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Morley Ashton



James Grant

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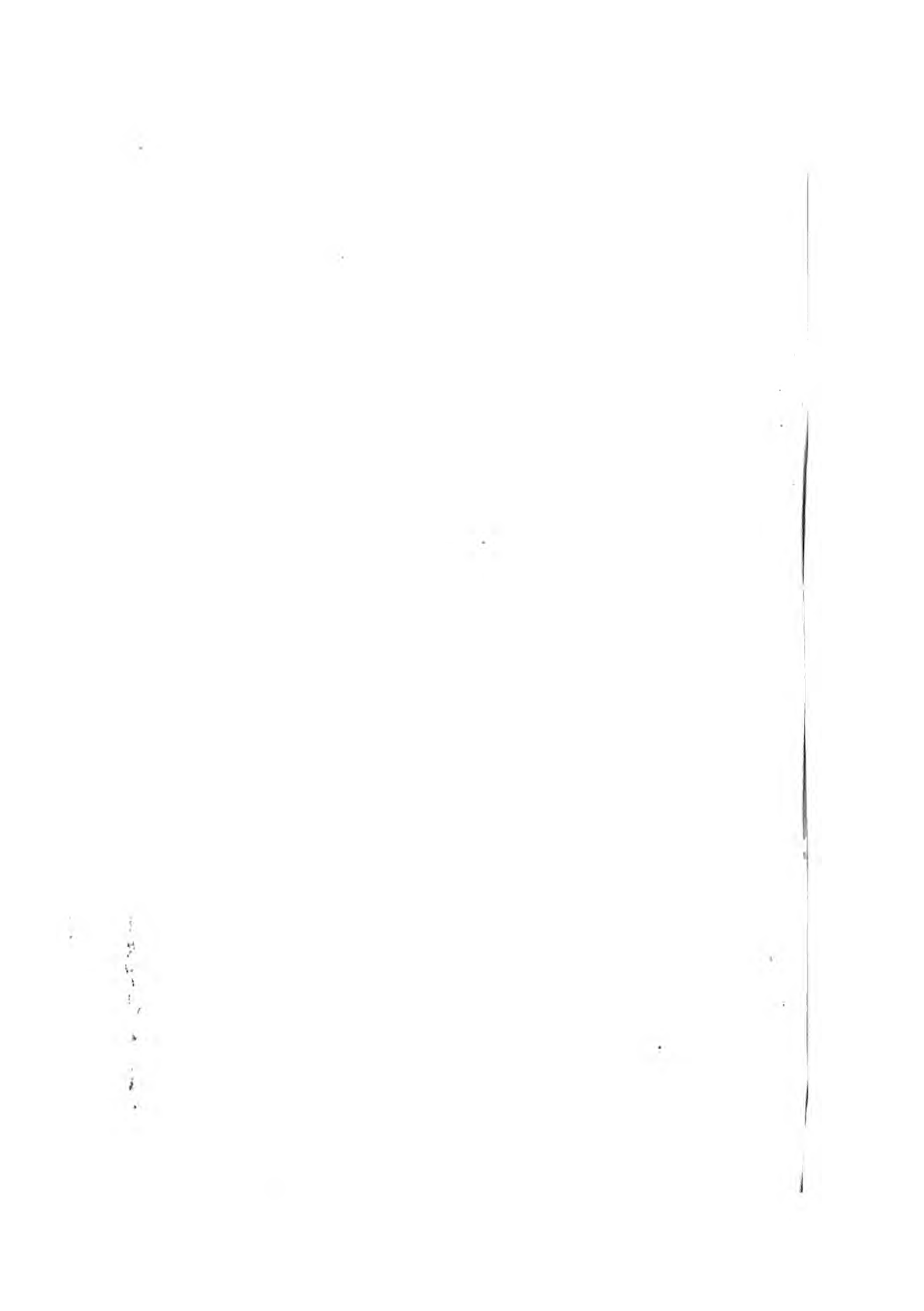
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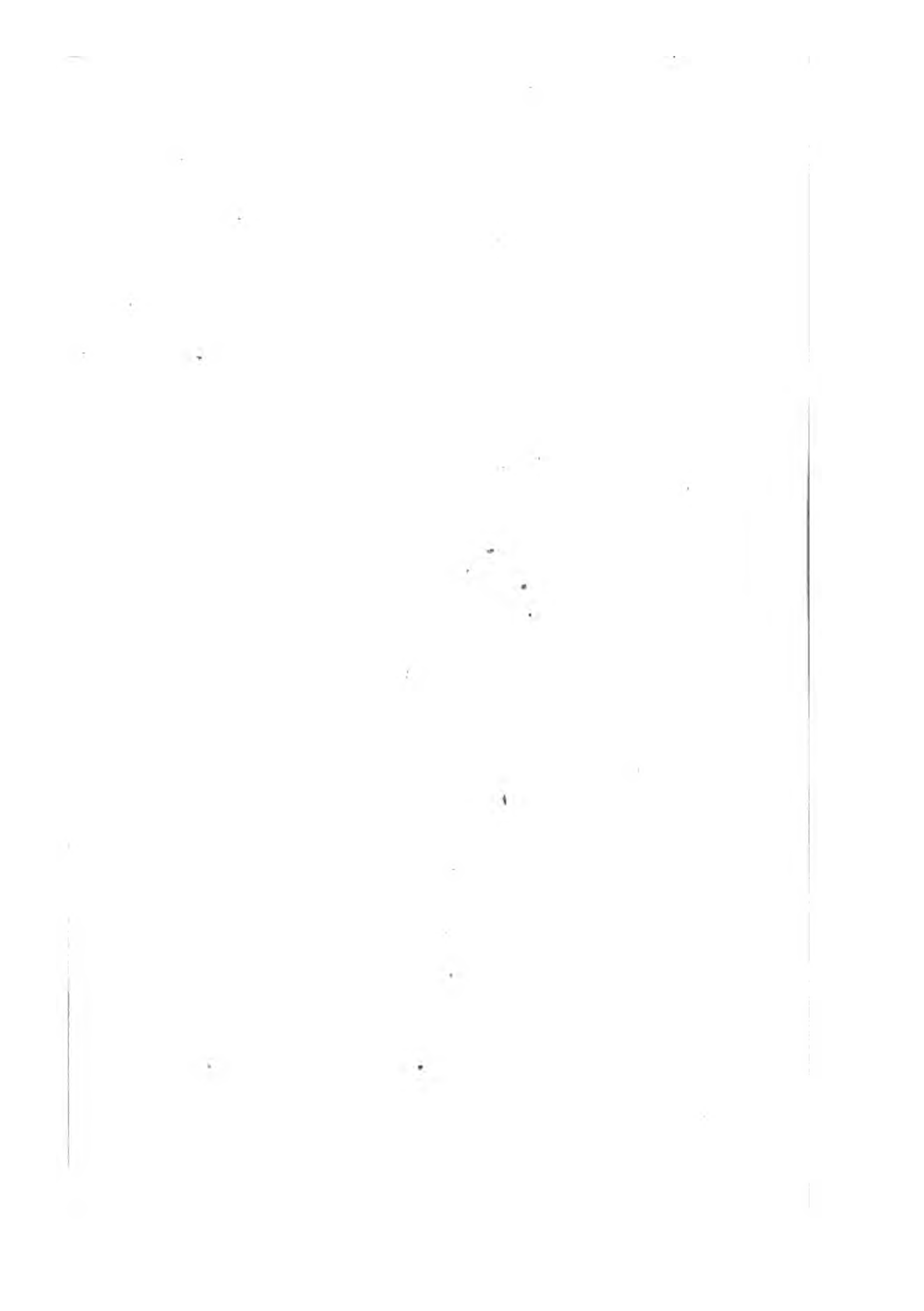
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MORLEY ASHTON.

CHAPTER I.

THE BLIND GODDESS.

IT was the evening of one of the last days of spring, when that delightful season is blending with the approaching summer, and when the sun was setting on one of those green and fertile landscapes which we find nowhere but in England, that a young man paused upon the crest of the eminence which overlooks, from the southward, the beautiful little vale and sequestered village of Acton-Rennel, and, with a kindling eye and flushing cheek, surveyed the scene and all its features, on which he had not gazed for what now seemed a long and weary lapse of time.

Morley Ashton—for it was he whom we introduce at once to the reader—was a handsome and active young fellow, with a lithe and well-knit figure, somewhat above the middle height ; but he was thin and rather sallow in face, as if wasted by recent sickness or suffering.

His short-shorn hair and well-pointed moustache, together with the general contour of his head, suggested the idea of a soldier, and yet no soldier was he.

Forethought and penetration were perceptible in the form and lines of his brow ; his keen, bright, but contemplative eyes, and the shape of his lower jaw, betokened firmness, decision, and courage ; and well did Morley Ashton require them all, for these pages, and the course of our story, which opens at no remote date, but only a very short time ago, will show that he had a very desperate game to play.

Tanned by warmer suns than those which shine in his native England, his complexion was dark, and at times there was a keen, bold restlessness in his eyes, which seemed to

indicate that he had seen many a far and foreign shore, and many a danger too, since last he stood by the old Norman cross on Cherrywood Hill, and looked on the vale and village of Acton-Rennel.

In Morley's dress—a stout grey tweed suit—there was nothing remarkable ; but a large and well-worn courier-bag, slung by a broad strap across his right shoulder, seemed to indicate that he was travelling, and dust covered his boots ; yet he had only walked some four miles or so from the nearest station on the London and North-Western line.

As he looked upon the landscape, where the cowslips were spotting the meadows ; where the wild rose was blooming, and the yellow gorse was flowering by the hedgerows ; where the cherry and apple trees were in full blossom by the way-side ; the landscape, so rich in its foliage and greenery ; so calm in aspect, with the square tower of its Norman church, stunted in form and massed with ivy, darkly defined against the flush of the western sky ; the little parsonage, secluded among plum and apple trees, over which its clustered chimneys and quaint old gables peeped ; the thatched village, buried amid coppice, wild hops, wild flowers, and ivy ; the fertile uplands, where the wavy corn would soon be yellowing under the genial summer sun ; and, stretching in the distance far away, the wooded chase, the remains of a great Saxon forest, whence comes the name of our village, *Æctune*, or Oaktown-Rennel, whose leafy dingles have echoed many a time to the horn of William Rufus, ere he fell by Tyrrel's arrow ; the landscape, where the voice of the cuckoo rose at times from the woodlands, with the occasional lowing of the full-fed herd, winding homeward "slowly o'er the lea." As he gazed on all this, we say, a sigh of pleasure escaped from Morley Ashton, for it was long since he had beheld such a scene, or one that had so much of England and of home in all its placid features.

Save a glimpse of the distant ocean, rippling and shining in the sunset, through a rocky opening or chasm, known as Acton Chine—terrible in the annals of wreckers and smugglers—the landscape might have seemed in the very heart of England ; but on the ocean, "our water-girdle," Morley turned his back, for of late he had tasted quite enough of spray and spondrift, having just landed in the Mersey, after a long and perilous voyage.

He passed the old church with its deep grey buttresses, and older yew trees ; its picturesque *Lykegate*, footstile, and gravelled path, that wound between the grassy mounds and

lettered stones ; he passed the village, with its alehouse and well-remembered sign-board ; and then he struck into the long green lane that lies beyond—the lane in which Dick Turpin robbed the rector.

All was very calm and still.

The merry voices of some little roisterers, who swung with frantic glee upon a paddock gate, soon died away in the distance ; the wheel of the rustic mill had ceased to turn, and the water flowed unchafed along its narrow race ; even the hum of the honey bee had died away, as it had gone laden to its home, and soft and almost holy thoughts would have stolen into Morley's heart at such a time and place and sober sunset, but for the keen anxiety that made him hasten on—the anxiety that love and long absence had created, and verses that he had somewhere read occurred to him with painful truth :—

“ Ah ! not as once !—my spirit now
Is shadowed by a dull cold fear,
Nor Spring's soft breath that fans my brow,
Nor Spring's sweet flowers my breast can cheer.

“ Oh, Spring ! sweet Spring ! if Heaven decree
My term of life to be so brief,
That joy I would afar but see,
But taste the bitter cup of grief.”

While proceeding he looked frequently and eagerly around him ; for now every old gnarled beech that overhung the path, and every meadow gate brought back some stirring thought or tender memory.

The flush in the western sky was bright, so he shaded his eyes with his hand (though whilom accustomed to more cloudless skies and brighter suns than ours), as if looking for some expected person.

At last an irrepressible exclamation of joy escaped him, as a hat and feather, and a female figure there was no mistaking, met his eye.

He flourished his wide-awake hat, and then quickened his pace, as a little parasol was waved in reply.

In a minute more his arms were round a young girl, who rushed forward, panting and breathless, to meet him, and his lips were pressed to hers in a long and silent kiss.

“ Ethel, my own, own Ethel, at last—at *last!*” he exclaimed, in a voice rendered tremulous by excess of emotion ; but the young girl for some time was unable to reply. She could but sob upon his breast in the fulness of her joy.

There was a long and tender pause, during which their lips, though silent, were busy enough, perhaps, for "Love," says some one, "is a sting of joy, but a heartache for ever!"

"I knew, dear Ethel, that you would come to meet me," said Morley, "if my letter arrived in time to inform you of the train by which I would leave Liverpool."

"Where you landed last night—only last night—and this evening you are here," she exclaimed.

"Yes, Ethel; but poorer than when I left England," said the young man sadly; "poorer than when I left you," he replied, drawing her arm through his, but still retaining her hand, with both of his folded over it;—"and now tell me how are all at Laurel Lodge? Your papa——"

"Is quite well."

"And your sister Rose—merry little Rose?"

"Well, blooming, and lively as ever."

"Why did she not come to meet me too? My letters have told you, Ethel, that after enduring the misery of three years' exile on the Bonny River, wearily waiting and toiling, transacting the sale of camwood, ivory, and palm oil, for my owners in Liverpool, and often enduring the frightful fever of that pestilent place——"

"Ah, my poor dear Morley, how it has thinned and wasted you!" said Ethel, looking at him tenderly through her tears.

"I have been compelled to return, almost broken in health, and what is worse, perhaps, in a worldly sense, well-nigh penniless, Ethel, to look for other work at home. But tell me something of yourself, dearest!"

"What can I say?—what can I tell you, Morley? for here, at Laurel Lodge, each day that passes is so like its predecessor."

"How will Mr. Basset—how will your father welcome me?" asked Morley anxiously.

"Most kindly, Morley."

"You think so, still," continued the young man.

"Yes. All the more kindly that you have not been favoured by fortune; papa is most generous," replied Ethel.

Morley did not feel quite persuaded of this, but replied:

"Bless him and you for this assurance, darling. Oh, Ethel, how charming your sweet English face seems to me! Do you know, dearest, that for three whole years I have never seen a white woman or a red cheek? But you have not told me about Rose—no husband yet?"

"She has lovers in plenty, and Jack Page is her adorer,"

said Ethel, smiling; "but there is enough time for Rose to think of marrying. Besides——" but Miss Basset paused and sighed.

"True; she is two years younger than you, Ethel. But our marriage, my love, seems far, far off indeed. Oh, farther than ever! Your father——"

"Will welcome you warmly, of that be assured, but——"

"But what, Ethel? Something weighs upon your mind."

"Many misfortunes have come upon him, misfortunes which we could never have foreseen."

"In your two last letters, you hinted something of losses in London speculations."

"Yes; and consequently, he has come to the resolution of leaving Acton-Rennel—leaving dear Laurel Lodge, where since childhood we have been so happy."

"Leaving Laurel Lodge!" exclaimed Ashton.

"Leaving England itself, Morley," said Ethel, as her fine eyes became suffused with tears again.

"England!" repeated Morley Ashton breathlessly, and growing very pale indeed.

"Yes; did you not get my letter, in which I told you that papa had been appointed to a vacant judgeship in the Isle of France, and that in two months or less from this time we shall sail for that distant colony?"

"No—no! I hear all this now for the first time."

"Papa will tell you all about it," continued Ethel, weeping on her lover's shoulder. "He has been appointed one of the three judges in the supreme civil and criminal court of the island."

"Oh, what fatality is this!" exclaimed Morley Ashton mournfully, as he struck his hands together; "have I returned to England, but to be more than ever an exile, and to learn that you are going where you must school yourself to forget me?"

"Oh, do not say so, Morley!" implored Miss Basset.

"All is ended now," replied her lover; "on earth there is nothing more for me."

"Or *me*!" said Ethel upbraidingly.

"True; in the selfishness of my own love and grief, I forget yours."

The girl's tears fell fast, and he held her locked to his breast; for there was no eye on them in that sequestered lane, where the evening star, sparkling like a diamond set in amber, alone looked on them.

After a pause:

"See, Morley," said the girl, with a lovely smile, as she drew her ribbon from her bosom; "our split sixpence!"

"Here is the other half, dear Ethel. I used to carry it at my watch-guard, but seals and charms are dangerous gear among the black fellows of the Bonny River, who want every trinket they see, so I thought it safe where your lock of hair lay—next my heart. It was a happy hour in which you gave me that dear lock, my sweet Ethel."

"It was on an evening in summer, when we sat yonder by the old stile at the churchyard. How often have I wished to live that hour over again!" sighed his companion.

"And, sweet one, so we shall in reality, as I have often done in my day-dreams, when far, far away from this dear home and you; but this approaching separation crushes the heart within me, and destroys all hope for the future."

"Take courage, Morley, though I have none," said the young girl, while still her tears fell fast.

Ah me! a split sixpence is of small value, yet here it was riches, for it embodied the hopes, the future, and was all the world to two young and loving hearts!

"Amid the pestilent swamps and mangrove creeks of West Africa, where, from September to June, the steamy malaria rises like smoke in the sunshine, baleful," said Morley, "and laden with disease and death, O Ethel, my thoughts were with you! There, while engaged in the stupid and monotonous task of daily bartering old muskets, nails, and buttons, powder, rum, and tobacco, for palm-oil, camwood, ivory, lion-skins, and gorgeous feathers, bartering, cajoling, and often browbeating the hideous and barbarous savages of Eboe and Biafra, for our house in Liverpool, the hope of being reunited to you alone sustained and inspired me. In my wretched hut, built of stakes, roofed with palm-leaves, and plastered with mud, or on board the river craft, where we always sleep at some seasons, and during the horrors of the fever which left me the wreck of myself, it was your memory alone that shed light and hope around me. And there was one terrible night, when the breathless air was still and heavy, and when a green slime covered all the ripples of the rotten sea, while my pulse was as fleet as lightning, and my brain was burning, and when I thought that certainly I must soon die, my old friend Bartelot—you have often heard me speak of Tom Bartelot, of Liverpool—conveyed me to his brig, which rode at her moorings inside Foche Point, and he actually cured me, merely by talking for hours of you, Ethel, and of our meeting again—cured me, when, perhaps, the doctor's doses failed. And now, Ethel,

poor though I am, broken in spirit, and crushed in hope—this hour, this moment, and these kisses, dearest, reward me for all, all—toil, danger, suffering, and hoping against hope itself!”

As he spoke he pressed Ethel Basset again to his breast in a long and passionate embrace, and a bright, happy, and lovely smile spread over the face of the young girl.

CHAPTER II.

LAUREL LODGE.

To a certain extent the conversation in the preceding chapter must have served to inform the reader of the relative positions and prospects of those whom, without much preamble, we have introduced—to wit, the hero and heroine of our story.

Morley Ashton was the only son of a once wealthy merchant, whose failure and death had left him well-nigh penniless, to push his fortune in the world as he best could. Thus, as agent of a Liverpool house, he had been, as he stated, broiling for the last three years on the western coast of Africa, with what success the reader has learned from his conversation with Ethel Basset, to whom he had now been engaged for four years.

Ethel was now somewhere about her twentieth year, and though her face was not, perhaps, of that kind which is termed strictly beautiful, it would be difficult to say wherein a defect could be traced.

Her features were regular, and, though somewhat pensive in expression, her occasionally sparkling and piquant smile relieved them from that insipidity which frequently is the characteristic of a perfectly regular face.

Though, in addition to singing, riding, and waltzing to perfection, she could play rather a good stroke at billiards, and make a good shot at the archery butts, her manner was gentle and graceful, her mind intelligent, and she improved on acquaintance, for few could converse with Ethel Basset for half an hour without being somehow convinced that she was lovely.

Her taste in dress was excellent, and one felt that from her little gloved hand, or, rather, from her smoothly-braided hair to the little heels of her kid boots, Ethel was a study.

Her mother's death had early inducted her into the cares

and mystery of housekeeping, and made her thoughtful perhaps, beyond her years.

Mr. Scriven Basset, her father, was a kind and warm-hearted, but somewhat easy-tempered man. In early life he had practised successfully as a barrister in London, where he had contracted a wealthy marriage. After this event he had retired to Acton-Rennel, and there, for the last eighteen years or so, his life had passed quietly and happily.

His tastes were elegant, but expensive; thus his villa of Laurel Lodge was fitted up in a style of no ordinary splendour, and to part with the elegancies by which he was surrounded would cost some pangs when the time came.

Since a pecuniary change had come upon his affairs, and as he had procured, by the friendship of the M.P. for Acton-Rennel, a legal colonial appointment, all his household goods must be scattered. He knew this, and that there was no help for it: save his dead wife's portrait, and a few equally dear "lares," all must "come to the hammer," as he phrased it, when he and his two girls sailed for their new home in the tropics.

He knew that poor Morley Ashton and his daughter, Ethel, had loved each other in early youth, when the prospects of the former were fair, and his "expectations" unexceptionable; and though reverses came which blasted these, and rendered a marriage inadvisable, strange to say he did not separate them.

This was but a part of his easy disposition, and he permitted them to correspond, in the hope that, by absence, their mutual regard would gradually die away, as the mere fancy of a boy and girl.

But fortune ordained it otherwise.

Had Morley come home with wealth (three years on the Bonny River will scarcely serve to acquire that), he could have had no objections to their marriage; but there would be many *now* that Morley had come home poor.

Mr. Basset knew, moreover, that Morley, as his last letter had informed Ethel, was to visit them at Laurel Lodge immediately on his return.

"Well, well," thought the easy Mr. Basset, "a few weeks will separate them hopelessly now, so the poor young folks may as well be left to bill and coo together in peace until we sail for the Mauritius, which will be three times as far off as the Bonny River."

This policy was dangerous, and somewhat questionable; but we shall see how it ended.

Proceeding slowly hand in hand, and while such thoughts as these passed through the mind of papa, who, reclining in his easy-chair, was still lingering over his wine and walnuts, watching dreamily the last flush of the sun, that shone down the dingles of Acton Chase, Morley and Miss Basset reached the end of the green lane, where a handsome white gate closed the avenue that led to Laurel Lodge.

It was long and shady ; a double row of giant laurels, from which the villa had its name, bordered the approach, and over these rose some venerable sycamores, on which the lazy rooks were croaking and cawing.

Laurel Lodge was a house of irregular proportions ; the oldest part having been built in the middle of the seventeenth century, had small latticed windows, with carved mullions of red sandstone. The modern additions had been built by Mr. Basset, and were lofty and elegant, with large windows, some of which opened to the gravelled walks of the garden.

There was a handsome Elizabethan porch, surmounted, as some thought, rather ostentatiously by the Basset arms, a shield having three bars wavy, supported by two unicorns, armed and collared ; and the pillars and arch of this porch, like the roof and clustered chimneys of the older part of the edifice, were covered with masses of dark ivy, fragrant honeysuckle, clematis, and brilliant scarlet-runners.

Through the vestibule beyond, with its tessellated floor and walls covered with fishing, riding, and shooting appurtenances—rods, nets, boots, whips, guns, and shot-belts—Ethel led Morley to the door of the well-remembered dining-room, where, as we have said, Mr. Basset was still lingering in the twilight over his full-bodied old port.

Though every feature of this comfortable English villa was known of old to Morley, after his three years' residence in a wigwam on the banks of the Bonny River, its aspect impressed him deeply now, and his eyes wandered rapidly over the furniture of carved walnut and marqueterie, inlaid with representations of game and fruit, the crimson velvet chairs, and old Rembrandt tables of quaint and beautiful designs, the buhl clock on the rich marble mantelpiece, the gorgeous vases of Sèvres and Dresden china, the ivory puzzles and Burmese idols, of which he had glimpses between the parted silk and damask curtains of the drawing-room windows.

Then there were the Brussels carpets, the grates that glittered like polished silver, the black wolf and dun deer skins, and the eight-light chandeliers of crystal and Venetian bronze, with armour, pictures, statuary, and rare books in

gorgeous bindings—in short, the *tout-ensemble* of Laurel Lodge, wherein taste, wealth, luxury, and comfort were all so rarely and singularly combined, formed to the mind of poor Morley a powerful contrast to the cabin of Tom Bartelot's 200-ton brig, and to the before-mentioned wigwam, with its roof of palm-leaves and trellised walls of reeds and bamboo cane, through which the mosquitos and the malaria came together by night.

"It is Morley, papa," said Ethel, as they entered; he has come by the very train we expected, and has walked all the way from Acton station."

"The express from Liverpool; but ah, my dear sir, it was not even quick enough for me. I would have come by telegraph if I could," said the young man, as Mr. Basset shook him warmly by the hand.

"Welcome back to England! welcome home, Morley!" said he. "Sit beside me, lad, and let me see how you look! Ring for wine and more glasses, Ethel. And so, after all your toil and danger, worldly matters have not prospered with you, eh?"

"No, sir," sighed the young man, with his eyes fixed tenderly on Ethel, who had flung her hat and parasol on the sofa, and seated herself beside him; "I have come back to England a poorer fellow than when I left it."

"I am deeply sorry for that, Morley—port or sherry? Under the sideboard are some Marcobrunner, Johannisberg, and Sauterne, too, I think—port you prefer?—then the bottle stands with you. Sorry for your sake, and the sake of others, to hear what you say."

As he spoke he did not glance at Ethel, who was filling Morley's glass; so she sighed and trembled, for it seemed, by his tone and manner, as if he still acknowledged the fact of her engagement with Morley Ashton, but considered all at an end now.

"Matters have not prospered with me either," said Mr. Basset, who was a healthy and florid-looking man, nearer fifty than forty, however, but with the dark hair already well seamed with grey; "quite the reverse," he continued, emphatically; "so that I cannot upbraid you with being on worse terms with fortune than myself. You have, of course, heard of all that has occurred?"

"Ethel has told me all," said Morley sadly.

"Ay, fortune is fickle, and was well portrayed as blind, and as Shakspeare has it:

"Will Fortune never come with both hands full,
But write her fair words still in foulest letters?"

She either gives a stomach and no food,—
Such are the poor in health ; or else a feast,
And takes away the stomach ; such are the rich,
That have abundance and enjoy it not.' "

" He can console himself with scraps from Shakspeare, while my heart is bursting," thought Morley.

" And so Ethel has told you all?" resumed Mr. Basset, cracking another walnut of the fruit which had followed a luxurious dinner.

" Yes, sir, and in doing so has wrung the soul within me."

" Oh, Morley," said Ethel, placing her ungloved hand kindly upon his, " do not talk so mournfully."

" Ay, ay, lad," said Mr. Basset, thinking most of himself, as, with his head on one side, one eye closed, and the other admiring the ruby colour of his wine as it shone between him and the flushed sky, " at my age, though I am not very old, but have many settled habits, it is hard to leave one's native country, and to set out with these tender girls on a long, rough voyage ; but needs must—you know the rest."

" And so Ethel and I meet again only to be separated for ever," exclaimed Morley, while he pressed her hand within his own, and in a tone so mournful that Mr. Basset, who, like every matter-of-fact Englishman, hated scenes, as they worried him, fidgeted in his chair, and said to Ethel :

" Where is Rose ? Has she not seen Mr. Ashton yet?"

" She is with the captain in the conservatory, I think."

Morley, who disliked the formality of being termed " Mr. Ashton," glanced at Ethel, and perceived that a blush was burning on her cheek.

" You did not tell me that you had a visitor," said he.

" We had matters of greater moment to think of, Morley, had we not?" asked Ethel anxiously.

" Besides, the captain is rather more than a visitor," observed Mr. Basset, laughing.

" More?" said Ashton, with a sickly smile.

" He has spent some few weeks with us," said Ethel.

" Weeks, Ethel?" exclaimed Mr. Basset. " Why, girl, they have run to months now. He is the son of one of my oldest and dearest friends—old Tom Hawkshaw, of Lincoln's Inn—and has seen a great deal of the world. He is a fine, free, rattling fellow, whom I am sure you will like ; at least, I hope so, as he proposes to follow, perhaps to go with, us to the Mauritius."

Morley felt his heart sink, he knew not why, at these words—or at what they imported.

"Has there been a game playing here of which I have been kept in ignorance?" thought he.

There was an instinctive fear or jealousy in his mind, and he dared scarcely to look at Ethel. When he did so there was a painful blush upon her cheek.

"Do not speak of the Mauritius, my dear sir," said he, in an agitated tone. "I cannot conceive or realise the idea of you all being anywhere but here—here at dear old Laurel Lodge."

"Never mind—time soothes all things. Fill your glass, Morley. The Mauritius possesses a splendid climate, though it is rather hot from November to April: and there the best of wine can be had almost duty free. Once we are there, who can say but I may find you a snug appointment, my boy, and Ethel shall write to acquaint you of it."

Now Mr. Basset had in reality no more idea at that moment of procuring any such post for Morley than of securing one for the personage who resides in the moon, but it suited him to say so at the time; and thus Morley, with a heart full of gratitude, exclaimed:

"Ah, how, sir—how shall I thank you?"

"By working hard and industriously at home in the meantime; by never shrinking from trouble, nor fearing aught that is onerous."

"Such, sir, has ever been my maxim and habit—yet what have they availed me?"

"With your business habits, your father's well-known name and connections in Liverpool, your intimate acquaintance with the west coast trade of Africa, you cannot be at a loss to push your way until you might join us. My friend the captain, as I have said, perhaps goes with us. Has Ethel told you that I am pledged to do something for *him*? But Heaven alone knows what will suit him; he is such an unsettled dog, and has been so long accustomed to wandering ways in California, and among scalp-hunters in Texas, the Rocky Mountains, and everywhere else."

All this sounded ill and unwelcome to Morley, and served to disturb him greatly.

His sallow cheek, long blanched by past illness, burned redly; his eyes were hot and sad in expression. As he drank another glass of port, he felt the crystal rattling on his teeth, and as Ethel watched him anxiously, her little hand stole lovingly into his, which closed tightly upon it.

He perceived that she had still his engagement ring on the proper finger, but another ring—a huge nugget-like affair, with a green stone—was there too!

CHAPTER III.

CRAMPLY HAWKSHAW.

BEFORE Morley had time to think or inquire—if, indeed, inquiry was necessary—concerning this trinket, a lovely, laughing girl of eighteen burst into the room, and kissed him playfully on each cheek.

“Rose,” he exclaimed, “Rose, how you have grown! The little girl I left behind has become quite a woman!”

“Why have you delayed so long, Rose?” said Ethel, almost with annoyance. “Did you not know who was here—that Morley had arrived?”

“No. If so, do you think I would have delayed?”

“Yet you have done so.”

“Oh, don’t be jealous,” replied Rose, laughing, though her answer unwittingly galled Morley, and annoyed Ethel more; “we were not flirting, for the captain was only telling me about the flowers of South America; and I merely amuse myself with him and Jack Page, when I can get no one else.”

Morley thought of the strange ring on Ethel’s finger, and as he caressed Rose’s hand, there arose some unpleasant forebodings in his mind; but at that moment, as lights were brought, and tea announced in the drawing-room, the gentleman whom they styled “captain” entered from the conservatory, throwing back therein the fag-end of his cigar.

Ethel hastened to introduce him to Morley as “Captain Cramply Hawkshaw, the son of papa’s old and valued friend.”

The captain bowed coldly to Morley, whom he scrutinised from head to foot in a cool and rather supercilious manner.

Hawkshaw was rather under than over the middle height, and possessed a tough and well-knit figure. He had rather a good air and bearing; but at times his manner was absurd and swaggering, and his features, though good and well cut, were decidedly sinister—so much so, that his eyes had in them occasionally an expression which, to a keen observer, was most forbidding.

Under his light grey sack coat he wore no waistcoat, but had his trousers girt by a Spanish sash; a tasselled smoking-cap, like an Egyptain tarboosh, was placed jauntily on his thick mass of curly dark hair. He rejoiced in a luxuriant

beard and pair of long whiskers, with which his moustaches mingled.

He interlarded his conversation somewhat profusely with digger terms, Spanish oaths, and Yankee military phrases, American interjections, and frequent allusions to bowie-knives and six-shooters, and a pair of these weapons always figured on his dressing-table.

In fact, the captain seemed a character, though scarcely worth studying ; but one that must frequently appear, more for evil than for good, in these pages.

At a glance, Morley perceived that he was somewhat of a swaggering fool—perhaps worse. He conceived an instinctive aversion for him—an aversion, however, that seemed to be quite mutual—and he marvelled by what idiosyncrasy of his nature Mr. Basset could tolerate, or propose to patronise, a guest whose bearing was so questionable, and whose presence was rendered so obnoxious to himself, by his too-evident partiality for Ethel. Nor was this emotion lessened when our hero perceived, that whenever he spoke, a covert sneer stole into the cunning eyes of the captain.

He had been an officer, it appeared, among the Texans, in the Partizan Rangers, or some such distinguished corps ; and like Gibbet, in the "Beau's Stratagem," he considered "captain" a good travelling name, and one that kept waiters, grooms, and even railway porters in order ; so he still adhered to his regimental rank in the Partizan Rangers, or true-blooded Six-shooters of Texas.

He talked of scalping Red Indians, and shooting Spanish picaroons, as if such were his daily amusement ; and when smoking out of doors, would squat on the grass in the mode peculiar to the Texan troopers, among whom he had undoubtedly become a deadly shot, and a good horseman—the only qualities he possessed.

"Papa," said Rose, while Ethel was officiating at the teurn, "I wish you to scold Captain Hawkshaw——"

"Why, what has he done now?—been burning your dog's nose with his cigar—smoking it in the drawing-room, or what?"

"He has been laughing at our loveliest azaleas, and saying they were only weeds."

"In Tennessee, my dear Miss Rose, in Tennessee," said the captain, with a deprecating grimace, while caressing his long whiskers ; "but your namesake, the rose itself, is perhaps deemed little better than a weed in some countries."

"Where you have been?" inquired Morley.

"But," continued Hawkshaw, without deigning to hear his question, "to me—one who has seen the luscious fruit and gorgeous flower-covered districts of Xalappa, and of Chilpansingo, in the *tierras tiempladas* of Mexico—there is nothing you can show in this tame England of yours that interests you."

"Ours," retorted Rose; "is it not yours too?"

"Nay, nay," said the captain, shaking his head and the tassel of his tarboosh together, "I am a cosmopolitan."

"And care nothing for your country?" said Morley.

"*Caramba!* as we say in Texas, I did so once; but the sun shines brighter in other lands than it does in England."

"You will never make me think so, captain," said Mr. Basset, pushing aside his tea-cup; "for even now my heart sinks with deep depression at the thought of leaving home."

"'Tis nothing when you are used to it, sir—positively nothing. However, you have comfortable diggings here, and some very pretty fixings, too," observed the captain, casting his eyes on the mirrors, the hangings, and vases of Sèvres and Dresden china which decorated the drawing-room; "and thus, perhaps, don't care much about sailing in search of 'fresh fields and pastures new,' eh, squire?—or judge, I suppose we should call you?"

"No, I shall leave my heart behind me in England—in dear old Acton-Rennel. But the sooner we are gone the better; for every day now seems to bind me more to the place where my happiest years have been spent," said Mr. Basset, whose eyes grew moist as his heart filled with the memory of the wife whom he had laid in the grave but three years before, and with whom Morley Ashton had been an especial favourite, for he was gentle and lovable, yet manly withal.

In her resting-place—under the old yew at Acton church—he felt that she was still near, and still his; but once away from England, the separation would seem complete indeed.

Half shaded and half lit by the drawing-room lights, Ethel's beauty seemed very striking. Tall and dark-eyed, there was something of great delicacy in her cast of features, over which, as we have said, a pensive shadow often rested; especially when her white eyelids and long, dark lashes were drooping.

She was a girl whose whole air and manner, expression of eye, and turn of thought, were the embodiment of refinement; thus the conversation and *brusquerie* of the digger captain were by no means suited to her taste.

On the other hand, Rose was somewhat of a brown-haired hoyden ; very lovely in her bursts of wild joy and laughter ; all smiles and rosy dimples, and full of waggish expressions, in which the quieter Ethel never indulged ; so she rather enjoyed the fanfaronades of Hawkshaw, and mimicked some of his idioms and Spanish exclamations with great success.

Tea over, and the piano opened, Morley hung fondly over Ethel, who ran her white fingers over the notes of an old and favourite air, which they had often sung together ; while the captain, with his feet planted apart on the rich hearthrug, was romancing, or to use his own phraseology, "bouncing away" about the Tierra Caliente, the mighty sierras of New Mexico, and so forth, to Mr. Basset, whose eyes were fixed on the embers that glowed in the bright steel grate, and whose thoughts were elsewhere.

"Your visitor seems quite at home here—a privileged man, in fact," said Morley. "You did not tell me this at first, Ethel," he added in a lower tone.

Ethel blushed, and replied :

"We have been so used to him that I quite forgot."

"So used—then he has been long here."

"Nearly three months."

"Three months ago, Ethel, I was lying in Tom Bartelot's cabin, off the Bonny River, in hourly expectation of death, and with little hope of being where I am to-night, by your side, dearest, and listening to that old air again. And he has been here three months?"

"Yes, ever since his return from California."

"Is he rich—this captain? What horse-marine corps is he captain of?" continued Morley in an angry whisper.

"Oh, Morley, hush! he is not rich, poor fellow!"

"Poor devil!" muttered Morley.

"But he has realised something ; I know not what; though he asserts that he has come back to us poorer than when he went away."

"To us," replied Morley, with growing displeasure, which he strove in vain to conceal. "Who is he?"

"A second cousin, or something of that kind, to papa, and the son of his old friend, Mr. Thomas Hawkshaw, of Lincoln's Inn. But why all these questions?" asked Ethel, looking her lover fully and fondly in the face.

Morley Ashton did not reply, for he felt an instinctive doubt and hatred of Hawkshaw—emotions that rose within his breast he scarcely knew why or wherefore ; but, as a Scottish poet has it :

“Men feel by instinct swift as light,
The presence of the foe,
Whom God has marked in after years
To strike the mortal blow !”

Hawkshaw, while talking apparently to Mr. Basset, had his keen and sinister eye fixed on the couple at the piano. They seemed plainly enough to indicate similar emotions in his breast, and to say :

“You are one too many in my diggings, Mr. Ashton. *Poco e poco*, I must get rid of you, my fine fellow, at whatever risk or cost !”

CHAPTER IV.

RIVALRY.

FOR a few days after Morley's arrival, he felt almost happy—happy in the society of Ethel, though the time when she would have to quit Laurel Lodge and sail from England—a time of painful, and it bade fair to be most hopeless, separation—hung like a black cloud on the horizon of their future, and, alas! that time was not far distant now.

In three days the air of his native England had begun to redden Morley's cheek, but his eyes were sad in expression, and his heart was at times oppressed by thoughts which even Ethel's smile failed to dispel.

We have said the season was spring, and the last days of April, the time of which Clare sang so sweetly in his “Shepherd's Calender.”

“With thee the swallow dares to come
And cool his sultry wing ;
And urged to seek his yearly home,
Thy suns the martin bring.

“Oh, lovely month, be leisure mine,
Thy yearly mate to be,
Though May-day scenes may lighter shine,
Their birth belongs to thee.”

All the old familiar places where Ethel and Morley had wandered hand in hand before, they revisited now together.

The old green lanes of the picturesque village of Acton-Rennel, which, with its quaint old tumble-down houses of white-washed brick, and the black oak beams that run through

their walls at every angle, its ivied porches and latticed windows, half hidden by wild roses and honeysuckles, is one of the prettiest in England, were wandered in again and again.

Then there was the ancient church, with its moss-covered Lyke-gate and sequestered graveyard; the stile near her mother's tomb, where they had plighted their troth, and split the sixpence which has already figured in our story; Acton Chine, a dreadful chasm in the cliffs which overhung the sea, where the brain grew giddy if the eye attempted to fathom its depth, where the sea-birds wheeled and screamed in mid-air, and where the boom of the breakers on the rocks below came faintly to the ear—all were visited again and again, and never were Morley and Ethel weary of rambling by the margin of glittering Acton Mere, where the snow-white swans "swim double, swan and shadow," or in Acton Chase, scheming and dreaming of a future all their own, when he would strive to rejoin her in the Mauritius, and fortune yet might smile upon them all.

They were too young, too loving, and too ardent to be without such hopes and day-dreams, though more than once Morley Ashton said :

"Oh, Ethel, I thought the time had gone for ever when I could lose myself in a world of my *own* creating."

They spent hours together by Cherrywood Hill and the Norman cross, where, according to old tradition, a Crusader, lord of Acton-Rennel, when returning from Jerusalem, had died of joy at the sight of his English home; but no place loved they more than stately Acton Chase.

This is the remains of one of those grand old English forests, where the Norman kings were wont to hunt of old, and where the marks of King John have been found on more than one of the old trees when cutting them down lately. The storms of a thousand years have scattered the heavy foliage of these old English oaks; but every summer their leaves are thick and heavy again, as in the days when the wild boars whetted their tusks upon their lower stems.

In long rows, trunk after trunk, gnarled and knotty, solemn, brown, and distorted, they stand within the chase, in distance stretching far away, all green with moss or grey with lichens, and with the long feathery fern, which shelters the timid deer, the fleet hare, and the brown rabbit; and where the golden pheasant lays her eggs, waving high around their venerable roots, some of which stretch far into the brooks and tarns, where the heron wades, and the wild duck swims.

In the centre of this chase stands one vast tree "the monarch of the wood," sturdy, old, and almost leafless now, for its trunk has been thunder-riven.

This is called the Shamble-oak, for thereon, when the lover of fair Rosamond came hither to hunt with the Norman lords of Acton-Rennel, they were wont to hang the slaughtered deer, ere it was roasted and washed down with Rhenish wine, in the old oak hall of Acton Manor, a ruin now, as Cromwell's cannon left it.

Every tree on which, Orlando-like, Morley had carved the name and initials of his mistress, was sought for again; every familiar spot was revisited, and Captain Hawkshaw found, to his rage and mortification, two emotions which he could not at all times skilfully conceal, that Morley was always with Ethel, while he was left to amuse Rose, who always teased or quizzed him, or with her companions, who seemed to dislike him, to play chess with Mr. Basset, to the enjoyment of a cheroot, or to his own society which no one envied less than himself.

Moreover, the farewell visits of friends, and entertainments provided for them, afforded Morley and Ethel many opportunities of being undisturbed together; and had it not been that the captain's self-esteem was wounded, and his inordinate pride hurt by the preference which Miss Basset showed for her old and affianced lover, Morley, he might have found plenty of consolation, for among the visitors at Laurel Lodge were some very attractive girls; but Hawkshaw's mode of making himself agreeable, even when most disposed to do so, seldom pleased.

There was something sinister in his keen eye, and a quaint *brusquerie* in his manner, that made ladies instinctively shrink from him.

"Pshaw—*caramba!*" said he, on one occasion; "it is very odd that I am always nervous when among crinolines and crape bonnets."

"Pray," asked Morley, with a disdainful smile, "how comes that to pass?"

"You forget the many years I have spent among Red Indian squaws and brown Mexican donzellas."

"Your nervousness should make you more choice in your expressions," said Lucy Page, a tall, grave friend of Ethel's, a handsome girl, with whom Hawkshaw was walking, as they were all promenading one evening, after tea, among the trees of Acton Chase.

"Though not much in the habit of receiving advice, I

shall hope to profit by yours, Miss Page," said Hawkshaw, bowing with a malevolent smile.

"Pardon me," continued Miss Page, colouring under the short veil of her round hat; "I do not presume to offer advice to so travelled a man; but, for all that, I know a very ugly word may be veiled in your favourite Spanish."

The captain laughed so loudly, that the young lady bit her lips with vexation, and Rose saucily inquired if he were vain of his teeth.

"I might be, if I had not seen yours, which the father of dentists and mother of pearl might envy," said he, with a mock reverential bow. "But we are sparring, it seems," he said, with a slight flush on his cheek, as Miss Page turned haughtily away and entered into conversation with Mr. Basset. But our officer of the Partizan Rangers was not to be easily put down, and to prove this, he began to whoop noisily at the cattle, which were browsing under the trees.

"Hah, demonio!" he exclaimed; "if I had a lasso here, ladies, I would show you how we loop the cattle in Texas. Many a wild bull I have overtaken with my horse at full gallop, and fairly tailed him."

"What may that be?" asked Rose Basset, who loved, as she said, "to draw the Texan warrior out."

"Cutting the poor animal's tail off, I suppose," suggested Miss Page.

"Not at all," said Hawkshaw, curtly.

"Then what is it, pray?" asked Ethel.

"Technically, it is catching him by the tail when at full speed, and slewing him round like a ship in stays; that is what we call 'tailing' in Texas."

"But to lasso?" began one of the ladies, to whom the captain's explanation was not very lucid.

"That is to catch Master Bull by casting a looped rope round his horns."

"Have you ever achieved this?" said Morley.

"I should think so—rather, and a great deal more," replied the captain, almost contemptuously. "I once caught one in mid-stream, when swimming the Arroya del Colorado, a salt arm of the sea, more than eighty yards broad, while a wild pampero (that is, a gale of wind, ladies) was rolling the waves in mountains up the bight; and with the same lasso, not long after, I caught a rascally picaroon, just about your size, Mr. Ashton, by the neck, and well-nigh garrotted him, when I was riding past at full gallop."

"And the result?" said Morley, disdaining to notice

something offensive in Hawkshaw's tone, when addressing him.

"Well, the result was mighty unpleasant for the poor devil of a picaroon," replied Hawkshaw, as the whole party rested themselves on the soft velvet grass of the lawn, when he began to amuse himself by tossing a clasp-knife of very ugly aspect among the buttercups, and skilfully decapitating one at every toss.

"Oh, pray tell us all about it!" exclaimed Rose, smiling brightly under her parasol, and drawing two very pretty feet, cased in bronze boots, close under her crinoline.

Hawkshaw seemed here to recall some real memory of his wild and wandering life, for a dark, savage, and malignant gleam came into his eyes, while a hectic flush crossed his weather-beaten cheek, and he began thus :

"I was travelling through the Barranca Secca, which lies between Xalappa and the Puebla de Perote, on the long, hot, dusty road which leads from Vera Cruz to Mexico.

"Though I had not a farthing in my pocket, and knew not how I was to procure a supper for myself or my horse on reaching Orizaba (for I had spent all my ready money), I was well mounted, and well armed, with a first-rate six-shooter, a bowie-knife, and carried, moreover, a lasso, for whatever might come to hand—to catch a stray *cavallo*, a wild bull, whip nuts from a tree, to loop in a chocolate-coloured *raterillo*, which means a thief, or, perhaps, a runaway nigger.

"The sun was setting behind the Cordilleras de los Ondes, when I entered a *quibrada*, as the Spaniards name it, a deep gully—all great adventures take place in ravines and defiles ; but I am more practical than most men, and so call things by their right names—so it was a gully in the mountains, worn, bored, and torn by the waterspouts and thunderstorms of ages ; but lofty trees that towered above the underwood of aloes and azaleas—azaleas to which yours are weeds, indeed, Rose—overshadowed it, and cast a gloom upon the road, which seemed to enter a species of sylvan tunnel. I took a hearty pull of aquadiente from the leathern *bota* at my saddle-bow, and lit a Manilla cheroot, to make the most of the 'shining hour.'

"This portion of the Barranca Secca had a particularly bad name as the haunt of robbers, and there was more than one wooden cross, covered with green creepers, and many a pile of stones by the wayside marking the lonely and unconsecrated grave of a bandit, who had been shot by the National

Guard of Orizaba, the soldiers of Santa Anna, long ago, or where the victim of the bandido's knife or rifle lay.

"Well, anxious to get through the gully, I was going at a fine rasping pace when I met a man, armed with a long rifle, and carrying a knife and brace of pistols in the red and yellow sash which girt up his blue cotton breeches. His tawny breast, feet, and legs, from the knees at least, were bare, and a sheepskin jacket, tied by a cocoa-nut cord, dangled over his right shoulder.

"I recognised him at once, as Zuares Barradas, a young man, whom, with his brother Pedro, I had met at the gold-diggings on the Feather River, and with whom I had travelled from the seaport of San Diego, when they had both deserted their ship to try their fortunes at the mines.

"What—capitano, is it you?" he exclaimed, 'welcome to the Barranca Secca.'

"*Muchos gracias, senor,*' said I, having some anxiety to be on good terms with the fellow.

"How far do you go to-night?"

"To Orizaba.'

"A light, if you please, senor—I have lost all my lucifers.'

"He was a sallow, dark-skinned half-blood; that is, half Mexican, half Spaniard, and wholly devil—partly seaman, partly landsman, and wholly pirate in spirit."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Rose, "were you not terrified to be alone with such a person in such a place? I am sure I should have screamed and died of fright."

Hawkshaw smiled and continued:

"His eyes, black and sparkling, told of a cunning equal to that of the serpent in the Scripture, and of a ferocity that death alone could tame. He had neither beard or moustache, for he was too young; but his raven hair hung in masses beside his olive cheeks, and he had silver rings in his ears.

"Such was Zuares Barradas, who, like his brother, Pedro, feared nothing on earth, and respected nothing in heaven."

"Was, you say—is he now dead?" asked Ethel.

"You shall hear; but such fellows don't die easily, Miss Basset, be assured.

"Are you looking for game?" I asked.

"*Por vida del demonio,* that I am!" said he, with a savage grin, 'but it is neither the elk, the jaguar, or the vinado I seek.'

"What then, *amigo mio?*"

"You must know," began the young rascal, 'that Pedro and I have spent all our money—every duro, yes, every

quartil—he at the wineshop, and I on Katarina, the barmaid at the Pasada de Todos Santos, and that other jade with the wheel—what's her name?—Fortune has since been as unkind to me as Katarina, with whom I parted on bad terms.'

"'You quarrelled?' said I.

"Zuares looked keenly into the gully, listened a moment, and then resumed his bantering style.

"'When last I visited the posada, Katarina had on a very handsome crucifix and pair of silver bracelets, so I took them off, saying, "Senora, a beautiful bosom, and such pretty hands as yours, require no adornment. Permit me to relieve you of these baubles—they are absurd!" She was about to permit herself the luxury of screaming, but I touched my knife and quieted her. Since then I have been left to shift for myself, as my father and mother too have turned their venerable backs upon me.'

"'I have not a coin, Zuares,' said I, with growing alarm, lest the underwood of aloes might be full of such evil weeds as the younger Barradas. 'Surely you mean not to rob me?'

"'Of course not; you are a *bueno camarada*. But as Pedro and I came through the Barranca Secca we heard that an old woman of the Puebla de Perote, who sold some cattle at Orizaba, will pass this way about nightfall. She is veiled, and has the blessed duros concealed among her hair, for fear of thieves—ha! ha! for fear of thieves,' he continued, pirouetting about, and slapping the butt of his musket. 'Pedro watches one part of the road and I the other, so the money we shall have—(what use has an old woman for it?)—even should we take her scalp with it.'

"'Perhaps her hair may be false,' said I.

"'Then I shall be saved some trouble.'

"'She may resist, and make an outcry,' said I.

"'Then so much the worse for her,' said the young fellow, with a fierce scowl, as he placed his hand under his sheepskin jacket into the Spanish sash, where his long knife was stuck.

"'In this place none would hear her,' said I.

"'There you mistake,' he replied. 'There are more than forty free bandidos lurking in the Barranca, and Pedro and I have no wish to lose the prize we have tracked so far. Maldito, see, 'tis she!' he exclaimed, as a dark female figure became visible about a hundred yards off, traversing an eminence, over which the road went, and thence descended into a hollow. 'Till I return, stay where you are, and beware how you follow me!'

"With what thoughts, you may imagine, I sat on my horse, afraid to interfere in the matter. Many a rifle might be covering me from among the wood of aloes and mangrove trees; so what was the old woman to me, that I should risk a bullet-hole in my skin to save her duros?"

"Zuares Barradas descended into the hollow, which was dark almost as night, so thick were the trees overhead, though the setting sun gilded brightly their topmost branches.

"Suddenly I heard a shriek ring through the rocky gully, and Zuares rushed out, with what appeared to be a bundle in his hand; but it was a bundle from which the blood was trickling among the summer dust of the roadway.

"She resisted, and fought and bit like a tigercat, *la muger muy vieja* (the old beldame),' he exclaimed, with an oath, 'so I have cut off her head to save time.'

"Kneeling down, with the bloody knife in his teeth, he proceeded hastily to unroll the veil, and the long grizzled hair of his victim, to secure the money, which was concealed among the thick plaitings of the latter.

"While doing this, I observed that he carefully kept the dead face *downwards*, as if he lacked the courage to look upon it.

"Thirty silver duros, with the eagle and thunderbolt, soon glittered in his hands; but he dropped them, as if they had been red-hot, and threw up his arms in dismay, on finding among the folds of the torn veil a little piece of cow's horn, tipped with silver—an amulet worn by women as a protection against the *mal de ojo*, or evil eye.

"On beholding this, a shudder passed over his brown and muscular frame, and turning up the dead face, now livid, white and horrible, with fallen jaw, and glazed eyes, he exclaimed, in a piercing and terrible voice:

"*Mia madre! mia madre!*"

"He had decapitated his own mother!"

CHAPTER V.

SUSPICION.

WHILE the ladies listened breathlessly, and uttered proper exclamations of horror, the narrator, with their permission, lighted a cigar, and, squatting on the ground in the Texan mode, continued his story.

"Zuares grovelled in the dust, so dismounting, I picked

up the blood-spotted dollars, and was in the act of pocketing them, when a musket flashed in the dark, leafy hollow, a bullet whizzed past my left ear, and——”

“What! did you actually take the poor woman’s dollars?” exclaimed Morley.

“Of course,” replied Hawkshaw coolly; “would you have had me leave them on the mountain road?”

“Yes; perhaps no; but——”

“*Caramba!*” said Hawkshaw angrily, but using his favourite Spanish interjection, “in such a country as that, I was not such a thundering muff.”

“Go on, please. What followed, pray?” asked Ethel.

“I took up the money that lay on the road. You, Mr. Ashton, may call it robbery, perhaps—granted. But what do the best men in England, yearly, at the Oaks, the Derby, and elsewhere? Oh, there is no such thing as robbery on the turf, of course. Well, where was I?”

“A musket was fired at you,” said Rose.

“Exactly, and then I saw Pedro Barradas, a vast and bulky Spanish seaman, whom, unfortunately, I knew too well, advancing towards me, with his Albacete knife tied by a handkerchief bayonet-wise to the muzzle of his piece. He was a ferocious fellow, and I knew that, when he and Zuares were so far inland, rapine and robbery were their sole objects and means of subsistence.

“These brothers once carried off a poor boy, the son of a widow, who resided near the Laguna d’Alvarado, and kept him among their companions in the mountains, till his mother was well-nigh distracted. A ransom of fifty duros was required by a padre, whom they sent as their messenger. She sent twenty—all she could borrow or scrape together; but, instead of her boy, she received back one of his ears, with a message that other parts of him, perhaps his *cabeza* (head) would follow, if the fifty duros were not forthcoming.

“The money was collected and intrusted to the padre, who, unknown to himself, was followed by twenty soldiers, sent by the commandant of Orizaba, with special orders to shoot the Barradas and their companions.

“Pedro saw these men approaching, and, believing that the padre had betrayed them, he pocketed the dollars, and with his stiletto stabbed the bearer and the boy to the heart, and fled to the woods of the Rio Blanco.

“Such was the character of the fellow who now advanced against me.

“I sprang upon my horse, unwound my lasso, took the

slack of it in my right hand, and, swinging the loop round my head, rode full at him, as I could not encounter him on foot, or escape his aim on horseback, if I permitted him again to reload.

"Shrinking back with an oath and a cry, he twice eluded me; but on the third cast I looped him round the neck, drew the lasso over my right shoulder, stooped hard over my horse's mane, and spurring onward, dragged him headlong over the dusty road, for more than two hundred yards.

"His shrieks were soon stifled, and when I reined up, the blood was gushing from his mouth; his limbs were quivering, and his face was blackened by strangulation; but he was not dead, however.

"Dismounting, I released the loop of the lasso from his bare and muscular throat, and then rode off at full speed, leaving the two brothers, and the mother, whom, in their cruelty and ignorance, they had tracked and destroyed, all lying on the mountain path together. I never looked behind me, nor did I draw bridle till reaching Orizaba, which lies sixty miles westward of Vera Cruz, where I put up at the Posada de Todos Santos (or All Saints) about midnight, when the volcano of Citlaltepétel, which rises from amid forests of vast extent, and covered with perpetual snows, was flaming in the sky eighteen thousand feet above me.

"And there, in Orizaba, the dueros sent me by fortune in the Barranca Secco, procured me a good supper, a bottle of vino-blanco, well iced, from the hands of the fair Katarina—a most enchanting fluid it proved, after such a devil of a hot ride. Then I went to bed, and blessed myself that I could sleep with an easier conscience than either Zuarez or Pedro Barradas."

This pleasant little episode in the captain's wandering Mexican life made the listeners regard each other, and him especially, with some surprise.

The girls looked at him blankly under their parasols and through the short black veils of their little round hats, for the actual horror of the story impressed them less than a certain cool gusto in Hawkshaw's manner, combined with his grim, matter-of-fact mode of relating it; but this story of the Barradas was only one of many such as he related incidentally from time to time.

"It is no easy matter," says Goethe, "for one man to understand another, even if he bring the best disposition with him. What, then, is to be expected if he bring the smallest *prejudice*?"

Aware that he was a rival—a cunning, a daring, and so far as could be gleaned from his conversation, an unscrupulous one, Morley, as may well be supposed, was strongly prejudiced against Hawkshaw, and felt certain that, under a considerable amount of bombast and external *bonhomie*, he concealed a character that was alike mean, fierce, and avaricious; but “every man,” says the writer just quoted, “has something in his nature which, were he to reveal it, would make us hate him.”

“And such creatures as these were your companions in South America?” exclaimed Ethel Basset, almost in a shudder.

“Do not say so,” replied Hawkshaw, who, perhaps, feared that he had been too communicative; “but travelling, in such countries especially, acquaints one with strange bed-fellows and strange boon companions, too. But enough of the Barradas, who have likely been shot or garrotted long ago. How delightful is this soft grass under the shady trees. By Jove! we are better here than in some places where I have been; the plains of Vera Cruz, for instance, among hot sand, mosquito flies, that sting like wasps, prickly pears, and herds of wild bisons; but, with all its charms, this is a cold-blooded country, this England of yours, Mr. Morley, and ill-suited to such a spirit as mine.”

“Is it not your country as well as ours?” asked Morley coldly.

“I scolded him for speaking thus the other night, when he laughed at my azaleas,” said Rose, shaking her parasol at the offender.

“Well, I was certainly raised here, which is my misfortune, and not my fault; but I have been so long where the bowie-knife or revolver, the hatchet or rifle settle all quarrels, disputes, jealousies, or impertinent interferences,” he continued with an unfathomable smile, “that I can ill tolerate the system——”

“Of a well-regulated police,” interrupted Morley, closing the captain’s sentence with a meaning smile, that was not unlike his own.

“*Caramba!*—yes; and, then, on the wild prairies, while one has a good musket and ammunition, we are so careless of money.”

“The money of others especially,” said Ethel.

Hawkshaw bit his nether lip; but observed with a smile:

“Be assured, my dear Miss Basset, that when in South

America I did not squander my cash among tradesmen, or ruin myself by paying tailors and bootmakers."

What Hawkshaw meant by this was not very apparent; but when the little party resumed their promenade among the grand old trees of Acton Chase, Morley gradually drew Ethel somewhat apart from the rest. After being silent some time:

"I entertain a horror of that fellow!" said he; "and I am astonished that your father tolerates or patronises him. Excuse me, dear Ethel; but I cannot help saying so."

"You mean Mr. Hawkshaw?"

"Pray don't omit his rank of captain—yes, Hawkshaw—a most decided aversion for him."

"Though I don't like him, Morley, I am sorry to hear this," said Ethel gently, while colouring a very little.

"Why?"

"He is such a favourite with papa—for his father's sake, I grant you, rather than his own—for old Mr. Hawkshaw was, indeed, a great and valued friend to papa, when early in life he much required one."

"Listen, Ethel, and, dearest, do be candid with me—has Hawkshaw ever spoken of love to you?"

"Frequently, before you came," said Ethel, smiling.

"D—— his impudence!"

"Oh, fie, Morley!" said she, folding her hands upon his arm, and looking up smilingly in his face.

"And I must quietly endure his presence here, after this most annoying admission from you!"

"There is something worse still you may have to endure," said Ethel sadly; "the voyage on which he may too probably accompany us."

Morley felt a keen pang in his breast at these words; he glanced, too, at the strange ring on Ethel's finger, which an emotion of pride or pique had hitherto prevented him from referring to.

"It seems preposterous, Ethel," he exclaimed, "that this man should propose to accompany you, while I, your affianced lover, am left behind; and, by Heaven, it shall not be so!"

"Dearest Morley!"

"Poor as I am, Ethel, I am not so poor that I cannot pay my way to the Mauritius—in the same ship, too, and I shall write this very night to London about it!"

"Oh, Morley—oh, what happiness!"

"I shall take a berth in the fore-castle bunks, rather than

be left behind. You have now at your breast a flower that Hawkshaw gave you."

"A flower!"

"Yes, a wild rose."

"I had quite forgotten it; but let this show you how it is valued," said Ethel, laughing, as she threw it on the ground, and placed thereon a pretty little foot, cased in a kid boot, with a heel of very military aspect.

"My own dear Ethel!" exclaimed Morley, pressing to his heart her hand and arm, which leant so lovingly and confidently on his, "I have one thing more to ask you about—this queer-looking ring with the green stone!"

"Well?"

"Is it a gift of his?"

"Yes; when he first came to Laurel Lodge he begged me to accept of it, saying that it was found in Mexico, at some battle fought by Juarez, at a place with an unpronounceable name."

"It was more likely found as he found those dollars about which he told us some time ago."

"Mercy! do you think so?"

"I am inclined to think the worst of him!" said Morley angrily and emphatically.

"Oh! Morley, do not let prejudice blind you, and do not condescend to be jealous of him," said Ethel imploringly; "I would return the ring, but that the act might affront him, giving, moreover, to its first acceptance a significance, an air of importance, I have no wish should be attached to it. Do you understand me, Morley, dear? Then he is papa's friend and guest."

Morley was pale with concealed annoyance.

Ethel perceived this, and that he was distressed by the double prospect of a rival living in the same house with her, and embittering the few days that intervened before their long—alas! it might be final—separation.

With her eyes full of tears, she drew Hawkshaw's gift from her finger, and gave it to Morley, begging him to return it to the donor at a fitting time.

This was, to say the least of it, a most unwise request, with which he readily enough undertook to comply, and secured the ring in his portemonnaie, as they rejoined their friends, who were now gathered round the shamble oak in the centre of the chase.

When Morley reflected on the story told by Hawkshaw, it seemed that there must have existed between him and those

lawless brothers, Pedro and Zuares Barradas, a greater intimacy than he had admitted in the narrative ; and he became convinced that, under a nonchalant and swaggering air, his rival concealed a real spirit of latent ferocity, with a dark character that had been inured to cruelty and promptitude to vengeance, when such could be taken with safety and secrecy ; so Morley Ashton resolved, but somewhat vainly, as we shall show, to be on his guard against him.

CHAPTER VI.

FOR THE LAST TIME.

MR. SCRIVEN BASSET had made all his arrangements for departing to his legal charge in the distant Isle of France.

He had secured passages for himself, his two daughters, and an old and valued servant, Nance, or, as she was more frequently termed, Nurse Folgate, in the *Hermione*, a fine ship of 500 tons burden, which was advertised to sail from the London Docks in fourteen days from the time we now write of.

Meanwhile, poor Morley resolved to make the most of the present, and endeavoured to shut his eyes to the future ; but while striving to be blindfolded, he knew that this future, with all its separation and sorrow, its fears, and, alas ! its doubts, must ensue.

There were times when Morley thought of asking Ethel to bind herself to him in writing ; but he soon thrust the idea aside as mistrusting and melodramatic. There were other occasions when he actually thought of imploring her to contract a stronger tie, by consenting to a secret marriage ; but it seemed an abuse of her kind and easy father's hospitality, and a violation of the trust reposed in him, and this, too, he abandoned, resolving to trust to Ethel's faith, to patience, and to time.

Poor Morley ! He knew how dark and lonely seemed the three years of their past separation, and he felt keenly how much more lonely and dark would be the vague years of that which was to follow.

Then the pictures he drew of this long severance from Ethel—the voyage by sea for so many weeks, so many months ; a residence in another land, with strangers, rich and attractive, perhaps, about her—a severance during which she would be hourly exposed to the attentions and addresses of

a rival so cunning, so artful, so enterprising, and, in some respects, not so unpleasing, as Cramply Hawkshaw, filled him with intense apprehension, anxiety, and disgust.

"Why should I not go with her?" thought he suddenly. "The money which will enable me to do so I shall only squander here in England, it may be, without avail, while there, in the Mauritius, a new sphere will be open to me."

Like all impulsive people, on this new idea he acted at once. He wrote to the agents for the *Hermione* to secure a cabin passage for himself, a measure which Captain Hawkshaw, for some reason as yet unknown, had omitted to take, though Mr. Basset had always more than half indicated that he was to accompany him abroad.

Now, when it was announced and definitely settled at Laurel Lodge that Morley was to go, the spite and disappointment of the ex-digger and *soi-disant* captain of Texan Rangers was ill-concealed indeed; for, doubtless, he considered it no joke to lose all chance of a lovely bride, with a fair prospect of getting—excuse us for using his own phraseology—"into comfortable diggings," under the wing of a colonial official.

After Morley wrote to London, two days elapsed without an answer coming from the agents, and the anxious dread of Ethel and himself, lest there was no more accommodation in the *Hermione*, was so great that he vowed he would go before the mast rather than be left behind.

Already Laurel Lodge had a somewhat dismantled aspect. Bookshelves were emptied in the library; the walls were denuded of pictures in dining-room and drawing-rooms; choice plants in the conservatory and rare flowers in the garden had been given away to the Pages and other old friends.

Chests, bales, and boxes, corded, labelled, and all very "outward bound" in aspect, encumbered all the hall and vestibule, indicating but too surely that the Bassets were on the eve of departure; and now came their last Sunday in the old village church.

Morley Ashton and Captain Hawkshaw were in the same pew with Mr. Basset's family.

The curate who officiated was an old friend of theirs, and his voice faltered as he besought the prayers of the congregation for those who were about to leave them, and set forth on a long and perilous journey.

Then Ethel felt her timid heart tremble, and Rose sobbed under her veil, while many a moistened eye turned kindly to

the Bassets' pew ; while a smile curled the moustached lip of the Texan Ranger, as much as to say :

“ Speak to me of danger—pah !”

The solemnity of the place, and the soft familiar music of the choir, and the old organ pealing from its shadowy loft, soothed the grief and agitation of Ethel's heart, though a keen pang shot through it, when she reflected, that when again the sacred melody rang through that ancient church, only seven days hence, she might perhaps be separated from Morley, and most assuredly would be ploughing the sea, while he—ah ! he might come here, where they had last sat side by side, and feel himself alone—so terribly alone !

Some such thoughts were swelling in the breast of Morley Ashton, for his eyes were turned on her with a deep and unfathomable expression of tenderness, while hers was bent upon her prayer-book—it might be on vacancy.

There was a wonderful charm in those snowy lids and downcast lashes, so dark, so silky, and in the pure, pale loveliness of the whole face of Ethel, especially when contrasted with the rounder and rosier beauty of her younger sister.

Over the high oak pews, quaint with old carvings, dates, and monograms ; the marble tablets, where lay the men of yesterday ; the time-worn tombs of those whose rusted helmets, spurs, and gloves of mail, erst worn in many a field against the Scot and Gaul, now hung over them amidst dust and cobwebs ; over the painted windows, through which the sunshine poured its rays of many colours ; over the bowed heads of the hushed congregation ; over the altar, before the rail of which, during many a day-dream in Africa, he had knelt in fancy, the bridegroom of Ethel Basset ;—over all these the eye of Morley wandered, but to fall, again and again, on her soft and downcast face, her sweet mouth and long lashes, and on her little tremulous hand, cased in its pale kid glove, that touched his from time to time, as they read from the same prayer-book.

“ No answer yet from London !” was ever in his mind, and keenly in anticipation he felt the nervous dread of being severed from her after all.

But now the morning service was ended ; the organ was pealing its farewell notes from the dark recesses of the vaulted loft, and the Bassets rose up to depart.

In that old pew the people of the parish had seen their heads bowed in prayer when Ethel and Rose had nestled beside their mother, now at rest in the adjacent graveyard—nestled with their shining heads bent over the same volume,

and now they were on the verge of womanhood. Ere evil fortune came upon them, so good had those girls been to the sick, the poor and ailing, that a crowd of village matrons, the mothers of the blooming Dollys and hobnailed Chawbacons, blessed them with hands outstretched ; and so deeply moved were all present, that when they passed down the aisle and issued—from amid those flakes of many-coloured light that fell on oaken pew and carved pillar—through the deep old gothic porch, into the grassy churchyard, where the tombstones that stand so thickly were shining in the sun that streamed in his glory down the far extent of Acton Chase, poor Ethel burst into a passion of tears, and sobbed aloud.

“ Oh, Morley !—oh, papa !” she exclaimed ; “ how sad it is to do anything, and know that we are doing it for the last time !”

Morley pressed the hand that lay upon his arm.

“ I have had the same emotion in my heart all day, Ethel, dear,” said he, “ with a sadness for which I cannot account. I have no one now to cling to but you. I never had a brother or sister. My father died, as you know, before I went far away to Africa, and now he sleeps by my mother’s side, in yonder old churchyard, among the Denbigh hills ; and their graves, of all our English ground the dearest spot to me, I shall never look on more.”

“ My poor Morley !” said Ethel, her eyes sparkling through tears of affection.

“ Oh, how plainly still I can draw their faces and forms, as my mind goes back quickly and feverishly at times over the past days of infancy, when their kind eyes smiled on me under our old roof. How different seems that early home and parental care, which to a child are as a fortress and tower of strength, when compared to——”

“ Our diggings in manhood, eh ?” interrupted Hawkshaw, who had joined them unperceived, and thus cut short Morley’s intended peroration.

The latter repressed his rising wrath with difficulty. Jealousy of Hawkshaw, perhaps, he had not ; but that Ethel should be annoyed by the society of such a man was repugnant to him. But how was he to act ?

He could not quarrel with Hawkshaw while they both shared, for a brief period now, the hospitality of Mr. Basset ; and to retire from Laurel Lodge would but serve to leave him in full possession of the field, and to embitter the last few days they would all spend together in good old England, and in the home of their early loves and best associations.

With Morley, Ethel and Rose had paid a visit for the last time to all their old haunts and rambles. At Acton Chase, now almost in the full foliage of an early summer ; at Acton Chine, that frightful cliff which overhangs the sea ; at the moss-grown Norman cross ; on Cherrywood Hill, where in childhood they had often sought in vain, among the long grass and the pink bells of the foxglove, for the elves and fairies of whom they had read so much in nursery lore.

They paid a last visit to the ivy-clad cottages of all their old pensioners and favourites in the village, to each and all of whom they gave some little memento ; to the churchyard stile ; to every place connected with the memory of their past happiness ; and, lastly, to their mother's grave the sisters paid a visit that was sad and solemn.

Some daisies which grew there Ethel gathered and placed in her breast, and with something of the same spirit which often inspires the poor expatriated Highland emigrant, she made up a little packet of English earth to take with her to her new home beyond the sea.

She sadly viewed their garden, where a blush of summer roses, of crimson daisies, gorgeous lilacs, and sweetbriar had now replaced the earlier flowers of spring, the yellow pansies, the purple auriculas, the golden crocuses, the pale white snow-drop, and she wondered if such things grew in the distant Isle of France.

It was on her return alone from a farewell visit in the village, that she was overtaken by Hawkshaw, when something like an unpleasant crisis took place in the relations which had subsequently existed between them. At that time Morley was absent, having walked to the Acton railway station, for the purpose of telegraphing along the London and North-Western line, to the agents of the *Hermione*, for intelligence regarding his berth and passage.

CHAPTER VII.

THE REJECTION.

HAWKSHAW had been rambling in Acton Chase alone, when he met Ethel, or overtook her, near the great old shamble oak, which we have before mentioned.

He had been pondering on the state of his affairs and finances, which were far from flourishing. His pocket-

money was almost gone, and for a time he had been reduced to clay pipes and cheap cubas. He was without the means, in fact, of travelling so far as the Mauritius; and Mr. Basset—good-natured, easy-tempered Mr. Basset—whose character had no particular point save perfect amiability, though half intending or adopting the idea that Cramply, the son of his “old friend Tom Hawkshaw, of Lincoln’s Inn,” should accompany him abroad, had never made an offer of means to enable him to do so; thus our Texan Ranger was somewhat at his wit’s end on the evening in question—an evening of which, at that moment, he little foresaw the end; and he rambled under the stately oaks of the ancient chase with a cloudy expression of eye, though still wearing the melodramatic scarlet cap and Spanish sash, which had excited considerable speculation among the rustic hobnails of Acton-Rennel.

Hawkshaw had imbibed rather too much of Mr. Basset’s Amontillado after dinner; this, with some champagne, of which he had partaken freely during that meal, and a glass of brandy, imbibed as a corrective after it, rendered him somewhat blind alike to consequences and to foregone conclusions. Thus, on suddenly meeting Ethel in such a secluded place, he resolved on speaking more openly of his love to her.

Had Mrs. Basset survived at this period of our story, there can be little doubt that she would speedily have relieved Ethel from the presence and advances of such a lover, despite her husband’s reverence for the memory of “old Tom Hawkshaw, of Lincoln’s Inn.” As the matter stood now, the village gossips at the tap of the “Royal Oak,” the blacksmith’s forge, and other rustic resorts, had long since settled the whole affair. Ethel was the affianced of Morley Ashton, and poor little Rose was assigned to “the captain with the red thingumbob cap.”

“‘Fortune favours the brave;’ ‘nothing venture, nothing have.’ They are two old saws; but I must keep them in view, nevertheless,” thought Hawkshaw, as he threw away his cigar and joined Ethel Basset, on whose cheek there was a charming flush, for the May evening was warm. She had been walking fast, to learn what tidings the electric wire had for her and Morley; and the last farewell of an old cottager, who dwelt by the skirts of the chase, had agitated her.

The captain opened the trenches by some of the remarks usually made about the weather, and the beauty of the

evening; then he adverted to his good fortune in meeting her, especially in such a place; how much he had longed for an opportunity of speaking with her alone, as his future happiness or misery would be the result—an opportunity that had not occurred for some time (since Morley Ashton's arrival he might have said), and so, after sundry awkward pauses, he proceeded to declare his regard, his esteem, his passion for Ethel.

She listened to him with considerable annoyance and concern, but barely slackened her pace as he spoke.

The extreme self-possession, the quiet manner, the cool and gentle aspect of Ethel, baffled Hawkshaw, and irritated him so much that there were times when in his self-communings he actually felt a doubt whether he loved or—*hated* her.

And now, while he spoke of love, volubly, but yet with agitation, she continued to fit on a lemon-coloured kid glove, with provoking care and accuracy, on her small, pretty hand, and seemed to be fully more occupied with it than with him.

The very movements of her hands, the white parting of her smooth, dark hair—all betokened a placidity which, as he said mentally, “served to worry him.” Yet Ethel was greatly agitated, though Hawkshaw's eye had not the acuteness, nor had he the refinement to be aware of it.

“I am deeply grieved to hear all this, Captain Hawkshaw,” said she; “for already you must be assured,” she added in a tremulous voice—“assured that I cannot love you in return.”

“Now, Ethel, call me Hawkshaw, Cramply, which you will, or anything that you please that is not formal, but do not, for Heaven's sake, speak so coldly. And so—and so it is quite impossible?”

“Quite,” she said in a low voice.

“Wherefore? Am I so hideous?”

“Far from it.”

Hawkshaw was aware of her undisguised preference for Morley Ashton; and though he knew, or feared what her reply would be, the wine he had imbibed, or some strange emotion that stirred within his breast, made him urge the hopeless matter still.

“Ethel,” said he softly, but through his clenched teeth, and while his cheek grew pale with suppressed passion, “you will, perhaps, have the kindness to explain?”

Trembling with excitement and annoyance, and while tears started to her eyes, she replied:

“Explain, sir! Why should I be called upon to explain?”

You know well that since I was seventeen I have been engaged—have loved another.”

“At seventeen, interesting age, a girl is in the first flush of womanhood,” began Hawkshaw, in his sneering tone; “fresh in feeling and tender in sensibility; the consequence is that, of a necessity, she falls in love with the first fellow, be he good, bad, or indifferent, who presents himself.”

“But I did not fall in love, as you phrase it, with the first who presented himself, any more than I am likely to do with the *last*,” replied Ethel, with an air that now was one of unconcealed annoyance. “My sister Rose is a girl whom all allow to be charming, and is as much admired as any in the county, and she has passed seventeen, your rubicon, your girlish equator, your ideal line, without ‘falling in love’ with any one——”

“That you know of, Miss Basset,” said Hawkshaw sharply.

“Rose has no secrets from me, sir!”

“Do not let us quarrel, for Heaven’s sake. I apologise.”

“How tiresome—how impertinent! and yet I dare not tell Morley,” sighed Ethel, in her heart, as she continued to walk very fast; but Laurel Lodge was a long way off, and the sunlit waste of the chase stretched for, at least, a mile before them yet.

Bitterly did she now repent having entrusted Morley with the ring, as it might lead to some unseemly quarrel between him and Hawkshaw; on this occasion she had an admirable opportunity for returning it personally. After a pause:

“With all this fancied attachment to your first love, I do not think you very romantic, Ethel,” said Hawkshaw.

“You are right, sir; indeed I am quite matter-of-fact.”

“*Caramba!* it is too bad for a charming girl of two-and-twenty to be so.”

“What right have you to deem me charming, or to assume my age?” asked Ethel angrily, and with her eyes now full of tears, which the short veil of her little hat concealed.

“I can no more help deeming you so than help admiring the sunshine. But, ah, Ethel, if I had you where I have been—where the volcanic mountains of the Sierra Nevada look down on the valley of the Colorado, I could teach you, or perhaps infuse into your impulsive nature something of the fire, the romance—the glorious romance—of Spanish South America.”

“Thank you,” replied Ethel, relieved and laughing, when she found Hawkshaw was indulging in one of his platitudes; “but I would rather learn it here, amid a sweet English

landscape like this old wooded chase, than among flaming volcanos, tawny savages, stinging mosquitos, and your old friends the Barradas."

"The Barradas!" repeated Hawkshaw, starting, as his eyes flashed with a gleam of malevolence and alarm; his brows knit, his hands twitched spasmodically, and he gave Ethel a keen glance of inquiry; for she had unwittingly touched some hidden spring, some secret sore—or it might be sorrow. For a moment he looked as if he could have sprang upon her; but he laughed, and said, with an evident effort at being jocular: "To return to the subject—this love of thrilling, blushing, and susceptible seventeen, which deprives me of you, occurred five years ago?"

"And since then I have found no reason to change my mind. Here is the gate of Miss Page's house, where I wish to call. Good-evening, captain. Her brother Jack will see me home."

Ethel bowed, left him, and closed the iron gate.

She was, in reality, full of intense anxiety to learn what tidings Morley had received by the telegraph from London; but being bored and worried by Hawkshaw's cool and impudent love-making, she took this opportunity of quitting him, which, in her nervous haste, she did perhaps, rather too abruptly.

A shower of tears relieved her; but Hawkshaw, as he watched her figure flitting up the Pages' avenue of lilacs, balsam, poplars, and giant hollyhocks, bit his nether lip till the blood nearly came, and his sinister eyes emitted one of their most malevolent gleams.

"Curse her!" he muttered hoarsely and deeply, "curse her! She spoke of the Barradas, too! But I shall crush her proud heart yet—crush it like a rotten *castano*!"

Then he turned away towards the seashore, with vengeance burning in his heart, and had not proceeded a quarter of a mile before he encountered Morley Ashton, perhaps the last person in the world he could have wished to meet at such a time, and when in such a bitter mood.

CHAPTER VIII.

MORLEY AND HAWKSHAW.

A FIERCE and panther-like spirit swelled up in the breast of Hawkshaw on seeing his fortunate rival approach. He felt a

strong desire to strangle him, and thus, by one determined stroke, remove him from his path, and gain revenge on Ethel, too!

He had more than once conceived the idea, in his wilder and more bitter moods, of giving Morley a *quietus* of strychnine, or putting a loaded revolver in his hand, so that it might go off conveniently, and, to all appearance, unawares; but coroners' inquests often brought unpleasant things to light, and Morley was completely master of that ticklish firearm, the "six-shooter," as well as himself, and our Texan captain was far too politic to risk his valuable neck, in committing an open outrage on the Queen's highway in England, whatever he may have done in his well-beloved Mexico, among the wild inhabitants of which he had learned the art—no small one certainly—of veiling alike every purpose, love, hate, or fear, under a bland and smiling exterior, when it suited his purpose to do so.

The man he hated most on earth was Morley Ashton, yet he walked up to him frankly, with a smile in his deep eyes, and on his cruel lip (though his moustache concealed that), his right hand extended, and a cigar-case in his left—

"A lovely evening, Ashton," said he. "Had a pleasant walk? Have a weed—eh? Try a cigar?"

"Thank you—I don't smoke cubas."

"Do you prefer a regalia?"

"Thank you, I have some here."

"*Caramba!* I have smoked them two feet long ere this."

"In Texas?"

"Yes."

"I thought so," replied Morley, laughing. He was in excellent spirits. A telegram to Acton-Rennel had announced that his cabin passage to the Isle of France had been secured on board the *Hermione*, immediately on receipt of his mandate, and added, that a letter, duly announcing the circumstance, had been posted for Laurel Lodge.

"I never received it, Hawkshaw—odd, isn't it?" said Morley; "but it matters nothing now."

Hawkshaw gave a bitter smile unnoticed. No wonder that Morley had never received it, as his quondam friend had found the letter referred to in Mr. Basset's post-bag, which hung in the hall, and, after making himself master of the contents, had quietly put it in the fire, thinking by delay to create confusion, and, perhaps, stultify Morley's intentions altogether.

In his joy, honest, good-hearted Morley felt blandly dis-

posed even to Hawkshaw, of whom he had such a constitutional mistrust. He had now an excellent opportunity for returning the ring which Ethel (whom Hawkshaw, incidentally, assured him was from home) had so unwisely entrusted to him ; but in the height of his own satisfaction, he felt loath to mortify his luckless rival, and so delayed the matter for a time, while, smoking their cigars, they walked together slowly, side by side, up the hill, towards the rocks that overhung the sea and border on the Vale of Acton.

"And so, old boy," said Morley to the silent and brooding Hawkshaw, "I am to go with our dear friends, the Bassets, after all."

"And what follows?"

"Of course, I shall have to look about me for some employment the moment we land, because I would rather die than be dependent on any man ; but when I have the new judge's influence to second my exertions, something suitable and jolly will be sure to turn up."

"Ah—yes," accorded the other, smoking vigorously.

"Then, I shall have all the joy of the voyage with"—Ethel, he had almost said—"with my old friends ; the voyage through those very waters I so recently traversed on my half-hopeless homeward journey—a most miserable dog in my own estimation."

Morley, who, in the exuberance of his joy, began to whistle "A Life on the Ocean Wave," seemed to commune with himself rather than Hawkshaw, whose sinister visage at this moment presented somewhat of a picture as he listened.

"Like you, friend Ashton," said he, "I have failed to climb

" 'The steep ascent where fortune frowns afar.'

But I have learnt to fling a bowie-knife, point foremost, with deadly effect, and to handle a six-shooter ditto, damme—yes, and that is something."

Had Morley looked at Hawkshaw as he spoke, he would have seen a fierce glitter in his usually cunning eyes, betokening mischief.

"Well," he resumed, "any place is better than this conventional England. One of the greatest annoyances to me is the state of society in it ; so you are wise to squat elsewhere."

"Indeed ! How?" asked Morley, watching his cigar smoke as it curled away in the breeze that came from the sea, whose breakers they could now hear bursting on the rocks.

“ Because that state compels us, as if we wore a vizard—a mask—to conceal our suspicions, our loves, and our hatreds—yes, Mr. Ashton, still more especially our *hatreds*—under a suave and cold-blooded exterior.”

“ The result of good-breeding, I presume ? ”

“ The result of cursed conventionality, I call it. The stronger the hate, too often, the brighter and softer is the smile that conceals it. *Maladette!* 'Tis not so in some of the sunny lands where I have been, and where a little homicide, now and then, is considered but a casual occurrence.”

The captain was in what Morley and Mr. Basset were wont to term one of his “ bitter and bouncing moods ”—moods which rather amused them ; so, as this was scarcely a moment in which to proffer the ring, Morley lit another cigar, and to put off the time until he could meet Ethel, strolled on till they reached the summit of the cliffs, from whence could be seen the far extent of the dark blue sea, that stretched away to the south-west, with the sails that dotted it shining red, rather than white, in the ruddy light of the setting sun. There, too, was visible the smoke of more than one steamer, rolling far astern, like a long and fading pennant on the sky.

So the rivals continued to ramble on in no very companionable mood, for Morley was happy and abstracted, while Hawkshaw was bitter and quarrelsome, till the deep hoarse booming of the breakers announced that they were close to Acton Chine, towards which, as if by silent and tacit consent, they proceeded.

The evening was lovely, and its calm beauty increased as the sun set and twilight stole on.

With the shrill practical whistle of an occasional locomotive on the London and North-Western line, there came on the breath of the soft west wind the more poetical tinkling of the wagon-bells from the dusty highway, in the green vale far down below ; and now, through the placid air rang joyously the evening chime from the broad, low Norman spire of Acton church, the solid outline of which stood defined and dark against the flush of the saffron sky beyond.

And with the breeze that wafted the sound came the fragrant perfume of the ripening fields, their warmth and fertility, as if it had stolen “ o'er a bed of violets.” Sunk in deepening shadow now, green Acton Chase, with all its great oaks blending in a mass, stretched far away in the distance to the foot of the uplands.

Acton Chine—the reader may perhaps have seen it—is a

seam or chasm in the rocks, rising to the height of four hundred feet or more, sheer from the sea, whose waves for ever roar, toil, and boil in snow-white foam against its base.

Standing where Morley and Hawkshaw did, on the evening in question, one might say with Edgar, but perhaps more truly than he did of Dover :

“ How fearful
And dizzy 'tis, to cast one's eyes so low !
The crows and choughs, that wing the midway air,
Show scarce so large as beetles
. . . . The murmuring surge,
That on the unnumbered idle pebbles chafes,
Cannot be heard so high. I'll look no more,
Lest my brain turn, and the deficient sight
Topple down headlong.”

There, too, as at Dover, on the dark face of those rocks, the fine green tufts of the samphire grow. The waves outside the chine are white as snow with foam and fury, while within the water is calm, deep, and dark as those of a far-sunk well.

Above, around, and below, the sea-birds wheel and scream, for the clefts and crannies of the rocks are full of their nests. And here, in explanation, we may add that chine is an old Anglo-Norman word, derived from *echine*—a gash or rent ; and these chasms are so named in some parts of England, particularly about the Isle of Wight, where we find Compton Chine, Brook Chine, and the Black Gang Chine.

Morley peeped over into the awful profundity below, and then shrank back instinctively, with an emotion of inexpressible alarm and awe—it seemed so vast, so terrible !

Retiring, he seated himself on the verge of the giddy cliff and removed his hat, that the sea-breeze might play on his hot and flushed forehead. Cool and grateful, it refreshed, soothed, and calmed him.

Impressed by the beauty of the scene and of the evening, a calm joy pervaded Morley's heart, and he prayed a voiceless prayer to God to strengthen him for his destiny.

What put prayer into his head at such a time ?

The scene was grandly terrible on one side, and softly serene on the other ; but Morley was familiar with both.

Was it present happiness, or a solemn foreboding of future woe, that filled his soul with pious thoughts ?

Morley himself could not tell. He thought of the future ; and none can foresee what is in the womb of Time.

To be separated from Ethel—ah! there was no chance of that now; but Hawkshaw—that cunning and hateful Cramply Hawkshaw—for some brief space would hover about her still!

What of that? The broad waters of the mighty sea on which he looked, and whose breakers boiled against the rocks four hundred feet below him—the sea from which a red moon, round and vast as a chariot-wheel, was rising—would be around him and Ethel, and this man Hawkshaw would be left behind.

While these thoughts occurred to Morley, he opened his portemonnaie, and drew forth the ring he had promised to return.

At that moment Hawkshaw, who was seated behind him, crept near, with a visage pale, damp, and distorted by malevolence, and with a fiendish glare in his eye.

About an hour after this, the captain was seen leisurely proceeding along the road to Laurel Lodge.

He was alone!

CHAPTER IX.

ALARM.

DARKNESS had set in, and candles had been lighted for an hour nearly, when Hawkshaw entered the now half-dismantled drawing-room of Laurel Lodge.

Rose was idling over the piano; Ethel was seated near the unremoved tea equipage, and Mr. Basset was busy among some papers in his escritoire. Hawkshaw, for reasons of his own, dared not encounter the pale, inquiring face of Ethel.

