suppose one of his Majesty's boats should happen to fall in with this here craft, and we should come to loggerheads and matches,' says I, 'what would the like of us two do in such a god-send?'—'Why,' says the black, 'we would stand to our guns on the side of master Harry,' says he; nor did I gainsay the same; but, saving his presence and your Honour's, I just took the liberty to add, that, in my poor opinion, it would be much more comfortable to be killed in an honest ship than on the deck of a buccaneer."

"A buccaneer!" exclaimed his Commander, with eyes distended, and an open mouth.

"Captain Bignall," said Wilder, "I may have offended past forgiveness, in remaining so long silent; but, when you hear my tale, there may be found some passages that shall plead my apology. The vessel in sight is the ship of the renowned Red Rover—nay listen, I conjure you by all that kindness you have so long shewn me, and then censure as you will."

The words of Wilder, aided as they were by an earnest and manly manner, laid a restraint on the mounting indignation of the choleric old seaman. He listened gravely and intently to the rapid but clear tale which his lieutenant hastened to recount; and, ere the latter had done, he had more than half entered into those grateful, and

certainly generous, feelings which had made the youth so reluctant to betray the obnoxious character of a man who had dealt so liberally by himself. A few strong, and what might be termed professional, exclamations of surprise and admiration, occasionally interrupted the narrative; but, on the whole, he curbed his impatience and his feelings, in a manner that was sufficiently remarkable, when the temperament of the individual is duly considered.

"This is wonderful indeed!" he exclaimed, as the other ended; "and a thousand pities is it that so honest a fellow should be so arrant a knave. But, Harry, we can never let him go at large after all; our loyalty and our religion forbid it. We must tack ship, and stand after him; if fair words won't bring him to reason, I see no other remedy than blows."

"I fear it is no more than our duty, sir," returned the young man, with a deep sigh.

"It is a matter of religion.—And then the prating puppy, that he sent on board me, is no Captain, after all! Still it was impossible to deceive me as to the air and manner of a gentleman. I warrant me, some young reprobate of a good family, or he would never have acted the sprig so well. We must try to keep his name a secret, Mr Ark, in order that no discredit should fall upon his friends. Our aristocratic columns, though they get a little cracked and defaced, are, after all, the pillars of the throne, and it does not become us to let vulgar eyes look too closely into their unsoundness."

"The individual who visited the 'Dart' was the Rover himself."

"Ha! the Red Rover in my ship, nay, in my very presence!" exclaimed the old tar, in a species of honest horror. "You are now pleased, sir, to trifle with my good nature."

"I should forget a thousand obligations, ere I could be so bold. On my solemn asseveration, sir, it was no other."

"This is unaccountable! extraordinary to a miracle! His disguise was very complete, I will confess, to deceive one so well skilled in the human countenance. I saw nothing, sir, of his shaggy whiskers, heard nothing of his brutal voice, nor perceived any of those monstrous deformities which are universally acknowledged to distinguish the man."

"All of which are no more than the embellishments of vulgar rumour. I fear me, sir, that the boldest and most dangerous of all our vices are often found under the most pleasing exteriors."

"But this is not even a man of inches, sir."

"His body is not large, but it contains the spirit of a giant."

"And do you believe yonder ship, Mr Ark, to be the vessel that fought us in the equinox of March?"

"I know it to be no other."

"Hark ye, Harry, for your sake, I will deal generously by the rogue. He once escaped me, by the loss of a topmast, and stress of weather; but we have here a good working breeze, that a man may safely count on, and a fine regular sea. He is therefore mine, so soon as I choose to make him so;—for I do not think he has any serious intention to run."

"I fear not," returned Wilder, unconsciously betraying his wishes in the words.

"Fight he cannot, with any hopes of success; and, as he seems to be altogether a different sort of personage from what I had supposed, we will try the merits of negotiation. Will you undertake to be the bearer of my propositions?—or, perhaps, he might repent of his moderation."

"I pledge myself for his faith," eagerly exclaimed Wilder "Let a gun be fired to leeward. Mind, sir, all the tokens must be amicable—a flag of truce set out at our main, and I will risk every hazard to lead him back into the bosom of society."

"By George, it would at least be acting a Christian part," returned the Commander, after a moment's thought; "and, though we miss knighthood below, lad, for our success, there will be better births cleared for us aloft."

No sooner had the warm-hearted, and perhaps a little visionary, Captain of the "Dart," and his lieutenant, determined on this measure, than they both set eagerly about the means of insuring its success. The helm of the ship was put a-lee; and, as her head came sweeping up into the wind, a sheet of flame flashed from her leeward bow-port, sending the customary amicable intimation across the water, that those who governed her movements would communicate with the possessors of the vessel in sight. At the same instant, a small flag, with a spotless field, was seen floating at the topmost elevation of all her spars, whilst the flag of England was lowered from the gaff. A half minute of deep inquietude succeeded these signals, in the bosoms of those who had ordered them to

be made. Their suspense was however speedily terminated. A cloud of smoke drove before the wind from the vessel of the Rover, and then the smothered explosion of the answering gun came dull upon their ears. A flag, similar to their own, was seen floating, as it might be, like a dove fanning its wings, far above her tops; but no emblem of any sort was borne at the spar, where the colours which distinguish the national character of a cruiser are usually seen.

"The fellow has the modesty to carry a naked gaff in our presence," said Bignall, pointing out the circumstance to his companion, as an augury favourable to their success. "We will stand for him until within a reasonable distance, and then you shall take to the boat."

In conformity with this determination, the "Dart" was brought on the other tack, and several sails were set, in order to quicken her speed. When at the distance of half cannon shot, Wilder suggested to his superior the propriety of arresting their further progress, in order to avoid the appearance of hostilities. The boat was immediately lowered into the sea, and manned; a flag of truce set in her bows; and the whole was reported ready to receive the bearer of the message.

"You may hand him this statement of our force, Mr Ark; for, as he is a reasonable man, he will see the advantage it gives us," said the Captain, after having exhausted his manifold and often repeated instructions. "I think you may promise him indemnity for the past, provided he comply with all my conditions; at all events, you will say that no influence shall be spared to get a complete whitewashing for himself at least. God bless you, boy! Take care to say nothing of the damages we received in the affair of March last; for — ay — for the equinox was blowing heavy at the time, you know. Adieu! and success attend you!"

The boat shoved off from the side of the vessel as he ended, and in a few moments the listening Wilder was borne far beyond the sound of any further words of advisement. Our adventurer had sufficient time to reflect on the extraordinary situation in which he now found himself, during the row to the still distant ship. Once or twice, slight and uneasy glimmerings of distrust, concerning the prudence of the step he was taking, beset his mind; though a recollection of the lofty feeling of the man in whom he confided ever presented itself in sufficient season to prevent the apprehension from gaining any undue ascendancy. Notwithstanding the delicacy of his situation, that characteristic interest in his profession, which is rarely dormant in the bosom of a thorough-bred seaman, was strongly stimulated as he approached the vessel of the Rover. The perfect symmetry of her spars, the graceful heavings and settings of the whole fabric, as it rode, like a marine bird, on the long, regular swells of the trades, and the graceful inclinations of the tapering masts, as they waved across the blue canopy, which was interlaced by all the tracery of her complicated tackle, was not lost on an eye that knew no less how to prize the order of the whole than to admire the beauty of the object itself. There is a high and exquisite taste, which the seaman attains in the study of a machine that all have united to commend, which may be likened to the sensibilities that the artist acquires by close and long contemplation of the noblest monuments of antiquity. It teaches him to detect those imperfections which would escape any less instructed eye; and it heightens the pleasure with which a ship at sea is gazed at, by enabling the mind to keep even pace with the enjoyment of the senses. It is this powerful (and to a landsman incomprehensible) charm that forms the secret tie which binds the mariner so closely to his vessel, and which often leads him to prize her qualities as one would esteem the virtues of a friend, and almost to be equally enamoured of the fair proportions of his ship and of those of his mistress. Other men may have their different inanimate subjects of admiration; but none of their feelings so thoroughly enter into the composition of the being as the affection which the mariner comes, in time, to feel for his vessel. It is his home, his theme of constant and frequently of painful interest, his tabernacle, and often his source of pride and exultation. As she gratifies or disappoints his high-wrought expectations, in her speed or in the fight, mid shoals and hurricanes, a character for good or luckless qualities is earned, which are as often in reality due to the skill or ignorance of those who guide her, as to any inherent properties of the fabric. Still does the ship itself, in the eyes of the seaman, bear away the laurel of success, or suffer the ignominy of defeat and misfortune; and, when the reverse arrives the result is merely regarded as some extraordinary departure from the ordinary character of the vessel, as if the construction possessed the powers of entire self-command and perfect volition.

Though not so deeply imbued with that species of superstitious credulity, on this subject, as the inferiors of his profession, Wilder was keenly awake to most of the sensibilities of a mariner. So strongly, indeed, was he alive to this feeling, on the present occasion, that for a moment he forgot the critical nature of his errand, as he drew within plainer view of a vessel that, with justice, might lay claim to be a jewel of the ocean.

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"Lay on your oars, lads," he said, signing to his people to arrest the progress of the boat; "lay on your oars! Did you ever see masts more beautifully in line than those, master Fid, or sails that had a fairer fit?"

The topman, who rowed the stroke-oar of the pinnace, cast a look over his shoulder, and, stowing into one of his cheeks a lump that resembled a wad laid by the side of its gun, he was not slow to answer, on an occasion where his opinion was so directly demanded.

"I care not who knows it," he said, "for, done by honest men or done by knaves, I told the people on the fore-castle of the `Dart,' in the first five minutes after I got among them again, that they might be at Spithead a month, and not see hamper so light, and yet so handy, as is seen aboard that flyer. Her lower rigging is harpened-in, like the waist of Nell Dale after she has had a fresh pull upon her stay-lanyards, and there isn't a block, among them all, that seems bigger in its place than do the eyes of the girl in her own good-looking countenance. That bit of a set that you see to her fore-brace-block, was given by the hand of one Richard Fid; and the heart on her main-stay was turned-in by Guinea, here; and, considering he is a nigger, I call it ship-shape."

"She is beautiful in every part!" said Wilder, drawing a long breath. "Give way, my men, give way! Do you think I have come here to take the soundings of the ocean?"

The crew started at the hurried tones of their lieutenant, and in another minute the boat was at the side of the vessel. The stern and threatening glances that Wilder encountered, as his foot touched the planks, caused him to pause an instant, ere he advanced further amid the crew. But the presence of the Rover himself, who stood, with his peculiar air of high and imposing authority, on the quarter-deck, encouraged him to proceed, after permitting a delay that was too slight to attract attention. His lips were in the act of parting, when a sign from the other induced him to remain silent, until they were both in the privacy of the cabin.

"Suspicion is awake among my people, Mr Ark," commenced the Rover, when they were thus retired, laying a marked and significant emphasis on the name he used. "Suspicion is stirring, though, as yet, they hardly know what to credit. The manoeuvres of the two ships have not been such as they are wont to see, and voices are not wanting to whisper in their ears matter that is somewhat injurious to your interests. You have not done well, sir, in returning among us."

"I came by the order of my superior, and under the sanction of a flag."

"We are small reasoners in the legal distinctions of the world, and may mistake your rights in so novel a character. But," he immediately added, with dignity, "if you bear a message, I may presume it is intended for my ears."

"And for no other. We are not alone, Captain Heidegger."

"Heed not the boy; he is deaf at my will."

"I could wish to communicate to you only the offers that I bear."

"That mast is not more senseless than Roderick," said the other calmly, but with decision.

"Then must I speak at every hazard.—The Commander of yon ship, who bears the commission of our royal master George the Second, has ordered me to say thus much for your consideration: On condition that you will surrender this vessel, with all her stores, armament, and warlike munitions, uninjured, he will content himself with taking ten hostages from your crew, to be decided by lot, yourself, and one other of your officers, and either to receive the remainder into the service of the King, or to suffer them to disperse in pursuit of a calling more creditable, and, as it would now appear, more safe."

"This is the liberality of a prince! I should kneel and kiss the deck before one whose lips utter such sounds of mercy!"

"I repeat but the words of my superior," Wilder resumed. "For yourself, he further promises, that his interest shall be exerted to procure a pardon, on condition that you quit the seas, and renounce the name of Englishman for ever."

"The latter is done to his hands: But may I know the reason that such lenity is shewn to one whose name has been so long proscribed of men?"

"Captain Bignall has heard of your generous treatment of his officer, and the delicacy that the daughter and widow of two ancient brethren in arms have received at your hands. He confesses that rumour has not done entire justice to your character."

A mighty effort kept down the gleam of exultation that flashed across the features of the listener, who,

however, succeeded in continuing utterly calm and immovable.

"He has been deceived, sir"—he coldly resumed, as though he would encourage the other to proceed.

"That much is he free to acknowledge. A representation of this common error, to the proper authorities, will have weight in procuring the promised amnesty for the past, and, as he hopes, brighter prospects for the future."

"And does he urge no other motive than his pleasure, why I should make this violent change in all my habits, why I should renounce an element that has become as necessary to me as the one I breathe, and why, in particular, I am to disclaim the vaunted privilege of calling myself a Briton?"

"He does. This statement of a force, which you may freely examine with your own eyes, if so disposed, must convince you of the hopelessness of resistance, and will, he thinks, induce you to accept his offers."

"And what is *your* opinion?" the other demanded, with a meaning smile and peculiar emphasis, as he extended a hand to receive the written statement. "But I beg pardon," he hastily added, taking the look of gravity from the countenance of his companion. "I trifle, when the moment requires all our seriousness."

The eye of the Rover ran rapidly over the paper, resting itself, once or twice, with a slight exhibition of interest, on particular points, that seemed most to merit his attention.

"You find the superiority such as I had already given you reason to believe?" demanded Wilder, when the look of the other wandered from the paper.

"I do."

"And may I now ask your decision on the offer?"

"First, tell me what does your own heart advise? This is but the language of another."

"Captain Heidegger," said Wilder, colouring, "I will not attempt to conceal, that, had this message depended solely on myself, it might have been couched in different terms; but as one, who still deeply retains the recollection of your generosity, as a man who would not willingly induce even an enemy to an act of dishonour, do I urge their acceptance. You will excuse me, if I say, that, in my recent intercourse, I have had reason to believe you already perceive that neither the character you could wish to earn, nor the content that all men crave, is to be found in your present career."

"I had not thought I entertained so close a casuist in Mr Henry Wilder. Have you more to urge, sir?"

"Nothing," returned the disappointed and grieved messenger of the "Dart."

"Yes, yes, he has," said a low but eager voice at the elbow of the Rover, which rather seemed to breathe out the syllables than dare to utter them aloud; "he has not yet delivered the half of his commission, or sadly has he forgotten the sacred trust!"

"The boy is often a dreamer," interrupted the Rover, smiling, with a wild and haggard look. "He sometimes gives form to his unmeaning thoughts, by clothing them in words."

"My thoughts are not unmeaning," continued Roderick, in a louder and far bolder strain. "If his peace or happiness be dear to you, do not yet leave him. Tell him of his high and honourable name; of his youth; of that gentle and virtuous being that he once so fondly loved, and whose memory, even now, he worships. Speak to him of these, as you know how to speak; and, on my life, his ear will not be deaf, his heart cannot be callous to your words."

"The urchin is mad!"

"I am not mad; or, if maddened, it is by the crimes, the dangers, of those I love. Oh! Mr Wilder, do not leave him. Since you have been among us, he is nearer to what I know he once was, than formerly. Take away that mistaken statement of your force; threats do but harden him: As a friend, admonish; but hope for nothing as a minister of vengeance. You know not the fearful nature of the man, or you would not attempt to stop a torrent. Now—now speak to him; for, see, his eye is already growing kinder."

"It is in pity, boy, to witness how thy reason wavers."

"Had it never swerved more than at this moment, Walter, another need not be called upon to speak between thee and me! My words would then have been regarded, my voice would then have been loud enough to be heard. Why are you dumb? a single happy syllable might now save him."

"Wilder, the child is frightened by this counting of guns and numbering of people. He fears the anger of your anointed master. Go; give him place in your boat, and recommend him to the mercy of your superior."

"Away, away!" cried Roderick. "I shall not, will not, cannot leave you. Who is there left for me in this world but you?"

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"Yes," continued the Rover, whose forced calmness of expression had changed to one of deep and melancholy musing; "it will indeed be better thus. See, here is much gold; you will commend him to the care of that admirable woman who already watches one scarcely less helpless, though possibly less—"

"Guilty! speak the word boldly, Walter. I have earned the epithet, and shall not shrink to hear it spoken. Look," he said, taking the ponderous bag, which had been extended towards Wilder, and holding it high above his head, in scorn, "this can I cast from me; but the tie which binds me to you shall never be broken."

As he spoke, the lad approached an open window of the cabin; a plash upon the water was heard, and then a treasure, that might have furnished a competence to moderate wishes, was lost for ever to the uses of those who had created its value. The lieutenant of the "Dart" turned in haste to deprecate the anger of the Rover; but his eye could trace, in the features of the lawless chief, no other emotion than a pity which was discoverable even through his calm and unmoved smile.

"Roderick would make but a faithless treasurer," he said. "Still it is not too late to restore him to his friends. The loss of the gold can be repaired; but, should any serious calamity befall the boy, I might never regain a perfect peace of mind."

"Then keep him near yourself," murmured the lad, whose vehemence had seemingly expended itself. "Go, Mr Wilder, go; your boat is waiting; a longer stay will be without an object."

"I fear it will!" returned our adventurer, who had not ceased, during the previous dialogue, to keep his look fastened, in manly commiseration, on the countenance of the boy; "I greatly fear it will!—Since I have come the messenger of another, Captain Heidegger, it is your province to supply a fitting answer to my proposition."

The Rover took him by the arm, and led him to a position whence they might look upon the outer scene. Then, pointing upward at his spars, and making his companion observe the small quantity of sail he carried, he simply said, "Sir, you are a seaman, and may judge of my intentions by this sight. I shall neither seek nor avoid your boasted cruiser of King George."

CHAPTER XIV.

— "Front to front, Bring thou this fiend— Within my sword's length set him; if he 'scape, Heaven forgive him too!"

— *Macbeth.*

"You have brought the grateful submission of the pirate to my offers!" exclaimed the sanguine Commander of the "Dart" to his messenger, as the foot of the latter once more touched his deck.

"I bring nothing but defiance!" was the unexpected reply.

"Did you exhibit my statement? Surely, Mr Ark, so material a document was not forgotten!"

"Nothing was forgotten that the warmest interest in his safety could suggest, Captain Bignall. Still the chief of yonder lawless ship refuses to hearken to your conditions."

"Perhaps, sir, he imagines that the `Dart' is defective in some of her spars," returned the hasty old seaman, compressing his lips, with a look of wounded pride; "he may hope to escape by pressing the canvas on his own light-heeled ship."

"Does that look like flight?" demanded Wilder, extending an arm towards the nearly naked spars and motionless hull of their neighbour. "The utmost I can obtain is an assurance that he will not be the assailant."

"Fore George, he is a merciful youth! and one that should be commended for his moderation! He will not run his disorderly, picarooning company under the guns of a British man-of-war, because he owes a little reverence to the flag of his master! Hark ye, Mr Ark, we will remember the circumstance when questioned at the Old Bailey. Send the people to their guns, sir, and ware the ship round, to put an end at once to this foolery, or we shall have him sending a boat aboard to examine our commissions."

"Captain Bignall," said Wilder, leading his Commander still further from the ears of their inferiors. "I may lay some little claim to merit for services done under your own eyes, and in obedience to your orders. If my former conduct may give me a title to presume to counsel one of your great experience, suffer me to urge a short delay."

"Delay! Does Henry Ark hesitate, when the enemies of his King, nay more, the enemies of man, are daring him to his duty!"

"Sir, you mistake me. I hesitate, in order that the flag under which we sail may be free from stain, and not with any intent of avoiding the combat. Our enemy, *my* enemy knows that he has nothing now to expect, for his past generosity, but kindness, should he become our captive. Still, Captain Bignall, I ask for time, to prepare the `Dart' for a conflict that will try all her boasted powers, and to insure a victory that will not be bought without a price."

"But should he escape"—

"On my life he will not attempt it. I not only know the man, but how formidable are his means of resistance. A short half hour will put us in the necessary condition, and do no discredit either to our spirit or to our prudence."

The veteran yielded a reluctant consent, which was not, however, accorded without much muttering concerning the disgrace a British man-of-war incurred in not running alongside the boldest pirate that floated, and blowing him out of water, with a single match. Wilder, who was accustomed to the honest professional bravados that often formed a peculiar embellishment to the really firm and manly resolution of the seamen of that age, permitted him to make his complaints at will, while he busied himself in a manner that he knew was now of the last importance, and in a duty that properly came under his more immediate inspection, in consequence of the station he occupied.