“Have you seen anything of Mr. Ashton?” asked her father, looking up, with one glance at Hawkshaw, and another at the clock on the mantelpiece. “It is past nine. He was only going to the railway station, and has not yet returned. His absence is most singular.”

Hawkshaw hesitated, and looked at his watch with a confused air, as he muttered:

“Past nine—yes, ten minutes.”

“He was seen to pass the gate with you,” said Ethel.

“With me?” said Hawkshaw, starting.

“Yes.”

"By whom?" he asked, with some asperity.

"Nance Folgate," said Rose.

"Ah—true, yes—we took a turn together; and when I saw him last he was going towards the chine."

"The chine!" exclaimed the girls together, in a tone of surprise that was not unmingled with alarm.

"The chine, at this hour!" repeated Mr. Basset.

"It was eight then; and he said he intended to enjoy a quiet weed along the cliffs."

"Most strange!" said Ethel; "when he had news of importance to communicate to me."

"He cannot be long now. I returned without him, as I felt odd—giddy; the regalias I sometimes smoke here don't agree with me. I used to get such prime ones in Mexico."

"You look pale—absolutely ill," said Mr. Basset; "have some wine. What is the matter?"

"Thanks," replied Hawkshaw, almost tottering into a chair, and tossing his red cap aside.

"The last bottle of our Cliquot is on the sideboard."

The cork was soon cut, and Hawkshaw nearly filled a crystal rummer with the foaming champagne, of which he drank thirstily. As he did so, his hand trembled, and the vessel was heard to rattle against his teeth.

Whence this unusual emotion, which did not escape the anxious eyes of Ethel.

"Oh, Heaven!" thought she in her heart, "if he should have quarrelled with Morley! His manner is so excited, so strange, something unpleasant—terrible—must have happened."

Time passed slowly.

Half-past nine struck, then ten, but there was no appearance of Morley. Ethel watched at the windows which opened to the lawn; she listened and lingered at the front door. Then Rose and she ventured to the foot of the avenue, now lighted by a clear, cold moon, and gazed down the long green lane, in which she had first met him on his return; but all was still, not a footfall was heard, nor aught but the dew dropping from the leaves.

Far into the darkness and silence stretched the vista of that long and shady lane, so famed for its wild roses in summer, its filberts and black brambleberries in autumn, its scarlet hips and haws in frosty winter—a real old English lane.

A sound breaks the impressive silence—it is the distant clock of the village church striking the hour of eleven.

Anon twelve struck, and no Morley came.

Ethel wept aloud. Mr. Basset now became seriously alarmed, and knowing how dangerous was the chine, and indeed, how much so were all the cliffs along the adjacent coast, he closely questioned Hawkshaw (who had now become more composed) as to when, where, and how he had last seen Morley, and his story never varied—that they had separated at the pathway which ascended upwards from the old London road to Acton Chine; that Ashton was in high spirits, having had a most satisfactory telegram from town, and that the speaker, when looking back, had last seen the outline of his figure between the earth and the sky on the summit of the rocks above the chine.

“He must have fallen and hurt himself—broken a bone—perhaps,” suggested Mr. Basset, rising, and proposing to start.

“Oh, for mercy’s sake—papa, papa !” began Ethel.

“Let us go forth to search—I am at your service !” said Hawkshaw.

“Nance Folgate, summon the gardener; let us get lanterns—a rope, a pole or two, so as to be ready for any emergency.”

Pale, trembling, faint, and in tears with apprehension and vague fears of some impending disaster, Ethel would have accompanied them, but for the opposition made by her father and Hawkshaw; and with sickening anxiety, she saw them depart, knowing that some hours must necessarily elapse before they could bring intelligence that might relieve her agony or crush her heart for ever.

Muffled in cloaks and shawls, she and Rose, with old Nance Folgate, lingered at the end of the avenue, so long as the lantern lights were visible; and hour after hour, till dawn was drawing near, did they wait, trembling with every respiration, and listening in an agony of expectation to every sound, till the shades of night began to pass away.

When Mr. Basset, Hawkshaw, and the gardener set out, a little after twelve, the night had become dark—unusually so for the season—cloudy and windy.

They traversed the road leading to that portion of the cliffs on which Hawkshaw averred he had last seen Morley Ashton lingering in the twilight.

Hallooing from time to time, as they continued to ascend the pathway to the shore, they pushed on rapidly, yet pausing ever and anon to listen; but there came no response on the gusts of wind that occasionally swept past them.

The clock of Acton church in the valley below struck the

hour of two, when they reached the summit of the cliffs, when weird and wild was the scene around them. Masses of cloud, like dark floating palls, were hurrying across the heavens; the stars between them shone out clear and brightly; the ocean, that stretched in distance far away, and blended with the sky, was flecked with foam, for there was a gale coming on from the seaward, and the boom of the hurrying waves as they rolled in white surf against the rock-bound coast, and mingled their roar with the bellowing wind in that deep and awful chasm, *the chine*, was terrifically grand and impressive, especially at such an hour.

Disturbed by the lantern-lights, and the voices of the three searchers, the wild sea-birds screamed and wheeled about in flocks.

The soft close turf grew to the very verge of the shore and wall-like cliff, and as the searchers proceeded along the giddy summit, seeking for traces of feet and hallooing from time to time, the utmost caution was necessary for their own safety.

Gradually they drew near the chine.

"Hallo—what is this?" exclaimed Mr. Basset, as he trod on something; "a hat—and near it, a kid glove."

They picked them up, and recognised Morley's light grey "wide-awake," and a glove supposed to be his, all uncertainty about the first-mentioned article being ended by their perceiving his name written on the lining thereof.

Proceeding with greater care, a little farther on they found his cigar-case, and a few feet below, near the edge of the cliff, the ends of two half-used cigars.

"I told you he was enjoying a quiet weed," said Hawkshaw.

Mr. Basset and the gardener made no reply; but with eyes and lanterns close to the ground, were breathlessly examining several footmarks impressed in the soft gravelly soil and sea grass about the mouth of the chine.

"For Heaven's sake, take care, sir," exclaimed the gardener, whom the scene, the place, the hour, and the awful booming of the black sea in the profundity four hundred feet below, appalled. "But look here, sir," he added almost immediately; "oh, sir, look here!"

Two deep ruts in the gravel, as if formed by a man's foot slipping downwards, and two places from which the grass had been recently torn away by hands that had clutched them evidently in despair, showed but too plainly and too terribly that some one had fallen over there.

"Look here, captain—look here!" continued the excited gardener.

Hawkshaw was pale as death, and he drew back with an irrepressible shudder.

"Oh, heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Basset, "poor Ethel!—he has fallen over here, and must have perished—most miserably perished!"

"Nothing could save him, sir," said the gardener, in a low voice; "he would be drowned, if he was not dead before he reached the water."

After lingering hopelessly for a time, as if loath to accept the fact of such a sudden calamity, they began to descend from the chine, and slowly and sorrowfully retraced their steps to Laurel Lodge, to increase by their story the alarm, dismay, and grief which already reigned there.

* * * * *

In vain were descriptions of Morley Ashton's person and dress circulated in the local papers, in vain were they distributed among the rural police, fishermen, and coastguard, by Mr. Basset, during the few days that remained before he left England.

In vain were telegrams despatched along the coast, north and south (at Mr. Basset's expense), by Hawkshaw, who made himself most singularly and kindly active; no trace could be found of the missing one; and after three days had elapsed, there remained not a shadow of a doubt that he had been drowned by falling or being thrown over the cliff of the chine. The London detectives who examined the spot were suspicious enough to aver the latter, from the traces they found, and, in their opinion, Mr. Basset and Hawkshaw, the latter most unwillingly, ultimately found themselves compelled to concur.

CHAPTER X.

POOR ETHEL.

THE day that followed the return of Mr. Basset and Hawkshaw from the perilous exploration of Acton Chine was one of dreadful suffering for poor Ethel.

Kind old Nance Folgate had forced the girls to retire to bed as dawn was breaking; but no sleep closed the eyes of Ethel Basset.

Morning came—a bright May morning—and still no word

of Morley ; for she could not realise as yet the idea, the dread conviction, of his death—that he had indeed perished so miserably.

Oh ! was this the world of yesterday ?

Her sister, Rose, weary with watching overnight, was now asleep. Happy Rose, who could gain oblivion in slumber. Ethel quitted her restless bed, opened the window, and looked forth into the sunny morning.

There was still the garden, with its trees and flowers, the first rays of the sun shining through the conservatory, a distant glimpse of the village church through a long vista of oaks, and the blue sea beyond. There, in the distance, she could trace the road that wound over the uplands towards that fatal chine—the road he must have pursued but yesterday. There also—but tears, hot and blinding, welled up in her eyes, and she nestled again beside her sleeping and unconscious sister.

“Gone ! Morley gone—Morley dead—Morley drowned !”

These words seemed ever on her lips, written in the air before her, to be whispered in her ears and in her heart, while fancy drew an agonising picture of his fall from the dreadful cliff into the yawning profundity below, where he would be tossed and dashed upon the rocks, till his poor, uncoffined remains were chafed to pieces by the waves.

As the lagging day drew on, she did not quit her bed ; but, after a time, total prostration of mind and body enabled her to sleep soundly and deeply, with her aching head pillowed on the bosom of Rose ; while her father, with Hawkshaw and others, pursued a hopeless and fruitless search for the missing man.

This slumber lasted little more than an hour, and waking brought her back to misery—a misery that flashed upon her vividly, keenly, and suddenly, calling all her half-dormant faculties into instant life and action.

It was indeed coming back to agony.

Vainly did Rose speak to her of hope, that it might not have been he whom Hawkshaw had watched proceeding towards the chine, and that the half-smoked cigars might not have been his.

“But the hat, with his name written in it, and the glove—his glove, Rose ; see where I sewed it for him yesterday—only yesterday !” she would exclaim, while pressing it to her lips as she sat up in bed, with her dark hair all dishevelled about her white and polished shoulders, pale, worn, and crushed by an anguish there was no alleviating—for the loss

of the poor dear heart, who had loved her so truly and so tenderly.

When re-examined by day, the verge of the chine, by the abrasion of the soil, bore conclusive evidence that a short struggle had taken place, and that some one had fallen or been pushed over there. A few drops of blood were detected on the stones ; but of this circumstance Ethel was not informed.

“Eat something, Miss Ethel—a bit of cake ; take a little tea, a glass of wine, or anything ; you must, darling, you must !” said old Nance Folgate, pillowing her favourite’s head on her breast, towards the close of this most dreadful day.

Ethel silently declined, for the smallest crumb would have choked her ; but grief is thirsty, so she drank the wine and water with gratitude, or rather permitted Rose to pour it between her pale and passive lips.

Then a shower of tears followed, and she moaned and sobbed aloud, and heavily. Another night followed, another day dawned ; but no hope dawned with it, and no tidings came.

The first shock over, there settled on the mind and soul of Ethel a deep and settled grief. She ceased to weep, save when alone. For a time she was reckless of the future, or viewed it with sullen indifference or composure, none knew which. She cared not how soon they quitted Laurel Lodge now, nor how soon she saw the shores of England fade from view, though she thought, with a shudder, of the ocean which she knew must have entombed the corpse of him she loved so long and well.

And Cramply Hawkshaw—how did he comport himself during this painful crisis? Quietly, earnestly, full of apparent solicitude, ready in suggestion and active in inquiry. He remained mostly with Rose ; but when Ethel appeared on the evening of the second day in the dining-room, he was ready, with hand and arm, to attend her politely, and silently.

She entered Morley’s bedroom, now empty of its tenant. She flung herself upon the couch in an agony of grief, for the place seemed full of his presence, and his beloved form appeared to rise up embodied before her.

There were his travelling-bag ; his telescope and flask, his hair-brushes, a stray glove or so, and a miniature of herself, which had been the poor fellow’s only solace when far away from her in Africa. There were other mementoes of the beloved one she would never see more ; he whose poor remains, if they were not lying at the foot of that dreadful chine, were

being, perhaps, swept away to sea—that sea which, at times, she hoped she might not live to traverse.

Here prostrate on the couch she was found by Rose and Nance Folgate, who conveyed her out, and locked the door.

This event, by the confusion and anxiety it created, delayed the departure of the Bassets from Laurel Lodge for a week longer.

There were times when Ethel wished that she might die, though she shrank from the idea of being separated from her father and sister, and from not sharing their perilous journey; but her mother's grave under the close-clipped grass looked so calm and peaceful in the sunshine of the old English churchyard, that she almost longed to be laid by her side. However, as some one says, "Grief rivets the chain of our life instead of breaking it." So Ethel did not die; but she fell into a state of languid apathy, which caused her father and sister the most serious apprehension.

There were other times, when dreadful thoughts occurred to Ethel—thoughts that came to her mind unbidden, and that she dared express to none; but she could not help associating the mysterious and terrible calamity which had befallen Morley with the idea of Hawkshaw, his rival.

She remembered the unusual and unnatural pallor of his cheek, and his strange excitement on the eventful night; how he complained of illness; how thirstily he drank of the champagne; and how his hand shook so that the crystal which contained the wine rattled nervously against his teeth.

The thought of his story of the Barranco Secco; of his having too surely associated in California, and elsewhere, with such men as Pedro and Zuares Barradas; and the remembrance of many episodes of his Mexican life, which he had incidentally related, and at which she and Rose had been wont to laugh, made her shudder now, she knew not why!

She perceived, too, that Hawkshaw wore his own ring once more, so Morley Ashton must have formally returned it to him on that fatal evening.

Prior to Morley's final arrangement to accompany them, Ethel had schooled her little heart to bear the separation consequent on their anticipated sea voyage and change of home, contemplating it as a sorrow that might have a happy end when brighter fortune smiled upon them all; but now she had lost him by a separation that would endure while life lasted.

The slight tinge of colour which her delicate cheek usually

wore faded completely away. Her eyes lost their brilliant and calm expression, her lips their wonted smile, her spirits all their buoyancy.

Mr. Basset, we have said, saw this with alarm, and by every means in his power hastened to break up his household, and leave Acton-Rennel.

His daughter's thoughts were with the dead ; but still the living, and the duties of life, claimed her care. One cannot live in the world and not be of it ; thus, one of her last days spent at pleasant Laurel Lodge was occupied in paying farewell visits—supported between Rose and Hawkshaw—to her old pensioners and dependents in the thatched cottages among those lovely green lanes that ere long were to know her footsteps no more, and these old people mingled their blessings with tearful hopes of her happiness and long life in the new home to which she was about to depart.

On the tenth day after Morley's disappearance she found herself, with her father, Rose, Hawkshaw, and old Nurse Folgate, seated in a first-class carriage, speeding along the London and North-Western line towards the metropolis.

Laurel Lodge had long since vanished, with its whole locality.

Steeped in summer haze, the landscape flew past like the wind ; but Ethel was listless. To her it seemed that the purpose of life, the joy of existence, the romance of love, and the charm of youth, had all gone for ever.

Hawkshaw was seated opposite to her. She lowered her veil to conceal her face ; he held the last number of *Punch* well up to conceal his.

As Morley had disappeared thus, and beyond all trace, and as his berth was secured in their ship, the *Hermione*, which was to sail for the Isle of France as soon as her cargo was all hoisted in, Hawkshaw availed himself of the circumstance to go in his place ; by which means this most enterprising Texan officer secured his passage free.

CHAPTER XI.

DARKNESS MADE LIGHT.

WE last left Morley Ashton and Hawkshaw seated near the verge of Acton Chine.

The former was extracting from his portemonnaie the ring

which Ethel Basset had so unwisely commissioned him to return, and he remained with it in his hand for a minute or two, forming in his own mind the least offensive mode of tendering it. At that time the chimes of the church of Acton-Rennel rung out joyously their closing peal, and the sound, together with the beauty of the evening, the softness of the wooded landscape on one hand, and the wild grandeur of the surf-beaten rocks on the other, were not without a most soothing influence on the somewhat poetic and imaginative temperament of Morley, who reflected on the shortness of the time he would be permitted to look on that familiar scene, and the changes that must take place ere—if ever—he saw it again.

He said something of this kind to Hawkshaw, who was alternately silent or nervously garrulous, adding with a sad smile :

“ I never hear the chimes of old Acton ringing over the woodlands, without thinking of the lines :

“ ‘ Those evening bells, those evening bells,
How many a tale their music tells,
Of youth, of home, and native clime,
When last I heard their soothing chime.’ ”

And then the scenery here about is so glorious, and so thoroughly English in its character and fertility !”

“ Bah ! you don’t call this scenery, do you ?” asked Hawkshaw brusquely.

“ Is it not charming ?”

“ May be so to you ; but to me, who have hunted, scouted, and trapped over the mighty sierras which divide Texas from New Mexico—sierras covered to their cloud-clapped summits with forests of oak, pine, and cedar, and all alive with wild horses and cattle; or to me, who have seen the yet denser woods out of which the Arkansas and Trinidad rivers come roaring to the sea, your mild, Dutch-looking, English landscape is no more than a rat-ranche would be if compared to St. Paul’s Cathedral !”

“ It must be somewhat dangerous, a land teeming with wild horses and cattle ?” said Morley, to change the subject, and smiling, as he lit a fresh cigar.

“ Dangerous ? *Caramba !* I rather calculate it is !”

“ How ?” asked Morley carelessly.

“ In those mountain ranges are wild trappers, and lawless bandidos, like those Barradas I told you of one evening—do you remember ?”

"Perfectly."

"Fellows of all colours—white, black, and brown, yellow, and copper-coloured—who may be off with your purse and scalp before you know where you are. Then there are bears, jaguars, buffaloes, panthers, wolves, foxes, and alligators. I was nearly gobbled up by one when bathing in the Red River. Immortal smash! I had a close run for it, and only kept him off by splashing and kicking like a sunfish in a breeze."

After a pause—

"I wish we had the ladies here," said Morley; "the evening is so lovely—the sunset is so rich."

"Ay—our Ethel is romantic, very!" observed Hawkshaw; "she rather likes 'Thaddeus of Warsaw,' and copies verses in a hot-pressed album; sighs often when alone, no doubt, and always ties the ribbons of her bonnet in a true-lover's knot."

Morley looked fixedly at the speaker, for the whole speech, and the phrase "our Ethel," displeased him.

"Mr. Hawkshaw," said he gravely, "there is something of a sneer in your tone, which I do not understand."

"Sneer—not at all. Do you imagine that I would sneer at one so charming as our friend, Miss Basset—one whom we mutually admire so much?" replied Hawkshaw; but as he spoke the fire of secret hate mingled in his eye with that of the admiration, we cannot term it love, he bore for Ethel.

"Apropos of Miss Basset," said Morley, now careless whether he offended or not, "I have here a ring of yours, Captain Hawkshaw, which she commissioned me to return to you, as, on reflection, she cannot think of depriving you of so interesting a relic of your Mexican campaigns."

"Thank you," replied Hawkshaw, with a quiet stare, as he took the ring from Morley and placed it on one of his fingers, even his bushy moustache failing to conceal the fierce quiver of his upper lip; "I received it at a ball, from the eldest daughter of General Santa Anna, and so can well afford to receive it back from a daughter of old Scriven Basset."

This was the third or fourth history of the ring Morley had heard; but he only smiled in silence.

"You think you have done your duty," resumed the captain, as the resolution to quarrel became strong in his breast, so strong that he cared not to repress it; "but I reckon, friend Ashton, that you are slightly up a tree, as the Yankees say."

"Sir, I do not understand you," said Morley.

"I am not so vernal as to fail in perceiving that you are awfully spooney upon Miss Basset."

"If I am to construe your slang into meaning that I love her, you are quite right," replied Morley coldly, as he rose up.

"But you cannot think of marrying her, even if old Basset be donkey enough to let you!"

"Captain Hawkshaw!"

"For one who can scarcely float himself, it is thankless work to take a sinking craft in tow," continued the captain, whose phrases were quite as often nautical as Mexican.

"Sir, you are impertinent."

"*Caramba!* not at all—but truthful—only truthful," replied Hawkshaw, with a studied insolence of manner, as he continued to knock the ashes off his cigar, so that they flew all over Morley's face. "If I had you in Mexico, I would give you advice more seriously; as it is, in this tame, stupid land of good order, coroners' inquests, rural police, and city blue-bottles, I must content myself with what I have said."

"Stand back, sir, and permit me to pass you!" said Morley haughtily, as he found that, on rising, he was unpleasantly near the verge of the rocks, and that Hawkshaw, with a dark and dangerous gleam in his eyes, stood menacingly between him and the safer portion of the edge.

It was at that moment that, unexpectedly as a star falls or light flashes, a diabolical idea occurred to Hawkshaw, just as if a fiend, unseen, was at his ear to whisper and to urge him on.

A sudden silence seemed to fill the air—to pervade the land and sea. He ceased to hear the roar of the waves in the chine below, or the screaming of the wild sea-birds in mid air. A clamorous ferocity—a terrible anxiety, seemed to possess his whole soul.

He cast a hasty glance around him; not a person was near, and no eye was upon them, save One in heaven, and that dread eye he forgot. He gave the unsuspecting Morley a dreadful blow with his clenched hand, and then a violent push. The victim staggered backward, reeled forward, and as he fell, clutched wildly at the turf which fringed the edge of the rocks.

"Oh Heaven!" burst from his lips; "Hawkshaw—you cannot—you dare not mean this! Save me—Ethel!"

The pieces of turf he clutched so desperately gave way, and without a sound he vanished into the awful profundity below!

Hawkshaw lingered a moment by the fatal spot, for in that moment all his senses were paralysed. His breath, his sight, and hearing were gone, and he felt as one who had ceased to live.

Then he glanced carefully, fearfully, and stealthily around, to assure himself again that the dreadful deed he had committed was unseen by mortal eyes, and anon, turning, he proceeded rapidly to descend the winding pathway from the chine, and then sought the road to Laurel Lodge.

The minutes spent in descending seemed to be so many hours. His feet felt as if glued to the dusty path, and his knees trembled under him. Before he reached the highway the fierce fever of his blood had cooled, though his heart still beat wildly, and his temples throbbed painfully.

There was a revulsion of feeling now, and he began to wish the cruel deed undone. It was an act so tremendous, so fearful to be perpetrated among civilised people, that it appalled him more than he could have expected, though he had witnessed, yes, and acted in many a deed of cruelty and bloodshed, in climes where the law, unless it were Lynch law, was unknown even in name.

The sun had set, and the sombre shadows of evening were deepening on the land and sea.

Hawkshaw walked hurriedly, taking a great circuit, that the perturbation of his spirits might subside a little before he presented himself at Laurel Lodge; but the throbbing of his temples, and the leaping of his heart, continued the same as he hastened on; and now as the twilight deepened, the trees and shadows began to take strange and threatening forms, and ever before him he seemed to see the last despairing glance of Morley's eyes, and in his ears to hear the rending of the turf as it gave way, with the awful sound of the poor victim's voice, as with the terror of a dreadful death in his soul, he so vainly sought the pitiless destroyer to save him.

In the cool flow of a wayside runnel, he bathed his trembling hands and flushed forehead. Then he began to consider that, as no one had seen him commit the act, he need scarcely wish it undone; that he should dismiss the palsy-ing fear that was gnawing at his heart, for in time he would strive to forget, as he had forgotten and lived down many a thing before.

He had removed a troublesome rival from his path, and fearfully had he punished Ethel for her rejection of his addresses but two hours or so before—it now seemed years ago—and for her open preference of the hapless Morley Ashton; and yet—

and yet the emotions of that man's soul were what no pen can depict.

The summer moon that rose so broad and redly from the distant sea now showed her clear, bright, silver disc above the rocks of Acton Chine, but Hawkshaw dared not look upon her lest he might see murder on her face, as slowly, with parched lips, pallid cheeks, and trembling hands, he left the long green lane, and proceeded up the avenue that led to Laurel Lodge.

CHAPTER XII.

ON BOARD THE GOOD SHIP "HERMIONE," OF LONDON.

AMID the glare, the roar, and bustle of the mighty world of London, ten days passed away like a painful dream, an unrealisable phantasmagoria, to Ethel, and like a dream, too, appeared the embarkation at the crowded docks (which seemed crammed with all the vessels in the world) on board the *Hermione*, a fine clipper ship of 500 tons register, which with all her canvas loose, and blue peter flying at the fore, was towed down the crowded river by a puffing, panting, noisy little paddle-tug, which rejoiced in the name of *Garibaldi*.

Blackwall, with its docks; noble Greenwich, with its terraces and domes; Woolwich, where now and then a drum beat sharply, or a cannon boomed through the air, were speedily passed; vast fleets of merchantmen, crowded river steamers, and lumbering barges sidling down with the tide, were glided between; each bend of Father Thames was traversed, and soon the *Hermione* was off Gravesend, so busy as a watering-place, and ever alive with whistling trains and smoking steamers, in its noise, bustle, and gaiety contrasting with sombre Tilbury on the flat Essex shore, with its brick-faced bastions, double-ditch, and moat—an old cannon or two lying among the sea slime, and a solitary sentinel pacing to and fro before King Charles's Gate.

At Gravesend, where the *Hermione* lay for a time, with blue peter still flying, and her foretopsail loose, as a double signal "for sea," she was joined by her captain, who came by the down train from town; the tug was paid off and a pilot taken on board, with the last of the sea-going stores.

Then sail was made on the ship, and the sunset of a fine

May evening saw her past Sheerness, with its vast basin docks, and storehouses, and the guardship at the Nore, which pealed her evening gun across the silent sea.

The wind was freshening as the eventful day went down.

Ethel and Rose, with old Nance Folgate, were all below now, sick and ill. Mr. Basset and Hawkshaw trod the lee side of the quarter-deck together. Both were silent. Mr. Basset was gazing sadly at the shore along which they were running, and anon at the red hulk of the floating light, which is anchored four miles north-eastward of Sheerness, and the lamps of which were now twinkling amid the haze and obscurity far astern.

Hawkshaw was full of thought, too. He felt a secret joy at being scatheless and free from England; though, when reflecting, he thought, in the words of Jane Eyre: "It is not violence that best overcomes hate, nor vengeance that most certainly heals an injury."

The *Hermione*, we have said, was a 500-ton ship. She was one of the finest of her class that ever left the slips at Blackwall, and this was only her third voyage; thus, in addition to being new, she was well found and well fitted up in every respect.

John Phillips, her captain, was a bluff, ruddy-visaged, jolly little man, with cheeks turned red by exposure to sun and sea-breeze. He had three mates; the senior, Mr. Samuel Quail, was a plain, honest, rough seaman, who expected next voyage to have a ship of his own; the second, Mr. Foster; but the third was Adrian Manfredi, an Italian, a quiet and rather gentlemanly young man, of whom we shall hear more anon.

The *Hermione* had a surgeon, Leslie Heriot, a Scotsman, of course, and F.R.C.S.E.; a boatswain, carpenter, blacksmith, and a crew of a somewhat mingled kind, as we shall have unfortunate cause to show ere long. She was bound for Singapore, but was to touch at the Isle of France on her way out.

Her cabin was handsome and spacious, and little cabins, called state-rooms, opened off it with sliding doors.

Ethel, Rose, and Nance Folgate had one of them. Mr. Scriven Basset and Hawkshaw had the berth opposite. The others were occupied by the officers of the ship, and all bade fair to form a pleasant little community during the long voyage before them.

For two days the *Hermione* lay at anchor off Deal; on the third day she put to sea. By this time Ethel and Rose had

nearly got what Captain Phillips bluntly termed "their sea-legs under them," and sat on the quarter-deck seats after breakfast, well muffled in cloaks ; for though a lovely May sun was shining on the rippling sea, and all over the fertile coast of Kent, the atmosphere was chill, as the breeze swept over the watery Downs.

The day was charming, the wind was fair, and, with everything set upon her that would draw, even to her topgallant studding-sails rigged aloft, the *Hermione* flew before it.

The chalky cliffs of Kent ; Dungeness lighthouse, with its miles of shingly headland ; gay Brighton, with its far extent of sandy bay, that stretches from Beachy Head to Selsea Hill ; the chalky ranges that look down on the wooded weald of Sussex—were soon passed, and ere long the cliffs of the Isle of Wight, gilded by the evening sun, rose on the star-board bow.

Rose Basset, about whom, attracted by her girlish beauty and *espièglerie*, the young Scotch surgeon and the Italian mate were both disposed to hover, asked questions from time to time—those silly but perhaps natural questions which land-folks will ask on board ship, which somehow did not sound quite so silly when asked by the rosy lips of such a pretty girl as Rose—while poor Ethel remained seated in silence, with her eyes fixed on the distant coast, and wondering how far Laurel Lodge and Acton-Rennel were beyond those shadowy cliffs of chalk.

Her reflections or thoughts were all chaos—a mere mass of confusion. Thus at times she could scarcely realise where she was, or how she came to be on board the *Hermione*, whether the journey by rail to London, her ten days' sojourn there, and her being at present on the sea, were not all a dream—a protracted nightmare, from which she would waken and find herself in her familiar bedroom in dear old Laurel Lodge, which her eyes were never more to see.

She thought, "How bright the evening sun may be shining on it now ; how gaily down the long leafy vistas of Acton Chase, and on poor mamma's grave ! How little could she have conceived that we should be so far from it ! But the Lodge—ah, others inhabit it now ; others look through the windows and pass through its rooms ; others promenade the gravelled walks and play croquet on its grassy lawn, or cull flowers in its conservatory. The place that knew us once, knows us no more ; we shall never see it again ; never tread its soil, or breathe its air ; never more, never more !"

Her tears fell, tears that fell hot and fast.

"Oh, to be with Morley and at rest!" she sighed in her heart. "But then there is papa, poor papa, who loves me so well, and Rose."

Her father's kind and benevolent face, sweet, ruddy Rose's happy smile, and the familiar visage of Hawkshaw (who had become exceeding gentle and attentive), were ever before her. But Laurel Lodge, with its home life, its elegance, and quiet details, with the face, voice, image, existence, and loss of Morley Ashton, seemed all to have passed away to a vast distance from her.

In a very few days she seemed to have lived a great many years in thought and suffering.

"Cheer up, Ethel—permit me to call you so," said Hawkshaw, who had been silently regarding her sweet, pensive face. "Cheer up," he repeated, in a low voice; "think of what is before us in the Mauritius—the lovely Isle of France—the land of Paul and Virginia, that amiable little Virginia, about whom every lady at least once in life sheds so many tears, especially when in her early teens. We must go over all the places depicted by Bernardin St. Pierre in his novel; the Shaddock Grove, the Mount of Discovery, Cape Misfortune, and the Bay of the Tomb—eh?"

"In pity leave me to myself," said Ethel, on whose sensitive ear his half-jocular voice sounded gratingly.

"As you please," he muttered under his breath with impatience, as he went to leeward and lit a cigar.

Next evening Ethel wept again, as she saw the last of England—the lovely coast of Devon, with all its apple-bowers mellowing in the sun—fade into a blue streak, that blended with the evening sea.

Then, for the first time, sea and sky, cloud and water were around them, and she strove to rouse herself from the apathy that had been oppressing her faculties, and endeavoured, if she could not speak, at least to listen to the conversation of others.

"Our crew are indeed a mixed lot, Mr. Basset," she heard Captain Phillips say to her father; "mixed in character and in colour; more like a gang shipped in the Mersey than in London."

"How so, sir?" asked Mr. Basset.

"We have Yankees, West Indians, and Mexican Spaniards—some of these last are the worst of the lot."

"Been a good many years in Mexico, Captain Phillips," said Hawkshaw, assuming a jaunty air.

"Have you?"

"Yes, and should like to see some of your fellows."

"They are quarrelsome, I presume," observed Mr. Basset.

"Very, and very apt to use their knives. Keep her away a point or two to the southward, Ellerton," said he to the man at the wheel. "Mr. Quail, desire the watch to bring those lee braces more aft."

"They should be restricted in the use of such weapons as sheath-knives by law," said Mr. Basset emphatically, and thinking, perhaps, of his judge's wig, which he had been recently trying on.

"So they should, sir; but the law seldom reaches far into blue water, unless so be as a Queen's pennant is floating over it. Do you see that fellow out upon the arm of the main-yard just now?"

"Ah!—what is he perched up there for?—amusement?" asked Mr. Basset.

"He is busy securing the eye of the stun'sail boom."

"Well, captain?"

"To my mind he is the very model of a pirate."

They all looked up, and saw a large-boned, powerful, athletic, dark-skinned, and black-whiskered fellow, clad in a red shirt, and a pair of remarkably dirty canvas trousers, secured about his waist by a black belt, in which a long sheath-knife was stuck.

He was astride the yard-arm; the bronze-like soles of his muscular bare feet were turned towards the group, and, as the captain said, he was doing something to the studding-sail boom.

"A foreigner, I presume, by the rings in his ears," said Mr. Basset, with his hands thrust into the pockets of his ample white waistcoat.

"A Mexican Spaniard," said Captain Phillips; "we have two of them on board, brothers, and a pretty pair of rascals they are. But there goes the steward's bell for tea, ladies; Miss Basset, may I have the pleasure of taking you below? She's running on a wind now, and will be pretty steady. Doctor Heriot, oblige me by doing the attentive to Miss Rose."

The young surgeon (whom the captain's request was meant to quiz) hastened, smilingly, to proffer his arm as directed, and the whole party, including Quail, the first mate, Manfredi, the third (as the second had charge of the deck), descended to the cabin, where Rose did the honours of the captain's tea-table, for Ethel was still too weak or too listless to do so.

The last to leave the deck was Cramply Hawkshaw. As

he turned to descend, he looked up at the Spanish seaman, whose outline and dark profile were clearly defined against the sky.

"'Tis Pedro Barradas," he muttered; "confusion and a curse! the Barradas here!"

His face was white as that of the dead—white as on the fatal evening when he entered Laurel Lodge; and he seemed scarcely to know what he was doing, as with one of his stealthy glances cast around, he descended to the cabin, from which he did not issue for the remainder of that night.

CHAPTER XIII.

ACTON CHINE.

MORE than three weeks have now elapsed since that eventful evening which saw Hawkshaw and Morley Ashton ascending the steep pathway that leads to Acton Chine, and which, moreover, saw the first-named personage traversing the same path homeward—but *alone*.

Though Morley was flung over the cliff, and though the turf which he grasped gave way, so that he actually fell into the yawning gulf below, he was not fated to perish.

But before the turf parted in his despairing grasp, poor Morley lived a lifetime, as it were, of keen agony.

He knew the profundity of the awful abyss that yawned in blackness far down beneath him, and he heard the roaring of the fierce waves, that leaped and boiled as if impatient of their prey.

The chine we have stated as being about four hundred feet in height; its depth, to the bottom of the sea, we have no means of knowing, the foundation of its rocks being far below where mortal eye can fathom.

After the name of Ethel escaped him, he had no power to utter another cry, for the terrible expression which he read in the malignant face of Hawkshaw, while standing safely on the brink above, paralysed him, and he remained silent—but silently desperate, in his wild and despairing attempts to raise himself up, and to regain a footing on the cliff; but he had no purchase (to use a mechanical term); thus, while clinging by his hands, his feet and knees scraped fruitlessly on the hard face of the basaltic rocks.

Mechanically, too, he moved his body, as one who, in sleep, dreams, and is afraid of falling.

He felt the turf rending, the last clutch of life parting, by the very efforts he made to save it. Then a blindness seemed to come upon him—a mist, through which the form of Hawkshaw seemed dilated to colossal proportions, towering between him and the sky like a destroying angel, while the roaring of the sea beneath seemed to fill all space, as with the roll of thunder.

Bead-drops of agony oozed upon his icy brow, while despair and the terror of death were in his heart, and though the whole episode lasted little more, perhaps, than a single minute, Morley Ashton lived, as we have stated, *a lifetime of agony!*

The turf gave way! a sigh—it seemed his parting soul—escaped him; *he fell*, and vanished from the eyes of Hawkshaw.

But Heaven had ordained that the poor lad was not to perish. About thirty-five, perhaps forty, feet below the verge of the chine, there extends a ledge or abutting piece of rock, about five feet broad, and eight or ten feet long, so far as the eye may judge of it from the seaward, as mortal hand has never measured it; and on this natural shelf he fell heavily, and almost senseless by emotion and the shock.

A thick coarse moss, of a kind that has grown there for ages, mingled with a species of guano deposited by the sea-birds, received him softly, and broke the force of his fall, which, had the face of the basalt been bare, must have produced the most fatal injuries.

For some time Morley thought all was over, and he lay still—half stunned alike by the shock and by the suddenness of the whole event. Then his heart filled with a gush of gratitude to Heaven that he was saved, till reflection brought a thrill of horror that he was now utterly lost.

He heard still the ceaseless roaring and bellowing of the breakers, gurgling, sucking, and surging in the chine; he heard also the wild screaming of the sea-birds above and below him, as the astonished gulls and cormorants wheeled in circles, or alighted on the shelf of rock beside him, and flapped their wings with a sharp and at times booming sound.

The evening passed away, and night came on before Morley dared to stir, to move, or look about him. In all its starry splendour, he could see the Plough and the glorious stream of the Milky Way.

Then the moon, that whilom rose as we have said, red and round as a crimson shield, at the far verge of the watery

horizon, had gradually reached almost to the zenith, when her disc, small and sharply defined, shone like a ball of glowing silver amid the sparkling ether.

A broad flake of her glorious sheen poured aslant into the gaping chine, increasing, perhaps, its weird and ghastly aspect ; but this broad stream of light enabled poor Morley to examine the place of his fall, and he soon saw in all their details the horrors of his hopeless situation.

Above, the rock ascended sheer as a wall to the height we have stated—a wall up which it was hopeless to think of climbing.

Below, the cliff receded from the ledge on which he lay, so that in reality the sea was foaming completely beneath him.

From the land-side his position could neither be seen nor even discovered in any way whatever ; and even if it were so, in what way were the finders to succour him.

How many ships might pass before even a sailor's ready eye might detect a human figure perched so far up, among the hungry cormorants and shrieking sea-mews ?

Without shelter, food, or water, how long could he survive on the giddy shelf of that storm-beaten sea-cliff, where he dared not close an eye lest he might roll into eternity below ?

To ascend was impracticable ; to descend was to die !

How awful it was to see the white sea-birds skimming the ocean with wings outspread, or floating in the air, and know that they were more than three hundred feet below him !

If descried by the crew of a fisher-boat, the idea occurred to him of risking a plunge into the water : but from this desperate thought his heart recoiled at once. To fall whizzing through the air from such a height would ensure his falling breathless into the sea, so that its waves would close over him when his lungs were empty, and he would never rise again.

Days might pass, and nights would certainly pass, during which no eye could see him, save those of the sea-birds that wheeled in circles round him, as if impatient of their repast, from which his apparent life and power of action—as he “who-whooped” from time to time to scare them—as yet denied their craving beaks and bills, but only as yet, for he anticipated with horror a time when, faint and expiring, they might pounce down in one voracious flock and rend him piecemeal.

And thus Ethel, life, hope, and the world, were all cut off from him at one fell swoop, by a single blow of Hawkshaw's felon hand.

Conquered, powerless, and crushed by the united horrors of his situation ; unseen, unknown, left to die within a pistol-shot of help, within forty feet of safety, he cowered his face between his knees, and murmuring, " Oh, villain ! villain !" he wept like a child.

So the breakers continued to boom, so sickening in their monotony, far down below, and the night passed on. Morley strove to pray, but his mind was a chaos ; he could neither thank Heaven for his first escape, nor implore aid for the future. For a time he was stupefied.

So the wild sea-birds—the black-billed auk, the mouse-coloured guillemot, the huge white gull, the rank, coarse cormorant, whose shape Milton describes Satan as assuming, when devising death, he perched upon the Tree of Life—continued to wheel and scream around the miserable Morley, who remained on his lofty perch in an agony of spirit.

The sea ebbed and flowed again ; the moon paled and waned ; the clouds gathered in heaven and divided again. Day stole over the brightening ocean, and gradually a bright May morning—the same morning when, creeping from Rose's side, the weeping Ethel drew the curtains of her window, and looked forth upon the upland path that led to this fatal spot.

The morning star twinkled brightly and propitiously above the edge of the chine, and then its light faded into radiance of the growing dawn.

And with day came hope, that if he was doomed to die it might not be unseen. Morley wiped his damp brow and eyes with his handkerchief, for though the season was summer, the atmosphere was damp and chill upon the cliff above the sea.

He heard once the voice of a lark, but it was high above him.

From the place where he sat, Morley's eye could command a range of about eight miles of sea, and as the day dawned he anxiously swept the offing, but in vain ; nothing was visible, but what the Ancient Mariner saw, " the sea and sky, the sea and sky," till about sunrise, when a white sail and the smoke of a steamer, both hull down, could be seen at the horizon, some thirty miles off ; thus, so far as succour was concerned, they might as well have been beyond the equator.

Fourteen hours had he now been missing.

What would be the emotions, the bewilderment, the grief of Ethel?—what the specious, the artful, it might be the villainous story framed by Hawkshaw to account for his disappearance? It might be one that would blast his character, blacken his memory, and sever even her love from him.

Was not a murderer capable of anything?

Now a fisher-boat, brown and tarry, with a patched lugsail of no particular hue bellying out in the fresh morning breeze, with the snow-white foam bubbling under her sharp prow, shot into sight about two miles off.

Morley shouted, though he might have saved himself the trouble, for the two men who formed her crew could no more have heard him than if he had been in the moon; but he could not repress the impulse that made him halloo to them again and again.

He waved his white handkerchief frantically. If observed, it would seem but a sea-bird's wing at such a distance; but the two black specks in the fishing-boat were seated with their backs to the shore, one intent upon handling his tiller, the other grasped the sheet, and both were enjoying their pipes and gazing seaward; so the boat, with her bellying sail and foam-dripping prow, passed on, and Morley remained unseen and alone.

Other three boats passed, under a press of sail, towards the fishing ground; but they were far off—so far that he scarcely made any attempt to signal them.

He felt no hunger; but now a thirst, which he had no means of allaying, and which the saline property of the atmosphere tended to increase, came upon him to add to his troubles and misery of mind and body.

Now a steamer passed, bound for Ireland or the Isle of Man.

She was nearly ten miles off; but in the hope some idling tourist or passenger might be scanning the coast with a telescope or lorgnette, he continued with anxious vigour to wave his handkerchief, but waved it in vain, for she sped on her course and rapidly disappeared, though the long, smoky pennant emitted by her funnel lingered for hours across the sky before it melted into thin air and passed away.

And still the angry waves boomed below, and the greedy sea-birds wheeled and screamed around him. How he longed for wings like the latter!

“Oh, Heaven!” he exclaimed, “aid, inspire, and sustain me for a little time, or let me perish at once, and end this day of horror!”

More than once he actually conceived the idea of endeavouring to lure a couple of gulls within his grasp, and then to plunge into the sea, in the hope that their flapping and outspread pinions might break the force of his descent; and once safely in the ocean, he knew that he could swim

round the chine, and reach the level beach that lies about a quarter of a mile to the westward of it.

But he might as well have hoped to catch the distant clouds or the hues of the rainbow, as those wild gulls and gannets.

So the weary day passed on, and with horror he contemplated the prospect of another night of hopeless watching, of sleeplessness and thirst, for he dared not close his eyes even for a moment, lest drowsiness should come upon him, when he might topple from his perch into the eternity that yawned below.

The rising wind moaned in the chine, and waved the tufts of samphire below, and those of the grass forty feet above his head.

The sun was verging to the westward. The breeze, which had been soft and mild all day, changed, and blew keenly against the cliff, rolling the sea in billows before it; and now, about six o'clock in the evening, so far as Morley could judge—as his watch had been broken in his fall—a smart, square-rigged vessel—a ship, as he soon perceived—lying as near the wind as she could on a long starboard tack, came gradually near the shore.

When she first hove in sight she might have been six miles off, but was running steadily towards the chine.

Morley knew that she would come within half a mile, or less, of the coast, without going about or shortening sail, as the water was so deep; so he resolved not to miss this chance of life and rescue!

To have a larger signal than his handkerchief, he drew off his white shirt, and, holding it by the sleeves, permitted the whole garment to wave out like a banner on the wind.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE RESCUE.

ON came the beautiful ship, with all her white canvas shining in the setting sun. Her deck, on which, from his fearful perch, Morley could look completely down, was spotless, and her crew seemed pigmies, herself a toy, but one, nevertheless, instinct with life, as she flew before the breeze, careening gracefully over, with the white foam curling under the bows,

and sweeping past her counter, to form a long grey wake in the green sea astern.

Frantically Morley waved his impromptu banner, his signal of distress ; and long he continued to do so, bathed in perspiration, and enduring an agony of hope and anxiety, before he could perceive the crew hastening to the bows, the fore-castle bits, and some ascending into the fore-rigging, as if to have a better look at him.

"Hurrah ! and blessed be God, they have seen me !" he exclaimed.

At that moment up went the scarlet ensign to the gaff-peak, from whence it was dipped once, and hoisted again, as a signal that he had been observed.

On she comes ; and now she is about half a mile distant from the rocks of Acton Chine. A man is heaving the lead in the fore-chains, but no soundings are there for more than forty fathoms ; and borne over the water, and upward through the ambient air, the words of command came clearly to Morley's excited ear.

Now the headsails shiver, heavily flap the jib, forestaysail, and foretopmast-staysail, round swings the main and maintopsail yards sharp to windward, and now she lies to, with her broadside to the shore.

A quarter-boat is lowered ; six men—Morley can count them—drop into her ; something is thrown in, Morley knows not what, but a telescope would have revealed that it is a coil of stout rope.

Now the oars are shipped. Bravo ! she is shoved off, and the dripping blades flash in the last rays of the setting sun, as she darts from the ship's side, and sweeps round the promontory, and out of sight, towards the little cove, where Morley knew there was a landing-place and little strip of white sand.

Morley waited nearly an hour—it seemed an age—after this. The ship still lay off the rocky shore, rolling heavily on the ground swell—so heavily, that the cracking flap of her loose canvas reached his ear sometimes. Once the mainyard was slued round, and sail was made on her for a little way, as if she had been drifted by wind and current rather too close in shore ; but again the yard was backed, and, as before, she lay to, motionless and still.

The sun had gone down, dusk was stealing over the land, and the warm saffron flush that bathed the western sea and sky became obscured by masses of copper-coloured clouds.

Morley's heart beat wildly ; he listened, but heard only the

boom of the eternal breakers in the horrid grave that yawned below, and the screaming of the sea-birds around him.

Suddenly he heard a cheer—the mingled shout of several voices—ring in mid-air above him. Oh, how his poor heart bounded at the sound!

He looked upward, as he had done a hundred times before, but saw nothing save the impending rock for a time, till suddenly something appeared to swing over it between him and the sky.

Down it came, and soon he grasped it, and the rope to which it was attached.

Wrapped round with a seaman's neckerchief, it proved to be a pint bottle, with a memorandum, written in pencil, twisted round the neck.

“Take a pull at the bottle to give you strength, and lash the line round you; tie the knot well, for your life depends on it. Then pass up the word to hoist away, and never fear but we shall pull you up.”

Such were the directions pencilled on the scrap of paper.

With a sigh of joy and gratitude, Morley, faint, weary, and trembling in every limb and every nerve, uncorked the bottle, which contained brandy-grog—stiff half-and-half. As directed, he took a hearty “pull” thereat, for strength and coolness were alike necessary now.

He then cast the bottle into the profundity below. No sound followed its descent: and the fall of a sixty-four-pound shot would have caused none there.

He tied the rope round his body, under the arm-pits, but with considerable difficulty, as his hands trembled like aspen leaves.

“All ready! heave away!” he shouted.

After a time the rope was tightened from above; a few sharp tugs followed, as if those who sought to save him wished to assure themselves that all was secure below.

Then followed the familiar “Yeo-heo!” of merchant seamen when pulling together, and Morley felt his scalp bristling as he was lifted off his feet and swung into mid-air.

The hated ledge of rock—hated, though but for its lucky intervention he must long ago have “slept the sleep that knows no waking”—receded below him, and he was dragged up the face of the bluff so speedily that all his care was requisite, by the use of hands and feet, to save his face and knees from being bruised and torn.

At last he reached the verge—that awful verge, close to where the tufts of grass had parted in his seeming

death-grasp. Here a stoppage, a trivial delay, occurred; Morley was too blind and giddy to know why or wherefore, but he was not without fear that the knot his feeble hands had tied might break loose, or that the chafed cord might part, here, as it were, upon the threshold of the world and a new lease of existence; nor did he feel secure until he felt himself grasped bodily by the strong hands of several sturdy seamen, dragged in, as it were, and landed like a huge fish on the grass. Pale, panting, weak, weary, and becoming breathless, he fainted outright.

"Here's a coil, mate," said one of the seamen. "The poor fellow has gone right off into a swoond, and is as useless as a wet swab."

"What's to be done now, Mr. Morrison?" asked another.

"We can't leave him, dying, it may be, of starvation," replied the seaman addressed—one in authority, apparently, and who spoke English correctly, but with a Scottish accent. "No house is nearer than yonder hamlet. He is well rigged, and don't look like a poor samphire gatherer, after all. How the dickens did he get up or get down there, unless on a grey gull's back?"

"Take a leg and an arm, Bill. Heave ahead. We must get him down from this 'tarnal steep bluff somehow."

And, carrying Morley as carefully as they could, the seamen, who were six in number, proceeded downwards by the narrow path which led to the beach.

So intent had these worthy fellows been on their humane operations, that they had completely failed to observe how the dense clouds had been banking up to seaward; how the waves were curling up, white and frothy, and how the wind was freshening, till it swept the spoon-drift off each foaming crest into the trough between; or how the ship had doused her royals, and handed her topgallant-sails, to make all snug for the coming blast.

"We have not a moment to lose," said Morrison, the mate. "It is almost dark already, lads—very dark for a May night. A breeze in shore is coming on fast. Let's be off to the ship without delay."

"But this poor fellow, sir?"

"Can't be left to die upon the beach. It would be clear murder, mates."

"Let us take him aboard with us, and send him ashore with the first in-shore craft we overhaul after he gets his sea-legs."

"In, in! Here comes the gale! Out oars! Shove off!"

And thus Morley Ashton, still insensible, or completely stupefied and passive, in three minutes more was speeding over the rising waves, as fast as six oars could bear him, towards the unknown ship.

CHAPTER XV.

AN OLD SHIPMATE.

FOR twenty-four hours after he was on board, Morley Ashton was alternately faint and delirious. His nervous system had been overstrained, and thus, for a time, he knew not where he was, by whom rescued, or by whom surrounded, and, at times, he still fancied himself on his awful perch above Acton Chine, and still in his ears he seemed to hear the roar of the waves and the screaming of the sea-birds.

Meanwhile a heavy gale had sprung up, and the ship which sheltered him had been compelled to stand off to sea, pursuing her course south-south-west, and thus the land had vanished astern some seven hours before Morley recovered complete consciousness, and began to look curiously and inquiringly around him.

Was he in a dream?

Whence the strange and not unfamiliar odour of new paint and tar, and the close atmosphere, so undeniably that of a ship's cabin? Then there were the creaking of timbers, the jarring of all sorts of things, the swaying to and fro of a chained lamp, of a brass tell-tale compass, that swung in the skylight—the swaying, also, of berth-curtains on brass rods and rings, the rattle of racks and plates and dishes in an open locker, the clatter of blocks on deck, and the gurgling wash of water against the outer sheathing, with the jolting of the rudder, and the rasping of its chains.

Aided by the gleams of uncertain radiance that came down the square skylight, and sometimes with prismatic hues through the yokes that were inserted in the planking of the deck, Morley looked around him, and became assured, beyond a doubt, that he was abed in the cabin of a ship under sail, and in no dream at all.

At that moment footsteps were heard descending the companion-ladder, and a seaman, muffled in a storm-jacket and sou'-wester, both of which were shining with salt spray, approached the berth in which Morley lay.

"Bartelot—Tom Bartelot! old friend and schoolfellow!" he exclaimed, with bewilderment; "where on earth did you come from?"

"Not from among the clouds and gulls, as you did, Morley," replied the other, laughing.

"And so—so *you* are beside me!"

"Of course I am, and right glad to see you again, Ashton; but this is a queer business of yours, old fellow."

"How?—why?—where am I?"

"Aboard my ship, to be sure."

"Then I have had fever again, and have never been at home; have never seen Ethel! have never been thrown into Acton Chine! I have had dreams, Tom—oh, such dreams!"

"I rather think you have, Morley."

"How mad I must have been, and such queer things I must have said. Did I speak about the Bassets and the Isle of France? I would have sworn that I had seen Ethel, had spoken to her, and—and kissed her many times. Dear Ethel! And so we are still on board your brig in the Bonny River?"

"Now what are you talking about? You are most awfully at sea, in more ways than one!" exclaimed Bartelot, thrusting his hands deep into his trousers pockets, and regarding Morley with great surprise. "My poor chum, Ashton, you are not aboard my old brig, the *Rattler*, of Liverpool, at Foche Point, with the yellow flag—the sign of fever—flying at the foremasthead, but aboard of my new ship, the *Princess*, of London, of 300 tons register (we won't say what burden) and A 1 at Lloyd's, bound for Rio de Janeiro, with a mixed cargo, and now about eighty miles off the Land's End and Cape Cornwall."

"Tom, Tom, how you bewilder me," groaned Morley.

"We are just clearing St. George's Channel with a glorious breeze—quite aft—though it will soon be upon the starboard quarter, I fear. So now, my boy, tell me how the deuce you came to be perched up aloft among the gulls and gannets on yonder rocks? A most fearful place it is, and a world of trouble it cost my first mate, Bill Morrison, to get you towed up in safety."

The silence almost of stupefaction succeeded this information, and some time elapsed before Morley could understand or realise the truth of it.

Meanwhile, let us describe Captain Thomas Bartelot, of the ship *Princess*, of London.

He had a free, open, jovial, and merry expression, a fresh

and ruddy complexion, a pleasant voice, and a very winning manner. He was a stout, rather gentlemanly man, about ten years older than Morley, but more muscular, better developed, and thicker, especially about the arms, the biceps whereof indicated that he had been used to a good deal of pulling and hauling in his time. He had on a glazed sou'-wester, the strings and ear-laps of which he untied, and a storm-jacket of tarred canvas, secured by horn-buttons, of which attire he now proceeded to disencumber himself, for on deck the weather had been rough, and the spray was flying in showers of foam over the catheads, occasionally over the quarter, and he "had just left the ship in charge of Morrison," he said, "and come below for the double purpose of seeing how Morley was getting on, and procuring a caulker from the steward's locker." After a pause, during which time the said "caulker" was imbibed from a square case-bottle: "When you were brought on board, Morley, by Morrison and the boat's crew, I was so surprised at recognising you," said Bartelot, "that I scarcely knew whether my head or heels were on the deck. You were in a death-like faint, or I would have sent you ashore again. The night was fast becoming dark, and the weather foul. We couldn't keep dodging about the coast, as Admiral Fitzroy had telegraphed, 'Gales of wind expected from all quarters;' so I resolved to give the land a wide berth (lucky it was for you that we hugged it so close!) and stood off to sea. I am sorry for that, Morley, but I couldn't help it, old boy; insurance brokers, ship agents, and owners won't stand trifling nowadays, so console yourself that it was no worse. You couldn't have fallen into better hands than Tom Bartelot's, eh? Look there," he continued, pointing to a small yellow map of Britain, framed and glazed on the bulkhead, and having all the coast surrounded by little black spots. "Each of these spots, Morley, marks a wreck of last year. It is the 'Wreck Chart,' published by the Life-boat Institution, and it shows quite enough of black spots in the Bristol Channel to warrant me in getting out to sea; and somehow, to my mind, we have had three gales now for one we used to have before Admiral Fitzroy took to telegraphing about his south and north cones, storm-drums, and what not. Old Gawthrop, one of our men, swears he whistles up the very gales he telegraphs. But speak, Morley, why don't you say something? Am I to have all the talking to myself?"

"Oh, Tom, I owe my life to you."

"To Bill Morrison, rather."

"Who is he?"

"My Scotch mate."

"But this adventure, and my being taken off to sea, I know not whither——"

"Rio de Janeiro, I told you."

"It ruins my prospects for ever!"

"Sorry to hear you say so; but we'll put you aboard the first homeward-bound craft we overhaul. Till then, you are heartily welcome to swing your hammock in my cabin, and to share our junk and grog."

"Thanks, thanks, old fellow; but a homeward-bound ship will avail me little."

"The deuce!—would you wish to swim or fly!"

"Unless I could be landed near Acton-Rennel, and within a week, it matters not where I am; for Ethel Basset, if she lives—survives my supposed loss—don't laugh in that way, Tom, please—must be, like myself——"

"How?—where?"

"Upon the sea."

"Drink this," said Bartelot, handing him a tumbler of wine-and-water; "and now tell me all about this matter, for I own to being rather curious about it."

Morley related his story briefly and rapidly.

"My berth was secured and paid for on board the *Hermione*, of London."

"I know the craft well, and jolly Jack Phillips, her captain, too," said Bartelot; "a fine old fellow he is, and your friends are in capital hands."

"I was to have sailed with them for the Isle of France," said Morley, in a voice like a groan; "sailed once more in search of Fortune—the blind jade! Ah, Tom, the Romans were right when they depicted her as a woman, for she has much to do with the happiness or misery of man."

"Is that the wine or water talking now?" asked Tom Bartelot, supplying himself with another measure, nautically named "a caulker," from the before-mentioned square case-bottle.

"Don't chaff me, Tom, for mine is an evil destiny."

"Oh, bother! don't talk of destiny, like a fellow in tights, with a broad-brimmed tile, addressing the lustre, or the foot-lights, at the Surrey. Every man who has a steady heart—a heart, mind you, that don't yaw even when the wind is foul—and keeps a strong hand on the tiller of perseverance, is the maker of his own destiny. I learned that long ago, before I knew the mizzen-top from a marlin-spike. This spirit will make a man go right before the wind, through even Ham-

let's 'sea of troubles,' and never head the waves or breakers thereof."

"Why, Tom," said Morley, with a sad smile, "you are a regular salt-water preacher."

"A philosopher if you will, but no preacher—oh, d——n it, I haven't come to that. I suppose that piratical beggar—what's his name?"

"Hawkshaw — Cramply Hawkshaw," replied Morley, through his clenched teeth.

"I suppose he will consider you quite a gone 'coon, as the Yankees say: but you must haul up for the Mauritius (if we can find a ship for thence at Rio, which is not very likely) and have the fellow exposed, tried, and punished as he deserves."

"Punished! how know I that ere I can reach the Mauritius, penniless as I am——"

"Penniless! You young swab, don't you know that you can command my purse—no great matter, certainly—to the last farthing?"

"Thanks, my dear Bartelot."

"Well, as you were about to say, before you may reach the Mauritius——"

"He may be—he may be——"

"What?"

"The husband of Ethel Basset."

"Whe-e-e-uh?" whistled Tom Bartelot.

"How can I foresee what one so subtle, so daring, so reckless as Hawkshaw may achieve!"

"Well, drink your wine-and-water; remain quiet in the meantime. You may keep all your night watches *below* if you like, and, till you regain your strength, content yourself with exercise by day—a Dutchman's promenade, three steps and overboard, eh?"

There was a pause, during which Morley sighed deeply.

"Cheer up, Morley," said jolly Tom Bartelot; "look firmly ahead, and boldly face the little spray and black scud of misfortune. Pursue your present way contented for some time at least, with confidence and hope, and never look astern. It is no use, as nothing ever comes that way, either for good or for evil. It would be a poor love that won't outlast a sea voyage, however long it might be, and if Miss Basset forgets you——"

"Forgets me—agony! Tom, she may be made to believe that I have deserted her."

"Impossible!"

"That I have been murdered, then!"

"Hawkshaw would not tell upon himself, surely?"

"That I fell over the cliff and was drowned!"

"Ah—that would be a likely tale enough."

"I know not what specious tale the villain may form to deceive Ethel and her father," continued Morley impetuously.

"When at Rio write to her all about it."

"Write! By the ship that bore my letter I would fly to her."

"I should prefer sailing; but every man to his taste. In another day or so, according to your own showing, she will be upon the sea!"

"True—true, and with that wretch, most probably," said Morley, relapsing into wretchedness, and striking his forehead with his hand.

"Come, come," urged Bartelot, patting him on the shoulder, "turn out and take a sniff of the breeze on deck. Another glass of wine first; drink and be jolly, man. What says the old song? for it is an old song of Captain Topham's and none of mine, be assured!

" 'You bid me my jovial companions forsake,
The joys of a rural recess to partake;
With you, my good friend, I'll retreat to the vine,
Its shelter be yours, but its nectar be mine;
For each 'twill a separate pleasure produce,
You cool in its shade, while I glow with its juice;
For own no delight with his rapture can vie,
Who always is drinking, yet always is dry.' "

"Many a night have we sung that together when in the Bonny River, on board the dear old *Rattler*," said Morley, listening with pleasure to the song which Bartelot trolled forth with a fine mellow voice.

"Ah!—the *Rattler*," said Bartelot, sighing; "they broke her up for firewood—think of that. I sent my old mother at Liverpool a table made out of her timber."

"Go ahead, Tom—finish your song."

"Ah, there is life in the old dog yet, I see," replied Bartelot as he resumed:

" 'The lover' [that's you, Morley] 'may talk of his flames and his darts,
His judgment of eyes and his conquest of hearts;
May smile with the wanton, and sport with the gay,
Enjoy when he can and desert when he may;
Yet the warmest adherents of love must deplore
That its favours when tasted are favours no more;
Then how can such joys with his ecstasy vie,
Who always is drinking, yet always is dry?' "

As Tom concluded (he was not a bit of a toper, as we shall show ere long, though he sang so bacchanalian a ditty) the sunlight died away, the cabin became gloomy, the rolling of the ship and the noise on deck increased.

"The gale freshens," said he, "and the glass is falling fast. We shall have the wind blowing great guns to-night, so we must close our shutters, as I once heard a lubber call them. Don't you remember Mr. de Vavasour Spout, the Cockney supercargo? Steward, pass the word to Mr. Morrison to have the dead-lights shipped. I must be off to the deck, Morley, and have some more cloth taken off her—send down the top-gallant yards, get the lumber out of the tops, and bend the trysail aft."

Morley was too feeble to leave his berth for that night, especially as the *Princess* encountered a heavy gale of wind.

He could slumber, but his dreams were wild, and disturbed by starts, visions, and memories of all he had undergone; and every thought of Acton Chine and its horrors caused a shudder to pass through his frame.

CHAPTER XVI.

UNDER THE TROPIC OF CAPRICORN.

NEXT morning, when Morley ventured up, everything was dripping wet; on deck and aloft all bore cheerless evidence of a rough night that had passed.

The *Princess* had but little canvas spread, for the sea was rising still; the fore, main, and mizzen topsails were taken off her, and ere long she was speeding before the wind and sea under a close-reefed foresail and storm staysail.

Morrison, one of the most powerful men on board, with another grim old seaman named Noah Gawthrop, whose weather-beaten visage resembled nothing on land or sea but a knot on a gnarled oak tree, were at the wheel, and it was with the utmost difficulty they could keep the helm, so heavily did breaker after breaker poop the ship.

Though heavy, the wind was fair for the *Princess*, but it bore her away from the shores of Britain, was Morley's first and regretful idea.

No other craft was in sight, and the grey sky imparted an opaque tint to the dark and tumbling sea, which seemed to follow her brine-dripping sides, as swiftly she darted on,

at times cleaving asunder or riding across the long rolling mountains of water that burst in hissing showers over the varnished bowsprit and gilded catheads, over the iron windlass and fore-castle bitts, and after drenching the cowering watch, poured away through the scuppers to leeward as the buoyant ship rose on each successive wave, like a gallant sea-bird trussing her pinions.

Amid that waste of waters no living thing was visible from the deck, save a brown flock of Mother Carey's chickens, the stormy petrels, tripping with outspread wings up the slope of one wave and down the slope of another.

Though accustomed to the sea by his past voyaging, Morley gazed around him with a bewildered air. He addressed something—he knew not what—to the men at the wheel, but the Scotch mate was too full of anxiety about his steering to reply, and as for Mr. Noah Gawthrop, he heard the remark with stolid indifference, and expectorated vociferously to leeward.

The bronzed face and keen grey eyes of the Scotchman were turned alternately to the leech of the close-reefed fore-sail, the bellying of the storm staysail, and the compass-box, while his feet were planted firmly on the deck-grating, and his weather-beaten hands grasped the wheel like his ship-mate on the other side.

Neither of these men ever spoke to each other. Instinct and skill taught them simultaneously and mutually when to keep her full and by, when to let her yaw, or when to let her ship a sea.

Wearied with toil, and the double watching of the past night, Captain Bartelot was asleep in his damp clothes on the cabin-locker. So noon passed away, and still the *Princess* flew on through mist and spray, under her close-reefed fore-sail and storm staysail.

Another vessel, similarly stripped of canvas, flew past them on the opposite tack, and like a spectre disappeared in the wrack and gloom; but anon the wind and sea went gradually down together, the clouds burst asunder, and the sun came joyously forth.

The gale gradually abated to a fine spanking breeze, the mainsail was set, and the reefs shaken out of the foresail; topsail after topsail were hoisted and sheeted home. Then followed the studding-sails and royals, and the *Princess*, with everything on her that "would draw," swept out into the waters of the mighty Atlantic.

A lovely evening followed, and a rosy sunset, but not a

ship was in sight, and Morley now calculated that they must be more than two hundred miles from land.

"By Jove, this is excellent!" exclaimed Tom Bartelot, lounging back in his chair after a late dinner (for on this day the cook's fire had been washed out of the caboose); "how happy I am to have you here, Morley. Confess, old fellow, that you couldn't have fallen into better hands."

"I do confess it most willingly; but, my dear old friend, I must be set on shore, if possible, at the first opportunity. I have Hawkshaw to punish, and Ethel to save from the insult of his presence."

"On shore, with the breeze blowing thus—the Scilly Isles more than a hundred and fifty miles astern, and not a sail in sight!"

"But, Ethel—the Bassets—what will they think of my sudden disappearance? What story may that rascal tell them?"

"Nothing that you can't unsay by and by."

"Unsay when it may be too late."

"Too late!"

"And to have Ethel left in the power, or rather subjected to the wiles and addresses of one so cruel, so artful!"

"Tut, tut! if she would slip from her moorings by the old man's side, to sail in company with a rascally pirate, she's not worth much, friend Morley, and certainly not worth regretting."

"Ethel shall judge what I have suffered by what she is suffering herself."

"Try some of that brandy-and-water, and don't get into the doldrums. Light a cheroot—there's a box of capital ones on the locker behind you. Have patience; in a few months at farthest——"

"Months! You talk to me of patience, Tom, as if you had never seen me practise it."

"In what way?"

"Have you forgotten when I was broiling, for a pittance, on the Bonny River? how I toiled, worked, ay, slaved, and cheered myself with the thoughts of Ethel Basset, and an English home? For three years I had patience, amid adversity and illness. Heaven knows how I got through those three years, Tom."

"Just as you shall get over the three months that must pass before you reach the Mauritius after visiting Rio."

"Well, I returned, as I have told you, to find that her future home was to be elsewhere than in England; that we were to be separated, perhaps hopelessly; that I had a rival,

too, a kinsman, a *protégé* of her father's, a son of a certain Tom Hawkshaw, of Lincoln's Inn—a fellow without honour, honesty, money, or scruple."

"I'd like to give him a dip at the end of a deep-sea line."

"Sail, homeward-bound, on the weather-bow!" reported Morrison, one morning, a few days after this.

Morley's heart leaped, and he rushed on deck to look at the stranger—a smart bark, close hauled, with all her starboard-tacks aboard. She was evidently a foreigner, being painted a pale pea-green.

"A Baltic craft, I take her to be," said Morrison. "Here she comes, running sharp on a wind, with a bone in her teeth."

"A bone?" repeated Morley.

"Yes; the spray flying under her cutwater, and over her catheads. "Don't you remember the fun we used to have with De Vavasour Spout, the Cockney supercargo, when talking all manner of nautical rubbish to him. Morrison, run up our ensign; lay the mainyard to the mast; steward, hand up the trumpet, we'll overhaul her."

The orders were promptly obeyed; the stranger also backed his mainyard, and showed his ensign—black and white.

"Prussian," said Morrison.

"Bound for the Elbe," added Bartelot, whose hail was answered in a hoarse dissonance that made even Noah Gawthrop's grim visage relax with a smile, as he sent the *débris* of his quid to leeward, and anathematised foreigners in general, and their lingos in particular, while each vessel stood off on her course again.

"No chance for you, Morley," said Bartelot, "so we'll give it up and think no more about it."

Ten days elapsed after this, and in all that space never once did the *Princess* come within hail of a homeward-bound ship, so Morley strove to resign himself to his fate.

"Rio de Janeiro be it," said he.

He took his watch with the rest of the crew, and endeavoured to make the time pass; but weary, weary was his lot for days and weeks—days and weeks of mental suffering, during which he fretted, chafed, and loathed, at times, the floating prison which bore him away, almost hopelessly, from the watery path which he now concluded Ethel must be traversing—she, due southward, towards the sun; and he, south-westward, towards the land of fire.

It is an age of swift postal arrangements, of telegrams,

magnetic and electric, but nothing could avail Morley there on the wide, wide sea; the appliances of modern science were there as nugatory and of as little avail as in the days when Columbus ploughed the same waters in search of the western world—he had nothing to console him save patience and hope.

She might be dying of grief for his loss, for people sometimes do die of grief, though, pardon me for the heresy, fair reader, people seldom die for love: and, unless assisted by some good genii or spirits of the air, Morley was powerless, and without the means of acquainting her that he was safe, alive, well, and had miraculously escaped a most foul and deliberate attempt to assassinate him.

So, weary were the days and more weary the nights, while the swift ship flew on, making a most prosperous voyage towards a clime of sunnier skies and brighter seas than those of England; but weary though it seemed, and insufferably slow, the time passed nevertheless.

Each day the sun grew hotter and rose higher overhead.

The Line was passed; Father Neptune came on board in all the splendour of oakum wig, tar, and yellow ochre; and Morley, having crossed the Line before, escaped being shaved with a hoop and bathed in salt water, though old Noah Gawthrop, who personated the god of the ocean, and Morrison, who personated Amphitrite, the mother of Triton, had some very waggish views respecting him. And now the atmosphere was hot indeed.

“When I was last at Rio,” said old Noah, whose voice, like worthy Tom Pipes’s, had “a cadence like that of an east wind singing through a cranny”—“the crabs and winkles were roasted in their shells upon the shore.”

The winds continued favourable; the *Princess* steadily held her course, and the day on which they would probably see Rio de Janeiro was already confidently spoken of by Tom Bartelot and his first mate, Bill Morrison, for both were practical seamen, and holders of first-class certificates.

Though a grave and stern man, and one deeply imbued with many of the northern superstitions of his country, with a few—but luckily a very few—of its theological whim-whams, Morrison became a great friend of Morley, and, though a believer in mysterious lights, warnings, and presentiments, in second sight, second hearing, and so forth, he was remarkably well informed, well educated, and spoke Latin, and more than one European language fluently.

His face was browned by long exposure to every climate in

the world ; he had faced all the dangers of the deep, and their name is legion ; he was hardy, tough and athletic, and, being at times conversational, he learned from Morley, long ere the voyage was over, the whole history of his love, rivalry, and adventures.

“ Take heart, young gentleman,” said he, as they kept their watch together on a lovely moonlight night, when drawing near the tropic of Capricorn ; “ when I was a bairn at home, my mother (God bless her, *puir auld body* !) aye taught me that ‘ the ways o’ Providence were dark and intricate, perplexed wi’ mazes and distressed wi’ errors,’ and I have seen but little reason to alter my opinion in manhood, or as I grow aulder in the horn, as we say in Scotland. But something tells me that you will bring this rascally piccaroon up wi’ a round turn yet.”

“ But Miss Basset ?”

“ If *she* countenanced him,” interrupted the Scotchman, turning his keen grey eyes and knitted brows to Morley, “ why, then, I say, e’en let her go with a flowing sheet.”

“ Which means——”

“ That you’ll be well free of so unseaworthy a craft.”

So, at this period of their story, the loved and the loving, Morley Ashton and Ethel Basset, are both traversing the same mighty ocean. Morley knew that, if Ethel lived, she would now inevitably be sailing for the Isle of France ; but she, alas ! believed that her lover was no more, and lost to her indeed for ever !

Will they ever meet more ?

They may meet peacefully and happily again, never to separate ; or, it may be, that they shall be united never more on this side of the grave, for both are now upon the sea, and the perils encountered by those who go down into the great deep and see the wonders thereof—wreck, storm, fire, mutiny, piracy, and famine—may be the lot of one or of both.

The wheel of fortune turns, and anon we shall see !

CHAPTER XVII.

SECOND HEARING.

THE Scotch mate, Morrison, spun many a strange yarn to Morley, when together they kept their watches at night under the glorious radiance of a tropical moon, when the vast sea

shone like a silver flood, over which the *Princess* glided before the trade wind, with all her canvas, topsails, and top-gallant sails set.

"When falling over those rocks, on which we found you, Ashton," said he, on one of those occasions, "did you utter any person's name?"

"Not that I remember of—why?" asked Morley, with surprise.

"Because—I have known of such things—that person might have heard your cry, however far distant."

"I do not understand."

"I mean on the principle, or rather the theory, of polarity. In the terror and despair of such a moment, your thoughts would flash, or rush to some one whom you loved—say Miss Basset—who became the recipient of the force, the hearer of your cry, by that faculty which is called in some countries *second hearing*."

Morley, though he coloured at Ethel's name, smiled, for he knew that this was another of Morrison's strange theories.

"I never heard of an instance of this," said he; "have you?"

"I shall tell you," replied Morrison; "but perhaps you won't believe me?"

"Why?"

"Because you English are so sceptical about the mystic, generally."

"I shall try, however."

"When I was third mate of the *Queen of Scots*, a clipper ship of Aberdeen, on a voyage home from Memel, we encountered in the North Sea a dreadful gale from the westward. We stripped the ship of everything, until at length we hove her to under a close-reefed main-topsail.

"The night was dark—black as pitch, as the saying is; the sea white as snow with foam, and the wind blew as if the clerk of the weather was determined to blow his last.

"The captain was on deck, holding on by the weather mizzen rattlings by one hand, while the other held his speaking-trumpet.

"'Away! forward! Morrison,' he shouted to me, 'and see the flying-jib stowed,' for somehow it had got loose.

"It was a perilous duty to perform at such a time, and in such a wild night. So, being loath to order a man for it, I undertook the task myself.

"I *felt* my way, like a man in the dark, along the wet and slippery bowsprit, which one moment seemed tilted up in the air, and the next went surging, cap under, in the seething

trough of the sea, when the bows of the *Queen* plunged down. Then I felt as if my heart was in my mouth, for I was but a young sailor, and thought of what would come of poor old mother and dad at home, if I should perish, and there would be no share of my wages to get monthly from our owners.

“At that moment I planted my feet on the leeward foot-rope, and nearly fell into the world of waters that yawned and whirled below.

“In my fall I caught a rope, and swung at the end of it, like a salmon grilse at the end of a line.

“None spoke to me, lest even to suggest anything might cost me my life, and none could aid me, for I was beyond the ship altogether. My shipmates seemed paralysed by the same peril that filled my own heart with despair and dread of death. I was but a youth; so the exclamation, ‘God help me, mother!’ escaped me, and was swept away by the howling wind.

“At length, favoured by a lurch of the ship, I somehow regained my footing on the bowsprit. I stowed the jib in its netting, crept along the dripping spar, and regained the deck, where the men crowded round me with congratulations on my escape; for, had I remained even one moment longer among the foot-ropes, I should never have been seen again, as thrice in succession, with awful rapidity, the ship went forward, plunging bows and bowsprit under the sea with such force, that the starboard cathead and all our headrails were swept away.

“Well, sir, at that very hour—ay, at that very moment—my poor old mother, who was abed and asleep in her cottage by the Don, was awakened by a voice, which with true maternal instinct and terror she knew to be mine, crying as if in agony, and from a vast distance—‘God help me, mother!’

“In the still and silent night, it rang dreadfully in her startled ears, and in her anxious heart. She roused her neighbours, and declared—*puir auld body*—with loud lamentations, that her dear Willie, her sailor laddie, her only bairn, was drowned; but it was only my thoughts that had rushed homeward, and she had received them in her sleep.

“It was, indeed, my voice she had heard, swept—He who holds the great deep in the hollow of His hand alone knows how—over the wide, roaring waste of the North Sea, and she never ceased to mourn for me, till our ship was signalled off the Girdleness, and all reported safe on board.”

As Morley was neither so superstitious nor so deeply read as his Scotch friend, and consequently was ignorant of Dr.

Ennemoser's queer theory of polarity, he could only listen in silence, as this was only one of many anecdotes such as Morrison was wont to beguile the watches of the night with.

At the time he fell over the cliff, and clutched the turf at Hawkshaw's feet, the name of "Ethel" escaped him as we have related ; but Morley had no recollection of the circumstance, and though at that dread moment his very soul seemed to fly to her, no warning voice came to poor Ethel's ear, so, in this instance, the first mate's theory was at fault.

"How steadily the trade wind holds," said he. "Watch, ahoy there, forward ! set the royals and top-gallant studding-sails, and up with the flying jib—quick, lads ! rouse it out of the netting, and hoist away."

These orders were promptly obeyed, and faster flew the *Princess* through the phosphorescent water, which seemed to smoke under her counter, and gleamed in millions of sparks in the long wake that could be traced astern for miles upon the moonlit sea.

"I have sometimes wondered, Mr. Ashton, what would be the emotions of a murderer at such a moment as that I endured, when clinging among the hamper of the wet bowsprit, on that night in the North Sea, or when in any similar peril," observed the mate, recurring to his anecdote, as they trod to and fro.

"His emotions would be anything but enviable. That man, Hawkshaw, must feel himself a deliberate and cold-blooded assassin, and I frequently wonder how he comforts himself."

"I should not like to go to sea with that fellow," said the mate ; "no ship that has a murderer on board can reach its destination in safety, or at least without accident."

"Another of your theories, I hope ; but pray don't say so," said Morley, thinking of the Bassets ; "yet he was only an assassin in intent—not fact. Moreover, he may not be on board the *Hermione* at all."

"Will you be surprised if I tell you that *I* was once accused of murder?" asked Morrison, turning his grave, grim Scotch face with a smile to Morley ; "ay, and marooned, too, as one, though innocent as the babe that is unborn. It is a queer yarn, so I don't mind telling it to you.

"Before I shipped aboard the *Queen of Scots*, I was a foremast man of a Peterhead whaler that was bound for a fishing trip to the north.

"Off the Noss-head, a rocky bluff on the south of Sinclair's Bay, and which has a dry cavern in it always full of seals, we encountered a tremendous storm, which carried

away our flying jib-boom, snapping it like a clay pipe right off at the cap ; at the same time we lost our long-boat with all our live stock ; so, amid whirlwinds of foam, we ran round Stromo, hauled up for Thurso Bay, and came to anchor under the lee of the land in Scrabster Roads to refit.

“ Our skipper ordered another long-boat from old Magnus Sigurdson, a boat-builder at Scrabster, who had a fine one nearly complete, and ready on the stocks in his yard, and which, for certain reasons of his own, he was remarkably anxious to get rid of at almost any price. Thus, ere she was brought aboard and lashed to the boat-chocks amidships, strange stories concerning her reached the ears of our crew, when drinking in the public-houses of Thurso.

“ It would seem that when old Magnus, his wife, and family were abed at night, they were roused by the sound of a hammer knocking at the sides of the boat in the building-yard ; then came the clinking, as of nails being driven into her planks, with other noises, so exactly like those made by Magnus when at his daily work, that his gudewife, Alie Sigurdson, had some difficulty in believing that he was in bed beside her.

“ ‘ Perhaps it is some idle callants amusing themselves among the chips,’ said Magnus, on the third night, and tried to sleep ; but louder grew the hammering ; so at last he leaped from his bed, dressed himself, and went forth to the yard. But no one was there ; the strange sounds had ceased ; the night was starry and still, and he only heard the hollow booming of those great billows that roll for ever, in snow-white mountains, over the Kirkebb, against the rocks of the Bishop’s Castle, the cliffs of Pennyland, and the piers of Thurso : for there three vast currents meet from the German, the Atlantic, and the Northern oceans.

“ All the family of old Sigurdson heard the hammering, night after night, while the boat remained on the stocks, and the sound thereof made his poor bairns cower and nestle in the recesses of their box-beds with affright ; yet not a mark could be seen upon its ribs, thwarts, or sheathing, even after she was painted.

“ At last the boat was upon rollers, and ready to be run to the beach.

“ On that night the din of hammers in the yard of Magnus Sigurdson exceeded any that had ever rung there before. Quicker, thicker, faster than ten smiths’ hammers ringing upon as many anvils, rang the strokes, and the old man listened with fear and trembling.

“ Bible in hand, he crept forth at last.

“ Still there was nothing to be seen, save the unlucky boat standing on its props in the broad moonlight ; but in the lulls or intervals of the breakers that rolled upon the distant beach, he heard moans of distress, sighs of fatigue, and faint mutterings, which seemed to proceed from the boat itself.

“ Such was the history of our new long-boat, a story still current in the north of Scotland ; and such was the craft in which I found myself at midnight, alone amid the North Sea, marooned and abandoned by my shipmates on a charge of murder.

“ You may imagine what I felt in such a situation.

“ Despising the stories that were current concerning the boat, our skipper had it shipped, paid Magnus Sigurdson his money, and we sailed from Scrabster Roads for the whale fishery. Four days after we were becalmed in the North Sea, some fifty miles or so beyond the Skaw of Unst.

“ Day succeeded day, night succeeded night, and there came no wind. Around us—strange, it was in such a latitude—the sea seemed like oil, so still, so glassy and waveless. Loose in its brails, the canvas flapped against the masts and yards ; and now, when too late, the men whispered anew, and murmured about the bewitched boat of Magnus Sigurdson.

“ At the far horizon we more than once saw craft passing under easy sail, but the breeze that bore them on never reached us.

“ From murmuring, the crew became clamorous ; so, yielding to their entreaties, and being perhaps a little impressed or scared himself, our skipper ordered the mysterious boat to be shoved overboard and cast adrift ; and heavily, with a thundering plunge, she fell bow-foremost into the glassy sea ; but by that power of attraction which larger bodies possess over smaller in the water, she lay close to the ship, and jarred there with every roll she gave on the long oily ridges that swelled up from time to time.

“ Three days followed, and still no wind.

“ In vain the captain whistled and consulted the dog-vane ; in vain the first mate blew up a feather, and cast bits of burnt wood over the side, to watch which way the stream went.

“ Some urged that we should sink the boat by scuttling her ; but at last Harold Trænaldson, an old Orkney whaler, red-faced and yellow-bearded, from the Isle of Stronsay, said, openly :

“ “ This will never do, mates ; there’s one aboard of us with

human blood upon his hands, and the mark of Cain upon his brow, though we can see neither. So here this ship will float, mayhap, till doomsday, for who ever heard of such a calm in these seas?

"So, in five minutes after this, we were all casting lots at the capstan-head.

"Three times we drew, and three times the fatal lot fell upon me.

"Denial, threats, and entreaty were alike vain. I was roughly hustled overboard into the enchanted boat. Two biscuits, a bottle of water, and an oar were given me, and I was peremptorily ordered to shove off and scull to a distance from the ship, which I was supposed to pollute by my vicinity, and was mockingly desired to keep company with Mother Cary and her chickens, Mr. David Jones, and the Flying Dutchman.

"With a heart bursting with mortification, rage, and many real and imaginary fears, I sculled the heavy boat away from the ship, and, strange to say, in ten minutes after I felt a coolness in the air and saw a catspaw on the water. Gradually it freshened. A breeze came—a breeze at last!

"The sails of the whaler filled; topsails and courses were sheeted home; up went jib and spanker; the ocean began to ripple under her bluff, iron-plated bows, and the crew gave me a cheer of derision, while my poor heart died within me, as she stood away upon her course to the whaling-ground, and ere the sun set, had disappeared, leaving me alone upon the gloomy North Sea.

"I shall never forget, Mr. Ashton, the horror of feeling myself marooned in such a craft, and under such an accusation; and such is the power of imagination, that, as the boat rolled and lurched on the waves of the dark and midnight sea, I almost fancied that I could see, between me and the stars, while crouching in the bow-thwarts, a huge shadowy figure, like the Spirit of Destruction, which haunted the boat of Ronald of the Perfect Hand.

"But when day dawned I saw the rocks of Balta, the most eastern of the Shetland Isles, shining redly at the horizon, and soon after I was picked up by the *Thorson*, a Danish galliot, bound for Leith, where I was safely landed a few days after."

"And the whaler?"

"She and her crew were never heard of again. So whether she had really a breaker of the commandments on board, or whether the boat of old Magnus Sigurdson, of Scrabster,

wrought the mischief, I cannot say. I only spin the yarn as it occurred to me. Strike the bell there, Gawthrop."

"Aye, aye, sir," growled old Noah, who had been dozing astride the spanker-boom.

"Call the next watch ; it is Captain Bartelot's ; and now, Mr. Ashton, 'tis time for you and I to leave the deck, and turn in."

CHAPTER XVIII.

RIO DE JANEIRO.

ON a gorgeous tropical morning, when the *Princess* was nearing her destined port, and when Morrison declared that already he could see the "land-blink" in the sky, Morley watched with some interest the result of what is termed in nautical astronomy, "taking a sight," or "making an observation," by noting the altitude of any heavenly body, in order to estimate the latitude and longitude.

"What is the time?" asked Bartelot.

"Twelve, sir, by the sun," replied Morrison.

"And by the chronometer?"

"Twelve."

"Then bring me the correct latitude, while I calculate the longitude. I have had a capital sight to-day."

He then relinquished the quadrant, and proceeded, compass in hand, to "prick off," as the sailors term it, the ship's place upon the chart.

Looking the while at a large chart of the Southern and Northern Atlantic, Morley asked :

"Where should a vessel, bound for the Mauritius, be now, if she left London at the same time I said the *Hermione* would sail?"

"Always the same thought, Morley," said Bartelot, looking up with a smile.

"Well, Tom?"

"If winds are fair, and all went well"—at these words Morley gave a sigh of anxiety—"she should now be here, about St. Helena, or a few miles to the southward, and off the African coast."

"And we are how far from that?"

"Farther than I should like to fly, Morley."

Poor Morley sighed again, and looked eagerly at the chart ;

thereon, by three spans of his hand, he could compass the world of waters that lay between him and Ethel Basset.

On the 6th July, the *Princess* was in latitude 19 deg. 57 min. south ; longitude 37 deg. 48 min. west. ; and Cabo Frio (or the cold cape of South America) bore about forty-five miles to the westward.

They were drawing very near Rio de Janeiro, and many ships bound for the same quarter were in sight daily.

The trade-wind continued steady and fine ; Morley looked with keen interest on the ships that veered from time to time in sight. Among them all might be one that would have a freight for the Isle of France.

To search for such was to be his first object and occupation on landing ; and worthy Tom Bartelot assured him that money should not be wanting to further his double purpose of joining Ethel and punishing Cramply Hawkshaw.

"But, ah, Tom," said he on one occasion, "how, or when, is a poor devil such as I to repay you?"

"Think of that when the time comes," said Tom, laughing.

About 10 A.M. on the morning of the 9th, the look-out man, old Noah Gawthrop, who was in the forecrossrees, sung out, in his queer voice :

"Land ahead !"

"Where away?" asked Morrison, jumping off the companion seat.

"Land on the starboard bow, sir," added Noah.

Morley's heart leaped at the sound, and the telescopes of Bartelot and Morrison were speedily levelled in the direction indicated.

"It should be Cabo Frio," said the Scotchman.

"And Cabo Frio it is!" added Bartelot emphatically.

"Look, Morley, that is the great headland on the coast of Brazil."

"It was there the *Thetis* frigate was wrecked in 1830," added Morrison ; "she had lost her reckoning, on a dark December night, and was borne more than twenty-four miles to leeward by the current."

"Then we shall see Rio to-night?" said Morley.

"No, no ; Rio lies sixty-four miles beyond the Ilha de Cabo Frio—the cold cape, rather a misnomer, in this season at least," replied the mate.

"Steward, bring up the case-bottle ; let the men forward have each a tot of grog, while we'll have a glass below on the head of this."

"Head of what, Tom?" asked Morley.

"Scenting the land, to be sure," replied Bartelot, as the three descended to the cabin.

"You are a clever seaman, Tom, and have made the land to a minute, at the time you foretold a week ago."

Bartelot laughed, and said :

"Father wanted me to go into the navy, where he said I was certain to shine, as I never was out of scrapes and turmoils at school and at home ; but I had no ambition. What does old Topham's song end with?" and pouring out his grog, Bartelot began to sing :

" ' Ambition, they tell me, has charms for us all,
But well I'm convinced they are charms that must pall ;
The pageant of splendour may lure for a while,
But soon we grow sick of its weight and its toil ;
Nor can it compare with us, Morley, my boy,
Whose appetites strengthen the more we enjoy.
Then deign, ye kind powers ! with this wish to comply—
May I always be drinking, yet always be dry ! "

After the long voyage, sixty-four miles from the Cabo to Rio seemed a trifle to Morley. He strove to be thankful and content in his heart that the first portion of his watery pilgrimage was nearly accomplished, and that he had now attained what was rather more than the beginning of a future end.

By 5 P.M. they were within seven miles of the land, and the rocky Cabo, a vast insular mass of granite which terminates a long range of mountains, was glowing redly in the light of the Brazilian sun. The highest summit there has an altitude of more than 1500 feet ; the sea and sky around were both serene and beautiful.

The water possessed a strangely pure and crystalline aspect ; so much so, that at times the bed, or what appeared to be the bed of the ocean, was visible, but this was only the flowers of the sea—long and mysterious plants (the *Nereocystis*), which, with a stem no thicker than a spunyarn, grow from their roots in the deep bed of the ocean to the length of 300 feet and more, and have at their upper end a huge bulbous-shaped vesicle, filled with air, which floats upon the surface, or near it, and from this bulb there springs a thick crown of dusky leaves.