The "order for all hands to clear ship for action" was again given, and received in the cheerful temper with which mariners are wont to welcome any of the more important changes of their exciting profession. Little remained, however, to be done; for most of the previous preparations had still been left, as at the original meeting of the two vessels. Then came the beat to quarters, and the more serious and fearful-looking preparations for certain combat. After these several arrangements had been completed, the crew at their guns, the sail-trimmers at the braces, and the officers in their several batteries, the after-yards were swung, and the ship once more put in motion.

During this brief interval, the vessel of the Rover lay, at the distance of half a mile, in a state of entire rest, without betraying the smallest interest in the obvious movements of her hostile neighbour. When, however, the

"Dart" was seen yielding to the breeze, and gradually increasing her velocity, until the water was gathering under her fore-foot in a little rolling wave of foam, the bows of the other fell off from the direction of the wind, the topsail was filled, and, in her turn, the hull was held in command, by giving to it the impetus of motion. The "Dart" now set again at her gaff that broad field which had been lowered during the conference, and which had floated in triumph through the hazards and struggles of a thousand combats. No answering emblem, however, was exhibited from the peak of her adversary.

In this manner the two ships "gathered way," as it is expressed in nautical language, watching each other with eyes as jealous as though they had been two rival monsters of the great deep, each endeavouring to conceal from his antagonist the evolution contemplated next. The earnest, serious manner of Wilder had not failed to produce its influence on the straight-minded seaman who commanded the "Dart;" and, by this time, he was as much disposed as his lieutenant to approach the conflict leisurely, and with proper caution.

The day had hitherto been cloudless, and a vault of purer blue never canopied a waste of water, than the arch which had swept for hours above the heads of our marine adventurers. But, as if nature frowned on their present bloody designs, a dark, threatening mass of vapour was blending the ocean with the sky, in a direction opposed to the steady currents of the air. These well-known and ominous signs did not escape the vigilance of those who manned the hostile vessels, but the danger was still deemed too remote to interrupt the higher interests of the approaching combat.

"We have a squall brewing in the west," said the experienced and wary Bignall, pointing to the frowning symptoms as he spoke; "but we can handle the pirate, and get all snug again, before it works its way up against this breeze."

Wilder assented; for, by this time, high professional pride was swelling in his bosom also, and a generous rivalry was getting the mastery of feelings that were possibly foreign to his duty, however natural they might have been in one as open to kindness as himself.

"The Rover is sending down even his lighter masts!" exclaimed the youth; "it would seem that he greatly distrusts the weather."

"We will not follow his example; for he will wish they were aloft again, the moment we get him fairly under the play of our batteries. By George our King, but he has a pretty moving boat under him! Let fall the main-course, sir; down with it, or we shall have it night before we get the rogue a-beam."

The order was obeyed; and then the "Dart," feeling the powerful impulse, quickened her speed, like an animated being, that is freshly urged by its apprehensions or its wishes. By this time, she had gained a position on the weather-quarter of her adversary, who had not manifested the smallest desire to prevent her attaining so material an advantage. On the contrary, while the "Dolphin" kept the same canvas spread, she continued to lighten her top-hamper, bringing as much of the weight as possible, from the towering height of her tall masts, to the greater security of the hull. Still, the distance between them was too great, in the opinion of Bignall, to commence the contest, while the facility with which his adversary moved a-head threatened to protract the important moment to an unreasonable extent, or to reduce him to a crowd of sail that might prove embarrassing, while enveloped in the smoke, and pressed by the urgencies of the combat.

"We will touch his pride, sir, since you think him a man of spirit," said the veteran, to his faithful coadjutor: "Give him a weather-gun, and show him another of his Master's ensigns."

The roar of the piece, and the display of three more of the fields of England, in quick succession, from different parts of the "Dart," failed to produce the slightest evidence, even of observation, aboard their seemingly insensible neighbour. The "Dolphin" still kept on her way, occasionally swooping up gracefully to touch the wind, and then deviating from her course again to leeward, as the porpoise is seen to turn aside from his direction to snuff the breeze, while he lazily sports along his briny path.

"He will not be moved by any of the devices of lawful and ordinary warfare," said Wilder, when he witnessed the indifference with which their challenge had been received.

"Then try him with a shot."

A gun was now discharged from the side next the still receding "Dolphin." The iron messenger was seen bounding along the surface of the sea, skipping lightly from wave to wave, until it cast a little cloud of spray upon the very deck of their enemy, as it boomed harmlessly past her hull. Another, and yet another, followed, without in any manner extracting signal or notice from the Rover.

"How's this!" exclaimed the disappointed Bignall. "Has he a charm for his ship, that all our shot sweep by him in rain! Master Fid, can you do nothing for the credit of honest people, and the honour of a pennant? Let us hear from your old favourite; in times past she used to speak to better purpose."

"Ay, ay, sir," returned the accommodating Richard, who, in the sudden turns of his fortune, found himself in authority over a much-loved and longcherished piece. "I christened the gun after Mistress Whiffle, your Honour, for the same reason, that they both can do their own talking. Now, stand aside, my lads, and let clattering Kate have a whisper in the discourse."

Richard, who had coolly taken his sight, while speaking, now deliberately applied the match with his own hand, and, with a philosophy that was sufficiently to be commended in a mercenary, sent what he boldly pronounced to be "a thorough straightgoer" across the water, in the direction of his recent associates. The usual moments of suspense succeeded, and then the torn fragments, which were seen scattered in the air, announced that the shot had passed through the nettings of the "Dolphin." The effect on the vessel of the Rover was instantaneous, and nearly magical. A long stripe of cream-coloured canvas, which had been artfully extended, from her stem to her stern, in a line with her guns, disappeared as suddenly as a bird would shut its wings, leaving in its place a broad blood-red belt, which was bristled with the armament of the ship. At the same time, an ensign of a similar ominous colour, rose from her poop, and, fluttering darkly and fiercely for a moment, it became fixed at the end of the gaff.

"Now I know him for the knave that he is!" cried the excited Bignall; "and, see! he has thrown away his false paint, and shows the well-known bloody side, from which he gets his name. Stand to your guns, my men! the pirate is getting earnest."

He was still speaking, when a sheet of bright flame glanced from out that streak of red which was so well adapted to work upon the superstitious awe of the common mariners, and was followed by the simultaneous explosion of nearly a dozen wide-mouthed pieces of artillery. The startling change, from inattention and indifference, to this act of bold and decided hostility, produced a strong effect on the boldest heart on board the King's cruiser. The momentary interval of suspense was passed in unchanged attitudes and looks of deep attention; and then the rushing of the iron storm was heard hurtling through the air, as it came fearfully on. The crash that followed, mingled, as it was, with human groans, and succeeded by the tearing of riven plank, and the scattering high of splinters, ropes, blocks, and the implements of war, proclaimed the fatal accuracy of the broadside. But the surprise, and, with it, the brief confusion, endured but for an instant. The English shouted, and sent back a return to the deadly assault they had just received, recovering manfully and promptly from the shock which it had assuredly given.

The ordinary and more regular cannonading of a naval combat succeeded. Anxious to precipitate the issue, both ships pressed nigher to each other the while, until, in a few moments, the two white canopies of smoke, that were wreathing about their respective masts, were blended in one, marking a solitary spot of strife, in the midst of a scene of broad and bright tranquillity. The discharges of the cannon were hot, close, and incessant. While the hostile parties, however, closely imitated each other in their zeal in dealing out destruction, a peculiar difference marked the distinction in character of the two crews. Loud, cheering shouts accompanied each discharge from the lawful cruiser, while the people of the rover did their murderous work amid the deep silence of desperation.

The spirit and uproar of the scene soon quickened that blood, in the veins of the veteran Bignall, which had begun to circulate a little slowly by time.

"The fellow has not forgotten his art!" he exclaimed, as the effects of his enemy's skill were getting but too manifest, in the rent sails, shivered spars, and tottering masts of his own ship. "Had he but the commission of the King in his pocket, one might call him a hero!"

The emergency was too urgent to throw away the time in words. Wilder answered only by cheering his own people to their fierce and laborious task. The ships had now fallen off before the wind, and were running parallel to each other, emitting sheets of flame, that were incessantly glancing through immense volumes of smoke. The spars of the respective vessels were alone visible, at brief and uncertain intervals. Many minutes had thus passed, seeming to those engaged but a moment of time, when the mariners of the "Dart" found that they no longer held their vessel in the quick command, so necessary to their situation. The important circumstance was instantly conveyed from the master to Wilder, and from Wilder to his superior. A hasty consultation on the cause and consequences of this unexpected event was the immediate and natural result.

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"See!" cried Wilder, "the sails are already hanging against the masts like rags; the explosions of the artillery have stilled the wind."

"Hark!" answered the more experienced Bignall: "There goes the artillery of heaven among our own guns.—The squall is already upon us—port the helm, sir, and sheer the ship out of the smoke! Hard a—port with the helm, sir, at once!—hard with it a—port, I say."

But the lazy motion of the vessel did not answer to the impatience of those who directed her movements, nor did it meet the pressing exigencies of the moment. In the mean time, while Bignall, and the officers whose duties kept them near his person, assisted by the sail—trimmers, were thus occupied, the people in the batteries continued their murderous employment. The roar of cannon was still constant, and nearly overwhelming, though there were instants when the deep ominous mutterings of the atmosphere were too distinctly audible to be mistaken. Still the eye could lend no assistance to the hearing, in determining the judgment of the mariners. Hulls, spars, and sails were alike enveloped in the curling wreaths which wrapped heaven, air, vessels, and ocean, alike, in one white, obscure, foggy mantle. Even the persons of the crew were merely seen at instants, labouring at the guns, through brief and varying openings.

"I never knew the smoke pack so heavy on the deck of a ship before," said Bignall, with a concern that even his caution could not entirely repress. "Keep the helm a—port—jam it hard, sir! By Heaven, Mr Wilder, those knaves well know they are struggling for their lives!"

"The fight is all our own!" shouted the second lieutenant, from among the guns, stanching, as he spoke, the blood of a severe splinter—wound in the face, and far too intent on his own immediate occupation, to have noticed the signs of the weather. "He has not answered with a single gun, for near a minute."

"Fore George, the rogues have enough!" exclaimed the delighted Bignall. "Three cheers for vic—"

"Hold, sir!" interrupted Wilder, with sufficient decision to check his Commander's premature exultation; "on my life, our work is not so soon ended. I think, indeed, his guns are silent;—but, see! the smoke is beginning to lift. In a few more minutes, if our own fire should cease, the view will be clear."