These tremendous marine vegetables are more commonly found on the north-western than on the eastern shores of America, but many are to be seen at times off the coast of the southern continent.

Elsewhere Morley's eye could discern masses of rock or coral reefs, that rose to within fifty or sixty feet of the surface,

showing a freight of shellfish, sea-anemones, wondrous creeping things, and fibrous tufts of giant seaweed.

But the scene changed with tropical rapidity, when with midnight there came on sudden black squalls, with heavy rain, deep hoarse thunder, and vivid red lightning, that seemed to flash and play about the granite summits of the Cabo Frio with a brilliance that eclipsed the gleam of its lighthouse, which marks now where our frigate, the *Thetis*, perished.

Bartelot reefed his fore and mizzen topsails; but when the weather faired he shook out the reefs again. He set his main topgallant-sail, mainsail, and jib, and the rising sun that gilded the mountains which bound the plain of the Corcovada saw the *Princess* running fair into the lovely bay of Rio de Janeiro, with the British ensign flying at the peak, her private colours at the foremast-head.

Now were heard the rattle of the chain-cables, as they were hauled up from the tier, laid along the decks in French-fake, that is, in lines all clear, and bent to the working anchor.

The harbour of Rio, one of the finest in the world in size and form, stretches twenty nautical miles inland, widening to the breadth of eighteen miles at its centre. On its western slope stands the city of Rio, or, as it is sometimes called, San Sebastian, crowded with magnificent edifices.

The entrance to the bay from the ocean is bounded at its southern extremity by the Pao d'Asucar, or sugarloaf, a conical mountain, more than 1200 feet in height.

On the northern side the ocean rolls in snowy foam against a mighty rock of glistening granite, at the base of which stands the castle of Santa Cruz, with a triple platform, from which 120 pieces of cannon point towards the sea.

Looking beyond this entrance, the bay is seen to be studded with little isles, nearly eighty in number, clothed with glorious verdure, brilliant with fruit, giant flowers, and wondrous foliage, though here and there the grim muzzle of a cannon shows where a battery is built, and among these isles a fleet of small steamers are always puffing and gliding.

Beyond all this and around it—a new scene, indeed, to Morley—the great mountains of the new world rise in a thousand fantastic forms, covered to their summits with wood, forming a vast amphitheatre around Rio de Janeiro, the City of Palaces, a title which it well deserves.

Morrison, who had been getting the cable clear, and the anchors hoisted over the bows, now came to Morley's side, and pointed out the church of Nossa Senhora da Gloria, on the lofty hill that juts into the sea, between the city and the

Praya de Flamengo ; and then indicating the castle, on which the gaudy flag of the Brazilian Empire floated, he said, in his deep Scotch accent :

“ In 1515, where that great castle stands, there stood only a wooden fort, built in that year by Juan Diaz de Salis, to be a place of refuge for Protestants, and forty years after they named it the Castle of Coligni ; but the Portuguese came upon it in the night, and put every living thing in it to the sword. It was Juan Diaz who gave the place its name, Janeiro, as his ship ran into the bay in the first days of January. A wild place it must have been then.”

“ Hands prepare to shorten sail ! Stand by the anchor ! ” were now the orders of Bartelot.

The canvas was clewed up preparatory to being handed, and the light warm breeze from the wooded shore swept through the bared rigging and spars.

Already the seamen were hurrying up aloft ; the small bower anchor was let go with a plunge ; hoarsely rushed the chain-cable as it vanished from the deck through the hawse-hole ; and now the *Princess* rode at her moorings in eight-fathom water, in the noble harbour of Rio de Janeiro—the region where eternal spring and endless summer reign.

And now, leaving Morley Ashton to push his way among the skippers and merchant-officers in the Rua Direta, and all its branching streets, seeking a mode of transit to the Isle of France, while Tom Bartelot sends his crew ashore, and procures a copper-coloured gang to “ break bulk ” and start his cargo, we shall return to Ethel Basset, whom we left several chapters back, with her quondam lover, on board the *Hermione*, of London.

CHAPTER XIX.

ETHEL AMID THE ATLANTIC ISLES.

UNLIKE the *Princess*, which, as we have shown, accomplished a most prosperous voyage, the *Hermione* encountered a series of head-winds and hard gales ; she had several of her spars carried away, and even before skirting the Bay of Biscay, had to put in requisition her spare foretopmast and topsail yards.

This was considered by all on board a singularly unlucky beginning, as Captain Phillips said ; all the more so, that a

pair of sparrows had built their nest in the forecrosstrees, during the time that the ship lay in the London dock, and had finished it, too, undeterred by all the noise and bustle around them.

This was considered so good an omen, that the event was actually recorded in the ship's log ; biscuit crumbs were scattered in the tops for their support, and orders were given not to disturb the birds, if possible, so they went to sea with the ship. The female sat upon her eggs, while the male hopped and twittered about the top and below in search of the scattered crumbs ; but in the first tough breeze, as some ill-disposed fellow—supposed to be Pedro Barradas—was going aloft at night, the nest was destroyed, and flung with its two little eggs on the deck ; the poor birds were swept away to sea, and hence, as Mr. Quail affirmed, came the ill-luck, the head-winds and hard gales, encountered by the ship.

After passing the Madeira Isles her foremast was carried away, and at the very time when Tom Bartelot was informing Morley Ashton that she should be somewhere off St. Helena, the *Hermione* was creeping slowly under a jury foremast into the harbour of Teguisse (the chief town of Lanzarota, one of the Canary Isles), to refit ; and there the dockyard appliances were so small and so poor, that she was delayed for more than a fortnight.

Mr. Basset took Ethel and Rose to a posada in the town, where, though the accommodation was miserable, as usual in all Spanish posadas, it was a vast relief, after the discomfort, circumscribed space, and monotony of the ship, to tread on *terra firma*, under the cloudless sky of the Canary Isles, and to see the sheep, and goats, and camels, too, browsing in the grassy pastures.

The inevitable Hawkshaw, glad, for certain cogent reasons of his own, to keep clear of the ship, or at least of its crew, of course accompanied them, as Mr. Basset's guest.

It should have been mentioned that when the captain came on deck next morning, after recognising Pedro Barradas on the yard-arm overnight, so complete was the change in his costume and toilet, that scarcely any one knew him.

His thick, luxuriant brown beard and most cherished moustaches were shaved clean off ; his hair, of which he had a great quantity, was now shorn quite short. In lieu of the scarlet tarboosh, in which he had been hitherto wont to figure, he wore a white wide-awake ; and his military boots with brass heels were exchanged for a pair of white shoes with yellow soles.

For the natty, short sack-coat, and Spanish sash beneath it, a surtout and vest of most ample and business-like cut had been substituted. On the whole, his *tout ensemble*, if less picturesque and striking, was infinitely more respectable.

"Lor' bless me!" exclaimed old Nance Folgate, terrified to meet on the companion-stair a man whose eyes and voice she alone could recognise.

Captain Phillips and Mr. Basset laughed heartily at the change; even Ethel smiled, and Rose made great fun of it; and it was soon remarked that, with his hirsute appendages, the *ci-devant* captain relinquished all his South American reminiscences, the Spanish interjections and Yankeeisms, with which his conversation had been so fully flavoured hitherto—a change greatly for the better.

Hawkshaw pleaded the heat they were soon to encounter as a reason for his new toilet, though they were scarcely clear of the "chops of the Channel." For many weighty reasons, best known to himself, he kept a nervous watch upon Pedro and Zuares Barradas; and the appearance of either of these seamen coming aft, to take the wheel, or perform any other ship's duty, sent the Texan captain below, with a celerity and abruptness which was so often repeated, that there were times—especially when he was conversing with the young ladies, Mr. Basset, Captain Phillips, or Dr. Heriot—that it became so strange as to excite remark, though no one could have understood what his conduct meant.

The rough weather encountered by the *Hermione* after leaving the British Channel afforded ample excuses for remaining below; but how to avoid his dreaded South American acquaintances during the months of a protracted voyage he knew not, and he felt the wretched conviction that it was impossible!

Whether it was a dread of some destructive revelation, or whether his growing love for Ethel had somewhat purified this luckless and guilty fellow's mind, we know not; neither can we say whether he repented the terrible past, as that could be known to Heaven and himself only. It is very possible that he may have felt alike repentance and remorse, with gleams of hope for the future, as no human character is so utterly bad as to be without one redeeming point at least.

"No time," says Robert Burns (in one of his unpublished letters preserved at Edinburgh), "can cast a light further on the present resolves of the human mind; but time will reconcile, and has reconciled, many a man to that iniquity which at first he abhorred."

The appearance of Zuares had even a more exciting effect on Hawkshaw than that of Pedro.

Zuares, the unwitting matricide of the Barranca Secca, was a more youthful, but equally picturesque-looking ruffian. He was decidedly handsome, with well-cut features; his eyes and nose were very fine; but he had a cruel and savage mouth, which he inherited from his Mexican blood.

It seemed the very machination of Satan, or of a retributive destiny, that, after he had so fearfully rid himself of Ashton, now placed him in the same ship with these two men.

If seen by them, if known and recognised, he felt himself lost with Ethel, Mr. Basset, and all on board.

Should they meet him face to face, he dare not decline their recognition, and with that recognition the assumption or resumption of an old and insolent familiarity from which he had everything to dread, and from which he shrank instinctively now.

Poor wretch! his position was far from enviable.

He felt conscious, probably, that he had led a wild and reckless, a wandering and unprofitable life; but softened now by his regard for Ethel Basset—though even that regard was full of self-interest and selfishness—he mentally resolved that, if he were spared from this disaster, this hourly terror of exposure, and if he escaped the toils and perils in which those Barradas could involve him, that he would turn over a new leaf, and be for the future a better man.

“Ah, these new leaves!” exclaims Digby Grand; “if the half of them were turned over, what a gigantic volume they would form in the life of many of us!”

With this resolution, perhaps, he strove to soothe the remorse, or guilt, he felt for the outrage on Morley Ashton. It was not his first crime, probably, nor the first time he had taken the life of a fellow creature in some fashion.

“Barradas—Barradas!” he never ceased to mutter. “How the wheel of fortune turns! What fiend brought us together again? But fate is fate, and there is an end of it!”

Consequently, right glad was he to avail himself of a fortnight on shore at the Canaries, till the *Hermione* was reported ready for sea, and had the blue peter fluttering at her new foremast head.

Rose found, in the Canaries, and boat visits to Santa Clara, Aleguena, and Graciosa (three islets adjoining Lanzarota), and to the old Spanish Castle, which, in 1596, the Earl of Cumberland assailed at the head of 600 men-at-arms, ample materials for the diary she was keeping; and Ethel wrote

letters to the Pages, and other dear friends at Acton-Rennel, dated from the Posado de St. Iago, opposite the Canal de Bocagna, detailing the terrors and dangers they had undergone, in such exaggerated terms as young ladies generally resort to when excited, or fired by a desire to run into flowery description.

A fine day in July—but all days are fine in that region, save those of October and November—saw the *Hermione* entirely refitted, her spars and hamper all a-taunto, under a heavy press of sail, once more at sea, and leaving the Cape of Mascona rapidly astern, while the sharp cone of Teneriffe rose as rapidly from the ocean on her weather-bow.

For some time after this the voyage was truly delightful, and as Mr. Basset had anticipated, the change of scene and of air acted most beneficially on Ethel. She was in excellent medical hands, too; for young Dr. Heriot, though more disposed to be attentive to Rose, was unremitting in his care of Ethel, to whose pale cheek the colour was gradually returning.

The atmosphere, especially in the evening, under the quarter-deck awning, was charming, and a day seldom passed without something occurring to break the monotony of the voyage.

The Canary Isles were passed in succession; one day they had a glimpse of Africa, about twenty miles distant. It was the great headland forming the extremity of Jebel Kahl, or the Black Mountains of Sahara.

Low, and dim, and distant looked that little strip of blue coast. How strange to think it was a portion of that vast continent of perils and wonders—the land of Park, Lander, Livingstone, Speke, and Grant!

After leaving the Canaries they had a tedious calm for nearly three days—a fresh delay.

The ocean was still as the waters of an English mere in summer. The sails hung straight and motionless upon the yards, though the ship kept sheering round from time to time, her bowsprit pointing to all the points of the compass in slow succession, and occasional swells that heaved slowly up and sunk noiselessly down in the glassy sea, jerked the neglected rudder and its wheel a few inches to and fro.

Ethel and Rose sat reading under the awning; the doctor was fishing over the taffrail; the mates were forward superintending the men, who were busy cleaning the fore-castle.

Captain Phillips sat somewhat moodily on a spare topsail-yard, that was slung alongside, smoking, with his short fat

legs dangling over the water, and his eyes fixed on the horizon, as if he was waiting to *see* the coming breeze.

Tempted by the heat, Manfredi was about to strip for a bathe about the ship's bows, when the Yankee, Bill Badger, who was busy painting the grating of the head-boards, sung out :

"Take care, mate ! for here comes a fellow that 'ud gobble up the prophet Joaney. Once in his ballast port, I calculate you'll never be a capting, Mr. Manfreddy. Blowed if I don't get a harpoon, and have a shy at the beggar !"

"Look, Miss Rose," cried Captain Phillips, from his perch on the spare topsail-yard, "there goes a sea-lawyer."

Rose looked at her papa and laughed, while the ship's cook threw over a piece of rancid pork, with a shark skewer in it, for mischief, as there is a natural antipathy between Jack Tar and Jack Shark.

The shark—a white one—turned on his back, and the piece of pork that floated steadily on the oily sea vanished into his capacious maw, the opening and shutting of which made the girls shudder, and old Nurse Folgate, who was knitting beside them, utter a "Lor' a mussy me !" with great earnestness.

Hawkshaw hoped the heat might tempt either of the Barradas to take a bathe alongside, but they were much too cautious to do so.

"How horrible !" said Ethel, as the monster sailed away, with his black triangular fin erect.

"A fellow like that would dart at a man in the sea, and snap him up as a snipe would a fly," said Dr. Heriot. "I have heard, Miss Basset, of the master of a Guinea ship, among whose cargo of slaves there prevailed a strange rage for drowning, in the belief that, after death, they would be restored to their native country, their tribes and wigwams ; to cure them of this, or to convince them that they could not reanimate their dead bodies, he ordered one, a gigantic negro, who had died at a ring-bolt, to be towed overboard by the heels at the end of a line. A shark rose. In an instant twenty men tailed on the rope to haul the body in, yet that instant did not suffice. The shark devoured every morsel save the feet and ankles, which were tied by the end of the rope."

One day a whale rose suddenly, about a quarter of a mile from the ship, and brought a shriek of dismay from old Nance Folgate, who clung to Manfredi, the Italian mate, on seeing it floating steadily, like Sinbad's island in the sea ; and still greater was her terror when he spouted a cloud

of water in the air, stuck up his flukes, and went surging down with a sound like a roar to the depths below.

On another day there came a shoal of porpoises from windward of the ship, rushing in madlike and headlong career.

On they come, on and on, surging, rollicking, flashing in the sunshine, as they leaped from one bank of water to the other, all keeping time in their ocean race, all going together, and all crossing the ship's bows in one frolicksome shoal. So close do they pass that their little red eyes can be seen twinkling and glancing; and away they go, surging and leaping on towards the far horizon, till they are lost or blinded amid "the grey and melancholy wastes" of ocean. It is always on a breezy day that these living shoals are seen. Rose clapped her hands, as if at a horse-race, when they passed.

"You English call them porpoises, from our Italian term, *porco-pesce*," said the soft voice of Manfredi; "but is it not strange, Mees Rose, that they do go so very fast with only three fins?"

"Only three, Mr. Manfredi?"

"Yes; one on the back, placed rather below the middle and two on the breast—no more."

But greater was the excitement when a water-logged vessel, whose deck was almost flush with the sea—a brig which the waves of some mighty storm had swept of everything from stem to stern, so that the stumps of her two masts, and a few weather-worn timber-heads, alone were visible above her planks—was passed, drifting silent and alone, about two miles to leeward.

The melancholy object excited, of course, much remark, and made Ethel and her sister weep, and speculate upon the probable fate of her crew, their story, and the story of that poor deserted ship, to the rusty chain-plates of which the barnacles and seaweed clung, as it drifted away into the wastes of sea and sky; and Ethel thought of the oft-quoted words of the Psalmist—words she had heard again and again in the old church at home:

"They who go down to the sea in ships, and do business in the great waters, these see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the mighty deep."

Dr. Heriot, who was a very enterprising young man, Hawkshaw, and Manfredi, proposed to have a boat lowered for the purpose of visiting the wreck, and ascertaining her name; but the *Hermione* was running free, under a press of sail, and

Captain Phillips and Mr. Quail flatly refused permission ; so that the old wreck was rapidly dropped astern.

On the warm summer Sunday mornings, when the quarter-deck—that looked so very small when they came on board at first—got an extra drenching, holystoning, and swabbing ; when the running rigging aft was more neatly coiled over the belaying-pins, and between the four six-pound carronades ; when the binnacle lamps and other brasses had received an extra polish ; when camp-stools, cushions, and hassocks were brought from the cabin, and “ a church was rigged ;” when the somewhat motley crew assembled in their cleanest attire, and stood by, bareheaded and respectful (to all outward appearance), to hear jolly Captain Phillips read the grand and impressive service of the Church of England, with Mr. Quail, the first mate, or Dr. Leslie Heriot, acting as clerk, making all the responses ; while the great ship, with her vast spread of white canvas bellying on the wind, and shining in the sun, with the British flag flying aloft in honour of the day, though no other eyes could behold it, save those in heaven ; when all this took place weekly, we say, Ethel was indeed soothed and charmed by the solemnity of the scene, upon that illimitable world of waters, and her thoughts naturally reverted to the grey old house of God at home, with its Norman spire and Gothic porch, the pew where last she had sat by the side of Morley Ashton, and then she seemed to see the old yew-tree that cast its shadow on her beloved mother’s grave—the grave which lay in that dear English soil she never more might tread, never more might see.

CHAPTER XX.

MOONLIGHT ON THE SEA.

AT such times as the Divine Service on Sunday, when there was a great muster of the crew, Hawkshaw always remained below on one pretence or other, unless he had assured himself that his two *bêtes noires*, the Barradas, were neither at the wheel nor in “ the church,” which was so easily improvised upon the quarter-deck.

On these occasions, it was observable that Rose Basset and the young Scotch doctor always read from the same book.

This did not fail to attract the notice of Captain Phillips, who, being unable to resist a joke thereon, gave them once or

twice a remarkably knowing wink, in the very middle of the service he was reading so solemnly, a proceeding which very much scandalised Mr. Samuel Quail, and made Rose colour and glance nervously at her papa.

And there was one Sunday when, after prayers had been read, the crew dismissed forward to smoke, sing, or mend their clothes, as usual on Sundays, and the passengers had assembled in the cabin for lunch, he proceeded to quiz poor Rose and the doctor, by offering, in his "double capacity of skipper and parson, to perform a Scotch marriage for them on the high seas."

Rose reddened again with so much real annoyance at this broad jest, that Captain Phillips offered a species of salt-water apology, which rather made the matter worse; so the handsome young doctor blushed too, all the more so, perhaps, that his soup was scalding hot, and the thermometer at the bulk-head stood at eighty in the shade.

"After the rigs I have seen run by those who live by salt water," continued the jolly captain, "I have always thanked my stars—wherever they may be—that I am still a bachelor; yet had I, in other times, met such a young lady as you, Miss Rose, mayhap I'd have struck my colours and changed my mind—who knows? But perhaps things are best as they are."

"You should be ashamed of saying so, captain," said Rose; "and I am certain that some one has missed a good kind husband, through your mistake."

"Mayhap, miss, mayhap; but 'tis too late now for old Jack Phillips to 'bout ship, and make a fool of himself, by hauling up for the gulf of matrimony."

"Gulf? Fie, captain!" exclaimed Rose; "you should call it a bay, or happy haven."

"Do you know, captain, how they treated old bachelors in Sparta?" asked the doctor.

"Stopped their grog, mayhap, or keel-hauled 'em, I shouldn't wonder."

"They were stripped of their clothes, and in the coldest days of winter were forced to run through the principal streets, chanting songs, full of sharp sarcasms upon their own condition."

"Deuced hard lines, doctor; was there any other nice little thing they made us do?"

"Yes," resumed the doctor, furbishing up his Scotch latinity to punish the captain for making Rosa blush, "Athēnæus, the grammarian of Naucratis——"

"My eyes! there's a name to turn in of a night with!"

"Well, he tells us that there was, every year, a laughable festival celebrated in a great temple, at which all the bachelors of a certain age were compelled to attend, that the ladies might taunt, mock them, and slap their faces as much as they pleased."

Honest Phillips rubbed his curly head, the brown hair of which was becoming thickly seamed with gray, slapped his sturdy thigh, and burst into a hearty fit of laughter.

"Overhaul the charts, Quail, and see where this same Sparta lies. Its latitude and longitude won't do for me, Sam. Another glass of wine, ladies, and then I must be off to relieve the deck, and let Mr. Manfredi down."

The night that followed this day was peculiarly lovely—lovely even beyond what night is in the tropics at times.

Mr. Basset, the captain, Mr. Quail, and the second mate were having a quiet rubber in the cabin; Hawkshaw had fallen asleep on one of the lockers, or pretended to do so; Rose and Dr. Heriot were promenading the deck aft the mainmast, in very close conversation, and Ethel was seated alone near the taffrail, at the stern of the *Hermione*, which was gliding through the water with an almost imperceptible motion, for the wind was light and steady.

She was alone, for no one was near her, save the man at the wheel, Zuares Barradas, who seemed oblivious of all save his duty. The light of the binnacle lamps fell steadily on his dark olive face, his bare neck, arms, and breast, on which the figure of a Madonna had been graven with gunpowder, on the rings in his ears, and on his black, glittering eyes.

The ship had her three courses, top and topgallant sails, royals, and lower studding-sails set; and this vast cloud of canvas shone white as snow in the moonlight, the bellying curve of every sail being beautifully and softly rounded into shadow by the chastened radiance, and with every heave she gave upon the long glassy rollers, the reef-points pattered like a shower upon the taut and swollen bosom of the sail.

Star after star twinkled out and was lost, and then seen again under the arched leach of each square of canvas, as the ship rose and fell with each successive heave. Forward she was sunk in silence; the watch were clustered in a group near the chocks of the long-boat or main-hatch; the rest of the crew were all seated together about the windlass and fore-castle-bitts.

Nothing broke the silence, save Mr. Basset's voice, or Captain Phillips's laugh, in the lighted cabin, the occasional

rattle of the rudder in its case, the wash of the passing sea under the counter, or the gurgle of the long wake astern, that seemed like a path of green fire amid the eddying bosom of the deep, the unfathomable deep, that held, as Ethel believed, the remains of him she loved and mourned, as a widow, in her heart of hearts.

Full of thoughts of home, of sadness, and of the past, Ethel reclined against the taffrail, with a heart inspired by deep and indescribable emotions; and her dark, swimming eyes wandered with admiration over the phantom-like outline of the vast white ship, gliding in awful silence unerringly over the solitude of the broad ocean, beneath the mighty dome of the star-studded sky.

Her thoughts were finding vent in tears, when she found that some one was near her. Passing a handkerchief across her eyes, she drew her cloak closely round her as this person came forward, and politely touched his cap. It was Manfredi, the handsome and pleasing young Italian mate.

"Pardon me, Miss Basset," said he, in his distinct yet somewhat broken English; "I have been observing you for some time, and am very sorry to see you so *triste*—so sad."

"I was not sad, Mr. Manfredi."

"Oh yes, you were," said he, with smiling earnestness.

"The great beauty of the night impressed me. To you, perhaps, it may be little worth noticing after the skies of your native Italy."

"The skies are clearer here than in Italy; the air is purer and freer," he replied, with a sad smile.

"When so far away, do you never wish for home?"

"I did so once."

"And now?"

"I have no home, save on the sea."

This was said with such a melancholy and pathetic brevity, that Ethel gazed at the young man inquiringly, but in silence.

"I had a home in Italy once, madam—a home, though humble, as happy, perchance, as yours in England; but the Austrians came and brought death and sorrow upon it, so I turned my back on the place where the olives and acacias grew before my father's house, and returned there no more."

"The Austrians," repeated Dr. Heriot, who, with Rose leaning on his arm, had now joined them; "we, in England, occasionally heard of great outrages committed by them."

The black eyes of Manfredi sparkled, and a sigh escaped him.

"Mr. Manfredi is sighing," said the heedless Rose; "de-

pend upon it that love has something to do with his memories of Italy."

"You mistake, madam," said the third mate, with a smile at the lively girl, whose fair English face and fine merry eyes looked so beautiful in the moonlight, that the younger Barradas at the wheel regarded her more than his compass, so that frequently the sails shivered aloft, and he was somewhat wild in his steering; "my memories of Italy are, many of them, pure and charming, as if love formed a portion of them; and yet I wish all these memories to die together."

"What kind of paradox is this, my dear Manfredi?" asked Dr. Heriot.

"It is no paradox."

"We have a Scottish writer who says that 'No thought, no delightful memory, ever dies; it may remain silent for a season, but it will come from those inexpressibly deep regions of memory; it will come at some time to brighten the present, and to brighten the recollection of the past.'"

The face of the young Scotchman flushed as he spoke, with Rose's pretty hand trembling on his arm; but the Italian only smiled sadly and said:

"You mistake me, doctor. The pure and tender memories of my home are so inseparably blended with the sad and bitter, that I have no desire but to forget them altogether, for the former add but poignancy to the latter. Surely you must have heard the story of my brother, little Attilio Manfredi, whose assassination was termed the great crime of the House of Hapsburg? As such it went the circuit of the English newspapers, which received the story from the *Monitore Toscana*, whose sheets were under the revision of the assassin, the Austrian commandant."

After a silence of a minute, for the Italian seemed labouring under deep emotion, Dr. Heriot said:

"No; I do not remember of this, Manfredi."

"Pray tell us about it," said Rose.

"Pray do," added Ethel.

"Wait, ladies, please, until the wheel is relieved, and I shall tell you a sad but simple tale of barbarous cruelty."

A tall, rawboned Yankee sailor, with a hooked nose and villainous square jaw, now relieved Zuares Barradas, who civilly touched his hat and went forward, just as the whist-players came on deck, and proceeded to exchange tobacco-pouches and light their pipes.

Immediately on discovering that the helmsman was changed, Hawkshaw appeared on deck and joined the

group, to whom Manfredi proceeded to explain what he meant by relating one of the darkest stories that ever disgraced the pretty voluminous annals of continental military tyranny.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE STORY OF A BRAVE BOY.

“IN 1850,” began Adrian Manfredi, “I was, with my elder brother, Attilio, a schoolboy at home, in our father’s house at Pistoja, and had no more idea then of becoming a seaman or a wanderer on the sea, than I have now of filling the chair of St. Peter.

“Our father was a sculptor ; his studio was always filled with choice efforts in Tuscan and Carrara marble, in alabaster and chalcedony. He was a leading member of the *Accademia delle Belle Arti* : but in that land of artists his means were small ; hence our living was frugal and our house somewhat humble, because it was very old, being the same in which Pope Clement IX. was born.

“My brother Attilio was said to be as beautiful as an angel by all the mothers of Pistoja. Indeed, he was a very handsome little boy, and frequently served my father as a model ; thus Attilio’s figure appears in more than one of the groups which he contributed to the Great Exhibition at London in 1851.

“Versions of my brother’s story have already, as I have stated, appeared in the English newspapers. I now propose to tell you *mine*.

“Pistoja, our native place, is a Tuscan town, situated amid a fertile country, at the base of the beautiful Apennines. In fancy I can see it still, with its carved cathedral of snowy Carrara marble ; its convents and hospitals ; its quaint streets of the middle ages ; its old and crumbling walls, that were built by Didier, last king of the Lombards, and the clear blue waters of the Ombrone, bordered by chestnut groves, and lands that teem with corn, wine, and oil, all reddened in the setting sun, as I saw them last ; and that feature, the blot and blight on all the rest, the accursed Austrian eagle, that floats above its ancient fortress.

“Yes, Pistoja, like too many other Italian towns, had or has an Austrian garrison, and, at the time I refer to—the first months of 1850—all Europe was filled with ardour, interest,

and sympathy by the gallant stand made by the Hungarians, under Kossuth, and other chiefs, against their imperial oppressors ; and nowhere did their victories and their downfall find a more ready echo than in the hearts of Italians.

“The boys of the Academia de Pistoja, which my brother Attilio and I attended—he was then twelve, and I but ten years of age—held a jubilee with others, on an evil day, when fresh tidings of some new battle came. We received a holiday. I went to fish in the Ombrone, and my brother returned home.

“When, chancing to pass near the palace of the Bishop of Pistoja, where the Austrian commandant, Colonel Count Rudolf de Veinrich, had quartered himself (after expelling our venerable prelate), Attilio saw a number of soldiers in what he considered the Hungarian uniform—brown tunics, embroidered and faced with red.

“When passing the first sentinel, Attilio lifted his little hat and cried :

“‘Viva Kossuth ! Viva Hongria !’

“‘Viva !’ replied the sentinel, whose comrades joined in the cry, adding :

“‘Eviva—bravo Hongrie !’

“Thus emboldened, the rash boy continued to wave his hat and shout the name of Kossuth.

“‘Come hither, boy,’ cried the soldiers, in strange Italian ; ‘we wish to speak with you.’

“Attilio, believing that he beheld the countrymen of the Hungarian dictator, approached, but was instantly surrounded and seized, and then, to his astonishment, he found himself in the hands of a party of Croats, whose uniform, in his ignorance of such matters, the boy supposed to be Hungarian.

“They were proceeding to drag him into the guard-house, when Attilio, active and nimble, glided like an eel through their hands, sprang from an open window and escaped, but was closely pursued.

“Fearing to take shelter in our house, which would implicate our innocent parents, and insure their ruthless pillage, he left the town behind him, and fled, bareheaded, towards the woods. As it chanced, he came close to where I was fishing in the Ombrone.

“‘Change jackets with me, Adrian !’ he exclaimed, ‘the Austrians are after me—change, but ask no questions.’

“We exchanged in a moment ; my jacket was black, and his a bright green ; thus, when he disappeared, the Croats came upon me. I uttered an involuntary cry of real terror as

they seized me, and handled me very roughly before they discovered their mistake.

"Then I laughed at them, on which they spitefully broke my rod, and seized my fish basket, with its contents. A closer search was instituted for poor Attilio, and at night he was dragged from our dear mother's arms, and reconducted to the guard-house, where he was brought before Count Rudolf de Veinrich, colonel of the Regiment de Radetzki.

"Knowing well the kind of hands he had fallen into, Attilio gave himself up for lost; yet he was brave as a lion; his courage never deserted him, and, in contempt of his captors, he spat upon the Austrian flag that hung over the guard-house door. Yet he wept, when in the dark, for the mother from whom he had been torn—the poor little boy of twelve happy years!

"I may mention that though, like the Italians, the Croats generally profess the Catholic religion, in the military portion of that semi-barbarous race there is a strong element of the Greek schism, and of this last was the Regiment de Radetzki composed. Its soldiers had all the worst qualities of the Croat; they were revengeful, deceitful, intemperate, prone to robbery, and officered by Germans, who, when in Tuscany, cared little to restrain their licentiousness.

"Their colonel, notwithstanding his title of count, was a man without family or friends, save such as position gave him, without kindly sympathy or common human feeling. His mother had been found speechless and dying near the new Scottish gate of Vienna, and she expired soon after in the Allgemeine Krankenhaus, or great infirmary of the city, leaving her child to the foundling hospital, by the name of Rudolf.

"Ten years after a person of rank, a prince of the Russian Empire, on searching the books of the said hospital, discovered in this foundling his own son, the mother being a hapless Polish woman, whom he had deluded and abandoned; so the little Rudolf, on the payment of so many thousand ducats, became a count, and in time rose to the rank of colonel of Croats; and, as such, exercised the stern military laws of Austria with unexampled severity.

"On bringing my brother before him, the Croats charged Attilio with attempting to induce them to desert in the name of Kossuth; and then with defiling the flag of the Empire by spitting thereon.

"'Did he attempt to seduce you by money?' asked the colonel, with a frown on his face.

“ ‘Yes, Herr Colonel,’ replied a corporal named Schwartz, ‘and he produced eighteen *quattrini*, which he had found in the pocket of my jacket, and which were in value about two-pence British.’

“On this the colonel, undeterred by the manly aspect of the beautiful little boy—for my brother Attilio was beautiful—struck him with his gloved hand, and with his sheathed sword, repeatedly.

“He then ordered him to be put into one of the dark, damp, and horrid dungeons of the old castle of Pistoja, where, among the rats, the toads, the gloom, and the cobwebs, the poor boy wept for his parents, and for me; wept in cold and forlorn misery, on some wet straw, near which a clay pitcher of water was placed.

“He had a stone whereon to rest his head if weary, and his right wrist was fettered by a chain to his left ankle.

“ ‘Sono desolato! Sono perduto!’ (‘I am ruined! I am lost!’) he kept repeating from time to time.

“Our father was crushed with grief, our mother was filled with wild despair, and I was stupefied!”

“And they dared to seize him thus?” exclaimed Mr. Basset, flushing with indignation like an honest John Bull, while vigorously polishing his forehead with his silk handkerchief; “a frightful outrage on the rights of the subject! Where were the police? Where was that great bulwark of liberty, the writ of *habeas corpus*?”

Manfredi smiled sadly, and replied:

“You forget that I am talking of Tuscany.”

“True, my dear sir, true; but go on.”

“The poor boy!” said Ethel mournfully.

“Those odious, hateful Austrians!” commented Rose.

“D——n them!” was the addendum of Captain Jack Phillips, while Manfredi resumed:

“In this horrible condition, crushed for a time in body and in soul, and drowned in tears, he remained, while all access was denied to him, even to our parents; but ultimately he was found by the good Padre Marraccini, who had come to visit the sick prisoners, and who, by chance or mistake, was shown by Corporal Schwartz into the atrocious dungeon where our poor little Attilio lay.

“Undeterred by the grim Croat, who carried a smoky lamp, the light of which scared the rats and toads, who were seen hurrying away to their dark and slimy recesses, the child leaped up with a cry of joy, and hastened towards the padre, who was our father’s friend, but in hastening fell,

for his chain was short, and cramped the action of his limbs.

“‘Water, Padre Marraccini!’ he exclaimed hoarsely, ‘water; for I am dying of thirst, and they have *salted* what is in that pitcher.’

“With great difficulty the commiserating padre procured him some water in the hollow of a broken bottle; the corporal would give nothing else, and it cut the poor boy’s mouth, so that he drank his own blood, his tears and the water together.

“‘My mother, my father—are they well?’ he asked.

“‘Yes.’

“‘It seems so long since I saw them—the day before yesterday when I went to school,’ continued Attilio, weeping, with his head on the padre’s shoulder. ‘And Adrian, my brother, did they hurt him, for he changed jackets with me?’

“‘Hush!’ said the padre, glancing at the stolid Croat who stood by them, with a lamp flaring in one hand, and his drawn bayonet glittering in the other.

“‘Get me out of this, Padre Marraccini; pray get me out of this place, and home to my mother. Oh, my mother! my mother!’

“‘I will, dear Attilio, I will—that is if I can.’

“‘I shall take courage. I shall be a man!’

“‘Do, until I return from the commandant.’

“With dire forebodings in his heart, the poor old padre hastened to the count, whom he found seated at his wine, after dinner, with several Austrian officers, in the saloon of the bishop’s palace.

“After enduring considerable annoyance—even insult—from the Croatian sentinels and German lackeys—insults which he endured with contempt, perhaps, rather than with meekness, and feeling himself the servant of a higher Master than even the Emperor of Austria—he was admitted to an audience, and he begged—he dared not, in such a presence, demand—‘the release of the child Attilio Manfredi, who had been seized by the soldiers of the garrison.’

“‘Seized, Fra Marraccini, for attempting to seduce them by money to desert their colours, in the name of the rebel Magyar, Kossuth,’ replied the count sternly.

“‘Term it as you please, Signor Excellenza. I implore you to allow me to restore him to his parents—his heart-broken mother especially.’

“‘It cannot be; his case is not in my hands.’

“‘In whose then?’

“‘It has been remitted to the general-commanding at Prato.’

“‘And the answer will come——’

“‘About midnight,’ interrupted the count, with a dark glance there was no misinterpreting. ‘Enough, priest. You may go.’

“The poor priest felt his soul sink within him. Instead of seeking our parents, to whom, knowing the Austrians as he did, he could give no hope, he returned to the castle, and sought to prepare the unhappy child, my brother, for the fate, the great change, that was to follow.

“All day had elapsed without food passing the boy’s mouth, and he was in such a state as to be incapable of swallowing the coarse cake which the priest had procured from the Croatian guard.

“Attended by the corporal, named Schwartz, who remained persistently in the dungeon, holding a lamp, the priest sat on the damp stone, with Attilio on his knee; and resting his head caressingly on his shoulder, besought him to make his confession, in the fashion of our church—to speak in whispers, lest the Croat might overhear and mock them.

“But the confession of a boy, a mere child, so pure, so good, and sinless, could interest the soldier but little, and the youthful prisoner made it with charming artlessness; though his large dark eyes began to dilate with mournful anxiety, fear, and wonder, and then to sparkle with courage and sublime resignation, as Fra Marraccini spoke to him in earnest whispers of his spiritual state, beseeching him to think of hopes beyond the grave, of the Father he had in heaven as well as his father on earth, and of the blessed Madonna, who was the mother of all good children.

“Then the little boy began to see clearly the terrible meaning of the priest, and though his heart yearned, and his tears fell fast when he thought of his poor mother who was on earth, and whom he never more should see, at length he became pacified, or worn out by emotion, and fell asleep in the arms of dear old Father Marraccini.

“So the hours stole on, Corporal Schwartz trimmed the lamp, growled and swore, tugged his obstinate moustache, and smoked his huge meerschaum, while the old priest, heedless of his impatience, read the prayers for the dying with the child asleep upon his knee.

“The galloping of a horse was heard, and the clank of a sabre, as an Austrian dragoon passed the grated window of the prison.

“ ‘Poor Attilio !’ groaned the priest.

“ ‘Rouse the prisoner !’ croaked the corporal harshly ; ‘here comes the final order about him !’

“ ‘At that time the clock of the fortress struck midnight.

“ ‘Prato is only six miles from Pistoja, so the general there had not hurried himself.

“ ‘They are not really going to kill me, Fra Marraccini, are they ? Oh ! my sweet mother ! Oh ! my dear father ! and my little brother Adrian, too, shall I never see you any more ?’ exclaimed Attilio, as he was dragged out by the guard.

“ ‘Remember what I have said and taught you,’ whispered the priest ; ‘take courage, and be a Christian.’

“ ‘Yes, padre, and a Tuscan, too !’ replied Attilio, as they were conducted from the dark passages and vaults of the ancient castle into one of the dry ditches, where the moon was shining in all her brilliance—yes, gloriously, as now she shines upon this tropical sea.

“ ‘There, between the high walls of the dry ditch, were several Austrian officers in their white uniforms, with long boots and black varnished helmets, surmounted by plumes or spikes, and double-headed eagles, and all apparently flushed with wine.

“ ‘Beyond them were twelve Croats under arms, drawn in a single rank across the ditch.

“ ‘Corporal Schwartz,’ said the count, as he opened a letter, ‘unlock the prisoner’s chains.’

“ ‘As they were taken off and flung rattling aside, the courage of Father Marraccini rose.

“ ‘Bareheaded before this imposing group, whose breasts were covered with imperial orders and medals, stood Attilio, with his dark eyes cast down, his crossed hands on his breast, humble, but courageous.

“ ‘He looked so fair and handsome !’ says the kind padre, in an account he wrote of this affair. ‘The moonlight silvered him from head to foot, and made him look like an angel. The boy was very sad, but at the same time calm. No entreaty passed his lips to be allowed to look once more upon his parents’ faces. All he said was, “Don’t leave me any more—oh ! see to what a pass they have brought me !”’

“ ‘Priest, bring the boy forward,’ said Count Rudolf imperiously.

“ ‘Marraccini did so, and so clear and bright was the moonlight, which poured aslant over the grand masses of the ancient castle of Pistoja, on the glittering arms of the fero-

cious-looking Croats, on the white uniforms and glittering accoutrements of the Austrian officers, and on the boy's pale face, that the count could read distinctly, as if at noonday, the brief but pompous despatch of the general commanding at Prato.

"'Attilio Manfredi,' said he, 'listen! Your sentence has come hither in German, but I shall read it to you in Italian.'

"The boy bowed, played nervously with his hands, and said:

"'Dio il voglia, Signor Colonello—se piace a Dio!' ('God willing—if it please God!')

"'Attilio Manfredi,' resumed the tall Austrian, raising his voice with a hiccup at times, 'scholar of the Academy of Pistoja, son of Adrian Manfredi, sculptor, and member of the *Accademia delle Belle Arti*, you have been accused and fully convicted of attempting, by bribery, to induce Corporal Carl Schwartz and Private Demetrius Spitzbübbel, with other soldiers of Veltmarshal Radetzki's Croatian Regiment, to desert the fatherly and benign service of his Imperial Majesty Ferdinand I., Emperor of Austria, King of Hungary, Bohemia, Lombardy and Venice, Dalmatia, Croatia, Sclavonia, Galicia, Lodomeria, and Illyria——'

"Dash my wig!" exclaimed Captain Phillips; "why did he omit the Cannibal Islands, and the Viceroy Whanky-fum?"

"Count Rudolf paused to draw breath, as well he might after such a mouthful of words; and again the fine large eyes of the boy dilated with wonder, at a list of names that sounded so strange and barbarous to his Tuscan ear.

"'Have you the courage to hear your sentence?"

"'Si, signore; the blessed Madonna, who is alike the mother of my mother and me, support me!"

"'She does, my son!' cried Marraccini, with enthusiasm.

"'Silence!' exclaimed the count. 'Prisoner—you are to be shot to death by a platoon of twelve men.'

"He deliberately folded the despatch and drew back.

"'The mother of God receive me!' murmured the poor boy; then he added, in a feeble voice, 'Father Marraccini, when it is all over—when I am dead—cut off three locks of my hair: one for my dear father, one for dear, dear mother, and one for my little brother Adrian.'

Here Manfredi drew a locket from his breast and kissed it.

"'You will keep my crucifix for yourself, in memory of your little penitent, and say masses for his soul.'

"It was now the old priest's turn to weep, and he wept aloud, while the brave little Attilio had not a tear in his eye.

"Hoarse, and harsh, and rapid were the German words of command, and in less than three minutes a volley of twelve rifles, that rang like thunder on the still midnight, waking all the echoes of the fortress and of the silent streets of Pistoja, announced that all was over—that the great crime had been committed!

"In five minutes more Attilio was flung into a hasty grave dug in the ditch beneath the castle wall, quicklime was cast over him, and there, uncoffined and unconsecrated, the Croats covered him up.

"My poor little brother!

"My father and mother could not survive the shock of this atrocity. They both died soon after; I was left alone in the world, and, turning my back upon Pistoja, became a sailor and a wanderer.

"A wooden cross nailed on the castle wall, by the kind hand of Fra Marraccina, marked the uncouth grave of my brother till 1860, when the ecclesiastical and civic authorities of Pistoja took heart, and, with many grand and empty ceremonies, exhumed his sad remains, and reinterred them in a coffin within the church of the Confraternita dei Dolori, where they now lie, and may they rest in peace!*

"Fra Marraccini, now Bishop of Pistoja, performed the funeral mass, and wrote me all about it when I was far away, a merchant seaman, in the Southern Pacific. The good man sent me his blessing, and it reached me even there."

As he concluded, the Italian crossed himself, and stepped aside, as if to light a cigar; but Ethel Basset and others knew, by the tremor of his voice, that he had turned to hide his emotion.

"And this cruel colonel—this Austrian," she asked, "what became of him?"

"The curse that fell on Cain followed *him*. He died, not on a gallows, as he deserved, but fell beneath the Danish rifles, at the foot of the Dannewerke," replied Manfredi, with flashing eyes; "and now I am Christian enough to say: May he, too, rest in peace, even as my brother rests at Pistoja."

* For the truth of this story, see the *Athenæum* of 1860.

CHAPTER XXII.

ZUARES AND THE SHARK.

THE voyage of the *Hermione* had now lasted several weeks.

During that time Hawkshaw had never ventured to resume the subject which Ethel had so summarily dismissed on that evening in Acton Chase—the evening which had an end so fatal—the subject of his passion for her, and certainly, as such things grow and mature by propinquity, it was more deeply rooted now than it was then.

He was wisely and sedulously attentive during their daily and hourly intercourse in the circumscribed space on ship-board—attentive, but nothing more.

Yet Ethel knew well what those delicate attentions inferred, and shrank from them systematically and intuitively, and in such a manner, though quiet and gentle, as to give the persevering ex-captain of Texan troopers not the shadow of a hope for the future.

Moreover, he was rather galled to perceive that ever since that evening when Morley Ashton disappeared, Ethel had adopted a nun-like soberness of attire and colour that reminded one of mourning. Save Morley's engagement-ring, she wore no ornament, and Hawkshaw knew that to the black ribbon around her neck was attached a locket, with a braid of Ashton's hair entwined with her own, on one side, and on the other, a miniature of herself, for it was the same locket which he had worn when in Africa, and which she had found lying on his toilet-table on the morning after his mysterious disappearance and supposed death.

She knew that he had always borne it next his heart, and now she resolved it should ever be worn next her own; for with such things do lovers solace themselves.

Hawkshaw knew, we say, quite well, that the black ribbon around that white and slender neck sustained that which she deemed an affectionate memento; so he never dared to ask her what it was, lest its production should serve as a curb and rebuke to himself; and while it was worn thus, he deemed it almost hopeless to resume the task of entreating her to love him, or permit his loving her. So day followed day, and still the great ship that bore them all flew on, but not always successfully, for she encountered such a succession of headwinds, as served almost to prove the truth of what our old friend Bill Morrison, of the *Princess*, stated to Morley, about a ship that had a "shedder" of blood on board; and now, even jolly

Captain Phillips lost his temper with his mates, his crew, himself, and everybody but Rose Basset, who, he was wont to say, "could wind him round her little finger like a bit o' spunyarn."

Though the *Hermione* made long tacks westward and eastward, on the latter sometimes "sighting" the coast of Africa, and though the winds were ahead, and fearfully protracting the voyage, the weather was very fine, almost to monotony, and thus for days after the moonlit evening on which Manfredi told his tale, nothing occurred to disturb the even tenor of the voyage, save the usual sights to be seen at sea.

A drove of porpoises dashing in the wind's eye; a shower of silvery flying-fish crossing the vessel's course, and falling in hundreds, like a glittering torrent, into the sea, from which they had sprung; the stormy petrels tripping gracefully with brown wings outspread, above the snowy spray, or the black fin of a shark prowling for offal in the vessel's wake astern; and once a sucking-fish was seen fixed to the rudder, where it remained for weeks, wriggling and twisting, for no amount of motion in the water, nor even the waves of the wildest storm that furrows up the sea, can shake it off when once it adheres to a ship's bottom, to a whale, or a shark, as it is sometimes wont to do.

Captain Phillips was not superstitious enough to believe that this small parasite retarded the progress of a ship, though such has been for ages the idea of those who live, and have lived, by salt water, as we may find in many

"—a book,
From Captain Noah down to Captain Cook,"

but more especially in the works of many who have written of nautical phenomena between the days of Pliny, Plutarch, and Captain Dampier. Yet to watch from the taffrail its obstinate adherence and wriggling, amid the foam down below, was for some time an amusement which duly found a record in the journal or diary which Rose kept for the special perusal of her friend Lucy Page when they met again.

On another day a ship was passed, "bound for Europe"—they had ceased to speak of Britain now—and all crowded to the side to hear her hailed. On she came, and each vessel backed her maintopsail and showed her colours, plunging stern down and head, their cutwaters dripping with foam, their bright copper, that rose to the bends, flashing in the sun, the sails of the stranger shivering, as the *Hermione* kept the weather-gauge of her.

"Ahoy!" came faintly from a trumpet over the sea; "what ship is that?"

"The *Hermione*, of London—two months out—bound for Singapore. What ship are you?"

"The *Robert Bruce*, of Glasgow, bound for Europe."

"Where from?"

"Batavia."

"Report all well."

"Ay, ay; good-bye."

Then the latitude and longitude, chalked on a black board, would be shown over the quarter of each ship; the colours were dipped at the gaff-peak, the yard-heads filled, a parting cheer exchanged, and each left the other to plough through the waste of waters, and each, ere the sun set, would be "hull down" to the other, at the horizon.

Then Rose hurried to her desk to record this trivial, but to her important, episode; but, alas! events were soon to occur which would make her diary, if kept amid them, the most startling work of the kind ever penned by a human hand—especially a hand so small and so pretty as hers.

That the young Scotch surgeon, Dr. Leslie Heriot, was very much captivated by Rose was evident to all in the cabin; but Rose was so accustomed to have plenty of admirers to talk to, laugh, and flirt with, when on shore, that to have an acknowledged dangler on board ship seemed nothing unusual, and she accepted his attentions accordingly.

She conceived it to be a penchant that had begun with the voyage, and would end with it; but, being less volatile than she was, to our young M.D. and F.R.C.S. of Edinburgh, it was a passion deeper than she thought, and of that she was to have ample proof ere long.

Whether it was that the irritation always consequent to headwinds extended from the occupants of the after cabin to those of the fore-castle bunks, we know not; but about this time a very perceptible difference began to manifest itself in the tone and conduct of the crew towards the passengers—towards each other generally, and the officers of the ship in particular; in short, a general insolence of bearing, to which the latter had been quite unaccustomed.

We have stated that they were a mixed crew; that the coloured, the foreign, and the Yankee elements largely predominated among them; hence, they were not the kind of men to stand upon trifles.

Thus, when two had their grog stopped for insolence to Mr. Quail when ordering them to work the spunyarn winch,

they drew their knives, and swore they "would have blood, if not their Jamaiky rum;" and so menacing generally was the conduct of the rest, that Mr. Quail was polite enough to content himself by entering in the ship's log a threat he affected not to overhear, and gave the mutineers their grog two days after, when both got three tremendous sousings, when ordered to "lay out forward and furl the gib."

The watch on deck at night went sometimes to sleep, committing the care of the vessel to the winds and the man at the helm; and as he occasionally chose to nod also at his post, the *Hermione* was thrice thrown in the wind, hove flat aback with all her studding-sails set, and fortunate it was that, on each of these occasions, the wind was light, or some of her masts would have gone by the board.

Sailors are never idle when at sea, as a ship perpetually finds work for every hand at all times, were it only to "polish the chain cable;" but the crew of the *Hermione* were resolutely slothful.

By day, the men who lounged about the fore-castle bitts, or stood in a row with their backs against the bow to leeward, exchanged strange cries, whoops, signals, and scraps of low ribald songs with those who were engaged aloft, or elsewhere; and more than once the man at the wheel ventured to do so likewise; and when told by Captain Phillips never again to come aft the mainmast, or appear on the quarter-deck, he very deliberately spat thereon, and told him that he and his quarter-deck might both be—not blessed at least.

These unusual indications were quite enough to cause alarm, and a day seldom passed that Captain Phillips, Mr. Quail, and his three mates did not confer about them, or exchange glances, the anxiety and import of which Mr. Basset and his two daughters knew nothing.

The captain dreaded that this secret spirit of disorder might develop itself in scenes of outrage when the old, and now almost disused, ceremony of receiving Neptune and crossing the line took place. To ignore the occasion might cause discontent, and to celebrate it might provoke what he feared; but, fortunately, for twenty-four hours, about the time of crossing the equator, the wind blew almost a hurricane, so Neptune and his visit were alike forgotten.

There was one occasion on which Hawkshaw hoped to get rid, at least, of one of his chief sources of dread—the Bar-radas.

There fell a dead calm one day about noon; the air was almost suffocating, the sea like glass or oil, and there was not

a breath of wind to stir the canvas, or even to wave the scarlet fringes of the quarter-deck awning, under the shade of which Ethel and Rose reclined languidly, with light summer dresses, and fan in hand.

It was strange that with this listlessness below there seemed to be aloft a current of air, which did not descend even to the skysail-yards, but played with the vane and its scarlet streamer on the mainmast-head.

On this day the *Hermione* was about a hundred miles to the northward of St. Helena. The air was thin and ambient; the sunlight, broad and blazing, exhaling from the sea a thin white haze, which at the dim horizon made the sea and sky so blend together that none could tell where cloud began and water ended.

Through the glassy surface of the still, calm sea the black crooked fin of a great shark was seen, as he glided stealthily alongside, preceded, as usual, by the long, wriggling pilot-fish.

It was evidently a white shark, by the mode in which he swallowed; for when the cook cast some offal to him, he turned on his back, and opening his dreadful mouth, exhibited his six-fold row of teeth, triangular, and sharp as razors. This terrible apparatus for mastication is quite flat in the mouth when the shark is in a state of quietude; but when biting or swallowing food, it has the power of erecting it with vast power, by the enormous muscles of the jaw.

The whole body being of a light ash colour, his grim form, with the motion of his pectoral fins, could be distinctly seen, as he floated alongside, or glided to and fro.

Now Zuares Barradas, a daring and athletic young fellow, stripped off everything but his canvas trousers, appeared suddenly in the starboard forechains with a coil of rope in his hand, and a murmur almost rang along the deck, as he made one end of his coil fast to a belaying-pin, preparatory to plunging into the sea.

"Oh, Mr. Quail!" exclaimed Ethel, "is he about to fish for that dreadful thing?"

"No, miss," replied Quail quietly; he is going to attack it."

"Attack it?"

"Yes, in the water. Shouldn't care if a few more tried the same game," growled the mate.

"Is it not rashness—madness? So handsome a young man, too," continued Ethel, greatly excited.

"It is rashness and madness too, as you say, Miss Basset."

"You will prevent it, surely?"

"By no means. The weather is warm ; if he wants a dip, let him have it," replied the mate, who had not forgotten that Zuares was one of the men who had drawn his knife when his grog was stopped.

Before he could be either warned or prevented, the younger Barradas sprang into the jolly-boat, which had been alongside for the carpenter, who had taken advantage of the calm to perform some piece of work upon the outer sheathing.

Shoving off to the full extent of the painter, Zuares stood for a moment in an attitude which showed his handsome, athletic, and tawny form to great advantage, and when the horrible shark came within six yards of the boat, rising at the same time so near to the surface that his grey body shone through the pea-green sea, as if scaled with gold and silver, a cry of terror burst from Ethel Basset, as Zuares plunged headlong into the water, within three feet of his jaws.

Turning instantly, the shark shot towards his expected prey, who rose near his tail, and on the shark turning again, dived once more beneath him, with a skill and courage he could only have acquired on the half-savage shores of his native country.

All on deck beheld this strange and perilous game with breathless interest, and even the ruffianly crew were hushed into silence by a scene so unexpected.

Thrice the ill-matched antagonists appeared on the surface, Zuares swimming with the hand he had at liberty, and keeping the other, with the coiled rope, behind him on his loins, the shark following, but warily, as if in doubt. Each time Zuares got breath he dived headlong down, and on the third time, the monster dived after him, so closely and so simultaneously, that not a doubt remained in the minds of those who lined the ship's gunwale that they had encountered below, and that the bubbles, now rising fast to the surface, would soon be tinged with blood.

Even the swarthy visage and beetling brow of Pedro Barradas grew pale ; and his present emotion found vent in a heavy curse.

Ethel and Rose covered their faces, and sank down on the quarter-deck seat. Nance Folgate gazed steadily at the place where the shark and seaman had disappeared, and continued to utter a series of noisy outcries and "Lor' a mussy me's !"

Five, ten, fifteen, twenty seconds elapsed—they seemed an age ; then suddenly the slack of the rope at the starboard fore-rigging was seen to tighten and pay out,

"Tail on—tally on—yeo-heavo!" was now the cry, and a dozen pairs of strong hands were pulling at it, and meeting, apparently, with a resistance that threatened to snap the rope.

At that moment, Zuares Barradas, panting, breathless, and weary, rose to the surface at some distance, and swam leisurely towards the boat—while the shark—round the tail of which, and the small black fin that is close thereto, he had, in some fashion known best to himself, contrived to loop the rope tightly—was drawn, ignominiously and in great wrath, tail-foremost, from his proper element.

A hurrah, rather varying in its cadence, as it did not come from British throats, greeted the monster's appearance as he floundered alongside, with his head downwards, and his awful jaws rasping and scraping in impotent fury against the ship's outer sheathing.

Up, up he was hoisted tailwise; then the carpenter, armed with his hatchet, descended into the fore-chains, and put an end to his power, by severing the spinal column, after which Jack Shark was cut adrift to perish, and amid great exultation the intrepid Zuares was hauled on board.

His right arm was severely lacerated and bleeding; but this, he stated, was done by one of the monster's fins, and not its jaws.

Handsome though the young fellow was, Ethel and Rose beheld him more with fear than admiration, for his feat savoured of a courage that was reckless or diabolical.

"True," said Dr. Heriot, aside to Mr. Quail; "a fellow who sets so little store upon his own life will set still less upon ours."

Although Captain Phillips would, perhaps, have felt small regret had Zuares shared the fate of the prophet Jonah, he ordered the steward to give him a good tot of grog, and ere long, as the breeze sprang up and sail was made on the ship, nothing remained of an adventure so exciting but an entry made very briefly by Mr. Quail in the ship's log:—

"4 P.M. *Calm. Zuares Barradas caught and killed a shark.*

"6 P.M. *Steady breeze; people employed in shifting the fore-topsail and slushing the mainmast. Pumps attended to as usual.*"

The pumps and the foretopsail were evidently of more importance to Mr. Quail than the shark and its story.

CHAPTER XXIII.

HAWKSHAW'S OLD FRIENDS.

ONE day, Ethel, inspired perhaps by Hawkshaw's evil genius, expressed a wish to go forward and see what she termed "the front part of the ship."

Her papa and Dr. Heriot were near ; but as Hawkshaw had a jealous dislike of Heriot's attention to the sisters, and Mr. Basset had no desire to take more trouble than was absolutely necessary, the ex-captain drew closer to her, on which she said :

"Please take me to see it."

Hawkshaw, though he would almost as soon have walked into a furnace, gave his hand reluctantly to Ethel, pulled his newly-donned wide-awake down over his eyes, and led her forward from the sanctum of the quarter-deck.

Though in no way enchanted with her cavalier, Ethel, with a minuteness that, to him, was alike distressing and provoking, insisted on examining everything in this new region of the ship. The capstan, with its drumhead, pals, and bars ; the hatches, with their tarpaulins and iron bands ; the long-boat upon its chocks, lashed amidships, full of hens, pigs, and all the *débris* of the deck ; the cook's galley, with its hot, steaming coppers and tin pans ; the skuttle-butt, from which the sailors drunk their water, by a long tin measure lowered through the bung-hole ; the bowsprit, riding gallantly above the foam, with its perpendicular martingale for guying down the headstays, dipping in the sea from time to time ; the cat-heads with their double sheaves ; the windlass, the best bower anchor, and the sheet anchor ; and last of all, she peeped into the fore-castle bunks, a dreary-looking little den, in the berths of which a number of the ruffian-like crew were lounging, sleeping, and some, in defiance of all orders, smoking pipes and cigaritos.

So full of interest had the beautiful and intelligent girl been while exploring this new world, passing from object to object, stepping lightly and gracefully with her gathered skirts above her pretty tapered ankles, that some time elapsed before she perceived, that which the more wary Hawkshaw had from the first observed, the cool and deliberate insolence with which the seamen—so unlike British seamen—were observing her. They loitered or stood directly in her way, and when she begged pardon or turned aside they leered at her, thrust

their tongues in their cheeks, applied their forefingers to the side of their noses, whistled, and betrayed other and unmistakable signs of course wit or insolent admiration.

Ignorant of all this, poor Ethel continued to loiter among them, thinking them all very brave and fine fellows, though very dirty, and quite unlike William in "Black-eyed Susan," with his spotless trousers, tight at the waist and loose at the feet, his low-crowned, varnished hat, with its black ribbon, his dandy jacket, broad collar, and black silk neckerchief, with its peculiar tie.

The Barradas, Bill Badger, and Co., were the very antipodes of all this; but now the cook's galley interested her again.

"Oh, Captain Hawkshaw—the cat—look at the poor cat!" she exclaimed, as this useful domestic animal peeped at her from amid the cook's kettles.

"Well, Ethel, what of the cat?"

"See, what a horror it is!" continued Ethel, pointing to pussy, who had neither ears nor tail, and whose usually silky coat was coarse as that of a Spitzbergen bear, by almost daily immersions in the salt water of the lee-scuppers. "Captain Hawkshaw, tell me——"

"You must not speak so loudly, Miss Basset!" said that personage, with uncontrollable asperity and alarm. "I am close beside you; and *others* will hear as well as myself," he added.

"Others, sir?" repeated Ethel, with astonishment.

"You were about to ask something," said he, with visible uneasiness and confusion.

"I was about to ask who had mutilated the poor animal so cruelly."

"How can I say? Some ruffian, no doubt. Come aft, and ask the captain about it."

"Lord love you, marm," said the cook—a greasy black fellow, who seemed to be in a perpetual state of steam, grime, and perspiration; and no wonder, when he had his blazing coppers around him, and overhead a tropical sun that melted pitch out of the decks—"there ain't no cruelty in this what-somdever."

"What! no cruelty in mutilating the poor animal thus?"

"It's natur's wicious, marm," replied the cook, with great earnestness. "'Tain't lucky to have a cat aboard o' ship, or a parson neither, for the matter o' that. We can't dock the parson; but we docks the cat, as you see."

"Poor little pussy!"

"Poor! be darned, marm! I shears off the ears for'ard, and docks the tail aft, leavin' on'y the starn-post; and so a cook's knife alters their appearance and their wicious nature entirely."

"What strange stuff is that you are cooking?"

"Scouse, for the fork'stle, marm; have a taste?" replied the cook, offering a huge dirty ladle filled with a queer mess, to Ethel's lovely lip.

But she shrank back; so he poured down his capacious throat the scalding contents, which in reality was a savoury mess, composed of salt junk chopped into small pieces, bruised biscuits, potatoes, suet and pepper, all stewed up together, and ready to be served up in the wooden kid for the ship's crew.

"Shall we go aft, *now*?" said Hawkshaw with irrepressible annoyance.

"Yes, please," replied Ethel, hastening away on finding herself the centre of what she deemed a curious, but which was in reality an impertinently admiring group.

And grasping the belaying pins to steady her steps, she hastened towards the quarter-deck alone, for Hawkshaw remained behind, paralysed, and almost cursing her in his heart, on finding himself confronted by the bulky form and lowering front of Pedro Barradas.

He saw that Ethel, alone and unattended, had reached a seat near the taffrail, and was now beside her father, Rose, Dr. Heriot, and some of the ship's officers; so he turned hastily away, seeking to get aft by passing between the foremast and the forehatch; but there he was encountered by Bill Badger, the raw-boned, red-skinned, and ruffianly-looking Yankee, who said, while touching his hat in insolent mockery:

"Avast! I beg yer pardon, Captin' 'Awkshaw, but haul yer wind. I calc'late there's a yellow cove as wants to speak with yer uncommon pertic'lar—one o' the not-to-be-done squadron."

Turning, with rage and desperation in his heart, Hawkshaw affected a calm exterior, and said, suavely, to Barradas:

"I believe you wish to speak with me, my good fellow?"

"Ha! ha! ha! *morte de Dios!* how well he does it!" exclaimed the black-whiskered Pedro, slapping his huge thigh with a great brown, hairy hand, and showing a row of strong white teeth that a shark might envy. "But it won't do, capitano—*caramba!* it won't do!"

"I do not comprehend you, fellow!" said Hawkshaw, with an assumption of dignity.

"Oho! hallo, mates, he doesn't comprehend. Shall I make him?"

"Ay, ay; pitch into the cork-sucker!" growled several of the crew, bent upon mischief.

"Step with me this way," said Hawkshaw, with growing perturbation, drawing Pedro Barradas towards the bow of the long-boat. "I assure you that I am quite at a loss to know what you mean."

"Mean!" thundered the other, with a scowl on his dark visage, so terrible that Hawkshaw expected next moment to see a sharp knife glittering at his throat; "do you pretend to say that you have forgotten our old South American life, *camarado*, and how well you handled your lasso in the Barranca Secca, between Orizaba and the Puebla de Perote?"

"You are labouring under some strange mistake."

"If I were, would you take it so quietly, unless you were a coward? Mistaken! *Por vida del demonio*, I am not!"

"You are, fellow!"

"Oh no, we are not mistaken," sneered the seaman.

"*We?*"

"Yes, we—Zuares and I. We knew you at once, and have known you ever since we cleared the Thames; so you may as well let your beard grow, and leave off skulking below when we take our trick at the wheel, or our spell at church on Sunday. You may as well leave off your blasted quarter-deck airs, too, for they won't go down with either of us."

"Scoundrel!" began Hawkshaw.

"Hah! is it to be *guerra al cuchillo* between us?" said the half Spaniard, touching his knife with a grim smile; "if so, *cuidar con el lobo!*" (beware of the wolf).

"Let me pass," said Hawkshaw, choking with rage.

"Not yet. I see you have still on your finger the ring we cut off the hand of the old padre, whom we lured into the Barranca, by sending, in the name of our Lady of Guadalupe, a message that he must hasten to a dying man."

"Liar!" hissed Hawkshaw, while the crew drew nearer.

"He bent down to hear the confession of the expiring sinner—you, capitano—YOU, who sprang up and cut his throat. Ho! ho! *Demonio*, I knew from the first that we were *companeros de viage.*"

"Villain and fiend!" muttered Hawkshaw, while drops of shame and rage rolled over his damp, pale visage, and his hands longed to clutch the muscular throat of the brawnier, mocking, and malevolent Barradas; "villain and fiend! so you are here?"

"Yes, and Zuares, too, Señor Capitano, as you have known well by the skulking aft; so civility is best. Oh, neither of us have forgotten that pleasant afternoon which we spent together in the Barranca Secca."

"Was I to blame for your mistake, or your brother's crime?"

"Now, what have you to say that I do not denounce you to your fine friends in the cabin, eh?—particularly to that girl with the dark eyes. Santos! what shoulders she has, such a bust and ankles! and then, there is that pretty little minabird, her sister, with the red cheeks and plump arms. It makes a fellow's mouth water to see them here upon the open ocean, so far from land—and help, eh, mates?—one would admire a coal-black negress here. And so you love the oldest one, capitano, eh?"

Hawkshaw drew back with indignant disgust at the idea of Ethel being referred to by such lips.

"Ha, did I sting you there?" resumed Barradas; "well, beware that you do not feel all the bitterness of losing her."

"Losing her?"

"Yes—before our ground-tackle is rove and ready. Take care," continued the mocking ruffian, "that you do not experience the bitterness of seeing a happiness that shall never be yours, *ours*. Harkee, *hombre*, can your fair ones swim?"

"Why?" asked Hawkshaw mechanically.

"We meant to have had some fun with them when we crossed the Line, and shall have it yet. In their dainty white English skins—nothing else, remember—they will look uncommonly pretty floundering alongside, in the belly of a top-gallant studding-sail, won't they—eh?"

"You cannot mean—you dare not?" gasped Hawkshaw.

"Oh, don't be shocked, *companero*; before that comes to pass, you and some others shall have walked the plank, or been shot endlong, foot foremost, off a grating to leeward. Do you remember the Gulf of Florida, and what we did there to the mate of the *Polacca*?"

"Will you keep silent?" groaned Hawkshaw.

"Yes—if I am paid for it," grinned the other.

"Of course."

"But how am I to answer for Zuares, unless he is paid too?"

"Of course," replied Hawkshaw, utterly bewildered.

The storm so long dreaded had burst upon him at last; and this was all he reaped by the cruel manner in which he had supplanted Morley Ashton.

"Well, the *duros*?" resumed Pedro with a scowl, placing his hooked nose instantly within an inch of Hawkshaw's.

"I have no money."

"*Maldita!*" replied the South American, with a frown, "have you nothing?"

"Absolutely nothing—but this watch."

"Let us see it—presto!" said the impatient Pedro, with an oath that made even Hawkshaw shudder.

Turning his back to the quarter-deck, the latter drew from his vest pocket, with a sullen, humiliated, and hang-dog aspect, a handsome gold watch.

"*Muchos gracias,*" said the mocking Barradas, with a grin, as he snatched it away with such force as to snap the guard; and then he thrust it into one of the pockets of his tarry trousers, adding, "Now be off to your quarter-deck, and take care how you come forward again *until you are wanted—vaya usted al demonio!* and the devil go with you!"

Barradas spat at Hawkshaw, with a scowl in his face, and turning away, walked to the forecastle, laughing.

A red blindness came over Hawkshaw, as if a crimson cloud enveloped him; he trembled in every limb, and his breath came in short painful gaspings. So black was his fury, that at first he thought of getting a revolver from his baggage, and shooting both the Barradas before the passengers and crew; but the fear of being instantly immolated by the latter restrained him, for he was a coward at heart, and one, moreover, who felt that he dared not die!

He was staggering, oppressed by hate, by rage, and shame, with the voice and mocking laugh of Barradas and his companions ringing in his ears, filling his tortured heart with bitterness and confusion, when suddenly several men on the weatherside exclaimed:

"A man in the water!"

"A dead body alongside!"

"Lay the ship in the wind!"

"Where away?" cried Mr. Quail.

"It's to leeward now. Bear a hand, boys; lower away the quarter-boat—stand by the falls."

This clamour, perhaps, arrested some immediate catastrophe, and gave a new current to the fierce emotions of Hawkshaw.

Though everything was set aloft that would draw or catch a breath of air, the breeze was very light, and all upon the starboard beam; thus the ship went very slowly through the water, with a steady but gentle heel to port.

Far away to leeward the western sun cast her giant shadow upon the sunny bosom of the deep, and it was in the midst of that shadow, about twenty yards from the ship, that the sad object was seen floating.

Soon it was abeam; then on the lee quarter, and soon astern, among the gold-tipped summits of the waves, as they rippled up in rapid succession beneath the passing breath of the light breeze.

Captain Phillips gave orders to lie to; so the mainyard was backed, and two of the crew, who owned the aristocratic names of Cribbit and Bolter, accompanied by Dr. Heriot, Manfredi, and Hawkshaw (who, after his late excitement, was anxious to do something, he knew not what), shoved off in the larboard quarter-boat, with four six-pound shots in a canvas bag, to sink the body after examining it.

A few strokes of the oar brought them alongside, scaring away a flock of Mother Cary's chickens that were hovering and tripping about it.

The body appeared to be that of a young seaman.

It was floating on its face, as all male corpses do when in the water, while those of females float on their back. How is it so?—let naturalists determine.

With his death-clutch his hands still grasped the lanyard of a life-buoy, from which the action of the weather had effaced the ship's name, and, as the poor fellow was minus a jacket, there were no pockets to search for anything that could lead to his identity. His dark hair rose and fell, floating on the water with every ripple that ran past him.

"He must have fallen overboard in the night, or belonged to some craft which has foundered in a storm that has not come our way," said Manfredi.

"Ay, ay," added Dr. Heriot; "some morning, perhaps the poor fellow little thought his soul would be required of him ere night; and little thinks some poor wife or sweetheart, mother or sister, that one they love is floating thus, so far from land."

"How long has he been in the water?" asked Hawkshaw in a low tone.

"About four days I think," replied Dr. Heriot, who, as he spoke, smartly lashed the bag containing the four six-pound shots to the feet of the corpse, at the same time desiring Hawkshaw with a clasp-knife to cut away the lanyard of the life-buoy, which was grasped by the hands of the deceased.

Hawkshaw reluctantly and shudderingly obeyed.

Then, as the poor corpse began to sink feet foremost, slowly,

solemnly, and gradually into the pale green and transparent sea, the head rose, nodding, but almost erect, from the water.

The face became visible in the glare of the setting sun, now almost level with the sea, and an exclamation of horror burst from Hawkshaw, as he fell backward over the middle thwarts of the boat, for in the ghastly lineaments of the sinking dead man, as the sea closed slowly over them, he seemed to recognise—oh, was it conscience, fancy, or reality?—the dreaded features of MORLEY ASHTON!

CHAPTER XXIV.

UP ANCHOR.

IN all the feet of merchantmen which crowded the busy harbour of Rio de Janeiro, Morley could not discover a single vessel bound for the Isle of France. There were hundreds freighted for Holland, the Mediterranean, the Baltic, the United States, Britain, and elsewhere, but not one for the island of his pilgrimage. So kind Tom Bartelot's generosity was proffered in vain, and for a time poor Morley was in despair!

To return to England merely to find that Ethel and her family had sailed at the appointed time, months ago, for the Isle of France, was a line of action to which he, by nature restless, impetuous, and impatient, could by no means reconcile himself to adopt.

He wrote to her a passionate and loving letter by the British mail, addressed to Laurel Lodge, to be forwarded after her if she had left. In this letter he detailed the story of his disappearance, revealed the true character of Hawkshaw, and concluded by declaring that whatever happened, death alone would prevent him from finding his way to her before the year was out.

And this letter, which he knew might be months in reaching her, he dropped into the post-office in the Rua Direita, with a sigh of hope, and turned away sadly, again to seek the docks where the *Princes* lay, feeling oppressively in his heart that his youth was almost gone—his once bright, hopeful youth gone—and without avail. A bitter, bitter conviction!

His letter, penned at such a distance from her, in a humble little posada, frequented by seamen, in the Campo de Santa Anna, though duly forwarded by the mail from Rio to Liver-

pool (for reasons which the reader will learn ere long) never reached the hand of Ethel Basset.

This, happily for himself, Morley could scarcely anticipate. The return steamer from Liverpool would not leave Rio, he learned, until its usual day of sailing (the 29th of every month); thus he knew that the letter on which his very life seemed to depend would be lying uselessly in the mail-bag for nearly three weeks. Tom Bartelot urged that Morley should remain with him, and he, poor fellow, at present had no other resource, and no immediate views.

"One chance remains," said Tom: "the *Princess* may get a freight for India or China, and if so, it will go hard with me if I don't contrive somehow to get a sight of the Isle of France."

But this hope was speedily dissipated by the ship being chartered for Tasmania, or "Wan Demon's Land," as old Noah Gawthrop persisted in calling it.

Bartelot and Morrison were busy daily about the ship. Cast thus upon himself, Morley rambled listlessly about the streets of Rio, feeling downcast, forlorn, strange, and miserable.

The glorious climate, the endless summer, the wonderful fruits and flowers of the province, with the beauty of its capital city, alike failed to soothe, to charm, or to interest him, for Ethel was not there.

In vain he visited the gay and beautiful Rua do Ouvidor, the Regent Street of Rio, with its magnificent shops, some of which have their enormous windows piled with massive gold and silver plate, the produce of Brazilian mines, while others sparkle with jewels. He saw nothing to interest him in the quaint old palace of the Portuguese viceroy, and equally little in the noble residence of San Christoval.

In vain he ascended the lofty hill which is crowned by the Church of Our Lady of Glory, and saw spread at his feet the vast Bay of Rio, with all its eighty isles and fleet of shipping, under steam, canvas, and bare poles; its verdant eminences, every one of which is crowned by a church or a convent, the surrounding mountains studded with villages and villas, and all this visible by the warm and golden light of a gorgeous Brazilian sunset in July.

There, on the western shore, rises the City of Palaces, where the early voyagers, three hundred years ago, saw but a savage waste, a howling wilderness. What a change in the New World since these times, when, as quaint Richard Hakluyt informs us:

"Old Master William Hawkins, of Plymouth, a man esteemed for his wisdom, valour, experience, and skill in sea

causes, much esteemed and beloved of Henry VIII., and being one of the principal sea-captains in the west port of England in his time, not contented with the short voyages commonly made then to the coasts of Europe, armed out a tall and goodlie ship, of the burthen of 250 tons, called the *Paul*, of Plymouth, wherewith he made three long and prosperous voyages unto the coast of Brazil—a thing in those days very rare, especially in our nation.”

Great, indeed, is now the change from those days when the *Paul*, of Plymouth, let go her anchor in the Ganabara Janeiro, as the bay was then named.

If a man wishes to kill time or bury care, few places afford better means for doing so than Rio, where all classes of that mixed race which inhabit it have an unlimited love for mirth and pleasure ; but in vain did Morley Ashton, to the utmost of his limited means, visit the opera, where the loveliest women of Brazil may be seen in full ball costume, seated in boxes that are without fronts, as in our European theatres ; and alike in vain he sought the public masquerades, and those glorious gardens by the cool seashore, for he had but one idea, one desire, to see Rio sink astern.

In this public garden, which is laid out with wonderful taste and skill by a Scottish gardener, with enormous flower-pots, shrubberies, and parterres, with winding walks between, bordered by tropical trees, whose luxuriant foliage forms cool shades from the sun, are beautifully-formed alcoves of trellis work, painted bright green and gold, and over these are trained the gorgeous and odoriferous flowering plants of that lovely clime ; and in these great bowers are nightly supper parties, lighted less by gas than by the moon or stars, where music, mirth, laughter, love, flirtation, and frequently dancing, make the night glide into morning unperceived ; but of all this, too, did our lost lover soon weary.

To lessen his gnawing anxiety, to spend the weary time, to make himself useful, and in some measure, by doing so, to repay, if only by mere manual labour, the friendliness of Tom Bartelot, Morley tried to become available on board the *Princess*, which was being rapidly got ready for sea, and he endeavoured to interest himself in all the details thereof.

Every huge round cask of sugar or tobacco that was lowered into the capacious hold seemed to hasten her departure, and every day that passed was reckoned by our lover as one less of absence from Ethel.

Ah ! if, after all he had undergone, he should only meet her to find that she was lost to him for ever ! But he thrust

that idea aside, and, in spite of all that Tom Bartelot would say, he "tallyed on" at the rope, and "took his spell," like a veritable negro, at hoisting in the cargo.

A numerous gang of slaves, natives of Angola (for to that province the trade in "black passengers" is restricted in Brazil), sent by the merchant who had chartered the ship, soon accomplished this, and ere long the hatches were battened down, the tarpaulins spread over them, and the iron bands locked round the coamings.

Many of those slaves who worked on board were captured fugitives; and to Morley's European eye there was something strikingly repulsive in the iron neck-collars with which they were accoutred, like mastiff dogs, while others had masks of tin that concealed the lower part of their faces, and were secured at the back by iron padlocks.

Yet these poor wretches were as merry as crickets withal, and tramped away with their bare black feet on the sun-blistered deck, keeping chorus and time to some uncouth ditty which they had learned in the vast forests of their native Angola.

In their activity, especially under the long lash of their broad-brim-hatted taskmasters, they formed a strange contrast to the lazy Portuguese, or Spanish South Americans, who lounged, or, to use a well-known western word, "loafed" about the piers and quays in the sunshine, clad in their coarse but brilliantly-coloured *surreppas* or blanket-cloaks, that hid their rags, or, it may be, nakedness below; their poncho wrappers, or *abarcas*, or leather leggings, wherein the dagger-knife was stuck, like the skenedhu of the Scottish Highlanders — solemn, stately, and polite ragamuffins, always smoking, wherever or however got, a paper cigarito.

Slowly, slowly, to Morley Ashton, seemed to pass the hours of the insipid anchor-watch, when he performed that duty, with his eyes fixed on the countless lights of Rio, that shed long lines of tremulous radiance across the bay, and his thoughts, as ever, with Ethel Basset.

This is a small watch, composed of one, and, at times, of two men, who look after the ship while at anchor or in port; and Morley was frequently so abstracted or taciturn that his watchmate or companion, when he had one, usually coiled himself up and dozed off to sleep under the counter of the long-boat, so our poor lover, when left in charge of the deck, always forgot to strike the bell, which it was his duty to do every half hour, as if the vessel were at sea.

On the 23rd July, after being thirteen days in Rio de

Janeiro, the *Princess* was ready for sea, and blue peter flying at her foremast-head. The hands were all busy preparing for their new and long voyage ; the royal-yards were crossed aloft ; the chafing gear (mats or other stuff to save the rigging from being frayed) was shipped on the backstays, or wherever necessary ; the last of the sea stores were taken in, and the studding-sail gear rove.

The carpenter gave the ship a final touch of paint all round, the standing and running rigging got their last overhauling, after the fag-end of the cargo, which was principally composed of tobacco and sugar, was hoisted in from a lighter alongside, and stowed away by negroes between decks ; the last boat laden with water had come off and been hoisted to the davits, and about 4 P.M. Morley, with delight in his heart, heard Bartelot's welcome order :

"All hands stand by the anchor—ahoy !"

It was soon heaved up, and hung dripping at the cathead ; then came the next orders to set the courses, cast loose the topsails, jib, and staysails, to sheet home and hoist away.

Old Noah Gawthrop grasped the wheel, the sails filled, her head payed off, and the tall cone of the giant Pao d'Asucar, which was before astern, was now on the larboard bow, and the *Princess* began to leave the harbour of Rio.

In working out among the many isles which stud that magnificent bay, bracing the yards sharp to port and then to starboard every few minutes, a tug steamer nearly ran foul of her.

"Look out?" shouted the carpenter, who was probably thinking of his new paint, while assisting to get the anchor a-cockbill ; "are your eyes no better than sojers' buttons, Noah ?"

Old Noah, who handled the ship to perfection, disdained to reply as he looked grimly at the puffing, pury tug ; but, nevertheless, contrived to let the foreyardarm get foul of the foretopmast rattlings of an ugly, squat, hermaphrodite brig* which shot suddenly round the little isle of Paqueta, going at great speed, with a vast fore-and-aft mainsail.

"Hallo, Noah," cried Morrison ; "are you playing at sojers with that wheel ?"

"Are you going to sleep ? Wipe your eyes with the flying jib," added Bartelot angrily, while some men jumped aloft and got the hamper clear.

"Dash my wig !" growled Noah, "after clearing a dirty

* A vessel with a schooner's mainmast and brig's foremast.

smoke-jack, to run foul o' that ere confounded butter-box ! 'tain't like me, sir, 'tain't like me."

"I know it is not like your steering, you old Triton," said Tom Bartelot ; "but keep a bright look-out for the next craft that comes near us, or your next glass of grog won't be measured by the rule of thumb."

Poor old Noah, who had been a man-of-war's-man, and served with the Black Sea fleet at Sebastopol, and who rather prided himself upon his steering, almost wept with shame and vexation. Spasms twisted his ancient visage, which was wrinkled like the kernel of a dry nut, and his grey eyes, the pupils of which were like herring scales, glared as he griped the wheel, with an air as much as to say :

"Thumb-grog or not, sir, pity the next craft as I runs foul on—damme !"

And here, for the information of the uninitiated in such matters, we may mention that the grog so specially mentioned, referred to that made for the watch who came below in the dark ; it was measured by dipping the thumb into the can, to ascertain when it contained enough of rum before adding water thereto ; but, as the nights were often cold as well as dark, the regular old salt had usually no *sensation* in his thumb till the rum rose to the second joint thereof.

"'Twarn't my fault, sir !" resumed Noah, as Bartelot came aft ; "that hermaphrodite brig don't answer her helm a bit—see how her mainsheet jibs."

"She is an old tub," said Bartelot, "and rolls at least twenty times per minute in a sea-way, or, like a crab, goes sideways, broadside-on, and any way but ahead."

"Shiver my topsails !" shouted Noah, with delight, "if she won't be bump ashore upon that blowed island of Packwetty, and sarve her right, too."

Contrary to his revengeful wish, however, the brig cleared it, and now the *Princess* soon passed the Castle of Santa Cruz, the giant rock of the Pao d'Asucar, after which she felt the full force of the sea breeze, and trimmed her sails on the starboard tack.

Morley was full of joy, and strangely excited.

The evening was a splendid one, and all the crew were in their summer gear—straw hats, white duck trousers, and flannel shirts of any colour they chose.

By 8 P.M. the coast of Brazil was many miles off, and all the outline of the land wore a deep blue indigo tint, against a warm sky of the most brilliant gold and burnt-sienna, that

gradually turned to crimson, as the sun set behind the mountains of the Corcovado, the Sugar-loaf, and La Gaviá.

The pharos at the mouth of the Bay of Rio was twinkling like a star that sunk at times amid the darkening waves, while, with night closing around her, the *Princess*, with royals and studding-sails set, bore swiftly on her course through the lonely waters of the Southern Atlantic Ocean.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE SUSPICIOUS SAIL.

THOUGH to the impatient landsman life on board ship becomes soon monotonous, to be once again at sea was soothing to Morley Ashton. He was not without imagination, and something of the poetic in his temperament; thus, when contemplating the ocean he felt how much there is of the grand and sublime, the terrible and beautiful, the free and fetterless in it; and hence, perhaps, the great popularity of most tales, novels, and romances, which refer to that aqueous element.

Morley seemed to become a new man. With all his disappointments he was too young not to feel the fresh impulses of youth strong within him; and thus hope seemed to come with the keen breeze that blew over the starlit sea, as he and Morrison trod the deck, keeping together the middle watch, which extends from midnight till four in the morning.

“There is,” says one of the liveliest of our English writers, “a great feeling of freedom in being the arbiter of one’s actions, to go where you will and when you will. The first burst of life is, indeed, a glorious thing; youth, health, hope, and confidence, have each a force and vigour they lose in after years. Life is then a splendid river, and we are swimming with the stream—no adverse waves to weary, no billows to buffet with us as we hold on our way rejoicing.”

Morley had buffeted with many adverse waves, but it was the ardour and confidence of this “first burst of life” and spring of youth that enabled him to surmount them; and, inspired by it, he looked hopefully and manfully forward to the vague and uncertain future.

Being an intelligent, well-educated, and well-read man, with a strong sense of probity and trust in religion, Morrison, though several years his senior, formed an admirable companion and occasional mentor to Morley. He was a man

who had undergone many vicissitudes in life ; but believing rigidly that all things were ordered for our ultimate good, and nothing evil occurred which might not have been worse, he passed through the world with a tolerable air of philosophy, and he contrived somehow to infuse into Morley's more ardent nature the quiet of content for the present time, with a spirit of perseverance and hope for that to come.

So Morrison talked away about Ethel Basset, as if he had known her all his life. He pointed out a variety of ways and means for reaching the Isle of France. He calculated the distance to a nicety ; about 2400 miles from Rio to the Cape ; about 4800 miles from thence to Tasmania ; and about 2400 more from thence to the Isle of France. In short, making allowance for variation, leeway, head-winds, and so forth, poor Morley found that he must traverse at least 9600 miles before he saw the land that was Ethel's new home !

At this calculation he could not repress a sigh and an emotion of repining, notwithstanding all the patience and philosophy with which his Scottish friend sought to inspire him.

But the ship flew fast on her watery path. She was spanking along at the rate of nine knots an hour over a smooth sea with a glorious sky overhead—a sky wherein he saw, for the first time, the Hole, or, as sailors term it, "the Coal-sack," a deep and dark blue starless space in the southern quarter of the heavens, an appearance only to be found in those latitudes where, in its far immensity of lightless azure, that portion of the sky becomes black, as if it had been pierced by a hole.

After they had been three days out from Rio, early in the morning, Morley was roused from sleep, first by the rattling and hauling aft of the starboard chain, which the watch on deck were unbending for stowage in the cable-tier, and second by a conversation at the companion hatch, where he heard the voices of Bartelot and Gawthrop, who both summoned Morrison with something of excitement in their tone, so he, too, hurried on deck.

The wind, which had been due west all night, enabling the *Princess* to run her course with both sheets aft, had veered round to the northward : so she was now trimmed with her starboard tacks on board, and had all her fore-and-aft canvas set.

"What is the matter?" asked Morley.

"Look astern," replied Bartelot.

He did so, and saw a long, low brigantine, with a black

hull, and a vast spread of snow-white canvas, heading directly in their wake about ten miles astern.

Every time she rose upon a wave her bright copper flashed in the morning sun, and the foam that flew off from each side from her sharp black prow was white as the cloth of the long tapering jib and flying-jib that bellied out from the bowsprit and boom above.

The crew of the *Princess* were all grouped aft about the quarter, regarding her with some anxiety, conferring in whispers, and the telescope was passed alternately from Bartelot and Morrison to Noah Gawthrop, Ben Plank, the carpenter, and some of the older men of the crew.

"Is there anything suspicious about her?" asked Morley of Gawthrop, who was taking a long and steady look at her through a tarpaulin-covered telescope.

Noah did not reply immediately; but vigorously expectorated his quid to leeward, and again applied his stern gray visual organ to the glass, puckering up the other fearfully as he closed it.

"When I came on deck this morning that craft was hull down at the horizon, bearing northward close-hauled; but she soon altered her course and headed directly after us. As I did not like the cut of her jib, or her hull either, for the matter of that, I kept the ship away six or eight points, upon which she still headed after us, and spread more canvas, which I saw her crew had been wetting. I hoisted our ensign, to which she made no reply by showing any colour, not even a thread of bunting. She is full of men; I don't like her look at all; and don't see why she should be dodging in this way."

This was the explanation of Bartelot, who added:

"And now, Noah, what do you say?"

"I say, sir, as she's a powerfully-built brigantine—coppered to the bends, sharp as a needle, and harmed, too, sir—harmed. She has stings in her, that wasp has! Blowed if I don't see 'em 'a-tricing up her bow ports now! She's up to some mischief, that confounded miskitty; so as we can't meet her in her own fashion, my advice, captain, is to give her a jolly wide berth."

"Just what I mean to do, Noah. She has gained a knot on us in the last twenty minutes; so, on a wind, we are no match for her; but before the wind we'll give her the go-by hand over hand."

Bartelot now ordered the vessel's course to be altered due south; the tacks to be brought aft, the fore-and-aft canvas to

be reduced, the studding sails to be set, and each, before it was hoisted out, was well drenched by buckets of water, to make the canvas draw better ; and from the tops and cross-trees the courses and topsails underwent a similar process. The royals were set, and little triangular skysails above them, too ; thus, in a very few minutes, the *Princess* was flying right before the wind under a mighty spread of canvas.

The morning breeze was fresh and increasing, and as she tore through the glittering water at the rate of ten knots an hour, deeply laden as she was, it literally smoked under her bows, and flew over her dripping catheads, while her new wake was one of white froth, like a mill-race, extending at an acute angle from the old one.

"Hah ! look there—how well I knew she was bent on mischief !" exclaimed Bartelot. A white puff, reduced by distance to the size of a whiff of tobacco, escaped from her lee-bow, and a long time after, for she was nine miles or so astern, the report of a cannon came over the water, but still no colours were displayed. "I knew it would come to this ; round goes her foretopsail-yard square before the wind."

With man-o'-war-like rapidity she, too, altered her course, set her fore-royal, her fore-top and top-gallant studding-sails, easing off the long spanker-boom and sheet of her enormous fore-and-aft mainsail, above which, on a mast that tapered away aloft like a fishing-rod, she hoisted a tall, shoulder-of-mutton gaff-topsail.

Fast flew the foam before her now, rising at times so high as to hide nearly her black hull, the fulcrum above which this cloud of canvas swayed as she rolled heavily from side to side ; but, sharply though she was built, and swiftly as she had hitherto run *upon* the wind, she was no match *before* it for a square-rigged vessel like the *Princess*, with her greater spread of sail.

So now she was left astern as fast as previously she had been overhauling the *Princess*, and as both were now trimmed dead before the wind, each rolled heavily from side to side.

This too-evident pursuit caused considerable excitement, and no small anxiety on board ; for, with the exception of a revolver of Tom Bartelot's, and a couple of fowling-pieces, the crew had no arms whatever, save handspikes and their sheath knives, with which to encounter the pirate, if such she proved to be.

That she was not a ship of war was evident, as she did not possess steam power, and carried neither ensign nor pennant at this juncture ; so, whatever her object was, Tom

Bartelot, in his present defenceless condition, was resolved to avoid her acquaintance, and continued to run due south during the whole day, for though she was left astern, the brigantine still continued to pursue them, with four long sweeps out, which her crew worked amidships; but about the middle of the first dog-watch, viz., four o'clock P.M., she was more than hull down at the horizon.

Clouds were banking up to windward; the weather was becoming hazy; but while daylight lasted, Bartelot did not alter his southern course, though he took in some of his studdingsails, and sent down his royals and skysails.

When darkness had fairly set in, he reduced the last of his studdingsails, set his fore and mainstaysail, brought the starboard tacks on board, and kept the ship upon her former course, after being forced by this little *rencontre* on the high seas to run about a hundred miles out of it, for the ship had gone for more than ten hours at an average of ten knots per hour by the log-line.

He gave Gawthrop the wheel and ordered him to steer by the stars, when he could see them, as he kept the binnacle dark, lest its lamps, by their light, might reveal the ship's course to some keen-sighted mastheadman of the suspicious brigantine. The cabin lamp was lit below, but a tarpaulin was spread over the skylight.

Silence was ordered to be kept on deck, as water will convey every sound to a vast distance; so, thus, in the dark, without moon, and with very few stars visible through the gathering scud, to guide our steersman, the ship sped upon her eastern course once more. The chase of the day formed a fruitful theme in the cabin that night, where they frequently congratulated themselves on their escape, and many a strange story of the pirates, whom the progress of steam, and its adoption in war vessels, had swept from those southern waters, served to beguile the night.

Morrison, who had the history and memoirs of all the buccaners of America and the Indian Isles by heart, particularly excelled in the yarns he spun; but the most quaint was one he told of a Scottish skipper—a Hebridean from Stornaway—who possessed a bottle, the stopper of which informed him how to steer for the avoidance of storms as well as the sailor's horn-book could do.

"A bottle!" exclaimed Bartelot. "I have heard of many a man who has lost his life, and his ship also, by application thereto; but never of one who saved them through its means."

"But this bottle and its stopper were unlike any you ever saw."

"So 'twould seem."

"It was one of our old flat-bottomed, blue Scotch dram-bottles, and had a quaint stopper of delf-ware, in the form of a man's head, with a rubicund visage, a jovial mouth, wicked-looking little eyes, and a comical red hat. By day, or at any time when the skipper was not present, the queer visage which surmounted the cork remained stolid and immovable, and to all appearance mere delf, like any other stopper where a human face was carved or cast. But at night, when the skipper was seated at his grog, the steward, who peeped in from the steerage; the man at the helm, who also peeped down through the skylight; the mate or anyone else who came suddenly below for orders, would find the skipper talking away to the stopper in the bottle neck—the little head was seen to nod waggishly, the eyes to wink and leer, the mouth to laugh, and the little red tongue to speak merrily; and it was further said, that the bottle had the admirable and economical property of being always half full——"

"Like the widow's cruse of oil?"

"Yes; but with the best Campbelton—some said Islay whisky—the quantity of which never diminished, yet it was never replenished by the steward, for the skipper seemed to prize his bottle as if it were the lamp of Aladdin, and always locked it carefully fast in the stern locker."

"And where is this jolly old bottle now?"

"At his death, he bequeathed it to a crack-brained skipper of Montrose, who, under its influence, astounded the public by the discoveries he made."

"How?"

"He sent the spirit of the bottle, in the form of a woman—a *clairvoyante*—to pry aboard a war ship in the West Indies; to search for Sir John Franklin; to visit his family in heaven, and bring back locks of their hair; to inquire after numerous enemies, who had all gone to the other place—and all of which revelations he duly recorded as they came to pass, in a Scotch newspaper, to the great astonishment of the queen's lieges."

About twelve o'clock, Bartelot went on deck, and adjusted his night-glass to sweep the horizon; but so dark and hazy was the atmosphere, that a large ship might have been within three miles of the *Princess* and yet have been invisible from her deck; so, as the middle watch was Morrison's, he and Morley turned in, and soon were sound asleep.

At 4 P.M. the latter was awakened by the bell being struck, and the morning watch called.

"Is that you, Morrison?" asked Bartelot, from his berth, as a step was heard in the cabin.

"Yes, sir; I was just about to call you in haste."

"About that rascally brigantine?"

"No, sir."

"What is in sight, then?"

"Land on the weather-bow, and we are raising it fast."

"Land!" exclaimed Bartelot, in astonishment.

"Bearing about twenty miles distant."

"Bah! Cape Flyaway. You have been at your Montrose skipper's wonderful dram-bottle."

"Land as solid as the Bass Rock," continued the Scotchman obstinately: "I have just had a squint at it from the fore-crosstrees, and now mean to have a look at the chart."

"This must be some of your second sight—there is no island hereabout, Morrison. Come, Morley, turn out—tumble up, there, and let us have a look at Morrison's enchanted island. How's the wind?"

"Veering ahead."

"And how does she lie?"

"East and by north," replied Morrison, glancing at the tell-tale compass that swung in the skylight, and which is constructed so as to hang with its face downward, for use in the cabin. Bartelot dressed in haste, and was soon on deck, where Morley joined him.

Although our hero knew it not—for who can foresee what to-morrow may bring forth?—this enforced and necessary divergence from the vessel's proper course brought about a very strange episode, or adventure, which cast some light upon the origin, and, it might be, the crimes, of certain persons whom we have been, however unwillingly, compelled by the force of circumstances and the tenor of our story, to introduce to the reader.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE STRANGE ISLAND.

WHEN they came on deck day was breaking. The stars were still sparkling brightly in the blue zenith, and in the western quarter of the sky ; but they paled away and faded out, as dawn spread over the east, and stole across the ocean in those long streaks of light that are rendered so weird, strange, and indistinct, from having only the tops of the lone waves to rest upon.

There is, indeed, something glorious and impressive in the dawn of a new day, as it spreads over the unlimited space of the mighty deep ; and this effect increases in its splendour, as the sun, with tropical rapidity, heaves up at the horizon, amid a burst of golden haze, and then all becomes life and light. There is no eagle there to soar towards him, with the dew on his pinions, and no lark to sing at "heaven's gate ;" but the petrels trip along the brine, the huge porpoise soars through the foam rejoicingly, and the silvery flying fish flits like a little spirit from the spray.

The wind was very light ; the vessel was creeping along under a cloud of canvas, and as Morley came on deck the watch were busy swabbing it. No need was there to drench it first with water ; there had been a rough gale in the morning watch, during which Morrison had ordered the foresail and foretopsail to be hoisted ; since then, the wind had come in angry puffs, and then died gradually away.

Now the ship was almost becalmed, and there, sure enough, upon her weather bow, a few miles off, lay the land which Morrison had so confidently reported, rising in dark and opaque outline, like a dusky patch of indigo, against the yellow and gold of the sky beyond, and the amber sea, that lay in middle distance.

For a time it looked like a dark cloud resting on the sunlit ocean, from which it might arise and melt away, but, gradually, as the ship crept on, the form of a headland, and some tuft-like palm-trees became defined against the sky.

Higher rose the sun, and ere long the beams began to gild this headland, and to shine glitteringly on the face of a bluff, in which it terminated.

"Land it is—but land here !" said Captain Bartelot.

"An island, and not a very small one either," added Morley.

"It is most extraordinary!"

"How so?"

"Bring up the chart, Morrison," said Bartelot, unheeding his friend's query, "and the log-book, too, with yesterday's reckoning and observation."

Morrison dived below, but speedily re-appeared, with a chart and the ship's log.

"At twelve, sir, yesterday, when we were running away from that rascally piccaroon, we were in latitude 28—25 south; longitude 35—20 west, Tristan d'Acunha bearing sixty-six miles to the eastward."

"That is not Tristan, but an island about three miles long, and there is no indication of it whatever in the chart. It is covered with trees; but I can see no sign of a human habitation," observed Bartelot, as he resumed his telescope.

Light though the wind, the ship gradually crept nearer the island; and by breakfast time it was abeam of her, and about four miles distant.

Save the rock before mentioned, no part of it was very high; it seemed to be about the size stated by Bartelot, and yet, strange to say, it was not recorded or borne in any map or chart on board.

Now there fell a dead and listless calm.

The sun was burning hot and the sea glistened like oil beneath its rays, but the fertility and greenness of this nameless and unknown isle were charming to look upon. Morley regretted the fresh delay occasioned by this calm, especially after the lost hundred miles yesterday (though a hundred were a trifle after Morrison's galling calculation of the oceans he had yet to traverse), but he could not resist the emotions of curiosity and novelty so peculiar to his age and temperament; and thus he expressed a strong wish to visit this *terra incognita*—this beautiful island of the southern sea.

But Bartelot hesitated.

"It may be the head-quarters, the rendezvous, of those who pursued us yesterday," said he; "and some of their sort, shipmates and companions, may be lurking among those thickets, the foliage of which seems so inviting."

"Save the sea-birds, I cannot discover a living object about it," urged Morley.

"There may be savages—who can say?—and most likely wild animals. There are some very ferocious boars on Tristan d'Acunha, and other South Sea isles. Then we have no arms."

"The revolver and two fowling-pieces——"

"Are not enough, Morley."

"Come, let us be off."

"Lastly, a sudden breeze might spring up, and blow the ship off the island to sea, so far that the boat, and what would be worse, its crew, might be lost. Four sufficient reasons, Morley, for not venturing ashore.

So Bartelot resisted all his friend's importunities, and the day passed away in idleness, after an observation had been taken at noon, and the exact bearings of the island recorded in the ship's log by Morrison, for the information of the Admiralty, Lloyd's, and others in London.

The calm continued; not a speck could be traced in the unclouded sky, betokening a coming wind, or a casual current of air. The ship lay like a log, with her courses clewed up, her spanker brailed, and all the rest of her canvas hanging loose and straight from the yardheads; the wheel, left to itself, oscillated a spoke or two, alternately to port and starboard. There seemed to be little or no current in the water; she had probably not moved in any way more than half her own length for three hours, as Morley perceived by a bunch of seaweed, the top tuft of some mighty trailer (the root of which was, perhaps, forty fathoms deep in the bed of the ocean), which rested on the oily surface of the water, and remained in the same position, with regard to the ship, about five feet from the port quarter-gallery.

In the first dog-watch, about four o'clock P.M., finding matters still thus, and seeing all quiet on the isle, the whole outline of which was reflected downward, as if in a mirror, and with wonderful minuteness, the captain ordered the gig to be lowered. The fowling-pieces and revolver were carefully loaded, capped, and placed in her, and then he, Morley, old Gawthrop, and three more of the crew shoved off for the shore, or, as they called it, in default of a better name, "Bill Morrison's Island."

The light gig shot swiftly over the smooth sea, which our friends soon perceived to be full of gigantic trailers and floating leaves; amid these, through the translucent waters, at a vast depth from its surface, the finny tribes, especially the beautiful silver fish, could be seen darting to and fro.

A little sandy creek or bight, bordered by mangrove trees and wild palms, opened before the boat, and offered a secure landing place, though overhung by rocks, that seemed to be literally alive with albatrosses, sea-hens, and other aquatic birds.

In a short space, Morley, Bartelot, and Noah Gawthrop,

with the three fire-arms, leaped ashore, and desiring their three shipmates who were in the gig to lie on their oars a few yards off, to prevent any surprise, they started on their tour of discovery.

The island was covered with wood, the foliage of which was singularly luxuriant, and of the most lovely green. Many of the trees and plants were strongly aromatic, and filled the air with delicious perfume. The myrtles, in particular, were of gigantic size, and there were several groves of the graceful cocoa-palm, under which were gourds, ground apples, and other tropical vegetables, growing in wild luxuriance.

A bird suddenly whirred up from the covert at Morley's feet.

Bang went one of the barrels of his fowling-piece, and the bird fell with flapping wings a few yards off, while hundreds of others, scared apparently by a sound so unusual as the report of a gun, flew hither and thither in confusion and dismay.

"A good shot, Morley," said Bartelot; "but reload instantly, and don't fire again. We don't know whom we may meet in these woods, so it is as well to be prepared."

The bird proved to be a species of black-cock, that is not uncommon in the islands of the South Atlantic.

"Keep a bright look-out a head, sir," said Noah Gawthrop in a low voice; "this island ain't quite so desolate as it looks, arter all."

"How?"

"I'm blessed if here ain't a regular made road, and no mistake, captain."

As Noah spoke, he pointed to a distinct foot track, or narrow beaten way, that passed through the grass. In one direction it led to a spring of deliciously cool and pure water, that fell plashing amid the sylvan silence from the face of a rock, which was covered with brilliant wild flowers; in the other it led away through a thicket of myrtles, from amid which some wild goats fled, as our explorers cautiously, and with cocked fire-arms, proceeded onward.

Morley was thinking of Ethel, and if with her what an Eden this lonely isle would be; but it was not without emotions of considerable anxiety and curiosity that he and his two companions continued to pursue the narrow track, which ascended in regular zig-zag windings to the summit of that high rock, which they had first discerned at sea, and on the face of which the morning sun had shone so brightly.

"It is merely a track made by the goats or wild boars," said

Bartelot ; "the spring below seems to be the only one in the island, and there, no doubt, they drink."

"Mayhap, sir, the wild boars, and the wild goatses made the road ; but 'twasn't them as made this bit o' furnitur—out of a ship's sheathing, too," exclaimed Noah, when, on the very summit of the eminence, that overlooked a vast expanse of sea, they came upon a rude seat, formed, apparently, by the number of holes pierced through it at regular intervals, from a piece of ship's planking, pegged down upon two uprights, which were securely driven into the turf.

The pathway ended here, and the soil about the seat seemed bare and denuded of grass, as if worn away by the feet of frequent sitters.

"What can this mean on such a place?" observed Tom Bartelot, perspiring with heat, and pushing his straw hat on one side of his handsome curly head.

"It means, sir, as there is some reg'lar-built Robinson Crusoe a livin' on this here island, and has made himself this seat to take a good squint to seaward comfortable ov a mornin', to look out for a ship, or, it may be, for the king of the Cannibal Islands, and them cussed ribroasting salvages in their piratical canoos."

The idea of Noah Gawthrop's seemed extremely probable ; but after making a circuit of the entire island, they found themselves again on the eminence without discovering other traces of the supposed recluse.

After hallooming repeatedly, scaring all kinds of wild birds from the thickets above, and the gorse or jungle below, they descended towards the spring ; but before reaching it found a tract that diverged from thence into the very centre of the isle.

Proceeding onward, their curiosity becoming whetted at every step, they perceived a piece of cleared ground, covered with fine grass, on which some goats and little kids, that appeared quite tame, were browsing.

Near this, enclosed by a fence of branches, torn from trees, stuck in the earth, and twisted together, was a small garden, wherein were some turnips, potatoes, radishes, ground apples, and other esculents growing ; and sheltered by a grove of giant myrtles, close by, was a little hut, or wigwam, formed of driftwood, fragments of wreck, palm leaves, and turf.

It measured only about twelve feet by ten ; it was about nine feet in height, and was covered by masses of beautiful scarlet-runners, and other parasitical plants of the tropics.

The door, a panelled mahogany one, which had evidently

been once a portion of a large ship's cabin, was open ; so the explorers advanced, and, on entering, beheld a very remarkable, and, indeed, appalling spectacle.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE HERMIT.

THE western sun streamed into the humble hut through the open door, in a broad and yellow flake of light, that seemed to pierce like a solid body the almost palpable obscurity within ; and where that flake of sunlight fell full in its glory, there lay, stretched on a bed of moss and dry leaves, an old man, who was too evidently in the last throes of death.

He was clad in a species of long brown weed, which was fashioned like a friar's gown, but had a hood or tippet, formed of grass matting, and both were worn, torn, patched and mended thriftily.

A cord—a piece of common rope—girt his waist, and thereon hung a little wooden cross, formed, apparently, by himself, of twigs of the myrtle tied cruciform.

His feet were bare, and, like his hands, they were shrivelled and attenuated, till every bone and muscle was painfully visible. His head was bald by age ; his features seemed to have been noble and commanding, and a beard, bushy but dignified, and white as snow, flowed over his breast, and reached to his girdle.

He was dying, whether of age, of illness, want of nourishment, or all these three combined, those who looked on him knew not.

Livid hues were spreading over his face rapidly ; his nose, which was fine and aquiline, became pinched and white at the point.

As the visitors stooped over him, his eyes dilated, as if he were still partially sensible to external objects ; but it was evident that sight had left him, and that the darkness of death was there.

The hardships incident to a life of seclusion and mortification, such as his must have been on that lonely island, together with his wretched attire and venerable white beard, all served to make him seem a patriarch in years ; but Bartolot supposed that he was not much over sixty.

“He is sinking—dying fast,” said he, in a whisper, as he

took off his hat, while an irresistible emotion of reverence and awe stole over him.

"Outward bound, heaven help him! Goin' forren, and no mistake," said Noah Gawthrop, doffing his straw hat. "I've seen some poor cretters like this, when I was in the Naval Brigade at Sebastypool. One was always a crossing ov hisself from stem to starn, and from port to starboard. Another was what they calls a darvish—he was always a spinning of hisself like a peg-top, and shouting, 'Allar—Allar!' Now, I reckons this here's been a darvish o' some kind."

"Had we come ashore this morning at the time I proposed, we might have saved him, Tom," said Morley, in a low tone, to Bartelot. The latter shook his head, and again the pupils of the glazing eyes dilated, as if the sufferer's ear had caught a passing sound.

"Well," resumed Noah Gawthrop, hissing a kind of sigh through his clenched teeth; "it's a darned hard thing for a poor old fellow like this to slip his cable without knowing what port he may have to steer for."

"He'll be brought up in heaven with a round turn, old boy; at least, I hope so," said Bartelot, as he knelt down and applied to the sufferer's lips a little water from a gourd or calabash that lay near.

Another vessel of the same primitive kind contained some *yerba*, leaves of an evergreen common in Paraguay and in the isles of the south, which when diluted with water, yields a species of tea. A smaller calabash contained some goat's milk; such were the equipage and last repast of this poor old recluse.

"See, Captain Bartelot, here is summut wrote on this bit o' plank," said Noah; "it's in some forren lingo, as I takes it."

On the board which formed the head of the truckle-bed, whereon the hermit lay, appeared a cross, carved as if with a knife, and the following inscription or request:

"Hermano Pedro Zuares Miguel de Barradas,*

"1863.

"Rueguen a Dios por el."

About five minutes after they entered, a heavy sigh, with a gurgling sound, escaped the hermit, his head turned over a little on one side, the lower jaw fell, quivered, became still, and all was over, and the three strangers remained mute, hat

* Brother,

in hand, and gazing with emotions of solemnity and awe on this spectacle.

What was his story? What were the crimes he had committed, the wrongs he had endured at the hands of man, of woman, of the world, that he had been driven to seek a life of such wild and savage seclusion?

Was it the result of eccentric choice, or an inevitable necessity? Who was he, and whence came he? How long had his dreary lot been cast in that voiceless and solitary isle. Had he been the last, or sole survivor, of some ill-fated crew, whose ship had never been heard of since she had left her port in old Spain, to be cast away amid the lonely waters of the southern sea?

All these questions must remain unanswered now, and be committed to oblivion with him in his solitary island grave.

That he was a Spaniard was evident from the name, if, as they had no reason to doubt, that name was his which was carved upon the plank that formed a portion of his humble couch, and also from the language of the request, "Pray to God for him," which was written underneath.

Deeply impressed by what they had witnessed, Morley Ashton, Tom Bartelot, and Noah quitted the hut, and under the bright sunshine stepped towards the little garden, where the few herbs the hermit's hand would never cull were ripening in the warm glow.

After a pause, Bartelot said:

"We must give the old man a Christian burial, for we can't shove off to the ship, and leave him lying there like a dead gull."

He looked at his watch, and then at the sun, and added:

"We have two hours yet before sunset; the calm still holds—not a breath of air on land or sea—and the ship is lying yonder like a log. Run to the boat, Noah, shove off to her, and bid the men stretch well on their oars, as we have no time to lose. Bring Ben Plank, the carpenter, ashore, with some boards to make a coffin; bring a shovel, and my prayer-book, for the English burial service. He wouldn't have believed in it much, perhaps, poor man! but 'twill serve his turn now, as well as another, I hope. Look sharp, old fellow."

"Aye, aye, sir," said Tom, twitching his forelock, and hastening to the creek where the boat lay, with its occupants smoking listlessly in the sunshine, and wondering "what the deuce the skipper was up to in that 'ere island," till Noah enlightened them by a yarn of his own, about the "ould dar-

vish or anchor-right they had found a drifting from his moorings, and dying all hisself," information that made them lay out on their oars, which flashed brightly as the sharp gig shot over the sunlit sea.

Some time elapsed, however, before she came off again ; for, though the ship, influenced by a gentle undercurrent, had drifted nearer the shore, she was still three miles distant.

When the gig's head was turned to the island, the *Princess* had her ensign half hoisted at the gaff peak by Morrison's order, in honour of the funeral ceremony that was to be performed on shore, and the crew were all clustered in the tops and on the cross-trees, with their faces turned in that direction.

The gig soon steered into the wooded creek again, bringing the carpenter, with two large packing boxes, his hammer, saw, and nails ; Noah brought a shovel, and while the former proceeded to make a rude coffin, the latter, with Morley, working by turns with their jackets off, dug a grave for the hermit, in a place chosen by Bartelot, under a magnificent myrtle.

In an hour all the preparations were completed ; he was coffined, and lowered by some of the boat tackle into his last resting-place.

With that reverence of which seamen are seldom devoid, Tom Bartelot stood bare-headed at the head of the humble grave, and read the burial service of the Church of England, Morley making the responses.

On one side stood the ship's carpenter, a squat, sturdy sailor ; on the other, old, hard-visaged, weather-beaten Noah, hat in hand, his grizzled hair glistening in the sunshine.

At the words—

"Ashes to ashes—dust to dust," Tom, with his straw hat under his left arm, dropped a handful of earth on the coffin-lid ; a little rapid shovelling followed ; a few sods were batted down, and the funeral party prepared to leave the spot.

Ere doing so, Morley and Bartelot examined the hut very carefully ; but found only a few nuts and dried fruits, which formed the larder of the deceased, an old and well-worn knife, like a seaman's, and two or three drinking-cups, formed of cocoa-nut shells, on which were carved crosses and other religious emblems. These were brought away as relics of their visit.

Just as they were retiring, Noah chanced to cast a glance at the couch of leaves, from which they had so recently removed the body, and near the plank whereon the name and request were written, he found a book, a Spanish missal, as

the title-page bore, "*Madrid, 1840, Imprenta de Don Pedro Sanz, se hallara en su liberia calle de Carretas,*" which he handed to the captain upside down, for any way was all the same to poor Noah's eye.

It contained a piece of folded ribbon, with a cross of red enamelled on gold, shaped like a sword, placed between the masses for the dead; and these relics he and Morley examined as they shoved off for the ship, giving a farewell glance at the lonely grave, at the head of which, as a humble monument to mark that a Christian lay below, Ben Plank had erected two barrel staves, nailed together in the form of a cross.

There was a great deal of manuscript, written small and closely, in Spanish, on the fly-leaves at each end of the missal, with implements that had been apparently pens torn from sea-fowls' wings, and ink furnished by leaves of the wild tobacco, dried in the sunshine, and diluted with water. Thus, from its reddish-brown tint, the writing had all the hue or appearance of that presented by a MS. of the Middle Ages, rather than of a document which, by its date, seemed to have been written only last year.

"Stretch out, lads, and let us get soon on board. Morrison knows Spanish well, and he'll read all this for us," said Bartelot. "I am curious to know what it is, though, perhaps it may only be prayers and pious meditations after all."

The blood-red sun had now set behind the high rock of the Hermit's Isle, and the rude seat, which he never more would occupy, could be distinctly seen, defined in outline against the sky. With tropical rapidity purple dusk was stealing over the red and golden sky. The calm was passing away; the chill night wind, chill alike from sea and land, was now blowing across the long rollers, that urged the swift gig from this unknown shore towards the ship.

They were soon alongside.

"Stand by the fall tackles, watch on deck! Hoist in the boat!" ordered Bartelot, as he sprang up the man-ropes and proceeded aft. "Douse the ensign, Morrison. All is over; we've laid the old man in his last home—and it has been a queer business this. Set the courses; let fall and sheet home, for here comes the breeze; but first look at these things."

"The enamelled sword—a knight's cross of the Spanish Order of Santiago de Compostello," said Morrison.

"And this writing?"

"On the fly-leaves of the prayer-book or missal?"

"Yes," replied Bartelot, impatiently.

"It begins :—' *The confession of Don Pedro Zuarez Miguel de Barradas, Knight Commander of the Order of St. James of Spain, Captain and Governor of the Castle of San Juan de Ulloa, for the Federal Government of the Free States of Mexico.*'"

"Barradas again? It seems to me most strange; but I seem to have heard that name before," said Morley, searching in his memory, as they descended to the cabin, while the yard-heads were filled, and the ship, standing to her course before the freshening breeze, began to leave astern the island where the old hermit lay.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MARIQUITA ESCUDERO.

AFTER the breathless calm of the past day, the heat of the cabin was intense. The lamp was trimmed and lit by the steward, but the skylight was still kept open.

"Awfully hot, Morley, is it not?" said Tom Bartelot, as he threw off his jacket.

"Yes; and the heat makes one so thirsty, too!"

"I can't give you iced champagne, as in the gardens at Rio; but the steward has bitter beer, beaujolais, and potash water, with grog for you, Morrison, which I know you prefer; and you, too, Noah, my old Triton. And now let us to work, and overhaul the old man's papers."

Morrison, who had been scanning over the manuscript, helped himself to a glass of grog mechanically, without taking his eyes from the writing. Noah Gawthrop, who had been specially invited below, in virtue of the part he had borne in the past day's episode, received a jorum of stiff grog from the steward, and seated himself near the bulkhead, uncomfortably, on the extreme edge of a sea-chest, in preference to the well-cushioned locker, which he evidently considered too fine for his tarry trousers.

Morley and Bartelot were each furnished with a glass of beaujolais and potash water. The stars were visible through the open skylight, paling away into the blue ether overhead, when Morrison began to read, translating the recluse's Spanish into tolerable English, as he made himself master of the subject; the sole interruptions, as he proceeded, being an

occasional interjection from Noah, such as "Dash my buttons!" "Smite my timbers!" varied by "Darn my eyes! the ragamuffin! the regular-built old Bluebeard!" followed by a hard slap of his hand upon his thigh; though much of what he heard proved a sore puzzle to him, especially the religious invocations, the outburst of remorse, and bitter self-reproaches which we omit in the rehearsal of his story.

The manuscript proceeded thus:

"I pray the reader hereof, if he be a good Catholic, to say a novena, or nine days' prayer, for the repose of my sinful soul; and I beg of the first Christian man who shall give my remains interment to place a cross at the end of my grave.

"Let whoever beholds these poor remains profit by the sad spectacle they exhibit, even as a recluse, Brother Pedro, has sought to profit by the prayers, penance, and mortification of twenty years spent in this solitude, while striving to atone for the errors of forty spent in the world as Don Pedro Zuarez Miguel de Barradas.

"I was a man of fortune in New Spain; my forefathers were of the purest blood—the boasted *blue* blood of those who dwelt by the Ebro, without taint of Goth, of Moor, or Jew—and my more immediate predecessors, men who came with Hernan Cortez, of Medellin, and Francis Pizarro, of Troquillo, to conquer the new world which Columbus had given to Castile and Leon.

"My direct ancestor, Don Miguel de Barradas, came from San Pedro de Arlanza, in the district of Burgos. A near kinsman of Hernan Cortez, he was one of the first who settled on the table-land of Anahuac, founding one of those powerful families which flourished there, and who also possess all the sea-coast, from La Vera Cruz to San Luis de Potosi.

"In power and right of action, we were free and unfettered as the Spanish nobility at home. No agrarian law could there force us to sell our vast estates, if we neglected to cultivate them; and our farmers we could harass, oppress, cajole, or expel at our pleasure.

"Proud of my descent from one of those who conquered Tlascala and Tenochtitlan in 1521, no man was more vain of his old Castilian pedigree than I; yet there came a time when I joined the patriots, and fought for the separation of Peru from the mother country, and, with my own blood, sought to cement the foundation of the free United States of South America.

“Prior to my entering upon that career of usefulness, my objects in life were very different.

“I was possessed of vast wealth ; I had been well educated and highly accomplished by my parents, at whose desire I had travelled over all Europe, and had visited its capitals, to the improvement of my taste, though but little to the advantage of my morals.

“I was possessed of a person that was considered handsome. I deemed myself a model and mirror of honour, and had a spirit ever high and haughty, but at times crafty and ferocious. My character was full of inconsistencies ; thus, wherever I went, I became involved in quarrels on frivolous pretexts and points of honour—quarrels, which invariably ended in duels, and in these I was generally the victor, whether with sword or with pistol, for I was skilful in the use of both.

“Within this shadow was a darker shade !

“No man’s wife or daughter—even were he my best and dearest friend—could be safe from my artful, insidious, and too often successful advances ; for to see any woman, possessed of even moderate attractions, was to love her at once.

“Success in each instance gave new courage and address, and led to success in others ; thus my whole time was spent in weaving plans and intrigues, and the chief aim of my existence was to feel myself the conqueror. Thus to flame succeeded flame, so rapid were my fancies, so insatiable my desires, that I rejoiced in the idea of making three or four assignations with as many different beauties in one day.

“Opposition in some, the tears, the reproaches, and the despair of others, added but piquancy to this pursuit of the innocent and unwary, while my hand with the small sword was so skilful and steady, my aim with the pistol so deadly and true, that relations and rivals sought to punish me in vain, though thrice I escaped miraculously their attempts at deliberate assassination.

“Of all whom I deceived none do I mourn more, in this time of repentance and bitterness, than Mariquita Escudero, whose image and memory fill me yet—even at the distance of many years—with inexpressible sorrow.

“She was the only daughter of Miguel Escudero, a worthy old farmer of mine, near Orizaba—that mighty volcano, whose summit is 1,300 feet higher than the Peak of Teneriffe, and which serves as a landmark to all mariners bound for La Vera Cruz.

“ Though tainted, as we deemed it, with the Mexican blood of her mother, who was an octoroon of a native tribe, Mariquita inherited from her father good old Castilian blood, and was a girl far exceeding all whom I had met or known in loveliness and goodness, in virtue and in purity.

“ She had heard of my evil reputation, and warned by common rumour—it may be by her parents, or inspired by native modesty—she always drew her mantilla close, and shunned or avoided me, when I visited Orizaba.

“ Piqued by her coldness and inflamed by her beauty, which was of a very remarkable kind, I relinquished, or forgot for the time, every other amour, to engage in this new one, proceeding to work warily, and with all the subtlety of the fiend I was then.

“ Though I frequently visited the *granja* (farm) of old Miguel Escudero, I ceased to notice, save by casual bow, the presence of Mariquita ; but strove assiduously to gain the friendship of her brother, Juan, a handsome and high-spirited young man, whom, as he was a deadly shot and good swordsman, I thought it would be as well to remove from the vicinity of my operations.

“ I might easily have had him taken off, by distributing a few dollars among the bandidos of the Barranca Secca, but, though wicked enough, I was not sufficiently a villain for that, and so preferred to procure for him a commission as an *alferez* (ensign) in the guards of the castle of San Juan de Ulloa, an honour which, being so unusual, when conferred on the son of a humble *grangero*, or farmer, filled the soul of Miguel with gratitude and Juan with pride and joy.

“ Not content with this, I appointed Escudero overseer of all my estates, with an income of about five hundred pistoles per annum ; so my cold little beauty, the Senora Mariquita, had now a horse and mounted groom when she went abroad, instead of a mule, as before, and a barefooted negro runner.

“ These presents—this unwonted patronage—passed well enough as rewards to an ancient and faithful adherent of our house, for old Miguel Escudero had been an especial confidant of my father, and was descended from one of the twenty men-at-arms whom my ancestor, Don Miguel, had brought from San Pedro de Arlanza in old Castile. He regarded me with a friendship, a love that was almost paternal, and now pressed me to visit him at the handsome residence which my favour and bounty had conferred upon him ; so I went to spend three months under the same roof with Mariquita, on

the slopes of the vast Pic d'Orizaba, to hunt the wild cattle, the elks, the buffaloes, and cabri, and the grisly black bears, in the ever green forests and lovely savannahs that spread away from thence towards the Rio de Carraderas, and nightly, it was my joy to lay the spoils of the chase at the feet of Mariquita, in compliment to her as the mistress of her father's house, for such she was—luckily, for the furtherance of my project, her watchful mother having been recently removed by death.

“I now saw more of her than I could ever have done by periodical visits, and my passion grew greater by our intimacy, for the girl was a wondrously lovely brunette, though her skin was exceedingly fair. The form of her hands and feet, the contour of her head, and the soft luxuriant masses of her ripply black hair, were all perfect; and her eyes, large, dark, clear, and liquid, were beautiful, and ever varying in expression.

“I was too artful, too well trained in the ways of vice, to seem more than simply pleased with the society of Mariquita, I was scrupulously attentive to her at table and elsewhere. If she mounted, my hand and knee were at her service; but when dismounting, she always preferred the attendance of her father, or her old negro groom, as if determined that no hand of mine should ever touch her slender waist.

“We occasionally accompanied each other on the guitar. Songs of love were long, long avoided, but they came at last. I remember the first we ventured on—‘Love's First Kiss,’ an old song of Burgos, beginning :

“‘A aquel caballero madre.’

And then came a time, too, when I saw that Mariquita ceased to avoid me—a time when her cheek flushed palpably, and when her lovely eyes dilated and sparkled at my approach with emotions of pleasure there were no concealing.

“In me she beheld her father's patron and benefactor, her brother's friend; so gratitude soon led the way to love.

“I beheld the growth of this secret influence with exultation, yet never spoke of love. Inspired by my master, the devil, I was too wary yet to mar my game until she loved me irretrievably and deeply. My efforts, my passion, were about to be rewarded at last!

“For good or for evil, to what is a man most indebted for success in life? To genius, birth, education, or perseverance? To none of these, but simply to success itself.

“Alas! she was too young, too tender, and too artless—

too full of keen Spanish and generous Indian impulses, to withstand me ; and after a time I saw that she burned with a passion equal to my own, which I still pretended to suppress within me, and to veil under an outward aspect of indifference and respect.

“ ‘The first symptom of true love in a young man is timidity ; in a girl it is boldness,’ says a writer. ‘This will surprise, and yet nothing is more simple : the two sexes have a tendency to approach, and each assumes the qualities of the other.’

“This strange analysis of the human heart was fully realised in the case of Mariquita.

“One day we were riding at the foot of the vast Cordillera, through those odoriferous groves, the leaves of which are used for perfuming the chocolate. We had contrived to miss our black groom, who had dismounted in a part of the wood, to examine a shoe of his horse ; so, as the atmosphere of noon was intensely hot and breathless, we sought a shady and sequestered spot, where, under the cool, humid, and umbrageous forest leaves, the smilax or sarsaparilla roots, the liquidamber, the choacun root, and the balsam of tolu were growing in luxuriance, and where the wild cotton tree, and the broad-leaved tobacco plant, the yellow gourd, and the purple grape all formed a jungle together.

“Languid and panting with the heat of the day, the length of our ride, and, inspired by the pleasure she now felt in my society, Mariquita never looked so lovely ; and now, when praying that she would alight, strange to say, I spoke timidly and with a wildly-beating heart ; but, to my surprise, she consented, and held out her hand with a delightful smile.

“As I lifted her from the saddle, she threw back her long low veil, and the heavy masses of her perfumed hair fell upon my cheek.

“She leant heavily forward in my arms and instead of placing her on the ground, I pressed her tenderly to my breast, with my lips trembling on her forehead. Then I murmured in her ear :

“ ‘Mariquita, *mi querida*—Marguerita, my idol—I love you—love you dearly ! Will you pardon me ? will you permit it ?’

“She did not reply, but her head sank upon my shoulders, for the crisis had come ! Her lovely face was close to mine, and I felt her breath upon my cheek. The colour had left hers, for those emotions which cause some women to blush make others grow pale ; but her half closed eyes sparkled with

passion and joy under their long black lashes, and her rosy lips were parted by a divine smile.

"I felt that I had triumphed ; that Mariquita, the once proud, cold, and reserved Mariquita, loved me, for that emotion which had made me at first seem timid now made her actually bold, and her sweet lips sought mine, it may be but too readily, in the first glow of her girlish ardour.

"She gave me one long and passionate kiss, and then, without assistance, she sprang from my arms to her saddle, saying, with mingled smiles and tears :

"'We have both been foolish—very foolish, Senor Don Pedro, but let us begone.'

"'Mariquita, consider the heat—your fatigue!' I urged.

"'We are some miles from the *granja*, and have first the road to find,' she replied hurriedly.

"With her horse's reins and her whip she had resumed something of her former self, but the memory of my kisses yet burned upon her brow and lips. I endeavoured, in vain, to lead the conversation back to the sudden impulse which the simple act of dismounting had given to both our hearts.

"I begged of her to moderate the pace of her horse, as there was plenty of time for us to reach home ; but she would not listen to me ; and seemed to blush with anger now at the memory of what had passed between us ; yet little cared I for that. I felt assured that we had passed the Rubicon, that this beautiful girl loved me, and that the time I had spent with old Miguel Escudero, in rambling among his plantations, where the negroes hoed the sugar, planted tobacco, and gathered the cotton tufts, had not been spent in vain.

"Mariquita did not avoid me, so for several days after this I never missed an opportunity, especially when old Senor Escudero was not present, of pressing my suit, and giving her assurances of my unalterable love ! Unalterable ! Oh *mal hayas tu*, Pedro de Barradas, into how many charming ears had those same words been poured, and in the same tender accents too !

"But Mariquita, who had become more mistress of herself, always heard me with composure, and with a bearing unlike that she had exhibited in the wood ; but I could see that the simplest remark, or most casual tone of my voice, made her heart vibrate with pleasure, and her colour deepen.

"One evening we were standing together at an open window which was shaded by a vine-covered verandah, and faced the usually flaming summit of the volcano of Orizaba. It was

wonderfully still on that occasion; a column of thin smoke only ascended from it to the very zenith. The evening was lovely, and the sun's farewell rays were gilding the mighty summit of the cone; all was calm and quiet, save in our hearts, which beat tumultuously. I drew closer to Mariquita, and as she stood before me, I passed my arms around her, kissed the back of her delicate neck tenderly and whispered:

“‘How long shall I speak to you of love, Mariquita!’”

“‘As long as you please, Senor Don Pedro,’ she replied, with a tender smile, as she half turned round her head.

“‘Call me Pedro, my beloved one, without the ceremonious don—and senor, too, oh, fie!’”

“‘*Bueno—Pedro mi querida.*’

“‘Sweeter still!’ I exclaimed in a low voice.

“‘Well!’

“‘Well, dearest Mariquita; how long shall we speak of love?’

“‘As long as you please.’

“‘Ah! feel how my heart beats. I ask how long in vain!’

“‘Long enough, senor,’ said she, with a pretty pout.

“‘*Senor!*’

“‘Yes, senor, unless—unless——’

“‘She paused.

“‘What!’

“‘You speak of marriage, too,’ she replied, suddenly unclasping my hands, which were tenderly folded round her slender waist.

“‘Do you love me?’

“‘Do I love you?’ she repeated, reproachfully, turning her full, clear, and glorious eyes to mine, while throwing back her veil and the masses of her silky hair together; ‘you know that *I do love you*, Pedro, fondly, deeply, passionately, for you have won that which never belonged, and never shall belong, to another—my heart.’

“‘Beloved Mariquita!’ I exclaimed, and pressed her to my breast in a long and mutual embrace, ‘and you will be mine—mine?’

“‘At the foot of the altar, Pedro—at the foot of the altar alone,’ she whispered, with a heart that swelled with love, and with dark eyes steeped in languor.

‘But vain are human resolves, even when made by a heart so pure and guileless as that of Mariquita, when struggling with a passion so deep and consuming; for with these very words on her lips she was yielding; we were alone and un-

disturbed, and ere the sun's last rays had faded from the cone of Orizaba, Mariquita had lost her honour !

* * * * *

“The hapless Mariquita ! She loved me more than ever now. She clung to me with all the strength of love, of sacrifice, and of despair.

“For days after this, on her knees, she besought me to marry her. I would raise her, kiss and console her, and flatter, too—how weary now the task !—flatter and pacify her, making countless promises and professions, for I still loved her in my own selfish fashion ; but I shrunk from the idea of marriage with the daughter of one of my own *grangeros*—one whose ancestors had been hewers of wood and drawers of water to mine—a girl, moreover, who had the taint of native blood in her veins !

“I, Pedro de Barradas, Knight of Santiago de Compostella, and Lord of Anahuac, whom the proud daughters of the first men, and of the noblest houses in New Spain, had failed to lure within the meshes of matrimony, was not likely to mate with the daughter of Miguel Escudero, however much I might love her, and however much she might please my somewhat fastidious eye.

“I heard her many tender and pathetic entreaties, and once, too, her wild threats of self-destruction, poniard in hand—that I would save her from impending shame ; but I was pitiless as the ocelot—the tiger cat that lurked in the woods of Orizaba—all the more pitiless that I knew she fondly—yes, madly loved me.

“Weary of the endless task of seeking to console one who would not and could not be consoled, I quitted Orizaba for some months, as we were planning the revolt against the mother country, a movement which was to secure to me the captaincy of the great castle of San Juan de Ulloa, the citadel of La Vera Cruz, which mounts nearly two hundred pieces of cannon, and is the key of the whole province.

“During my absence and in the fulness of time, Mariquita had a son, born in secrecy, amid tears, shame, and sorrow. She baptised it by the name of Pedro, and sent him to a lonely *puebla* in the mountains that overlook the Barranca Secca, to be nursed by one of my people. This birth was all unknown alike to Miguel Escudero, whom I had despatched on a political mission towards the shores of the Pacific, and to his son Juan, who was now a lieutenant of infantry at the castle of San Juan de Ulloa.

“My passion for Mariquita still existed ; her love for me

was greater than ever now, and she lived but for me, and in the hope that in pity, if not for love, I would espouse her still, and these hopes I was always wicked enough to fan ; 'so man wrongs and time avenges.'

"Completely in my power, surrounded by my toils, the victim of my wiles, still loving me dearly and desperately, and still hoping for the ultimate fulfilment of my thousand protestations, the poor girl continued to meet me from time to time in a deserted sugar-mill on the mountains of Orizaba, a secret intercourse that ended fatally for her, and for all, for another son, whom we named Zuares, was born, and at the same time the whole affair came to the knowledge of Miguel Escudero, who though but a humble *grangero*, had all the pride of birth, and more than the ideas of spotless honour, honesty, and female purity, possessed by any grandee of old Castile.

"The poor old man's horror was beyond all description.

"To find that his daughter's honour had been lost, his hospitality so infamously violated, his home disgraced, his prospects ruined, and by me—ME, whom he had so loved and so respected, as his friend and benefactor, was a mortal stab too deep to survive, and within an hour after the revelation came upon him in all its stunning details, poor Miguel Escudero had ceased to exist.

"He did not die by his own hand, he was too good and too religious a man for such a terrible act; but sinking on the floor of his chamber, he never moved again. He died of autopsy—paralysis of the heart!

"I was not present at the scene of horror, being, fortunately for myself, in command of the great castle of San Juan de Ulloa.

"On the day of Corpus Christi, after [having attended mass, I was walking on that portion of the ramparts which faces the flats of Gallega, accompanied by some of the officers of my staff, when the young lieutenant, Juan Escudero, approached to inform me, in a voice broken with grief, of his father's sudden death, and to request leave of absence to attend his obsequies.

"My heart was struck with remorse, and grew sick with shame. I placed my purse in his hand ; I gave him my best horse, and bade him begone to Orizaba with good speed ; but I trembled like a craven in my soul for the hour of his return.

"A few days passed and the young lieutenant came back.

"I was walking along on the same ramparts when I saw

him steadily approaching me. He was clad in his uniform, and his silver epaulettes glittered in the sun. He had a band of crape on his right arm, and another on the hilt of his sword—a soldier's simple mourning for a lost parent, and alas! a lost honour.

“He came straight up to me; his handsome face, so like the face of Mariquita, was deadly pale; but the glare of wild hate shone in his eyes, and his nether lip quivered spasmodically.

“‘Senor Don Pedro de Barradas,’ said he, saluting me, ceremoniously, ‘I have the honour to confess the many services you have rendered my family in the days when you were true to yourself and to us. For all these I beg to thank you. But I have also to confess the many deep wrongs you have done us, and I here brand you, before God and man as a villain and a coward, whom I have vowed to kill like a dog here on the ramparts of San Juan de Ulloa!’

“My heart sank, and my hand trembled.

“‘Senor Teniente—Senor Escudero,’ I began in a rash and vague attempt to explain or to extenuate; but the brother of Mariquita was mad with ungovernable fury, and he rushed upon me sword in hand.

“I knew that he would kill me without mercy, and that there was nothing left for me but to defend my life to the utmost, and to do this all my skill was requisite.

“I was the best swordsman in La Vera Cruz; but he was twenty years my junior, young, active and filled with just rage and indignation.

“Compelled to stand on my own defence, my sole object was to ward off his cuts, to parry his thrusts, and to keep him at bay till the castle guard came to separate us. I sought to disarm, and if driven to sore extremity to wound him only; but while he was making a desperate lunge at me, my sword entered his heart. I felt its hot blood spout upon the blade, and pour though the hilt upon my hand, as I flung my weapon down in grief and dismay.

“Juan threw up his hands, and uttered a wild cry. It was ‘Mariquita,’ as he fell dead on his face, at my feet.

“Long, long did a horror of these events oppress me. I buried him in the church of the Augustine Friars, and had one hundred masses sung for the repose of his soul—oh, who will say one for me!—I would have made some efforts to requite the living victim of my wickedness; but now retribution came upon me.

“Mariquita was still living at her father's old *granja*, on

the borders of the Barranca Secca, in shame and seclusion, nursing her children, Pedro and Zuares, who now bore the dishonoured name of Barradas, and each of whom had, strange to say, a little red cross, like that of Santiago, on his left shoulder, where their mother's hand engraved it, lest the children should be lost.

"About a month after Juan's death, I was betrayed by some of his friends into the hands of the troops of his Majesty Ferdinand VII., and was placed by them on board a vessel for conveyance to Spain, where an ignominious death as a traitor awaited me.

"When passing near this isle, a heavy gale came on, and I fell overboard. In such a sea, to save me was impossible; but a sailor heard my shriek of despair, and cast over to me a hencoop.

"God, in his goodness, enabled me to reach it, and after drifting on the dark ocean for more than an hour, I was cast ashore, and here have I remained ever since leading a life of piety and austerity, of penance and of prayer, in the humble and earnest hope that this imitation of the holy men of old may atone for the errors I committed in the world as Don Pedro Zuares Miguel de Barradas.

"Ruguen a Dios por el."

Such was the substance of this strange confession, which we have written out in a more readable and coherent form than Morrison found it, and which throws a light on the parentage and origin of the two dark seamen on board the *Hermione*; and as for the fate of the hapless Mariquita, the reader has already learned it from Captain Hawkshaw's unpleasant reminiscence of the Barranca Secca.

The evening of the next day saw the *Princess* steering for the north-western extremity of the island of Tristan d'Acunha. At nine o'clock, Bartelot ordered a light to be hoisted at the end of the foretopmast studdingsail boom, and a gun to be fired, as a signal for a shore boat, which promptly came off from this remarkable place.

As he wanted fresh water, the captain continued to stand off and on till dawn next day, when Morley, who had spent the morning watch in successful fishing, had the gratification of seeing the sun rise on the isle of Don Tristan d'Acunha.

Situated far amid the lonely waves of the Southern Atlantic, at the distance of 1,500 miles from any continent, this lofty island has a peak of 5,000 feet in height above the level of its beach.

At dawn it seemed like a cone of flame, shaded off by purple tints, and towering amid a rose-coloured sea, whose depth is so vast that it far exceeds even the height of Tristan's loftiest peak.

Two islands are near it : one is named the Inaccessible ; the other the island of the Nightingale but they are mere masses of wild storm beaten rock, against which the ocean rolls its masses of foam, and above which, in the amber-tinted sky, a cloud of sea-hens, petrels, and albatrosses wheel and flutter.

In the little town which held a British garrison when our imperial captive pined in St. Helena, there is a mixed population of English and Portuguese mulattoes, though the isle is described in a recent gazetteer as being as desolate as when the Cavalier Tristan d'Acunha, traversed the southern sea with his high-pooped caravel, and gave the place his name, in the first years of the sixteenth century.

Morley, Gawthrop, and three of the crew went ashore in the jolly-boat to procure some fresh water and vegetables. Morrison followed in the quarter-boat; both returned in about an hour, and after what they had brought off was put on board, they were sent ahead with a warp to tow the ship off the land, towards which a dangerous current had been drifting her.

A fine breeze soon after sprang up ; the *Princess* bore away upon her course, and ere midnight came down upon the sea, she had bade a last farewell to the lofty isle of Tristan d'Acunha.

When next we see her on the ocean, we shall have something to narrate very different from the hitherto peaceful and prosperous voyage of Bartelot and his shipmates.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE CREW OF THE "HERMIONE" DISCONTENTED.

FOR days Captain Hawkshaw was haunted by the recollection of that strange episode, the sinking corpse ; whose features—seen through the fevered medium of his own imagination and his guilty conscience—seemed to assume the likeness of Morley Ashton, as they went slowly down through the green, translucent sea, after Dr. Leslie Heriot had attached the cannon-shot to its heels.

He accounted for the exclamation of horror that escaped him by saying to those in the boat that he felt a sudden qualm of sickness, of disgust, or a giddiness; and his first resource when on board was to Joe, the captain's steward, for his brandy bottle.

When he began to reason with himself, however, in a calmer moment, he perceived the impossibility of the remains being those of Morley Ashton, as no influence of current, tide, or wind could have drifted them from the coast of Britain so far through the ocean as the South Atlantic.

The idea was absurd—impossible!

Moreover, the drowned man had not been dead more than a week to all appearance; and then his hands had grasped a life-buoy, evincing that he must have fallen overboard from some ship, or been the victim of a wreck.

When the impression of that affair began to wear away, his fears of the two Barradas, and a recollection of the manner in which Pedro, Bill Badger, the bulky Yankee, and others of the crew had insulted him, resumed their sway; but after a time he began to take courage.

"What have I to fear from the Barradas? Nothing!" he would whisper to himself, as if to gather comfort from the echo of his own thoughts. "Suppose they denounce me to my friends—to Ethel—I have simply to deny, and that is all. The story of the padre—d——nation!—no, I mean of the Barranca Secca—I have already told, and Master Zuares does not shine in that affair. Even to Ethel it is nothing new, for I have related it more than once to increase her horror of the Barradas when the crisis comes."

A *crisis* was coming which the captain did not quite foresee!

"Even to Ethel it is nothing new—I can deny, deny, and defy them all. 'Tis only my word against theirs."

This was all very well; but ere the voyage ended there occurred several events, which alike put the captain's courage and resolution to flight.

As the *Hermione* approached the Cape of Good Hope, she encountered alternate storms and calms, with weather so unusually cold for the season, that Hawkshaw had a fair excuse for permitting his whiskers and moustache to resume their wonted aspect of luxuriance, as he had ceased to hope for concealment on board.

Though pretty well inured now, by their very protracted voyage, to the discomforts of ship-life, Ethel and Rose Basset remained a good deal in the cabin, especially the former, to avoid Hawkshaw's attentions, which were thus repressed by the

presence of the captain, when it was not his watch, of Mr. Quail, or her father, who preferred to lie reading or lounging on the cabin locker, to facing on deck the spoon-drift that flew over the lee quarter when the ship was going free.

She found Adrian Manfredi, the young Italian mate, a pleasant companion, for Rose rather absorbed the society of Dr. Heriot. He was gentlemanly and well bred; he had seen much of the world, and her preference for him was so decided, that Hawkshaw felt at times a pang of jealous rage in his heart, which was in no way soothed when, in the mate's hours of leisure, they took to reading together in Italian, "I Promessi Sposi," the beautiful novel of Alessandro Manzoni, from the neat little three-volume edition, printed at Lugano.

This emotion became all the more bitter after Ethel gave Manfredi a handsome gold locket, to hold the hair of his little brother, "the brave boy, Attilio," whose story he told in a previous chapter.

The young man was no doubt charmed by the beauty and society of a sweet English girl like Ethel Basset; thus his voice became mellow and soft whenever he addressed her, and his eyes sparkled with admiration and pleasure whenever he saw her, but beyond this no sign of a deeper emotion escaped him. Perhaps he felt the folly or futility of encouraging it.

On the other hand Ethel's preference for him was greatly induced by some real or imaginary resemblance which she saw, or thought she saw, in his features to those of Morley Ashton; though Rose and her father failed to perceive it, and Hawkshaw, who always trembled in his soul at the young man's name, treated the idea with angry ridicule.

The sullenness and other growing peculiarities in the bearing of the crew had been increasing, so that some would scarcely obey those orders necessary for the working of the ship. Captain Phillips, though full of anxiety for the probable issue, resolved to forbear until a ship of war hove in sight, or until he could dismiss some and put others in prison, if this state of matters still continued, when the *Hermione* hauled up for Table Bay.

One day Adrian Manfredi had charge of the deck.

The ship was running nearly fair before a fine top-gallant breeze; there was not much of a sea on, but the sky was lowering, and a great gray bank of cloud was resting on the ocean to the northward, for they were encountering regular Cape weather now,

Manfredi was conversing with Ethel from time to time, and she was still busy with the last volume of "I Promessi Sposi," when one of the crew, named Samuel Sharkey, a coarse, square stump of a fellow, having great misshapen hands, a large and very ugly visage, came deliberately aft, with a short black pipe in his mouth, and stood near her, puffing with great coolness, and eyeing her with a very admiring leer.

Ethel glanced at him uneasily, and removed to a seat nearer the taffrail, for there was cool insolence in the man's sinister eyes and bearing which alarmed her very much.

On this, Sharkey the seaman, gave a peculiar whistle, to which Bill Badger, the tall, ungainly Yankee, who was at the wheel, responded; and these signals now attracted the attention of Manfredi, who had been looking aloft, and securing some of the halyards to the belaying-pins.

"Hollo, you sir!" said he, "what do you want aft, eh?"

"None o' your grand airs, Mister Manfredy," was the sulky response, "'cos they won't do in this part o' blue water, so I tells you at once."

"Take that pipe out of your mouth; remember that you are on the quarter-deck, and there is a lady here."

"That is just what brought me aft. Are you chaps and the cabin passengers a goin' to keep the gals—the old judge's darters—all to yourselves? I don't mean to offend you, marm; oh, not at all, by no manner o' means," he continued, making a mock bow to Ethel; "but shiver my topsails, if mayhap, we won't be better acquainted afore we sights Maddygascar and the gut of the Mosambique Channel—ha, ha!"

And as he concluded he continued to leer at Ethel.

"You are drunk, fellow," said Manfredi, who was resolved to keep his temper if possible, for the man's words contained in them a reference to ultimate views sufficiently daring to excite alarm.

"I am no more a feller than you are, mayhap not so much," replied Sharkey, taking his huge square hands out of his trousers pockets and proceeding to clench them very ominously; "and as for being two or three cloths in the wind, 'taint the six-water grog as we gets aboard o' this 'ere beastly craft as will make me so."

"Go forward, I command you, or by Heaven I'll throw you overboard," said Manfredi in a hoarse voice.

"If you want to swim, there may be two as can play at that," responded the ugly seaman; "but I knows summut easier in seamanship, and I would advise you to l'arn it."

"What is it?"

"To run ten knots an hour right *in the wind's eye*, with everything set that will draw, aloft and alow, skyscrapers, moonrakers, and all."

"My dear Miss Basset, I beg of you to excuse this scene, and permit me to lead you below," said Manfredi, with an agitated manner, to Ethel, who had listened to all this with great dismay.

"My dear, don't do nothin' o' the sort; just stay here and see how I'll rib-roast him," said Sharkey.

"Go forward, you gallows lubber!" thundered Manfredi, growing pale with a passion which he strove to repress, lest he should terrify Ethel, between whom and this seaman he interposed.

Sharkey, instead of complying, put his right hand behind him, and suddenly drew forth a sheath-knife—one of those ugly weapons which few seamen are now without. Armed with this he was about to make a rush at Manfredi, when the latter, quick as thought, and as if he had anticipated some such catastrophe, snatched up a heavy iron marlinspike and hurled it full at Sharkey's head, with such force and unerring aim that he was knocked down, senseless and bleeding, with a severe wound on the head.

"Carry the scoundrel forward, and drench him well with salt water to bring him to," said Manfredi, while panting with excitement, to the Barradas and some of the crew who had run aft. He took the knife from Sharkey's relaxed hand, and threw it into the sea, adding, "I will serve every man who disobeys me now in the same fashion, and tow him overboard for twenty knots at the end of a line, if the captain will allow me."

"Mayhap as you won't," growled Sharkey, recovering a little, as he was lifted up by his sulky and muttering mess-mates; "and if you don't repent this work *afore to-morrow morning*, you infernal Hytalian, my name ain't Sam Sharkey!"

That some general outbreak among the crew was on the *tapis*, and might have taken place but for his own resolute conduct, Manfredi had not a doubt.

With his face covered with blood, the mutineer was carried forward, and Dr. Heriot (whom Ethel's scream when she beheld the scuffle had brought on deck), with others, hastened to the forecabin to examine the wound and have it dressed.

The marline-spike, an iron instrument that tapers like a pin and is used for separating the strands of rope when splicing

or marling, had inflicted a severe wound on the forehead of Sharkey, and the blood was flowing freely from it.

He growled and swore, using fearful oaths and threats, while Heriot, bathed, dressed, and bandaged the gash. Captain Phillips threatened to have him put in irons till the ship reached Cape Town; but as the wound was severe, he permitted him to remain in his berth in the fore-castle bunks, where his shipmates remained to console him, and hear his reiterated threats of revenge.

Manfredi apologised to Ethel for the alarm he had unwittingly caused her, but added that no other course was left him but to strike the ruffian down, to preserve his own life and authority.

Quiet Mr. Quail made a due entry of the event among his columns of "remarks" in the ship's log, while Mr. Basset waxed warm at the affair, and expounded learnedly and as became a new-fledged judge on the law relating to merchant seamen, quoting Shee's edition of "Lord Tenterden," and so forth with great fluency.

So generous and forgiving was Manfredi, that, at lunch time, he sent boy Joe, the captain's steward, forward with a tot of brandy to the patient in the fore-castle, and the amiable Mr. Sharkey drank it to the last drop, with a fearful invocation of curses on the donor's head, and thereupon dashed the wooden tot in Joe's face.

Before the first dog-watch the event was apparently forgotten; but it increased the desire of Captain Phillips to reach Cape Town and get rid of some of his crew.

CHAPTER XXX.

ROSE AND DR. HERIOT.

SUPPER was over in the cabin, and the little community there would soon be separating for the night, or "turning in," as it is technically named.

"How brightly the stars are shining," said Rose, as she peeped up through the skylight.

"Should you like to go on deck for a moment?" asked Dr. Heriot, in a low voice, as he hastened to her side.

"Yes, for a moment only."

"Take care of chill," said Mr. Basset, warningly.

"Take care rather of yourself, Miss Rose, and, of all things, take care of the doctor," said Captain Phillips, laughing.

"Manfredi has charge of the deck ; see how she is trimmed aloft. Report to me when you come down, and then I'll turn in."

Rose coloured on hearing the captain's bantering tone, as she threw a shawl over her head and shoulders, took the doctor's ready arm, and hastened up the companion-stair.

Ethel smiled sadly at her joyous and girlish sister, for she had seen how the intimacy between the young doctor and Rose had been ripening ; and she wondered, or speculated on, how they would separate when the tedious voyage was over. Then she thought of Morley Ashton, and the fatal blight that had fallen so awfully and mysteriously upon her own first love.

"Miss Basset," said Hawkshaw, rising, "would you wish——"

"To go on deck? Oh, no, thank you," said she, hurriedly, anticipating and replying to his offer without looking up from "I Promessi Sposi."

Hawkshaw seated himself again, and bit his lip, while that malignant gleam which filled his eyes at times shot from them covertly and unseen.

He made one other effort to engage her in conversation, by saying, in a low voice, as he stooped over her :

"Your sad smiles, Ethel, go straight to my heart, with an effect, believe me, that is cruel—killing !"

"Why ! it seems that 'I can smile, and murder while I smile,' as Shakespeare says. Is it so?"

"Bantering—bantering still—even here, when on the verge of destruction, perhaps !" muttered Hawkshaw, as he drew back with another fierce but covert gleam in his stealthy eyes, and Ethel never lifted hers again from her book, until a noise on deck aroused her.

Rose clung closely and affectionately to the doctor's arm, as they traversed the quarter-deck towards the taffrail, and turned to look at the ship, at the sky overhead, through which the wild black scud was driving, and on the mysterious world of water and of darkness, through which she was careering under a press of canvas.

Encouraged by Rose's ready accession to his request, the young man held her right hand in his, and pressed it tenderly to his heart.

There was none near them save the man at the wheel ; for it was about the middle of the first watch, or near eleven o'clock.

Rose had a presentiment that a crisis was approaching in

her relations with the young doctor. The somewhat annoying banter of Captain Phillips, the affectionate warnings of Ethel, and the praises of him so loudly sung by her old nurse, had all, in a manner, prepared her for it, as much as the steady and delicate attention he paid herself.

Nightly when Rose retired to rest in that little cabin, which seemed so small, so very small, the first night they occupied it, Nance Folgate was wont to chant her praises of the handsome doctor.

"Lor' a mussy me!—for a Scotchman—he *is* such a sweet dispositioned youth, Miss Rose. Oh, yes! now, ain't he, miss? He gives me no end o' cordials and stuffs when I'm in low spirits, which *are* often the case, 'specially when it blows 'ard, and the ship tumbles about. There is such a modesty in all his words and ways—now, ain't there? If I was a fine gal like you, instead o' bein' a poor old toothless thing, I would love him, that I would, when I saw how much he loved me—he is such a nice young man, is the doctor. But why don't you answer, miss?"

If Rose did not reply to such rhapsodies as these, it was not because she agreed with them; but her young heart was wild with pleasure, and she often affected to be asleep that she might conceal her flushing cheek on her pillow. But if the young doctor had won over the old nurse, it was just as he had won over the quiet and unaffected Mr. Quail, or anyone else, as he was a good obliging fellow, and fond of doing kind offices for all. So Rose, yielding to an irresistible impulse, assented to a *tête-à-tête* on deck, on the night in question.

After a silence of some minutes—

"How strange it is," said Rose, in her soft, sweet voice, "that amid the wind which moans through the rigging, I seem to hear the sound of bells."

"Bells?"

"Or is it from the bottom of the sea?"

"Don't say so, Rose," replied Heriot.

This sounded strange in both their ears, as he had never simply called her "Rose" before; yet the implied familiarity was not without its novelty and charm.

"Why may I not say so?" she asked.

"It is an old superstition of our Scottish sailors that the bells of wrecks and sunken ships are rung by mysterious hands at the bottom of the sea, to announce storms and disasters."

"Ah, but you Scots are so superstitious; you live in a land

of omens and ghosts, predictions and dreams, even in these fast railway times."

"Yet I would that we were in Scotland now," said Heriot, with a sigh, as he thought of the doubts and clouds that veiled the future.

"We?" repeated Rose, inquiringly, while peeping from her hood and shawl, so that the light of the binnacle lamp fell full on her sweet young face, and very beautiful the dark-eyed girl looked.

"Yes, we," reiterated Heriot, whose heart was rushing to his head as he held, unresisted, her plump little hands in his. "I wish to speak with you, Rose, to—to—I have so long desired—do you—do you care for me, Rose, dear Rose?"

"Care for you!" she repeated, faintly.

"Can you love me, dear, dear Rose, as I love you?"

"Yes," said Rose, in a whisper, as her head dropped on Heriot's shoulder, and his lips were pressed on her throbbing brow, for now the great secret was told, and all her pulses beat with a new happiness.

A few moments of joyous silence followed. Then crossing the deck to leeward, they were more in obscurity; and fortunately for them, Manfredi at that moment went forward, so Heriot pressed Rose to his breast, and said in a low, earnest, and agitated voice:

"But, Rose—my beloved Rose; to what end do I love you?—to what purpose?—how taught you love to me? We are to land you at the Isle of France, and then sail on through the Indian Seas—to leave you—leave you there, for I have no home—no settled abode."

("Papa's daughters are unlucky in their lovers," thought Rose.) She replied, however, while tears of apprehension filled her eyes:

"Why cannot you leave the ship? Sailing with it to and fro must be very tiresome."

"Leave it?"

"Yes, and live with us in the Isle of France."

"Live with you, Rose?" said Heriot, with sad perplexity.

"Settle, I mean—at least, while papa is there."

"I cannot, even if I had the means. I am bound to the owners and to Captain Phillips, for this voyage at least, unless the *Hermione* procures another medical officer."

"At Singapore?"

Heriot smiled sadly at Rose's simplicity.

"Ah, yes—that will be delightful! and if poor dear Morley Ashton, who is dead, were here with us now, how happy Ethel

and we should all have been !” exclaimed Rose, while nursing herself into a mood of the most prosperous cheerfulness, as her happy young spirit soared into a bright world all her own, and Heriot, caressingly slipped a ring on her “engagement” finger, whispering in her ear :

“It was my mother’s, Rose—wear it, at all events, for her sake and mine.”

Another kiss and the bond was sealed. Then Rose, in a tumult of joy that could only find vent in tears, hurried below, with her head inclined on Ethel’s bosom, told her of all that had passed between Leslie Heriot and herself—a pretty little narrative, interspersed with hesitations, smiles, and blushes, till they were startled by the wild hubbub that reigned on deck, where a terrible catastrophe had occurred,

CHAPTER XXXI.

MAN OVERBOARD.

A SUDDEN squall, and a sea which heavily swept over the poop with a shower of blinding spray, that hissed away amidships, had first driven Rose and Heriot below, and just as they retired, hand in hand, they heard the voice of Manfredi, shouting through the wild blast :

“Below there ! all hands ahoy ! come, tumble up to take in sail !”

Then the men were heard grumbling and swearing as they hurried half-dressed out of the fore-castle bunks, to assist the watch ; next followed the orders “to let go,” “haul down,” “clew up,” amid the cracking and flapping of the canvas, as the topsails were lowered almost to the caps ; the royals and topgallant sails taken off her ; flying gib and studding sails all in a twinkling, though for a time the wind howled fearfully, and the ship careered before its fierce breath almost on her beam-ends. Little more than steering canvas was left upon her, for wild and black was the Atlantic squall that had come suddenly over her, accompanied by torrents of rain, that rattled on deck, like a tempest of rouncival peas, while ever and anon the red lightning flashed vividly at the horizon, but still the brave ship flew on.

“By the sky to-day I knew we should have a gale to-night,”

said Captain Phillips cheerfully, as he donned his storm jacket of shiny oilskin, and came on deck.

“‘A mackerel sky and grey mares’ tails
Make lofty ships carry lowly sails.’”

A glorious sailor is Manfredi ! How smartly he had all the cloth off her. But we’ll need our best umbrellas to-night.”

Suddenly, from the forecastle, through the many wild sounds of the squall, there came the appalling cry :

“A man overboard ! hard down ! hard down !”

Other shouts followed.

“Ahoy ! heave over the life buoy ! mainsail to the wind ! clear away a boat !”

Captain Phillips grasped his trumpet ; Mr. Quail—who had just turned into his berth with his clothes on, “all standing” —Dr. Heriot, and Hawkshaw sprang on deck at this new alarm.

“Hard down with the helm !” cried Phillips ; “to the braces, men ! let go, and haul ! Back with the mainyard ! Ready the starboard quarter boat, and cut away the life-buoy !”

The mainsail was speedily laid to the mast, though there was great danger lest, in such a gale, it might be carried away entirely, and, in the excitement of the moment, even the most sullen of that ill-assorted crew worked cheerily and well.

Alternately the huge ship rose and sank on the mighty rolling waves ; and now the spray flew from stem to stern over her in white and blinding sheets, plashing over her courses, and hissing under the arched leaches of the bellying sails.

Upheaved she rose on the foaming surge one moment, to sink down into the yawning trough of the sea the next, loose spars, buckets, handspikes, and everything else adrift, going to leeward, and overboard.

A faint but despairing cry came from the waves ; another followed, as the drowning man, struggling hard for existence, rose on the white, foamy crest of a wave, and then sank for ever into the black and gaping bosom of the midnight sea.

Then, after some minutes of the most painful and lingering suspense, the captain, the doctor, and others, came to the conclusion that all was over, and that the poor victim must have perished, for it was found impossible to lower a boat with safety, or with the least hope of success, in such a sea or squall.

“Fill the mainyard, Mr. Foster,” said the captain to the second mate. And he sighed bitterly as he spoke, for John Phillips was a kind and good-hearted man. “God receive the poor fellow ! We could do nothing more. Let the

ship lie her course ; muster the hands aft, please, and see who is missing."

The yard heads were filled ; the vessel's bow fell off from the wind, and there was less strain upon her now, and less spray broke over her, as she tore through the sea at liberty.

Aft the mizzenmast the drenched seamen mustered.

" Boy Joe ! steward ! bring a lantern," said the captain.

And now, by its weird light, were to be seen the two dark and sullen Barradas ; Bill Badger, the bulky and insolent Yankee ; the square, squat, and ugly Sharkey, with his head bandaged up ; the Messieurs Brewser, Batter, and Cribbit, and others of that remarkable crew.

" Are all present, Mr. Quail?" asked the captain, as the mate passed the lantern along the dripping line.

" All except *one*, sir," replied Mr. Quail, whose face wore a very ashy hue and alarmed expression.

" Who is it?"

" Mr. Manfredi, sir ; he is nowhere on deck."

" 'Twas his watch, was it not?" said Phillips, starting.

" Yes, sir."

" Good Heavens, can it be?" exclaimed the captain, in an agitated voice, as the threat of Sharkey occurred to him. " If there has been foul play to-night, I say woe to the perpetrator of it!"

Some one now uttered a snorting laugh in the dark.

" Let us search below," said the doctor, taking the steward's lantern, and proceeding to examine in person.

He did so, and soon returned to report that no trace of Adrian Manfredi could be found, so the crew were dismissed.

" Who was the person that called out ' Man overboard?'—who saw him last?" demanded the captain, as they descended to the cabin.

" I did, sir," said Joe the steward, as he closed the door. " I was stowing the gib in its netting with Pedro Barradas," he continued, in a low voice, as if afraid to be overheard, " Mr. Manfredi was standing on the topgallant fore-castle, holding on by a rope and directing us. Our heads were stooped over our work, when all of a sudden we heard a cry. On looking one way I saw him falling into the sea ; on looking another, I saw a man in his shirt-sleeves, armed with a capstan bar, slipping down into the fore-castle bunks."

" A man?" repeated the listeners.

" Did he strike him overboard?" asked the captain.

" We supposed so," replied Joe, in a whisper, and glancing furtively at the skylight.

"We."

"That is, Pedro Barradas and I. He laughed——"

"The mutinous villain!"

"And tried to stop me from shouting to put the helm down."

"Did you see the man's face?"

"No, sir."

"Who do you think he was?—speak!" said Captain Phillips, perceiving that Joe, a fat, good-natured fellow, with flabby cheeks, and large boiled-looking grey eyes, hesitated through fear, "speak!"

"I am frightened, in this ship, almost to say who I thought he was."

"In this ship—right! Was it, Sharkey, eh?"

The steward's teeth chattered. He again glanced fearfully at the skylight, and gave a nod in the affirmative, and the captain struck his right heel on the floor.

"There has been murder committed on board to-night; yes, a most foul murder!" he continued, turning by a mere coincidence to Hawkshaw, who, on hearing the terrible word, grew deadly pale, and trembled violently from head to foot. "Would to Heaven that I had only half-a-dozen good hard-weather English seamen to keep this coloured lot in order. Even Lascars of the lowest cast were better than what we have!"

The consternation in the cabin was very great, and the conversation continued below, and the storm above, till Mr. Quail, with many unpleasant forebodings, went on deck to relieve the watch at four o'clock, A.M., when the wind began to abate and the sea to go down.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE LIVID FACE.

THE event of the night shed a gloom, a horror, over all in the cabin next day; nor was the alarm in the breasts of Captain Phillips and his mates in the least soothed, when it was remarked that the cook's grindstone was kept at work all the forenoon, and a most ominous sharpening of sheath and clasp-knives went on, while sundry jokes were uttered audibly about "Mister Manfreddy having gone on a visit to Mr. David Jones and old Mother Carey, without his umbrella, too;"

"and the rain a fallin' like Niagary," as Badger, the Yankee, added, with a diabolical grin.

The morning sky was grey and cloudy ; a heavy sea was still on, and not a sail was in sight, so Captain Phillips swept the horizon with his telescope in vain.

At breakfast Ethel and her sister were informed that Mr. Manfredi had fallen overboard in the night, and been drowned. No hint of foul play was given them, at their father's special request ; but they wept and mourned for the poor young fellow, of whom they now recalled to memory so many pleasant traits and anecdotes ; among others, the sad story of his little brother, Attilio, who had been so savagely shot by the Austrians at Pistoja.

His seat at table, his place in the cabin were empty ; his face and form were no longer seen, and his step and voice were no longer heard.

The suddenness of the catastrophe seemed most difficult of realisation ; and the words of Dana, in a passage of one of his works, which Dr. Heriot pointed out to Rose, came painfully and truthfully home to all their hearts.

"Death is at all times solemn, but never so much so as at sea. A man dies on shore ; his body remains with his friends, and the mourners go about the streets ; but, when a man falls overboard at sea and is lost, there is a suddenness in the event which gives it an air of awful mystery. Then at sea you miss a man so much. A dozen men are shut up together in a little bark upon the wide, wide sea, and for months and months see no forms and hear no voices but their own ; but one is suddenly taken from among them, and they miss him at every turn. There are no new forms or faces to fill up the gap. There is always an empty berth in the fore-castle, and one more wanting when the small night-watch is mustered. There is one less to take the wheel, one less to lay out with you upon the yard. You miss his form and the sound of his voice—for habit had made them almost necessary to you, and each of your senses feels the loss."

"So we shall never see him again—never !" said Ethel, with her eyes full of tears ; "so kind, good, and gentle."

"And so handsome, too !" added Rose.

"A better seaman never trod a deck," sighed Mr. Quail.

"Damnation !" was the singular addendum of Captain Phillips, through his clenched teeth, when thinking of the secret he had not revealed, and the crime which, as yet, he dared not attempt to punish.

So Ethel put past "I Promessi Sposi," which had Man-

fredi's name written on the fly-leaf of the first volume, as the relic of a friend with whom she had spent many happy hours, whom she never more could see, and on whose vast tomb, the boundless ocean, she almost shuddered to look--for was not Morley Ashton sleeping there too?

So the gloomy day passed slowly by, and night came on.

Retired to their little cabin, Ethel and Rose were disrobing for rest (Nance Folgate had long since gone to sleep), and now, relinquishing the sad subject of Manfredi, Rose, with a blush on her charming face, was detailing to Ethel, for the second time, her interview with Leslie Heriot, whose ring—containing a large Scottish pearl, set with diamonds—glittered on the engaged finger of her left hand.

“And you are sure that you love him, Rose?” said Ethel, as she took her sister's face caressingly and affectionately between her soft hands.

“Dearly, devotedly,” was the energetic reply. “How could I do otherwise, when he is such a kind, darling fellow—and so handsome too?”

“Have you weighed well the probabilities of the future?”

“What do you mean, Ethel dear?”

“What papa may think.”

“Oh, Leslie will speak to papa to-morrow, or on the next day, at the latest.”

Ethel smiled sadly at her sister's confidence.

“Our voyage will soon be over, dear Rose,” said she, shaking her head seriously. “Once round the Cape of Good Hope, we shall be speedily at the Isle of France, and then your dream of joy will have an end—a rough awaking; not so sad or rough as mine, but a gloomy reality, and a doubtful future, nevertheless.”

Poor Rose's usually merry eyes now filled with large tears, and she permitted the braids of her fine dark hair, which her slender fingers were wreathing up for the night, to roll down in unheeded masses over her bare bosom and back, which shone white as the new-fallen snowdrift, in the light of the cabin lamp that swung above her.

“And Jack Page—poor Jack Page!” said Ethel, smiling, to arouse Rose's spirit; “is he quite forgotten—eh?”

“Oh, bother Jack Page!” replied Rose, crimsoning, and with the faintest tinge of irritation in her tone, as she proceeded vigorously to knot up the masses of black hair. “He was a pleasant enough fellow to flirt with, or play croquet with at Laurel Lodge (dear old Laurel Lodge! ah, heavens!

Ethel, shall we ever see it again?) He was a good fellow for fishing or sailing on the mere——”

“And to botanise with, and to gather wild flowers on Cherrywood Hill,” added Ethel, a little maliciously.

“Yes, but he gave himself such insufferable airs after he became a rifle volunteer; and as for loving him, I should almost as soon think of loving your adorer, the gallant Captain Hawkshaw. By-the-by, how taciturn he has become of late.”

“Perhaps he finds his task a hopeless one,” said Ethel, with a haughty smile.

“He seems quite changed somehow,” said Rose, slipping into bed, “does he not, Ethel dear? Why don’t you speak to me?” added Rose, with sudden alarm, and springing from her berth, on perceiving her sister standing pale and motionless, her lips parted, her dark eyes dilated with terror, and their gaze fixed on the little circular window of their cabin, which was simply a pane of thick glass, about nine inches in diameter, framed in an iron ring, and secured by a powerful bolt.

Rose gazed in the same direction, and beheld, to her intense dismay, the whole aperture filled by a human face—a man’s apparently—pale, livid, green, and distorted, as viewed through the coarse crystal, with large keen eyes, that glared in upon them.

Whoever the person was that dared thus to violate their privacy, he occupied a position of extreme peril, for the little window in question was below the plank sheer of the ship, and considerably abaft the mizzen chains, so that the eaves-dropper must have been swinging alongside, almost with his heels in the foam that boiled under the ship’s counter.

Could the sea give up its dead?

Was it a spectre—Manfredi, or Morley Ashton?

Such were Rose’s first ideas, as she clung in terror to her rigid but more resolute sister, who sprang forward and vainly attempted with her delicate hands to wrench round the bolt, and open the little window; but at that moment a fierce and sardonic smile seemed to spread over that livid and distorted visage, which instantly vanished, and then nothing was seen through the aperture but the vast sea that rolled in the starlight far away.

“Papa—Nurse Folgate!” screamed Rose; but the old woman slept like one of the seven sleepers.

“Hush!” said Ethel; “’twas only some insolent seaman; but we must prevent a recurrence of this,” she added, as she rapidly hung a species of curtain over the window. “Good

Heavens, Rose ! to think how often this may have happened before, and we in total ignorance of it ; but the captain shall be told in the morning."

" Oh, Ethel !" exclaimed Rose, " how terrified I am."

" Why ?"

" At first I thought it was his ghost."

" Whose ?"

" Poor Mr. Manfredi's."

" Nonsense, child !"

" A ghost on board of a ship, how dreadful that would be ! Almost as bad as a fire, for there would be no escaping from it."

Inspired by natural emotions of doubt, Ethel opened the door and peeped out into the great cabin. All was still and quiet there, at least nothing was heard but the jarring of the rudder in its case, and of the brass swings of the lamp and tell-tale compass, with the heavy creaking of the ship's timbers, the backwash under the counter, and one other sound, to which she had become pretty familiar about this time—to wit, the profound snoring of Mr. Quail, as he lay at full length on the cabin locker, with his peacoat spread over him, and his sou'-wester at hand, ready to relieve the deck when the middle-watch was called.

She secured the door, perhaps more carefully than usual. She knelt down by Rose's side to say her prayers, after which they retired together, but lay long awake, conversing of that future, the events of which, happily, they could so little foresee, until they dropped asleep, Rose with her charming face half pillowed on Ethel's snowy shoulder.

All remained still in the ship ; but while the two sisters slept with arms entwined, each " hushed like the callow cygnet in its nest," anxious hearts were watching over them elsewhere ; and they formed the subject of a somewhat unusual but animated discussion among the seamen—a discussion of which, as yet, they were happily ignorant.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

WHAT THE DOCTOR OVERHEARD IN THE FORECASTLE
BUNKS.

THE love he bore Rose, the love that she permitted him to bear, and which she so fully reciprocated, together with the regard and esteem he had for the grave, gentle Ethel, and good, easy Mr. Basset, increased the anxiety with which the young Scotch surgeon beheld the growing discontent of the crew.

On deck, he more than once had heard them conferring in most unpleasant terms about the disappearance of the third mate, and, in reply to some remark of Sharkey's, Zuares Barradas said, with a cunning twinkle in his eyes :

"Bueno ! paso a paso va lejos."

"Wot the devil does that mean, shipmate? Avast with your Spanish. Can't you speak the Queen's English?"

"Well, it means that 'step by step goes far.' Manfredi is gone; a little spell and we shall have it all our own way," replied the Spanish American, as he hitched up his trousers and slunk forward.

"These rascals are decidedly up to something—or whence all this skulking about, this whispering in gangs, and knife-sharpening," said Heriot to the captain.

"The grindstone has never been idle all day," observed Mr. Quail, who was looking, as the captain remarked, "rather white about the gills, in consequence."

After a long conference in the cabin, Dr. Heriot offered, there being no moon about the middle of the first night-watch, to creep forward to the fore-castle bunk, where, in defiance of all orders, the crew now kept a light burning after sundown, and endeavour to overhear their conversation. The duty of acting eavesdropper was not a pleasant, but, in this instance, a most necessary one.

The first night Heriot attempted this, he failed to get forward unseen; but on the second, as the atmosphere, though very cloudy, was fine, and the ship under easy sail was going large, that is, with the wind abaft the beam, which careened her slightly to port, Heriot, armed with a sharp bowie-knife, concealed in his breast, so as to be ready for any emergency (for if discovered by the watch he might be sent overboard

after poor Manfredi), crept forward on the leese, keeping his head close under the bulwarks, and in the shadow.

The men of the watch were all grouped to windward, smoking, with their backs against the long-boat, and the steersman could see little else than the lights that glared in the binnacles, and the ship's canvas, that towered aloft between him and the sky.

Through the two yolks of dense, thick glass that admitted light to the fore-castle bunks, in which the seamen had their chests and berths, he could see nothing, save that they had, as usual with them, in defiance of the captain's order, a lamp or lantern, the light of which glared as from two bull's-eyes upon the fore-hatchway, the foot of the fore-mast, the gallows-bitts abaft it, the scuttle-butt, and so forth.

These two lines of light had the effect of rendering the rest of the deck dark, thus favouring the purpose of Heriot, who reached unseen the fore-castle, and crept along it, until he found himself close to the coaming of the scuttle, or small square hatchway, which gave access thereto, and from whence there ascended into the pure saline atmosphere of the midnight sea a combination of odours that were neither of Araby nor of Ind; for more than a dozen of dirty, tarry, unwashed, and uncombed specimens of those seamen usually denominated "coloured," the most ruffianly of their class, such as may be seen lounging and loafing about the quays and grog-shops of Liverpool and Birkenhead, were all seated closely round a chest, which was lashed by ringbolts to the deck, and formed the table, whereon they had recently supped on scalding hot "scouse" from a greasy wooden kid; and the fumes of this savoury mess yet mingled with the tar with which their clothes were saturated, and the coarse tobacco in which they were all indulging freely, by means of pipes, quids, and cigarettes.

A ship's lantern, in which a candle sputtered, shed a wavering light through the perforated tin upon the black hair, massive frontal bones and square jaw of Pedro Barradas and on his coarse, leather-like ears, in which a pair of silver rings were glittering; on the dark olive face of his brother, Zuares, a villain of a more pleasing type, only because he was younger and handsomer; on the cruel, sardonic visage, the keen eyes, hooked nose, and enormous chin, and tangled elf-locks of Bill Badger, the long-legged and ungainly Yankee; on the huge head and giant hands of the odious Sharkey, who sat with his cheeks wedged between his hands,

his elbows planted on the chest, and his eyes that, from under the bloody bandage encircling his temples, glared at each speaker alternately; and on all the rest of the ill-selected crew—fell the lantern's dim uncertain ray, bringing some forward into light, and leaving others almost in shadow.

Though quite sober, for as yet they had no means for procuring alcohol, they generally all spoke at once, and were engaged in an angry dispute, which, however, they were still cautious enough to conduct with suppressed voices.

Pedro Barradas grasped in his left hand an old dice-box, which was served round with spunyarn, and two suspicious-looking dice were rattled in it from time to time.

At the moment that Heriot peeped in, it would seem as if our Spanish acquaintance had lost his temper. His black eyes filled with fire, his swarthy cheek grew livid and pale, he showed his sharp white teeth like a dog about to bite, and striking his drawn knife into the lid of the chest, round which they were all grouped, and with a force of action that made them all shrink back, he uttered a tremendous oath, and said, in a low, hoarse voice :

"It is agreed, then, that we take the ship, and make all the people aft walk the plank. Am I to understand this?"

"Yes, yes," from all hands was the reply; "and all must walk the plank to leeward."

"Except the women," suggested the Canadian seaman, named Bolter.

"In course we shall keep them!" said Badger, laying a long and dirty finger on one side of his hawk nose, and closing an eye wickedly; "and take very partik'lar care o' the darlings, too."

"We take the ship," resumed Pedro Barradas, speaking good English, and with an air of authority; "and then we shall run her on her own account."

"How?" asked one.

"In the slaving or piccarooning line, or anything else that comes to hand."

"But where to?" asked the Canadian, who seemed a man of doubts.

"Anywheres, darn your nutmeg of a head!" growled the Yankee; "anywheres, arter we has had a jolly spree ashore."

"On what shore, mate?"

"On the coast ov Africy, in course; but not afore, mate—not afore, I calc'late."

"Come, now, I likes this," observed Sharkey, putting in

his voice ; " if water and wittles runs short, we may overhaul an Ingeeman, homeward-bound, or an Australian liner——"

" With sojers aboard, mayhap," said Bolter ; " so what will you dew then ?"

" Hail or signal for a boat, to be sure, and sink it to leeward with a cold shot through its ribs. Shout that it has been swamped under the counter, and to send another, and another, and so knock 'em all on the head. Then run her aboard, take all out of her—the women, too, if any—then scuttle or burn her."

" A game you won't play long athout being overhauled by some cussed man-o'-war," said the Canadian. " I tell you, mates, the good old piratical times have been put out o' fashion long since. Even the slaving business is knocked up by them blazing smoke-jacks and gun-boats of the African squadron. The sea ain't wot it was, mates, when old Kidd sailed the *Vulture* down the Channel with a scull and marrow-bones flying at his foremast-head."

" Hooray ! I'll ship with you, Barradas," cried another. " Grog for the drinking, a grab at these gals, and the pick o' the good things in the passengers' trunks and cabin-lockers."

" And till that time comes," added Sharkey, " we'll work Tom Cox's traverse with old Phillips—that we shall. Precious little work he'll get out of me."

" But I don't like usin' the knife or plank if they could be done athout, mates," said the Canadian, ponderingly.

" The Reverend Mr. Ben Bolter, a Methody parson, 'll offer up a blessin' over the empty mess-kids," sneered the Yankee.

" *Par todos santos*," growled Pedro Barradas, giving the Canadian a glance of profound scorn, while Zuares uttered a shrill and ferocious laugh.