A shout from the men in the batteries interrupted his words; and then came a general cry that the pirates were sheering off. The exultation at this fancied evidence of their superiority was, however, soon and fearfully interrupted. A bright, vivid flash penetrated through the dense vapour which still hung about them in a most extraordinary manner, and was followed by a crash from the heavens, to which the simultaneous explosion of fifty pieces of artillery would have sounded feeble.

"Call the people from their guns!" said Bignall, in those suppressed tones that are only more portentous from their forced and unnatural calmness: "Call them away at once, sir, and get the canvas in!"

Wilder, startled more at the proximity and apparent weight of the squall than at words to which he had been long accustomed, delayed not to give an order that was seemingly so urgent. The men left their batteries, like athletæ retiring from the arena, some bleeding and faint, some still fierce and angry, and all more or less excited by the furious scene in which they had just been actors. Many sprung to the well—known ropes, while others, as they ascended into the cloud which still hung on the vessel, became lost to the eye in her rigging.

"Shall I reef, or furl?" demanded Wilder, standing with the trumpet at his lips, ready to issue the necessary order.

"Hold, sir; another minute will give us an opening."

The lieutenant paused; for he was not slow to see that now, indeed, the veil was about to be drawn from their real situation. The smoke, which had lain upon their very decks, as though pressed down by the superincumbent weight of the atmosphere, first began to stir; was then seen eddying among the masts; and, finally, whirled wildly away before a powerful current of air. The view was, indeed, now all before them.

In place of the glorious sun, and that bright, blue canopy which had lain above them a short half—hour before, the heavens were clothed in one immense black veil. The sea reflected the portentous colour, looking dark and angrily. The waves had already lost their regular rise and fall, and were tossing to and fro, as if awaiting the power that was to give them direction and greater force. The flashes from the heavens were not in quick succession; but the few that did break upon the gloominess of the scene came in majesty, and with dazzling brightness. They were accompanied by the terrific thunder of the tropics, in which it is scarcely profanation to fancy that the voice of One who made the universe is actually speaking to the creatures of his hand. On every side, was the appearance of a fierce and dangerous struggle in the elements. The vessel of the Rover was running

lightly before a breeze, which had already come fresh and fitful from the cloud, with her sails reduced, and her people coolly, but actively, employed in repairing the damages of the fight.

Not a moment was to be lost in imitating the example of the wary freebooters. The head of the "Dart" was hastily, and happily, got in a direction contrary to the breeze; and, as she began to follow the course taken by the "Dolphin," an attempt was made to gather her torn and nearly useless canvas to the yards. But precious minutes had been lost in the smoky canopy, that might never be regained. The sea changed its colour from a dark green to a glittering white; and then the fury of the gust was heard rushing along the water with fearful rapidity, and with a violence that could not be resisted.

"Be lively, men!" shouted Bignall himself, in the exigency in which his vessel was placed; "Roll up the cloth; in with it all—leave not a rag to the squall! Fore George, Mr Wilder, but this wind is not playing with us; cheer up the men to their work; speak to them cheerily, sir!"

"Furl away!" shouted Wilder. "Cut, if too late; work away with knives and teeth—down, every man of you, down—down for your lives, all!"

There was that in the voice of the lieutenant which sounded in the ears of his people like a supernatural cry. He had so recently witnessed a calamity similar to that which again threatened him, that perhaps his feelings lent a secret horror to the tones. A score of forms was seen descending swiftly, through an atmosphere that appeared sensible to the touch. Nor was their escape, which might be likened to the stooping of birds that dart into their nest, too earnestly pressed. Stripped of all its rigging, and already tottering under numerous wounds, the lofty and overloaded spars yielded to the mighty force of the squall, tumbling in succession towards the hull, until nothing stood but the three firmer, but shorn and nearly useless, lower masts. By far the greater number of those aloft reached the deck in time to insure their safety, though some there were too stubborn, and still too much under the sullen influence of the combat, to hearken to the words of warning. These victims of their own obstinacy were seen clinging to the broken fragments of the spars, as the "Dart," in a cloud of foam, drove away from the spot where they floated, until their persons and their misery were alike swallowed in the distance.

"It is the hand of God!" hoarsely exclaimed the veteran Bignall, while his contracting eye drunk in the destruction of the wreck. "Mark me, Henry Ark; I will for ever testify that the guns of the pirate have not brought us to this condition."

Little disposed to seek the same miserable consolation as his Commander, Wilder exerted himself in counteracting, so far as circumstances would allow, an injury that he felt, however, at that moment to be irreparable. Amid the howling of the gust, and the fearful crashing of the thunder, with an atmosphere now lurid with the glare of lightning, and now nearly obscured by the dark canopy of vapour, and with all the frightful evidences of the fight still reeking and ghastly before their eyes, did the crew of the British cruiser prove true to themselves and to their ancient reputation. The voices of Bignall and his subordinates were heard in the tempest, uttering those mandates which long experience had rendered familiar, or encouraging the people to their duty. But the strife of the elements was happily of short continuance. The squall soon swept over the spot, leaving the currents of the trade rushing into their former channels, and a sea that was rather stilled, than agitated, by the counteracting influence of the winds.

But, as one danger passed away from before the eyes of the mariners of the "Dart," another, scarcely less to be apprehended, forced itself upon their attention. All recollection of the favours of the past, and every feeling of gratitude, was banished from the mind of Wilder, by the mountings of powerful professional pride, and that love of glory which becomes inherent in the warrior, as he gazed on the untouched and beautiful symmetry of the "Dolphin's" spars, and all the perfect, and still underanged, order of her tackle. It seemed as if she bore a charmed fate, or that some supernatural agency had been instrumental in preserving her unharmed, amid the violence of a second hurricane. But cooler thought, and more impartial reflection, compelled the internal acknowledgment, that the vigilance and wise precautions of the remarkable individual who appeared not only to govern her movements, but to control her fortunes, had their proper influence in producing the result.

Little leisure, however, was allowed to ruminate on these changes, or to deprecate the advantage of their enemy. The vessel of the Rover had already opened many broad sheets of canvas; and, as the return of the regular breeze gave her the wind, her approach was rapid and unavoidable.

"Fore George, Mr Ark, luck is all on the dishonest side to-day," said the veteran, so soon as he perceived, by the direction which the "Dolphin" took, that the encounter was likely to be renewed. "Send the people to quarters

again, and clear away the guns; for we are likely to have another bout with the rogues."

"I would advise a moment's delay," Wilder earnestly observed, when he heard his Commander issuing an order to his people to prepare to deliver their fire, the instant their enemy should come within a favourable position. "Let me entreat you to delay; we know not what may be his present intentions."

"None shall put foot on the deck of the `Dart,' without submitting to the authority of her royal master," returned the stern old tar. "Give it to him, my men! Scatter the rogues from their guns! and let them know the danger of approaching a lion, though he should be crippled!"

Wilder saw that remonstrance was now too late; for a fresh broadside was hurled from the "Dart," to defeat any generous intentions that the Rover might entertain. The ship of the latter received the iron storm, while advancing, and immediately deviated gracefully from her course, in such a way as to prevent its repetition. Then she was seen sweeping towards the bows of the nearly helpless cruiser of the King, and a hoarse summons was heard ordering her ensign to be lowered.

"Come on, ye villains!" shouted the excited Bignall. "Come, and perform the office with your own hands!"

The graceful ship, as if sensible herself to the taunts of her enemy, sprung nigher to the wind, and shot across the fore-foot of the "Dart," delivering her fire, gun after gun, with deliberate and deadly accuracy, full into that defenceless portion of her antagonist. A crush like that of meeting bodies followed, and then fifty grim visages were seen entering the scene of carnage, armed with the deadly weapons of personal conflict. The shock of so close and so fatal a discharge had, for the moment, paralyzed the efforts of the assailed; but no sooner did Bignall, and his lieutenant, see the dark forms that issued from the smoke on their own decks, than, with voices that had not even then lost their authority, each summoned a band of followers, backed by whom, they bravely dashed into the opposite gangways of their ship, to stay the torrent. The first encounter was fierce and fatal, both parties receding a little, to wait for succour and recover breath."

"Come on, ye murderous thieves!" cried the dauntless veteran, who stood foremost in his own band, conspicuous by the locks of gray that floated around his naked head, "well do ye know that heaven is with the right!"

The grim freebooters in his front recoiled and opened; then came a sheet of flame, from the side of the "Dolphin," through an empty port of her adversary, bearing in its centre a hundred deadly missiles. The sword of Bignall was flourished furiously and wildly above his head, and his voice was still heard crying, till the sounds rattled in his throat,—

"Come on, ye knaves! come on!—Harry—Harry Ark! O God!—Hurrah!"

He fell like a log, and died the unwitting possessor of that very commission for which he had toiled throughout a life of hardship and danger. Until now, Wilder had made good his quarter of the deck, though pressed by a band as fierce and daring as his own; but, at this fearful crisis in the combat, a voice was heard in the *melée*, that thrilled on all his nerves, and seemed even to carry its fearful influence over the minds of his men.

"Make way there, make way!" it said, in tones clear, deep, and breathing with authority, "make way, and follow; no hand but mine shall lower that vaunting flag!"

"Stand to your faith, my men!" shouted Wilder in reply. Shouts, oaths, imprecations, and groans formed a fearful accompaniment of the rude encounter, which was, however, far too violent to continue long. Wilder saw, with agony, that numbers and impetuosity were sweeping his supporters from around him. Again and again he called them to the succour with his voice, or stimulated them to daring by his example.

Friend after friend fell at his feet, until he was driven to the utmost extremity of the deck. Here he again rallied a little band, against which several furious charges were made, in vain.

"Ha!" exclaimed a voice he well knew; "death to all traitors! Spit the spy, as you would a dog! Charge through them, my bullies; a halbert to the hero who shall reach his heart!"

"Avast, ye lubber!" returned the stern tones of the staunch Richard. "Here are a white man and a nigger at your service, if you've need of a spit."

"Two more of the gang!" continued the General, aiming a blow that threatened to immolate the topman, as he spoke.

A dark half-naked form was interposed to receive the descending blade, which fell on the staff of a half-pike, and severed it as though it had been a reed. Nothing daunted by the defenceless state in which he found himself, Scipio made his way to the front of Wilder, where, with a body divested to the waist of every garment, and empty

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handed, he fought with his brawny arms, like one who despised the cuts, thrusts and assaults, of which his athletic frame immediately became the helpless subject.