" I say, cooky," said Sharkey, in a way which he supposed to be very jocular, " as Ben Bolter don't like the stickin' business, couldn't you put summut tasty into the mess-kid o' the cabbinn passingers, and pison the whole bilin' o' them. I have known o' such things being done afore now, mates, and many other things, too, that never appeared in the ship's log. Have you any Calabar beans aboard ?"

" Yaas," replied the cook, with a regular negro grin, for he was a black Virginian, named Quaco ; " dere's a bagful in de hold. Why ?"

" I have known of a handful, put in a copper of peasoup, doing for a whole ship's crew afore now."

" When ?"

" In the Gulf of Florida once, and again among the Coral

Islands, in the Pacific. Aye, aye, mates, I have seen some rum sprees in *my* time."

"And you are likely to see more," added the Yankee, "ere this cussed old craft gets her anchors over the bows, and her ground-tackle rove. Ha, ha! But as for the pison, you darned fool, wot of old Basset's gals? We wants 'em partik'lar, you know. So avast with your Calabar beans. I guess, mate, you're up a tree, rayther."

Sharkey was abashed into silence.

"And that Scotch doctor," said a gaunt, unhealthy-looking seaman, named Cribbit, who had not yet spoken, and who so frequently required Heriot's medical aid that he had imbibed half the contents of his medicine-chest, "must he, too, walk the plank?"

"In course he must," drawled Bill Badger, stuffing an enormous quid in the inmost recesses of his capacious mouth.

"No, no, *demonio*, no!" said the elder Barradas; "we must keep him alive so long as we want him. We can't physic ourselves, *compañeros*, especially if fever comes aboard, which it is likely to do if we hug the land."

"But in physicking us he might poison the whole blessed gang," suggested the Canadian.

"No fear of that. We'll have him chained to the mainmast, and if a man dies in his hands, then *el señor doctor de medicina* shall be tipped overboard after the others."

"Thank you, my Spanish *patrone*," thought Heriot, who had listened to all this with blood that alternately boiled and curdled; "a pleasant little medical practice you are likely to find me here!"

"Mayhap that fellow, Hawkshaw, would join us?" suggested the Canadian again.

"He, the white-livered Perro!" exclaimed Pedro, "I long to have my Albacete knife between his ribs. I'll teach him to play off quarter-deck airs with me, the God-abandoned Piccaro! Well, is it agreed that, instead of letting old Phillips haul up for Table Bay, we keep the ship off the land whether he will or will not take her before we are abreast of La Tierra de Natal; hug the coast of Africa after; have a run through the Mozambique Channel, and then stand right across the Indian Sea for whatever we may overhaul?"

A unanimous clapping of very hard and very dirty hands responded heartily to this programme.

"Now, Pedro, the *dados* (dice)," said Zuares, impatiently.

"Yes, mates, the dice!" added the Yankee, setting his chin, which was like a shoemaker's knife, upon his knees, and

clasping his hands over his ankles, so that he squatted on his hams like a huge baboon. "Hooray! the old *Herminy* has been trimmed by the stern since she saw Dungeness Light; but we'll trim her by the head arter we doubles the Cape—eh, mates? So now to draw lots for them two pretty creeturs, as I calc'late is just agoin' to bed about this blessed time. Think o' that, mates! I'm a thorough-bred Yankee—half bull, half shark, with an uncommon cross of the snake; so I'm blow'd if I can wait a'most till we leave Table Bay astern and bear up towards Natal. But rattle away, Pedro, my boy!—Captain Pedro that is to be, I reckon."

The blood of the young Scotchman grew cold as he listened, longing for a brace of loaded revolvers, that he might shoot down the whole band; but the talkative Yankee began his nasal drawling again.

"How I'd like to have one of 'em under a big palm-tree in some snug diggin' on the Africy coast, or in a wigwam on the Mozambique, thatched with leaves, no topsails to reef o' nights, and nothin' to do all day but keep on admiring her and swigging the grog old Phillips has aboard, or blowing a whiff of 'baccy—eh, mates? Jeerusalem! that's summut like, I calc'late!"

"*Morte de Dios!*" swore Pedro Barradas, with a very dark look; "haul in your slack, and be hanged to you! There are other things than the two girls worth casting lots for!"

"Is there really, now?" drawled Badger.

"I was looking into the senoras' cabin the other night, and saw them going to bed. I saw lovely necks and shoulders, and all that; but I saw more, I can tell you, *companeros*."

"Smite my timbers!" "Shiver my tawpsails!" "Darn my eyes!" "Oh, Jeerusalem!" And "What did you see?" asked several all at once.

"A splendid jewel-case," replied the Spaniard, while an avaricious gleam sparked in his dark eyes; "a box with diamond rings for the ears and fingers; carbuncles, turquoises, and topazes, in bracelets and necklets, all glittering on the trays of blue and crimson velvet. So he who loses the girls should have a chance——"

"Of grabbing jewels," interrupted Badger; "in course he should—in course!"

"Jewels or not," said Zuares Barradas, laughing, while he rolled up a fresh cigarette, "I'll teach one senora, at least, that it is no longer here *mira y no totas*, as they say in *Mi-norca*."

"Which means in your cussed lingo?" asked Bolter.

"*Look* at me, but *touch* me not !" replied the young Spaniard, with a grin.

"I'm rayther pertik'lar," observed Mr. Badger, "and I might do neither one nor t'other, if I wor in Minorky."

"Ay, mate ; but if you saw the Minorca girls in their robazillas of white lace or silk, pinned under their pretty dimpled chins and falling over their shoulders, to be lifted at times by the wind only as if to show the low bodice and rounded bosom beneath—*hombre*."

"Here is a sentimental young villain, with an eye for the picturesque !" thought Heriot.

"Now, then, the *dados*," said Pedro, rattling the dice-box, "I throw myself first."

"*Maladetto*, Pedro !" interrupted Zuares. "Content yourself with rum and plunder ; you are too old and crank for either of these girls to be pleased with you."

"*Vaya usted al Satanos !*" responded his affectionate elder brother. "The girls, at all events, are not too young for me to be pleased with them. I am not more than forty, you son of a burnt *castano*."

"Take the old nurse, Pedro—you'll have her a free gift, gratis, all for nothin', and Badger's blessing into the bargain. If one o' these galls falls to me," continued the talkative Yankee, "I reckon I must get shaved by the doctor, and be fixed anew ; have my 'air swabbed down with some o' the cook's slush, and a hextra pull up o' my shirt collar—eh, mates ?"

Amid the ferocious laughter which these and similar remarks drew forth, and while the dice-box rattled on the sea-chest lid, Dr. Heriot withdrew, and crept aft, just as he had done forward, by keeping close under the lee bulwarks.

Reaching the companion-way unseen, he slipped downstairs with a burning brain and aching heart—a heart sick and sore with apprehension for others rather than for himself ; and now, with his ear tingling with countless coarse oaths, obscenities, and foul jokes, which, of course, have been omitted in our relation of the remarkable discussion he had overheard, he sought at once the cabin of Captain Phillips, to communicate the dreadful game that was on the *tapis* in the fore-castle of the ill-fated *Hermione*.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

MEASURES FOR DEFENCE CONCERTED.

THOUGH Ethel and Rose had retired to rest, the hour was not late, and Captain Phillips, Mr. Basset, and Hawkshaw were still lingering over a glass of wine in the cabin, when Dr. Heriot entered it.

The pallor of his face, and the excited expression of his eyes, made them start with exclamations of surprise and inquiry ; and their alarm increased when he filled up a glass with port and drained it, the crystal rattling against his teeth while he did so.

“Hallo, doctor, what the deuce is the matter ?” asked bluff Captain Phillips, changing colour, or rather losing it partially. “You have been forward—eh ?”

“Yes, sir ; and have there heard more than enough to confirm our worst fears.”

Phillips arose, and closed the cabin door. He then summoned from his berth Mr. Quail (as Mr. Foster, the second mate, had charge of the deck), and they, together with Mr. Basset and Hawkshaw, heard with undisguised consternation the result of the doctor's eavesdropping.

As for Hawkshaw, he had long endured the horrible conviction of guilt, with the still more gnawing sense or dread of perpetual suspicion in others. He loved Ethel, yet, as we have said elsewhere, at times he almost hated her for her coldness to him ; but now his soul was full of terror—terror for her and for himself, as he knew he would meet with little mercy from the Barradas and their friends. Retribution for the crime he had committed at Acton Chine was about to come at last, and he had fallen into a trap of his own devising !

Neither Captain Phillips nor Mr. Quail were much astonished, though grieved and alarmed, by Dr. Heriot's tidings ; but poor Mr. Basset's first thought was for his daughters—his young, delicate, and tenderly-nurtured girls ; and already, in his excited imagination, he beheld them, after his own butchery, in the rude grasp of those lawless wretches, and subjected to the grossest indignities, far from help or human aid, upon the lonely sea, and in a floating hell—indignities the mere idea of which wrung the poor man's heart with agony.

To-morrow, to-night, even now, they might be advancing towards the cabin, intent on assassination and robbery !

The dread was maddening to the unhappy parent, who made a step towards his daughters' sleeping place, as if in anticipation, by thought and deed, to save them from the coming peril. He had no voice or coherence of thought for a time, and listened like one in a dream to the discussion or consultation now held by the officers of the ship.

After relinquishing his practice as a barrister in London, Scriven Basset had spent many years of ease and affluence at Laurel Lodge, and all unused to alarms or excitements, he felt himself totally destitute of the stamina or courage requisite for facing so sudden and perilous an emergency. Personal danger he might have confronted, for he had all the spirit of a gentleman ! but at the thought of his daughters—the graceful and ladylike Ethel, the sweet and playful Rose—his soul seemed to die within him.

Cramply Hawkshaw's visage was paler than usual. He remembered the threats used towards himself, when Pedro Barradas so summarily appropriated his gold watch, and while trembling for Ethel, he began to think of means for quitting the ship, for the safety of his own person, of which—being all the property he possessed—he was rather disposed to be economical.

"The accursed—the bloody-minded villains !" exclaimed Captain Phillips, after a pause, while pacing to and fro. "This comes of having a coloured crew ; and this is why they have been so sullen and insolent of late."

"And so lazy at work, too," groaned Mr. Quail.

"Lazy ! they have done little else but take three turns a day round the long-boat, and then a pull at the scuttle-butt."

"For weeks there has been no work done," resumed Mr. Quail ; "all our spūnyarn and chafing-gear are worn out, and you might as well expect them to polish the chain-cable, or brighten up the best bower, as prepare for an emergency, or get the fellows even to wash or mend their own clothes."

"If a man-of-war hove in sight, I'd put an end to their sogering !" said Captain Phillips, still pacing about. "I'd make them toe the mark, and work the old iron out of them. I'd have them all seized up, and made spread-eagles of at the gangway, the coloured vermin."

"A worse lot were never shipped, unless on board a Spanish pirate," said Mr. Quail, with another groan, as he thought of plump, jolly Mrs. Quail, and their five little Quails, at that moment, doubtless all abed in their pretty little rose-covered cottage near the Windmill-hill at Gravesend.

"Is there not one on whom we could depend?" asked Mr. Basset, in faltering accents.

"Not one, sir," replied Captain Phillips; "not one, except Boy Joe, the steward, and he is not worth much."

"We are in a desperate situation, certainly," said Heriot. "But I am most concerned for you and—and your daughters, Mr. Basset."

Tears started to the lawyer's eyes, and he wrung the young doctor's readily-proffered hand.

"And, I, too, Mr. Basset, feel for you and your two dear girls—though perhaps this business may be all talk and sogering; yet I confess it don't look like it," said the captain. "Thank Heaven I am a bachelor, and have no one depending upon me but the son of my poor brother Bill, that was drowned in the Straits of Sunda, and my life is insured on his account, so that is all right; but these young ladies——"

Phillips paused, for Mr. Basset, who was reclining on the cabin locker, covered his face with his hands, and groaned aloud.

"We have no time to lose in preparing to meet these rascals," said Dr. Heriot, with growing confidence. "We must see what arms we can muster, and endeavour to use them too. D—n it, Captain Phillips, we must show fight in some fashion, and not all walk the plank without making some of them walk it also. I have a pair of good rifled pistols."

"And I have two six-barrelled revolvers and a fowling-piece," added the captain.

"Sixteen shots," said Hawkshaw, brightening a little. "We can barricade the cabin, and defend it with these against them."

"We are seven, including myself," said Phillips.

"Seven?" said Mr. Basset, looking up.

"Yes, sir; there are the two mates, the doctor, yourself, and I, Captain Hawkshaw, and Joe the steward."

"But they are eighteen in number, and armed too."

"Only with sheath-knives, so far as we know; but then there are hatchets, cleavers, handspikes, and capstan-bars, with anything else that will form a weapon."

"Oh that we were nearer the coast of Africa, that we might all get into a boat, and quietly leave the ship on a dark night!" said Mr. Basset, wringing his hands, while Dr. Heriot unlocked a case of pistols—the parting gift of his class-fellows on his leaving the old College of King James VI.—and proceeded at once to load and cap them, after which he put all the ammunition in his pockets.

"Fear for your girls bewilders you, sir," said Captain Phillips, in a low voice, to Mr. Basset. "That, perhaps, is natural; but to be landed on the coast of Africa might not mend matters much with you and them, if you fell in with some houseless Dutch bushmen or wild Cape Caffres; and as for me, I shall never quit my ship while a plank of her holds together."

"Captain Phillips," said young Heriot, with his teeth clenched, and his eyes flashing, as he thought of sweet Rose Basset, whose last kiss seemed yet to linger on his lip, "if they keep quiet until morning, I have a mind to call forward Pedro Barradas in front of the crew, tell him what I have overheard, and then, as an example, shoot him dead before the rest!"

The captain vehemently opposed this idea as rash, and added:

"You are very risky for a Scotsman; you would only perish under the knives and handspikes of the rest, and thus bring destruction the sooner on us all."

"Oh, if a man-o'-war would but come in sight!" groaned Mr. Basset.

"They are seldom so far off the Cape; and we are a good way to the southward of it already."

"Could we not sound the crew? All may not be so bad as the Barradas," said Hawkshaw.

"They are all alike, confound 'em!" rejoined Captain Phillips, as he brought from his cabin the two revolvers and the fowling-piece, all of which he proceeded quietly, but quickly, to load and cap.

The arms and ammunition were distributed among them, and Hawkshaw really handled the "six-shooter" like a man who was used to it, and, doubtless, when in Mexico, his life and his food had frequently depended on the goodness of his aim.

"If we only take care and fire steadily, we may dispose of them all in case of an attack," said Dr. Heriot, who, with the captain, was the most resolute of the little band. "Our chief aim must be to prevent a surprise."

After a council of war, it was arranged that the ladies should be warned against leaving the cabin or venturing much on deck, and that they should be kept in ignorance of the why and wherefore.

That the seven men in the cabin should stand staunchly by each other, and never undress while lying in their berths, so as to be ready for instant service.

That one at a time should hold a strict watch on the companion-way and cabin door, and that all should keep their arms loaded and their ammunition constantly about them.

That as little canvas as possible should be kept on the ship, so that aloft she might be ready for any sudden emergency, squall, or catastrophe.

A large trunk, full of Mr. Basset's law-books (which next morning was to have been shot into the hold as lumber), was placed near the outer cabin door, and lashed by one of its handles to a brass ring-bolt, and so arranged that, slung round the other end, it effectually barricaded the sliding-door that opened to the steerage and companion-ladder.

To defend this avenue in case of an attack, and so sell their lives as dearly as possible, or, it might be, to shoot all their assailants down in succession, were the simple, but stern resolutions come to.

These preliminaries adjusted, the captain, armed with his revolver, took the first two hours' spell. The rest retired to their various berths, and lay down with their clothes on, and their weapons beside them.

The two hours passed away in silence.

The captain went on deck, and sent the second mate, Foster, below, in a not very enviable frame of mind, after hearing what was on the *tapis*, for, like Mr. Quail—

“He, poor fellow! had a wife and children—
Two things for dying people quite bewildering.”

So, with a beating and anxious heart, he lay down on a locker, with a sharp hatchet under him—the only weapon that came to hand.

The ship was still going large, with the breeze abaft the beam, and the fore and main studding sails set. Joe, the steward, was at the wheel; the light in the fore-castle bunks was extinguished now, and the watch on deck were all grouped, in silence apparently, to leeward of the long-boat.

All seemed still for that night, or rather the remainder of the morning, when the captain warned the miserable Mr. Basset to take the next “spell,” or watch, as sentinel at the cabin door.

Pale and sleepless, with bloodshot eyes, the poor man received the loaded revolver, with all the timidity and awkwardness of one who had never handled such a weapon before, and dreading lest it might explode of its own accord, like a loaded firewheel, and thus shoot himself and everybody

else ; but anon the thought of his daughters nerved his heart and steadied his hand.

Slowly, as if Time stood still, the minutes passed ; and when, as usual, the ship's bell clanged at each half hour on deck, it sounded in his ears and in his soul like the knell of doom !

So the poor father continued to watch in breathless anxiety ; now pacing the carpeted cabin in miserable restlessness, then seating himself upon the stern locker, with the revolver on his knee, and his hands over his face, breathing an unuttered prayer for his darling daughters ; now listening keenly as a hunted hare, at the door of their little cabin, to hear their soft, low breathing. Anon, seeking the companion-way, as if the confined air of the ship stifled him, and looking up at the mizzen-rigging towering into the starry sky, where the mizzen-topsail, topgallantsail, and the driver, with the boom and gaff, spread between him and heaven like a broad grey cloud of canvas.

Then the thought of his dead wife, and their once dear, happy home in England far away.

By a freak of memory, past hours of happiness, of joviality and frivolity—hours spent amid the flowery and leafy seclusion of Laurel Lodge, came crowding on him, with faces of friends, their voices, smiles, and little episodes ; the green sunny lawn, the stately chase of Acton-Rennel, the Norman cross on Cherry-tree Hill, and the great yew that shaded his wife's grave in that quiet old English churchyard, where he might never lie : all these came before him now, and he marvelled in his aching breast if the horrors that overhung him, now were not a nightmare, and all a dreadful dream !

Ethel and Rose, so pure, so fair, so lovely, and so highly bred, to be in such peril ; at the mercy of such men as those who formed the crew of the *Hermione*, and far from all human succour on the wide, wide, open sea.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE SAIL TO WINDWARD.

UNDER the interlaced crosses of Great Britain—our brave old union-jack—a very different crew manned that good little ship the *Princess*, of London, which we last left when dropping the giant cone of Tristan d'Acunha astern, and bearing on her voyage towards Tasmania.

Under Tom Bartelot's command, all went well and prosperously, and his ship had fine weather and spanking topsail breezes, after leaving the romantic Isle of Tristan.

Anxious to be useful and to kill time, Morley Ashton had applied himself to seamanship, and in seeking to master all the mysteries thereof, became the peculiar pupil of old Noah Gawthrop, who confidently undertook "to make a man and a sailor of him before they saw Wan Demon's Land."

He could soon dip his hands in a bucket of tar without wincing; slush the mast, from the royal-masthead down, without becoming squeamish; he could box the compass, take his trick at the helm, and achieve many clever things, from holding the log-reel upwards to sending down a royal-yard without mistake or blunder, which Noah told him "was one of the prime feats of seamanship, which even the queen on the throne couldn't do."

The first time he accomplished this was when a squall was coming on. Ben Plank had the fore-royal, Noah the main-royal, and Morley the mizzen.

His spar was certainly the lightest, with a smaller sail, but he had it struck and set down before the others, greatly to the delight of old Noah, who, with all his ugliness, which was undeniable, was a genuine salt of the old school—a regular British tar, with his slouching shoulders and light gait, swinging arms, and half-closed hands, that were always ready to "tally on" to anything; a comical twinkle in his eye, and who believed in whistling for wind as truly as the Turkish skipper who pours oil upon the sea, in the hope that it may float to Mecca, for the same useful purpose.

Noah bore on his breast, engraved in gunpowder, a little romance of his younger days—a sailor and a girl standing on the sea-shore. In the background (or offing, to speak more correctly) lay a ship, with her topsails loose, hove-apeak to her anchor, while the smoke from a gun—the signal for sea—curled over her quarter. Under the male figure were the initials "N.G.," and under the girl's were—what we won't say, for in them lay the pet secret of old Noah's honest heart. The ship, however, he often pointed to with pride, saying it was a "lovely pictur' of her Majesty's ship the *Haurora*, of fifty guns, as was—an ugly smoke-jack now, with a screw-propeller in her stern."

The weather was cool, almost cold, at times, and frequently icebergs were in sight, with their white glistening pinnacles standing sharply defined against the sky, and shaded off with pale green or purple tints, that blended with the deep blue of the sea.

Tom Bartelot's cheerful temperament, his songs and his *bonhomie*, and Morrison's queer legends of Scotland and the sea, together with grave and earnest advice, and confidence in a Providence who ordered all things for the best, had a good effect upon Morley Ashton's spirits, which might have sunk, circumstanced as he was, amid the monotony of a sea voyage, with forshadowed fears of evil tidings on reaching the Isle of France, after making a tour so circuitous as Tasmania.

Ignorant of the unlooked-for detention of the *Hermione* at the Canaries, and of the series of foul winds she had encountered, Morley never doubted that now the Bassets must have reached their destination, and been installed in their new home; that Mr. Basset must have entered on his official duties, and if they were accompanied by one so enterprising as Cramply Hawkshaw, it was difficult to fortell how Cupid and Fortune—blind deities both—might reward his perseverance, and thus cast a fatal blight upon the hopes of our hero who, like a poor "pilgrim of the heart," or a knight-errant of old, was traversing the sea from shore to shore in search of a lost love.

One day as Morley trod the deck to and fro listlessly, he was startled by the unusual, or, at least, unexpected cry of—
"Land, ho!"

Telescope in hand, he sprang up to the weather-rigging.

"Land it is, indeed," said Tom Bartelot, shading his eyes with his hand, and peering over the weather-quarter.

"What land, Tom?"

"Diego Alvarez, or Gough's Island. I have been looking out for it all forenoon. Keep her full and by—full and by, lad," he added to the steersman; "keep her closer to the wind—see how that foretopsail shivers."

This was about six bells (*i.e.*, 3 P.M.) on a fine, clear afternoon. The hill of Gough's Island arose dim and blue upon their weather bow.

Discovered long, long ago, by an adventurous Portuguese mariner, who bestowed upon it its name, it is a lonely and desolate place, covered with moss and sea-grass, the abode only of sea-elephants and the fur-seal. It was named anew by Captain Gough, of the *Richmond*, when on his voyage to China in 1731.

After leaving it astern, good fortune seemed to abandon the *Princess* and her crew.

A series of foul winds that veered round every point of the compass, with heavy gusts and squally weather beset her, and

so cloudy was the sky, that for several days Bartelot and his mate were quite unable to make an observation—*i.e.*, to take the sun's altitude at noon.

In one squall the mizzen-topmast was carried away, being broken right off at the cap, the heel with the fid alone remaining in the top.

"So, friend Morley," said Tom, "if this kind of work and these foul winds continue, we may see the Table Mountain, and have to run into the bay for fresh water."

"At the Cape of Good Hope?"

"Yes. Then if you wish to have a day's run in Lubberland, you may come ashore with me; and who can say," he added, kindly on perceiving how Ashton's countenance fell at the prospect of fresh delays, "but we may there find a craft bound for the island of Paul and Virginia, and get your hammock swung aboard of her at once?"

One day the weather cleared a little, and the sun broke forth a few minutes before noon.

Bartelot and Morrison betook them to quadrant, sextant, and chart, and found they were within some three hundred miles of the Cape of Storms.

After this the sky resumed its sombre and inky hue; the sea was gray, save where the sun shot his beams like a flood of yellow light through a rent in the clouds, and lit the waves below with a golden sheen, long and steadily, about fifteen miles distant on their weather-bow.

"Sail, ho!" shouted Ben Plank, who with some others was up aloft taking advantage of this bright blink, to get the spare mizzen-topmast shipped, with all its hamper and gearing.

"Where away, Ben?" asked Morley, snatching Tom's telescope from its brass hooks under the companion-hatch.

"There, sir, in that streak of light to windward."

Looming large as coming out of the haze, Morley saw a large, square-rigged vessel, with all her fore-and-aft canvas set, running close-hauled on a different current of wind, which did not as yet affect the *Princess*, and which would probably carry her ahead.

Her canvas was white as snow, and shone like the outspread wings of a swan in the bright gleam of sunshine, and in strong relief against the gray and dusky sky beyond.

She was visible but for a few minutes—so briefly, indeed, that Morrison had not time to run the ensign up to the gaff-peak, when she seemed to dart into the gray obscurity ahead, and to vanish like a phantom that melted into the sky; but though invisible, it was evident that the *Princess*, a faster sailer, would soon leave her far astern.

In that large, square-rigged ship, that spanked along on a taut bowline, with the white foam curling under her black bows, and flying over her gilded catheads, how little Morley Ashton imagined that Ethel Basset—the Ethel of his hopes by day and dreams by night, the centre around which all his aspirations and his life itself revolved—was seated side by side with Hawkshaw on one of the quarter-deck seats, watching, through a fifteen-mile lorgnette or racing-glass, the outline of the *Princess*, whose canvas being all in shadow came blackly out, for a few minutes, from the sombre atmosphere to leeward, and then melted from their view for ever.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE STORM.

VARIED by occasional torrents of rain, black, cloudy, and squally skies, the regular "Cape weather" continued after this, and the *Princess* was soon running under close-reefed topsails. So frequently were the reefs taken in and shaken out, that Bill Morrison said they reminded him of an old Scottish seaman's rhyme :

"Gif the rain pouirs ere the wind swurl,
Your topsails lowse and gar them furl ;
But gif the wind blaws ere pouirs the rain,
Your topsails lowse, and hoist again."

Even the gay spirit of Tom Bartelot became depressed by the gloomy and threatening state of the weather, and he spent nearly his whole time on deck, or in observing the compasses, the barometer, and state of the pumps.

Two days after the strange sail had been seen on the weather-bow, the glass was still falling, while the sea and wind were rising.

At seven bells, after taking a hurried breakfast, Tom found the wind increasing to a gale, so he took in the maintop-gallantsail, the second reef of his topsails, and set the mainstaysail.

By midday he had to summon all hands on deck.

"Close-reef the topsails, furl mainsail and fore and mizzen-topsail."

These orders followed each other rapidly.

Soon after the *Princess* was flying through the gloomy sea under a close-reefed maintopsail and reefed foresail, shipping

a great deal of water the while, and labouring hard as her pumps worked ill.

After this the wind began to die away, the sea went somewhat down, and then more canvas was spread on the ship; but there were many indications in the sky and atmosphere which filled Tom and Morrison, and Gawthrop too, for he had his nameless nautical instincts, with anxieties which the younger men of the crew could not fail to perceive.

"How's the barometer, Morrison?" was the frequent question.

"Still falling slowly, sir."

"What do you think the night will be?" asked Morley.

"There's a gloom, and a closeness too, indicating thunder."

"Aye," said Noah Gawthrop, who had the wheel, "the wind and the sea will make a fine bobbery together in these parts afore the morning watch is called."

"Steward—Ben Plank, get the dead lights shipped," cried Bartelot, "here comes the squall again! In with all the light sails, Morrison; hurry forward—'way aloft, lads, and lay out on the yards."

Thus by six o'clock she was again running under close-reefed topsails and foresail.

The clouds were banking up in strange, wild, and fantastic forms to windward; black and sombre, they were altering every moment, revealing weird-like patches of white and livid sky beyond. At some parts of the horizon the blended sea and sky had the darkness of night, while in the zenith there was at times the brightness almost of noon.

"I don't like the aspect of all this, Morley," said Bartelot, in a low voice to his friend; "we are in for a rough, wild night, and I wish it were well past."

The wind veered rapidly round half of the compass; sometimes it seemed to blow from all quarters at once. It came in strong and hot gusts, while through the bosom of the black clouds at the horizon, the red lightning seemed to plunge its seething bolts in the sea, and to add to the sublime terror of such a scene; the atmosphere was so sulphurous that, at times, luminous lights like fireballs or meteors were seen on every masthead, yardarm, and beam-end.

"Furl the topsails, lower the yards upon the cap, leave nothing set but the close-reefed foresail," were now Bartelot's orders.

Morley had never before seen so wild a tempest; but he was now seaman enough to scramble aloft with the rest, and soon found himself on the footrope, and "laying out" on the

arm of the main-yard, and he was first up at the weather-earring, there holding on with all his strength, for so weird was the scene below, the flapping of the canvas, the snapping of ropes, that cracked like coach-whips in the bellowing wind, the swaying of the rigging, and the pitching of the ship, that a terrible nausea came over him, together with a giddiness, and had not a seaman, named Erwin, who was by his side, caught him, he might have toppled into the sea that roared and seethed below.

Ben Plank, being a strong fellow, had his post in the slings of the mainyard, to pack the sail, and make up the bunt, or stow the heavy middle portion. Soon all was snug aloft; but again the wind changed so rapidly, that it flew round from the south-east to the north-west, and then with a mighty sound of rending and tearing, the foresail was split to ribbons, that flapped and cracked like rifle shots in the tempest, while the ship, which seemed almost enveloped in lightning for an instant, was almost thrown on her beam-ends.

"Stand from under, men—there go the masts!" shouted Bartelot through his trumpet, and a stunning peal of thunder bellowed over the ocean at the same moment.

Then followed a mighty crash, as if the heavens were falling on the deck, and all shrunk instinctively aside or stooped downward as the three topmasts and jib-boom broke off at the caps, and the *Princess* was a wreck in a moment.

"Hatchets—cut away the hamper to ease the ship!" was now the order, and, in a short time, the tangled wilderness of yards, masts, cross-trees and blocks, stays and rigging, on being cut adrift, whirled out of sight to leeward, carrying with it the unfortunate seaman Erwin, who had been caught by the body in the bight of a rope.

By the fall of the mizzen-topmast the starboard quarter-boat was dashed to pieces, and the other, which was a life-boat, was torn from its davits and vanished in the darkness like a child's toy, as a tremendous sea pooped the ship.

"Tom," gasped Morley, as he clung, half-drowned or stunned, to a belaying-pin, "are we indeed lost—do you think all is over?"

"Nearly so—if this continues long," was the composed reply. "Hold on, lads, here comes another sea!"

Now the black waves continued to burst over the vessel with a series of thundering explosions, as if determined to overwhelm it, till all around was foam, as white as snow; but though labouring at times with her gunwale almost under water, her whole deck strewed with fragments and splinters of

timber, bulwarks, buckets, pieces of rope, blocks, sails, and spars, that were washed to and fro, and while the crew, knee-deep in this *débris*, clung to shrouds and belaying-pins, she rose up buoyantly ever and anon on the crest of a wave, with all the water streaming from her, and all the while the wild wind blew in gusts, and bellowed like an unchained fiend. Amid the terrible scene another seaman was swept overboard and drowned ; the long-boat was uprooted from its lashings and chocks over the main-hatch and carried over the side by a sea that came right amidships and tore away half the star-board-bulwarks, so, fearing that the ship would founder, Bartelot with a heavy heart gave orders to cut away the lower masts.

The men were soon at work with sharp axes, and, while keeping afoot with difficulty under the drenching seas, shipped every moment by the labouring hull, after cutting through the shrouds and stays, a few blows at the foot of each mast readily sent them in succession crashing to leeward, where they vanished amid foam and obscurity.

Noah Gawthrop had just relinquished the now useless wheel, when a wave broke over the quarter, tearing the rudder from its bands and dashing the wheel to pieces.

“All’s over with the poor *Princess*, Morley,” said Tom, with a groan ; “she won’t outlive the night I fear.”

Morrison now came aft to report that the chain-pump had given way, the other had become choked, and that water was rising fast in the well.

“She’s sprung a leak, sir, somewhere about her fore-foot, so it’s a bad look-out for us all,” said Plank, the carpenter.

By this time the bulwarks were all torn away from the stanchions and timber-heads amidships by the sea, which now made clean breaches over the entire hull.

Nothing could be done now by the crew but to leave the ship to her fate, and to hold on by whatever offered itself, and wait the event of the storm abating, or, what seemed much more likely, of the ship foundering, by settling bodily down into the trough of the sea and rising never more. Her cargo, too, sugar and tobacco, were the reverse of buoyant under the circumstances ; so now, Morley, Bartelot, Morrison, the chief mate, Plank, the carpenter, and old Noah, were all grouped about the quarter-deck, some holding on by the timber-heads, others by the stump of the mizzenmast, while the rest of the crew were grouped forward, where they lashed themselves to the stump of the foremast, the barrel of the windlass, and gallows-bitts ; but so dark was the night, so terrible the sea,

and so loud the wind, that neither party could see or hear anything of the other.

Suddenly there was a rending crash !

An invocation of heaven rose to the lips of all, and a wild, despairing cry from those in the fore-castle reached the ears of our friends on the quarter-deck. Morley felt the whole ship tremble beneath his feet as the entire quarter was burst up or torn away from the rest of the hull, and with his companions he found himself floating on it, as on a species of raft, and up to his neck in water every moment, while whirled away from the ship, of which they saw no more, and which no doubt went speedily down with all on board.

“Just as this happened, Plank, the carpenter, was swept away, clutching with despair a fragment of wreck.

On this trail remnant of the shattered ship the other four unfortunates found themselves adrift on that wild, dark midnight sea, which whirled it to and fro like a cork on the black, tempestuous waves.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE FOUR CASTAWAYS.

“LORD have mercy on us !” escaped the lips of all.

It would seem that by the strength and violence of the sea the entire quarter-deck abaft the mizzen-mast, with a portion of its bulwarks, the taffrail, some parts of the stern windows and quarter galleries had been torn from the ship, and this crazy fragment was all that intervened between our four friends and eternity.

Being level with the sea, it could not be capsized, which, at least, was one good property.

Lashed to such parts of it as were available, the poor victims clung there in desperation and silence, waiting and praying in their hearts that the storm would abate ; and now, as if its errand had been done, its object accomplished in the total destruction of the unfortunate *Princess*, the gusty wind began to lull gradually, though the agitated sea rolled high and black as ever.

As the common saying has it, the waves “ran mountains high ;” but it must be borne in mind that few waves rise more than ten feet above the general level of the water, which, when

ten more are given for the trough of the sea, makes the whole height from base to crest twenty feet—sufficiently high to be terrible in aspect and effect.

Over the raft of the *Princess* (for it was little better) those vast hills of water made a thundering breach every instant, or came surging up through the apertures, from whence the companion and skylight had been torn away.

The taffrail was strong, and it was chiefly to it that Bartelot, Morley, Morrison, and Gawthrop lashed themselves, for gradually all that remained of the bulwarks were torn away, and the stump of the mizzenmast was soon worked or sucked out by the sea.

There was an appalling sense of loneliness, of dread and desolation, and of too probable death being near at hand, though perhaps all the more terrible if it were protracted.

So the fearful night wore on; the black scud was passing away, the stars shone out, and the four castaways began to hope that morning was at hand. Yet, ruthlessly, wave after wave came rolling over them, each with its high and monstrous head, curling white with snowy foam, though its sides were black and inky. Then there would be a roar as of thunder when each burst over the fragment of wreck, engulfing and half choking the poor dripping wretches who clung to it in silence and despair.

But now as dawn began to spread rapidly over the east, the sea went down, and the wind also; the waves ceased to roll over the broken deck, which floated steadily, and as it rose upheaved on each successive swell the occupants cast around them eager glances from their bloodshot eyes, in the hope of descriing a sail.

Dawn came thoroughly in—a cloudy morning, but no sunshine. Ere long they could see the whole horizon; but there no vestige of a sail was visible, and now they looked blankly into each other's pallid faces.

"My poor crew!" said Bartelot, with a thick sob in his throat, but the exclamation had escaped him many times before; "second-mate, carpenter, sail-maker, steward, cook, boys, and all—all gone but us, Morley. Sad—deplorable, is it not?"

"Do not grieve for what is irreparable," said Morrison.

"If I saw you, Bill Morrison, my friend Ashton, and my old shipmate Noah, all safe, I don't care if I were shark-meat this minute," he resumed, bitterly.

"Don't say so, Bartelot, my old boy," replied Morley, with an affectation of spirit he was far from feeling: "you have

behaved bravely, and done all that man could do to save your ship. Take courage ; you have buoyed me up many a day, when my heart had sunk to zero. Let me try to cheer you in turn."

"Cheer !" Tom repeated, shaking his head sadly, and still more bitterly as he surveyed their home upon the waters.

"Oh, Heaven ! to think of this being a bit of the old *Princess* we all loved so well !" groaned Morrison, looking almost affectionately on the frail planks over which the sea rippled at every heave.

"Aye, sir," chimed in Noah ; "it *are* odd, but it was a bit of that same blessed deck, as was holystoned and prayer-booked, swabbed and squilgeed of a morning till it were white as snow—whiter a'most than the deck of her Majesty's yacht. I've poured half the sea over that deck, I have, when the head-pump was rigged for'ard of a morning, and now what is it, but only a bit of drift-wood, and we a clinging to it, like four wet barnacles ? Lor' help us !"

"And bless our poor shipmates !" added Bartelot, pointing upwards.

"They are all gone, sir—found sailors' graves, every one of them," said Morrison ; "the ship would fill, and go down the moment she parted aft."

"But you've done your duty, sir," said Noah ; "and can clear yourself of the ship's loss before any naval court in any part of the world. I only wish we were all afore one this blessed minute, instead o' drifting about here, without compass, biscuit, or 'bacca."

Now came the oppressive reflection that they were without food and without water.

Morley had read very recently the "Paul Huet" of Eugene Sue, and the more true story on which his romance is founded—the awful wreck of the *Medusa*, French frigate, and thus the horrors which her crew endured upon the raft came vividly and painfully before him now.

The saline property of the atmosphere, their long and repeated immersions in the ocean, the quantities of its water they had been compelled to swallow when the drenching waves broke over them soon excited thirst. This longing was increased by heat when the sun came forth ; but as yet they had no desire for food.

All their energies were bent on watching the horizon around them, but no sail appeared ; so the wreck continued to float listlessly about, without making way apparently in any direction.

A boat they might have rowed in the direction of the Cape of Good Hope, and though they might have failed to reach the coast, while minus food and water, they would always have increased their chances of being picked up by a passing ship, homeward or outward bound ; but on the wreck they were helpless, as if upon a desert rock fixed amid the sea.

The first day passed slowly, wearily on, and the sun verged westward in his course.

Now night descended on the sea. There was no moon, but the stars shone clearly and sharply.

Worn by emotion, by toil, suffering, and lack of sleep, they trusted to the security of their lashings, and strove to find rest, or oblivion, in slumber ; but a half-wakeful doze was all they could achieve. Each body lay, to all appearance, torpid ; but the anxious soul slept not, so each had his own keen active thoughts and dreams.

Tom Bartelot conjured up a certain pretty little English face, whose smiling blue eyes were associated with many a summer evening walk among the sylvan scenery of Richmond Park, in the gardens of Kew, and visits to Hampton Court.

Morrison's heart was in his old mother's cottage, where he first saw the light, by the broad waters of the Dee, that roll from the hills of Crathie and Braemar in "the bonnie north country ;" for he had intended at the close of another voyage, to go home to Scotland, with all his earnings and wages, to spend them with her, and for her only ; but all that seemed hopeless now, though the hum of the sea in his ears, as it rippled against the wreck, suggested the surf that in boyhood he had seen breaking over the Black Dog of Belhelvie.*

Poor old Gawthrop, with his grizzled whiskers, and lips baked in dry salt, dreamt of neither father, mother, nor love—for all who loved old Noah were dead long ago ; but he had a vision of a stiff jorum of

"Boatswain's grog—just half and half,"

such as he used to get in the *Haurora*, of fifty guns ; while Morley Ashton thought, and dreamed and murmured to himself of Ethel Basset.

"Absence makes the heart grow fonder."

He had now been long absent from Ethel, and been long

* A rock on the Aberdeenshire coast, so named from its appearance at low water.

mourned by her as one who had been lost to her for ever, and numbered with the dead. And now death menaced him again !”

He had been saved from destruction by his friend—saved from a death by starvation, or despair, at Acton Chine; but only to perish with him here amid the lonely waters of the South Atlantic; for this time it seemed that he was too surely doomed to die—an idea rendered all the more bitter by a conviction that Ethel would never and could never, know the dark story of his disappearance, for no mortal lips could tell her save those of Hawkshaw.

Morley felt that he might perish now; that she would never learn the true character of his rival; of his own awful escape from Acton Chine; of his journey to Rio de Janeiro; of his sufferings on the raft, till relieved by death; of how he had been tossed hither and thither by fortune’s unrelenting hate, and how deeply and devotedly he loved her.

By this last misfortune, the wreck, more than all the others, he might, by dying, leave her to become the wife of Hawkshaw, the would-be assassin!

So another night passed over, and the raft, or wreck still floated darkly silently there; and now those who were thereon had ceased to speak, even in whispers.

Another day dawned—a day of glorious sunshine; but no food, no water, no hope came with it; for not a sail was in sight, and their eyes ached with weariness in searching the faint blue watery line that marked where the sky and ocean met.

They were becoming very feeble now, and the cravings of nature were maddening.

Their hair was encrusted by salt, as white as hoar-frost, their lips were baked, their tongues parched. Already they had become gaunt and white, hollow cheeked, and old-looking, with eyes bloodshot and wild.

Their feet and legs were sore and sodden by long immersion in the brine, and their whole bodies were rendered stiff and weary by the wet ropes which lashed them to the taffrail—a means of security which they dared not unloose or relinquish for a moment.

Ere long they were in a species of delirium.

Hunger brought its own fantastic and exciting suggestions of well-cooked viands, of hearty homely dishes, steaming and savoury, roasts and stews, puddings and pies; but thirst, agonising thirst, suggested ideas of cold rivers, amid which snows were dissolving; of lonely mountain tarns, where the

brown trout sported under the broad-leafed water-docks, and where the wild bird swam ; of glassy meres, of crystal rills, that murmured under old oak trees, or shady drooping willows with dark green sprays, and water lilies that dipped therein ; of iced champagne, that effervesced in crystal goblets ; of sparkling hock and seltzer-water ; of jolly London stout, all brown, with its creamy froth ; of every impossible luxury that they had not, and never more might feel upon their cracked lips and dry, hard, arid tongues !

A dead bird !—it was a huge albatross, with wings outspread—floated slowly past them on the glassy oil-like sea, thus indicating a current that ran eastward.

They were all too weak to attempt to swim for it ; so wolfishly, with haggard eyes and longing appetites they watched the wretched carrion for hours, until it floated out of sight.

Then three nautilus shells, with purple sails outspread, passed near them, and, to Morley's excited vision, they seemed like large Roman galleys, or fairy barges, at a vast distance—such craft as he had read of in legends of the Rhine, in fairy tales, and knightly ballads.

And now came mother Carey's chickens, hopping and tripping about the wreck, and on the ripples round it—merrily and happily, like brown sparrows in a farmyard at home.

About the setting of the sun, they were roused from their listlessness by the sudden apparition of a large vessel, barque-rigged—that is, with the fore and mainmasts of a ship and a mizzen like a schooner's mainmast, with a long spanker-boom—bearing down towards them.

There was a fine breeze blowing ; she had all her canvas set, and ran on a taut bowline.

“ A ship ! a sail ! a sail ! ” they exclaimed together.

“ Now, blessed be Heaven ! ” said Tom, “ we are saved at last ! Hurrah—hurrah ! ”

She was painted a kind of yellowish white ; her side chains and hawse holes, and all her iron work, looked red and rusty, as if she had been long in tropical waters.

With almost inarticulate lips they sought to hail her, and waved their hands in frantic glee as she came on, with the white foam curling under her bluff bows, where the old copper was green, and covered with barnacles. Her side was lined with the faces of her crew, who seemed to be in earnest conference, and some of whom gesticulated violently.

She seemed to be foreign by her build and rig, as well as by the scarlet and blue shirts and fur caps of her men.

Now she was close to them, and the white flag, with the black eagle of Prussia, was hoisted at her gaff peak; now she would certainly be hove in the wind, with a mainsail laid aback, and have a boat lowered to relieve them.

So close was she, that the wheel revolved to keep her away a point or two, lest she might run the frail wreck under with her bluff bows, as she sheered past.

Tom hailed in English "to relieve them from misery—to save them, for the love of mercy and of God!"

He spoke imploringly, for a sudden doubt had chilled his heart.

Hoarsely the hail was responded to in German, and the baque passed on—on, without lifting tack or sheet, without lowering a boat, or tossing a single biscuit, to those four men who were all dying on the wreck! The Prussian—she was the *Einigkeit*, of Dantzic—stood away on her course, and left Bartelot and his three friends in an agony of disappointment and despair that bordered on madness!

With such terrible emotions in their hearts, as no pen could portray, they saw her slowly diminish in distance, and vanish into the yellow haze that overspread the evening sea. Then once more night descended on the world of waters, and again they were alone—more alone, they felt, than ever, for even their fellow-beings had abandoned them.

During all that night Morley Ashton was delirious.

Dreams and thoughts of Acton Chase and woods, that rustled their green leaves in the soft west wind; of golden fields of bearded grain that waved like billows beneath its breath; of the voices of the larks that soared aloft into the blue sky, and of the cushat dove that cooed to its mate in the leafy dingle; the ring of the village chimes, and of children's merry voices—came strongly to memory, with the comforts of the land he never more might tread—English home he never more might see.

Anon, strange monsters seemed to come out of the starlit bosom of the glassy deep, to bob and dance, to glare and jabber, with faces green, white, lilac, and rose-coloured; and all as if to mock their misery.

These, however, were only sea-weed and foambells, or floating blubber, to which the water gave unusual size and phospho-

For the infamous conduct of this Prussian crew to a Scottish ship in distress, see any paper of May 26, 1864.

rescent light, while the sufferers' giddy brains and weakened eyesight lent them wild and fantastic forms.

Poor Tom Bartelot must have been quite deranged; for more than once Morley heard him singing what seemed to be a scrap of his old drinking song, and his voice sunk into a childish quaver at the couplet:

"Oh, deign, ye kind powers with this wish to comply!
May I always be drinking yet always be dry."

Then he suddenly changed his note to a kind of hoarse wail, as he sang:

"King Death was a rare old fellow,
He sat where no sun could shine;
He lifted his hand so yellow,
And pledged us in coal-black wine."

He soon after became senseless, and hung, as if asleep, drooping, alas! it might be dead, in the lashings that secured him to the taffrail.

Towards the morning of that terrible night, Morley felt life ebbing within him, and, as it ebbed, he had a last wild dream—wild indeed, but too delicious to be true.

A long, long time seemed to elapse, but another day had dawned, and a ship—the false, cruel Prussian barque of yesterday—had returned in quest of them. She lay to, a boat came off, he heard the rattle of the fall-tackles, and the splash of the water. They were, he thought, rescued; he felt the lashing that bound his swollen limbs cut by a seaman's jack-knife, and now kind faces and kind hands were around him, and gentle voices were murmuring in his ear.

Cool wine and grateful cordials seemed to be poured between his parched lips, and then to be suddenly withheld when he would have imbibed more.

Oh, the madness of this tantalising and most feverish dream, for Ethel Basset seemed to be there!

Ethel, with her sweetly feminine and dear affectionate face, was bending over him; her lips were close to his, her kiss was on his cheek; but he could neither respond nor speak, for Hawkshaw's visage, pale and wrathful, was between them, with knitted brows and glaring eyes, as he had seen it last, when he fell beneath his hand at Acton Chine.

Then he seemed to sleep, to die; for he felt and remembered no more.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

CAPTAIN HAWKSHAW MAKES A DISCOVERY TO LEEWARD.

ON the night the *Princess* was lost, the *Hermione* did not escape the same storm, which probably traversed in a circle all the waters of the South Atlantic.

It was no doubt the mere skirt of the tempest which affected her, as the sky around was clear, and the stars shone brilliantly.

Her jib was blown out of the bolt-rope and split to ribbons, and she had her topsails close-reefed.

"Stow what remains of the jib," ordered Captain Phillips; "Into the netting with it—quick, men; cheerily now, and up with the foretopmast-staysail."

As soon as this was done, he added:

"Go below, the watch, and take a nap if you can, for it may blow great guns before morning."

"It is blowing three gales in one as it is," said Mr. Quail. "The water comes waist-high in the lee-scuppers, and washes right chock aft to the taffrail."

The *Hermione* was tearing through the sea upon the wind, so she rolled a little, but the wild waves came pouring over her catheads and topgallant fore-castle, and over the weather bulwarks, swashing and plashing their snowy spray far above the level of her main-courses.

"Who is at the wheel?" asked the captain, who was standing at the break of the quarter-deck.

"Badger, the long Yankee," replied Mr. Quail.

"All seems quiet among these rascals forward; and they worked cheerily enough to-night."

"All quiet as yet, sir; but we don't know when their little game may begin."

"If they should have changed their minds?" suggested Phillips.

"No chance of that, sir," said Quail, shaking his head.

"Or, if the doctor was mistaken?"

"Impossible, sir," said Quail, shaking his head again—it was under a cloud of spray this time; "and, even if he was so, we can't mistake the disappearance of poor Manfredi after Sharkey's ugly threats, and their mutinous spirit in general. As first mate, I have seen enough of it to last my time at sea."

"I am prepared for the worst at all events," responded

Phillips, in the same low voice, as he instinctively felt for the butt of the revolver pistol in his breast-pocket, and ascended to the weather side of the poop.

Veering round to the south-eastward, the wind was soon dead against the ship, which laboured hard, though running close-hauled, and, while beating to windward, her head was many points away from her proper course.

She was running fast through the water—ten knots an hour at least—but was making great leeway. The strain on the weather-rigging was great; there every shroud, rope, and halyard were tight as iron wire, while to leeward they were all blown out in wavy bights and bends, especially at every lurch.

There was never a lull in the fierce gale, and, with every wave that burst against her bows, the *Hermione* seemed to roll, or swerve, bodily off to leeward.

On this night poor Mr. Basset was in great mental misery, lest, amid the tempest, for to such the gale nearly amounted, the crew should put their nefarious designs in execution; but they had their hands too full of necessary work to find time for mischief then.

He twice ventured on deck, but to the landsman's eye, the aspect of that wild, stormy sea, visible under a starry and cloudless sky, so appalled him, that each time he returned to the cabin with such visible signs of tremor and emotion, that Ethel, who had found the impossibility of sleeping, and had thrown on her morning wrapper and shawl, joined him, and sat caressingly by his side.

Pale, anxious, and lovely she looked in her white-frilled dress; and now every sound on deck made her father start with agitation.

"Is the gale increasing, papa?" she asked, for the twentieth time.

"Undoubtedly it is—but the captain laughs at it, and says his ship is strong and stout."

"How soundly dear Rose sleeps amid all the hurly-burly!"

"Bless the poor child—oh yes; but go to bed beside her, darling, we have little fear to-night—for the ship, at least."

"Have we aught to fear from the sea, papa?"

Mr. Basset did not reply.

"You are silent, papa," resumed Ethel, scanning his features keenly and affectionately, and patting his cheek with her delicate hand; "then there *is* some danger of which you do not tell me. Oh, papa, what is this you would conceal from me, who, I know, am all the world to you?"

"You are, indeed, all the world to me now, Ethel—you and Rose," replied the poor man in a broken voice, as his eyes filled, and his heart swelled with uncontrollable anxiety and emotion; "but there, dear, there, kiss me, and go to bed; don't waken Rose—let the poor child sleep while she may."

And leading Ethel to her cabin, he pushed her gently in, and closing the door, lay down on the stern-locker to watch, but not to sleep.

This gale blew steadily for more than eight-and-forty hours, during which the *Hermione* carried as little canvas as possible, yet she made so much leeway as to be blown far to the southward of the Cape—how far was known only to Captain Phillips and his two mates, Mr. Quail and Mr. Foster, as they had tacitly agreed to keep the crew in total ignorance of the ship's working or progress, hoping by doing so to delay, if they could not ultimately frustrate, any dark plans the intending mutineers had formed.

During all this gale, which showed no signs of abatement until the evening of the second day, Ethel and her sister remained in the cabin with old Nurse Folgate, who, with all her love for them, was deploring the moment of weakness in which she consented to leave the leafy seclusion of Acton-Rennel, "to go forth a-voyaging round the world, nobody knew to where."

Dr. Leslie Heriot found much to keep him below too; and thus by day and by night, according to the plan formed and already described, there was always at least one armed man guarding them and the cabin-door.

As for poor Mr. Basset, he never quitted the side of his daughters now until he saw them into their little cabin for the night; and Ethel, who soon perceived her father's new solicitude and affectionate anxiety, was quite at a loss to understand what caused it.

None knew how the lots had fallen, or whose cast of the dice had been highest in the fore-castle bunks of the *Hermione*; but many of her crew when they came on deck, on the morning subsequent to the amiable discussion so luckily overheard by Dr. Heriot, bore unmistakable marks of a conflict, in the shape of blackened eyes, swollen noses, and in more than one instance a slash or stab from a knife.

Whatever were the ultimate intentions of these men, matters remained unchanged on board the ship, the duty of which was carried on excellently during the gale, for then every man did his duty readily and cheerfully, either by force

of habit, or from the knowledge that to do so would save themselves much trouble and probable danger.

No doubt they deemed it better to wait for an opportunity after they were assured of being past the Cape, when they would seize the ship, and as the doctor heard suggested, haul up for the Mozambique Channel, a very unwise idea on their part, as in the narrow sea they ran the imminent risk of being overhauled by some man-of-war, homeward bound, or transport full of troops—chances to be avoided in the open Indian Ocean.

The tempest had blown them to the westward, and also considerably to the southward of the Cape, which lies in latitude 33.5.42 south, and longitude 18.23.15 east. But the morning of the third day came in clear and calm; there was a gentle breeze from the eastward, and the ship was running close-hauled, with her port-tacks on board, and everything set upon her that would draw, even to triangular skysails and maintopgallant staysails, so that her hull seemed a mere black speck under such a cloud of white canvas.

And the glorious morning sun cast her shadow far along the smooth ocean to the westward, as she cleft its waters swiftly and steadily with her gallant prow, from which a white female figure, representing the Hermione of the classical age, the daughter of Venus and wife of Cadmus, with Vulcan's golden necklet round her slender throat, spread her graceful arms above the foam.

The fourth and fifth days after the gale were serene and lovely in the extreme.

There was scarcely need for the watch to rig the head-pump for the last three mornings; washed by the waves of the recent gale, the decks were white as snow, and not even a shred or thread of spun-yarn could be seen about the wheels of the carronades, the coamings of the hatches, or the mouths of the scupper-holes.

Breakfast over, Rose and Ethel came on deck, and Dr. Heriot hastened after them with cushions, shawls, and wrappers, for the morning air in that extreme southern latitude was cold, though clear and bracing; even an iceberg was visible at the far and blue horizon to the westward, an object to which Heriot drew the attention of the sisters, and promptly arranged for them his telescope; but the fair voyagers had become quite used to such things, so Ethel betook herself to a novel, and Rose began a piece of crotchet (which seemed like the web of Penelope) in expectation that her lover would sit by and converse with her.

Both seemed paler than usual, in consequence of the few days' confinement below. Their father was anxious still, and the poor man continued to linger about them, to hover near them, and instinctively his trembling hand felt for the loaded revolver he carried in secret, if one of the crew came near his daughters, and his heart beat quicker if even one glanced to them, for in him he suspected the winner by the dice-box of the two abhorred Barradas.

Hawkshaw, whom the young doctor's steady attentions to the sisters galled and fretted, was up in the fore-rigging, somewhere, looking out for a sail, as no one on board longed for the appearance of a ship of war more than he did; so he kept one eye on the horizon, and another on the quarter-deck, where Ethel and Rose were seated, chatting and laughing.

Heriot had carefully examined, capped, and charged anew his revolver, and placed it in his breast-pocket before he joined them, so the crew very little suspected how completely all their superiors were forewarned and forearmed.

The two girls looked, if possible, lovelier than ever on this, as it will prove in the sequel, eventful morning, by a species of delicate pallor induced by the close atmosphere of the cabin; and as young Heriot gazed into their clear, full, earnest eyes, a fierce, high spirit swelled up in his heart, and he almost rejoiced that the terrible circumstances in which they were placed, sailing as it were with a volcano on board, would give him an opportunity of showing how dearly he loved Rose Basset, how willing he was to dare, alas! it might be to die for her!

Not that he would gain much by the last move, as reflection showed, and die he might, perhaps, by the hands of some of those ruffians, before she could be succoured and protected, and then there was acute agony in the contemplation of what she might endure when he could neither see nor avenge it.

"Look, Ethel dear," Rose suddenly exclaimed with girlish delight, "there is a great swan asleep on the water."

"A swan here?"

"It is an albatross," said the doctor, smiling, "and sleeping sound enough, certainly. I could almost toss a biscuit on his back."

There, not twelve yards distant from the ship's side, on the smooth surface of the sea, was a great albatross, with plumage white as snow—a bird whose pinions may have measured twelve feet from tip to tip—fast asleep, and floating with his huge head under his wing.

Slowly he was upheaved upon each huge glassy swell, and

slowly he sank down into the glassy vale between them, sleeping, as Ethel said, just as she had seen the swans on Acton Mere, at home, and now this lonely bird was, perhaps, three hundred miles from land.

When first descried he was upon the weather-bow, and now he was upon the lee quarter, so rapidly the ship left far astern this great bird of the "Ancient Mariner," enjoying his nap, all undisturbed, upon the morning sea.

Hawkshaw, who was pretty far up the fore-rigging, now drew the attention of some of the crew, who were at work upon the foreyard, greasing the sling thereof, reeving new bunt-lines to the foot of the foretopsail, &c., to a small dark object that was floating on the water at a great distance, and the discussion that ensued about it soon caught the attention of the anxious and active Mr. Quail, who was standing at the break of the quarter-deck, for the *Hermione* had a species of half poop, so he descended into the waist and hailed the talkers.

"Fore-top there!"

"Aye, aye, sir," replied Bill Badger and Zuares Barradas.

"Do you see anything, that you keep such a bright look-out to leeward, eh?"

"Yes, sir; there is something in sight," replied Zuares.

"Something; well, what is it?"

"The head o' the great sea-sarpent, I rayther reckons it to be," replied Bill Badger, impudently; "I sees his row o' grinders standing up above the water."

"Grinders, you Yankee swab," responded Mr. Quail (under his breath, however, for the fid-maul and a couple of iron marlinespikes were lying in the foretop, and one of these might fall out of it, by accident); "what you call grinders are the timber-heads of a piece of wreck—if not, I am as green as a cabbage! A piece of wreck in sight to leeward, sir," he reported down the skylight to Captain Phillips, who came promptly on deck, telescope in hand.

"Whereabouts, Mr. Quail?"

"There, sir; you can see it now under the leach of the forecourse, when the ship rises—can you make it out?"

"Wreck it is, Quail; the taffrail and sternpost of a vessel. Ease her off a bit, Pedro; edge down towards it," said the captain to the elder Barradas, whose strong hands grasped the handsome, brass-mounted wheel of the *Hermione*; "we are raising it fast."

"If there ain't men a-clinging to it, I'm a Dutchman!" shouted Badger, from the foretop.

"The fellow is right," said Phillips, politely passing his glass to Mr. Basset; human figures are visible on it. Ready the lee quarter-boat, there—clear the fall tackles; keep her on a little just as she is, Mr. Quail, and then back with the mainyard."

All the crew crowded to the leese of the deck now, and their entire attention was riveted on the piece of drifting wreck which lay like a log in the water; but towards which they were rapidly bearing down.

Ere long, four men could be distinctly seen upon it, but whether alive or dead none could say with certainty, though all surmised the latter, as they made neither sign nor hail, but remained still, mute, and passive as the timber-heads to which they were lashed, and which rose and fell, slowly and sullenly, amid the sunny ripples of that calm morning sea.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

DR. HERIOT'S PATIENTS.

FILLED with the interest roused by this new episode, the crew, for a time, forgot everything in their desire to know what ship this had been, where she hailed from, to relieve the sufferers, and to learn all they had undergone; for, even in his worst moods, Jack is always ready for anything, and the more of novelty it contains, the better for him.

The four drooping figures could be distinctly discerned now, with their heads bare, their faces blanched and pale. Ethel and Rose were full of commiseration; already their gentle eyes were swimming in sympathetic tears. The former kept by the side of her father, and the latter, in her excitement, leant more heavily than usual, perhaps, on the arm of Dr. Heriot; and even old Nance Folgate had come out of her berth, and muttering "Lor' a mussy me!" from time to time, clung with cat-like tenacity to the nettings on the lee-quarter, to see the castaways, whom, she had no doubt, had been devouring each other from time to time, till only four were left now.

"Back with the mainyard!" shouted the captain; "to the braces, men; let go and haul!"

The lee-braces were cast off the belaying pins; the weather hauled in, and the yard was slued round till the sail was laid flat to the mast; and now the great ship, which had been

edged down towards the piece of wreck, as she lay to, rose and fell with slow, but regular and impatient heaves, on the swelling ridges of the sea, while, with a quick revolution of the double-sheaved blocks, the fall-tackle fell and the quarter-boat vanished from its davits with a splash into the sea alongside.

She was speedily manned : Mr. Foster, the second mate, took the tiller ; Bill Badger, the Yankee ; Joe, the steward ; Quaco, the black Virginian, and Dr. Heriot (with Rose's entreaties to take care of himself ringing in his ears), shipped their oars in the rowlocks and she was shoved off.

"Happy go lucky ! here's summut new, at all events," said Bill Badger, as he made the tough blade of the stroke-oar bend like a willow wand ; for after a long dull voyage like that of the *Hermione*, varied only by adverse winds and the loss of a mast at the Canaries—a voyage in which a few restless and roving spirits are shut up for many weeks in the small compass of a ship—anything that may serve to relieve or vary the tedium and monotony of the life they lead is welcome ; hence, a drifting wreck, with its contingent stories, mysteries, and the surmises it may occasion, is, perhaps, the most welcome, though least lively adventure they could meet with.

The proceedings of the boat's crew were watched with deep interest by those who lined the ship's side, about five hundred yards off.

Mr. Foster pulled round the stern of the wreck, and was seen to stoop with his face close to the water, as if he was endeavouring to read (which was the case) the vessel's name, then sunk some feet below the surface, as the wreck was half submerged.

Then he sheered the boat alongside, and by the painter it was made fast to a timber-head ; but almost immediately after, for fear of accidents, this was cast off, and she was simply held on by the boat-hook.

Mr. Foster, Dr. Heriot, and another stepped along the piece of quarter-deck, and were seen to be examining the four men, whom they relieved from their wet lashings by simply cutting these through with a slash of Quaco's jack-knife.

"Evidently, the poor fellows are *not* dead," said Captain Phillips, joyfully, as he clapped his fat hands together.

"How do you know, dear sir ?" asked Ethel ; "ah, the poor men, I do not see them move !"

"They are putting them into the boat to bring them aboard, Miss Basset. If they had been dead, there would have been little use in doing that."

"What would you have done in that case, captain?" asked Mr. Basset.

"Sunk each of 'em simply, with a round shot at his heels, as we did the poor fellow whom we found floating with the life-buoy. Mr. Quail, get some brandy and wine out of the cabin locker—some water, please, too."

"Oh, let me assist you, sir," exclaimed Ethel.

"And me—me too," said Rose, with enthusiasm.

"Stop, ladies, you'll only lose your footing and get a tumble, perhaps, the ship is pitching so; better stay where you are, and hold on by the side netting."

"Hush!" said Captain Phillips, suddenly; "silence on deck—silence fore and aft, for Dr. Heriot is hailing the ship, and waving the cap."

"What is it that he is saying?" asked several, as the doctor's clear voice came distinctly over the water.

"Captain Phillips" they heard him cry, "please to request the ladies to leave the deck."

"That is plain enough, miss," said Mr. Quail, touching his cap to Ethel.

"Why—for what must we go?" said Rose, pouting.

"You must permit me to lead you below, ladies," said the captain; "depend upon it, the doctor knows best. There is something there he does not wish you to see."

So Ethel, Rose, and the old nurse, to the intense mortification of the latter, left the deck, and retired to the cabin to wait the event.

The truth was that the worthy young doctor had found the four sufferers on the wreck, though not dead, as he fully ascertained on feeling their pulses, in such a frightful state of prostration and delirium, that he deemed it better Ethel and Rose should be spared the shock of their first appearance, and should not witness the conveyance of them up the ship's side.

"They are all in the boat now, and now she is shoved off. Give way, my boys—give way!" shouted the captain, whose kind, ruddy English face flushed with eagerness. "Lay out on your oars and pull with a will, for a glass of grog awaits you all."

To do them justice, the men in the boat needed no incentive; to the whole length of their arms they bent to their oars, and the boat came sheering alongside in a twinkling.

"In larboard oars, out fenders," said Mr. Foster, as he relinquished the tiller.

"Into the main-chains there, some of you, and bear a hand

to get the poor fellows on board," said Captain Phillips, jumping down the short ladder at the break of the quarter-deck, just as four thin and wasted figures—their tattered clothes sodden and saturated by salt water, their matted hair encrusted with salt—were handed like children up the side, passed over the bulwark, and laid on the deck near the long-boat.

"Poor fellows, poor fellows! God help them," said Phillips, commiseratingly, as they seemed quite insensible. Their teeth were clenched, but their lips were far apart, cracked, parched, and in some instances, bleeding. They breathed irregularly, and twitched their fingers convulsively.

"They must be your peculiar care for a time, doctor," said Mr. Basset, as Heriot flung his coat on the deck, and while rolling up his shirt-sleeves, rushed below to his medicine-chest.

"Boy, Joe—steward, bring wine and brandy here! Carpenter, get four comfortable hammocks slung in the 'tween decks! and you, Quaco, my darkey, get us plenty of hot water from the galley," cried Phillips.

"Yaas, sar," replied the sable Virginian, as he hastened forward with a bucket.

Every one bustled about, and even Sharkey, the sulkiest villain of that ill-assorted crew, made himself useful in some way, or fancied that he did so.

"These men are evidently British men," said the captain, as the doctor stooped over each, and raising his head, poured weak brandy-and-water, with some medicament therein, down his throat. "How thirstily they drink! One opens his eyes. All right, my friend, you'll soon come to," added the kind skipper, as he patted Morrison on the shoulder. "Now then," said he, "Mr. Quail, get the quarter-boat hoisted in, and fill the mainyard. Trim the ship to her course."

"Very good, sir."

It was soon done, and the *Hermione*, as she began again to walk through the water, soon left the piece of wreck astern.

"Did you make out the name of that unfortunate craft, Mr. Foster?"

"Yes, sir; but with difficulty."

"And what was it?"

Our readers, of course, anticipate the reply.

"The *Princess*, of London—ship rig evidently, from the side chains, the double row of dead eyes, and the gearing of the mizzenmast."

"All right. Now bring up the ship's log."

The four patients were taken below. A little food, such as might be made for children, arrowroot with sherry, and so forth, was given to them, and greedily they devoured it. They were then stripped, sponged with warm fresh water, and lifted each into a comfortable hammock, the active young doctor, Mr. Foster, the captain and steward, working for them like servants and nurses with hearty good-will.

Gentle cordials were then administered, and soon after Heriot appeared in the cabin with a bright and smiling face, wearing the happy expression of one who, in doing a good action, has done his best, to report that they had fallen into a sound sleep, were all doing well, and would, he hoped, soon be free from danger.

"It was too bad of you to send us below like children," said Rose.

"And you think they will recover, doctor?" asked Ethel, interrupting some playful apology of Heriot's.

"Recover? Oh yes, and perhaps be with us soon at table, too; so poor Manfredi's seat may thus be filled. Like Banquo's, it has long been empty."

"Oh, Leslie, how can you jest thus?" whispered Rose.

"I don't jest, dearest," replied the doctor, deprecatingly. "I liked poor Adrian Manfredi too well to associate his idea now with a jest," he added, gravely, as he thought of that night in the fore-castle bunks, of the revelations he had heard, and the peril that was yet unaverted.

"Have the poor men said anything?" asked Ethel.

"Not much, Miss Basset, beyond a few indistinct and delirious mutterings."

"Could you gather who they were?"

"No; but they all seem to be seamen, save one."

"One?"

"Yes."

(How little could she dream who *this one was!*)

"And you are able to distinguish!" she resumed.

"At once—by their hands and general appearance."

"And this one, who is not a seaman?"

"Is a pale, and thin—but then he has been starved—and gentleman-like young man. Though half dead with privation, he made a whispered apology for the trouble he gave us."

"Poor fellow!" said Ethel, whose eyes glistened.

"Where was their vessel from?—how was she lost?—and where was she lost?" asked Rose.

"They are past telling all this now," said the doctor, smiling,

and patting Rose's hand ; " by to-morrow evening, perhaps, we shall learn all."

" I do long so to hear their story—how terrible it must be—quite a nautical romance ; and then, the other poor men of their ship, who have been drowned !"

" Yes, Rose," said Ethel, glancing at the captain and mate, who were each making an entry in his log or journal, " this incident will fill up an entire page of your diary."

" How—why?" asked Rose, reddening very perceptibly.

" For Lucy Page's perusal," said Ethel, with a smile that had a little mischief, or waggery, in it.

Rose grew redder, for her diary or journal of the voyage, which she had begun to keep (from the day she left Laurel Lodge), for the special perusal of her friend and gossip, Lucy Page, had proved rather a bore, and had been completely relinquished, as she could not consistently omit, and yet shrank from recording, memoranda of a certain little interview with the doctor, being naturally restrained therefrom by a certain awkwardness, if the eye of Jack Page, now almost a myth to her, as he has been, perhaps, to the reader, should peruse them also.

So Rose had ceased altogether to continue that interesting volume, which, we may presume, terminated abruptly on that night recorded in a previous chapter, when she and the doctor took a turn on deck to view the stars.

At this moment Cramply Hawkshaw entered the cabin with an expression of face so scared, so altered, and so unmistakably wretched, that Ethel surveyed him with surprise ; and then, with some commiseration, she kindly inquired if he was ill ?

He complained of giddiness, and abruptly hastened on deck.

In fact, our ex-Texan officer had just come from between decks, where he had been visiting the doctor's patients.

CHAPTER XL.

CAPTAIN HAWKSHAW'S TROUBLES INCREASE.

INSPIRED by some emotion beyond curiosity—a feeling which it would be alike impossible to define or describe, Hawkshaw had gone between decks to look at the rescued men.

A man had been left to watch them. He was Bolter, the

Canadian, to whom Dr. Heriot had given strict injunctions that the sleepers were not to be disturbed to gratify the mere curiosity of the crew; and he growled out a few words by way of warning to Hawkshaw, who, assuming a jaunty air, said:

"Now, my amphibious biped, how are your patients?"

"None of your names, mister," replied the Canadian, knitting his brows.

"You mistake me, my good fellow; I simply wished to know how our new friends are."

"Judge for yourself—blow'd if I know," was the sulky rejoinder, as Bolter replaced a tremendous expectoration (which he shot fairly over Hawkshaw's shoulder and out at the lee port) by a huge quid; "but they seemed all goin' forren—out'ard bound, till the doctor hove 'em up fresh."

Each was in his hammock sleeping soundly, in that deep, drowsy torpor which enables even "the famished to escape from the pangs of hunger, and those who are perishing of thirst to escape for a time from the agony of the parched throat"—the sleep that covereth a man all over like a mantle, as honest Sancho Panza said, when, in the fulness of heart, he blessed the great inventor thereof.

On tiptoe Hawkshaw passed from sleeper to sleeper.

One seemed a brawny and weather-beaten seaman, with grizzled locks, that were fast becoming grey; his bare and muscular chest was tatoed blue with gunpowder. This was our old friend Noah Gawthrop.

The second he looked at was somewhat hard-featured, with a high forehead, dark, full eyebrows, a well-shaped nose, and one of those prominent chins which bespeak firmness, decision of character, and indomitable perseverance. He was the Scotch mate, Bill Morrison.

The next was a pale, wan lad, whose handsome but attenuated features——

"Gad's fury!" burst from the lips of Hawkshaw, as the sudden recognition of those features struck a terror into his soul. "He here! he! Can it be possible?"

"Hullo, shipmate, what's the row?" said Bolter, looking up from a sea-chest, on which he was lolling, with his hands in his pockets; "'vast and belay this gab o' yours, or you'll waken 'em up, which is clear ag'in the doctor's orders."

"A musquito stung me," said Hawkshaw, with a confusion which Bolter's perceptions were not fine enough to discover.

"A miskitty in these latitudes!" he exclaimed mockingly. "I'm not so jolly green a hand as to believe that; but be off

on deck, and leave me to keep my watch 'athout you. I may say this, though the ship is yet trimmed by the stern," added the fellow, with an insolent grimace, for like the rest of the crew, whom the Barradas influenced, he had a peculiar aversion for Hawkshaw.

The latter had now shrunk back, scarcely breathing, after assuring himself that the pale sleeper was indeed Morley Ashton; and then flashed upon his mind the keen and savage idea of getting him again removed from his path—by strangling him in his sleep, by putting poison in his food—and thus to send him out of the world ere his eyes again fully opened on it, and ere he, Hawkshaw, could be destroyed by the story he had to tell—by the great crime he had to reveal.

From the cabin, as we have told, he went on deck, and desirous of avoiding all, of seeking that solitude so impossible to find on board ship, he ascended into the fore-rigging and sat there amid a whirl, a chaos of thought, endeavouring to consider his prospects and position *now!*

Could he have been mistaken?

Impossible! The likeness had been too deeply impressed upon his memory since that awful night at Acton Chine; so he needed not to go between decks again, and, moreover, he dared not, lest Morley should awake and recognize him.

"How came he to escape death at the Chine? How to be sailing on the sea, and hereabout too?" thought Hawkshaw. "Oh, strange and most accursed fatality! But for *me*, perhaps, we might have passed that piece of wreck—passed it unseen by all on board; but Fate is retributive; I was the first to descry, the first to be anxious to visit it."

For a moment, but a moment only, there came into his soul a gleam of joy, with the conviction that he was *not*, as he had so long remorsefully considered himself, the destroyer of a fellow-creature.

His victim—Heaven alone knew how!—had escaped, and was here alive and safe on board the *Hermione*. The ever-present idea of crime, with the *word* that had seemed ever before his eyes, on his lips, and in his heart—that shone in his dreams like those letters of flame that flashed on the vision of Belshazzar, could be a terror to him no longer.

The proverbs, that "Murder will out;" that "God's retribution will fall upon a murderer;" the law, that "Whoso sheddeth man's blood by man shall his blood be shed," would haunt him no more—for this crime at least.

Such were his ideas for a moment; but the next, cold, selfish fear resumed its sway, and reason showed him that he

was yet an assassin by intent—one whom his intended victim would expose, crush, and destroy, *if*—what?—he was not anticipated, crushed and destroyed *first*.

To Hawkshaw this waif from the ocean was worse by a thousand degrees than his *rencontre* with the two Barradas.

To avoid the accusations, the shame and contumely that Morley Ashton could heap upon him by the exposure of his falsehood, cruelty, and hypocrisy, he would happily now have relinquished even Ethel Basset and all he had hoped from her father's patronage in the Isle of France. He would gladly have fled; but whither could he fly—how, when, where?—encompassed as he was by the sea? Save in its depth there was no escape from this accursed ship, as there was no eluding his own conscience in this floating prison, the *Hermione*—how he loathed the name!—with her crew of foul and treacherous mutineers.

He had one hope left. Morley might die on getting food. He seemed so weak when brought on board, that the powers of digestion might be past, so that death might ensue from mere inanition.

But then his three companions would probably know his story, and were certain, if they survived, to reveal all Hawkshaw's guilt.

In the bitterness of his soul he contemplated suicide by slipping quietly overboard before the fatal recognition and discovery took place; but then came the fierce thought—if one of us is to perish why should not *he*? and what time so fitting as now, when he is weak—almost dying? And thus, in his blind desperation, some of his old Mexican instincts or propensities grew strong within him, and he conceived the fiendish idea of strangling, or otherwise destroying, the half-dead lad in the night.

If marks of violence were found upon him Hawkshaw knew there were so many "black sheep" in the fore-castle, that one of them would readily be blamed for the crime.

A fierce eagerness to put himself in a safe position to prevent the discovery that would blight him for ever, now possessed his whole soul, and, nerving it for the deadly task he had to do, made him long for the darkness and silence of night, when he resolved to make the attempt.

In this pleasant mood of mind he heard the cabin bell rung by Joe the Steward, announcing dinner, and descending reluctantly from his perch in the fore-rigging, he went aft and took his seat between Ethel and Dr. Heriot, who were conversing gaily, while he had all the misery of having to veil

over the secret serpent that gnawed at his heart by an outward air of ease, security, and pleasantry, which, however, was nearly put to flight by Captain Phillips asking if he had seen the devil in the foretop, he looked so very white about the gills.

One portion of the conversation maintained amid the clinking of glasses and plates, and the difficulty of balancing wine-glasses nicely when the ship rolled, was by no means calculated to restore his equanimity.

"Miss Basset," said the young doctor, blandly, "I hope you will come with me and visit those poor fellows?"

"Yes, with pleasure. Rose and papa will come too."

"Well, it will cheer them a bit to see your dear, kind, pretty faces," said Captain Phillips, bowing to each sister ere he drained his glass of sherry.

"You will quite spoil my girls by flattering them," said Mr. Basset, laughing.

"Our good captain is too honest for flattery," resumed Dr. Heriot; "but, Miss Basset, there is one fellow there who interests me much, though why I cannot say. Please to look at him well when you see him. There is something very remarkable about him."

"Indeed, how, pray?"

"I judge by his bearing and the general expression of his face. As a clever American writer says of a similar impression, 'His is one of those cases which are more numerous than supposed by those who have never lived anywhere but in their own homes, and have never walked but in one line from their cradles to their graves. We must leave our straight paths for the bye-ways and low places of life if we would learn truths by strong contrasts, and in hovels, in fore-castles, and among our own outcasts in foreign lands, see what has been brought upon our fellow-creatures by accident, hardship, or vice.'"

"Vice!" repeated Hawkshaw, with a nervous start, and in dread lest Morley had already discovered himself.

"Oh, do not misunderstand me. I merely completed the quotation. Heaven forbid, Mr. Hawkshaw, that I should attribute vice to one so gentle as my poor patient; but tomorrow, or at latest, next day, you shall see them, ladies, and I shall have much pleasure in being your guide between decks."

Hawkshaw felt as if the doctor was dictating his sentence of degradation and death; but he strove to preserve an unmoved countenance and to affect a pleasant demeanour.

Then he had to do the honours of the table to Ethel Basset,

while his food seemed to choke him, with the agreeable consciousness that he whom she still loved, and for whom she still sorrowed, Morley Ashton, was asleep quietly in his hammock on the other side of the after-bulkhead, and scarcely three feet distant from her chair.

CHAPTER XLI.

HAWKSHAW TURNS NURSE.

FOR that night all went well on board, as Dr. Heriot kept his watch between decks lest he should be wanted, and the next morning he reported a great improvement in his four patients, whom food, wine, and sleep were restoring so fast that he hoped by evening, perhaps, to learn their names, whence they came, and all about them.

Hawkshaw started on hearing this. That all the four had been found dead in their hammocks would have been to him the more welcome tidings.

"Aye, doctor, be sure about their names, as we must have them inserted in the log," said Captain Phillips. "Miss Basset, may we trouble you to pour out some tea for the poor fellows?"

Younger than his companions, Morley was the first to recover complete consciousness for a time on this morning. Naturally strong, lithe, and active, he had been wont, when ashore, to ride, shoot and fish, to be a first-rate bowler at cricket, a good hand with foils, gloves, single-stick, and to indulge in all hardy sports; hence his vigorous frame was less shaken than those of Bartelot, Morrison, and Noah, who were his seniors in age.

The 'tween decks of the *Hermione* was a clear and airy place. Through a half-open port to leeward he could see the bright green sea running past in the morning sunshine; a pleasant breeze came down the half-grating of the open hatchway, and as the ship was running on a wind, the hammocks hung steadily.

The ship's bell clanged on deck; he heard a hoarse voice calling the watch, and gradually the dream-like events of the past day unfolded themselves with some coherence, and with a sigh of joy, an unuttered prayer of gratitude, he closed his eyes again, with the delicious conviction of being safe and in kind hands.

Ere long, Boy Joe came from the cabin with warm tea and soaked biscuits for them.

How little did Morley know whose hands had poured it into the cups! And now, refreshed, and aware of each other's presence, all swinging side by side in their hammocks, Bartelot and Morrison began to converse with him.

This roused old Noah, who had dozed off to sleep again; so he began to mutter hoarsely in a dream:

"All starboardlines ahoy; come, tumble up the larboard watch."

"What is the matter, Noah?" asked Bartelot.

"It is that 'ere smatchet of a marine drummer," replied Gawthrop, looking up vacantly.

"He is dreaming of the old *Aurora*, of fifty guns," said Morrison, in a weak voice, quite unlike his own. "Hollo, Noah, old fellow; you've not unroved your life-lines yet, eh?"

"No, mate, thank Heaven," he replied, in something of the same childish treble; "nor you. And you shall see the Black Dog of Belhelvie yet, as I hopes one of these blessed days to see Dungeonness Light and the buoy at the Nore."

"Here, shipmate, drink this, and talk after," said Joe, the steward, as he held another cup of warm tea (in which a whipped egg was substituted for milk) to the lips of Noah, who drained it at a draught, and then looked less wild and more awake.

"Go ahead, old boy," said Joe, a curly-headed, good-humoured-looking English lad, as he tucked the blanket about Noah's shoulders; "it is tea for dunnage, and soft biscuits for ballast just now. By-and-by, it will be grog and old horse for cargo, eh?"

"It's the 'tween decks that did it," muttered Noah. "I thought I was aboard the old *Haurora* in the Black Sea, with the boatswain ahead in the dingy, seeing all the yards squared by the lifts and braces."

Bartelot sank into slumber again, but Morley began to be more lively and awake, and proceeded to compare with Morrison the notes and incidents of yesterday, and how they came to be rescued. Their voices sounded strangely to themselves and to each other, as at times they sank into husky whispers.

Morrison had seen much of the world. In the words of his countryman, a poor sailor too (Falconer, the doomed author of the "Shipwreck"), he had been in every climate under the sun,

"Where polar skies congeal the eternal snow,
 Or equinoctial suns for ever glow.
 Smote by the freezing or the scorching blast,
 'A ship-boy on the high and giddy mast,'
 From regions where Peruvian billows roar
 To the bleak coasts of savage Labrador.
 From where Damascus, pride of Asian plains,
 Stoops her proud neck beneath tyrannic chains,
 To where the Isthmus, laved by adverse tides,
 Atlantic and Pacific seas divides.
 But while he measured o'er the painful race,
 In fortune's wild, illimitable chase.
 Adversity, companion of his way,
 Still o'er the victim hung with iron sway."

Morrison was deeply thankful to Providence for his rescue ; and on the first night of their being saved, Morley could remember, through his dreams, hearing the poor fellow praying very devoutly in his hammock, and in his own national dialect, which grew all the broader and more Doric as he communed with God and himself.

On the afternoon of the day, so pregnant with events of importance to him personally, Cramply Hawkshaw felt himself impelled, on various pretences, to keep aloof from those who shared the cabin with him ; for he was in momentary dread that Dr. Heriot, to whom the name of Morley Ashton had been rendered quite familiar by the confidences of Rose Basset, would enter, and startle all by announcing *who* was one of the four men rescued from the wreck.

The better to achieve his dastardly project, he volunteered to attend them on this night between decks ; and his offer, though it excited some surprise, was at once accepted by Dr. Heriot, who gave him several directions as to the small quantities of food and diluted wine they were to receive, if they required nourishment.

So Hawkshaw drank deeply, mixing brandy and sherry, to nerve himself for the dark purpose he had conceived ; and, to conceal his pallor, his restlessness and wretchedness, he secluded himself in his own berth, and strove to sleep ; but there was no sleep for him.

Thoughts maddened him, and he muttered to himself inaudibly, while, with a hot and trembling hand, he wiped the bead-drops from his aching brow.

"Why should I waver or shrink now ?" he asked himself—not aloud, for fear of being overheard ; "what may I not dare, who have dared everything, I who have risked all ? For the past I have no compunction now. Another might have done

all those things as well as I, for I did not create myself, neither did I scheme out my own accursed destiny. Is there a demon within me, or is there one presiding over me—some fiend, some angel of darkness, whom I cannot see, but to whose whispers I am compelled to listen? Why does this wretched boy cross my path again? Why does the sea—why does the grave—give up its dead, as if to haunt, to tempt, to goad me into crime on one hand, if I would not lose name, honour, consideration, respect, and, it may be, Ethel and affluence, on the other? I had thought to be good, and loyal and true for her sake, even though she loves me not; but all in vain. Ethel to marry me? Oh, that would be like a white moss-rose entwined with the deadly hemlock! Had Heaven not impelled or abandoned me, and had Hell not allured and prompted me, perhaps I had not been the creature I find myself to-night. *Caramba!* it is a game of desperation between this Ashton and me. The ball is yet at my foot, and shall I not strike it? Yes, and with a vengeance, too!"

Watch after watch was called; the half-hourly bells of the ship seemed to be rung every five minutes, instead of every thirty.

The night, solemn and starry, approached more swiftly than he could have wished; and yet he longed that the fatal time was past—that the terrible deed he had to do was done.

Thus he lay on his bed, almost perspiring with mental agony and with criminal sophistry, gradually nursing himself into the conviction that the first law of nature—self-protection and self-preservation—rendered that deed imperative, needful, and requisite.

He almost consoled himself by the idea that there was but *half* a life to crush out; for was not Morley nearly half dead already?

Darkness had set in, before he missed daylight, so completely had his mind and thoughts been abstracted and turned inward; thus he received a species of electric shock, when the curtain of his berth was withdrawn by Heriot, who said:

"Now then, Mr. Hawkshaw—come, tumble up, old fellow—eight bells have struck; it is twelve o'clock, and you have not been 'tween decks yet to look after these men."

"Twelve—twelve o'clock is it?" he stammered, with confusion, as he leaped out.

"Yes, to a minute; the ladies and all have supped and turned in. By Jove! you've had a long spell in your berth. Can you make your way forward alone?"

"Oh yes," replied Hawkshaw, who reeled like a tipsy man, for the ship was now running before the wind, so she rolled till her lower studdingsail-booms nearly touched the water.

"You have your revolver, of course?"

"Yes," said Hawkshaw, with chattering teeth.

"Ah! we never know what may happen. By-the-by, I have got the names of those four sea-waifs; but the captain has gone to bed."

"And who are they?" asked Hawkshaw, in a faint voice, and half averting his face.

Heriot opened his note-book, and drawing nearer the cabin lamp, read:

"Thomas Bartelot, late master of the 'Princess,' of London, a 300-ton ship, from Rio last; William Morrison (countryman of mine) first mate of the same; Noah Gawthrop, a seaman——"

"And the fourth?" asked Hawkshaw, in agony, as Heriot paused.

"A young cabin passenger. I did not get his name, as the poor fellow was sound asleep. They are the sole survivors of the ship. Good-night; we have a spanking breeze, and carry topmast stun'sails. Take my poncho wrapper in addition to your railway rug."

"Why?"

"You'll find it cold enough, watching between decks till sunrise."

"Thanks. Good-night," muttered Hawkshaw, through his teeth, which the poor wretch clenched, to prevent them chattering, so strong were his emotions, as he passed through the door of the after bulk-head, and sought his way, by lantern light, to that place which was to be the scene of his great crime; where, all unconscious of his entrance, Morley and his three companions were swinging in their hammocks.

About four hours after this, a cry—almost a yell—rang through the silent ship, startling the watch on deck and the man at the helm, terrifying Mr. Basset (whose duty it was to watch at the cabin door), bringing Captain Phillips, Mr. Quail, and Dr. Heriot from their berths, in dread that the great crisis of the voyage had come, that the mutineers were in arms; there, too, were Ethel and Rose, in their white-laced night-dresses, the latter with her rich hair all falling over her neck, peeping fearfully from their cabin door, while Nurse Folgate had buried herself under her bed-clothes, for that cry, which "pierced the night's dull ear," was one of mortal agony, and it seemed to come from—*between decks!*

CHAPTER XLII.

A BITER BITTEN.

AFTER leaving the doctor, Hawkshaw, to gather "Dutch courage," took a last mouthful from his brandy flask, and with his slippers on, stole softly and stealthily between decks, so softly that his entrance was unheard by our four friends, whom he found awake, and conversing in low tones; so he seated himself on a chest, with his face completely in shadow, and there he remained listening, and scarcely daring to breathe, for with every roll of the ship the four hammocks swung regularly to and fro, side by side, from port to starboard, and the outer one, in which Morley lay, nearly touched the watcher's head at times.

The air-port was closed now, and the place was lighted by the feeble rays of a ship-lantern, which swung from one of the beams.

In shadow, as we have said, and with a broad tarpaulin hat slouched over his stealthy cat-like eyes, that flashed with malignant light, Hawkshaw sat, or crouched, listening, watching, and waiting for the time that would suit the attempt, eagerly, and all but breathlessly, and the duration seemed interminable, for he had no watch, his gold repeater having been so summarily appropriated by Pedro Barradas.

Morley spoke, and his voice so long heard only in troubled dreams now thrilled through the heart of Hawkshaw, causing sharp pangs of fear and agony; yet Morley's remark was a very simple one; but his voice, like the voices of the others, was husky and weak.

"Oh, the delight of such a cozy bed as this after all we have undergone! Eh, Tom!"

"Yes, Morley, lad," replied Bartelot; "but I should like to know what craft we are on board of, and for where bound. I quite forgot to ask the doctor."

"She's true British at all events, by her build 'tween decks, captain," said Noah Gawthrop. "Thank God for all his mercies, 'specially to a rough old salt like me. He was very good and kind to remember a poor old feller like Noah, that he was, when there are so many younger and better folks to take care of. But I think the doctor mentioned her name, captain."