"Give it to 'em, right and left, Guinea," cried Fid: "here is one who will come in as a backer, so soon as he has stopped the grog of the marine."

The parries and science of the unfortunate General were at this moment set at nought, by a blow from Richard, which broke down all his defences, descending through cap and skull to the jaw.

"Hold, murderers!" cried Wilder, who saw the numberless blows that were falling on the defenceless body of the still undaunted black. "Strike here! and spare an unarmed man!"

The sight of our adventurer became confused, for he saw the negro fall, dragging with him to the deck two of his assailants; and then a voice, deep as the emotion which such a scene might create, appeared to utter in the very portals of his ear,—

"Our work is done! He that strikes another blow makes an enemy of me."

CHAPTER XV.

— "Take him hence; The whole world shall not save him."

—*Cymbeline.*

The recent gust had not passed more fearfully and suddenly over the ship, than the scene just related. But the smiling aspect of the tranquil sky, and bright sun of the Caribbean sea, found no parallel in the horrors that succeeded the combat. The momentary confusion which accompanied the fall of Scipio soon disappeared, and Wilder was left to gaze on the wreck of all the boasted powers of his cruiser, and on that waste of human life, which had been the attendants of the struggle. The former has already been sufficiently described; but a short account of the present state of the actors may serve to elucidate the events that are to follow.

Within a few yards of the place he was permitted to occupy himself, stood the motionless form of the Rover. A second glance was necessary, however, to recognise, in the grim visage to which the boarding-cap already mentioned lent a look of artificial ferocity, the usually bland countenance of the individual. As the eye of Wilder roamed over the swelling, erect, and still triumphant figure, it was difficult not to fancy that even the stature had been suddenly and unaccountably increased. One hand rested on the hilt of a yataghan, which, by the crimson drops that flowed along its curved blade, had evidently done fatal service in the fray; and one foot was placed, seemingly with supernatural weight, on that national emblem which it had been his pride to lower. His eye was wandering sternly, but understandingly, over the scene, though he spoke not, nor in any other manner betrayed the deep interest he felt in the past. At his side, and nearly within the circle of his arm, stood the cowering form of the boy Roderick, unprovided with weapon, his garments sprinkled with blood, his eye contracted, wild, and fearful, and his face pallid as those in whom the tide of life had just ceased to circulate.

Here and there, were to be seen the wounded captives, still sullen and unconquered in spirit, while many of their scarcely less fortunate enemies lay in their blood, around the deck, with such gleamings of ferocity on their countenances as plainly denoted that the current of their meditations was still running on vengeance. The uninjured and the slightly wounded, of both bands, were already pursuing their different objects of plunder or of secretion.

But, so thorough was the discipline established by the leader of the freebooters, so absolute his power, that blow had not been struck, nor blood drawn, since the moment when his prohibitory mandate was heard. There had been enough of destruction, however, to have satisfied their most gluttonous longings, had human life been the sole object of the assault. Wilder felt many a pang, as the marble-like features of humble friend or faithful servitor came, one after another, under his recognition; but the shock was greatest when his eye fell upon the rigid, and still frowning, countenance of his veteran Commander.

"Captain Heidegger," he said, struggling to maintain the fortitude which became the moment; "the fortune of the day is yours: I ask mercy and kindness, in behalf of the survivors."

"They shall be granted to those who, of right, may claim them: I hope it may be found that all are included in this promise."

The voice of the Rover was solemn, and full of meaning; and it appeared to convey more than the simple import of the words. Wilder might have mused long and vainly, however, on the equivocal manner in which he had been answered, had not the approach of a body of the hostile crew, among whom he instantly recognised the most prominent of the late mutineers of the "Dolphin," speedily supplied a clue to the hidden meaning of their leader.

"We claim the execution of our ancient laws!" sternly commenced the foremost of the gang, addressing his chief with a brevity and an air of fierceness which the late combat might well have generated, if not excused.

"What would you have?"

"The lives of traitors!" was the sullen answer.

"You know the conditions of our service. If any such are in our power, let them meet their fate."

Had any doubt remained in the mind of Wilder, as to the meaning of these terrible claimants of justice, it would have vanished at the sullen, ominous manner with which he and his two companions were immediately dragged before the lawless chief. Though the love of life was strong and active in his breast, it was not, even in that fearful moment, exhibited in any deprecating or unmanly form. Not for an instant did his mind waver, or his

thoughts wander to any subterfuge, that might prove unworthy of his profession or his former character. One anxious, inquiring look was fastened on the eye of him whose power alone might save him. He witnessed the short, severe struggle of regret that softened the rigid muscles of the Rover's countenance; and then he saw the instant, cold, and calm composure which settled on every one of its disciplined lineaments. He knew, at once, that the feelings of the man were smothered in the duty of the chief, and more was unnecessary to teach him the utter hopelessness of his condition. Scorning to render his state degrading by useless remonstrances, the youth remained where his accusers had seen fit to place him—firm, motionless, and silent.

"What would ye have?" the Rover was at length heard to say, in a voice that even his iron nerves scarce rendered deep and full-toned as common. "What ask ye?"

"Their lives!"

"I understand you; go; they are at your mercy."

Notwithstanding the horrors of the scene through which he had just passed, and that high and lofty excitement which had sustained him through the fight, the deliberate, solemn tones with which his judge delivered a sentence that he knew consigned him to a hasty and ignominious death, shook the frame of our adventurer nearly to insensibility. The blood recoiled backward to his heart, and the sickening sensation that beset his brain threatened to upset his reason. But the shock passed, on the instant, leaving him erect, and seemingly proud and firm as ever, and certainly with no evidence of mortal weakness, that human eye could discover.

"For myself nothing is demanded," he said, with admirable steadiness. "I know your self-enacted laws condemn me to a miserable fate; but for these ignorant, confiding, faithful followers, I claim, nay beg, entreat, implore your mercy; they knew not what they did, and"—

"Speak to these!" said the Rover, pointing, with an averted eye, to the fierce knot by which he was surrounded: "These are your judges, and the sole ministers of mercy."

Strong and nearly unconquerable disgust was apparent in the manner of the youth; but, with a mighty effort, he subdued it, and, turning to the crew, continued,—

"Then even to these will I humble myself in petitions. Ye are men, and ye are mariners"—

"Away with him!" exclaimed the croaking Nightingale; "he preaches! away with him to the yard-arm! away!"

The shrill, long-drawn winding of the call which the callous boatswain sounded in bitter mockery, was answered by an echo from twenty voices, in which the accents of nearly as many different people mingled in hoarse discordancy, as they shouted,—

"To the yard-arm! away with the three! away!"

Wilder cast a last glance of appeal at the Rover; but he met no look, in return, from a face that was intentionally averted. Then, with a burning brain, he felt himself rudely transferred from the quarter-deck into the centre and less privileged portion of the ship. The violence of the passage, the hurried reeving of cords, and all the fearful preparations of a nautical execution, appeared but the business of a moment, to him who stood so near the verge of time.

"A yellow flag for punishment!" bawled the revengeful captain of the forecastle; "let the gentleman sail on his last cruise, under the rogue's ensign!"

"A yellow flag! a yellow flag!" echoed twenty taunting throats. "Down with the Rover's ensign, and up with the colours of the prevot-marshal! A yellow flag! a yellow flag!"

The hoarse laughter, and mocking merriment, with which this coarse device was received, stirred the ire of Fid, who had submitted in silence, so far, to the rude treatment he received, for no other reason than that he thought his superior was the best qualified to utter the little which it might be necessary to say.

"Avast, ye villains!" he hotly exclaimed, prudence and moderation losing their influence, under the excitement of scornful anger; "ye cut-throat, lubberly villains! That ye are villains, is to be proved, in your teeth, by your getting your sailing orders from the devil; and that ye are lubbers, any man may see by the fashion in which ye have rove this cord about my throat. A fine jam will ye make with a turn in your whip! But ye'll all come to know how a man is to be decently hanged, ye rogues, ye will. Ye'll all come honestly by the knowledge, in your day, ye will!"

"Clear the turn, and run him up!" shouted one, two, three voices, in rapid succession; "a clear whip, and a swift run to heaven!"

Happily a fresh burst of riotous clamour, from one of the hatchways, interrupted the intention; and then was

heard the cry of,—

"A priest! a priest! Pipe the rogues to prayers, before they take their dance on nothing!"

The ferocious laughter with which the freebooters received this sneering proposal, was hushed as suddenly as though One answered to their mockery, from that mercy-seat whose power they so sacrilegiously braved, when a deep, menacing voice was heard in their midst, saying,—

"By heaven, if touch, or look, be laid too boldly on a prisoner in this ship, he who offends had better beg the fate ye give these miserable men, than meet my anger. Stand off, I bid you, and let the chaplain approach!"

Every bold hand was instantly withdrawn, and each profane lip was closed in trembling silence, giving the terrified and horror-stricken subject of their liberties room and opportunity to advance to the scene of punishment.

"See," said the Rover, in calmer but still deeply authoritative tones; "you are a minister of God, and your office is sacred charity: If you have aught to smooth the dying moment to fellow mortal, haste to impart it!"

"In what have these offended?" demanded the divine, when power was given to speak.

"No matter; it is enough that their hour is near! If you would lift your voice in prayer, fear nothing. The unusual sounds shall be welcome even here. Ay, and these miscreants, who so boldly surround you, shall kneel, and be mute, as beings whose souls are touched by the holy rite. Scoffers shall be dumb, and unbelievers respectful, at my beck.—Speak freely!"

"Scourge of the seas!" commenced the chaplain, across whose pallid features a flash of holy excitement had cast its glow, "remorseless violator of the laws of man! audacious contemner of the mandates of your God! a fearful retribution shall avenge this crime. Is it not enough that you have this day consigned so many to a sudden end, but your vengeance must be glutted with more blood? Beware the hour when these things shall be visited, in almighty power, on your own devoted head!"

"Look!" said the Rover, smiling, but with an expression that was haggard, in spite of the unnatural exultation that struggled about his quivering lip; "here are the evidences of the manner in which Heaven protects the right!"

"Though its awful justice be hidden in inscrutable wisdom for a time, deceive not thyself; the hour is at hand when it shall be seen and felt in majesty!" The voice of the chaplain became suddenly choked; for his wandering eye had fallen on the frowning countenance of Bignall, which, set in death, lay but half concealed beneath that flag which the Rover himself had cast upon the body. Then, summoning his energies, he continued, in the clear and admonitory strain that befitted his sacred calling: "They tell me you are but half lost to feeling for your kind; and, though the seeds of better principles, of better days, are smothered in your heart, that they still exist, and might be quickened into goodly"—

"Peace! You speak in vain. To your duty with these men, or be silent."