"Her—who?"

"Why, the ship I mean, sir."

"Yes—I am sure I heard it ; she is the—the——"

(Hawkshaw trembled as Tom paused, for if the name was uttered in Morley's hearing, he—the listener—was lost!)
"Well, it is strange that I don't remember ; but her skipper's name is Phillips, and she hails from London. I made out that somehow."

"I knew one Phillips—Bill Phillips, who was lost in the Straits of Sunda. He was once captain of the brig *Erminia*," said Morrison.

"*Herminya*!" replied Gawthrop, "that is the name 'o the identical craft as we're aboard of ; but she is too large—too broad in the beam for a brig."

"I am weary of speaking, mates, and wish to sleep," said Bartelot, yawning ; "here, under a good deck of British oak we may take a long spell of it without fear ; and yet I can't help thinking of the poor *Princess* and all who perished with her. Their faces are always before me."

"And that was a valuable cargo o' hers, that was," added Noah, "and a power o' trouble we took with the sugar and 'bacca casks at Rio. Oh, lor, to think of all that 'bacca goin' to Davy Jones, and never a leaf of it being smoked or cut in quids ! She was steved to within a fathom of her beams, she was ; and then we had Californy hides for dunnage to the hatches—aye, aye, all gone, and I'll never have another watch-mate like old Ben Plank again !"

"Poor Ben !" said Morrison ; "he'll never more cheer the lads in the forecabin or on the watch of a clear night with the 'Bay of Biscay' or 'Tom Bowling,' or lead the chant of 'Time for us go,' when shipping the capstan bars. A better crew than ours never hove up anchor !"

With a purpose so cruel and deadly in his mind, it may be imagined with what exasperation and impatience Hawkshaw listened to a conversation so trivial, and maintained so drowsily at intervals. He began to hope they were dropping asleep when old Gawthrop spoke again.

"Oh, warn't that warm tea delicious this morning, captain ! I doesn't think as I'll ever take kindly to grog again, but become a regular quaker and teetotaller."

"Not even thumb-grog, Noah, eh—on a wet night, when a shout comes down the forecabin of 'All hands reef top-sails !'" said Bartelot laughing.

"I am almost afraid to sleep," said Morrison, "for dreams of the wreck always come with it, and again I seem to find myself up to my neck in cold salt water. I had often in memory while we were drifting about a story my mother, poor

woman ! used to tell me when I was a laddie at home and played truant frae the school, and when she wished to frighten me into good behaviour ; so between sleeping and waking I used to think sometimes I was one of the doomed men she used to speak of."

"Doomed, mate ; how ?" asked Morley, raising his voice ; "how were they so ?"

"It was the belief of some of the seafaring folk who dwell in the north of Scotland, that those among them who were wicked and sinful in their lives were roused in the night by the knocking of a skeleton hand on their cottage doors. The tap sounded like that of a bony or fleshless hand, though neither the hand or arm of the summoner were visible to mortal eyes. Compelled by a power they dared not and could not resist, those who were so summoned left their snug beds, their wives and bairns (if they had them), and went, awe-stricken and sick with horror, down the beach, where at such a time there was always a heavy sea rolling in white foam, a black scud drifting overhead and a storm coming on. Compelled by the same mysterious power that brought them forth, the shivering wretches had to step on board a long, black, coffin-shaped boat (which was always sunk to its gunnel in water), and then they shoved off to sea. A grinning skull formed the figure-head of this grim barge, and human bones the thole-pins. Then a great dark cloud spread itself like a sail on the laughing wind, and away they were borne careering into the offing of the black and midnight sea, from whence there was no return, for there they had to cruise for ever, like Vanderdecken at the Cape, until the final day of Doom ! Many a time such boats have been seen driving past the lighthouse on Buchanness and the deep caverns of that tremendous shore, where the sea bellows for ever and ever—sailing on and on towards the north, the shrieks of the despairing mingling with the wind on a cold winter night, when the sleet and rain were sowing all the German sea."

"Such a diabolical story !" exclaimed Morley.

"Well, that *is* a lively legend of the north of Scotland," added Bartelot ; "but now silence, mates, and let us to sleep, if we can."

Before this end, so desirable for the purpose of Hawkshaw, was attained, he heard the middle-watch called, and the port-tacks were brought more on board, which showed that the wind was veering upon the quarter ; then all became still, and he heard only the ceaseless creaking of the timbers, the sound of the sea rushing past, the sway to and fro of the

sleepers' hammocks, and his own half-suppressed breathing.

The idea of cutting the head-clew of Morley's hammock, and letting him fall head-foremost on the lower deck occurred to Hawkshaw ; and then he preferred the idea of relaxing the clew, so that it might seem to have given way, and the result of such a fall in Morley's weak state would certainly kill him, while all the blame of the event would fall on the carpenter or sailmaker who slung the hammock.

But Hawkshaw's trembling fingers completely failed to undo the knot of the clew—one of those mysterious ones which sailors alone can tie and untie—so he was compelled to relinquish the idea.

He next approached softly to assure himself that the four men were asleep. He opened the lantern and passed the lighted candle twice across their faces, which were still wan, pale, and weird in aspect after all they had so recently undergone.

He looked on Morley Ashton last, for it required some courage to do so steadily, while memories of the past and anticipations of the future were conflicting in his heart.

Morning was at hand now, the first sleep of the night was past, and the four were again in dreamland—chiefly, perhaps, our friend Morley—in that state which is between sleep and wakefulness.

Various shades of expression were passing over his handsome, pale, and gentle face. He muttered at times, too, and gave uneasy moans and starts, for thought, life, the soul, were still at work. Then his mouth wore a soft smile as Ethel's image most likely came before him; anon, there was a knitted brow and stern compression of the lips as some fierce emotion followed; and next there came a gaunt aspect of despair, with some memory of the floating wreck, all evincing that while he slept the reflections of life were busy amid that uneasy slumber.

With bent brows, with haggard cheeks, with eyes that glared snakily in fear and hate, Cramply Hawkshaw gazed upon his victim; and as his deadly intent came gushing up in his heart—as his cruelty and wrath were screwed “to the sticking point,” he quietly extinguished the candle without perceiving that two eyes close by were watching him narrowly with wonder and alarm.

There was no light now save that of the stars, which struggled dimly and uncertainly through a couple of yolks in

the deck overhead and through the grating of the open hatchway.

Hawkshaw's heart panted as that of a chased tiger might do, and the old emotion he felt on that terrible night at Acton Chine—a lust of cruelty, of vengeance, and destruction—swelled or glowed within him !

A flame seemed to pass out of his eyes, while a thousand glaring orbs appeared to fill or pierce the obscurity about him ; his breath became short and difficult, a deafness fell upon his ears, or there came around him an awful silence, as if the world itself stood still. Then his hands felt as if endued with a giant's strength as they made a clutch at Morley's mouth and throat, for he had resolved to strangle or suffocate him.

But it was an attempt and no more, for ere he could achieve his detestable purpose he felt his hands seized, and one was grasped as if by the teeth of some wild animal.

The bite, with the terror and confusion it occasioned, so bewildered him that the wild cry of agony which roused all on board the ship escaped his lips; he dealt a heavy blow in the dark at some one or something, he knew not what, and breaking from the strange assailant, fled, baffled, in consternation, to the after-cabin.

CHAPTER XLIII.

DREAD.

“WHAT the devil is the matter?” asked Captain Phillips, as he hastily donned his pea-jacket, and addressed Hawkshaw, who was seated on the cabin locker, panting with excitement.

“Did you utter that dismal howl, Captain Hawkshaw?” added Dr. Heriot, impatiently; “speak, sir, have you lost your voice?”

“Very nearly, and my senses too,” groaned the other, whose cup of shame and misery was well-nigh full now.

“What has happened?”

“Look at my hand!” said Hawkshaw, striving to gain time for thought—to rally his scattered wits for the coming *dénouement*—for an explanation, or a bold defiance.

“Well, what has happened?”

“It is almost bleeding—bitten.”

"By what--by whom?" asked everyone at once.

"A madman."

"Mad!" was exclaimed in wild tones by all.

"Yes," said Hawkshaw, through his clenched teeth, and with a glare in his eye that seemed somewhat akin to insanity; "one of those fellows between-decks—one of those wretches we took off the raft (a curse upon them all!) has bitten me."

"But which of them?" asked Heriot, who had now completely attired himself.

"Oh, I don't know which, and I care not which," replied the wretched Hawkshaw, as he rubbed and blew his breath upon his aching digits.

"And he actually bit you?"

"Yes; have I not already said so?"

"What were you doing?"

"Doing—adjusting the clothes upon him," replied Hawkshaw, after a pause; "and look you, he has almost bitten my hand to the bone."

As he spoke he held up his right hand to the cabin lamp, and there certainly were the marks of a row of teeth distinctly visible, for Noah Gawthrop had been determined to give Morley's nocturnal assailant a stamp by which he would know him again.

"For all that I know, he might have half strangled one of his companions, in addition to this wild assault upon me," added the Texan captain, as a sudden thought occurred to him, for in his confusion he did not know how far he had assaulted Morley.

Heriot, a very sharp-witted and intelligent fellow, who, at his native university, had met men from all parts of the world, and had thus gained a considerable insight of human character, had been scrutinising Hawkshaw keenly, and something in his manner, or in the expression of his face, seemed to excite some vague suspicion—Heriot knew not exactly of what—in his mind.

"To me this appears like an impossibility," he began; "excuse me saying so, but what motive——"

"I know nothing of motives, Dr. Leslie Heriot," interrupted Hawkshaw, becoming furious and desperate; "but this I know, that I may be tempted to use my revolver with a vengeance, if I am molested again by any one on board this ship; be assured of that."

At this sudden outburst, Heriot gave a smile of well-bred surprise, and glanced at the captain, who said:

"This is a most extraordinary and unaccountable affair, and must be instantly inquired into. I am sure that the poor fellows looked quiet enough when I saw them last. Steward—Joe, a lantern—quick! Come, doctor, Mr. Basset—we'll see to this."

"Oh, Leslie," cried Rose, "take care, take care!"

"Oh, papa—dear papa, you, at least, must not go," added Ethel, who had now put on her morning wrapper, or dressing-gown, and appeared at the door of her little cabin.

"Pooh, pooh, Miss Basset; there is not the slightest cause for fear, my dear girl," said the captain, laughing, as Joe lit a ship-lantern.

"But the poor man's sufferings may have made him vicious—wild."

"I'll take care of your papa, ladies; and bite the fellow's head off, mayhap, if he bites him. Come, Captain Hawkshaw, and show us which of the four is the culprit, and then, if need be, we shall get the bilboes ready."*

"No, no, I cannot," replied Hawkshaw, with a sullen and hang-dog expression in his now white and livid face.

"What—you won't go?"

"No."

The captain looked at him with a smile of contempt.

"Lead the way, captain," said Mr. Scriven Basset, impatiently; for his ideas of legal prerogative and position were gradually becoming stronger as he drew near the scene of his future judgeship—the sunny Isle of France. "I am anxious to see the end of this singular affair."

"Oh, most accursed fate!" murmured Hawkshaw, as he sank upon the stern locker. "All is over with me now!" he added, as Mr. Basset, the captain, Heriot, and others quitted the cabin, to go forward between decks, and then every minute that elapsed seemed at least an hour.

The cabin appeared to whirl round him like a great revolving cylinder; there was a confused hum of voices, that seemed to mingle with the rush of many waters, in his ear.

Again his former thoughts of suicide occurred to him; but his soul shrank within him at the idea of self-destruction. A loaded revolver was close by; he glanced at it with haggard and wistful eyes. One bullet would enable him to escape the coming shame, and by so doing he would gain a triumph—a ghastly victory over them all.

But then he thought of a suicide's grave in the midnight

* Iron shackles used on board ship to secure the feet of prisoners.

sea ; shot off a grating to leeward, without even a prayer, and shudderingly he withdrew his hand, and closing his eyes, muttered, with quivering lips—

“ No, no—I cannot—I cannot.”

At this moment a soft little hand was laid gently upon his, and looking up he beheld Ethel Basset.

Ignorant of all this man's secret life ; of his crimes committed in wild and lawless lands ; the wrong and cruelty of which he had been guilty to herself and to Morley—she surveyed him with something of pity, and he gazed at her bewildered, and in silence, thinking that she never looked so lovely as at this terrible moment of his humiliation and suspense.

She wore a loose and ample morning wrapper, of white stuff, spotted with red ; it was profusely frilled, and fitted closely round her delicate throat, and her tapered white arms came softly out from its wide falling sleeves. A white tasselled cord confined it at the waist, and she had no ornament about her, save Morley Ashton's ring.

Turned hastily off her face, and behind her white and handsome ears, her dark, glossy, and glorious hair fell in a long mass down her back, and she was knotting it up with her right hand (thus showing to perfection a smooth white arm and dimpled elbow), while her left, so soft and small, rested on the hand of Hawkshaw—the hand that only five minutes before had aimed a death-clutch at the throat of Morley Ashton.

She gazed kindly and inquiringly into his pale and agitated face, for his present wretched and guilty aspect astonished and perplexed her.

Her colour, always so delicate, was somewhat heightened beyond its usual rose-leaf tint, by the late excitement, and, as we have said, Hawkshaw, with all his selfishness, with all his guilt and bloodthirstiness, thought he never beheld her looking so lovely and so pure as at this, to him, most terrible time.

She was about to speak, when several footsteps were heard coming towards the great cabin, on which she retired hastily to her own, and shut the door.

“ Oh, my God ! they are coming to denounce me ! Peril—disgrace—ruin, and no escape but death !” groaned Hawkshaw, covering his eyes with one hand, while the other fell, by chance—or was it fatality !—on the cold butt of the loaded revolver.

CHAPTER XLIV.

UNMASKED.

THE time spent by the captain and his companions in the place where the four castaways were located must have appeared interminable to the wretched Hawkshaw, as they remained there fully an hour, for much had to be inquired into, and much more related and explained.

Resolved to question, cross-question, sift, and refine, and all unconscious of the surprise that was awaiting him, Mr. Basset, with tolerable lawyer-like activity and importance, fussily followed jolly Captain Phillips, who had one hand stuffed into that pocket of his pea-jacket which held his revolver, and in the other hand he swung a ship's lantern.

To Mr. Basset's unpractised eye, the 'tween decks seemed rather a dreary den, to say the best of it. It was lower in height, or, to write more correctly, between beams, than the ship's cabin, and its furniture was exceedingly simple, consisting only of a small breaker or gang-cask, and wooden drinking tot, set upon a sea-chest which was securely lashed to the bulkhead, while a railway-rug and poncho wrapper lay thereby.

Then his eye caught four queer-looking long bags, that swung by clews and cleats from the beams longitudinally, and out of each of the aforesaid bags a human face was peering, with eyes expressive of inquiry and interest; but their features could not be discerned, for all was darkness, or nearly so, except where the light of the lantern fell.

"Hallo, my friends," said Captain Phillips, as he held his lantern up, and took a rapid survey of them all, "so you are awake, I see. What the deuce has been doing here, that we are all turned up in the night, or rather in the middle of the morning watch, in this way, eh?"

"I don't understand what it is all about, sir," replied Tom Bartelot; "but a few minutes ago, in my sleep, I heard a terrible cry."

"Who was it that bit the gentleman?" asked Phillips, angrily.

"I did, your honour," replied Noah Gawthrop, looking over the edge of his hammock, and twitching his grizzled forelock.

"You—and you acknowledge it!" said the captain, turning towards him with angry surprise.

"Yes; and I hope as I have left the marks o' my blessed grinders in him, that's all."

"The fellow is mad," said Mr. Basset in an undertone.

"Do you think so?"

"Who else would talk thus?"

"Likely enough, sir," whispered Joe, the steward; "for I heard that old one this morning saying that he was tormented by a marine drummer, and shouting for all hands to reef top-sails. He seemed to think himself on board a man-o'-war."

"A little crazed, perhaps, by recent suffering," suggested Mr. Basset. "A short sleep may soothe him; but a bite is a serious offence—a very serious offence."

"I ain't no more mad than your honour," said Noah, who had overheard their whispers, and looked up angrily; then he added, in a different tone, "But—is that you, Captain Phillips—lor' bless you, don't you mind o' me?"

"No, I do not," replied the captain, curtly.

"Not remember old Noah Gawthrop, as sailed for ten year and more with your brother, Captain Bill, and was wrecked with him in the Straits of Sunda?"

"Noah it is, by Jupiter!" exclaimed Phillips, shaking the old seaman's hand with genuine warmth. "This is indeed strange; 'tis long since we last met, Noah."

"Five years ago, if it is a day, since I came home from the West Ingees, and ran up the Mersey in a old sweating sugar-ship—her berths aft and bunks for'ard a swarming with bugs and cockroaches, a crew of Jamaiky darkies, and her lower rigging all alive with poll-parrots. I see you minds o' me, Captain Phillips—lor' bless me, in course you does, and know that I am no more mad than yourself, or my own good captain here, Mr. Thomas Bartelot, of the *Princess* as was, poor old craft."

"Oh, glad to see you, captain," said Phillips, shaking hands with Tom on this blunt introduction; "and glad too, that we came so opportunely to save you."

"Yes," resumed Noah, "I am the man as saved your nevy, Master Bill, when all hands went down in the Straits of Sunda, and I brought the child home with me, and gave him to yourself, as your honour very well knows. I was father and mother, dry nurse and wet nurse, and everything to that 'ere boy, I was; and many a time I rope's-ended him, too, for putting plugs o' powder in my 'baccy pipe, or japaning the starn o' my trowsers with new pitch. So you knows me well enough."

"Of course I do, Noah, my brave old salt."

"Of course you does. Ah, sir, your brother, Captain Bill, would never have been lost, but in passing the Straits during a south-east monsoon, he hugged the coast of Java, with his port tacks aboard, and so we went bump ashore on a blessed coral reef, where the sea made clean breaches over us. I made a grab at Master Bill, who was hauling his pet tom-cat by the tail out o' the wash to leeward, and then we all crouched under the weather-bulwarks, ready to cut away the masts, if necessary. But the sea saved us the trouble; for there came a regular snorer, that carried away the topmasts at the caps, breaking them sharp off like 'baccy pipes, the midship-house, boats, and everything went to leeward, while the ship parted, breaking her back fairly on the reef. I found myself in the dark, swimming away for the bare life, among sharks and long seaweed, with little Bill riding on my back like Sinbad's Old Man o' the Sea, and, top of all, the tom-cat, holding on to Bill with all his claws out. 'Hold on, you young warmint,' says I; and so he did, until we got ashore, and next day we were sent off by the Dutch in a queer jigamaree, with a lantern sail for'ard, and a dandy in her stern, to a British man-o'-war, that was bearing through the straits on a taut bowline, before the same monsoon that finished us off on the coral reef."

"But why did you bite the man?" asked Captain Phillips, who had listened with some impatience, returning to the matter in hand.

"Because he is a pirate, if ever one broke biscuit!"

"Take care, Noah; he is one of our cabin passengers."

"I was a watching him, your honour, and I had queer suspicions that he meant foul play to one of us at least, and so I pretended to snooze, keeping watch with one eye open, though he did pass the light twice athwart my face. I saw him, your honour, though he doused the glim, and I could make out that he was going to strangle—to garotte, in true Californy style—my shipmate here, young Master Morley Ashton, who was asleep——"

"Mr. Morley Ashton!" exclaimed Mr. Basset, in an excited voice, as he hurried round to the other side of the hammock; "I should like to see the gentleman who is named so."

"Surely I should know that voice!" cried Morley, springing up in his hammock, and almost falling back within it, overwhelmed by astonishment on finding himself face to face with Mr. Basset—with the father of Ethel!

"What is this?—who is this? *You*, Morley Ashton, on board the *Hermione*?" exclaimed Mr. Basset, in a gust of

genuine bewilderment, equalled only by that of Morley, who trembled with anticipation and astonishment, and who felt at his heart a sudden and clamorous joy. "You one of the four men taken from that melancholy wreck! How came it to be? Explain—tell me. Good heavens! how? Oh, my poor boy, Morley, we have long numbered you with the dead, and have mourned for you as such—none more, believe me, than my dearest girl."

"Where am I, sir?—what ship is this?" stammered Morley, as a new light began to break in upon him, while grasping Mr. Basset's hand, with one arm thrown caressingly round his neck. "Am I on board the *Hermione*? Has she picked us up—saved us from death?"

"Yes, sir; this is the *Hermione*, of London," said Captain Phillips, "too long delayed by contrary winds, and the loss of a mast near the Canaries."

"Oh, Morley Ashton," began Mr. Basset, "if you did but know——"

"Ashton?—Ashton?" interrupted the captain; "are you the gentleman who was to have sailed with us—who telegraphed for a cabin berth, and was not forthcoming when we dropped down the river?"

"I am the same, sir."

"What came of you? How did you disappear?"

"I was a victim to the foulest treachery and cowardice!"

"At the hands of whom?" asked Mr. Basset.

"Cramply Hawkshaw."

"What! he whom Gawthrop bit in the dark?"

"Bit, that I might know him again, your honour, for I warn't strong enough to grapple with him."

"And who, he says, attempted to strangle you in your sleep?" asked Dr. Heriot, coming forward.

"Hawkshaw here! on board with you—with *her*!" said Morley, in a faint voice, as certain undefinable but terrible suspicions arose in his mind.

"Yes; he is with us, a cabin passenger," replied Mr. Basset.

"Here! here! on board the *Hermione*?" continued Morley, almost vacantly, for his brain spun round.

"Yes, sir, in your place," said the captain.

"Great Heavens!"

"Your passage was taken out, your berth ready, the money paid; but you had slipped from your moorings somehow, so he went in your place. There is nothing very wonderful in that, is there?"

"He went with Ethel?" said Morley, in a tremulous and imploring voice to Mr. Basset.

"He came with *me*, as the son of my old friend, Tom Hawkshaw, of Lincoln's Inn, to push his fortune in the Mauritius," said Mr. Basset, hastily.

"And Ethel—Ethel?" continued Morley, in a broken voice, while his eyes filled with tears.

"Is well, though she has mourned for you deeply," replied Mr. Basset. "But pray be calm, my poor boy. How terribly agitated you are! Do not doubt her, or misunderstand me."

"And I shall see her—see her again?"

"Very soon—in ten minutes, perhaps."

"Oh, this is indeed happiness," sighed Morley, sinking back in his hammock. "Heaven is kind—most singularly merciful to me. But Hawkshaw—that wretch!" he added, starting up with new energy. "Oh, Ethel must shun, avoid and loathe him, for she knows not that he is an assassin!"

"How an assassin?"

"Or one who would be such."

"A regular-built pirate, and no mistake—a rascally Californy piccaroon!" added Noah, with sundry adjectives, which we feel the propriety of omitting.

"Aye, Mr. Basset, as Douglas Jerrold says, 'he is a scoundrel, who would whet a knife on his father's tombstone to kill his mother.' Oh, you know him not as I too surely, too truly, and too well know him, and all of which he is capable."

"These are severe and sweeping assertions. Explain this enigma—this most unaccountable affair."

"You remember, Mr. Basset, the night of my sudden disappearance from Laurel Lodge?"

"I shall never forget it. You had gone to Acton station, concerning a telegram from London."

"Concerning a berth in this very ship!"

"Yes."

"Returning alone, I met Cramply Hawkshaw, who entered into conversation with me, offered me a cigar, gradually lured me to the summit of the rocks above the Chine. There we sat listening to the village chimes in the old church tower, chatting, smoking, and enjoying the pleasant breeze from the Bristol Channel, till he, inspired by rivalry, jealousy, and hate, or by some fiendish combination of them all, at a moment when I was completely off my guard, by one furious blow struck me over the cliff into the Chine!"

"The Chine—oh, my God!" said Mr. Basset, in a voice that sank low with horror. "We came to look for you, Cramply and I, for he said that he had seen you walking there, and certainly we found marks of a struggle—the gravel dislodged, and the turf torn. You fell into the sea of course, but from that height! How—by what miracle did you escape?"

"A miracle, a narrow chance indeed! A turf-covered ledge received me, and there for many, many hours, more than a night and a day, I remained sleepless, and scarcely daring to move, chilled less perhaps by the cold sea-breeze than by the horror of drowning if I rolled off the narrow shelf, of dying slowly by starvation and falling a prey to the sea-birds at last, till I was saved by my friend Captain Bartelot, whose vessel passed below me."

Excited by the memory of all he had undergone, Morley's voice faltered and grew weak as he spoke.

"Yes, sir," said Bartelot, striking in, "we chanced to see a human figure perched up among the gulls and cormorants, so we made a longer tack close in shore, and sent off a boat's crew, who climbed to the top of the rocks and hove him the end of a line. He was then towed up, and being quite insensible, Morrison, my mate, brought him on board. So, being outward bound—a storm having been signalled by Admiral Fitzroy, and beginning to break white in the offing, we had no time for backing and filling, or chopping about the rocky shore at Acton—I stood right down the Channel, intending to put him aboard the first suitable ship. We never overhauled any but foreigners, so we took him with us to Rio. He has often been well-nigh out of his mind sometimes, sir, about—I may be pardoned mentioning her name—Miss Basset; but he was in safe hands with me, sir, his old schoolfellow, Tom Bartelot."

"A strange and terrible story!" exclaimed Dr. Heriot.

"Poor Ethel, Morley," said Mr. Basset; "oh, what she has endured, and in silence too!"

"I can know that well, by what I, too, endured. Dear, dear Ethel; and I shall see her——"

"So soon as she can be wisely informed of the great surprise, of the great joy, that await her. But that fellow, Hawkshaw—the fact of how I have been duped, deluded, and disgraced by the pretended friendship of such a man, falls like a thunderbolt upon me!" exclaimed good, easy Mr. Scriven Basset, with more energy than he was wont to exhibit; "and to think of my poor, sweet, and virtuous girls

being contaminated by the society of such a man, and my secluded home being polluted by his presence, though sheltered there under the name of his good and worthy father! Damme! it's enough to make one suspicious of all mankind!"

Mr. Basset thrust one hand into his breast and the other under the tails of his coat, and trod to and fro the whole length of the 'tween-decks, about twelve feet or so, swelling and reddening with just ire and indignation.

Bartelot, Morrison, and Gawthrop added many details corroborating the remarkable escape of Morley from Acton Chine, and descriptive of his mental sufferings during the voyage to Rio de Janeiro; and by the time this interview, so full of stirring interest to all concerned in it, was over, and the captain and his companions had quitted the 'tween-decks, a new day had dawned, the sun was rising brightly from the sea, and throwing the shadow of the lofty *Hermione* far astern upon the gleaming waters to the westward.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE EXPULSION.

HAWKSHAW'S hand, as we have stated, fell unconsciously on the loaded revolver which lay by his side, but was instantly withdrawn.

He had not the courage to die by his own hand, in the fashion to which the old Romans were so partial in all their griefs and difficulties. He looked up with a half-haggard and half-bullying or defiant expression as Captain Phillips, Mr. Quail, the doctor, and Mr. Basset entered the cabin.

The latter gave him a long, steady, and withering glance, and after knocking at the door of Ethel's little cabin or state-room, entered it hastily. Then the varying exclamations of astonishment and joy which were heard within it sounded as additional knells of disgrace—they might be those of death to Cramply Hawkshaw; and now, after surveying him long and sternly, Captain Phillips addressed him with great deliberation.

Hawkshaw found himself regarded with horror and aversion, but no ashes of fire were heaped upon his miserable head, for the good, jolly captain was the only person who spoke.

"Sir, give me up that revolver."

Hawkshaw seemed to be stunned, and did not reply.

"The revolver, sir; do you hear me?"

"Why?"

"Never mind why or wherefore—they matter little now."

"I thought that we were all armed for a particular purpose."

Captain Phillips smiled bitterly.

"Yes," said he; "but you can no longer be trusted with arms on board my ship."

"Indeed!" said Hawkshaw, who knew not very well whether to cringe or bully, and pondered in his desperation.

"Yes; so surrender your arms. I'm an easy-going fellow, but one who won't be trifled with, for all that. Your revolver!"

Hawkshaw reluctantly handed Captain Phillips the loaded weapon.

"Thank you. Now, sir, I must inform you that we have had a long interview with the men in the 'tween-decks—those whom you so kindly undertook to watch, though such a duty was scarcely necessary—and after the revelations they have made, but chiefly after the account given of you by Mr. Morley Ashton—you wince at the name, I see—you can no longer remain in the cabin of the *Hermione*."

"Revelations! Did I not say that one—one at least—of these men was mad?"

"You shall not be sent forward," continued the captain, "among my crew, however congenial some of their spirits may be."

"What then?" asked Hawkshaw, with undisguised alarm.

"You shall be secluded between decks till the end of the voyage, or be sent on shore at the first land we make, in the hope that we may never see you more."

"At the Cape of Good Hope?" asked Hawkshaw eagerly.

"I do not mean to touch at the Cape now, as we are so far to the southward of it," replied the captain, little foreseeing that this information was to have a fatal influence over all on board.

"Sir," replied Hawkshaw, gathering courage for a moment, "may I remind you that my passage to the Isle of France——"

"Is paid for, you would say?"

"Yes—*carambi!*"

"By Mr. Ashton's money. Ha! ha! I have known of a man being marooned on a rock in the Gulf of Florida—aye,

or sent adrift on a hencoop, or in a punt, with three biscuits and a bottle of water, in the middle of the South Pacific—a poor devil who was far less criminal than you. I would to Heaven we had never seen you. No ship with such a thorough-bred rascal on board could hope for a prosperous voyage; and,” continued the captain angrily, as his professional superstitions came to memory, “the fact of having you with us sufficiently accounts for the loss of our foremast after passing the Madeira Isles; for the mysterious loss of poor Manfredi, and the head winds we have uniformly encountered. Why, damme! we might as well have had a parson, or an undocked Tom cat aboard. Seclusion from among us is a punishment slight indeed for the crimes of which you have been guilty, but chiefly for your double and dastardly attempts upon the life of that young gentleman. You understand me, sir?”

“I understand only, Captain Phillips, that your mind has been poisoned by a parcel of infamous falsehoods, which, on the first shore we make, I shall ram down the throat of him who uttered them with a pistol bullet!”

“I hope the person referred to will not be such a confounded donkey as to exchange shots with a convicted assassin,” replied Phillips.

“Assassin! I—I—I——”

Choking with sudden and uncontrollable passion, Hawkshaw sprang up from the locker, his bloodshot eyes flashing with fire, his face pale and haggard, the veins of his temples swollen like whipcord, and his heart stung with the idea that Ethel in her little cabin could hear all that passed. His voice, husky and inarticulate, failed him, but his bearing was so threatening that Captain Phillips cocked the revolver pistol, and said sternly:

“If you attempt to strike me, I will shoot you down like a gull. Quit the cabin this instant, and if you would keep your heels out of the bilboes, never let me find you aft the break of the quarter-deck.”

Hawkshaw's hands were opened and clenched convulsively, as if his fingers twitched for an object to grapple with, and on which to vent his pent-up rage and shame that consumed him; yet he found that he had no resource but to submit and retire, so he slowly left the cabin, but with an air of defiance which so ill became him, and so ill befitted his present predicament, that Phillips, the mate, and doctor, knew not whether to pity or laugh at him.

But the whole episode was a painful one, as they could not

forget, at this climax of his humiliation, that this man, so summarily disgraced and cast forth from among them as an unclean thing, had been for so many months their companion and associate, their friend, and, to all appearance, their equal.

He repaired to the quarter-deck, and the cool breeze that swept over the morning sea gratefully fanned his flushed face and throbbing brow. For a time he was blind with rage, and trod mechanically to and fro over the very cabin wherein Ethel and Rose (now filled with tumultuous joy by the strange tidings their father had brought them), were making a hurried toilette ; till the appearance of Mr. Quail, who came to relieve the deck, to call the watch, to change the helmsman, and have the log hove, recalled the stern order of Captain Phillips, and, descending the break of the quarter-deck, he went sullenly forward—a proscribed man.

As he did so a mocking laugh met his ear.

It came from Pedro Barradas—who had just relieved the wheel, and who, being ignorant of the events that had transpired in the cabin, naturally supposed that Hawkshaw had, as usual, quitted the quarter-deck to avoid him.

For a moment this laugh stung him deeply ; but many emotions were conflicting in his breast on this miserable morning, so that he scarcely felt anger at Barradas.

He had passed a sleepless night ; but no sensation of weariness felt he, as he clambered into the fore-rigging, and sat there to consider his position—to watch the inmates of the cabin, and to avoid the crew, until he could conceal himself somewhere for the night.

Oh, how he longed for its friendly shadow and concealment—longed for it, while the beams of the morning sun gilded all the sea, and lit up the full swelling sails of the *Hermione*.

Feverish, and madly excited by the many emotions which had convulsed him since the moment in which he recognised the sleeping Morley Ashton, and more especially by the terrible and wicked thoughts of the past night, a longing for vengeance, or victory, rather—victory at any risk or price—filled his heart, till he nearly became mad, when thoughts of his rival's safety, restoration, and triumph were contrasted with his own exposure, expulsion, and disgrace.

The crew, among whom he dared not venture, would soon learn the whole story, and, knowing alike their reckless character and their nefarious projects, he already felt, by anticipation, the sharp stings of their fierce and brutal mockery,

and the coming vengeance of those he had contemptuously ignored—the Barradas.

“Why did I not put a bullet through my head before old Phillips took away my pistol?” thought he. “Had I done so, by this time, perhaps, I would have been peacefully at rest below the surface of that blue and shining sea, instead of being perched up here, a moody wretch—a miserable and disappointed outcast.”

Slowly, slowly the sunny morning wore on.

He heard Joe the steward’s bell—once a welcome sound—rung for breakfast. The smoking ham and eggs, broiled chicken, tea and coffee, were borne from the steaming galley, aft to the cabin; he knew that the whole party, with their familiar faces, would be assembled at table as usual; and *others*, too, he shrewdly anticipated, would be there. Nor was he mistaken; for all the four castaways were so much better this morning, notwithstanding the recent disturbance, that they had quitted their hammocks, with the intention of coming on deck.

Perhaps they had already begun to feel that necessity which so soon impresses the sick or ailing on board of ship—the expediency of getting well as soon as possible (especially in such a ship as the *Hermione*); for, after a time, there is but little sympathy to spare for useless hands, either fore or aft; “an overstrained sense of *manliness* being the characteristic of seafaring men, or rather of life on board ship.”

Apart from these considerations, and being bodily better, the knowledge that Ethel Basset was only separated from him by a few planks, worked a miracle upon Morley Ashton.

Their sodden and surf-beaten rags had all been thrown overboard, so Morley was attired from the wardrobe of Dr. Heriot; the others were supplied by the captain and Mr. Basset; and the appearance of Noah Gawthrop, when rigged out in a black swallow-tailed dress coat, belonging to the latter gentleman, with gilt buttons, and lappels of watered silk, an old crimson velvet waistcoat, an ample pair of dark tartan trowsers, and a sou’-wester of Mr. Quail’s, was unique, and excited considerable speculation when he came on deck.

Forgetting his “landlubber-like toggery,” with sailor-like instinct, Noah cast his eyes aloft, and critically surveyed all the rigging, and a smile, that puckered up the wrinkles of his old face, showed that the result of his scrutiny was satisfactory.

His remarkably ill-favoured visage was in no way improved by a patch of black sticking-plaster, with which Dr.

Heriot had covered a cut on the bridge of his copper-coloured nose, the result of Hawkshaw's random blow in the matutinal row between decks.

Descending the break of the quarter-deck, Noah went forward, to get his breakfast with the crew, concerning whom the officers of the ship deemed it yet unwise to give him any warning.

He had considerably recovered his strength, and was eagerly welcomed by the seamen as he walked forward, and all gathered in a group about him in the break of the deck at the forecastle bunks, clamorous to hear his yarn about the loss of his ship—where she was from, where bound to, what she was loaded with, and so forth—to hear all about himself, and, though recorded last, not the least exciting topic on which they wished enlightenment, was the cry that had come from between decks in the first hour of the morning watch.

Noah, seated on the barrel of the windlass, with a tin mug of scalding hot coffee, together with a slice of salt junk, and Quaco's "plum-duff," after denouncing the tea and arrow-root of Joe the steward, proceeded to give, in his own fashion, a rambling narrative of all the recent events in which he had borne a part.

The words which he uttered did not reach the ear of Hawkshaw, in his lofty perch; but suddenly all eyes were simultaneously cast aloft to where he sat near the sling of the foreyard, and Noah threateningly shook his clenched hand at him, while a roar of mocking laughter from the crew—that bitter laughter which he so long dreaded—filled his heart with rage and spite, that he nearly fell from his seat among his tormentors.

For a time, it seemed as if all these villainous upturned faces—the thick, African nose and sausage-like lips of Quaco, the glittering eyes and olive face of Zuares Barradas, the hideous squat form of Sharkey—a wretch with the life of Manfredi to atone for—Badger, with his sunken orbs and square jaw; Bolter, the unhealthy-looking Canadian, and all the rest—had been turned into mocking fiends, who would yet drive him to more desperate deeds, for he was now expelled, cast forth from among those with whom he had associated, without a prospect of return, or a hope of retrieving himself.

"Is not life altogether a long comedy," says some one, "with Fate for the stage-manager, and Passion, Inclination, Love, Hate, Revenge, Ambition, Avarice, by turns, in the prompter's box?"

Hawkshaw felt bitterly in his soul that his life had been a tragedy, in which the evil passions alone had played their parts by turns, and sometimes all together.

What would the last scene of that tragedy be?

"Hallo, foretop there!" cried Bill Badger, the tall, lantern-jawed, and odious Yankee. "Well, captin, I guess you're chawed up rayther. Thunder and lightning! come, ship with us in the little game we've got in hand. Jine us; you can't do better now; and who knows but you may get your gal with the black shiners, after all?"

"*El cuchillo primero!* (My knife first)" said Zuares Baradas, touching the haft of his Albacete knife with ferocious significance.

Honest Noah opened his eyes very wide at these singular remarks, which were followed by another roar of brutal laughter. On this, Hawkshaw, to get, if possible, beyond the reach of their conversation, trembling in every limb with rage, and with a strange blindness coming over his sight, as the old clamorous ferocity gathered in his soul, while feeling that the mocking words had not been uttered in vain—as they suggested certain ideas of probable vengeance on his exposers—proceeded to climb farther up the rigging, until he perched himself on the fore-crosstrees, his past experience having made him seaman enough to achieve this.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE MEETING.

How shall I describe the almost mute meeting between Ethel Basset and Morley Ashton? or shall I omit it altogether?

Instinctively, and with proper good taste, all in the cabin left them to themselves for a time; and even Rose—the saucy and impulsive Rose—who looked just as Morley had last seen her when playing at croquet in Acton Chase, with her pretty straw hat, her green zouave jacket, and tiny bronzed Balmoral boots, after rushing back to give him one kiss more, tripped upstairs on deck to join the doctor.

Mr. Basset had managed to break the matter—the vast secret—to Ethel skilfully and gently, by saying that the wrecked men could afford some information concerning Morley Ashton; that they knew where he was, that one had seen him lately, that he was alive and well, and so forth.

Thus there was no scene, no screaming, no fainting for joy, and certainly no dying of that pleasant emotion. Such a climax as the latter would have put the narrator of these events very much about indeed, for, our story being a true one, this little romantic portion of it dovetails with the rest—rather flatly, perhaps, because it is *true*.

For a time neither could exactly “realise” (to use a good Americanism) that they were reunited—Ethel, that Morley lived; Morley, that he should so suddenly find himself by the side of her whom he had been pursuing through the deep, reunited, and on board the *Hermione*, of London.

Again and again she fell upon his breast, repeating, in a voice that was almost breathless, but exquisitely touching:

“My darling—oh, my darling! can this be possible? Is this reality?”

Their poor hearts were too full to permit much to be said; nor would it be fair to them, or interesting to others, to rehearse all the little that they did say then. But how much had they to ask, to relate, to explain, and to deplore?

Morley had undergone so much, he had seen so many strange faces, and places too—Rio de Janeiro, with bay, mountains, and isles; Tristan d’Acunha, with its cliffs and mighty cone; Diego Alvarez, with its sea-elephants and fur seals; the Island of the Hermit, with its strange story of old Don Pedro de Barradas. He had encountered, moreover, so many gales of wind, the wreck, with all its contingent woes and horrors, and so forth, that Laurel Lodge and Ethel’s face, figure, and whole image had seemed ten years off—at least, ten years appeared to have elapsed since their sudden separation.

To poor Ethel the intervening blank had seemed greater, for Morley had lived with hope, while she had none; and, to understand and conceive her utter bewilderment, we must bear in mind all she had undergone.

The sudden and unaccountable disappearance of Morley, and the supposed mode of his death (for it was only supposed, after all,) had occasioned a more bitter sorrow, a keener and more protracted agony, than she could have endured by weeping at his death-bed, and afterwards knowing that he was at rest in a grave she could see, where she might plant flowers and drop her tears.

To have seen him borne forth from Laurel Lodge to Acton churchyard, amid all the real and paid-for pageantry of woe, would have been actual contentment, when contrasted with all she had suffered—doubt, uncertainty, despair!

Oh, she felt how deeply she must loathe Hawkshaw as the author of all their woe!

But now Morley was beside her, with her hands in his, looking lovingly into her loving eyes, drinking in her murmured words, sitting close, very close, to her, so this reunion was as stunning and bewildering in its own way as their separation had been.

They were dearer to each other now by a thousand degrees than ever they were before, even after Morley's absence in Africa.

"It is good sometimes to be absent," says a graceful writer, truthfully; "better still to be dead, as regards our own imperfections and our equally imperfect friends. How they rise up and praise us for virtues we never possessed, and benignly pardon us for sins we never committed. How tender over our memories grow those who, living, worried our lives out, and might do so again, if we were alive, to-morrow."

They had none of those upbraiding thoughts to recall. Can it be reality, this happiness? was the uppermost idea in both their minds.

It was indeed Ethel whose head reclined upon his breast. She was changed since last they met at peaceful Laurel Lodge, among its rose-bowers, its giant laurels and stately sycamores; and yet how lovely she was—lovelier even now than then.

Long grieving had imparted a sweet Madonna-like sadness to the soft features; her cheeks were thin, and Morley's affectionate eye could see two *white hairs* amid the deep black braiding of the young girl's head; and he saw, too, that her broad, low brow, had an impress of care and sorrow—sorrow for him, even now, when her dark eyes were flashing through their tears of joy.

It was indeed she, that beloved one, whose name he had so dotingly murmured to himself a thousand times in the lonely watches of the night, when treading the ship's deck under the sparkling stars of the tropics, when the glorious planets of the Southern Cross—fabled by the devout mariners of the old Spanish Argosies to be "a brooch taken from the breast of the blessed *Madre de Dios*"—looked close and nigh, so close as to cast the ship's shadow on the rolling waters.

It was she whom he had imagined in those wild dreams by day, when the dreams of the waking are wilder by far than those of the sleeper.

She was beside him again, and they were hand in hand as of old, eye bent on eye, lip meeting lip. Ethel, his own

Ethel—after all they had undergone—was beside him, so suddenly, so unexpectedly, that it seemed indeed a dream, or like a set scene, the plot or conception of a sensational romance or playwright—a trafficker in plots, contrivances, and *situations*.

It was so, and truth proved stronger than fiction after all !

And so, forgetful of others, forgetful assuredly of breakfast, till Joe in the steerage and Quaco in the galley were in despair about the eggs and coffee, they would have sat till the sun that now shone through amber clouds so merrily ahead to the eastward had beamed his farewell rays in crimson through the stern-windows from the westward, had not Joe's bell, rung vigorously and impatiently for the third time, brought the whole party, including Mr. Foster, who had no sympathy whatever for lovers, and who felt famished, having had charge of the deck since four to eight A.M.—the morning watch—and it was now half-past ten, alike by his appetite and the captain's chronometer.

All oblivious of the unhappy wretch who was "chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancy" aloft in the fore-crosstrees (where the swaying of the mast made the rolling of the ship seem so much greater than below), jovial indeed was the party which assembled at the sound of Joe's bell, and how curly-headed Joe's honest English face shone as he handed round coffee and tea, with whipped eggs for cream, or as he skipped about with hot water, and handed to the ladies preserves in tin cans, midshipmen's nuts and American biscuits in a silver bread-barge, a spotless white towel thrown over the sleeve of his round jacket the while, for Joe was something of a hybrid, half waiter and half seaman.

Under the cheering influence of Ethel's presence, Morley's features soon became less haggard, and the keen, hawk-like expression of his dark eyes—an expression the result of suffering, danger, and of being long menaced by death—rapidly softened and passed away.

But with breakfast untasted, or feigning only to partake thereof, Ethel, pale and feverish, sat like one in a dream.

For this sudden restoration of Morley to life and to *her*, as it would seem, from the bosom of the deep—from the greedy waves of that vast ocean which they had been traversing for more than three months—was more difficult of realisation than the horror of his disappearance and of his supposed dreadful death.

But she, and Rose too, seemed so forgetful of every one present, save Morley, that worthy young Dr. Leslie Heriot,

F.R.C.S.E., actually envied him—envied the earlier intimacy he could claim with these two charming sisters, and felt almost jealous of the deep interest they evinced for our poor waif of the sea.

“And so you are indeed Miss Ethel Basset?” said Tom Bartelot, surveying the lovely girl with honest admiration and kindness when he was introduced to her.

“I am, sir,” replied Ethel, smiling at his manner; “and a very old friend of Mr. Ashton’s.”

“I can scarcely regret the loss of my ship, the poor *Princess*,” said Tom, gallantly, “or my own suffering and misfortune, when I consider that all have been but the means to a happy end.”

“Sir?” said Ethel, blushing a little, and looking down. “You mean——”

“That they have been the means of bringing you and my old chum and schoolfellow, Mr. Ashton, together again,” continued Tom, blundering still more by his straightforward inferences.

“You are very kind, sir, in saying so,” replied Ethel, as her colour came and went.

“That poor lad loves you as his very life,” continued Tom, warming with his subject; “aye, far beyond it, for when compared with you he don’t value it more than a bit of old rope-yarn! Many an hour has he walked the deck by my side, speaking of you and praising you; and even when he didn’t speak, by his silence and his sighs I knew well enough that he was thinking all the deeper.”

“My poor Morley!” said Ethel, who heard all this with joyous tears in her eyes.

As soon as they came on deck Noah Gawthrop presented himself in his peculiar attire, the black dress-coat and crimson vest, and doffing his sou’-wester at the break of the quarter-deck, twitched his grizzled forelock and beckoned Morley.

“Mr. Ashton,” said he, in a stage whisper, “wot’s this I hear for’ard among that rum lot in the fok’stle?”

“Really, Noah, I cannot say. What have you heard?”

“Why, sir, they says as your sweetheart, Miss Basset—she you were always raving about on the wreck—is aboard o’ this here craft.”

“Yes, Noah, she is,” replied Morley, laughing.

“Is that dainty little ’un her?”

“Which?”

“She with the pork-pie hat, red stockings, and red cheeks, the jigamaree jacket, and crinnyline?” said Noah.

"No ; the taller lady."

"Smite my timbers ! A regular built stunner ! Wot a wonderful coinsiddins !—wot a cannondrum ! as the player chaps say when they go bouncing about to the fiddles and blue fire !"

"It is destiny, Noah."

"Jest wot they says too ! Well, I have given over sweet-hearting now ; but I have shared my pay with many o' that sort o' ware in my time. The best of 'em all—here's her photograff done in gunpowder by the cook's mate of the *Haurora*, as we were a working out of the harbour of Odessa. Many a mouthful of salt-water I've swallowed, and many a whistling Dick I've heard since that was done," said Noah, pointing to the tattooing visible on his breast when his check shirt was open. "But won't you introdooce me as an old shipmate ? 'Mornin', marm, 'mornin'," he added, sweeping the deck with his sou'-wester, as Ethel came frankly forward ; "I'm one o' them as took Mr. Ashton off the cliffs, and sailed with him to Rio Janairey, in South 'Meriky, in the old *Princess* as was."

"Indeed—oh, I am most happy to see you, sir," replied Ethel.

"Call me Noah, marm—Noah Gawthrop ; I ain't used to being sir'd," said he, smoothing down his gray hair.

"Well, my good friend Noah," said Ethel, her eyes beaming, as she presented her little white hand to Gawthrop, who looked at his own hard palm, rubbed it well on his trousers as if to clean it, and then shook hers gently and kindly, not crushing it up as the tars do invariably in the play.

"Such a dear old thing it is !" said Rose, laughing, as she observed this interview.

"I've made a man of him for you, Miss Ethel—I knows your name, you see ; one couldn't be long with Mr. Ashton, keeping watch and watch, without finding out that—but I have made a man of him for you, marm. He wasn't worth a tobacco-stopper at first ; but I've taught him to becket a royal and send it down, yard and all, in a stiff topgallant breeze or a regular squall ; to slush a mast from the truck-head downward ; to haul out to leeward when on the yard-arm, and if that ain't summut towards making him a good husband for you, and one as will, through the voyage of life, keep a firm hand on your rudder and trim you nicely by the starn, I don't know wot is."

Noah's praises and rough congratulations were unintelligible to Ethel ; but as they were calculated to excite laughter,

and as some of his adjectives applicable to the "shark up aloft in the fore-crosstrees" were neither elegant nor euphonious, he was speedily sent forward by Tom Bartelot.

Rose perceiving that Ethel was deadly pale, for the events of the morning proved rather too much for her strength, took her below for a little time by Mr. Basset's suggestion. Morley affectionately and tenderly handed her down the companion-stair—not a glance of his the while, not an emotion or movement being unnoticed by Hawkshaw, who, like a hawk, or rather like a tree-tiger robbed of his prey, was still perched alone in the fore-crosstrees.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE CORPSE-LIGHT.

AS Morley turned away from the companion he was confronted by his old friend Morrison, the mate of the defunct *Princess*. The Scotsman's honest face was radiant with pleasure, and grasping Morley's hand, he congratulated him warmly on the sudden change that a few hours had made in all his plans and prospects.

"No use in thinking of Tasmania now, or calculating the chances of finding a ship for the Isle of France, and all that, Mr. Ashton, eh?" said Morrison, laughing.

"Thank Heaven, no," said Morley, as they descended the break of the quarter-deck and went to windward, near the main-rigging; "so great has been the alteration in all our affairs that I can scarcely believe I was the poor doomed wretch of a few hours ago. Another night on that wreck would have seen us all dead men, Morrison."

Then Morley thought how strange it would have been if the ship, with Ethel on board, had passed the wreck on board of which he was lying dead and there was no voice to inform them of his fate and the terrible mystery involving it.

"And you will be getting married now, Mr. Ashton," said Morrison, after a pause.

"Married!" repeated Morley, with astonishment; "where—where—here upon the open sea?"

"No; but when we are all landed at the Mauritius, where I shall have to look out for another ship, and, perhaps, may have to work my way home before the mast, for home to Scotland I must get somehow; and before the mast——"

"You shall never go in that fashion, Morrison, if I can help

it ; but as for my being married to Miss Basset".—Morley felt his cheek flush and his heart flutter at the thought—"that is an event which is somewhat distant yet, and must be so, till fortune—the old story—smiles on me."

"That I am sorry to hear," replied the Scotsman ; "what says poor Robbie Burns, in one of the sweetest of his songs?—

" 'Oh, why should Fate sic pleasure have,
Life's dearest bonds untwining ?
And why sae sweet a flower as love
Depend on fortune's shining ?'

Well, Mr. Ashton, hap what may, though our path in life and our homes will aye be far apart, I'll never forget the days we have spent together ; and miserable enough some of them have been latterly," continued Morrison, who was a warm-hearted and impulsive fellow, and whose keen gray eyes grew moist as he spoke ; "and so, as I said, hap what may, you shall always have the best wishes of poor Bill Morrison, though a sailor has seldom more to give, unless it be a quid from his tobacco-box, or a share of his grog on pay-day."

"Fortune may go and hang herself," said Morley ; "she has never favoured me till now."

"Perhaps she thought such a good-looking fellow might be left to shift for himself," replied Morrison, laughing. "I once heard the song I have just quoted sung by a girl, whose story was a very strange one. She was separated from her lover by adverse circumstances, and though they never met again in life, they repose now in the same grave."

"Another of your melancholy yarns, Bill?"

"Well, it isn't lively. Shall I tell it to you?"

"Yes, please. Miss Basset is still below."

"I had entered on board the *Clyde*, a Greenock ship bound for Tasmania. I was but a third mate then, and that post, you know, is only a trifle better than being before the mast. She had several emigrants, and among them was a man named Udny, with his wife and a daughter whom I heard them call Hester.

"There was with them a good-looking young fellow from the shore, a shepherd apparently, for he wore a checked tweed suit with a Border plaid, and a broad blue bonnet. He was evidently not going the voyage ; but he continued to hover about Hester Udny with a sad and dreary expression of face, and I could see that the girl's eyes were red and sore with weeping.

"She was a bonnie, fair-haired Scotch lassie. That the

pair were lovers we could all see, and we knew that they were about to be separated for ever, perhaps, as her parents, poor and expatriated cotters, were going to find a new home in Tasmania. The lad was poorer still, and had to remain behind in the old country.

“My heart bled for them, and from time to time I could not restrain the inclination to observe them, as they sat, hand in hand, oblivious of the noisy throng about them, and the coarse jests of the cargo-puddlers, dock-porters, and especially of the sailors, each of whom volunteered to replace her sweetheart on the voyage.

“Twilight came on as we began to cast off the warps, and were towed down the river by a tug-steamer, so quickly, that the lights of Greenock soon twinkled out amid the haze and smoke astern.

“The sun had set, but the red flush of the departed day lingered brightly beyond the dark peaks of the Argyleshire mountains that look down on the Gairloch, the Holy Loch, so solemn and still, and many another place that I can see in memory yet, and that I often saw in dreams when we were floating on the wreck.

“The lad was to go back, among a few other shore people, in the tug-steamer. I heard the girl sobbing as if her heart would break when she heard the order given for them to quit the ship, as we were preparing to cast off the towline and loosening the topsails out of the bunt. I was sent forward with a gang to cat and fish the best bower anchor, and hoist it over the bows on board. When again I went aft, sail had been made on the ship; the tug-steamer had disappeared in the obscurity astern, and the sad girl was sitting alone, with her eyes fixed on the lights that glistened in the castle of Dumbarton.

“We had been for some days at sea before the girl came on deck. She looked pale, wan, and thin—worn almost to a shadow with mental suffering and sea-sickness; and the close atmosphere of a crowded steerage was as poison to one accustomed from infancy to the green lanes and wooded hills of Clydesdale. All pitied her forlorn appearance, and even the roughest sailor did not jest with her now.

“One evening she remained longer on deck than usual. I had the wheel; the ship was running before the wind with topgallant-sails, lower and topmast stun’sails set. The air was mild and the stars shone clearly and brightly amid amber to the westward and the blue in the zenith.

“With her head muffled in a plaid, Hester Udny was

seated near me ; but I had my attention mostly fixed upon the binnacle. There was silence fore and aft, and silence on the sea, when I heard the poor lassie singing to herself in a sweet, low voice, that song of Burns', and the notes became full of pathos at the lines :

“ ‘ Oh, why should Fate sic pleasure have,
Life's dearest bonds untwining ?
And why sae sweet a flower as love
Depend on fortune's shining ? ’ ”

“ Suddenly she uttered a cry, and springing to me, grasped my arm. Her plaid or shawl had fallen back, and her fine golden-coloured hair was all in disorder ; her eyes, which were a deep blue, were unnaturally bright and dilated, and their gaze was fixed wildly upon a part of the deck just aft the mainmast.

“ ‘ Sailor—sailor ; oh, man, man, do you see *that* ? ’ she asked, in tones of terror.

“ ‘ What ? ’ said I.

“ ‘ A flame rising up through the deck, and growing higher every moment.’ ”

“ ‘ Flame ! ’ I repeated ; ‘ there is no flame.’ ”

“ ‘ Fire—it is *not* fire ; it is the figure of a man—head, shoulders, arms, and hands—flame, all flame, pale blue, wavering, and indistinct ! ’ ”

“ ‘ Nonsense, lassie, you are demented,’ said I.

“ ‘ And you don't see it, sailor—you don't see it ? ’ she continued, wildly.

“ ‘ No, my poor lassie,’ said I ; ‘ your eyesight must deceive you.’ ”

“ ‘ Oh, heaven ! ’ she shrieked, in a voice that brought all who were below tumbling up the hatches as if the ship were going down. ‘ Can I be going mad ? It is like the figure of my Willie ! ’ ”

“ She fell senseless on the deck, and was carried below.

“ This alleged apparition caused great speculation, and, as we had several emigrants from the Western Highlands on board, no small degree of terror ; so that part of the deck abaft the mainmast was always watched narrowly and suspiciously ; but neither flame nor figure saw we, though Hester afterwards asserted that one of the watch, who heard her cry, and hastened to assist her, passed *through* the figure, which wavered as he did so, but again resumed its luminous form.

“ A fortnight elapsed before she was brought on deck

again; and I must own to being shocked at the change in her appearance. Her keen blue eyes seemed unnaturally large and sunken, with dark rings round them, and her poor, thin, transparent hands trembled as she muffled her plaid or shawl over her head, when the watch on deck hastened to make a comfortable seat of old sails for her under the lee of the bulwark.

“Fearing a repetition of what had occurred before, her father and mother insisted on taking her below when twilight approached; but, urged by some undefinable feeling or emotion, she lingered longer than she should have done.

“We were now in latitudes where the sun sets quickly, the dusk comes on as rapidly, and heavily falls the dew.

“Hester Udny, pale as a spectre, was soon observed to fix her eyes upon that portion of the deck abaft the mainmast where she had seen the apparition, with a wild, but steady and deliberate gaze, as if fascinated; and then, in faint and tremulous accents, she declared that the figure of flame was again visible, pale and luminous, sometimes turning from amber to blue, and becoming hazy; that beyond it, or through it, she could see the line of the ship’s bulwark, and the shrouds of the mainmast, as if it was transparent.

“To undeceive her, the captain passed and repassed the place, going each time, as she said, amid her cries, completely through the figure, unsinged, unhurt, and all unconscious that he was doing so.

“She swooned, and was carried below again.

“What added greatly to the strangeness of this phenomenon was the circumstance that some of the crew, when standing over the spot where the spectre was alleged to appear, were seized with giddiness, strange qualms, and even sickness, alike by day or night, and were ridiculed by those of a less nervous temperament, who never felt any such sensations, as ‘green-horns’ and ‘fanciful lubbers.’

“Hester Udny never came on deck again—alive, at least.

“She remained in bed during the remainder of our voyage, evidently in a rapid decline, and on the day when we made the south-west cape of Van Diemen’s Land—a high, bold, and rocky promontory—she expired

“We were soon within six miles of the land, and her parents begged so hard that they might be permitted to bury the poor girl ashore, that our skipper acceded to their request. Assisted by the sailmaker, they wrapped her up in blankets, and her body was placed on a grating along the thwarts of the long-boat amidships, with a union-jack spread

over it. No other pall had we, nor could we have found a better for a heart so true as that poor lassie once possessed ; and there she lay when we entered the mouth of the Derwent river, and worked against a head wind up D'Entrecasteaux's Channel.

"I see that I am tiring you, Morley, with this long yarn ; but Miss Basset is still below, and the strangest part is yet to come.

"We got aground on the western side of the channel, but ran an anchor out, manned the capstan, and hove the ship off. At half-past nine that night we came to anchor in thirty-fathom water, off Hobart town, fired a gun, and furled our canvas, with the ensign at our gaff-peak half hoisted, to show that death had boarded us before the harpies of the custom-house.

"By daybreak next day I was ordered with a gang to prepare for breaking bulk, and proceeded to unship the main-hatch prior to starting the cargo.

"On removing a bale or two, and a few casks, how great was our horror to find, just abaft the mainmast, and under that portion of the deck where Hester Udny had twice seen the figure of flame—a figure perhaps always there, though invisible to us—the skeleton of a man, standing quite erect against the after bulk-head !

"He was dressed in a grey tweed suit, with a blue bonnet, surmounted by a red tuft, and a checked Border plaid was over his right shoulder. All the flesh had dried upon his bones, so that his clothes hung loosely on him. A few blackened shillings, and a mouldy letter or two, were found in his pockets, so we at once supposed that, being unable to pay his passage, the poor fellow had secreted himself in the hold, little knowing how the cargo would be screwed and stowed up to the beams, and how hermetically the hatches would be closed by battens, tarpaulins, and iron bands ; and thus he had perished miserably, unheard, unseen, and unknown—perished of suffocation, and remained there until he dried into a veritable white mummy.

"Our commiseration was greatly increased when we found that the mouldy green letters were written by Hester Udny, and in the poor stowaway her parents recognised her lover, Willie, the lad whom we had all seen hovering about her on the night we hauled out from Greenock to drop down the Clyde.

"They were buried ashore, these two ill-starred and unfortunate lovers, in the burying-ground of the big brick church

of Hobart Town, and the whole ship's company attended the funeral. Jack's a rough fellow, Mr. Ashton, but I can assure you that, as we lowered their two plain black coffins into their deep grave, side by side, with a few fathoms of line, there was not a dry eye among us.

"And some of the roughest patted the old father on the back, as he stood dreamily at the head of his daughter's grave, in that far foreign land—sae far frae the Hills o' Campsie, and wondering if it could a' be true, and that she was lying *there*, while tears streamed down his cheeks, and his white hair waved i' the wind under his auld blue bonnet."

It was a peculiarity of Morrison's, that whenever he became interested, or perhaps more perfectly natural, he always slid into his old Scottish vernacular.

"This is a sad story, Morrison; but the luminous figure which the girl saw—how the deuce do you account for that? She was out of her mind, of course?"

"Out of her mind! not at all!" responded the philosophical Scot; "she was of a delicate temperament, and in a highly nervous and sensitive state, thus she may or must have seen that which was invisible to us of a rougher texture—the gaseous light proceeding from the fermentation, putrescence, and decay of the body beneath the deck—in short, that which we call in Scotland a corpse-light."*

But now to return to our own story.

A long consultation ensued concerning what was to be done with Cramply Hawkshaw, and the conclusion come to was simply that he should be kept in the seclusion, or "Coventry," enjoined by Captain Phillips, till the vessel reached the Isle of France; and Morley gave a species of parole, that he would studiously avoid, nor seek in any way to punish him for the outrage he had formerly committed, or that which he had latterly attempted.

So the first day of Morley's re-union with his friends passed merrily and happily away.

In honour of the event, Mr. Basset had a case containing some of his favourite Marcobrunner and sparkling hock hoisted out of the store-room, and in the cabin that night the wine went round so freely, that Captain Phillips's merry eyes shone in his head, Tom Barlelot came out in his favourite

* Concerning such appearances, see Baron von Reichenbach's work on the "Dynamics of Magnetism, Electricity," &c., &c., with notes thereto, by Dr. John Ashburner.

drinking song, and poor Mr. Quail, all unused to such beverages, when he went up to relieve the deck, at eight bells, saw two wheels and two steersmen, and the *Hermione* tearing through the sea with six masts, and at least seven-and-twenty crossyards upon her.

As it came on to blow about midnight, a reef was taken in the topsails, and forgetting the evil projects broached by his crew on this occasion, Captain Phillips gave a double allowance of grog to the watch, with pots of hot coffee to those who preferred them—kindness thrown away, as it proved in the sequel.

Now that our hero and heroine are safely re-united on board the very ship in which they were originally to have sailed together, the reader who is versed in novel-lore may suppose that nothing remains but for Mr. Basset to bestow his paternal benediction on them in the true fashion of the “heavy father,” and for Hawkshaw, either at once to be forgiven, on promising to be a good boy in the future, or to receive condign punishment.

But, unfortunately, our story is not fictitious, so it ends not here.

Morley has escaped death, and is again seated by the side of Ethel Basset, gazing into her quiet, deep, and loving eyes as if he could do so for ever, and never, never weary, of course ; but storms as yet unthought of, unheard and unseen, are ahead.

The good ship *Hermione* lies bravely to her course, now east and by north ; but she carries with her the growing elements of discord, crime, and misery.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

OUT OF SCYLLA AND INTO CHARYBDIS.

THE little excitement consequent on discovering the piece of wreck, the rescue of those who were on it, and the speculation caused by the recent uproar in the night, and the exclusion of Hawkshaw from the cabin, soon passed over among the crew, who now began to consider that there were on board four more men to feed, to win over to the project of Pedro Baradas—a process which seemed doubtful—or to be got rid of, if the attempt to win them failed.

The only one with whom they supposed there was a chance

of success was Noah Gawthrop, or "Old Sticking-plaster," as they named him, from the patch on his nose ; and hence Badger and one or two others were deputed to sound him on the subject ; but the chief defect in their plans arose from a doubt of the ship's whereabouts, and whether Captain Phillips would haul up for Table Bay.

Some were disposed to enlist Hawkshaw in their daring scheme, or at least to sound him, too, as a little homicide in no way injured a man in their estimation ; while the misery of Hawkshaw's position on board might have made him ready to embrace any proposition that came short of jumping into the sea.

Neglected, to all appearance forgotten—for who could sympathise with an assassin?—he had passed the whole of the first day without food in the fore-rigging. Towards evening Quaco brought him a pot of hot coffee from the galley, which was a grateful beverage to his parched throat, and in the twilight he came down stiff, sore, and benumbed, and walked about amidships.

There, Joe, the steward, came to say, that when he "wished to go below, his traps and berth were 'tween decks, where he would have full leisure to employ his mind in squaring the circle."

At this jibe he clenched his hands to chastise Joe ; but felt too much crushed to make even the attempt, and turned in silence away.

On the second or third day after his expulsion from the cabin, when retiring to his place between decks—the same quarter in which the four hammocks had been hung—he encountered Miss Basset, and passed her so closely that he felt her skirts brush against him.

Though dark and soft, Ethel's eyes were at times keen and piercing, for they possessed a wonderful power and beauty of expression—a beauty one may meet with perhaps but once in a lifetime. As she passed Hawkshaw, she drew aside her skirt, as if to avoid contact, and hastily cast down her eyes, as if loath to humiliate him, while her breast heaved, and her cheek grew painfully pale ; but in her eyes, as they flashed beneath their downcast lashes, Hawkshaw could see the horror, the loathing, and even terror with which his presence inspired her.

More humbled than ever by this, though he could have expected nothing else, he slunk to his place of penance—his prison he deemed it, as he seldom left it—and casting himself

upon the sea-chest, groaned aloud in rage, in bitterness, and agony of spirit.

His food was brought to him by Quaco, the black cook; but his appetite was gone, so each meal was taken away almost untasted.

"By golly, Massa Hawkshaw, you had better eat and keep strong," said Quaco, with a grin on his shining face.

"Why—what the devil is it to you whether I eat or not, you black thief?" asked Hawkshaw, savagely.

"Kindness, on'y kindness, massa—yaas, yaas," he replied, grinning more broadly than ever.

"I want none, even from you."

"Dat be bad—dat it is; but, golly! don't you know what Pedro Barradas aim up to?"

"No."

"He's agoin' to be massa captin'."

"What?"

"He's agoin' to trim de ship by de starn, he is. Jolly, ain't it. But there will be no loblolly boys allowed to skulk 'tween decks after dat—by golly! no," and, grinning away like an ogre, with his yellow eyeballs gleaming, his white teeth and angular cheek-bones shining, Quaco retired with the greasy wooden mess-kid on which he had brought Hawkshaw some hot lobscouse.

Quaco's words made his heart beat faster, and set him to think deeply, and with indescribable agitation.

The proposed seizure of the ship was again upon the *tapis*.

Should he acquaint Captain Phillips of it; but perhaps he knew of it already more fully, and was quite prepared.

By his silence, Ethel might be destroyed; by speaking in time, she might be saved; but only saved for Morley Ashton. Damning thought! The first impulse made him start to his feet, to summon Joe; the second made him sink back sullenly on the sea-chest again.

To join those in the cabin was but to serve Morley Ashton and those who loathed him; to league with the mutineers, whom he dreaded, was but to sink deeper in disgrace and more hopelessly into crime.

On shore, he would have gladly fled from them all; but in that floating prison, the *Hermione*, he had but one resource left—to join the crew, if he would save his own life. He felt himself helplessly at the mercy of the Barradas; and, by joining them in the scuffle or conflict that must precede the capture of the ship, he might find a fair means of putting a period to Morley Ashton's existence, if some one else did not antici-

pate him. Morley he hated with a tiger-like emotion—a mingled dread and aversion.

For himself, he might yet have Ethel in his power. Some very daring, dark, and incoherent thoughts flashed through his mind. He might have her, in spite of Fate and Fortune, too? and afterwards, when once on shore, she would feel herself compelled to link her future life with his.

The shore—any shore—oh, how he longed for it.

He felt himself constrained to avoid the deck, save in the night, and thus to spend the entire day below.

Secluded there like a felon, avoided like a reptile, he asked himself, was he really the man of yesterday or the day before?—the same Cramply Hawkshaw who had sat at table with the Bassets and officers of the ship, enjoying their society and companionship, as an equal and friend?

Was the past, indeed, gone for ever? He was on board the same ship (how he loathed and cursed every rope in her rigging, every plank in her hull); he still heard the same daily sounds on deck, the same voices from time to time, and more than once he had heard Rose Basset's ringing laugh; there was the same rush of water alongside; the same moaning of the wind aloft; the same bell clanging the half hours; all seemed unchanged but he alone!

He could not bring back the perfect idea of himself or what he was.

How bitterly he felt, how impatiently he spurned the restraint imposed upon him in the circumscribed space of the ship, and longed for land, any land, as we have said—Africa, even Dahomey, were welcome—that he might escape and hide himself from all; but chiefly from the Bassets, before whom he had so successfully glozed over his secret life and real character by a network of lies, crimes, and cunning—a network which Morley's sudden appearance had torn aside.

Right well he knew the light in which all viewed him now—a swindler, impostor, and worse.

Unless it lingered in the emotions of envy and wounded self-esteem, his selfish passion for Ethel had quite evaporated, amid his shame and humiliation, or was almost merged in his vengeful hate of Morley—a sentiment rendered all the deeper by the wrongs already attempted without success.

So there between decks, in the scene of his last attempted crime, he sat and brooded darkly on the past, or scheming out the future; a trial he did not dread, even if the vessel reached the Isle of France, and Morley Ashton urged it by an appeal to the civil authorities.

There would be but his bare accusation, without a single witness to support it, so a bare denial was all that was necessary, for well he knew that no human eye had seen that encounter by the verge of Acton Chine, in England.

Then there was a memory of Ethel's loathing attitude and averted glance lingering like a barbed arrow in his heart.

"Yes," said he aloud, "I feel the time at hand when I may requite hate with deeper hate."

"*Buenos noches, mi hombre de nada*" ("Good night, my rascal, or man of nothing"), said a voice in his ear, and starting from his reverie, he found himself confronted by the tall and muscular figure of Pedro Barradas.

It was night now, and the candle flickered dimly in the lantern of perforated tin, which swung from a beam above, and its downward rays fell on the dark face and picturesque figure of the South American seaman, with his crisp locks and coal-black beard, his tawny ears, in each of which a silver ring was glittering, his loose shirt of dark blue woollen, open at his breast, on which a cross was tattooed, and girt at the waist by a Spanish scarlet sash, in which his Albacete knife was stuck.

A fierce and malicious grin pervaded his sombre features—such a grin as one might imagine in the face of a laughing fiend—as he surveyed the crushed and miserable Hawkshaw, who, being quite unarmed, was not without emotions of terror and alarm.

"You scurvy *ladrone*," said Pedro, grinding his strong white teeth, "when I remember that evening in the Barranca Secca, between Xalappa and the Puebla de Perote, and the use you made of your lasso, I wonder what devil prevents me from putting my knife into you."

Hawkshaw started back and glanced hopelessly about for a weapon. Pedro laughed hoarsely; but his merriment did not allay the alarm of Hawkshaw, who knew that such men as he could jest with their victim while the knife was piercing his heart.

"So the air of the cabin has not agreed with you, eh? Well, I daresay you have been worse lodged and fixed in Texas, where some of the huts are no better than a *retranche*; but I think you had better come forward and hitch in with us."

Hawkshaw still glanced uneasily about him.

"Demonio! why don't you speak, and be d——d to you?" roared Pedro, losing his patience, which was never at any time a very extensive commodity. "Have you lost your lying tongue as well as your wits?"

"No, Pedro Barradas, I have lost neither."

"How long it is since I have heard my name on your tongue, *companionero*; not since we were diggers together on the banks of the Feather River. Speak out—*presto!*"

"What do you want with me, or require of me?"

"I am exceedingly anxious to ascertain something of which the crew have been kept in ignorance for some time past."

"Something—from me?" asked Hawkshaw with surprise.

"Yes."

"You mean the progress and working of the vessel?"

"Precisely so; her whereabouts upon the sea."

"How should I know?"

"How you should or should not is nothing to me; but, *presto*, no equivocation," said Pedro, placing his left hand on the haft of his knife.

"Then, for the soul of me, I cannot tell you," replied Hawkshaw with great earnestness.

"You must have heard it mentioned, casually or otherwise, in the cabin. The latitude and longitude, I mean."

"If so, may I die if I can remember them now."

Pedro's eyes began to gleam dangerously; but he changed his tactics and asked:

"What does the captain mean to do with you?"

"Do with me?" stammered Hawkshaw.

"Yes, *santos!* I spoke plain enough."

"But do not understand," said Hawkshaw, evasively.

"Must I speak more plainly?"

"If you please."

"How cursedly polite we are," sneered Pedro. "Well, most illustrious Señor Caballero, does he mean to maroon you or hang you?"

"Neither; and in either case it is not probable he would consult you."

"Well, *companionero*, perhaps he will land you at El Cabo de Bueno Esperanza?" said Pedro with more suavity.

"We are not to touch at the Cape," was the unwary reply.

"Not to touch at the Cape?" repeated Pedro, so loudly that he might have been heard in the cabin.

"No."

"Why?"

"Simply because I have been given to understand that we are past it."

"*Por vida del demonio!* Past it, say you?" exclaimed Pedro, as if communing with himself.

"One thing, at least, is certain. We are not, I am sorry to say, to touch at the Cape."

"And who told you this?"

"The captain himself."

Pedro uttered a tremendous Spanish oath, expressive of extreme astonishment and satisfaction.

"So—so this cunning old Englisher has been keeping us all in the dark as to where we are?"

"Exactly."

"But wherefore?"

"That I cannot say," said Hawkshaw, evasively.

"*Morte de Dios!* does he suspect?—does he smell at a rat!" exclaimed the Spaniard with a sudden rage; but Hawkshaw remained silent. "We must be somewhere off the coast of La Tierra de Natal, and if so, by the ship's steering to-day the mouth of the Mozambique Channel should be upon our weather-bow; yet how far distant none but the captain and his mates can say," continued Pedro, as if in communion with himself; but he was wrong in his supposition, for the ship at the time he spoke was about a hundred miles to the southward of Algoa Bay, which opens between Cape Recife and Cape Padrone in southern Africa.

"Listen to me," said Pedro, suddenly, with a savage glare in his black eyes, a low and husky tone in his deep, sonorous voice, his right hand on the haft of his knife, and his left planted on Hawkshaw's shoulder with the grasp of a vice. "We mean to take this ship and run her on our own account; but as four new hands have been added to the officers, will you join us? It is a fair offer—your only chance of vengeance, too: for ashore you will not be worth a rotten castano."

"Well—well—I am with you," said Hawkshaw in a low and husky voice.

"*Bueno!* we should fight for the ship whether you were with us or not. Your hand on it, mate! But first, what terms do you want?"

"My life, in the first place, to be respected by all, and to be set ashore on the first land we see, as I am not a seaman."

"The *first* land may be a sea-weedy rock at the mouth of the Mozambique," said Pedro, with a diabolical grin, as it suggested a new idea of cruelty. "Your share of plunder?"

"I seek no plunder. I seek but revenge and liberty."

"Your hand, then; and let us forget all about the Barranca Secca."

Pedro grasped in his strong, hard hand the shrinking fingers of Hawkshaw, thinking the while:

"This ship once ours, I shall soon make short work of it with *you*, my fine fellow!" Grinding his teeth, he added aloud, "If you betray us, woe to you."

"I am pledged," said Hawkshaw in a voice like a groan.

"The cargo is valuable, so we shall go in for a good stroke of business together."

"When—when do you make the attempt?"

"To-morrow night or the next, at latest."

"I shall be ready."

"Then to-morrow evening at four bells, in the second dog-watch, be in the fore-castle bunks, and you will learn all. Till then, *compañero*, be silent, and *remember!*"

With another significant touch of his knife-handle, Pedro retired, leaving Hawkshaw in a very unenviable state of mind. As a bold and reckless ruffian, the Spanish American valued him little as an ally; but the chief object of his visit had been attained—information that the ship, instead of being hauled up for Table Bay, was *past* it.

CHAPTER XLIX.

FOUR BELLS IN THE DOG-WATCH.

ALL the next day there blew a gale, and Captain Phillips, anxious to make the most of it, as the wind was fair, squared his yards, with all that he dared to spread upon them. So sharp was the aforesaid gale that on a taut bowline no vessel could have shown more than a single sail, perhaps; but the *Hermione* tore on before the hurrying blast with her fore and main courses bellying out before it, and her three topsails set with a single reef in each.

Ere long Captain Phillips was heard to shout:

"Away aloft, men—shake the reefs out of the topsails—masthead the yards."

Cheerfully enough the watch sprang aloft and obeyed the order. And now the foam flew in white sheets over her sharp bows, rolling aft to the break of the quarter-deck, from whence it surged forward again and gurgled through the scuppers on each side alternately.

Astern a tremendous sea kept rolling after her, for waves and wind and all were with her now, and she sped before them at the rate of eleven knots an hour; thus it required all the strength of Pedro Barradas and of Noah Gawthrop,

who volunteered for it, to hold the wheel and steer her steadily.

Inspired by the speed with which his brave ship tore along through foam and spray, Captain Phillips walked briskly to and fro, with his hands thrust into the pockets of his glazed storm-jacket, a gutta-percha speaking-trumpet under one arm, and his jolly red face shining with pleasure and drops of spray as he glanced alternately aloft over the quarter, or at Mr. Quail, who smiled approvingly.

"Hurrah, old ship!" said he; "now she goes through it! now she walks along with a will. She smells the Mauritius already I think."

"The Bird Islands or the Mozambique more likely," muttered Pedro to Noah.

"What the devil have we to do with either one or the other?" asked Noah with sulky suspicion.

"There she goes!" continued the captain; "and on she shall crack as long as her sticks hold together. Mr. Quail, get preventer-braces reeved; ship tackles on the backstays, haul all taut, and belay."

All day the gale held on thus, and about nightfall, when it began to abate into a steady breeze in which the swinging booms of the lower studding-sails dipped at times like birds' wings in the brine, the *Hermione* must have run more than one hundred and twenty miles, and she was about that distance off the most southern portion of the coast of Natal.

How often had Captain Phillips and Mr. Basset wished to be fairly round the Cape of Good Hope—to have doubled it, though it was far away from dear old England; yet it was a necessary feature or point to be achieved in the voyage. They were fairly round the great Cape of Storms now, and the vessel's course was east and northerly, with a calm sea and a fair wind.

Every one should have been in the highest spirits; but, save Ethel and Rose, Morley and his three companions, all were cloudy, anxious, and dull; for Captain Phillips, his officers, and Mr. Basset felt themselves still menaced by secret dangers.

During the most of this day Morley had remained below with Ethel. Rose was working beads on a cigar-case for the doctor, and Tom Bartelot, with Morrison, remained by choice on deck.

"Now that we can be of service, Captain Phillips," said Tom, "we must be allowed to take our turn of duty. I know

that sick folks are soon deemed little better than skulkers aboard ship."

"How so?"

"When one has to take a fellow's trick at the helm, another his look-out aloft, or out upon the booms, a third his watch, and a fourth something else, they soon weary of him."

"True," replied Captain Phillips, in a low voice, as they drew near the break of the deck, and beyond ear-shot of that tall son of Columbia, Mr. William Badger, who was at the wheel, with his very long legs, half-cased in very short trousers, placed very far apart; "but your arrival on board, if a lucky circumstance for you all, has been rather a godsend to me."

"Indeed! How? The ship doesn't look short-handed."

"Ah! here comes Mr. Ashton; and please call your mate here. I have something to say to you all."

Tom beckoned Morrison, who had been busy coiling and belaying some of the running rigging, for the crew had become exceedingly untidy and neglectful.

Badger's keen eyes peered from under his beetling brows, as if he strove to *see*, what he could not overhear, the conversation that ensued, when Captain Phillips detailed the secret state of his crew, and the daring project which the doctor had heard so freely canvassed in the fore-castle.

Bartelot and Morrison heard the honest captain's narrative with astonishment and indignation, but Morley with a terror and agony very much akin to Mr. Basset's, under the same circumstances.

"In such a state of matters, why did you not haul up for Table Bay, where some ships of war are sure to be?" asked Bartelot.

"Such was my intention; but the same hurricane that destroyed your ship drove mine too far to the southward. That circumstance made us the means of saving you; but I lost thereby a chance of thinning out, or altogether dispersing the crew, and shipping another."

"Aye, aye," observed Morrison; "what between crews of Lascars and coloured men, Chinese junks and piratical Bornese boats, there are many craft disappear in these seas, and at Lloyd's the typhoons are held responsible for all."

"If that fellow who is at the wheel, and two who are named Barradas, were quietly overboard, I could manage the rest, I think."

"Barradas! are they Spaniards?" asked Tom.

"Spanish South Americans—two of that bad lot who are so often to be seen loafing about the Liverpool docks."

"Troublesome hands always."

"And these two are among the worst—the very worst. They were chums of that fellow Hawkshaw in Texas and Mexico, at the gold diggings, and elsewhere, it would appear. They are two brothers, named Pedro and Zuares—at heart, pirates both."

"Barradas!" said Morley, striving to remember; "that name seems familiar to me."

"Have you forgotten the name of the old hermit—the 'darvish,' as Noah called him—whom we buried on the island, and whose papers I read to you?" asked Morrison.

"Don Pedro Zuares de Barradas," said Bartelot.

"I remember now. I have his Spanish cross below," said Morley. "Good Heavens! if these should be his sons! The names are the same. How singular!"

"And they were comrades of Hawkshaw, you say, Captain Phillips?"

"Comrades, or shipmates, or something—nothing good, you may be assured."

And now Morley, just as Dr. Heriot joined them, recalled Hawkshaw's strange story of how the one named Zuares committed—unwittingly, however—the awful crime of matricide, in the Barranca Secca—that savage story which he related on a summer evening in Acton Chase, to the Bassets and Pages; and now, by a strange fatality, their lot was all cast together within the narrow compass of a single ship, upon the wide and open sea.

"These are most calamitous tidings," said Morley, in a low and troubled voice, as he passed his arm through Heriot's, and drew him aside; love, they say, laughs at danger; but here, Dr. Heriot, love may weep," he added, almost with a groan.

"Hang it, man, call me Heriot—Leslie Heriot, or whatever you like; but drop the doctor, it sounds so precious stiff, especially when—when we both love these two girls."

"Well," said Morley, who, as an Englishman, had his local or national prejudices, but meant to be complimentary, "for a Scotchman, you are a nice fellow, Heriot; but—but Ethel and Rose, what are we to do now?"

"Fight to the last gasp for them, that is all," replied Heriot, stoutly.

While they were conversing thus, Noah Gawthrop approached Captain Bartelot, and, in his own fashion, began to state that he had heard some strange hints dropped by the watch at night, by others that lounged about the windlass-

bitts and forecastle ; that some of the crew had been whetting their knives on the carpenter's grindstone, that all were on the alert, and were, he added, "sartainly up to summut that looked like squalls, or mischief."

As an old man-o'-war's man, Noah knew well how unpleasant was the reputation of being a tale-bearer, and that, if it was bad ashore, it was deemed ten times worse at sea ; but in the *Aurora* he had acquired certain ideas of discipline which had never left him, so he considered that he was only doing his duty in this matter.

"What do you mean to do, your honour?" he asked of Captain Phillips, in a husky whisper.

Phillips gave him a grim smile, and showed the butt of a revolver in his breast-pocket.

"Oh, the poor girls below," said Morley.

"I have perilled my life many times, young gentleman," said Phillips—"many times on land, but oftener still on the great highway of waters, and, though scared a bit, I ain't going to be frightened now ; and, believe me, my ship shall not be taken without a scrimmage. Let these mutinous curs come on and do their worst, I'm ready for them—life for life, and man to man."

"Hooray, and the *Haurora* for ever. Beat to quarters—them's my sentiments," said Noah, with a voice so loud that Long Badger, at the wheel, craned his scraggy neck to listen, and opened his eyes and ears very wide indeed. "D——n their limbs ! I hopes to see 'em all with their ears nailed to the mainmast, and here's the first as will handle the hammer and nails."

As he made this unwise exclamation, he stepped aft, to relieve Badger at the wheel, and that ungainly personage, avoiding the group who were at the gangway, passed forward to the forecastle, where he at once informed his colleagues that he "rayther reckoned that old man-o'-war shark had blowed the whole affair upon them."

Deeply-muttered oaths and vows of vengeance on poor old Noah were the immediate result.

"*Ror mi honor !*" exclaimed Pedro, who was polishing the blade of his knife on the sole of his shoe ; "so, so, this is what old sticking-plaster is up to—eh?"

"In course, my Spanish gamecock."

"*El espio y picaro !* (spy and scoundrel)," said Pedro, grinding his teeth.

"The old corksucker !" growled the rest, using in this the most opprobrious epithet known at sea.

“He’s a old man-o’-war’s man, and, I reckon, has got notions o’ discipline, doffing his hat to the quarter-deck, and other darned nonsense whipped into him, nigger fashion, by the boatswain’s cat. To try gettin’ over such fellows is summut like reefing of a stun’sail, or anythin’ else that’s next to useless.”

Having delivered himself of this aphorism, Badger proceeded to “darn” sundry parts of Noah’s person, such as his eyes and limbs, and by the unanimous vote of all he was consigned to very warm latitudes indeed.

Amid this, the ship’s bell struck. It was the appointed time—four bells in the second dog-watch—and then, pale as a spectre, or looking like an evil spirit whom the sound had summoned—Cramply Hawkshaw descended through the scuttle into the little apartment, or fore-cabin, a close and squalid den, where his appearance was greeted with shouts of ironical welcome and applause, in which the watch on deck joined.

We have already detailed a scene in this unpleasant quarter of the ship: but have little desire to rehearse another, and so shall be brief.

With a mocking grimace on his moustached lip, and a ferocious gleam in his wild black eyes, Pedro presented Hawkshaw to the crew as a new *companero amigo*—associate and friend.

“Hitch in, mates—make room for the capting,” said Badger, drawing in his long, lean, and misshapen legs. “So having ’ad a spell in limbo aft, you’re bound for the bunks for’ard, eh? Come, Pedro, prodooce the dev’l’s bones—let him have a shy with the ivories. I reckon he’s got an eye on the gals aft, as well as ourselves; and I say, capting—Jeerusalem! ain’t the black eyes o’ that oldest gal regular Broadway shiners!”

In his misery and rage, Hawkshaw had slunk forward, and joined the crew with two ideas uppermost in his mind: that he would yet revenge himself on Morley Ashton, and might also have the haughty Ethel at his mercy—that she yet might be his, and his only, despite fate, fortune, and friends, and despite her own aversion for him.

But when he found himself among this crew of desperadoes, whose obscene lips bandied about the names of those so pure and gentle, fair and tender, as Ethel and Rose Basset, the old times of Laurel Lodge came to memory, and though bad, hardened, and desperate, Hawkshaw felt his soul die within him.

But it was too late for receding now !

Criminal though he was, to find himself the chosen comrade and companion of these wretches, filled up the full measure of his misery ; but no sympathy can be wasted on him, when we remember the crimes of which he had been guilty, and the keen suffering he had caused to Ethel, to Morley, and to others.

In mockery, and in a pretended spirit of good fellowship, Pedro's loaded *dados* were produced from his sea-chest, and they proceeded again to cast lots for wives among the women in the cabin, amid roars of laughter, cheers, and other noises, while, to enhance the general din, Mr. Badger smashed the mess-beef kid, dashed the butter gallipot to pieces, and danced a hornpipe on the tin bread-barge.

This noisy laughter was heard distinctly in the cabin.

"Surely that sounds jolly and well," said Tom Bartelot, as the party from the deck entered it ; "fellows who laugh so loudly cannot mean much mischief."

"Ah, you don't know them," said Captain Phillips, in a low voice.

"Mischief?" said Ethel, looking up inquiringly.

"What, is it possible that you don't know?" Morley was beginning, when Mr. Basset placed a finger on his lip warningly.

These extremely hilarious sounds in the forepart of the ship were simply caused by the lots for sweethearts or wives being cast anew.

Ethel had fallen to Pedro Barradas, thanks to his peculiarly-constructed dice ; Rose fell to the share of Bill Badger ; and Nance Folgate, the old nurse, to Hawkshaw ; and hence the yells and screams of laughter that ascended from the fore-scuttle, and rang upon the still and starlight night.

CHAPTER L.

THE CRISIS AT LAST.

ON the morrow, a gale like that we have described carried the ship still farther on her course ; but again, towards evening, the sea and wind went down together, and a calm and lovely night stole over the world of waters.

Morley had intended to speak to the two Barradas about what he suspected--his knowledge of their secret history.

Had he found an opportunity for doing so, much evil would, perhaps, have been averted, as he might have exercised a little influence over them ; but one time they were aloft in the rigging, at another, tarring down the backstays, clapping on chafing gear, or otherwise occupied most of the day, as they now began to feel a *personal interest* in the ship ; so no opportunity occurred, and the fatal evening of the intended mutiny crept on.