"Is their doom sealed?"

"It is."

"Who says it?" demanded a low voice at the elbow of the Rover, which, coming upon his ear at that moment, thrilled upon his most latent nerve, chasing the blood from his cheek to the secret recesses of his frame. But the weakness had already passed away with the surprise, as he calmly, and almost instantly, answered,—

"The law."

"The law!" repeated the governess. "Can they who set all order at defiance, who despise each human regulation, talk of law! Say, it is heartless, vindictive vengeance, if you will; but call it not by the sacred name of law.—I wander from my object! They have told me of this frightful scene, and I am come to offer ransom for the offenders. Name your price, and let it be worthy of the subject we redeem; a grateful parent shall freely give it all for thpreserver of his child."

"If gold will purchase the lives you wish," the other interrupted, with the swiftness of thought, "it is here in hoards, and ready on the moment. What say my people! Will they take ransom?"

A short, brooding pause succeeded; and then a low, ominous murmur was raised in the throng, announcing their reluctance to dispense with throng, vengeance. A scornful glance shot from the glowing eye of the Rover, across the fierce countenances by which he was environed; his lips moved with vehemence; but, as if he disdained further intercession, nothing was uttered for the ear. Turning to the divine, he added, with all the former composure of his wonderful manner,—

"Forget not your sacred office—time is leaving us." He was then moving slowly aside, in imitation of the

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governess, who had already veiled her features from the revolting scene, when Wilder addressed him.

"For the service you would have done me, from my soul I thank you," he said. "If you would know that I leave you in peace, give yet one solemn assurance before I die."

"To what?"

"Promise, that they who came with me into your ship shall leave it unharmed, and speedily."

"Promise, Walter," said a solemn, smothered voice, in the throng.

"I do."

"I ask no more.—Now, Reverend Minister of God, perform thy holy office, near my companions. Their ignorance may profit by your service. If I quit this bright and glorious scene, without thought and gratitude to that Being who, I humbly trust, has made me an heritor of still greater things, I offend wittingly and without hope. But these may find consolation in your prayers."

Amid an awful and breathing silence, the chaplain approached the devoted companions of Wilder. Their comparative insignificance had left them unobserved during most of the foregoing scene; and material changes had occurred, unheeded, in their situation. Fid was seated on the deck, his collar unbuttoned, his neck encircled with the fatal cord, sustaining the head of the helpless black, which he had placed, with singular tenderness and care, in his lap.

"This man, at least, will disappoint the malice of his enemies," said the divine, taking the hard hand of the negro into his own; "the termination of his wrongs and his degradation approaches; he will soon be far beyond the reach of human injustice.—Friend, by what name is your companion known?"

"It is little matter how you hail a dying man," returned Richard, with a melancholy shake of the head. "He has commonly been entered on the ship's books as Scipio Africa, coming, as he did, from the coast of Guinea; but, if you call him S'ip, he will not be slow to understand."

"Has he known baptism? Is he a Christian?"

"If he be not, I don't know who the devil is!" responded Richard, with an asperity that might be deemed a little unseasonable. "A man who serves his country, is true to his messmate, and has no skulk about him, I call a saint, so far as mere religion goes. I say, Guinea, my hearty, give the chaplain a gripe of the fist, if you call yourself a Christian. A Spanish windlass wouldn't give a stronger screw than the knuckles of that nigger an hour ago; and, now, you see to what a giant may be brought."

"His latter moment is indeed near. Shall I offer a prayer for the health of the departing spirit?"

"I don't know, I don't know!" answered Fid, gulping his words, and uttering a hem, that was still deep and powerful, as in the brightest and happiest of his days. "When there is so little time given to a poor fellow to speak his mind in, it may be well to let him have a chance to do most of the talking. Something may come uppermost which he would like to send to his friends in Africa; in which case, we may as well be looking out for a proper messenger. Hah! what is it, boy? You see he is already trying to rowse something up out of his ideas."

"Misser Fid—he'm take a collar," said the black, struggling for utterance.

"Ay, ay," returned Richard, again clearing his throat, and looking to the right and left fiercely, as if he were seeking some object on which to wreak his vengeance. "Ay, ay, Guinea; put your mind at ease on that point, and for that matter on all others. You shall have a grave as deep as the sea, and Christian burial, boy, if this here parson will stand by his work. Any small message you may have for your friends shall be logg'd, and put in the way of coming to their ears. You have had much foul weather in your time, Guinea, and some squalls have whistled about your head, that might have been spared, mayhap, had your colour been a shade or two lighter, For that matter, it may be that I have rode you down a little too close myself, boy, when over-heated with the conceit of skin; for all which may the Lord forgive me as freely as I hope you will do the same thing!"

The negro made a fruitless effort to rise, endeavouring to grasp the hand of the other, saying, as he did so,—

"Misser Fid beg a pardon of a black man! Masser aloft forget he'm all, misser Richard; he t'ink 'em no more."

"It will be what I call a d—'d generous thing, if he does," returned Richard, whose sorrow and whose conscience had stirred up his uncouth feelings to an extraordinary degree. "There's the affair of slipping off the wreck of the smuggler has never been properly settled atween us, neither; and many other small services of like nature, for which, d'ye see, I'll just thank you, while there is opportunity; for no one can say whether we shall ever be borne again on the same ship's books."

A feeble sign from his companion caused the topman to pause, while he endeavoured to construe its meaning

as well as he was able. With a facility, that was in some degree owing to the character of the individual, his construction of the other's meaning was favourable to himself, as was quite evident by the manner in which he resumed,—

"Well, well, mayhap we may. I suppose they birth the people there in some such order as is done here below, in which case we may be put within hailing distance, after all. Our sailing orders are both signed; thought, as you seem likely to slip your cable before these thieves are ready to run me up, you will be getting the best of the wind. I shall not say much concerning any signals it may be necessary to make, in order to make one another out aloft, taking it for granted that you will not overlook master Harry, on account of the small advantage you may have in being the first to shove off, intending myself to keep as close as possible in his wake, which will give me the twofold advantage of knowing I am on the right tack, and of falling in with you"—

"These are evil words, and fatal alike to your own future peace, and to that of your unfortunate friend," interrupted the divine. "His reliance must be placed on One, different in all his attributes from your officer, to follow whom, or to consult whose fraii conduct, would be the height of madness. Place your faith on another"—

"If I do, may I be—"

"Peace," said Wilder. "The black would speak to me."

Scipio had turned his looks in the direction of his officer, and was making another feeble effort towards extending his hand. As Wilder placed the member within the grasp of the dying negro, the latter succeeded in laying it on his lips, and then, flourishing with a convulsive movement that herculean arm which he had so lately and so successfully brandished in defence of his master, the limb stiffened and fell, though the eyes still continued their affectionate and glaring gaze on that countenance he had so long loved, and which, in the midst of all his long-endured wrongs, had never refused to meet his look of love in kindness. A low murmur followed this scene, and then complaints succeeded, in a louder strain, till more than one voice was heard openly muttering its discontent that vengeance should be so long delayed.

"Away with them!" shouted an ill-omened voice from the throng. "Into the sea with the carcass, and up with the living."

"Avast!" burst out of the chest of Fid, with an awfulness and depth that stayed even the daring movements of that lawless moment. "Who dare to cast a seaman into the brine, with the dying look standing in his lights, and his last words still in his messmate's ears? Ha! would ye stopper the fins of a man as ye would pin a lobster's claw! That for your fastenings and your lubberly knots together!" The excited topman snapped the lines by which his elbows had been imperfectly secured, while speaking, and immediately lashed the body of the black to his own, though his words received no interruption from a process that was executed with all a seaman's dexterity. "Where was the man in your lubberly crew that could lay upon a yard with this here black, or haul upon a lee-earring, while he held the weatherline? Could any one of ye all give up his rations, in order that a sick messmate might fare the better? or work a double tide, to spare the weak arm of a friend? Show me one who had as little dodge under fire, as a sound mainmast, and I will show you all that is left of his better. And now sway upon your whip, and thank God that the honest end goes up, while the rogues are suffered to keep their footing for a time."

"Sway away!" echoed Nightingale, seconding the hoarse sounds of his voice by the winding of his call; "away with them to heaven."

"Hold!" exclaimed the chaplain, happily arresting the cord before it had yet done its fatal office. "For His sake, whose mercy may one day be needed by the most hardened of ye all, give but another moment of time! What mean these words! read I aright? `Ark, of Lynnhaven!' "

"Ay, ay," said Richard, loosening the rope a little, in order to speak with greater freedom, and transferring the last morsel of the weed from his box to his mouth, as he answered; "seeing you are an apt scholar, no wonder you make it out so easily, though written by a hand that was always better with a marling-spike than a quill."

"But whence came the words? and why do you bear those names, thus written indelibly in the skin? Patience, men! monsters! demons! Would ye deprive the dying man of even a minute of that precious time which becomes so dear to all, as life is leaving us?"

"Give yet another minute!" said a deep voice from behind.

"Whence come the words, I ask?" again the chaplain demanded.

"They are neither more nor less than the manner in which a circumstance was logged, which is now of no consequence, seeing that the cruise is nearly up with all who are chiefly concerned. The black spoke of the collar;

but, then, he thought I might be staying in port, while he was drifting between heaven and earth, in search of his last moorings."

"Is there aught, here, that I should know?" interrupted the eager, tremulous voice of Mrs Wyllys. "O Merton! why these questions? Has my yearning been prophetic? Does nature give so mysterious a warning of its claim!"

"Hush, dearest Madam! your thoughts wander from probabilities, and my faculties become confused.— `Ark, of Lynnhaven,' was the name of an estate in the islands, belonging to a near and dear friend, and it was the place where I received, and whence I sent to the main, the precious trust you confided to my care. But"—

"Say on!" exclaimed the lady, rushing madly in front of Wilder, and seizing the cord which, a moment before, had been tightened nearly to his destruction, stripping it from his throat, with a sort of supernatural dexterity: "It was not, then, the name of a ship?"

"A ship! surely not. But what mean these hopes?— these fears?"

"The collar? the collar? speak; what of that collar?"

"It means no great things, now, my Lady," returned Fid, very coolly placing himself in the same condition as Wilder, by profiting by the liberty of his arms, and loosening his own neck from the halter, notwithstanding a movement made by some of the people to prevent it, which was, however, staid by a look from their leader's eyes. "I will first cast loose this here rope; seeing that it is neither decent, nor safe, for an ignorant man, like me, to enter into such unknown navigation, a-head of his officer. The collar was just the necklace of the dog, which is here to be seen on the arm of poor Guinea, who was, in most respects, a man for whose equal one might long look in vain."

"Read it," said the governess, a film passing before her own eyes; "read it," she added, motioning, with a quivering hand, to the divine to peruse the inscription, that was distinctly legible on the plate of brass.

"Holy Dispenser of good! what is this I see? `Neptune, the property of Paul de Lacey?'"

A loud cry burst from the lips of the governess; her hands were clasped one single instant upward, in that thanksgiving which oppressed her soul, and then, as recollection returned, Wilder was pressed fondly, frantically to her bosom, while her voice was heard to say, in the piercing tones of all-powerful nature,—

"My child! my child!—You will not—cannot— dare not, rob a long-stricken and bereaved mother of her offspring. Give me back my son, my noble son! and I will weary Heaven with prayers in your behalf. Ye are brave, and cannot be deaf to mercy. Ye are men, who have lived in constant view of God's majesty, and will not refuse to listen to this evidence of his pleasure. Give me my child, and I yield all else. He is of a race long honoured upon the seas, and no mariner will be deaf to his claims. The widow of de Lacey, the daughter of—, cries for mercy. Their united blood is in his veins, and it will not be spilt by you! A mother bows herself to the dust before you, to ask mercy for her off-spring. Oh! give me my child! my child!"

As the words of the petitioner died upon the ear, a stillness settled on the place, that might have been likened to the holy calm which the entrance of better feelings leaves upon the soul of the sinner. The grim freebooters regarded each other in doubt; the workings of nature manifesting themselves in the gleamings of even their stern and hardened visages. Still, the desire for vengeance had got too firm a hold of their minds to be dispossessed at a word. The result would yet have been doubtful, had not one suddenly re-appeared in their midst who never ordered in vain; and who knew how to guide, to quell, or to mount and trample on their humours, as his own pleasure dictated. For half a minute, he looked around him, his eye still following the circle, which receded as he gazed, until even those longest accustomed to yield to his will began to wonder at the extraordinary aspect in which it was now exhibited. The gaze was wild and bewildered; and the face pallid as that of the petitioning mother. Three times did the lips sever, before sound issued from the caverns of his chest; then arose, on the attentive ears of the breathless and listening crowd, a voice that seemed equally charged with inward emotion and high authority. With a haughty gesture of the hand, and a manner that was too well understood to be mistaken, he said,—

"Disperse! Ye know my justice; but ye know I will be obeyed. My pleasure shall be known to-morrow."

CHAPTER XVI.

—"This is he; Who hath upon him still that natural stamp: It was wise Nature's end in the donation, To be his evidence now."

—*Shakspeare.*

That morrow came; and, with it, an entire change in the scene and character of our tale. The "Dolphin" and the "Dart" were sailing in amity, side by side; the latter again bearing the ensign of England, and the former carrying a naked gaff. The injuries of the gust, and the combat, had so far been repaired, that, to a common eye, each gallant vessel was again prepared, equally to encounter the hazards of the ocean or of warfare. A long, blue, hazy streak, to the north, proclaimed the proximity of the land; and some three or four light coasters of that region, which were sailing nigh, announced how little of hostility existed in the present purposes of the freebooters.

What those designs were, however, still remained a secret, buried in the bosom of the Rover alone. Doubt, wonder, and distrust were, each in its turn, to be traced, not only in the features of his captives, but in those of his own crew. Throughout the whole of the long night, which had succeeded the events of the important day just past, he had been seen to pace the poop in brooding silence. The little he had uttered was merely to direct the movements of the vessel; and when any ventured, with other design, to approach his person, a sign, that none there dared to disregard, secured him the solitude he wished. Once or twice, indeed, the boy Roderick was seen hovering at his elbow, but it was as a guardian spirit would be fancied to linger near the object of its care, unobtrusively, and, it might almost be added, invisible. When, however, the sun came, burnished and glorious, out of the waters of the east, a gun was fired, to bring a coaster to the side of the "Dolphin;" and then it seemed that the curtain was to be raised on the closing scene of the drama. With his crew assembled on the deck beneath, and the principal personages among his captives beside him on the poop, the Rover addressed the former.

"Years have united us by a common fortune," he said: "We have long been submissive to the same laws. If I have been prompt to punish, I have been ready to obey. You cannot charge me with injustice. But the covenant is now ended. I take back my pledge, and I return you your faiths. Nay, frown not—hesitate not—murmur not! The compact ceases, and our laws are ended. Such were the conditions of the service. I give you your liberty, and little do I claim in return. That you need have no grounds of reproach, I bestow my treasure. See," he added, raising that bloody ensign with which he had so often braved the power of the nations, and exhibiting beneath it sacks of that metal which has so long governed the world; "see! This was mine; it is now yours. It shall be put in yonder coaster; there I leave you, to bestow it, yourselves, on those you may deem most worthy. Go; the land is near. Disperse, for your own sakes: Nor hesitate; for, without me, well do ye know that vessel of the King would be your master. The ship is already mine; of all the rest, I claim these prisoners alone for my portion. Farewell!"

Silent amazement succeeded this unlooked-for address. There was, indeed, for a moment, some disposition to rebel; but the measures of the Rover had been too well taken for resistance. The "Dart" lay on their beam, with her people at their guns, matches lighted, and a heavy battery. Unprepared, without a leader, and surprised, opposition would have been madness. The first astonishment had scarce abated, before each freebooter rushed to secure his individual effects, and to transfer them to the deck of the coaster. When all but the crew of a single boat had left the "Dolphin," the promised gold was sent, and then the loaded craft was seen hastily seeking the shelter of some secret creek. During this scene, the Rover had again been silent as death. He next turned to Wilder; and, making a mighty but successful effort to still his feelings, he added,—

"Now must we, too, part. I commend my wounded to your care. They are necessarily with your surgeons. I know the trust I give you will not be abused."

"My word is the pledge of their safety," returned the young de Lacey.

"I believe you.—Lady," he added, approaching the elder of the females, with an air in which earnestness and hesitation strongly contended, "if a proscribed and guilty man may still address you, grant yet a favour."

"Name it; a mother's ear can never be deaf to him who has spared her child."

"When you petition Heaven for that child, then, forget not there is another being who may still profit by your prayers!—No more.—And now," he continued, looking about him like one who was determined to be equal to the pang of the moment, however difficult it might prove, and surveying, with an eye of painful regret, those naked

decks which were so lately teeming with scenes of life and revelry; "and now—ay—now we part! The boat awaits you."

Wilder had soon seen his mother and Gertrude into the pinnace; but he still lingered on the deck himself.

"And you!" he said, "what will become of you?"

"I shall shortly be—forgotten.—Adieu!"

The manner in which the Rover spoke forbade delay. The young man hesitated, squeezed his hand, and left him.

When Wilder found himself restored to his proper vessel, of which the death of Bignall had left him in command, he immediately issued the order to fill her sails, and to steer for the nearest haven of his country. So long as sight could read the movements of the man who remained on the decks of the "Dolphin," not a look was averted from the still motionless object. She lay, with her maintop—sail to the mast, stationary as some beautiful fabric placed there by fairy power, still lovely in her proportions, and perfect in all her parts. A human form was seen swiftly pacing her poop, and, by its side, glided one who looked like a lessened shadow of that restless figure. At length distance swallowed these indistinct images; and then the eye was wearied, in vain, to trace the internal movements of the distant ship. But doubt was soon ended. Suddenly a streak of flame flashed from her decks, springing fiercely from sail to sail. A vast cloud of smoke broke out of the hull, and then came the deadened roar of artillery. To this succeeded, for a time, the awful, and yet attractive, spectacle of a burning ship. The whole was terminated by an immense canopy of smoke, and an explosion that caused the sails of the distant "Dart" to waver, as though the winds of the trades were deserting their eternal direction. When the cloud had lifted from the ocean, an empty waste of water was seen beneath; and none might mark the spot where so lately had floated that beautiful specimen of human ingenuity. Some of those who ascended to the upper masts of the cruiser, and were aided by glasses, believed, indeed, they could discern a solitary speck upon the sea; but whether it was a boat, or some fragment of the wreck, was never known.

From that time, the history of the dreaded Red Rover became gradually lost, in the fresher incidents of those eventful seas. But the mariner, long after, was known to shorten the watches of the night, by recounting scenes of mad enterprise that were thought to have occurred under his auspices. Rumour did not fail to embellish and pervert them, until the real character, and even name, of the individual were confounded with the actors of other atrocities. Scenes of higher and more ennobling interest, too, were occurring on the Western Continent, to efface the circumstances of a legend that many deemed wild and improbable. The British colonies of North America had revolted against the government of the Crown, and a weary war was bringing the contest to a successful issue. Newport, the opening scene of this tale, had been successively occupied by the arms of the King, and by those of that monarch who had sent the chivalry of his nation to aid in stripping his rival of her vast possessions.

The beautiful haven had sheltered hostile fleets, and the peaceful villas had often rung with the merriment of youthful soldiers. More than twenty years, after the events just related, had been added to the long record of time, when the island town witnessed the rejoicings of another festival. The allied forces had compelled the most enterprising leader of the British troops to yield himself and army captives to their numbers and skill. The struggle was believed to be over, and the worthy townsmen had, as usual, been loud in the manifestations of their pleasure. The rejoicings, however, ceased with the day; and, as night gathered over the place, the little city was resuming its customary provincial tranquillity. A gallant frigate, which lay in the very spot where the vessel of the Rover has first been seen, had already lowered the gay assemblage of friendly ensigns, which had been spread in the usual order of a gala day. A flag of intermingled colours, and bearing a constellation of bright and rising stars, alone was floating at her gaff. Just at this moment, another cruiser, but one of far less magnitude, was seen entering the roadstead, bearing also the friendly ensign of the new States. Headed by the tide, and deserted by the breeze, she soon dropped an anchor, in the pass between Connanicut and Rhodes, when a boat was seen making for the inner harbour, impelled by the arms of six powerful rowers. As the barge approached a retired and lonely wharf, a solitary observer of its movements was enabled to see that it contained a curtained litter, and a single female form. Before the curiosity which such a sight would be apt to create, in the breast of one like the spectator mentioned, had time to exercise itself in conjectures, the oars were tossed, the boat had touched the piles, and, borne by the seamen, the litter, attended by the woman, stood before him.