And, notwithstanding that he was a quiet and peaceable man, and possessed of much of the caution usually attributed to his countrymen, matters were precipitately brought to a crisis by Morrison, Tom Bartelot's Scotch mate, as we shall soon have occasion to show.

On this night our old friend was at the wheel, as a volunteer ; and, as the atmosphere was singularly calm, Morley and Ethel, Rose and Heriot, were on deck, sometimes seated in pairs, conversing in low and confidential tones, or promenading, arm-in-arm, between the break of the deck and the taffrail.

Mr. Basset and the captain were smoking near the companion-hatch, Mr. Quail had turned in below, and the second mate, Foster, had charge of the ship, whose lofty spread of snow-white canvas shimmered with a weird effect in the light of the rising moon, which heaved up at the horizon, the size of three European moons—sublime and vast—to shed a blaze of silver radiance far across the sea.

Noah's hints had already made Captain Phillips take in his studding-sails and royals, so the ship was now running snugly and easily, under the fore and main-course, topgallant-sails, jib and spanker.

Ethel sat silently, with her hands clasped on Morley's left arm, for the moonlight on the water, the stars above, and his familiar voice, made her think of home, and the beautiful garden at Laurel Lodge, with its ribbon-borders of pinks, mignonette, and scarlet geraniums ; its roseries, its gigantic sweet peas, her sister's boasted azaleas, which Hawkshaw had ridiculed in an evil hour ; its avenues of laurels and stately old sycamores.

She now drew forth her mother's miniature, which she wore in her breast, at the end of a slender gold chain. It had been taken in that dear mother's youth, when she closely resembled Ethel herself.

Who that surveyed that soft, bright, smiling face, could realise the idea that it was the image of one who had long been dead, and had passed away.

So, as Ethel gazed upon it, her mother's figure, expression of face, and tone of voice, the embodiment of that gentle friend and loving mentor, all a mother should be, "the best and most beautiful of earth's creatures," rose to memory, strangely mingled with recollections of her death and of her funeral, on a sunny day, in peaceful Acton churchyard, while the familiar bell tolled solemnly in the old grey Norman tower, and when the turf looked so green, the fresh earth so brown, and that awful and mysterious grave, as it yawned beneath the old yew tree, so deep, so terrible!

Then there was the reverend rector, her father's dearest friend, reading the beautiful and impressive service for the faithful departed, while his voice faltered and his eyes glistened. It was the last day of an English autumn, when the leaves of the tall oaks in the Chase, and the foliage of every coppice, were brown and crisp, and when all the world seemed hushed and still; when even the village urchins who clambered on the churchyard wall were mute, and sat uncovered, and no sound stirred the air but the rector's voice, and the solemn bell that boomed in the time-worn tower, and shook its ivy leaves.

So all that sad and mournful day came vividly back and unbidden to memory now.

"Mamma, dear, dear mamma! she did so love you, Morley!" said Ethel, as she closed the miniature, and placed it tenderly in her bosom.

Inspired by livelier thoughts on the other side of the quarter-deck, merry Rose Basset and the doctor were leaning over the bulwarks, and watching the luminous animalcula that gleamed in the passing waves.

In the second chapter of our history, we have related how Mr. Basset had considered the early engagement between Morley Ashton and Ethel as the mere fancy of a boy and girl—a fancy which separation, or the spirit of change might cause to wear away and be forgotten.

But now, by his most providential restoration, by the strength of their mutual regard, by what the poor fellow had undergone; by what Ethel, too, had suffered, and, more than all, by the necessity for securing her future happiness, he felt himself bound to do the utmost in his power to advance Morley's interests, when they all reached their new home in the Mauritius, and a reiterated promise to this effect had made the young pair supremely happy.

Rose and the doctor were the next consideration? what was to be done with them?

The excitement consequent to recent events ; the expected outbreak among the crew ; the discovery of the wreck, its occupants, and their story, together with Hawkshaw's villainy, had so fully occupied the attention of all on board, that Heriot had scarcely found an opportunity for broaching a matter, which Captain Phillips's jokes had quite prepared our friend, the judge, to have laid before him, for his earnest consideration and kindly sympathy—neither of which he had quite made up his mind to accord ; but Rose had always flirted with some one ; and when two favourable occasions came to pass, Heriot was dissuaded by her thoughtlessly saying :

“ Now, don't bother yet, my dear old darling Leslie,” for this was her unromantic style (“ a jolly one,” the doctor thought it) of addressing him.

Mr. Basset would have been blind indeed, had he not seen the growing intimacy which existed between them ; but he had no idea that matters had proceeded the length of interchanged promises. Neither did he observe the ring which Rose now wore on her engaged finger—to wit (for the information of the uninitiated), the third of the right hand ; and to use a hackneyed phrase, “ as fairy ” a finger as ever rejoiced in that pleasant decoration, for among Rose's chief beauties were her hands, plump, white, and tiny.

Recent events, we have said, prevented explanations, or any account of what the doctor's prospects were.

“ Not much, they are, certainly, dear, dear Rose,” whispered Heriot, as they sat together in the moonlight, while the ship still sped before the wind, with all the reefs out of her topsails. “ I have, one way and another, but one hundred pounds a year at present. Had I more, I would have sought out a snug practice at home, and not roved about as the surgeon of a sea-going merchantman.”

“ Then you would not have met me, sir,” said Rose, with waggish asperity.

“ But I have an uncle, a jolly old fellow, who loves me well, for my mother was his only sister ; and he loves me for that, perhaps, rather than any merits of my own.”

“ My poor modest Leslie ! well—and this uncle ?”

“ When he dies—distant may the day be when he does so !—I shall come into four hundred pounds per annum more. If at the Isle of France, I could battle the watch——”

“ Battle what ?”

“ Oh, it is an old college phrase ; I mean, fight my way into a practice somehow. With you to cheer me on, we

should do very well. Then, an M.D., to get a practice, must have a wife."

"Why?"

"What is the difference between a doctor and a student? 'There is but a degree between them,' says some one; but until the student has the magical letters M.D. added to his name, he is nothing, and even then he will never get the *passé-partout* to private houses, unless he has a wife; and where could I find one dearer, sweeter, more playful and joyous, more charming than——"

"Me, you would say?"

"Yes."

Then here, as no one was looking, there followed a sound which made honest Morrison, who was at the wheel, "prick up his ears," and laugh quietly to himself in the moonlight.

A ship, of course, does not offer the lover-like facilities of shady lanes, green thickets, rosy bowers, or flowery garden walks; but it produces a thousand occasions for polite attention, amidst its rolling, tumbling, and pitching about, its extreme discomfort and peculiarity, which are not given by the solid and immovable earth, and which the fair dwellers thereon do not require; but it is, nevertheless, a very awkward place for indulging in little bits of osculation—a phrase for which I refer my fair reader to her dictionary, if she knows it not.

All as yet was quiet in the *Hermione*.

The embers of discord were still smouldering amid the crew, and the brave ship flew steadily over the shiny waters of the moonlit sea, her ghostly shadow falling far across them.

Inspired by the calm and beauty of the night, Morrison, as he leaned thoughtfully over the wheel, his left hand grasping an upper spoke, and his right hand a lower one, thinking, perhaps, of his present shattered prospects, without ship or funds, his distant home, and his mother's cottage by the Dee was singing to himself in a low and plaintive voice.

Ethel looked up and listened, though she scarcely knew the language in which he sang—a portion of a sweet little song (by some local poet), and which he recalled, as we do now, from memory, though perhaps he may have heard it from his mother, to whom this brave and honest fellow was attached with a devotion that was almost childish.

"The tear dims my e'e
As I look to heaven hie,
And sigh to be free
Frae want and frae wae;

But I dinna see the road,
 For between me and my God
 A darkness has come doon,
 Like the mist on the brae.

“The nicht is wearin’ past,
 The mist is fleein’ fast,
 And heaven is bricht at last
 To the closin’ e’e ;
 In the hollow o’ the hill,
 The weary feet are still,
 And the weary heart is hame
 To its ain countrie.”

At that moment the ship’s bell clanged.

“Stand by to heave the log—relieve the wheel,” cried Mr. Foster.

After considerable delay Badger, the Yankee, came slowly shambling aft, to “take his trick” at the helm, and at the same time the whole crew came scrambling noisily up the fore-scuttle, where the watch on deck joined them, and they gathered in a group about the windlass-bitts.

Captain Phillips, Mr. Basset, and Tom Bartelot, exchanged glances of intelligence and inquiry, while the second named, inspired by some miserable foreboding, grew deadly pale.

“You have not hurried yourself, mate,” said Morrison.

“No ; didn’t intend to, I reckon,” drawled the Yankee, in his nasal twang.

“Why did you not come aft the moment the bell struck?”

“Now, stranger,” said Badger, in a tone of mock expostulation, “d’ye wish your few brains blowed out with the cook’s bellows, or not, that you asks questions or gives orders here?”

“Take the wheel, and take it in silence,” said Morrison, haughtily and sternly ; for, although no mate on board the *Hermione*, he still felt the habit of authority strong within him.

“I knowed a man at Cape Cod, in the state of Massachusetts,” continued Badger, still delaying, and speaking slowly through his long nose ; “a Scotchman he was, Mr. Morrison, and the very moral o’ you, with a hook nose and chin, that ’ud hold a ginger-nut between ’em, who fed sea-gulls with iron filings, and sold their wings for steel pens. A ’cute crittur ! But, as I said, he was called a Scotchman, though I calc’lates he was a Yankee Jew of Hirish parentage.”

“If you don’t take the wheel, I’ll show you the foretop with a vengeance, my fine fellow,” said Morrison, who could stand anything but sneers at his country.

"You're riled a bit, you air, and your monkey's getting up. You've been too well fed, mate," drawled Badger. "I reckons that at home, in your own little clearin' of a country, you fed upon fir shavings and cold water. As for decent junk, reg'lar old hoss, and plum duff, I calc'late you never heerd on 'em afore. Now, in this here craft, as the junk's atrowcious, so that even an 'ungry Scotchman or a blue shark wouldn't look at it, we mean to have a blow-out to-night in the cabin, and on the best in the steward's locker too."

At that moment Mr. Foster, who, with Joe, had been heaving the log-line, on hearing words, came aft, and took the wheel from the hands of Morrison, who was trembling with suppressed passion.

"Go forward, you rascally carrion," said the Scotchman, "or, by the heavens above us, I soon will make blue sharks' meat of you."

Badger drew his knife, which gleamed in the moonlight, but at the same instant he was laid sprawling on the deck by a blow from the butt-end of a revolver with which Captain Phillips had armed Morrison, and which the latter swung at the full length of his arm and with no unsparing hand.

The cry of rage uttered by Badger was answered by a yell from the fore-castle, and all the crew came rushing aft, armed with knives, capstan-bars, and some with pistols, which they had hitherto secreted in their sea-chests.

"Below, ladies, below—into the cabin, and barricade the door; quick, quick!" cried Captain Phillips, as Ethel and Rose, to their astonishment and terror, were hurried, almost thrust, down the companion-stair.

Then several pistol-shots were exchanged, and a furious struggle instantly took place on deck.

CHAPTER LI.

HOW THE SHIP BROACHED TO.

AT the time of this outbreak the *Hermione* was, as we have stated, somewhere about 100 miles off the mouth of Algoa Bay, and not, as Pedro had calculated, near the entrance of the Mozambique Channel.

Hurried, actually thrust into the cabin by the hands of Morley Ashton, Dr. Heriot, and others, Ethel and Rose Basset's terror and astonishment may be imagined; and greatly were these emotions increased by the sounds they heard on

deck—the sudden uproar, the stamping of feet, as of men engaged in a deadly struggle, the oaths, imprecations, and occasional discharge of pistols.

If Captain Phillips and his friends were disagreeably surprised to find that the crew possessed some four or five old ship pistols, which they had hitherto kept secretly in their sea-chests, they, on the other hand, were much more disappointed on discovering that the officers and passengers were fully prepared for them—alike forewarned and forearmed; and the sudden appearance of their pistols and revolvers, as shot after shot flashed from them in the clear tropical moonlight, baffled the first rush aft of Pedro and his brother, for most of the crew, following Hawkshaw's prudent example, suddenly retreated to the fore-castle, their own peculiar region and quarters.

A ball from Pedro's pistol found a harmless victim, for he shot dead poor Joe the steward. But at the same moment a ball from Heriot's revolver grazed the assassin's left ear, tearing a ring out of it, and as he rushed back with a bewildered air, at first believing himself to be shot through the head, Morrison followed him past the long-boat, showering, with a capstan-bar, such blows upon him as would have prostrated any other man than Barradas, who turned twice upon his pursuer, to whom he opposed in vain his clubbed pistol and the blade of his Albacete knife.

Poor Mr. Foster, who, as related, had taken the wheel from Morrison, was now assailed by Badger, the long Yankee, who had gathered himself up from the deck, where he had lain sprawling.

"Villain!" exclaimed Foster, as he clung to the spokes of the wheel, which he dared not relinquish lest the ship should bring to by the lee, and as he glanced the while with irrepressible agitation at the upheld knife of the wretch who had grasped his collar, and held it at the full length of his long, lean, muscular left arm. "Villain, would you lift your knife to me?"

"Ah, you 'tarnal Britisher, I would choke you like a weasel," hissed the Yankee through his yellow teeth.

"Do be quiet, Badger," urged Foster, as he thought of his poor wife and little ones asleep in their beds at home. "Have you no pity—no fear?"

"Nayther, I reckon," snivelled the Yankee.

"No conscience?" asked Foster, as he felt the grasp tightening on his collar.

"Conscience be d——! as we say in Californy. I left my

blessed conscience at Cape Horn long ago. Do you understand that?" said Badger, ferociously.

Down came the threatening knife, flashing in the moonshine. Foster quitted the wheel and leaped aside, leaving the collar of his jacket in Badger's hand ; but the point of the blade gave him a severe slash on the right shoulder.

Filled with rage and fear, the second mate broke away, and plunged down the companion-stair into the steerage in search of a loaded weapon. Tom Bartelot and Mr. Basset followed him, on the same errand, and the crew, believing that a fight had begun, once more made a furious rush aft, and thus, being now minus five of their number, the captain, with Morley, Heriot, and Noah Gawthrop, found themselves driven, under a shower of blows and missiles, past the break of the quarter-deck, and ultimately, down below, where they all fell in a heap upon Mr. Quail, who had turned out half-dressed, on hearing the row on deck.

The last to effect a retreat was Morrison, who had emptied the six barrels of his revolver without hitting anyone, but having a capstan-bar, a weapon to which he was more accustomed, he gave way, step by step, with his face to the foe ; but ultimately he was beaten down the companion-stair, covered with blood, which flowed from a wound on his right temple.

Fighting inch by inch, there is little doubt that, at this crisis, the crew might have forced an entrance to the cabin, especially if some one had entered by the skylight ; but now a yell burst from them, followed by a tremendous crash, and the sound as of a vast ruin descending on the deck.

On Foster abandoning the helm, the ship, which had been running with a spanking breeze upon her starboard quarter, broached to ; by swinging round, all her sails were taken aback upon the weather-side, the sudden strain was more than her spars could bear, and the fall of a maintopmast, which had been sprung (*i.e.*, split) in a recent gale, brought down the fore and mizzen, with all their yards and hamper, clean off at the cap of each ; and thus, in a moment the beautiful *Hermione* was a scene of as great a ruin and disorder aloft as she was below.

The wilderness of masts, yards, booms, sails, blocks, and gearing that suddenly descended on their heads somewhat cooled the ardour of the crew, and severely injured two or three of them ; but Pedro, a thorough seaman, gave instant orders to cut, clear away, and coil up, while, rushing to the wheel, his powerful hands soon made it revolve ; the *Her-*

mione's head fell round, once more the wind came on her quarter, her fore and main courses, jib, and driver swelled out before it, and she stood on, but slowly, crippled and shorn of all her fair proportions.

This unexpected misfortune to the mutineers gave those whom they had for a time vanquished and driven below, time to gather their energies, to reload their weapons, consider their position and resources, and to put in requisition those plans originally formed for the defence of the cabin, their stronghold, and chiefly of the two Misses Basset.

The huge trunk, filled with Mr. Basset's law books (which fortunately came too late on board to be shot with other lumber into the hold) was slued round, and jammed across the cabin-door, which was further secured by its usual bolts and fastenings.

Heriot's pair of pistols, two revolvers, a double-barrelled fowling-piece, and a sharp hatchet, were their only weapons, but they had plenty of ammunition, all made up in cartridges, and so they resolved to expend it to some purpose.

"My ship! my ship! my poor ship! everything seems to have gone to the devil aloft," groaned Captain Phillips, in an agony of rage and mortification.

"Oh, papa—dear papa—what has happened? What means that dreadful noise on deck?" asked Ethel and Rose together, as they clung to their bewildered parent, and saw with alarm their companions' blanched, flushed, and, in some instances, blood-stained faces. Dr. Heriot and Morley Ashton were both bleeding; the former from a scalp wound, and the latter from a cut in the lip. "Oh, papa! tell us what all this means?"

"It means that those infernal villains have risen to murder us all, ladies; but don't be alarmed for all that," said Captain Phillips, as he reloaded his revolver, while a horrible hurly-burly was heard on deck, where the crew, under the orders of Barradas the elder, were cutting away or securing so much of the rigging and spars as might be useful to them, even to bringing on board the jib-boom, which had been snapped off at the cap, and hung in the guys at the end of the whiskers, with the sail drooping in the water; and all the while they worked amid a storm of oaths, imprecations, and threats.

Among other things cast adrift was the body of poor Joe, whose pockets were soon investigated—his pipe, knife, tobacco-box, and a few coppers appropriated by Messrs. Sharkey and Bolter—after which they cast him over to leeward

with as much indifference as if he had been a dead gull or bit of "old horse" (*i.e.*, mouldy junk).

Meanwhile, overcome with horror and anxiety for the probable future of his two daughters, poor Mr. Basset was completely bewildered, and, for a time, as Captain Phillips said, "had no more pith in him than an empty sack." Reclined on the stern-locker, he pressed his daughters to his breast, keeping, as if for protection, an arm round each, and he exclaimed more than once :

"Oh God! most merciful of all who show mercy, protect my poor girls."

"He has committed their protection to you, sir," said Tom Bartelot, rather impatiently; "only show a little pluck, like the rest of us, and we shall weather these villains yet—aye, work them to an oil, if they don't fire or sink the ship."

"Oh, what new—what sudden horror is this?" exclaimed Ethel, wringing her hands, and then clasping them over her temples, while she turned her flashing eyes on each in succession.

"No sudden 'orror at all, marm," said Noah Gawthrop, as he tightened his waist-belt, rolled up the sleeves of his shirt, and looked everywhere about to spit, but, being in the cabin, restrained the impulse; "we've known o' the rig they were goin' to run this long time past."

"And Hawkshaw?" asked Ethel, shuddering.

"Is a leader among them," replied Morley, applying a handkerchief to his bleeding lip. "I never had a better opportunity for clearing off old scores than to-night, but somehow he never——"

"Oh, Morley, dear! leave vengeance to other hands," said Ethel, imploringly. "Dear, dear papa," she added, laying her pale brow on Mr. Basset's cheek, "and so it was this knowledge—this horrible dread hanging over you—that has given such a mournful tenderness to your voice and manner for some time past."

Her voice, so mellow and thrilling, pierced poor Basset's heart: he could only answer by his tears.

"Oh, Morley, love!" said Ethel, in a low, beseeching voice, "say something to comfort poor papa."

But Morley could only press Mr. Basset's hand in silence, for, in fact, the poor fellow knew not what to say. Rose had tied her little handkerchief round the doctor's head, and it seemed a more agreeable remedy than the piece of court-plaister he had hastily stuck on his scar.

To Ethel the watchful, mysterious, solicitous, and almost

sorrowful regard which her father had so long exhibited towards herself and Rose was quite accounted for now.

"Oh, my poor papa—my own papa!" she exclaimed, as she threw her arms round his neck, and nestled with her lovely face close to his, "I have no fear of death; I would face it courageously—but you, and Rose, and Morley. Oh, I fear that the blow which kills me may kill you all, too, you love me so much—so much more than I have deserved, dear papa!"

"Alas, Ethel! it is not death only that I fear for you, my sweet and innocent lamb—and Rose——"

"Below there, ahoy!" hailed a hoarse voice down the companion-stair, after the hurly-burly had somewhat ceased on deck.

"It is the voice of that villain, Sharkey," said Quail.

"The murderer of poor Manfredi," added Dr. Heriot.

"Below there, you swabs and cork-suckers! have you all gone to sleep?" hailed the squat mutineer.

"Hollo!" responded Noah, "what do you want, gallows-bird?"

"We want the two girls. Give them up, and come on deck. Tumble up, or it will be the worse for every man jack of you."

"How so, you squab ragamuffin?" asked Captain Phillips.

"We'll drop down the skylight, and make precious short work with you all," was the hoarse response.

"Come on then, one at a time, or all together—we are ready for you," said Captain Phillips.

At the same moment the cover of the skylight was roughly wrenched off, and the chill night wind poured through the cabin, extinguishing the lamp.

A noisy and derisive cheer followed.

"Silence fore and aft. *Por vida del demonio guardad vuestra maldita garulla* (i.e., "Hold your cursed clack"). Ere long I shall let you know who is captain of the ship now," cried a deep bass voice there was no mistaking, and the dark visage of Pedro Barradas was seen looking down, just as Heriot led Ethel and Rose to their cabin, when he whispered to them to take courage, and closed the door. "Surrender and give up your arms, or I shall set fire to the ship," added Barradas.

"What will you gain by doing so?" asked Captain Phillips, feeling with his fingers if the caps on his revolver were all right, and taking a full sight at Pedro's head, which he could see above the rim of the skylight.

"Gain? Not much, certainly, unless it be vengeance," replied the Mexican, hoarsely.

"Vengeance, you miscreant? Of what can you accuse me? Surely I never wronged you."

"I have nearly lost an ear by the hand of one among you."

"That infliction you brought upon yourself."

"If you do not surrender in less than twenty minutes, I shall fire the ship or scuttle her, and then shove off with all the boats, leaving you to drown like a rat in a trap," continued Pedro.

"Fool as well as villain, what purpose would that serve but to destroy you all? Do you know how far we are from land?" asked the captain.

"I know that we are off the mouth of the Mozambique, and will soon make the land by steering nor'-nor'-east," replied the mutineer, with a grin.

"You are wrong, Pedro Barradas—by Heaven you are! We are only off the Bay of Algoa."

"Well, if this wind holds good, and we keep the ship under her courses and lower studdingsails, we will make the channel soon enough for our purpose. But ha, ha! Senor Capitano, do you hear that?" he added, as the sound of axes was heard; "we are starting the main-hatch to get at the bread and spirit room, so while you starve here, we shall drink and be jolly."

Captain Phillips groaned as he heard those sounds, which indicated a further destruction of the ship; but, taking a sure aim at Pedro, he fired! The red flash and sharp report of the pistol were followed by a yell of rage.

"A miss is as good as a mile," cried Badger, the Yankee; and Pedro, whose cheek was grazed by the ball, replied by firing into the cabin a random shot, which lodged in the table; and now, with pistols and the double-barrelled fowling-piece, there ensued a regular skirmish, in which our friends, in the dark seclusion of the cabin, had all the best of it, the mutineers' mode of warfare being simply a waste of ammunition, as some four or five of them in succession continued to dart past the open skylight, down which they fired at random.

Too terrified to weep, Ethel and Rose, clasped in each other's arms, reclined on their knees against the side of their bed, with poor old nurse Folgate grovelling on the carpet beside them.

Every instant they heard the sharp reports of the pistols, and saw the explosions flashing through the slits in their cabin-door, and all unaccustomed to the horrors of such an event, they could scarcely believe they were not in a dream.

Who could imagine that such a scene would occur on board of a London ship? But they knew not the evils that attend a mixed crew.

Ignorant of the chances and casualties of voyaging on the deep, Ethel and Rose, but particularly the former, was utterly bewildered by this terrible episode, in which she found herself and friends involved. Every shot, every sound, made her heart leap for her father and her lover.

She had pictured to herself how, with Morley by her side, she would tend for life the declining years of her only and beloved parent—tend him as her mother would have wished her to do. He, on the other hand, had hoped to tend, watch, guide, and see her and Rose far on the chequered highway of life; but now it seemed as if they were all about to be torn from each other—he to suffer a violent and cruel death, they dishonour and death together.

Rose! Rose! Poor Ethel's soul shrank within her at this crisis; but it was more with fear for dear, merry little Rose than for herself.

For some time the exciting skirmish we have described continued, without anyone being hit, apparently, either above or below, till Morley felt someone close by utter a low heavy moan or sigh, and then fall suddenly and heavily against him.

"Quail—Mr. Quail," he exclaimed, "is this you? Are you hurt—are you hit?"

It was poor Mr. Quail who, unable to reply, fell on the floor of the cabin with blood bubbling from his mouth. A lucifer match was promptly applied to a candle, a light procured, and the wounded man was laid on the floor of the captain's stateroom, where Dr. Heriot soon discovered that he was quite dead, being shot in the head by a common nail, a proof that the ammunition of the enemy above was running short.

"My God! Poor Quail—his wife and little ones!" exclaimed honest Captain Phillips, with deep emotion. "Oh, gentlemen, when will these horrors end?"

A low groan from Mr. Basset alone replied, and the features of the hapless mate soon grew livid and ghastly in the flickering light of the candle, as the damps and the pallor of death stole over them together.

Meanwhile the crash of axes was heard in the hold, where already some of the mutineers were making their way in search of plunder, through the cargo, hoping to make a breach in the bulkhead and reach the store where the ship's provisions and spirits were kept.

CHAPTER LII.

THE CABIN ATTACKED.

SOME of the mutineers now proceeded to throw various missiles, such as cold shot, ship-buckets, spare or fallen blocks from aloft, the carpenter's paint-pots, and so forth, into the ship's cabin ; but only in one instance, when Tom Bartelot received a contusion on the shoulder, from a wooden marline-spike flung at random, did any of these take effect, as our friends lurked securely, pistol in hand, in the recesses of the upper stern-lockers, in the berths, and so forth, but none as yet could foresee where this strife was to end, or who would first come to terms, before the ship was utterly destroyed, as it bade fair to be, if this internal war continued.

Now the voice of Barradas was heard, giving orders to cast loose one of the carronades on the quarter-deck.

"What are they about to do with the carronade?" asked Morley, as he listened intently.

"Lower it between decks, to fire through the bulkhead," suggested the old man-o'-war's man, Noah.

"But have they any round shot?" asked Morley.

"We have six rounds for each gun round the combing of the main-hatch," said Captain Phillips, with a very dejected air ; "and there are plenty more in the hold. Shot are wanted sometimes in the Indian seas."

"And the powder?"

"Is all kept in a little magazine near the taffrail—the powder required for immediate service, I mean."

"The gun is cast loose," said Bartelot ; "if Noah's idea be their game, it is all up with us, as they may bowl us to death without danger of resistance."

"Unless when they are at work in the hold, we make a sally, regain possession of the deck, ship on the main-hatch, and smother the whole brood!" said Phillips, with a more savage emotion than ever before glowed in his kind and jolly breast.

A few minutes of painful suspense served to show that the intentions of the mutineers were quite different.

They were heard to break open the powder magazine, and load the carronade, which, with loud yells, and much vociferation, they urged forward to the rim of the skylight with such

force as nearly to break the framework to pieces, and over it, by using capstan-bars as levers, they levelled and depressed the gun, by hoisting up the hind wheels of the carriage, and driving home quoins under the breech, till the muzzle was at the angle of forty-five degrees, and pointed almost towards the bulk-head of the little cabin in which Ethel and Rose were weeping and praying.

Scarcely a moment was given for question or consideration, ere Quaco, the black Virginian, came rushing aft from the caboose, with his sable cheekbones shining, and his yellow eyes aflame, as he flourished a red-hot poker, which, as an extempore match, he applied to the touch-hole.

A sudden and blinding flash, with a cloud of suffocating smoke, filled all the cabin, and there was a report or concussion, which made the ship reel to her centre; a hundred splinters seemed to fly in every direction, but still no personal danger was done, though the gun had been charged, not with round shot, but with a bag of nails, nearly all of which crashed through the centre of the mahogany table, and lodged in the deck below.

It was not until the first blink of dawn that those in the cabin knew this; their first idea being, that a round shot had been sent through the vessel's bottom; but, mad and furious though the mutineers were, there was a method in their proceedings, and to utterly destroy the ship was no part of their daring plan.

Wailing cries of terror came from the ladies' cabin, and wild and noisy ones from the old nurse; but no one was hurt there, though all were nearly stifled by the smoke of the discharge, ere it rose slowly through the open skylight, and floated away into the still night air.

As the sailors were withdrawing the gun, taking advantage of its recoil, a volley of pistol-shots from below whistled about them, and Dr. Heriot, with a steady aim of the fowling-piece, sent a charge of buck-shot from both barrels into the face and shoulders of one fellow, who was immediately borne forward to the care of Quaco, who, greatly to his own delight, and with all the mingled fun and cruelty peculiar to his dingy race, proceeded to extract them from the bleeding wretch, more curiously than skilfully, with the prongs of a carving-fork.

They now lashed the gun to its port again, and retired forward, to consult, probably.

The ship's bell was no longer struck to call the watches, but the man at the wheel was regularly relieved, and, though sometimes exposed to shots from the cabin he was never fired

on. Under her courses and other lower sails, the ship was steered to the north-east, but her exact course those in the cabin knew not, as the tell-tale compass had gone to wreck long ago, under the missiles showered so liberally through the skylight.

By the sounds that came aft from time to time, it was evident that the crew were eating, drinking, and making merry in the region of the fore-castle ; but the fears of those in the cabin were increased by this hilarity, which increased the evil chances that overhung the ship, if a gale came on, and found her with her crew and rigging in such a state of disorder, and half the main-hatch open !

As day dawned, and the armed lurkers in the once trim cabin looked around them, its aspect filled them with exasperation and dismay.

The mahogany table, polished to perfection by poor Joe, was split, and literally torn to pieces by the contents of the carronade ; and below it, the planks were thickly sown with nails. All the missiles we have enumerated, the fire buckets, double and single blocks, six-pound shot, holystones, and "prayer-books," &c., encumbered the floor ; and there, cold, white, and ghastly, lay the stiffened corpse of the unfortunate Mr. Quail, with many a spot and patch of blood, that had dropped from the cuts and scars of his companions.

Taking advantage of the lull in the hostilities, Morley, Bartelot, and Noah Gawthrop added all the missiles that strewed the floor to the barricade behind the cabin-door ; Mr. Foster procured more caps and ammunition for their fire-arms ; Heriot prepared plasters and bandages for their flesh wounds and bruises, while Mr. Basset and the captain took some wine and water, with biscuits, to Ethel, Rose, and their old attendant, as the only breakfast they had to offer. After this, unknown to their fair friends in misfortune, Morrison and Foster made preparations to launch the mortal remains of the poor mate into the deep.

No time was there then for prayer or homily.

The body was simply rolled up in a blanket taken from his own bed, lashed tight at the head and foot with a piece of rope. To the ankles were lashed four of the shot with which the rascals on deck had favoured them ; and, opening one of the large windows next the rudder case, they permitted the body to drop gently, feet foremost, into the pale-green water that seethed under the counter.

It could be seen sinking slowly far down into the depths of the morning sea, where it vanished ; but not soon enough to

elude the keen instinct of some Cape pigeons and albatrosses, which gathered, with ravening beaks and flapping wing, about the place where the corpse went down, and where but a few spreading ripples appeared upon the trough of the rolling waves.

By her frothy wake astern, the *Hermione* seemed to be going through the water at the rate of six knots an hour, for the breeze was fresh and steady.

Some cold beef from the locker of poor Joe, and a glass of brandy-and-water, were served round for breakfast ; and none spoke, though all thought of how they would fare when the last drop of water in the cabin was gone !

So passed the noon.

The ill-fated ship still ran north-eastward, increasing hourly, as Captain Phillips said, her chances of being overhauled by some homeward-bound ship—a chance on which their hopes of succour mainly depended now.

CHAPTER LIII.

SAIL HO !

THEY deplored the death of poor Mr. Quail ; but their blood was too much “ up,” to use a common phrase, and their own peril was too imminent, to permit them indulging in the same soft regrets and mournful sentiments that were aroused by the sudden disappearance of Adrian Manfredi.

Notwithstanding the wild disorder that reigned on board the unfortunate *Hermione*, the mutineers, true to their original idea of keeping her, with the vague intention of running her on their own account, with Pedro Barradas as captain, and themselves as crew and owners—a vague intention, indeed—steered her towards Madagascar, under her fore and main courses, jib, and spanker. They rigged jury topmasts, and crossed jury yards thereon ; and, as the breeze was fair for the Mozambique, they steered in what they, rightly enough, conceived to be that direction.

Sorely crippled though she was, and no longer under a stately spread of snow-white canvas, as of old, the fine ship flew on, and each night saw some southern constellation sink into the horizon, to appear no more.

Thus, in four days, and as many nights, she ran nearly eight hundred miles, which brought her so close to the mouth

of the Mozambique Channel, that she soon began to feel the steady breath of the south-west monsoon, which begins there to blow in April, and continues till November, so the ship ran as fairly as even Pedro could have wished her.

During this time matters did not go quietly between the adverse parties on board.

A secret sally, made by Morley Ashton, Dr. Heriot, and Noah Gawthrop, up the companion-stair, with the intention of capturing the scuttle-butt in a very dark night, nearly ended in their being discovered and cut off by Pedro's drowsy and half-drunken watch ; the butt—a cask with a square hole cut in its bilge, and always kept on deck for the use of the crew—containing about seven gallons of water, was fortunately taken, the cabin regained in safety, and the barricades replaced.

It was evident to our friends that a dread of their well-supplied fire-arms, their truer aim and steady determination, alone cooled the ardour of the crew, and prevented them from making a vigorous attempt, by a combined attack through the skylight and companion-way, to storm the cabin and slay its defenders.

Once or twice, however, a shot was fired, or a missile flung, down the skylight, or a threat, or a malediction, was levelled at the occupants of the cabin. Frequently shouts, cries, and quarelling were heard on deck, where evidently Pedro found as much difficulty in enforcing obedience as his more legal predecessor had done.

At the stern windows Captain Phillips and his friends kept, by turns, a constant look-out for a passing sail, which they meant to signal by waving a flag or table-cloth, or by firing their pistols ; but none was ever visible, nor was ought to be seen but Mother Carey's chickens tripping along, for even the albatrosses appeared seldom, so far was the ship from the region of the Cape.

Under Captain Phillips and Tom Bartelot, those in the cabin divided themselves into two watches, which, to prevent surprise, were alternately vigilant or sleeping by night. This saved the personal strength of the whole ; but they soon grew pale with anxiety and watching, and had a worn, unshaven, and uncouth appearance.

The horror of their whole circumstances, and the natural solicitude for the future, were somewhat alleviated to Morley, who, in the dark watches of the night, lay like a faithful mastiff at Ethel's cabin-door, through which he, at times, conversed with her in whispers, and had her dear hand passed to him,

that he might kiss and caress it; but all the tales he had heard or read in his schoolboy-days, of pirates, buccaneers, and other lawless folks upon the high seas, crowded into memory now, and his soul sickened within him, as he thought of how Ethel and her sister would be situated, if the protection of those who loved and guarded them failed.

On the second morning after the mutiny broke out, and while those in the cabin were making almost merry over the capture of the scuttle-butt, with its welcome seven gallons of fresh water, their attention was arrested by a commotion on deck, and Zuares Barradas, who was at the wheel, shouted :

“ Sail, ho ! ”

“ Where ? ” asked his brother and several others.

“ *Estribord* (starboard), ” replied Zuares, as the ship was running before the wind at the time.

“ A sail ! a sail ! hope at last ! ” exclaimed the prisoners in the cabin, while Tom Bartelot sprang up the stern-lockers, and looked forth, but saw sea and sky alone. How to communicate with her, without being immolated on the spot, was the first and fullest idea of all.

They writhed in agony of spirit at the prospect of succour—it might be vengeance—being, perhaps, within hail, all to be attained, or all lost for ever.

At that moment, Badger, the long Yankee, appeared at the open skylight, armed with a sharp axe, which he shook significantly, and then shrank back, lest a pistol-shot might respond to the menace.

This man had long served on board an American otter-hunter, and was hence, perhaps the most lawless character on board, as these craft are all armed with cannon, have their hammocks in netting, man-o'-war fashion, and, being illegal traders, fight their way through the Pacific, and among the Sandwich Islands, and, somewhat like the buccaneers of old, are not wont to stand on trifles; so, in such a service, Badger had long been inured to crime and outrage.

Suddenly a spare mizzen-topsail was drawn over the skylight, nearly involving the cabin in darkness.

“ What does this mean ? ” asked Mr. Basset; “ are they about to smother us ? ”

“ It means that they are about to muffle us, for the strange sail is close at hand, ” said Tom Bartelot.

And almost immediately another sail was lowered, as if to dry, over the taffrail, covering the four stern windows like a thick curtain, and thus rendering the cabin quite dark, and all communication with the stranger impossible.

"This is a most extraordinary proceeding," said Mr. Basset.

"Not at all, sir," said Captain Phillips. "These are knowing rascals, who have us at their mercy; and have resolved that, if possible, we shall neither make signals to the stranger or overhear what passes."

"Hark—what sound is that?" asked Morley.

"Steam blowing off," replied Tom Bartelot, listening intently.

"Steam!" exclaimed Morley.

"Then, by Heaven, it is a man-'o-war," said Phillips.

"A man-'o-war—a man-'o-war," chorussed all in great excitement.

"Oh, Heaven! to be on the verge of safety, and yet to be immured here with my two girls!" exclaimed Mr. Basset, with great bitterness. "I shall force my way on deck. I am commissioned by the crown—a judge—a—a——"

"To be cut down, destroyed—Badger is armed with an axe, and the first head that appears will be cloven to the teeth. Oh, my dear sir," said Morley, grasping his sleeve, "be wary—be persuaded."

"D—n my eyes! think o' bein' bottled down here, and a royal pennant within hail! It's enough to make one's biler bust!" growled Noah, hitching up his trousers.

"Hark! they are hailing—now the pirates are lying to," said Captain Phillips, as they heard the now ungreased sling of the mainyard grating under the top, when it was swung round, and the ship lay to.

"Ship, ahoy!" cried a clear and somewhat authoritative voice, that came distinctly over the water about a hundred yards distant.

"Hollo!" responded Pedro, through Captain Phillips's speaking trumpet, as he sprang on one of the starboard caronade slides, while the ship plunged, as she rose and fell impatiently on the long rollers and heavy swell made by what was evidently the screw propeller of a large steamer.

"What ship is that?" demanded the same voice.

"The *General Jackson*, of Boston, United States," replied Pedro without hesitation.

"They did well to muffle up her stern—*Hermione*, of London, is painted there plain enough," said Captain Phillips.

"Where from, and whither bound?"

"From Boston to Bombay direct," replied Pedro.

"Why didn't you show your colours?" was the next rather suspicious question of the British officer.

"Our signal chest was washed overboard. How does the Mozambique bear?"

"Cape St. Mary bears about two hundred miles, nor'-nor'-east."

"Thank you. What ship are you?"

All listened breathlessly.

"Her Britannic Majesty's steam-corvette the *Clyde*, Captain Sir Horace Seymour. How did you lose your masts?"

"A typhoon carried them away."

"A typhoon in these seas!" exclaimed the other through his trumpet.

"Yes, sir."

"We felt nothing of it. Do you want any assistance? We can send a boat's crew, or a gang of carpenters, on board."

"No, no," replied Pedro, hastily, as hope rose in the panting hearts of those below, and curses to the lips of those above; "we have lots of spare spars."

"Do you mean to pass through the Mozambique Channel?"

"Yes, sir."

"Are you armed?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"With four six-pound carronades and some small arms."

"That is lucky; keep a bright look-out after you pass the Europa rocks."

"For what reason?"

"Some Malay pirates, in three large red proas, or country boats, have destroyed more than one ship in that quarter, so be prepared."

"Thank you, we shall—good-bye."

"Good-bye; pleasant voyage."

Each vessel filled away, and the rush of the war-ship's screw propeller was heard by those imprisoned in the cabin as they separated, and as it died away in the distance, so did hope die, and silent despair gather in the hearts of our friends below.

Repentant, and almost full of horror for the part he was now acting, as the ship of war braced up her yards, and her screw began to revolve, Cramply Hawkshaw rushed to the starboard gangway, and was about to hail her again. What he was about to say he scarcely knew, but in a moment the powerful hand of Pedro Barradas was on his throat. By main strength the latter hurled him at full length upon the deck, and with one knee planted on his chest, and a knife upheld above him:

"*Silenzio, perro!* (Silence, dog!)" he hissed, through his sharp white teeth; "one word, one whisper, and it is your last!"

Pedro's tawny visage was pale, almost pea-green with rage, and with black eyes, that gleamed like two sombre carbuncles, he glared into the very soul of the miserable Hawkshaw, and continued to hold him thus for some time. He then dragged him up, and roughly shook him off, saying, as he did so, with a ferocious grimace, and sheathing his knife:

"*Por ma vida!* I don't know why I don't kill you now, as I mean to do at some time or other."

"So we are only two hundred miles from El Cabo de Santa Maria?" said Zuares, who was still at the wheel.

"Nor'-nor'-east," added Pedro, giving a glance at the compasses in the binnacle; two points more, Zuares."

"The monsoon will soon bring us abreast of it, I calc'late," drawled Badger, who now enjoyed the honourable post of second in command. "Thunder! then we shall all be liberty boys, and look out our go-ashore togs. I reckons on bein' all the go among the Malay gals, eh, Zuares!"

"*Vivan los marineros!*" cried the young Mexican.

"And down with the 'tarnal imps below!" added Badger, striking his huge splay foot on the deck, as he relieved the wheel, notwithstanding his brevet rank.

The headland named by the officer of the corvette is the most southern point of the long narrow island of Madagascar; but no sooner had all sounds indicative of her presence died away, than Captain Phillips and his companions, who had listened to the colloquy above, as if spell-bound, broke into expressions of bitter regret that they had not all made a scramble on deck, and risked death or anything, that some, at least, might have been saved! But these ideas came too late, and they could only hope for a better chance next time; so true it is, as some one says, that regrets for the past, and dreams for the future, make up the whole career of human life, at sea as well as on shore.

CHAPTER LIV.

THE FORTITUDE OF ETHEL.

ON the evening succeeding this day, Morley and Mr. Basset spent some hours with Ethel and Rose in the little cabin, while their friends kept their anxious watch in the outer one, over the skylight of which the sail was yet drawn. That which had been hung over the taffrail was hauled in ; but the use it had been put to prevented Captain Phillips, on this occasion, from chalking on a black board the demand for succour which he meant to exhibit from the cabin windows, if a feasible opportunity with a passing sail occurred.

There was but little conversation with the Bassets, so the time passed in sad glances and sadder sighs ; but Ethel seemed to have more confidence, more fortitude, and more hope for the future than any of those about her.

Old Nance Folgate lay on her bed, where, from time to time, she sighed over the peaceful security of her cottage in a green lane at Acton-Rennel, and groaned heavily at the reflection that she would never see it any more, or, perhaps, the solid earth again.

Rose sat on a hassock on the cabin floor, with her pretty head resting, child-like, on her father's knee, while his hands were crossed caressingly above it.

Ethel half drooped her head on Morley's shoulder, and so they sat, buried in thought and anxiety, each for the others rather than themselves, for "the passion of love and parental affection are counterparts of each other," says Reid ; "and, meeting with a proper return, are the sources of all domestic felicity, the greatest, next to that of a good conscience, which this world affords. But its joys and griefs are fitter to be sung than said."

As Mr. Basset gazed upon his two daughters, and summed up the dangers which menaced them, how bitterly he repented that he had not remained in England, even with the wreck of his fortune, and sought subsistence there in any way, rather than have stooped to the false pride which made him seek that colonial appointment, and lured him away from home.

These, and many such ideas, occurred to him when it was too late to retreat, or reverse the dictates of fate.

Morley's heart swelled with mingled love and sorrow, as he looked on Ethel's pale and delicate face. Could it be that they were only united, to be, perhaps, more surely parted

again? Surely no pair of lovers, even in the most highly-spiced "sensational novel," were ever the victims of adverse fate so much as they.

They were silent ; but their hearts understood each other, for their eyes were the interpreters of a silent language, known to lovers only. Still, as we have said, amid the horrors of anticipation, Ethel singularly preserved her presence of mind, and seemed to rise superior to the present occasion. With one hand clasped in Morley's, she sat with her Bible open on her knee, and, before they separated for the night, she read aloud the twenty-first chapter of Revelation, for religion and regard could soothe or sweeten even their adverse destiny.

On the fly-leaf of this Bible was written the autograph of her mother, "Ethel Rose Basset, London," dated on her bridal day, just twenty-four years before, so it was one of Ethel's most valued relics ; and while she read, her pallor and beauty, her pure profile and sublime composure, together with the richness and softness of her sweet English voice, were very touching ; and she had listeners without who bent their heads to hear her, for at the cabin-door were Bartelot, Morrison, and Heriot, who sat on guard, with old Noah, who, more reverent than they, doffed his battered tarpaulin in a dark corner, and, as the words fell from Ethel's lips, he hoped they might prove prophetic, for sailors generally are deeply impressed by anything appertaining to religion, though having strong doubts about the policy of voyaging with a black cat or a parson.

So Ethel read on, and Noah's grizzled head bent lower, as she read :

"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying ; neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away.

"He that overcometh shall inherit all things, for I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

"*But* the fearful, and unbelieving, the abominable and murderers, &c., shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

At such a time, in such a place, and with a dark doom perhaps hanging over all, Ethel's sweet low voice thrilled through every heart ; so she continued to inspire them with confidence, and there was almost a smile upon her father's careworn and anxious face as he kissed her and Rose, and retiring with Morley, closed the cabin-door, and left them to repose.

"Good night, Morley—good night, dear papa," was again whispered through the cabin-door.

"Good night! God bless you both, darlings," said Mr. Basset.

"Sleep if you can, dear girls," added Morley, as he and Mr. Basset picked their way through the cabin by the light of a candle (which feebly replaced the lamp that whilom swung from the beams), and joined the party who were on watch under Captain Phillips, while Tom Bartelot, with his three—for there were only eight men in all in the cabin now, opposed to twenty, including Hawkshaw—prepared to sleep while they could.

They heard the starboard tacks eased off, as the wind—the south-west monsoon—came more duly aft; and steering by the stars, Pedro, a skilful mariner, kept the ship he had captured in the course he wished her to pursue.

So, as the night stole on, a strange quiet reigned on deck—a silence which seemed almost ominous, when the characters and purpose of those who held the ship were considered; and they were more numerous now, since the death of the first mate and the steward.

But the actual reason of the extreme quietness was, that some of the crew were weary with working at the jury rigging; others had dozed themselves off to sleep, quite intoxicated, with some cases of Cliquot which they had started out of the forehold; there was scarcely any watch on deck save the man at the wheel, who permitted the ship to yaw fearfully, and to fall away from her course every moment; while the two Bar-radas, with Badger and Sharkey, were in the fore-castle, devising means to get possession of the cabin by stratagem, and to massacre its male occupants, against whom, for their skilful resistance, these pirates cherished a glow of real vengeance, as if a wrong had been done them; and if those in the cabin had but known the state of matters on deck, they might have recaptured the ship with ease, and closed the fore-scuttle like a trap on the ruffians below.

Captain Phillips was certain that they could scarcely pass through the Mozambique Channel, the narrowest part of which is about two hundred and forty miles wide, and studded with many islands, without being overhauled by some home-ward-bound ship; and though one great chance of succour had gone for nothing, so assured did he feel of ultimately getting the mutineers punished, that he kept about his own person the muster-roll—a document which every shipmaster must keep, for therein are specified his own name, with the names of all his ship's company, their birth-places, with their time and place of entering before the mast, and so forth,

together with their register-tickets—all of which he duly hoped to lay at a future day before a commissioned officer in Her Majesty's service, or some civil magistrate, prior to seeing the Barradas and their companions swinging at the yard-arm ; but, unhappily for worthy Captain Phillips and his friends, all these hopes of retribution seemed very dim and distant yet.

Slowly the night stole on.

Morley felt, he knew not why, painfully wakeful ; and, unlike his companions in the captain's watch, he had no necessity to pinch his arms, rub his eyes, or so forth, to keep as much awake as possible.

The cabin looked dreary and desolate by the feeble light of the candle, which sputtered in the wind that came between the skylight and the sail which still covered it. The broken furniture, the splintered panelling, the general air of wreck and ruin that pervaded it, the deep shadows against which the pale and haggard faces of his companions, who slept with weapon in hand, were sharply defined, seemed like a vision or dream altogether, and such he might almost have deemed it, but for the steady rolling of the ship, which was now running before the wind ; the noise of the water under the counter ; the clatter of the empty champagne bottles which strewed the deck, and with every roll of the ship flew, clashing and breaking, from port to starboard ; the clank of the rudder in its iron bands, the whistling hum of the night-wind, that sung monotonously through the rigging aloft !

He frequently turned his eyes to the dim streak of light that shone from under the door of the little cabin occupied by the sisters, and hoped that now, in the oblivion of sleep, they had found repose for a time ; and in imagination he saw their sweet faces hushed upon the same pillow, with Rose's nestling in Ethel's gentle bosom.

Twice that streak of light seemed to die away in obscurity, and twice the shadow of a foot seemed to darken it.

Were Rose or Ethel stirring ?

He listened, but all remained still there, till suddenly a gasping sob, a wild, half-stifled cry, and then the sound as of something or some one falling heavily on the cabin floor, made him leap up as with a shock of electricity, and spring towards their door.

Either it was fastened within, or his trembling fingers failed in strength when most he needed it.

Fully a minute elapsed ere he and Tom Bartelot forced

open the door, and they all crowded in, to find the little cabin quite dark.

"A light—a light! for Heaven's sake!" cried Morley.

"Oh, what new horror, what new calamity is this?" added Mr. Basset, wringing his hands, as Captain Phillips brought the candle from the tin sconce in the outer cabin.

Half disrobed for the night, as they were never completely undressed now, Rose Basset lay on the floor on her face in a swoon. Nance Folgate, beside herself with terror, was coiled up among the blankets of her berth, speechless or incoherent—otherwise the little cabin was empty, for *Ethel was no longer there!*

The Bible from which she had been reading overnight lay upon the floor, crushed, and bruised, as if by a heavy foot. Close by it was a black and gold-coloured Indian shawl, which she had worn over her shoulders; but no other trace remained in that little cabin of Ethel Basset, who seemed to have been strangely and mysteriously spirited out of it.

Morley felt stunned, and felt also how immeasurably all imagination and anticipation were unequal to portray the horror of such a shock as this!

CHAPTER LV.

THE DOOR IN THE BULKHEAD.

WE left the leaders of the mutiny in the fore-castle, consulting, in their own coarse and blustering fashion, about the capture of the cabin, and thus acquiring entire possession of the ship.

"Batten down the companion-hatch—kiver up the skylight with tarpaulin," suggested the short, thickset ruffian Sharkey, "and then smoke 'em out, like rats."

"Wa-al, but look ye here—the tew gals," drawled Badger, inserting an enormous quid in his mouth with the point of his jack-knife. "Would ye smoke 'em tew, till they went dead, eh?"

"Aye, the senioritas," added Zuarez, "that would never do; they are the best plunder on board—the plunder most to my taste, at least."

"The cabin we must and shall get," said Pedro, grinding his teeth. "While one of these men aft is permitted to live, the ship cannot be said to be ours."

"And if one should escape, anyhow," added Sharkey,

"we might have some man-o'-war in our wake before we knew where we were."

"Dead men tell no tales, darn 'em, that's old buccaneer style, long afore Kidd went a-cruising in the *Vulture*," said the Yankee; "and they or we must be gone coons, or, airthquakes and ginger! you can't reckon on what may 'appen, you can't"

"And they have possession of the bread, beef, and spirit room, and all that we most require," resumed Pedro; "for we can't eat the dry goods and hardware in the forehold, mates; so the knife it must be."

As the pirate spoke, a fierce gleam came into his eyes, and in his blind wrath he drove his knife repeatedly into the lid of the sea-chest, around which they were seated, and which proved to be the property of his American compatriot, Mr. Badger.

"Walley of Gehosophat! airthquakes and alligators!" exclaimed that personage; "keep calm dew, Pedro. Yew are getting tew riled, capting. I'd like to gouge old Phillips, rayther, and p'ison the whole bilin' of 'em aft!"

"Massa Pedro, Massa Barradas," said Quaco, the black cook, looking suddenly out of his berth with a tremendous grin on his sable visage, "I could tell you something funny—yaas! yaas!--I could."

"*Maláita!* then why the devil don't you tell it?" growled Pedro; "time is short, and I can't get the Malay proas out of my head."

"You know where the wite gals sleep?"

"Yes; out with what you have got to say, you dark-skinned fool."

"Yaas! yaas!" grinned Quaco, whose yellow eyeballs gleamed with mischief.

"Presto, quick, or my knife may tickle your ribs," roared Pedro, setting down a bottle, from which he had sucked the last drop of a mixture of champagne and brandy, compounded by Badger.

"Under the companion-stair, Massa Pedro, a door opens with a slide into the wite gals' cabin."

"*Démonio!* do you say so, darkey?"

"Can yew make tracks ahead now, capting?"

"You are certain of this, Quaco?" said Pedro, bending his black brows as he looked at the cook.

"Sartain as that um a living nigger, Massa Pedro, yaas! yaas! Boy Joe, the steward, showed it to Quaco many a time."

"And what use would you make of this door, Quaco?"

"What use?" repeated the negro, putting out a long, red tongue, while a leer, like that of a fiend, shone in his black, glittering, and half-shut eyes.

"*Hombre!* yes, speak."

"Get at the wite gals fust, and the cabin arter—yaas! yaas!—eh, Massa Pedro?"

"I reckons, Pedro, that the darkey is the only one among us with any brains in his skull, a thick 'un though it be," said Badger; "but this sliding door——"

"I will look to it now," said Pedro, staggering up, for he was very tipsy. "*Cuidado*, mates—take care who follows me till I call for help," he added, with a dark glance at Hawkshaw, who eyed him with sullen resentment from a corner of the comfortless den, of which he was now one of the occupants.

"Oh, Barradas," he exclaimed, "if you have a human soul, spare them. They will surely die."

"Oh, *demonio*, yes—yes. These fine ladies have a habit of dying, and always coming to again," said Zuares, laughing.

"Make way there," exclaimed Pedro, brandishing his knife with something of mock and more of real ferocity. "One of them is mine by a cast of the dice, and mine she shall be," he added, hoarsely and huskily, while reeling towards the ladder.

"It is for my sins I am here," groaned Hawkshaw.

"Well, it is not likely for your virtues that you are among us, mate," said Zuares, laughing.

"*Cuidar el lobo* (Beware of the wolf)!" said Pedro, with a cruel grin, as he went up through the scuttle, or little hatch of the fore-castle, and went aft with a stealthy step.

Inflamed to a dangerous pitch of rashness, lust, and savagery by the champagne and brandy, which he had been mixing and imbibing freely, this powerful and agile ruffian left the bunks on his fatal errand.

Save Bolter, the Canadian, who was at the wheel, and half tipsy too, there was not a man on deck now. Under her courses the ship was going before the wind, with a gentle breeze, which fanned pleasantly the hot, flushed face of Pedro Barradas, who paused for a moment, looked aloft, and then at the horizon.

The moon had newly risen from the sea to the eastward. To the west a line of deep crimson light, but transparent as the purest crystal, lingered between the dark horizon of the ocean and a long straight bank of black cloud, and the wave-

tops, of a deeper tint than indigo, were seen to rise and fall incessantly between. Amid this low and blood-red belt of light, a few bright stars were twinkling.

Though weird and impressive, the night was solemn and pleasing ; but all its gentle influences were lost on the ruffianly soul of Pedro Barradas.

Being barefooted, he crept along unheard, and at the companion-way he paused to listen.

No sound came from the cabin ; but he knew well that there were armed watchers below—armed better than himself—so he looked carefully to the powder in the pan of his old flint-lock and brass-barrelled Spanish pistol, felt if his knife was loose in its sheath, and then crept softly down the companion-stair, and past the cabin-door, on the inside of which Morley Ashton was seated on Mr. Basset's trunk of law-books, as already described, listening to the casual sounds, amongst which he heard neither the large bare feet of Pedro nor the creaking of the stairs, as the barricade and the straining of the ship's timbers muffled everything in the steerage.

Stooping down on his hands and knees, with his black eyes close to the bulkhead, or partition, Pedro felt about for the door mentioned by the mischievous Quaco, and discovered it at once.

It was an aperture formed in the bulkhead, about four feet high and nearly three feet broad ; it slid in grooves, like a window-sash, and could be pulled up by two brass knobs, screwed into the middle of the door for that purpose. It had evidently been made for the conveyance of stores, casks, bales, &c., in and out, when that cabin was not required by passengers ; and the strong hands of the swarthy Pedro almost trembled with ferocious joy and eagerness as he grasped the knobs, and essayed to remove the only barrier that lay between him and his helpless victims.

Stiffened by long disuse, it refused for a time to yield. At the third effort he started it, and a ray of light shone out below its lower edge. Stealthily as a tiger cat, Pedro paused to listen. All was still within, and the perfect silence there assured him that the two young ladies and their old attendant slept.

"*Bueno !*" he muttered, with a chuckle of satisfaction.

Then he inserted his hard, copper-coloured hands, and slowly and gently drew the door up within its slide, its creaking being lost amid the other sounds incident to the motion of the ship.

Stooping, he entered, and found himself almost within arm's length of the bed wherein the sisters lay, and he held his obnoxious breath as he drew nearer.

Accustomed to take every precaution, and fertile in expedients, he glanced now at the cabin-door, and saw a brass bolt on the inside. This he softly shot into its place, to prevent surprise or interruption by the occupants of the larger cabin.

Now a sound made his heart start, his eyes gleam, and his hand clutch the knife in his girdle; but it was only a prolonged snore from the old attendant, Nance Folgate.

While his dark eyes flashed with impatience, the swarthy Spanish American drew near, and looked boldly and steadily upon the sleeping girls. Both seemed so delicately pale, so beautiful and gentle, when hushed together in repose, that for a moment, as the gust of evil passion mounted to his head, he knew not upon which to pounce.

Both sisters were only partially undressed, but the closeness of the little cabin had made them partly throw off the coverlet.

Rose lay with her soft cheek reposing on Ethel's bare white shoulder, and their rounded arms, so taper and delicately fair, were clasped about each other. Shining like flossy silk, a dark tress of Ethel's hair mingled with her sister's lighter braids.

A smile that was singularly sweet played about the child-like mouth of Rose; but Ethel's face was pale and placid, and the length of the dark lashes that fringed her snow-white eyelids, imparted a charming softness to her face, while a half sigh that escaped her from time to time made her swelling bosom heave beneath her sister's cheek.

Never had their atrocious visitor looked on two such fair, soft, English faces, nestling thus abed; and there was such an air of enchanting innocence, candour, and perfect modesty about the two sleeping sisters, that, instead of calming the daring thoughts which swelled in the heart of Barradas, it served only to add fresh stings to them.

We have said that, for a moment, he was doubtful which to seize. Rose was certainly the smallest and most easily borne; but Ethel's larger form tempted him the most.

"*Que bonita!* it shall be you," he muttered.

Drawing from his muscular bull-like throat a dirty, greasy necktie, he suddenly twisted it tightly over Ethel's face, and particularly across her mouth, so that to make an outcry was impossible on her part.

He then drew her out of bed, and, in so doing, awoke

Rose, whose shrill shriek at once reached the ears of Morley Ashton.

"*A los infernos!*" cried Pedro savagely.

His knife was his first idea; but, as the girl's life was not worth taking, he dashed out the cabin lamp with his clenched hand, tore Ethel with brutal violence through the aperture by which he had entered, and shut the sliding door with a crash, preventing, but unintentionally, the entrance of his amiable brother Zuares, who had glided after him like a tawny snake, less with views of fraternal assistance, than with those of doing a little abduction on his own account.

Rose fell senseless on her face; but Ethel, recovering something of her native energy and strength, grasped the rail of the companion-stair with such vigour that all the muscle of Barradas was required to tear her tender hands away from it, and then, with an awful imprecation of mingled rage and triumph, he sprang up and bore her along the deck.

On lifting up Ethel's Indian shawl, part of it was found wedged in the port, or door in the bulkhead, thus showing at once the place and mode of ingress.

But so firmly had Barradas's strong hand shut it down that it was not until after several efforts made by Phillips and Bartelot, the avenue was opened. Then Morley pressed through, and pistol in hand, rushed like a madman on deck, just in time to see Ethel—his tender and beloved Ethel—borne by Pedro down the fore-scuttle, into the very den and stronghold of the mutineers!

As he sprang forward, an empty cask—part of the plunder—started from the hold, rolled against him; he slipped and fell heavily on the deck. Then, on rising, half stunned, he heard the sound of pistol-shots in the fore-castle, followed by a despairing cry from Ethel, and a man's hoarse howl of agony.

At that awful moment the heart of Morley died within him, and his blood seemed turned to water.

CHAPTER LVI.

ETHEL AMONG THE MUTINEERS.

IN a preceding chapter we have described the fore-castle bunks of the *Hermione*, when the ship was in a state of good order and discipline, and when that portion of her hull was daily drenched with water, when the head-pump was rigged

by the morning watch, and the swab and holystone were in daily use.

Now that dreary little den was as filthy as its dirty occupants could make it, and was strewn with half-picked bones of beef and bacon, with broken or empty bottles, and in almost every berth there lay, with his clothes on, a half-drunk seaman.

The atmosphere, redolent of tar, paint, and bilge, was stifling; moreover, it was thick with the smoke of coarse pig-tail tobacco, that obscured the rays of the feeble lamp, and rendered the place more noxious and horrible.

It was damp and chill, too, for there was an unheeded leak about the heel of the bowsprit, and near the windlass-bitts, which came through the deck into the fore-castle, and it made the place more comfortless still.

The *tout ensemble* of it, the grimy faces which looked forth upon her from the dark recesses of the bunks, the great chin and cheek-bones of Badger, the hideous Sharkey, the black visage of Quaco and others, the ferocious character of the man in whose grasp she found herself, helpless, abandoned, or only to be rescued after a scene, perhaps, of butchery and slaughter—the slaughter of her dearest friends—appalled, beyond all description, the soul of gentle Ethel Basset.

In her extreme perturbation and agony of spirit, she could not even pray; “but God often hears the heart that is silent better than the lips that speak.”

“Jee-rusalem and apple-sarce!” exclaimed the Yankee, Badger, leaping out of his berth, and standing at about half his full height, with his long fingers planted on his knees, for the space between beams was very scanty, “here comes Capting Pedro, with the black-eyed gal—the sarcy stunner that he’s been nuts on so long!”

“*Para!* hold! keep back!” said Pedro, panting, and almost breathless, as he pushed aside Badger, whose insolent face was peering within an inch of Ethel.

“Jee-rusalem! kinder rum lover you’ll make her I calkilate.”

“He’ll make her a rough one, at any rate,” added Sharkey, while a roar of coarse laughter greeted the appearance of the miserable girl, whom Pedro seated with rough kindness on a sea-chest, saying—

“*Mi queridita—estrella mia,** at Orizaba and San Francisco I was the terror of the old women and the idol of the young ones. So come, let us be friends and shipmates.”

* My little dear—my star.

He attempted to force a kiss ; but Ethel uttered a low wail, and an expression of such loathing and terror filled her face, that even he paused, and she pressed her hands upon her breast, as if her emotion would burst it.

Perceiving this action, Pedro roughly thrust his daring hand into her bosom, and tore out a packet which had lately been carried there for concealment. While holding her with one hand, he held up the packet with the other, and tore it open with his teeth.

Then he cast it from him with a malediction, on finding that it contained but a few withered leaves—the daisies she had gathered on her mother's grave.

Oh, that she were beside it now in peaceful Acton-Rennel !

“ Try some o' this, my gal,” said Badger, presenting a little gallipot full of rum-and-water ; “ its right Jamaiky ; I takes to it unkimmin, marm, like a babby to its mother's milk. Do have a drop—'alf a totful, my gal.”

Ethel shrunk back in silent misery, and Pedro kept his left hand resolutely round her waist, while holding her right hand in his.

“ Don't yew be so darned proud, my sarcy Britisher,” resumed the bantering ruffian, with an offended air. “ We'll take the pride out o' yew afore we're done with yew. I'm a true-blooded Yankee, marm, though tall enough for a Paddygonian. The Paddygonians come from South 'Merriker, Pedro's country, while I was raised about Cape Cod. Guess yew never heerd o' sich a cape in the stupid old country, though yew ought to rayther, for we licked the Britishers there, as we dew everywhere else on airth, and why shouldn't we, when their hearts are like wooden nutmegs ?”

Ethel looked round despairingly, but saw no aid, nor hope, nor mercy.

Bad, wild, and cruel though he was, there came something of pity into the eye and heart of Zuares Barradas, when he saw this lovely girl, one so fair, and so delicately nurtured, in this frightful situation—her dress torn and disordered, and blood trickling from her nostrils—in such a place, and in such hands, for he knew what was about to ensue, and he knew his elder brother to be an incarnate fiend.

There was another, half-concealed amid the smoke of this murky den, who regarded her with more than pity, and this was Cramply Hawkshaw ; but he felt that to protect her was to die, and to die he had not yet the courage.

At last her eyes met his

"Forgive me, Ethel Basset," he said, mournfully ; "oh, forgive me the past !"

"I do forgive you," she replied, in a trembling voice, "and trust a time may come when you will be able to forgive yourself."

Her soft, sweet voice seemed to thrill through the marrow of his bones.

Bad and reckless, desperate and wicked though he was, the memory of pleasant and of peaceful days—days of goodwill and happiness, when he had tried to forget his past wild life in South America—days spent at Laurel Lodge amid all the elegances of civilized life, came thronging now on Hawkshaw's mind. So the inscrutable soul of this miserable man seemed to die away within him, when he beheld, now in a felon's daring grasp, one who had been his hostess, his friend, and the object of his own most selfish passions !

Though she felt as if dying of shame and terror, fearfully pale, and calm, and holy, Ethel looked, for she thanked God in her innocent heart that she had been taken—even from Morley—and Rose left to comfort, perhaps, their beloved father, and as she folded her white and tremulous hands upon her swelling bosom, she felt that the dread hour had come when she must surely die.

Oh, who could once have foretold the awful scene of outrage through which, perhaps, her blameless life was to pass away ?

And now, as Pedro's iron grasp about her tightened, and the laughter rung around her, like a chorus of devils, she lifted her imploring eyes to Hawkshaw, and their gaze seemed to turn him into stone.

Sorrow, horror, and upbraiding—all were there expressed.

It was she, the same Ethel, that he—blood-guilty though he was, and selfish too—had ventured to love in peaceful England. She, who had never coquettishly allured nor proudly repulsed him ; but had been gentle and polite, according to the rules of well-bred society—gentle, even, and pitiful—until she knew his crimes and his character, and learned to abhor them.

All this rushed like a flood upon his memory, and Cramply Hawkshaw, with all his errors, faults, and crimes, felt, for the moment, the soul of a hero within him, and he resolved to save Ethel Basset from disgrace, or die in the effort—yea, to save her even for Morley Ashton.

"Ethel," said he in a breathless voice, "love me as a friend, and I will protect—it may be, save you !"

"Love—friendship—Oh, Hawkshaw save me if you can,

but talk not of love and friendship, after the awful past, and in presence of companions such as these," replied Ethel, shuddering.

"Alas! I feel that guilt gives a shame and horror, Ethel, which fail even to cure it."

"*Morte de Dios!*" growled Pedro, grinding his teeth, and turning round with flashing eyes; "what is this I hear?"

"Your death-shot, wretch!—take that, and die!" cried Hawkshaw, as he fired his pistol full at the dark head of Pedro Barradas, who received the shot in his elbow, just as he raised the arm to protect his face.

"Malediction!" he exclaimed, with a howl of agony, as he dropped the limb, which was fearfully shattered. Then Hawkshaw—endued with twice his natural strength—for, when roused by passion, or nerved by danger, he was no ordinary man—snatched Ethel amid the smoke, glided with her up the steps and through the fore- and aft-ports, and placed her in the arms of Dr. Heriot, who, with all her friends came rushing forward, for this episode did not occupy five minutes.

As Ethel was borne aft, a dozen of hands and arms came up through the fore- and aft-ports, and Hawkshaw was torn down within it.

"Gag him—lynch him—stick the 'tarnal varmint!" cried Badger, and the death shrieks of the miserable Hawkshaw were drowned amid the storm of maledictions which accompanied the shots and blows dealt him by the knives of Zuarez, Badger, Quaco, and others; and again and again they continued to bury them in his body, long after he was dead.

It was Pedro's howl of agony, and the two first pistol-shots, that were heard by Morley as he staggered up, half-stunned, from the deck, and felt himself seized by Tom Bartelot.

All hurried below with Ethel. The cabin was regained, the barricades were again made fast, and our friends remained ignorant that one half the mutineers were in a state of helpless intoxication; that their leader had received a severe wound, which might prove mortal, and that the miserable Hawkshaw was being butchered without mercy in the fore-castle bunks.

And so closed this night of outrage on board the *Hermione*.

CHAPTER LVII.

A SNARE LAID.

ON Ethel the effects of all she had undergone—a terror equal to the menace of death—the memory of all she had seen, Pedro bleeding from the bullet of Hawkshaw, and the latter torn back to be butchered in the very den from which he had rescued her, produced fits of hysteria and violent sickness, requiring all the skill of Dr. Heriot to soothe and subdue them.

For a time she lay in a fainting fit as in a deep sleep, with her breathing so low that it could scarcely be perceived on a mirror. Morley was in an agony of alarm, lest she should never wake more ; but this symptom was followed by strong convulsions, till tears relieved and left her very weak.

However, she was able to relate at intervals what had taken place, and how she had escaped the mutineers ; after this, she was left for a time to the care of Nance Folgate, who was great in the use of burnt feathers, hartshorn, and assafoetida.

With Rose, on recovering from her swoon, joy for her sister's sudden restoration took the form of alternate showers of tears and bursts of ringing hysterical laughter, which were painful to hear and difficult to allay, so, between them, the poor doctor had his hands quite full.

Morley and his nautical friends, who had never seen anything of this kind before, were sorely puzzled by the turns and symptoms of Rose's ailment ; for there is but little difference sometimes between the crying and the laughing of an hysterical young lady.

Physical and mental exhaustion at length brought on sleep, and Rose and Ethel lay with arms entwined, the terrible past and the dreaded future being alike committed to oblivion, unless when, at intervals, the latter seemed to see, in fancy, those grimy visages peering out from the dark berths, freezing her with affright, and Pedro's black and gloating eyes stupefying her with their terrible expression.

Gradually, however, both sisters were soothed, and calm with perfect sleep came together.

The sliding-door to the steerage was made fast by strong screws against all attempts by that avenue for the future.

"Well," whispered Heriot, as they withdrew into the cabin, "matters are improving for us forward."

"How?" asked Tom Bartelot gloomily.

"Pedro Barradas has his right arm shattered—you heard Miss Basset say so—and then there is Hawkshaw killed and flung overboard."

"Poor wretch!" said Morley.

"Two almost out of their rogues' mess," added Captain Phillips; "but I don't think Hawkshaw was very warm in their cursed business."

"His poor father, jolly old Tom Hawkshaw, of Lincoln's Inn, little foresaw an end so miserable for his only son. Poor Tom! how he did love that boy!" exclaimed Mr. Basset, wringing his hands, as he thought of his old friend.

"Judging from the state in which Miss Basset says she found those fellows forward," said Morrison. "I don't see why we shouldn't make an effort to re-capture the ship, and make every one of them walk the plank."

"My very thoughts, Mr. Morrison," said Captain Phillips, with great earnestness; "but, as yet, they still outnumber us, and, unless by stratagem, I don't see a way in the matter—a fair trial of strength would only end in our own defeat."

"Something is worth tryin', sir—I'm precious weary o' bein' bottled down here, like a rat in the cable tier," said Noah Gawthrop, who was on his knees, lighting, and puffing with distended cheeks, at a fire in the cabin-grate, preparatory to boiling coffee, for the morning was far advanced, and no one thought of sleeping now, even on the cabin-locker; "but you see, your honour, unless we had 'em all in the bilboes, or shoved clean overboard, we could never be safe."

"Not even if we had them all secured in the bunks, and the fore-scuttle shipped and battened over them?" interrupted Morley.

"No, sir, not even then," replied Noah very emphatically.

"How so?"

"'Cos, if you didn't smother 'em, they'd set the ship on fire, that all on us might go to old Davy together. The greatest varmints on land and sea are them Espanoles, as comes from South 'Meriker—I knows 'em, I does."

"Egad, Noah is right," said Tom Bartelot; "and to get the weather-gage of these fellows we must try some other plan than fisticuffs."

During this time the crew were all heard on deck rumbling about, growling and uttering threats; and by the number of seas shipped over the bows, by the lurching and pitching of the vessel, it was evident to those below that the wind had

freshened, and that an unsteady hand was on the wheel, as she was yawing, and steering wild.

By noon Ethel was almost composed, and when she reclined on her bed, with one hand clasped by her father, another in Morley's, Rose bending over her, and worthy young Dr. Heriot hovering about, she felt soothed; through all her overtaxed frame there seemed to flow a tranquillising and magnetic influence; she almost forgot that the same ship contained, but a few yards off, the source of her recent terror; her over-wrought mind grew calm, and the fever passed out of her.

"Dear papa—dear papa—kiss me. Sit closer, Morley dear," she said, in a sweet, low voice; "where is your hand, Morley?"

"Here—clasped on yours, Ethel."

"Oh, papa, if poor mamma only knew of all this!" she was beginning, when tears choked her utterance.

"Do not think of these things," whispered Morley, anxiously; "it is well she is not with us."

"Even her loss was merciful, though it nearly broke my heart, for all this would have killed her," said Mr. Basset, in a low voice.

"Oh, when will it end!—when will it end!" sobbed Rose.

"When we reeve some of those fellows up to the yard-arm, in the loop of a stout line," said Dr. Heriot. "I can't help feeling assured that we shall weather them yet, and my countryman, Morrison, who, perhaps, has the gift of the second sight, among his other accomplishments, is of the same opinion," added Heriot, with a pleasant laugh to raise their spirits.

Ethel felt safe comparatively—protected and restored; but at what a price—a human life! The life of that misguided being who first cast a shadow on her path.

She recalled his last words and forgave him all, for his closing act had been one of devotion towards herself. But for him, she might, or must have been, destroyed. The imagination of all from which he had saved her made her shudder in her soul, and froze her very marrow! Poor Hawkshaw, she might almost call him now, as he had gone so summarily to his dread account, gashed with many a wound, and cast into the sea, without prayer, or shroud, or grave—cast with all his sins and errors on his head and on his soul!

She shuddered, we say, as she thought fearfully of these

dire things, and clasped more tightly the kind hands of those who sat beside her.

Morley, too, felt that he could freely forgive Hawkshaw now ; for his nature was brave, generous, and gentle, and he wondered whether, when dying, that unfortunate wretch had felt what *he* endured—first, when he was flung over Acton Chine ; and, second, when the shattered wreck of the *Princess* parted, and he found himself, as he believed, drowning in the water—the intense rapidity with which thought and memory rushed through his soul, as he hung for a moment between two lives, one to come, and one that seemed passing away—how all the loves and memories, faces of friends and foes, sins of omission and commission, all the errors and shortcomings of his existence flashed with the rapidity of light upon his maddened mind ; bodily suffering, on those two occasions, he had none—it was all mental, and the most acute of its kind.

Had Hawkshaw felt all this when the death-shot rang in his ears, and the assassins' knives were clashing in his body ?

He must have felt this emotion ; and Morley, with that conviction, and the knowledge that he (Hawkshaw) had saved Ethel Basset at the price of his own unhappy existence, felt in his honest heart that he could freely forgive him all the past.

But this spirit of forgiveness by no means extended itself to Pedro Barradas, against whom he cherished the most undying vengeance, when he thought of the terror Ethel had suffered at his hands, and, more than all, the horrors she had escaped.

Meanwhile, the elder Barradas, maddened with the agony occasioned by his shattered limb, which none on board, save Dr. Heriot, could dress or reduce—for the fracture was compound, the ball and socket of the elbow being completely smashed—was scheming out revenge and fresh outrages, which he found a difficulty in putting in practice, as the same wound which reduced his bodily strength, and stung his soul with rage and pain, deprived him of the influence he formerly exercised over his companions—an influence that he maintained physically rather than morally.

He supposed that they must be several miles up the Mozambique Channel, and he remembered the Malay proas ; thus every hour rendered the necessity greater for having entire possession of the ship and for destroying those in the cabin, for if but one of these escaped, he and all his companions might yet swing as pirates, and, knowing that Mr.

Basset was a lawyer—a judge or legal functionary of high position—caused the crew to cherish a peculiar dread and aversion of him in particular.

There were times when, in the intervals of his bodily and mental fury—both of which the copious use of ardent spirits had greatly inflamed—he conceived the idea of running the ship ashore on the first land he made, or of setting her on fire in mid-ocean, that all might perish, and so frequently did he mutter of these things that Zuares, Badger, Sharkey, and the rest, knowing the desperation of his character, and the resolute cruelty of which he was capable, feared that he might put his terrible threats into execution.

As for asking Dr. Heriot to dress his wound, or by a touch of his skill to lessen the agony that wrung the bead-drops from his tawny brow, he never thought of such a thing! To expect an act of such mercy or generosity never occurred to his cruel mind as being within the compass of possibility; but he now conceived and prepared to execute a very subtle plan for gaining possession of Ethel Basset, and through her, as hostage, compelling Heriot to dress his shattered limb, after which he would destroy them all without mercy; and as these ideas occurred to him he gnashed his sharp white teeth and uttered a roar that was something between a laugh of savage exultation and a howl of agony.

CHAPTER LVIII.

MR. BASSET DELUDED.

NOON was drawing slowly on; Ethel and Rose were still sleeping, when the tarpaulin, or spare mizzen-topsail, which had so long covered the skylight, was withdrawn from above, and a flood, it seemed, of sunny radiance, streamed into the cabin, the occupants of which saw the blue sky overhead for the first time these several days past.

“Below there, Captain Phillips!” cried a voice.

“Hollo! who are you that hail?”

“Bolter—Benjamin Bolter, sir.”

“Well, fellow?”

“May I talk to you a'thout bein' fired on?”

“Certainly; come forward.”

Bolter, the Canadian, appeared at the rim of the skylight, looking down with watery, bloodshot eyes, a pale, unwhole-

some visage, and a black mouth, furred by dissipation and squalor.

"What do you want?" demanded Captain Phillips, with a tone of impatience and authority.

"Pedro Barradas has sent me aft to speak to you."

"About what?"

"The state o' matters aboard, sir."

"Oho! you are coming to your senses at last, are you?"

"Perhaps so, sir," said Bolter, giving a covert wink, full of sly wickedness, to Sharkey, who stood near him on deck, unseen by those below, and with his tongue thrust into his cheek.

"Well—speak out!"

"Pedro Barradas is severely wounded, sir; his right elbow is knocked all to splinters."

"Glad to hear it; hope he may slip his cable in the turn of a hand. Which of his precious friends did this for him?"

"Mr. Hawkshaw, who has been knocked on the head and flung overboard, after a bit of a scrimmage for'ard."

"Well—well?" said the captain, impatiently.

"Pedro can't come aft, sir, so he wishes one of the gentlemen below to come for'ard, that we may all toe a line, beg pardon for what's past, and make some terms with you."

"Oho!"

"He says, sir," resumed the Canadian, in a whining voice, "that he would rather have Mr. Basset than anyone else."

"Why?"

"Bein' a gentleman as is bred to the law, for which he has a very particklar respect."

Mr. Basset grew a little pale on hearing this selection; but, knowing how important was the stroke that might be won by a little skilful diplomacy—

"I am ready to go—ready to meet these men, if—if—you think good will come of it, Captain Phillips," said he, while his mind became full of apt quotations from the Mutiny Act, "Shee's Edition of Lord Tenderden," and so forth, for the harangue which, mentally, he proposed to make the misguided and—as he supposed—now repentant mutineers.

"But we have no hostage for your safety, sir," urged Dr. Heriot.

"Hostage—safety—am I in danger, think you?" stammered Mr. Basset.

"The venture is not without peril. And why have they selected *you*?"

"As a legal man, and as a neutral party, I learn from what

their messenger says," replied Mr. Basset, gathering courage as he thought of his commission as judge in the supreme civil and criminal court of the Isle of France. "Shall I go, Captain Phillips?"

"If you will venture, and can succeed in bringing back these fellows to a sense of their crimes, and of their duty, an unspeakable boon will be conferred on us all; but they must agree to put the leaders in bilboes, or set them adrift in the dingy, which they please. They must also give up all their knives, pistols, and other weapons."

"Of course, of course."

"See, my dear sir, at all events, what they want."

"There is one thing as we wants badly, sir," said Bolter, twirling his tarpaulin hat, and scratching his head; "and that is some brandy, or rum, we ain't particklar which; and a few bottles would go a long way to heal old sores."

"Some brandy?—granted."

"We have a gallon jar in the steward's locker," said Mr. Foster, the second mate.

"Then hoist it out."

Dr. Heriot anticipated Foster by opening the locker, when he soon found the jar, which he proceeded at once to uncork.

"Why, doctor, you don't mean to make it pay toll, do you?" asked Tom Bartelot.

Heriot placed a finger on his lip, as if to impose silence on the speaker, and, pouring out about a pint of the brandy, he substituted for it the contents of a large phial, a clear and pellucid fluid, after which he passed up the jar into the hands of Mr. Bolter, who received it with a very solicitous and affectionate expression of eye.

"What, in Heaven's name, have you done, doctor—not poisoned the stuff—eh?" asked Phillips, in a whisper of alarm; "what was that you poured in?"

"Morphia—strong morphia, and another powerful narcotic—nearly all I had, too," replied the doctor, in a similar whisper. "It will serve to throw some of them, at least, into a sound sleep, and thus enable us to overpower the rest, if need be. This will render us independent of their terms, their promises, and their repentance."

"Now, will Mr. Basset come on deck and meet Pedro Barradas?" asked the Canadian, in his nasal twang.

"Take care, my dear sir, that this is not some lure?" said Morley, interposing.

"Lure?" repeated Mr. Basset, turning pale again.

"A snare, perhaps."

"Aye—a regular plant—they're rum chaps, these Spaniards and Yankees," added Noah, sententiously.

"Nevertheless, I shall try," replied the good easy man, as he thought of his two poor girls, and hoped the time was almost come when they might be considered comparatively safe.

"You have your revolver, sir?" asked Morley.

"All right," replied Mr. Basset, slapping his breast confidently.

"It is loaded?"

"Yes—of course."

"Let me see it, please?"

"Whew," whistled the doctor; "my dear sir, there is not a single cap on the nipples!"

"Bless me, you don't say so?" ejaculated poor Mr. Basset, who looked, what he really was, as little used to the handling of revolvers as to facing mutineers.

Heriot examined the six chambers, and found them all loaded; he capped the nipples, and gave the weapon to Mr. Basset, who concealed it again in the breast-pocket of his coat, and tried to assume a jaunty air, but failed.

"Now then, Mr. Basset, are you goin' to be all day of tumblin' up?" growled Bolter, stamping on the deck.

Mr. Basset gave a wistful glance at the door of his girls' sleeping-place, as the barricades of the cabin were secured, and then he ascended to the deck, with a heart that beat very fast indeed!

The dirty and disorderly state of the ship did not strike Mr. Basset's unprofessional eye, so much as the aspect of the crew impressed him, when he descended from the break of the quarter-deck, and walked forward to where Pedro Barradas was seated on the horizontal beam of the windlass, endeavouring to soothe himself by smoking, and in his rage half chewing the paper cigaritos, which his brother Zuares made for him; and close by was placed the uncorked brandy jar, which Bolter had carried forward, with a very triumphant expression.

Mr. Basset's heart sank, when he found himself among these squalid desperadoes, whose persons were now filthy in the extreme; their eyes were wild and wolfish in expression, their faces bloated, and obscured by sores and bruises; but still lower would his heart have sunk, had his eye detected the ominous noose that dangled at the weather-arm of the foreyard!

From his seat on the windlass, Pedro Barradas surveyed

the poor gentleman, with black eyes, to which the glare of passionate hate and mental insanity, conduced by extreme bodily pain, imparted a terrible expression.

Enveloped in bloody bandages, his right arm hung powerless by his side. The fingers of the once strong hand seemed dead and livid now. His ear, which had been wounded by a pistol shot, was now a festering sore, amid which his coal black hair was matted; his bare brawny feet beat the deck with restless impatience, and spitting out to leeward the end of a paper cigarito, he showed all his white glistening teeth beneath his dark moustache, on the approach of Mr. Basset.

"Presto! come forward quick, you lubberly scribano," he roared out.

"You wish to see me!" began Mr. Basset, in faltering accents, for this mode of reception, and its tone, by no means reassured him.

"To see you—yes," said Pedro, while a spasm of agony convulsed his tawny visage; "Badger overhaul and lash him fast!" he suddenly exclaimed.

On hearing this alarming order, the meaning of which he imperfectly understood, Mr. Basset was about to rush away; but the powerful hand of the gigantic Yankee was inserted in his collar, and others were busy about his person: thus he was speedily deprived of his watch, rings, and the revolver, the appearance of which excited a shout of derisive laughter.

Then, almost before he knew where he was, Bolter, the Canadian, had tied his wrists together with a piece of cord.

"Now, stranger, yew air fixed proper, I reckon—you air," snivelled the Yankee, with a broad grin; "Jeeusalem! yew air in an almighty fright!"

"He shall be yet in a greater," said Pedro, in a husky voice; "where is the line from the yard-arm?"

"Here," said Zuares, as a rope was suddenly cast over Mr. Basset's head, and looped round his neck—a rope which, while his blood ran cold, he saw came down from a block at the yard-arm.

"Lash another line to him for a down-haul," said Pedro.

And Badger did so instantly, by looping a rope round Mr. Basset's ankles.

"My God! my God!—my good men," he said, in trembling accents; "you do not—you, you cannot——"

"Mean to hang you, eh? Yes, but we do," grinned Pedro.

"Yaas—yaas, Massa Basset, we'll make you dance ebber so 'igh," added Quaco, with a yelling laugh.

"Silence, you black devil," roared Pedro, gnashing his

teeth; "who gave you leave to speak here. Away to the caboose, and look after your coppers. Yes, Mr. Basset, we mean to hang you unless Dr. Heriot will come forward and dress my wounded arm. And more than that—unless your two girls come forward here among us, to ransom you. Do you understand all that, eh?"

Mute with fear, and the awful dread of impending death, and such a death—feeling all the futility of seeking mercy from the merciless—the unhappy Mr. Basset stood in a cold sweat before this demon of a man. He had but one idea prominent amid the chaos of his thoughts, that never more would he look upon the faces of his children.

"Pass the word aft that the rope is knotted and rove," said the inexorable Pedro.

Badger ascended the break of the quarter-deck, and peeping down the skylight, said:

"You below thar?"

"Well—hallo—what do you want?" asked Captain Phillips.

"Jest to say, friends, as Captain Barradas will string your precious judge up to the arm of the fore-yard in a brace o' shakes, if yew, Dr. Heriot, don't come for'ard and dress his wounded arm" (at these words, the proposal he heard of chaining him to the mast flashed upon Heriot's memory), "and if yew all don't give up the tew gals you reckon on keeping for yourselves. If yew understand all that, yew had better be quick, yew had."

"Be off, you rascally Yankee, or I'll mar your seamanship!" said Captain Phillips.

"I hope to crop that rascal's auricular appendages before we part," said Heriot, in a voice not unlike a groan.

"Wa-al, lookye here, be quick, I say," resumed Badger, in a nasal twang, "for Pedro's in a very bad humour to-day, and there'll be an almighty airthquake aboard in another minute."

The words, the manner, and bearing of this fellow created great consternation in the cabin. More than once had Morley levelled the barrel of his pistol at Badger's head, but paused, with his finger throbbing on the trigger, and fearing to fire, lest, by doing so, he might jeopardise the father of Ethel.

"Are the girls coming?" said Pedro, in a low voice of concentrated passion and pain, when Badger returned.

"Never—never, assassin and coward!" exclaimed Mr. Basset; "destroy me, if you will—but—but—oh, Heaven!—oh, my poor girls!"

He hung his head and wept, as his voice failed him, in the excess of his misery.

"Hang the judge—hang him!" said the short, squat ruffian, Sharkey, as he danced a hornpipe with a vigorous double shuffle round their pale victim; no doubt he hopes to hang us some day."

This idea was conclusive.

"Mercy! Listen to me, good fellows—listen!" cried poor Mr. Basset, starting wildly, as the rope began to tighten.

"Mercy—save me, save me—Morley, Captain Phillips!"

Pedro's eyes filled with their most dangerous gleam. Despite the agony of his shattered arm, in his hatred of law, lawyers, order, and persons in authority, he almost smiled at the idea of thus degrading and executing a legal functionary.

"*Ahorcar! ahorcar!*—to the yard-arm with *el Senor Juez!* Away with him, and aft with the line!" he exclaimed in a hoarse voice, as the crew tallied on and ran aft with a derisive cheer, and, at the same moment, Mr. Basset was swung strangling off his feet, and run, with a violent jerk, to the arm of the foreyard to windward, where the unhappy man, hanging, in strong convulsions, and in all the agonies of death, presented a horrible spectacle to Morley Ashton, who had crept up the companion-stair and peeped out.