"Tell me, I pray you," said a voice, in whose tones grief and resignation were singularly combined, "if Captain Henry de Lacey, of the continental marine, has a residence in this town of Newport?"

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"That has he," answered the aged man addressed by the female; "that has he; or, as one might say, two; since yonder frigate is no less his than the dwelling on the hill, just by."

"Thou art too old to point us out the way; but, if grandchild, or idler of any sort, be near, here is silver to reward him."

"Lord help you, Lady!" returned the other, casting an oblique glance at her appearance, as a sort of salvo for the term, and pocketing the trifling piece she offered, with singular care; "Lord help you, Madam! old though I am, and something worn down by hardships and marvellous adventures, both by sea and land, yet will I gladly do so small an office for one of your condition. Follow, and you shall see that your pilot is not altogether unused to the path."

The old man turned, and was leading the way off the wharf, even before he had completed the assurance of his boasted ability. The seamen and the female followed; the latter walking sorrowfully and in silence by the side of the litter.

"If you have need of refreshment," said their guide, pointing over his shoulder, "yonder is a wellknown inn, and one much frequented in its time by mariners. Neighbour Joram and the 'Foul Anchor' have had a reputation in their day, as well as the greatest warrior in the land; and, though honest Joe is gathered—in for the general harvest, the house stands as firm as the day he first entered it. A goodly end he made, and profitable is it to the weak-minded sinner to keep such an example before his eyes!"

A low, smothered sound issued from the litter; but, though the guide stopped to listen, it was succeeded by no other evidence of the character of its tenant.

"The sick man is in suffering," he resumed; "but bodily pain, and all afflictions which we suffer in the flesh, must have their allotted time. I have lived to see seven bloody and cruel wars, of which this, which now rages, is, I humbly trust, to be the last. Of the wonders which I witnessed, and the bodily dangers which I compassed, in the sixth, eye hath never beheld, nor can tongue utter, their equal!"

"Time hath dealt hardly by you, friend," meekly interrupted the female. "This gold may add a few more comfortable days to those that are already past."

The cripple, for their conductor was lame as well as aged, received the offering with gratitude, apparently too much occupied in estimating its amount, to give any more of his immediate attention to the discourse. In the deep silence that succeeded, the party reached the door of the villa they sought.

It was now night; the short twilight of the season having disappeared, while the bearers of the litter had been ascending the hill. A loud rap was given on the door by the guide; and then he was told that his services were no longer needed.

"I have seen much and hard service," he replied, "and well do I know that the prudent mariner does not dismiss the pilot, until the ship is safely moored. Perhaps old Madam de Lacey is abroad, or the Captain himself may not"—

"Enough; here is one who will answer all our questions."

The portal was now, in truth, opened; and a man appeared on its threshold, holding a light. The appearance of the porter was not, however, of the most encouraging aspect. A certain air, which can neither be assumed nor gotten rid of, proclaimed him a son of the ocean, while a wooden limb, which served to prop a portion of his still square and athletic body, sufficiently proved he was one who had not attained the experience of his hardy calling without some bodily risk. His countenance, as he held the light above his head, in order to scan the persons of the groupe without, was dogmatic, scowling, and a little fierce. He was not long, however, in recognizing the cripple, of whom he unceremoniously demanded the object of what he was pleased to term "such a night squall."

"Here is a wounded mariner," returned the female, with tones so tremulous that they instantly softened the heart of the nautical Cerberus, "who is come to claim hospitality of a brother in the service, and shelter for the night. We would speak with Captain Henry de Lacey."

"Then you have struck soundings on the right coast, Madam," returned the tar, "as master Paul, here, will say in the name of his father, no less than in that of the sweet lady his mother; not forgetting old madam his grandam, who is no fresh-water fish herself, for that matter."

"That he will," said a fine, manly youth of some seventeen years, who wore the attire of one who was already in training for the seas, and who was looking curiously over the shoulder of the elderly seaman. "I will acquaint my father of the visit, and, Richard—do you seek out a proper birth for our guests, without delay."

This order, which was given with the air of one who had been accustomed to act for himself, and to speak with authority, was instantly obeyed. The apartment, selected by Richard, was the ordinary parlour of the dwelling. Here, in a few moments, the litter was deposited; the bearers were then dismissed, and the female only was left, with its tenant and the rude attendant, who had not hesitated to give them so frank a reception. The latter busied himself in trimming the lights, and in replenishing a bright wood fire; taking care, at the same time, that no unnecessary vacuum should occur in the discourse, to render the brief interval, necessary for the appearance of his superiors, tedious. During this state of things an inner door was opened, the youth already named leading the way for the three principal personages of the mansion.

First came a middle-aged, athletic man, in the naval undress of a Captain of the new States. His look was calm, and his step was still firm, though time and exposure were beginning to sprinkle his head with gray. He wore one arm in a sling, a proof that his service was still recent; on the other leaned a lady, in whose matronly mien, but still blooming cheek and bright eyes, were to be traced most of the ripened beauties of her sex. Behind them followed a third, a female also, whose step was less elastic, but whose person continued to exhibit the evidences of a peaceful evening to the troubled day of life. The three courteously saluted the stranger, delicately refraining from making any precipitate allusion to the motive of her visit. Their reserve seemed necessary; for, by the agitation which shook the shattered frame of one who appeared as much sinking with grief as infirmity, it was too apparent that the unknown lady needed a little time to collect her energies, and to arrange her thoughts.

She wept long and bitterly, as though alone; nor did she essay to speak until further silence would have become suspicious. Then, drying her eyes, and with cheeks on which a bright, hectic spot was seated, her voice was heard for the first time by her wondering hosts.

"You may deem this visit an intrusion," she said; "but one, whose will is my law, would be brought hither."

"Wherefore?" asked the officer, with mildness, observing that her voice was already choaked.

"To die!" was the whispered, husky answer.

A common start manifested the surprise of her auditors; and then the gentleman arose, and approaching the litter, he gently drew aside a curtain, exposing its hitherto unseen tenant to the examination of all in the room. There was understanding in the look that met his gaze, though death was but too plainly stamped on the pallid lineaments of the wounded man. His eye alone seemed still to belong to earth; for, while all around it appeared already to be sunk into the helplessness of the last stage of human debility, that was still bright, intelligent, and glowing—it might almost have been described as glaring.

"Is there aught in which we can contribute to your comfort, or to your wishes?" asked Captain de Lacey, after a long and solemn pause, during which all around the litter had mournfully contemplated the sad spectacle of sinking mortality.

The smile of the dying man was ghastly, though tenderness and sorrow were singularly and fearfully combined in its expression. He answered not; but his eyes had wandered from face to face, until they became riveted, by a species of charm, on the countenance of the oldest of the two females. His gaze was met by a look as settled as his own; and so evident was the powerful sympathy which existed between the two, that it could not escape the observation of the spectators.

"Mother!" said the officer, with affectionate concern; "my mother! what troubles you?"

"Henry—Gertrude," answered the venerable parent, extending her arms to her offspring, as if she asked support; "my children, your doors have been opened to one who has a claim to enter them. Oh! it is in these terrible moments, when passion is asleep and our weakness is most apparent, in these moments of debility and disease, that nature so strongly manifests its impression! I see it all in that fading countenance, in those sunken features, where so little is left but the last lingering look of family and kindred!"

"Kindred!" exclaimed Captain de Lacey: "Of what affinity is our guest?"

"A brother!" answered the lady, dropping her head on her bosom, as though she had proclaimed a degree of consanguinity which gave pain no less than pleasure.

The stranger, too much overcome himself to speak, made a joyful gesture of assent, but never averted a gaze that seemed destined to maintain its direction so long as life should lend it intelligence.

"A brother!" repeated her son, in unfeigned astonishment. "I knew you had a brother; but I had thought him dead a boy."

"'Twas so I long believed, myself; though frightful glimpses of the contrary have often beset me; but now the

truth is too plain, in that fading visage and those fallen features, to be misunderstood. Poverty and misfortune divided us. I suppose we thought each other dead."

Another feeble gesture proclaimed the assent of the wounded man.

"There is no further mystery. Henry, the stranger is thy uncle—my brother—once my pupil!"

"I could wish to see him under happier circumstances," returned the officer, with a seaman's frankness; "but, as a kinsman, he is welcome. Poverty, at least, shall no longer divide you."

"Look, Henry—Gertrude!" added the mother, veiling her own eyes as she spoke, "that face is no stranger to you. See ye not the sad ruins of one ye both fear and love?"

Wonder kept her children mute, though both looked until sight became confused, so long and intense was their examination. Then a hollow sound, which came from the chest of the stranger, caused them both to start; and, as his low, but distinct enunciation rose on their ears, doubt and perplexity vanished.

"Wilder," he said, with an effort in which his utmost strength appeared exerted, "I have come to ask the last office at your hands."

"Captain Heidegger!" exclaimed the officer.

"The Red Rover!" murmured the younger Mrs de Lacey, involuntarily recoiling a pace from the litter, in alarm.

"The Red Rover!" repeated her son, pressing nigher with ungovernable curiosity.

"Laid by the heels at last!" bluntly observed Fid, stumping up towards the groupe, without relinquishing the tongs, which he had kept in constant use, as an apology for remaining in the presence.

"I had long hid my repentance, and my shame, together," continued the dying man, when the momentary surprise had a little abated; "but this war drew me from my concealment. Our country needed us both, and both has she had! You have served as one who never offended might serve; but a cause so holy was not to be tarnished by a name like mine. May the little I have done for good be remembered when the world speaks of the evil of my hands! Sister—mother—pardon!"

"May that God, who forms his creatures with such fearful natures, look mercifully on all our weaknesses!" exclaimed the weeping Mrs de Lacey, bowing to her knees, and lifting her hands and eyes to heaven. "O brother, brother! you have been trained in the holy mystery of your redemption, and need not now be told on what Rock to place your hopes of pardon!"

"Had I never forgotten those precepts, my name would still be known with honour. But, Wilder!" he added with startling energy, "Wilder!—"

All eyes were bent eagerly on the speaker. His hand was holding a roll on which he had been reposing, as on a pillow. With a supernatural effort, his form arose on the litter; and, with both hands elevated above his head, he let fall before him that blazonry of intermingled stripes, with its blue field of rising stars, a glow of high exultation illumining each feature of his face, as in his former day of pride.

"Wilder!" he repeated, laughing hysterically, "we have triumphed!"—Then he fell backward, without motion, the exulting lineaments settling in the gloom of death, as shadows obscure the smiling brightness of the sun. THE END.