"Oh, Father of Mercy!" he exclaimed, and sank almost fainting on his knees, incapable for a few moments of action or speech.

After hanging thus for several minutes, the body of Mr. Basset was lowered with another jerk, brought on board by the down-haul attached to the ankles, and, amid loud yells of derisive laughter, it was flung into the cabin through the still open skylight, just as Morley, deathly pale, and trembling in every limb, tottered back to tell what he had seen on deck.

CHAPTER LIX.

LUX VENIT AB ALTO.

PITY for Mr. Basset, and intense commiseration for his two daughters, soon gave place in the hearts of his friends to a dire longing for vengeance on the treacherous authors of this new atrocity.

"Secure the door, Morley—quick, or they may be on us!" cried Heriot, as he threw off his coat and rolled up his shirt-sleeves.

"There is no danger of their attacking us," replied Morley Ashton, panting and breathless.

"Why so?" asked Phillips, with an oath.

"Because these wretches are already busy with the brandy jar."

"All the better," replied the Scotch doctor, with a sombre frown. "Keep your pistols and the gun ready—pot the first villain who comes within range through the skylight. Poor Mr. Basset! poor Mr. Basset! Bartelot and Morrison, assist me, please; we have work to do—quick, before the ladies wake and hear us."

The body of Mr. Basset was laid on Captain Phillips's bed, and the hateful rope which still compressed his throat, together with the cord that secured his wrists, was cut off and flung away by Heriot's ready hand.

Blackened, swollen in features, and horribly disfigured, with protruding eyes and tongue, few would have recognised, save by his dress, the bland and smiling smooth-skinned, close-shaved, and rather florid gentleman of a few minutes ago.

"Dead—quite dead!" groaned Morley, as he hung over him; "my poor friend—oh, my poor friend! so kind—so gentle—so amiable!"

"What a fate his has been!" added Tom Bartelot.

"And who is to tell it to his poor girls?" said Morrison.

"Ethel, at least," whispered Heriot, with a significant glance at Morley, "must be kept as long as possible in ignorance; after the shock of last night to know of this might have a most serious effect upon her nervous system."

"Papa, papa, speak with me, please!" they heard her soft, pleasant voice say at that moment.

"Say what you will, or can, Ashton; but Miss Basset must not see her father yet," said Heriot, hastily; "the shock, as I have said, might be dangerous, for his aspect is terrible."

"Speak to me, dear papa, for one moment. I have had such a horrible dream, and all about you," she said again.

Amid the deep muttered expressions of rage and commiseration made by his companions, Morley, pale and trembling, tapped at her cabin door, and, opening it a little way, whispered that Mr. Basset was asleep, and must not be disturbed.

"Must not," she repeated with alarm; "is papa ill?"

"Oh, no; but——"

"But what?"

"Only in a deep sleep," he replied, with a sigh of bitterness, as he closed the door, fearing to excite her alarm further.

"Is this fatal outrage completed?—is the poor gentleman quite dead?" asked Captain Phillips, in a low and impressive voice.

"I fear so, I fear so," replied Heriot, with growing agitation; "I can detect no sign whatever of life, and even warmth is passing away."

"But remember, doctor," said Morrison, earnestly and anxiously, "that the time of—of strangulation was short, and death by being run up to the yard-arm is not so instantaneous as by the drop from a regular scaffold ashore."

"Of course, Morrison, I know that; but——" the doctor paused, and shook his head sadly.

"Horrible difference!" thought Morley, with a shudder of mingled rage and grief, while he clenched his teeth and hands.

"But our poor friend was a heavy man and of a full habit. He is already becoming cold. No breath—no pulsation," added Heriot, placing his hand on Mr. Basset's heart.

"Quite dead, you think?" asked Morley, whose eyes filled with tears, as the memory of happy years long past, and sincere pity for the two girls, rushed into his mind.

"Beyond hope, I fear," muttered Heriot, who, however, still continued, mechanically, as it were, to feel the pulse and chafe the rigid limbs.

"The scoundrels—the black-hearted scoundrels! oh, to have revenge for all this!" exclaimed Captain Phillips, stamping his feet on the cabin floor.

"Our numbers decrease. First we lost poor Manfredi, then Joe, the steward, then Sam Quail, and now Mr. Basset," said Foster, the second mate; "whose turn will it be next?"

"Hush!—remember the young ladies," said Heriot, looking up, warningly.

Cold nearly, ghastly pale, where not livid and discoloured, and rendered horrible in feature by past convulsions, poor Mr. Basset's case seemed, indeed, hopeless; yet Leslie Heriot, inspired by his love for Rose, by perhaps something of the dogged perseverance of his country, by the regard he really bore Mr. Basset, and an enthusiasm for his profession, with a reliance on his own skill, which was by no means small; imbued, we say, by all these, he felt inclined to attempt something unusual in his art, and proceeded at once to put it in practice.

As the idea of struggling with death, of restoring life and animation to that still and corpse-like form occurred to him, a sudden light shone in the handsome young doctor's eyes; his cheek flushed, and there was a charming brightness and

animation in all his features, as he bustled about, and unlocked the medicine-chest and case of instruments.

"At all events I will try, I will try," he muttered to himself; "in great attempts 'tis glorious e'en to fail."

He perceived that blood oozed out from a cut in the forehead, received when the body of their victim was flung by the mutineers through the skylight into the cabin.

The sight of this blood gave him fresh hope, and he commenced operations at once, and with confident determination, while those around, who had never witnessed such a scene, or heard of such an attempt before, beheld him with wonder, and obeyed all his orders with alacrity.

With his love for Rose, and his medical enthusiasm, there mingled something of religious fervour and much of human kindness, and selecting carefully a lancet, he almost uttered a prayer of hope, as he opened the temporal artery, and then the external jugular—a vein which runs along the neck, just beneath the skin, and returns the blood from the head to the heart; but he sighed with doubt on finding the circulation stopped in both, and that a little coagulated blood only appeared at each orifice.

With the assistance of Morley and Tom Bartelot, he stripped the body in haste, and proceeded to rub the back, mouth and neck vigorously, with volatile salts and fine oil.

When they grew weary, Captain Phillips and Mr. Foster relieved them, and the arms and legs were well lubricated in the same fashion, to restore and promote circulation.

Puffs of strong tobacco were blown up the nostrils and into the mouth, when these were compressed; but an hour and more elapsed without any sign of returning animation, and even Heriot was beginning to despair (as his companions had done long before) when, after making a small incision in the skin of the windpipe, through which, with his own breath, he sought to inflate the lungs, by breathing strongly through a cannula, a cry of joy escaped him.

The blood from the temporal artery was now trickling down the pale, discoloured face!

Heriot snatched up Mr. Basset's right hand, and applied his fingers to the wrist.

"The pulse—the pulse begins to beat!" he exclaimed; "quick, Morley!—place that bottle of sal-ammoniac under his nostrils."

Morley did so, and soon an exclamation escaped from all, on beholding Mr. Basset, open and close each eye alternately.

He was then raised up in the kind and sturdy arms of Noah

Gawthrop, while Heriot poured some warm brandy-and-water down his throat ; after which a sound like a groan left his lips.

“Victory ! blessed be God !” exclaimed Heriot, as he struck his hands together, and thought of Rose Basset, with her sweet loving smiles, and an honest moisture dimmed his eyes ; “he lives, after all !”

“Thanks to your skill, doctor,” said Tom Bartelot ; “the world should hear of this.”

“Nay—no thanks to me,” replied Heriot ; what used we to learn at school, Morrison ? *Lux venit ab alto.*”

“All light comes from above,” translated Morrison, without hesitation.

A low wall beside them made all turn from the bed whereon the body lay, and, to their dismay, they beheld Ethel standing near, pale as death, mute and rigid, her large dark eyes dilated with blank horror and bewilderment, while surveying the scene before her, as if she strove, but failed, to realise or understand it.

CHAPTER LX.

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW.

“AH, Miss Basset, leave us—do leave us, for Heaven’s sake,—this is no scene for you !” said Heriot, half imperatively, half entreatingly. “Ashton, I can ill spare you, but do lead her away. Tell her all if you choose, now. There is, I hope, no further fear.”

Morley put his arms round Ethel, and lifted her back into her cabin.

Still she did not speak, though her pale lips and inquiring eyes showed how eagerly she sought an explanation of the terrible scene formed by the busy group ; but Morley was silent, for he knew not how to begin, and contented himself by repeating, as people usually do, that she must compose herself, be calm, and so forth.

“Compose myself for what ?” she asked, suddenly. “What has happened ?—who is injured ? Not papa—not my papa, surely ?”

“Yes, Ethel, your papa,” replied Morley, retaining her hands firmly in his own.

She uttered a cry, and was breaking from him, when he restrained her in his arms.

"Pardon me, Ethel—dear Ethel, pardon me," he continued to repeat; "your father has suffered much maltreatment at the hands of those villains on deck; but Dr. Heriot has nearly restored him—a little time, and he shall tell you all about it himself."

"Oh," she sobbed, and, overcome by emotion, dropped her head on Morley's shoulder; my father—my loved papa!"

And, as she spoke, how convulsively the white bosom heaved.

Impulsive, and wildly energetic, Rose Basset now tried to escape from the cabin; but Morley placed his back against the door, and strove to soothe and to retain her.

At first, it would appear that Ethel had not recognised her father in that stripped man, whose face was swollen, streaked with blood, and livid by recent strangulation; and thus, unobserved, she had overlooked the operations of Heriot for nearly a minute in silent bewilderment and alarm.

She was almost fainting again on learning that this helpless patient was her father, but gathered courage from the energy of Rose, who kept incessantly repeating:

"Let me out, Morley—let me go to papa! I must—I shall get out! *Mr. Ashton*, will you dare to keep me from papa, who is ill?"

Then Ethel joined with her, and insisted so touchingly and so vehemently, that Morley was compelled to yield, and they rushed to the bedside of Mr. Basset, just as Heriot and Tom Bartelot placed him in a comfortable sitting posture, well bolstered up, and covered with warm blankets, where he sat, breathing heavily; but with his eyes closed, and his head reclining on the shoulder of the young doctor, in whose face there shone a bright smile of joy and triumph.

"Papa, papa, speak to me!" cried Ethel, in a piercing voice, as she thrust herself between Captain Phillips and Tom Bartelot, knelt by the side of the bed—which was nearly level with the cabin-floor—and stroked his brow with a delicate and tremulous hand, while caressingly she drew his head upon her own breast; "you are not dying, papa—you cannot be dying! oh, say so—speak to your own Ethel!"

A slight quivering of the eyelids, and, if possible, a heavier respiration, was his sole response.

Again she spoke to him more imploringly, and this time the head was raised for a moment, but only to drop more heavily on her bosom.

"Will he die?—will he die?—speak Leslie!" exclaimed Rose, while wringing her hands.

"No, not if my skill, with God's blessing, can save him, Rose. He is recovering rapidly."

"But recovering from what?" asked Ethel, shrilly; "what manner of ailment or maltreatment is this?"

"Himself will tell you all about it to-morrow; to-day he must sleep—I say must, my dear Miss Basset," said Heriot, in an impressive whisper.

"Oh, that by dying I could save my papa—my own dear papa!" cried Rose, as she rocked herself to and fro, her eyes streaming with tears the while.

"Don't talk so, Rose," said Heriot, almost angrily; "people can do more good by living than by dying, so, if you are determined to stay here, let us see what a dear little nurse you can make. There is no assistant a medical man appreciates so much as a capital nurse; so look alive, you little fairy—end this bother, and squeeze that sponge."

Heriot's cheerful and confident manner did more to soothe and reassure Ethel and Rose than all the friendly hopes expressed by the others—even by Morley Ashton. Ethel patted him on the cheek and kissed him, and bluff Captain Phillips too; which made old Noah Gawthrop's eyes begin to twinkle, and he wiped his mouth with the sleeve of his jacket, and thrust his quid of pigtail into a remote corner of his jaws, in the hope that his turn would come in time.

"There is a crisis in the life of everybody;" Ethel Basset had passed that crisis, but it had been one of woe and terror.

She had passed, as it were, through a tempest of emotions and alarms of late—emotions that had separated her from her girlish life, strengthened her mental powers, and developed her faculties. So she sought to brace up her energies for trials that might yet be to come—to be a woman of action, rather than, like poor little Rose, a girl of thoughts and tears.

So now she bent all the energies of life and affection to nursing her father, upon whom, as the evening deepened, a heavy slumber stole; thus, left by his side, alone—Rose had fallen asleep, exhausted—she sat and watched, heedless of her friends, who were occupied elsewhere, and heedless whether the ship was becalmed, or rushing before a gale of wind.

Ethel remembered the death of her mother, and the dull stunning sense of a mighty and unwonted calamity and loss—the yawning of a chasm that never more would close; the hushing of a familiar voice that would never more be heard; the passing away of a beloved face, that would never more be seen; and she remembered the calm aspect of the corpse

disposed in its coffin, lined with white satin, laid on her own bed, with white curtains draped up—the same bed in which all her children had been born, around which they had all hovered for weeks in the close atmosphere of a sick room, hushed into silence and on tiptoe, and about which they had all knelt with bowed heads, as the spirit that had lingered for hours between eternity and time fled at last on its mysterious and unknown journey; and Ethel felt that then she could pray.

Now she knelt by her father's side, in that little and confined cabin, where no sound reached her but his deep breathing, and the jarring of the night-lamp that swung from the beam above, and swayed to and fro as the ship rolled, casting weird gleams alike on the pale face of the watcher, and the discoloured features of the sleeper; but she, more stunned and more bewildered than ever, had neither words nor language, nor, at times, coherent thought in her soul, yet that soul was full of a dumb, despairing entreaty of Heaven, but in what form she neither knew nor felt, and scarcely did the chaos of her mind enable her to know what she would ask.

Rose was not with her now, we have said.

Poor child, her grief was noisy, and full of tears, so she had long since cried herself to sleep beside old Nance Folgate.

“Is not all this some phantasmagoria, or am I turning mad?” thought Ethel. “Why am I so far away from Laurel Lodge—far away upon this world of waters, and enduring all these miseries? Ah, my God! if all these should be but the dreams of insanity?”

She feared this all the more that, by some idiosyncrasy of the human mind, amid the horror of her great grief, she was haunted, almost tormented, by a frivolous song and air she used to sing at home.

Why was this, and how was this? The number of brass rings on the curtain rods, the gyrations of the flies, that buzzed about the night-lamp and clustered on the beams overhead, the knots in the wainscot, that seemed, especially when in shadow, to become quaint and freakish faces, all mingled with the memory of this song, which struggled for mastery with the prayers she sought to say, and with the awful idea that her father was dying, and that he and she were alone together in that fatal ship upon the midnight sea.

Anon, the singular and most unwonted silence that reigned

around her, the absence of all sounds in the cabin, roused her at last to external objects.

She looked out of the little state-room in which her father lay; the cabin was empty; Morley, Bartelot, Captain Phillips, and all were gone!

She looked at her watch; the time was a quarter to twelve. Midnight was at hand.

New and vague terrors seized her; she ran to her own cabin, and found Rose still asleep beside their old nurse.

"Morley!" cried Ethel, in great alarm; "Morley! where are you?"

But the cabin was dark; she received no answer, and heard no sound but the regulated clatter of the rudder in its case, and the wind whistling drearily through the mizzen-top.

Ere this a great change had taken place on board the *Hermione*; but the relation of what had occurred deserves a chapter to itself.

CHAPTER LXI.

THE QUARTER-BOAT AND ITS FREIGHT.

THE silence below was caused simply by the circumstance—a somewhat unusual one now—of all her friends being on *deck*.

They had recovered complete possession of the half-dismantled ship.

So busy had they all been about the restoration of Mr. Basset, that they heard nothing of the ribald songs, the wild uproar, and systematic noise of the crew, who were all clustered forward about the fore-castle and windlass-bitts—a coarse and brutish hilarity induced by the contents of the brandy jar. Of this they had all freely partaken; none more so, perhaps, than Pedro Barradas, to deaden or drown the sense of agony he endured in his wounded arm, which was now bringing on a species of remorse for the past, and *that* emotion he sedulously sought to lull or stifle too.

An unnatural stillness succeeding the uproar which had reigned so long on deck, attracted, however, the attention of Captain Phillips and Tom Bartelot; and, as Mr. Basset had now been consigned to the care of Ethel, they began to confer with the rest about the probable results of the jar of drugged brandy.

"The scoundrels, I believe, are all asleep, or dead drunk," suggested Dr. Heriot; "I was not particular to a scruple about the morphia and belladonna I poured in."

"Then now is our time to retake the ship, and send every one of them to leeward," said Captain Phillips, starting up from the cabin-locker. "Look to your pistols, my good friends, and follow me."

The barricades were removed from the cabin-door, and those who had been so long imprisoned below crept up the companion-stairs, and peeped out in succession.

Overhead "the blue, wide shell of the sky," as Ossian names it, was clear and starry, and the waning moon, cold, pale, and white, shone over the calm, still ocean from the horizon, casting the weird shadow of the ship far to the westward, over the silvered sea.

The *Hermione* was almost becalmed, and most fortunately for the safety of all. Her fore and main courses, with a single neglected reef in each, hung motionless, like two great tableclothes on a clothes-line. Unhoisted, the jib and fore-staysail, "lay in a blessed ruck," as Noah phrased it, each at the foot of the stays. The driver was brailed up, and its gaff and boom swayed idly to and fro. The deck was encumbered by spars, yards, bundles of sails, half-coiled ropes, and much of the *débris* that had come down from aloft when the ship broached to on the night of the mutiny, together with casks, boxes, sacks, empty bottles, and other things which had been brought out of the hold, one of the hatches of which was still open; and thus the disordered ship was floating like a log upon the water, at the mercy of any sudden squall or gale, her abandoned wheel, revolving some four or five spokes from port to starboard ever and anon, with an impatient jerk as the rudder grated from side to side on its iron pintles, though it had been "made fast," in a very loose fashion, by the steersman.

Near it lay that official, a seaman named William Cribbet, asleep, in a stupor apparently, so Noah pulled a few fathoms of stout yarn from his pocket, sprang upon him with an exclamation which was not quite a benediction, turned him on his face, and in a trice lashed his hands hard and fast behind his back.

Proceeding forward, they found fifteen or sixteen of the crew lying about the break of the fore-castle, under the long-boat, or near the windlass-bitts, some on pieces of sail, and others on the bare deck; but all asleep, or snorting in a state of idiotic intoxication. Broken in pieces, and scattered about

were fragments of the brandy-jar, the contents of which brought all this to pass.

Each man in succession they tied securely, though one or two attempted to resist, even when the cold muzzle of a cocked pistol was pressed against their ears; and others began to threaten and revile their captors, as the operation of binding roused, and partially sobered them. At last every man was bound and at their mercy.

"What are we to do with them now, Captain Phillips?" asked Morley.

"Short-handed as we are, we can never work the ship, even dismantled as she is, and watch and cook for all these villains, too," said Mr. Foster; "and as for trusting 'em again——"

"Trust them again—cook for them indeed!" exclaimed Captain Phillips; "cook for a gang of pirates and murderers—feed up what ought to be hung! It is a mercy from Heaven that no breeze or gale came on ere this, for we must have foundered then, and all gone to the bottom together. No, Mr. Foster; I shall neither keep them nor feed them, but overboard they shall go, every man and mother's son!"

"Drown them, do you mean?" asked Tom Bartelot, with anxious surprise.

"No, for that might cause an unpleasant imputation on us all."

"What then?"

"I mean simply to maroon the whole gang. They shall have a chance for their worthless lives; but not aboard my ship."

"On an island—there should be several hereabout, that is, if we are near Madagascar," observed Bartelot.

"No, I shall not wait for the chance of sighting land, but will sacrifice my good quarter-boat, and with it get rid of them all. Noah Gawthrop, jump into the quarter-boat and clear the fall tackle. Mr. Morrison and Mr. Ashton, please to cast off—stand by to lower away and bring her alongside."

"Under the mizzen-chains?" asked Morley.

"Yes, round here to the port-side."

This order was promptly obeyed, for anything like freedom became a luxury now. Quickly the double-sheaved blocks revolved as the davits swung round and tackles fell; then the boat was speedily made fast by Noah to the side-chains by the bow-rope.

"Mr. Foster," said Captain Phillips, "get up a gang-cask of fresh water, and also a few dozen of biscuit from the cabin—"

locker. More food or mercy these piratical wretches shall not have from me ; and now let us all bear a hand, for I feel that coolness in the air which always precedes a breeze ; so we have no time to lose. Search and disarm every man ; then chuck them into the boat, and cut it adrift."

The first who was collared and dragged over the side was he whom Heriot had so peppered with the fowling-piece, that, as Noah said, "his face looked like plum-duff, with currants, on a Christmas-day."

A sheath-knife was taken from his belt ; he was then half-lifted, half-flung into the boat, where he lay across the thwarts, kicking and blaspheming, but unable either to resist or pick himself up.

"Who comes next?" asked the captain.

"Cribbet, who was steering."

"Cribbet, who was sleeping rather. Over with him. Who is the next?"

"Badger, the Yankee," replied Foster.

"Give me his pistols," said Phillips, who, with his new purpose, had resumed his tone of authority.

"Now, airthquakes and sherry-cobbler ! wot air yew up to?" he stammered out. "I say, shipmates—hallo ! 'vast heaving, yew bloated Britishers !"

"Heave with a will ! In with him—over with him !"

And in a trice this long-legged son of Columbia was sprawling over the thwarts below.

The idea of cropping Badger's ears actually occurred to Heriot ; but he dismissed it as too barbarous and unworthy, even while remembering all the man's rascality.

"What son of Old Scratch is this?" asked Morrison, dragging one from under the gallows-bitts, abaft the foremast.

"Sharkey, with Mr. Basset's revolver in his belt."

"The ugly villain !"

"The murderer of my friend Manfredi, captain," said Heriot, with mingled sadness and loathing.

"An out-and-out ticket-o'-leaver," added Noah, squirting his quid into Sharkey's eye, as he was cast into the boat with a lurch that nearly overset it ; "we should lynch him at the yard-arm, captain, that we should."

"Quaco, the cook, next. Heave ahead, darkey," said Foster.

"Yaas, yaas, Master Foster !" grinned the negro, who was partially intoxicated, and but partially awake.

"Black in heart, and black in face."

"Bolter ! Come along, you traitorous scoundrel !"

Mr. Benjamin Bolter, who was more sober than the rest, kicked vigorously, and nearly fell into the sea, in which case he must have sunk like a stone, as his arms were tied, and neither friends nor foes could have saved him ; but such were the comments made by the recaptors of the ship, as the mutineers were flung over the side into the boat, like so many sacks of wool or flour.

Zuares, who seemed in a perfect stupor, came last. There were taken from them the revolver, of which Mr. Basset had been deprived, with his watch and rings, six old brass-barrelled pistols, and about a dozen sheath-knives.

"Pedro Barradas — where is Pedro !" asked Captain Phillips, suddenly ; "every rascal is in the boat but he."

"He is not on deck, sir," said Mr. Foster.

"Can he have been killed—or has he jumped overboard?"

"Not likely the last—he is too cowardly to die if he can help it."

"Search the bunks forward—lose no time."

"Aye, aye, sir."

There Pedro was found and dragged forth. He offered no resistance, but moaned heavily, and hung lifeless in their hands.

"Hoist the carrion up, and over with him," said Captain Phillips, who, though naturally one of the kindest and jolliest of men, seemed, for the time, to be hardened and pitiless ; as he said, "all mercy had been quite squeezed out of him."

"Stop, if you please," said Heriot, who looked earnestly at Pedro's eyes, and felt his pulse ; "we must not be quite so merciless to them as they would have been to us."

"What do you mean, doctor?" asked Phillips, impatiently.

"This man is dying," replied Heriot.

"Dying !" repeated all, drawing near.

"Yes—look here," said Heriot.

And certainly Pedro's face, when viewed by the cold, clear light of the waning moon, presented a most striking and appalling aspect. His features were regular, even handsome ; his black eyes, that nearly met over the long and well-cut nose, seemed darker now ; his tawny hue was gone, and a death-like tint, as of white marble, had replaced it, forming a singular contrast to the intense blackness of his beard, moustache, and curly hair ; his lower jaw had fallen, his eyes were almost closed, his respirations were heavy and uncertain, his pulse was low and sinking, and he drooped helplessly in the

arms of Foster and Morrison, who had dragged him to the port gangway.

"Are you sure of what you say, doctor?" asked Captain Phillips, earnestly.

"Quite, sir; ah! these terrible signs are not to be mistaken."

"Then, how long do you think he may live?"

"Till midday to-morrow—certainly not until midnight."

"In that case," said Captain Phillips, turning to the others after a pause, during which much reviling and growling were heard alongside, "we must temper justice with mercy. Our own safety requires that we must rid ourselves of those rascals; but this one, although the worst and leader of them all, may remain on board, and die at his leisure. Stow him away in the bunks, Foster; and, doctor, give him a touch of your skill."

"If he lives?"

"He shall be hanged at Port Louis; and, if he dies, why then he becomes what he would have made each one of us—food for Jack Shark."

Morrison and Foster carried Pedro back into the fore-castle, and deposited him in one of the most comfortable bunks—one of those farthest from the cutwater and heel of the bowsprit, and there, soon after, Heriot came to attend him.

"Now in with the gang-cask and the biscuits," said Captain Phillips; "look alive about it, Foster. I feel a puff of wind, so we must soon attend to the ship; throw them in a couple of oars, they can unlash one another when sober, and pull whichever way they please. Now cut off the painter, Noah, and set the mutinous spawn adrift."

Promptly as the captain could have wished Noah cast off the painter; but the boat still clung close to the mizzen-chains, and jarred—on the principle of attraction—against the vessel's side.

"Take a boat-hook, Noah, and shove her clear off the counter," said Morrison, looking over the side. "By the way the rudder hangs, there is a strong current running here, and that will soon drift her clear of the ship."

The boat, with its, as yet, helpless load of ruffianism, was soon shoved astern of the *Hermione*, and, as Morrison foretold, it rapidly drifted away on the starboard quarter.

"Oh, imagine what those fellows may—nay, *must*—endure, when they all become sober after so many days and nights of almost ceaseless intoxication!" said Heriot, looking after the boat with very little commiseration in his eye or voice, as it

rose and fell on the long glassy rollers that glittered in the full sheen of the waning moon, whose disc was dipping now at the horizon, and sending from thence a path of dazzling light across the ocean. "Sea and sky will be round them," continued the doctor. "As the ballad says :

' Water, water everywhere,
Yet not a drop to drink ! ' "

"Aye, yer honour ; the contents o' that 'ere gang-cask won't last 'em long," said Noah with a grin.

"The poor wretches will go mad!" said Morley, who thought of his own sufferings on the wreck.

"Mad?" repeated Noah.

"Yes ; and drink each other's blood, perhaps. I have read of such things."

"And I've heard of such things many times, in fore-castle yarns ; but as for men positively eating one another——"

"They may do so and welcome, Noah," interrupted Captain Phillips, who was surveying, with increasing wrath, the disordered and dilapidated state of his once beautiful ship, the pride of his owners, and the pet of his heart.

Already half-sobered, or becoming aware of the situation, some of the crew began to shout and hail the ship, particularly Badger.

"Lookey har, capting ! Halloo, yew Britishers !" he cried, again and again ; but the hail became fainter as the boat drifted steadily away, first out of the fading line of moonlight, and then on the face of the sea, which darkened as the moon went down, and the stars shone sharp and clear.

"A breeze is coming fast," said Captain Phillips, cheerfully, as he took the wheel. "Now, gentlemen, our only real fore-mast-man is Noah, so we must all become A.B.'s, and work together with a will ! Dr. Heriot and Mr. Ashton, set those headsails ; up with the jib and staysail ; haul taut and belay. That will do. Now set the driver ; haul out and sheet home ; ease off those starboard tacks ; coil up and belay everything that is loose or adrift on deck. We have hard work before us, and our lives yet depend upon how we perform it."

"Give me the wheel, Captain Phillips," said Tom Bartelot. "You have your whole ship to look after."

"Thank you, Captain Bartelot."

"Our course——" began the latter.

"Matters little to-night, or for the remainder of the morning ; only, not knowing our whereabouts, we must keep a

bright look-out. To-morrow's observations will let us know all."

"Ah, we're in latitudes now where Admiral Fitzroy's storm-drums, cones, barometers, jigamarees, and all them sort o' things ain't no use," said Noah; "it's Heaven's own blessed stars does the business o' nights—here we read 'em as if they were a pictur' book."

The wind came puff after puff, till the breeze grew fine and steady. The fore and main courses soon filled and swelled out; the leach of each sail formed a complete arc, and the once slack sheets became taut, while the reef-points pattered as the ship rose and fell on the rolling sea.

Once again the *Hermione* walked through the waters, while the first rays of the coming sun began to play along the edge of the horizon, and on the clouds above, in tints of gold and crimson; and far astern she left the drifting quarter-boat, with its freight of yelling and raving wretches, to their fate, perhaps their death, upon the sea.

By mid-day it could not be discerned, even with the aid of the most powerful glass on board.

CHAPTER LXII.

PEDRO'S WOUND.

ALL the few who could work on board the *Hermione*—seven in number—to wit, Captain Phillips, and his second mate Mr. Foster, Morley Ashton, Tom Bartelot, and his mate Morrison, Doctor Heriot, and Noah Gawthrop, now became foremast-men, and had to work hard in putting the long-neglected ship in some order. Thus they became riggers, painters, ship-carpenters, and everything else in turn.

Morley and the doctor were invaluable in the use of the hammer and saw, and in plaiting sinnet of rope or spunyarn, and in assisting to get better jury spars rigged, spare sails bent, and new chafing clapped on back and forestays, or wherever necessary.

The pumps were first attended to, and all the *débris* flung into the cabin by the mutineers was cleared out, the shot replaced round the coamings of the hatchway, the hatchway itself reclosed, and battened down; the buckets were hung again at the break of the quarter-deck, ropes were coiled over the belaying-pins, spare spars were lashed alongside,

and everything was tidied fore and aft, and made as ship-shape as the small number of workers and their circumstances would permit ; even the scuttle-butt was lashed again to its ring-bolts on deck, and the captain's spy-glass and gutta-percha trumpet placed on their brass cleats in the companion-way.

All the rubbish accumulated during the disorderly reign of the mutineers was thrown overboard ; the head-pump was rigged, and the deck, after being deluged with water, was cleanly swabbed up. All this unwonted work caused an unusual quantity of pale ale to be consumed, together with more than one case of Mr. Basset's still Cliquot and sparkling Moselle, which had escaped the investigations of Pedro and his compatriots.

Noah was installed as cook, and Heriot had to take his "trick" at the wheel with the rest—in fact, no one could be excused anything. All worked with hearty good-will, and not without anxiety, knowing that if a gale blew, or a sudden squall came on, they would have to reduce the sails in succession, and not at once, as the emergency of the occasion might require.

By mid-day Rose Basset, with a shawl pinned over her braided hair, and old Nance Folgate, in a straw bonnet of wonderful fashion and size, sat smiling and wondering at all this, under the awning on the quarter-deck.

Even Ethel, pale, anxious, and tremulous, ventured to leave the bedside of her father, who was progressing favourably, and once more inhaled, for a few minutes, the sea-breeze. She found it delightful after the close atmosphere of the cabin for so many days ; but she was rather startled to see Morley out on the arm of the mainyard, astride above the deep, with his shirt-sleeves rolled up, and a hank of spun-yarn between his teeth, as he was busy, in a most workman-like way, about the weather-earring of the mainsail. After a time, however, she ceased to feel either wonder or alarm at Morley's feats of seamanship.

Again the life of the vessel, though so slenderly manned, seemed to be resumed ; once more the log-line was hove from time to time ; daily the meridian was taken, half-hourly the bell was clanged, and the log-book was kept regularly. If less than half-handed, the large ship was now considerably under-rigged ; yet the duty of watch and watch by night and day became pretty severe.

All the weapons in the cabin, together with those taken from the marooned crew, were cleaned by Noah, and put in

order, with ammunition made up for them, as the savages along the seaboard of the coast of Madagascar were not to be trifled with by the crew of a half-manned ship; and the warning the officer of the corvette gave concerning the three piratical boats, was remembered with some anxiety from time to time as an alarming and dangerous contingency.

Mr. Foster entered in the log a full narrative of all the late events, for the information of the owners, and of the civil authorities of the first British port—Port Louis all devoutly hoped it would be—at which they might arrive.

He inserted a list of the crew who were set adrift, with all the cogent reasons therefor, and these statements were duly attested by the signatures of all on board. Thereto even Rose's pretty hand appended her signature, and Nance Folgate added "her X mark."

In addition to his new duties as seaman, Leslie Heriot had his two patients, and often Ethel, to attend upon, as her health had suffered considerably by the successive terrors her mind had undergone of late.

Mr. Basset progressed, as we have said, favourably; but so slowly that it was impossible to say when he might be able to leave his bed, so terrible was the shock his system had sustained; but Pedro Barradas lived longer than the doctor had foretold, and more than once had cooling drinks and possets given him from Ethel's own hands. Such men as Pedro take a long time to die, and Ethel, gentle and forgiving, had no fear of him now.

Dr. Heriot, on the night the ship was recaptured, moved alike by that compassion in which his noble profession is seldom deficient, and by the poor wretch's repeated entreaties that he would dress his wound—*por amor del Madre de Dios! por amor del Maria Santissima!*—examined him carefully, and found it necessary to amputate his right arm above the elbow.

With great *sang froid*, Noah, who received the limb, carried it on deck, and tossed it overboard to leeward.

Heriot then gave Pedro a soothing draught, to procure him sleep, and at length he slept, but with the seal of death upon his features, for mortification had set in. When awake, he endured an excess of remorse, and fear of his approaching end, which nearly drove him mad.

"*A padre—a padre, por amor del Santo de los Santos!*" was his constant and piercing cry, that, according to the religion which he had professed in youth, he might not die unconfessed and unabsolved; and his cries of despair at times

reached the ears of Mr. Basset, in the after portion of the ship.

Ere this an observation had been taken by both Captain Phillips and Tom Bartelot, who was an equally good navigator; and, on comparing their notes and working, they found that Pedro had steered so well by the stars at night in the course he had intended to pursue, that the ship was far up the Mozambique Channel, and was then about south latitude 21.8 deg., which made all those who knew anything of the locality deem it almost miraculous that the vessel, which had been so ill watched, had not been cast away in the night on the Europa Rocks, or some other of those treacherous reefs and little islands that stud all the channel, but more especially along the western coast of Madagascar—the Great Britain of Africa, as it has been named.

To put the ship about and to beat to windward, against the south-west monsoon, for nearly 400 miles, until he could double Cape St. Mary, the most southern point of that long island, and then haul up for St. Louis, in the Mauritius, was the plan at once decided upon by Captain Phillips; and the evening of the second day saw the crippled *Hermione* running close-hauled, under all the fore-and-aft canvas he could set upon her, making a long tack towards the coast of Africa, while a tropical sun, that crimsoned sea and sky, sunk amidst clouds of flame in the north-western corner of the horizon.

In one of these long tacks they saw the Europa Rocks, which looked like a long, low island, with clouds of sea-birds wheeling over it in mid-air, like gnats against the amber-tinted morning sky; but, happily, as yet they saw nothing of the three red proas, which they heard the officer of the *Clyde* mention, in conjunction with these rocky islets which lie in the centre of the channel.

Noah, when cleaning out the fore-castle bunks—in more than one of which were traces of blood—found some withered daisies. These he brought to Heriot, who gave them, with some complimentary remark, to Ethel, and an exclamation of surprise escaped him when he saw her kiss them, and, while her eyes filled with tears, place them tenderly between the leaves of her Bible; for they were those gathered by her on that dear grave in Acton churchyard, and torn from her breast on that night of terror by the fierce hand of Pedro Barradas—that man, so long a source of terror and aversion, now helpless and gentle as a child in their hands.

CHAPTER LXIII.

REMORSE.

ON the morning after the ship was recaptured, while the *Hermione* was "going free," and running steadily with her staysails set, Morley and Bartelot visited the dying wretch in the forecabin bunks for a few minutes. His aspect was very striking.

His sharp features were very pale; the rich olive tint they usually wore had fled, and a tawny green replaced it; his lips were black, and, being parted, showed the strong white teeth, clenched firmly by an agony that was mental rather than bodily; his eyes were closed, and his thick black hair was knotted in elf-like knots about his forehead. Under the squalid blankets the Mexican desperado was breathing low and heavily.

Hearing them descend through the forecabin, he opened his eyes, and gave them a long and sullen stare, expressive only of indifference, for he felt that all ties and cares on earth were broken with him now, for Heriot had not attempted to deceive, but had told him that the hour of his departure was approaching, that mortification had set in, that he could not survive long.

Morley lifted to the sufferer's lips the drinking cup of weak wine-and-water, the only drink they could procure him on board. Pedro moistened his hard-baked mouth, and muttered something expressive of gratitude. He was very weak and quite gentle now.

"How strangely things come to pass in this world," said Tom Bartelot, in a low voice. "So this is a son of the old hermit we buried in that lonely islet of the South Sea."

"Strange, indeed. We should speak to him about that while he can understand us."

"Barradas," said Bartelot, "your name is Pedro Barradas, I believe?"

"Yes," replied Pedro, opening his large, black, bloodshot eyes, and surveying the speaker inquiringly and with a sad earnestness.

"A Mexican Spaniard?"

"Yes, senores; or Spanish Mexican, which you please," said he, sighing wearily.

"From Orizaba, in La Vera Cruz—Orizaba, near the Rio Blanco?"

"Yes," replied Pedro, while something of native suspicion crept suddenly over his pale face.

"And your mother?"

"Oh, my mother!" he exclaimed in an indescribable voice, "what of her?"

"She was named Mariquita Escudero, a woman of the Puebla de Perote?" said Morley.

A convulsive spasm passed over the features of Pedro, and with an effort he replied, in a low voice:

"*Mia madre ha muerto*" (My mother is dead).

"We know that she died in the Barranca Secca."

"And who are you who know all this?" asked Pedro, rallying his energies; "or how came you to know it?"

"Through him whom you killed," replied Morley.

"Cramply Hawkshaw?"

"Yes."

A gleam of malevolence flashed from Pedro's black eyes; but remembering, perhaps, the cold hand that was already on the pulses of the heart, he groaned, muttered, and crossed himself.

"Your father——"

"Demonio! senores, speak not of my father."

"Why, Pedro?"

"Because I never knew him; but my mother, my poor mother, who loved her boys so well, so tenderly," he faltered, in a broken voice, while writhing in his bed.

"From Hawkshaw I learned the terrible story of your mother's fate and the crime of your brother Zuares, in the Barranca Secca," said Morley, who looked with deep interest on the strange workings of the mind exhibited by the expressive visage of the dying ruffian, whose sole human weakness seemed to be a strong love for the memory of his mother.

"*Mia madre! mia madre!*" said the once strong man, in a voice that became touching, while tears welled up into his eyes, long, long unused to such a moisture. "Oh, senores, bad, vile, cruel, wicked as you deem me, at this terrible hour, when well-nigh under weigh for—*for—where?*—it may be hell!—when I think of *her*—of the only human being who ever loved me—my heart swells with the old pang that was so keen, so very keen at first, on that awful evening in the Barranca Secca, and my memory goes back to the happier years beyond. I feel myself again a little boy and seem to hear her gentle voice calling me—Pedrillo—*el muchacho Pedrillo*—the same little boy who served at the altar of San

Jago, who waked up in the winter nights and wept for his mother, and thought her dear, dear face the fondest, the sweetest, and the fairest under heaven—yes, fairer and kinder even than that of the blessed Madonna which hung in San Jago de Chili. *Mia madre ha muerto!*" he repeated, some four or five times, with incoherent fondness.

"And your father?" resumed Bartelot, after a pause, for they could not but respect this grief.

"I tell you, senores, I never knew my father," said Pedro, almost with a frown.

"Why?"

"He was Don Pedro Zuares de Barradas, a Spanish cavalier of high family, possessing great estates on the table land of Anahuac, and who was captain of the castle of San Juan de Ulloa, for the Government of the Free United States of South America. He is said to have perished at sea, by falling overboard in a gale when being conveyed to Spain to be tried and executed as a traitor to the king."

"All that we know; but he did not perish as you suppose," said Morley.

"How, senor—how then?" asked Pedro, looking up with surprise.

"He escaped drowning and became a hermit on an island near Tristan d'Acunha."

"My father—a hermit!"

"Yes."

"And this is truth?"

"Truth as we live and now address you," said Bartelot; "what could we gain by any fabrication?"

"And—and he died——"

"After a long life of devotion and repentance."

"Oh that his life and death may atone for mine and for Zuares! But how know you all this, senores?"

"By a strange chance—a singular coincidence—Pedro Barradas," said Morley.

"Bad as I am, fallen though I be, you would not, I am assured, trifle with the agonies of a dying wretch," said Pedro, in a low, moaning voice.

"No," replied Tom Bartelot, gravely; "neither of us are capable of doing so."

"But tell me how you came by the knowledge of these things?"

"Landing on that solitary isle by chance, we found an old recluse at the point of death, and discovered his name by means of a written confession which he left behind him."

"And—and this confession, senores," said Pedro, raising himself on his elbow, and looking at Morley and Bartelot alternately, as if he would read their very souls; "this confession—where is it?"

"It was written on the blank leaves of a Spanish missal, and was lost when my ship foundered at sea. By that confession, however, we learned his name and history, and also that he was a knight of the Military Order of Santiago de Compostella," added Tom Bartelot, as Morley drew from his pocket-book the red enamelled cross of that famous old Spanish confraternity, and gave it to Pedro, who pressed it to his lips again and again with his only remaining hand.

"I feel now, senores, that you speak the truth," said he, while the tears that flowed down his cheek relieved his emotion, and cleared his utterance. "When I am dead, senores, you will bury this cross with me. And he died in your hands?"

"Yes; and we buried him near his hut, setting up a little wooden cross to mark his grave."

"*Ave Madre de Dios!* no cross will ever mark mine; no prayer, or blessing, can accompany the departure of me!" groaned Pedro, in a low voice, as if communing with himself.

"From that written confession, taken in connection with the revelations of Hawkshaw" (at this name something of the old devilish gleam passed over Pedro's features) "we recognised both you and your brother; and we learned that your mother, Marquita Escudero, had marked each of you, in infancy, with a cross on the left shoulder."

"Yes, senor—dyed, tattooed redly on the skin, with the juice of a plant that grows on the warm slopes of the volcano at Orizaba. "See," added Pedro, as he drew back his blue shirt, and displayed his brawny shoulder, on which there was distinctly traced a cross like that of St. James. "Our poor mother punctured that mark on each of her little boys, in the hope that Santiago would take us under his protection; but, alas! from infancy we were the peculiar care of the infernal spirit."

With all the impulsiveness of his race, Pedro behaved at times in a very frantic manner, and these paroxysms induced a subsequent weakness and lethargy, that seemed the precursor of dissolution; but he was a man of a powerful frame, and the instinct of life was strong within him. He expressed great satisfaction, almost joy, to learn that Mr. Basset had survived the outrage contemplated by him and the mutineers;

and thus, that, thanks to Dr. Heriot's skill, he had one sin less to atone for.

Then he entreated that Ethel would come, that he might implore her pardon. This the poor creature sought in terms so touching that Ethel was deeply moved, and ventured to speak with him in terms of consolation.

But there was ever the same reply from Pedro—there was no priest on board, and he was beyond being consoled. So Ethel proved his only soother, and read to him at times from the Bible—her mother's Bible—the same that had fallen from her unconscious hand on the night when Pedro so daringly carried her off; and a striking little group they formed—the black-haired and black-bearded Spanish ruffian, his tawny visage, already pale and pinched by the touch of death, pressing to his lips the red cross of Santiago again and again, while striving to follow her words and understand them, as they fell softly and distinctly from the lips of that fair-skinned and delicate English girl, who sat by the side of his bed, in the squalid and noisome fore-castle, with the half dim daylight struggling through the square scuttle above, and, perhaps, Morley, with his loving smile, or Tom Bartelot, with his sun-burned face, listening near.

Sometimes, in Pedro's paroxysms, his voice rose almost to a shriek.

"Oh! senora," he would exclaim to poor shrinking Ethel, "pray for me—pray for me. You are good—you are kind—you are pure—while I—I—what am I? Heaven will hear you when Heaven will not hear me!"

"Oh, do not speak thus," implored Ethel.

"I must, senora—I dare not pray for myself. To me the ear of God will be deaf, or turn from me."

"Oh! Pedro, why?"

"I have been so wicked, so bad! I have committed many sins, and *one most awful deed*, for which I cannot hope for pardon from Him whom I outraged, and whose altar I desecrated—never, oh never!"

His voice died away in low moans; but Pedro seemed no longer the same piratical ruffian, for, when speaking, his voice, manner, and diction were all changed and improved.

This scene, with his mental suffering and terror of death, proved all too much for Ethel's nervous system, and Morley wished to remove her; but Pedro implored her to remain with him yet a little while, and even caught her skirt as she rose to withdraw.

"Great though your sins may be, my poor man, be assured

that the mercy of God is greater still," said Ethel, weeping. "Like the sea we traverse, it is boundless."

"But so may be God's vengeance, and I have shed blood—the blood of many," he replied in a low, concentrated voice, through his clenched teeth.

Ethel grew very, very pale on hearing this, and drew back again, lest he might clutch her dress once more.

"Well, even those whose blood you shed may be praying for you, if—if——"

"What—what?" asked Pedro, huskily.

"If you sincerely repent."

"I do repent—I do repent, and sincerely too," he said, impetuously; "but without a priest to absolve me—to give me the last sacraments of that church in whose belief my mother reared me—what matters my repentance?"

Then he howled and gnashed his strong white teeth, while tearing his black glossy hair with his only remaining hand.

"Let hope for the future find a place in your heart, Pedro, and grow there with repentance for the past," urged Ethel, while shrinking close to Morley, for the appearance of the patient terrified her.

"And then, senora, you say nothing of penance?"

"Because I know nothing of it," replied Ethel.

"A priest! a priest! Oh, that the sea would give up its dead, for I know there is *one* at least there; but could I face *him*?" he added wildly; "oh! that night of horrors at Santiago—I see the flames yet, and feel them in my soul!"

"Oh, Pedro Barradas," said Ethel, as this paroxysm induced weakness, and nothing was heard but his deep and heavy breathing; "whatever be the sins you have committed, remember that this book tells us 'there is more joy in heaven over one sinner who truly repents than over ninety-nine just men who do it not.'"

"Hear her, O Lord, who created heaven and earth, who divided light from darkness, and the sea from the land!" prayed the poor wretch, while crossing himself again and again with his left hand, "and who formed me out of dust, to which I shall never return, because I must be buried in the sea," he added with something of simplicity; then, as his mind seemed to wander, he said, "*Mi madre*, listen to me, am I praying aright?"

"Yes, yes, Pedro, you pray aright," replied Ethel, covering her face with her handkerchief, and taking Morley's arm; "lead me away, dearest," she whispered, "I must return to papa. Pray on, Pedro, it is proper, it is good for you."

"*Ave Maria purissima!*" he said, "my own mother is at your feet interceding for me. Oh, she loved her little Pedrillo so well—and Zuares too—could she have foreseen this end!"

His voice completely failed him now, and Morley led Ethel on deck.

CHAPTER LXIV.

STORY OF A MODERN SPANISH ROGUE.

"THE remorse of that unfortunate wretch has in it something appalling," said Morley, as they walked aft.

"Bah!" replied Captain Phillips, who was busy with his quadrant; "I have seen something of this kind before, Mr. Ashton, and know it is only a case of 'the devil was sick:' you know the rest of the couplet."

"What crimes can he have committed?" said Ethel, who was weeping with sympathy.

"Crimes, Miss Basset!" repeated the captain, as he wiped and adjusted the two speculums or horizon glasses; "Lord love your kind heart, he'll have committed every crime that ever was recorded in Newgate, and would commit 'em all again, but old King Death has brought him up with a round turn."

Whether it was the result of Ethel's visit, or that excess of despair had prostrated his nerves, we know not; but as night approached Pedro became more composed, and was heard to pray very fervently. The iron had entered his soul; he wept freely, and his tears relieved him; but the retrospect of his past life still rose like a barrier of flame before him, and this he said from time to time, when Morley Ashton and Tom Bartelot watched him by turns or together, and gave him drink; for he was tormented by a consuming fever and thirst.

The night was fine and clear, the constellations that look down on the mighty Indian Ocean were shining amid the pure ether overhead, and the waves sparkled in light as they rolled around the fleet *Hermione*, for she was running steadily, close-hauled, making a long tack towards the distant coast of Africa.

Morley had bade "Good-night" to Ethel, and he and Tom Bartelot sat smoking on the steps of the forecastle, when they could equally attend to the wants of Pedro, and bear a hand with what was wanted on deck.

As if to relieve his mind, between his muttered orisons, Pedro mentioned many dark episodes of his career, among slavers in the West Indies, and otter-hunters in the Pacific Ocean; among the gold-diggers of California, and the robbers of the Barranca Secca, between Zalappa and the Puebla de Perote. The names of Hawkshaw and Zuares occurred more than once in these wild stories, which, with his casual remarks, indicated Pedro's complicity in many heinous crimes, and filled his listeners with wonder and repugnance; but there was one story he related, with many pauses, filled with sighs and outbursts of repentance, which showed that he was more an incarnate fiend than a mere common villain or everyday rogue.

To rehearse it here, as he related it—he who seemed to be in a Hades without hope—would prove scarcely intelligible to the reader; so we shall give the episode of Pedro's past life in our own words, with many additions, the result of local inquiry. These are woven up with the text of the story, as being preferable to giving them in the tantalising form of notes.

In their childhood Pedro and Zuares Barradas in no way promised to become the outcasts of religion and of nature they proved in future years.

Aware of her own errors and frailty, for which she repented in bitterness, in sackcloth and ashes, in hours of sorrow, prayer, and self-inflicted penance, known to Heaven and herself only, Mariquita Escudero lived for her sons alone. Had she been without them to cling to, in the rash impulsiveness of her race and of her nature, she would probably have committed suicide, after the sudden death of her father, the catastrophe which happened to her young brother, Juan, on the ramparts of San Juan de Ulloa, and the loss of her lover, Don Pedro, who was borne away beyond the sea.

She educated her boys carefully and lovingly, living with them the life of a recluse at her father's solitary *granja*, on the slope of the Pico d'Orizaba, and striving to impress them with a high sense of religion and morality, and thought that she had done so completely, all unaware, poor woman, of the latent and inherent spark of the infernal spirit that slumbered in the heart of each.

Her whole hopes for the future, her entire soul, were centred in her little boys, and this tender and repentant mother was never weary of watching them when they assisted

at the service of mass, in carrying tapers or little vessels of holy-water, and when making responses, in attending the old Bishop of Orizaba within the rails of the great altar.

Neither was she ever weary of sewing and dressing with her own hands the little white surplices which they wore over their black soutans on those occasions, for she knew that her boys were handsome, and were alike the envy and the taunt of other mothers.

Pedro and Zuares spent nearly their whole time in or about the old cathedral church—a fane, the pride of the wooded valley, and founded of old by a pious follower of Hernan Cortez. They sat or played for hours daily on the steps of that great altar, where Pedro Valdivia prayed in his armour, ere he marched against the Aurucans of Chili.

Thereon stood a beautiful image of Our Lady, holding in her arms her divine Son, with arms outspread, a miracle of sculpture and painting. She was clad in an azure robe, with an aureole and thirteen stars above her brow, all sparkling with precious gems.

Frequently Zuares used to talk to these figures as if they were answering him; while hovering in the side-aisles, with a finger on her lips, tears in her eyes, and hope and gladness in her heart, Mariquita watched and listened, assured that they would become faithful servants of God, and as such would atone for the errors of her own life, and again and again she blessed her little boys, and whispered in her mother's heart, "that of such was the kingdom of heaven."

Pedro at times spoke to the image of the little child Jesus, as if it was a playfellow; while, like the little chorister of the old legend of Chartres, Zuares was wont to say that he had divided his heart into three portions: "one he had given to God, one to the Blessed Virgin, and one to his mother." Yet, as years crept on, it seemed as if all the snares of Satan had been set around to tempt and lure them, for they rapidly fell into evil ways; they abandoned the church, the morning mass and evening vespers, with all their duties and services; they became the companions of outlaws and robbers, and it was by the hand of her youngest and best-beloved son that the unfortunate Mariquita, long since broken in heart and crushed in soul, perished, as we have shown, in the savage gorge of the Barranca Secca.

Even the old bishop wept as he cursed them.

Zuares had early joined a band of outlaws in the Barranca, where, among many other outrages, on a dark night, when there was no other light on earth or in heaven, save the

flaming cone of Orizaba, which lit up all the grove of peach trees that clothe the valley, they waylaid and robbed a wealthy *escribano*, or lawyer, of the city. Then with a refinement of cruelty, they tied him across the nearest line of railway, and watched to see him torn to shreds by the first train which passed; but his cries of despair—which they mimicked and mocked—reached the ears of the engine-driver, the train was stopped in time, and the *escribano* saved. He never forgot the horrors of that night, and became an honest man for ever after, abandoning for ever the study and practice of the law.

He denounced Zuares, however, and the reward for his capture, offered by the *alcalde*, proving too great for the cupidity of his companions, this enterprising youth, ere long, found himself a captive in the *carcel* or prison of Orizaba, under sentence to die by the garotte.

The day of his execution had been named, when letters to the bishop and *alcalde* arrived, threatening vengeance, and to the dismay of the people, the famous image of Our Lady was missed from the altar of the cathedral church, having been carried off, with its golden aureole, the precious gems that decked it, and the thirteen stars that sparkled round her brow.

In its place was found a piece of paper, on which was written :

“ A hostage for my brother.

“ PEDRO BARRADAS.”

From the altar the old bishop, in full pontificals, denounced vengeance on the sacrilegious robber, and threatened with condign punishment here and hereafter all who were concerned in this new outrage, which filled all the good people of Orizaba with grief and indignation, for the image of Our Lady was the peculiar palladium of their city.

On the following day this notice was found appended to the cathedral door :

“ I, Pedro Barradas, know who stole the image of Our Lady from the great altar; I know also in what part of the Barranca Secca it is concealed. To the altar I shall restore it, but on two conditions; first, the instant release of my brother Zuares, who is condemned to die for mulcting a miserable *escribano* of a few ill-gotten dollars, second, a pardon for myself; otherwise, the Holy Image shall never more be seen.”

Great was the indignation of the entire community at this

insolence ; but discretion was deemed better than severity. Zuares was set at liberty by the *alcalde*, who placed round the cathedral a guard of soldiers, with orders to shoot down any *bandido* who should appear, even if he bore the image of Our Lady.

How the act was achieved will never be known ; but in the night after the release of Zuares, the image was replaced on the altar, unseen by the guard and other watchers. Some there were who said the soldiers were tipsy or asleep ; others stigmatised the whole affair as a trick of the Jesuits, of course. But by far the greater number declared it was a miracle, and Orizaba poured her thousands towards the cathedral gates, shouting :

“*La Madonna neustra ! La Madonna del Paradiso ! A miracle ! a miracle !*”

The old bishop, however, did not share this enthusiasm ; neither did he think there was any miracle in the matter ; for the holy image had come back denuded of its golden aureole and its thirteen stars, each of which was composed of thirteen magnificent rose diamonds.

After this, the wooded valley of Orizaba, even the recesses of the Barranca Secca, became too hot to hold these wicked brothers ; they fled to the sea and took a passage for San Francisco, where, after many wanderings in the lawless land of the gold-diggers, they found their way to Vera Cruz, and lived among some outlaws and *contrabandists* in their old haunt, the Barranca.

In the summer of last year, immediately after the terrible episode of Zuares and his mother in that wild place, Pedro and he quitted the valley of Orizaba for the third time, and reaching the port of La Vera Cruz, shipped as foremast-men on board a long, low, sharp, and rakish-looking brigantine, bound, as her captain stated vaguely, “for the Pacific, towards the Bay of Mexilones.”

She proved to be an otter-hunter, and long ere she doubled Cape Horn she had her eight brass guns, which had been concealed in the hold, hoisted out and lashed to the ports, the wooden quakers they replaced being sent below ; and then sundry pikes, cutlasses, and pistols, that had all been invisible while the brigantine was within range of the cannon of San Juan de Ulloa, were placed upon racks in the steerage, and presented a goodly array ; for these otter-hunting craft are lawless and contraband, and frequently their crews must fight their way against Spanish and other war ships, like the buccaneers of old,

She ran along the coast of South America, in sight of the snow-capped summits of the mighty Andes, traversing a great portion of the Pacific, without accident or adventure, until, in a fore-castle row, knives were drawn, and Zuares threatened to stab the mate. In such a craft severe measures were necessary, so Zuares was put in the bilboes, and would have been scourged next day, by order of the captain, save for an accident which happened to the latter in the night.

Taking advantage of an intense darkness about the first hour of the morning watch, the worthy brothers quitted the brigantine, dropping quietly astern of her in the quarter-boat, when the harbour lights of Valparaiso were visible about three leagues distant on the lee bow, as they had resolved never again to face the snows and horrors of doubling the Horn, and reefing topsails that were stiff with ice.

They did not quit the brigantine, however, without leaving tokens of their vengeance. The poor captain was found in his berth, with the sheath-knife of Zuares—that illegal weapon now so constantly in use among seamen—planted in his heart; and it was soon after discovered that a canvas bag, containing two thousand Mexican dollars, was gone, as well as the quarter-boat.

But long ere this was known on board the armed brigantine her two deserters had pulled the boat into the harbour of Valparaiso, where they scuttled her, and landed at the Almendral, a suburb which lies close by the shore, and is chiefly inhabited by those who are employed about the shipping.

Here they divided the contents of the bag between them, and the precious pair having shaken hands, separated, each to shift for himself.

Master of a thousand silver dollars, and of himself—rid of his brother Zuares, whose petulant and fiery temper was frequently the means of embroiling him in useless, or what he deemed still worse, unprofitable quarrels—Pedro hoped to enjoy himself in Chili, and without fear, too, as the mates and crew of the otter-hunter (of whom our late American acquaintance, Mr. Bill Badger, formed one), were already too far beyond the pale of all laws, even those of South America, to seek either him or Zuares, especially under the Cordilleras de los Andes.

He resolved to get rid of his sailor's costume; to dress himself like an emigrant hidalgo; to take upon himself the airs and certainly all the ease of one, until his money was spent, and something else turned up. He was not without hope,

too, of replenishing his stock at the Casa de Juego, or gaming-house (as we have related he was never without a pair of cogged *dados*), and he knew, from his previous habits and education, that he could act tolerably well the part he meant to assume ; and who could say that he might not, if a run of fortune favoured him, marry an heiress, and settle down pleasantly till the money was spent.

"*Come esta el Senor Caballero Don Pedro,*" said he, as he lit a cigarito, and slapped the bag containing his dollars with great gusto ; "courage, and to work at once, for the day will soon dawn."

He quitted the Almendral, with its muddy streets and unpaved narrow lanes, and just as the sun was rising, or, rather, as its light was descending on the steep red cliffs, and penetrating into the deep dark mountain gullies that overhang the city of Valparaiso—or the Valley of Paradise—he found himself amid the opening shops and early morning bustle of the spacious Plaza de la Victoria.

He soon found the shop of a clothier (all shopkeepers in Valparaiso are Frenchmen), under whose auspices he substituted his forecastle attire for a round jacket of fine claret colour, braided elaborately with yellow and scarlet silk, especially about the breast, and slit-up sleeves, loose, braided trousers of some light material, girt at the waist by a Spanish sash of the Chilian colours. His sou'-wester gave place to a smart sombrero of black velvet, with a plush bob of the same sable hue on one side, and a long scarlet riband flowing on the other ; and in lieu of the dingy checked shirt, which was washed once weekly, and strung on the mainstay to dry, he exhibited one of spotless linen, with elaborate needlework on the breast.

A poncho cloak, black without and scarlet within, was thrown over the left shoulder, for use by night, for ornament by day, and to conceal the bowie-knife and revolver, which completed his equipment.

After a barber had shaved off his luxuriant beard and whiskers, leaving only the heavy, black, and well-trimmed moustache, Pedro walked along the shady side of the Plaza de la Victoria, surveying his outward mien in the plate-glass windows as he passed them, a long regalia between his lips, master still of nine hundred and thirty dollars, and perfectly satisfied with himself, and with the South American world in general.

In the shop of the barber he had filled up a spare moment by fitting on and pocketing unseen a luxuriant red wig, which

he thought might at some time prove useful to him ; and aware that a traveller without baggage has always short credit and a shady reputation, he next procured a handsome trunk of ample dimensions, with screws to fix it to the floor of any place which he might happen to honour with his residence—a very old “dodge” indeed, or, as the Spaniards would call it, *tergiversacion*.

Repairing to the Posa de San Augustin, still kept by a person named Felipe Fernandez, close by the Church of the Augustin Friars, he chose an apartment, from the lattice of which he could have a view of the volcano of Aconagua, sending a tremendous column of smoke up to the very zenith, through a sky of wonderful purity, against the blue of which the snow-capped Andes stood in a clear and awful outline ; and this selection impressed Signor Fernandez that his guest was a wealthy hidalgo in search of the picturesque.

“*Basta!*” said Pedro, as he tore a roasted galina to pieces at dinner, and devoured it with more rapidity than grace, “I have eaten nothing for two days ; but this is excellent, and the wine, too—your health, brother Zuares.”

At this posada Pedro resided for several days, and ran up a goodly bill, chiefly for stronger liquors than are usually drunk by noble hidalgos ; but his trunk being securely screwed to the floor, so as to be quite immovable, Felipe Fernandez was quite easy on the subject, believing that a guest with a box so ponderous—full of *duros*, no doubt—could not levant in a hurry.

Pedro’s tastes and instincts would have led him towards the alleys of the Almendral, the harbour, and the shipping ; but he remembered the little accident which occurred ont he last night he and Zuares spent on board the brigantine, so he wisely avoided the vicinity of the sea-shore, and turned his thoughts inland.

He actually gave himself airs of propriety, and inquired of Signor Fernandez which was the most attractive church in Valparaiso. Pedro meant attractive in the number of fair devotees ; but Felipe understood him differently, and replied :

“The Matriz Church, senor. The Padres Eizagiuerro and Ugarte, from Santiago, are preaching there now. The former is the Apostolic Nuncio, and friend of His Holiness the Pope.”

“And their preaching draws the people in numbers?”

“Yes, senor,” replied the host, bowing lower.

“I am particularly fond of a good sermon, and love to see a well-filled church.”

"Why, *senor*, the people go for various reasons," continued Fernandez, smiling; "the women to show themselves."

"And the men—what do they go for?"

"To see the women, or put off time till the theatre opens."

"*Bueno!* I shall go to see the women and hear the Padre—what the devil's his name?"

So Pedro hung a brass medal of the Madonna at his neck, bought a rosary as thick as a hawser, and went to the Matriz Church to vespers, and always fell asleep. Mass was too early for him, he was always a-bed then. As all the women were very old or very ugly, he soon grew tired of the eloquence of the Padres Ugarte and Eizaguierro.

The latter was the most popular; the church was usually filled by a dense crowd, who stood, as there was no sitting space, and through whom Pedro's brawny arms and square shoulders forced a passage, without ceremony, right and left, straight up to the pulpit, in spite of crinoline or other obstructions, and reiterated exclamations of annoyance.

"*Senor*, the church is quite full!"

"So I see, *senora*. A charming place, isn't it?"

"*Senor*, you *cannot* pass further!" exclaimed someone else.

"I shall try," was the cool response.

"*Senor*, how can you be so troublesome?" exclaimed a young man angrily.

Pedro turned to him with a dark scowl.

A young lady, closely veiled, was hanging on his arm.

"Perez—dear Perez!" said she entreatingly, and, with a voice of great sweetness, added, "*Senor*, do not crush me so, if you please."

"Do I incommode you, *senora?*" stammered Pedro.

"Very much indeed."

"Pardon me—I shall make room."

And he did so by lurching forward and squeezing an old duenna against a pillar, where she was nearly suffocated by his huge back, and from whence he began to eye—almost ogle—the young lady who had spoken.

Her features, though partially hidden by a black lace veil, were charming and soft, and the pressure of the crowd had deranged it so far as to permit Pedro's bold and wandering eye to see enough of an adorable white neck and swelling bust to make him long to look on more.

Her nostrils and lips in contour were singularly fine, her tresses were of a rich ripply brown, and a valuable rosary was in her pretty hands, which were cased in well-fitting gloves of lavender-coloured kid.

Pedro was smitten. He continued to ogle and leer, and make a cushion of the old lady behind, in a mode of which the young girl was all unconscious, for she never looked at him once, though her male companion, whom she had named Perez, felt undisguised anger and uneasiness from time to time.

Of his frowns Pedro saw nothing, for his attention was riveted on the sweet young girl, so nothing heard he of the Reverend Padre Eizaguierro's denunciations of worldly sin and iniquity.

The sermon over, and benediction given, Pedro rushed to the font, that he might give her some holy water in the hollow of his hand ; but Perez, by an awkward or intended motion, knocked it into the eyes of Pedro, who was half blinded by its saline property. He uttered a malediction, and resolved to follow the little beauty ; but she was driven away in a handsome carriage.

Again and again he came to vespers ; but the sweet girl was no longer there to mingle her soft voice with the hymn ; and, as we have said, the other fair ones who attended the Matriz Church were not to our adventurer's taste, he contented himself by leering at all the girls who promenaded in the Plaza, and this he did so pointedly, that, in one or two instances, nothing saved him from being punished summarily, even in that city of poniards and police, but his towering figure, muscular limbs, and dare-devil aspect.

A fortnight slipped away without any adventure.

He had not yet fallen on an heiress, and already four hundred of his beloved dollars had slipped away, but not in works of charity or devotion. Money is easier spent than won everywhere, so Pedro began to get tired of Valparaiso.

He certainly led a very jolly life. There were no watches to keep in the wind and rain ; no hoarse voice at the fore-scuttle summoned all hands to reef topsails on a sleety night ; no scrambling for the best of the beef and potatoes in the filthy mess kid ; no weevils to pick out of the mouldy biscuits ; no pumps to work at, or decks to scrub ; but withal Pedro—he knew not why—began to be weary, and wonder what Zuares was about : whether his share of the spoil was spent, and where he had turned his steps.

In Valparaiso, the mercantile men are nearly all Britons, Americans, or Germans. Thus, in the *cafés* frequented by Pedro, his appearance and bearing did not suit their taste exactly, and he never got beyond receiving and giving a very

cold bow, exchanging a light for his cigar, or a civil remark now and then.

If he had the fumes of wine in his head—an element it was seldom without—he rattled out a forecastle oath in Spanish or English, which made them stare at him, and then at each other. Though twice at the Casa de Juego he had more than replenished his exchequer so rapidly that suspicion of foul play was excited, on one evening fortune was so decidedly against him that he walked forth into the Plaza with only ten dollars in his pocket, and the prospect of receiving his bill at the posada, amounting to four hundred at least, which had been overdue more than a week.

“*Los Infernos!*” thought he; “what is to be done now?”

The idea of donning his red wig, taking a turn through the streets after dark, and relieving some belated citizen of his purse, occurred to him; but he reflected on the acumen of the well-regulated police, and, with a malediction on things in general, wished himself at San Francisco, or La Villa Rica del Vera Cruz.

The evening was singularly beautiful; so much so that even Pedro could not be insensible to its lovely calm, and to the wonderful rocky scenery that overhangs the Valley of Paradise, as he rambled listlessly along the harbour towards the fort, on which the flag of the Chilian Republic was waving.

The stupendous hills that overlook the city were steeped in golden light, which streamed into the ravines that yawned beneath them; and each of these ravines seemed to be piled up on both sides with white-walled houses—for every chasm formed as it were a street, that branched upward from the low-lying suburb, named the Almendral.

The spires, the bay with its shipping, the cannon on the batteries, were all burnished with the yellow sheen, and over all, towering blue and dim in the distance, rose the cone of Aconcagua, sending a cloud of sombre smoke on the south wind, far away towards the woody and snowy Andes, whose summits rise above the limits of eternal frost—for the burning mountain we have named is twenty-three thousand feet above the level of the sea at Valparaiso; and there are thirteen similar peaks in Chili, all nearly in a constant state of eruption, flame, smoke, and lava.

The lattices of a thousand villas that nestled on the sloping hills were gleaming in the light of the setting sun, as he sunk into the waters of the Pacific, casting the shadows of their walls and terraced roofs on gardens, where the gorgeous, but

scentless, flowers of the tropics were closing their petals, and where the deep green leaves of the guava contrasted with the purple tints of the olive, the golden bulbs of the orange, and the giant quinces of Chili, that were ripening in his warmth—the glow of a summer that never ceases.

Pedro surveyed all this with a half-listless, half-pleased eye; and he watched the groups of idlers, in their picturesque dresses of gaudy colours, who thronged the harbour mole and evening promenade. There were the graceful Spanish whites, particularly the donzellas, with their sparkling eyes and piquante smiles, their black lace mantillas, short crinolines, and taper ankles; the slenderly-formed and olive-skinned mestizoes, and the half-naked, supple, and grinning mulattoes, who sung so gaily as they worked in gangs at cranes or capstan-bars.

Several padres were among the promenaders, chiefly Grey Friars, in greasy frocks and hoods, with beads and cord complete; and Chilian soldiers were not wanting, in tawdry uniforms, with plenty of braid without, and plenty of fleas within.

Two priests passed him—they were tall, thin, and sallow men—for whom all made way, for they were the famous preachers from Santiago, the Padres Ugarte and Eizaguierro; and when Pedro lifted his sombrero, a pang shot through his heart as he thought of Zuares, and their boyish days, when they carried tapers, or swung the censer before the old Bishop of Orizaba—of what they were, and what they might have been.

“*Caramba!*” he muttered, “why should I think of such things?”

The harbour was full of shipping from Lima and Peru, taking in Cordovan leather in brown bales, cordage in vast coils, and dried fruit in boxes of all sizes. The waves curled in golden prisms over the great rock that lies near the shore, and the yellow-billed and speckled seamews that always cluster there fled screaming towards the offing, as the flag was hauled down and the evening gun boomed across the water from the fort which the Spaniards built of old as a defence against the Indians.

The evening was calm and mild, and the hum of the city was carried away by the soft breeze that swept across the bay, where hundreds of pleasure-boats were shooting to and fro under sail or oar.

Suddenly a gaudy little pinnace, that was running for the stairs near the old half-moon battery, caught the nautical eye of Pedro.

"Luff, luff, presto!" he exclaimed, as he saw there was something foul with the sheet; "luff, you lubber!"

The words had scarcely left his lips ere there was a shout from the spectators. The shoulder-of-mutton sail shivered and flapped as the boat broached-to and capsized.

Then a lady and gentleman were seen floundering and splashing in the water. The latter succeeded in reaching the keel of the inverted boat, to which he clung, wildly shouting for help the while; but the former was swept by the current that ran round the harbour rock.

"My daughter! *O Dios mio!* my poor daughter! She will perish—she will drown! Who will save her? *O Madre de Dios!* who will save her?" exclaimed an old gentleman, rushing in despair along the quay, wringing his hands, and gesticulating, as foreigners only do, appealing to several men in vain.

Pedro saw the girl rising and sinking alternately as her crinoline buoyed her up, and piteously she shrieked every time she rose. He coolly measured the distance from the quay to where she was drowning. He could swim like a fish; but he thought of his new finery, so recently donned, and was turning away, when the unfortunate father rushed forward and grasped his hands.

"Can you swim, senor?" he asked, impetuously.

"Yes, a little," replied Pedro, with hesitation.

"You can—you can!"

"Like a duck or a dolphin sometimes."

"A thousand dollars, if you save my poor girl, shall be yours!" exclaimed the old man, weeping.

"Are you sure that——"

"I can pay you? Eh, eh. *O Dios mio!* she will drown before my eyes while this wretch chaffers for her life. Oh, my Ignez! my Ignez!"

"Save her, if you can swim, I command you!" cried the full, deep voice of the Padre Eizaguerro, who rushed forward. "Quick, senor! he who implores you to save his child—his only child—is the wealthy Moreno, the richest merchant in the city of Santiago."

"Too late!—too late!—she sinks! Pray to God for her!" cried a hundred voices.

"In, in!" exclaimed the Padres Ugarte and Eizaguerro together, for her father was almost speechless with despair; "in, if you are a swimmer—two thousand dollars if you save her!"

"Half my fortune—yea, all, if you will but save her!" groaned the unhappy father.

"Shame! shame!" muttered the crowd.

"Two thousand will do—*presto!* here goes!" said Pedro, as he cast his sombrero, poncho, gaudy jacket and vest, his knife and revolver, to the care of old Moreno, and plunged into the water amid the joyous yells of the negroes, and the loud "*Vivas!*" of the white and yellow spectators, many of whom were already stripping as if to anticipate him.

Pedro's head of black curly hair was soon seen to rise above the water as he swam, unerringly as a Newfoundland dog, to where the man was gesticulating frantically on the keel of the capsized boat, and to where the poor girl had sunk.

There he dived down, and all who looked on held their breath for a time; many crossed themselves very devoutly; the two padres raised their hands and eyes to heaven, and all the friars were on their knees, with many of the people.

Again a "*Viva!*" rent the air, as Pedro reappeared, but a few yards off, with the girl on his left arm, while he swam vigorously with his right, and gained the battery steps, even before a boat could reach her, for which he was by no means anxious, as he wished to enjoy the entire credit and profit of the enterprise; but life seemed almost extinct in the poor creature.

"Dead or alive," muttered the heartless Pedro; "'tis nothing to me; two thousand dollars are a good set-off against a wet shirt!"

The strong hand of the Padre Eizaguierro grasped his, and assisted him up the slimy sea stair, where he placed the senseless and dripping girl in her father's arms, and then the poor man wept as he covered her cold, wet cheek with kisses—the purest that are ever bestowed in this world; and now the shouts of "*Viva el noble caballero!*" that greeted him on all sides, so applaudingly and so vociferously, almost made Pedro Barradas believe himself the disinterested and gallant fellow the simple people believed him to be.

The young gentleman, who clung to the keel of the inverted boat, was almost immediately rescued by the crew of the brigantine, in which Pedro suddenly recognised, to his dismay, the otter-hunter; but the lady's companion was viewed with singular displeasure by all. Even the negroes ventured to mock him, for Pedro was the hero of the whole episode!

A carriage was summoned; the young lady, in whom Pedro discovered his beauty of the Matriz Church, and, who was already reviving, was placed therein, with her friend, or

lover, as he appeared to be, by his excessive alarm and tenderness. Her father insisted on her preserver accompanying them, and after a little affected demur and diffidence, he gave an anxious glance at the brigantine, another at the crowd, lest some of her crew might be there, and, assenting, took his place beside Moreno.

He remembered what the Padre Eizaguierro had said so hurriedly, that this old gentleman was the richest merchant in Santiago, the capital of Chili (of which the great city of Valparaiso is merely the port); that the girl he had saved was an *only* child.

"*Caramba!*" thought he; "I may get the daughter as well as the two thousand *duros*. Courage, Pedro, *amigo mio*, for fortune smiles more than ever! How lucky it was that little accident occurred on board the brigantine!"

CHAPTER LXV.

IGNEZ DE MORENO.

FROM the mole the carriage was driven to one of the most splendid hotels in Valparaiso. Don Salvador held his daughter in his arms, and hung over her with great solicitude and affection. She soon began to open her eyes, and the swinging motion of the carriage tended to promote the circulation of the blood. She was at once committed to the care of a medical man and her own attendants, and ere Pedro had dried his garments, and imbibed a stiff glass of brandy-and-water, most favourable tidings of her recovery were brought by her father, old Don Salvador, who insisted that Pedro should stay and sup with him, promising, that if Donna Ignez were sufficiently recovered ere he left them—which there was no reason to doubt—her preserver should be introduced to her.

"Bravo!" thought Pedro, as he approvingly glanced at himself askance in a great mirror, that ascended from the marble mantelpiece under which the gilt brassero smouldered, to the lofty frescoed ceiling; "bravo, Pedro!—so far so well!"

A supper, consisting chiefly of light dishes, fruit, and rare wines, served up in costly plate and splendid crystal, made Pedro's eyes twinkle, and ere the last flush of sunset had faded away on the Pacific, of which they had a fine view

from the open windows of the hotel, they were joined by the Padres Eizaguerro and Ugarte (whose presence Pedro could very well have spared); for the former was the confessor of Donna Ignez, and the latter was an old friend of her family.

Don Perez, the young man who had cut such a sorry figure on the keel of the inverted boat, also joined the party, but he was silent, reserved, and dissatisfied.

"Pardon me, senor," began Salvador de Moreno—a befevolent-looking old gentleman, whose silky hair was white as snow, though his face, which was noble in feature, wore a deep ruddy brown hue—"pardon me," he continued, after having expressed his gratitude in the most extravagant terms; "but may I inquire the name of a gentleman to whom my daughter owes her life, and I so much?"

Now, Pedro had not thought of a name to assume; but, with all the ready wit of a rogue, he at once foresaw that to adopt any *other* Christian cognomen than his own might prove awkward, if he forgot it, or failed to keep his cue, so he replied:

"Don Pedro Florez de Serrano."

The old merchant bowed very low indeed, for the name sounded well, and somehow not unfamiliar.

"You have served——"

"In the navy—yes," said Pedro, hastily.

"Ah—I thought so."

"Curse his clever eyes!" thought Pedro; "there is no concealing a sailor's hands."

Ere this, he had discovered a necessity for concealing this circumstance, which had always excited suspicions of his assumed character, for his hands were, of course, browned by tar and exposure, and hardened by tallying on to ropes, cables, and capstan-bars. He resolved to invest in a box of kid gloves forthwith, and to account for his nautical bearing, said:

"I am a lieutenant in the navy of the Southern States, on parole not to serve during the war against the North. I belonged to that famous ship, the *Florida*."

Don Salvador and the two padres bowed again, while Don Perez, a pale, but rather handsome young man, on whom Pedro's sharp eye turned from time to time, stared before him straight at his wine-glass, and looked, if possible, more discontented than ever.

"Jealous already, my old friend of the Matriz Church!—ho! ho!" thought Pedro.

"As your name is Florez," said the Padre Ugarte, "may I inquire whether you are any relation of Don Florez de —?"

Here the priest named a famous Spanish grandee. On which the adventurous Pedro promptly replied, while holding his glass to the liveried and aiguilleted servant, to be filled with hock, iced and sparkling, for the sixth time :

"I am no relation whatever, I believe—only a namesake."

"Indeed !"

"Since the death of my uncle, the Corregidor of Ciudad Rodrigo, in the old country, I have only one relation in the world."

"Ah, indeed !" remarked Padre Eizaguierro, who seemed to be studying Pedro closely with his small, keen eyes.

"My father's cousin," he resumed, with a steady stare, which somewhat abashed the worthy ecclesiastic.

"May I inquire?" asked Perez, who had not yet spoken.

"Certainly—old Serrano, the Captain-General of Cuba."

"El Mariscal Duque de Serrano !" exclaimed Ugarte.

"Certainly—do you know him, Senor Padre?" continued Pedro, with affected carelessness, while rolling up a paper cigarito, knowing well that the truth of this bold statement would never be tested in the Republic of Chili; and though a citizen thereof, Don Salvador now bowed very low indeed, for he had enough of the old Spaniard in his disposition to have a respect, bordering on awe, for long names and long pedigrees. The priests glanced at each other doubtfully, but remained silent, for they were more acute men of the world than their worthy host.

"And how came you among us here in Chili?" asked Perez.

"Simply by a stroke of fortune, senor. My parole cuts me off indefinitely from naval employment; my cousin will do nothing for me, either in Castile or in Cuba, so I have come here to kill time by travelling, attended by a young fellow named Zuares, a faithful servant, whom I have lost; so I find myself," added Pedro, who, thanks to the tutelage of the old Bishop of Orizaba, could express himself well when he chose, "by the great shores of the Pacific without a single friend."

"Do not say so, I entreat you, Senor Don Pedro," exclaimed old Moreno, impulsively, as he shook the speaker's hands; "oh," he added, while his eyes filled, "how much do I owe you, *Madre de Dios!*—how much?"

("Two thousand dollars, my golden pigeon!" thought Pedro.)

"I shall be your friend, senor, and so must our kinsman Perez."

Don Perez mumbled some reply half in his wine-glass, for he evidently viewed our adventurer with no favourable eyes. Indeed, though loving his young cousin Ignez with all his soul, he had scarcely grace to thank Pedro for fishing her up from the bottom of the bay. Perez de Moreno was rather a handsome young man; his black hair was shorn short, and he had smart moustaches, that stuck straight out right and left, terminating in sharp points, and his costume, though provincial, became him well.

He wore a short, round jacket of dark figured silk (surtouts and swallow-tails are unknown in these regions); a rich vest of scarlet satin; a shirt open at the neck, fastened by gold studs, in the centre of each of which a diamond flashed; long, straight pantaloons of chocolate-coloured velvet, girt by a sash of yellow silk; a broad-brimmed brown beaver, encircled by a gold band; straw-coloured kid gloves, and a knife concealed somewhere, no doubt, completed his attire.

As yet not a word had been said about the dollars, and notwithstanding his chivalrous character and high connections, our friend Pedro was getting impatient on the subject, and was very well pleased when it was referred to, with a covert sneer, by Don Perez.

"Ah, true, true, *Dios mio!* I had forgotten," exclaimed Don Salvador, producing a gilt morocco pocket-book, and opening it hastily; but Pedro, knowing well the character of the merchant, and having a deep and ultimate game in view, declined to receive a single dollar for the service rendered. Don Salvador expostulated, remonstrated, and was almost indignant, while Pedro rose fifty per cent. in the estimation of the two priests. At last, he could with difficulty, apparently, be prevailed upon "to accept, as his remittances from Charleston had been delayed," a cheque from his host, on the bank of Santiago, for a thousand dollars.

"We leave this to-morrow for Santiago, where we reside. I should like my daughter to see you ere we go; but I find that, if she is well enough, we must start by sunrise. If you should ever visit our city, don't forget us, senor—don't forget us, I beseech you," and the old gentleman presented his card, on which was engraved the name and address:

"*Don Salvador de Moreno, Alameda de la Canada.*"

"I shall not forget, be assured, senor," said Pedro, pocketing the cheque and the card; and now, thinking, as the lights were beginning to multiply, that the time had come when it would be prudent to take his departure, he solemnly, and with much profuse politeness, bade his intended father-

in-law adieu, for in this relationship he actually viewed Don Salvador already. "I have some business to transact, about—about—but it does not matter what, so I shall not be long behind you here."

He remembered the brigantine at anchor in the bay, and resolved to quit Valparaiso without loss of time.

"*Adios*, Padre Ugarte—Padre Eizaguierro, *adios!*" said he, waving his hat, and yawing somewhat in his course towards the door; "*adios*, Don Perez; don't forget to learn to swi—swi—swim. A thousand farewells to you, Don Salvador."

Fortunately the door was promptly opened by a servant, or Pedro would have lurched against its panels of plate-glass, and ere long he found himself in the street, with his back against a lamp-post, and very dim ideas of how he had quitted the hotel. Then he thought Don Perez had insulted him, and a vague notion of returning and punching that individual's head floated through his own.

The cool breeze from the Pacific partly sobered him; he wrapped his poncho round him; felt if the cheque was safe; and, then, remembering that he was in a strange place, he searched next for his knife and revolver.

"All right—*bueno!*—he hiccuped, "now for the Posada de San Augustin. The church is just opposite the posada—no, it is the posada that is opposite the church, *amigo mio!*"

Though tipsy, he reflected that he had a heavy bill due there; but as he had not the slightest intention of liquidating it, the expenses of a night more would matter little, as he meant to depart for Santiago on the morrow and follow up his fortune there without delay.

Pedro lay long a-bed next day for divers weighty reasons. He had a crushing headache—the result of iced champagne, moselle, sherry, and brandy-punch; he had to remember all the little romances he had invented for the behoof of Don Salvador and the jealous Don Perez; he also deemed it safer to keep out of the way till nightfall—even though skilfully disguised—than to wander about Valparaiso while that devilish brigantine (he could see her from the posada windows) was anchored off the battery.

Among other things, Pedro reflected that he must get rid of Don Perez, whom he already hated as a rival.

He knew well that attentions to the fair sex must be gone warily about under the shadow of the Andes; for though the women of South America are handsome and gay, their ideas of morality are somewhat cloudy and vague, hence the

jealousy of the men is extreme, their vengeance deadly and sudden. Spanish and Indian blood make a fiery mixture in that land of earthquakes and volcanoes.

Gallantry to women, married or single, is often repaid by the bullet or stiletto of a parent or lover; and yet what a certain writer says of California suits Chili, or any other of these regions, equally well, for there the very men who would lay down their lives to avenge the honour of their own family, would risk the same lives to complete the dishonour of another.

But the intentions of Senor Don Pedro Florez de Serrano, of the Southern navy, were strictly honourable. He contemplated nothing but matrimony.

Some woman he meant to marry; whether she was a princess or a *paisano*, whether, like Ignez, the heiress of uncounted pistoles, or the pretty keeper of a *taberna*, mattered nothing to him provided she could supply all his little exigences till he grew tired of her, slipped his cable and ran off to sea again.

So now an opportunity of the most golden and unexpected kind—one favoured by fortune and those good old romantic accessories of all lovers and novelists—to wit, gratitude and adventure, had suddenly opened up to him.

It seemed that he had but to go in and win. He was the rescuer from death of an heiress, young, beautiful, tender, and simple “as a sucking turkey,” to use one of his own peculiar fore-castle phrases; so he leaped from bed about mid-day, called for a long glass of brandy and potash iced, to assist in clearing his faculties, after which he began to consider in what fashion he would “levant” from the Posada de San Augustin, and set out for Santiago, without seeking for his bill, to attempt which, when he had but ten dollars in hand, would only have been an insult to his worthy host, Felipe Fernandez, whom he had no desire to offend.

CHAPTER LXVI.

HOW PEDRO PROVIDED HIMSELF WITH A HORSE AND VALET.

SANTIAGO lies sixty miles south-west of Valparaiso towards the Andes, a rough and hilly road. To proceed there on foot by no means suited Pedro's ideas of locomotion, while to travel by any kind of vehicle might lead to detection and other serious annoyances, so, as evening approached, and Pedro considered that old Moreno and his daughter must have had ten or twelve hours' start, he became sorely perplexed.

The sun set, the moon rose, and still Pedro was undecided. Slowly, solemnly, and majestically that broad, round silver moon ascended from the calm waters of the Pacific. White as snow shone all the plastered streets of Valparaiso, and the sea that rolled rippling into the bay, between the embattled forts, seemed a sheet of liquid sheen; but in the blue sky her silver light struggled for supremacy with a lurid red cast—not upon the clouds, for there were none—but upon the very ether itself, by the flames that were now shooting upward from the vast cone of Aconcagua.

From the windows of the front drawing-room, or large public saloon of the posada, which opened towards the bay, Pedro sauntered, sunk in thought and rage—perplexity always took that form with him—to those of the back, which overlooked the stable-yard, and there a violent altercation arrested his attention. It was taking place between no less a personage than Felipe Fernandez and a horseman who had just arrived.

“I have ridden from the Maypo River,” said the latter, “and must put up here.”

“A short distance, senor, and your horse is quite fresh,” replied the host; “it is useless dismounting, as I cannot accommodate you.”

“Why?” asked the other, with a malediction which sounded familiar to the ear of Pedro.

“We have no room.”

“Bah! I have been told that elsewhere.”

“Very likely,” replied the host, drily, as he turned to retire.

“If you have no room inside, just shove a pole out of the upper window, and I'll roost on that in California fashion,”

urged the speaker, as he deliberately dismounted, and, taking the lasso from his saddlebow, threw it over his arm; "I must have a bottle of wine, at least, ere I look for other diggings—*caramba*."

This interjection made Pedro regard the stranger more closely as he passed from where he had fastened his horse, and crossed the yard in the full blaze of the moonlight. Then Barradas ground his teeth as he recognised Cramply Hawkshaw, whom he had not met since that afternoon of crime in the Barranca Secca; and he was quite as much enraged and bewildered on seeing Hawkshaw there in the Posada de San Augustan as that personage had been on beholding him when perched on the yardarm of the *Hermione*, on that evening after she left London.

But Pedro's measures were rapidly taken; already he heard the footsteps of him he must avoid ascending the broad marble-staircase of the hotel! Save his poncho, knife, and revolver, Pedro had no luggage that he cared about, so he thrust the weapons in his sash, threw the poncho over his shoulders, stuck his sombrero fiercely on his head, and brushed past Hawkshaw just as that person entered the room.

Descending quickly to the stable-yard, Pedro went straight to where Hawkshaw's horse was standing in shadow, and after deliberately giving a glance at the bit and bridle, and lengthening the stirrup-leathers, to suit himself, he mounted, rode softly out of the stable-yard, and before Captain Hawkshaw, late of the Texan Partisan Rangers, had finished his wine, and had another expostulation with the *maestro de casa*, who either knew him of old, or disliked his trapper-like equipment, Pedro was fully three miles from Valparaiso, and was ascending, at a slow pace, of course, the steep and winding path which led to one of the many ravines in the mountain range that overhangs the city.

The horse had come from the Maypo River that day, as Hawkshaw stated; but it was strong and active, being one of that degenerated breed of Spanish chargers, which are to be met with, sometimes in herds of ten thousand, on the vast plains which extend from the shores of La Plata to the mountains of Patagonia. His head was broad; his legs clumsy; he was long-eared, rough-coated, and of a chestnut bay colour; but, like his brethren of the grassy prairies, he was possessed of great strength and spirit, and thus ascended the rough mountain path with unflagging zeal; but not so quickly as to prevent another horse, whose hoofs were heard

behind, from gaining on him as they entered the ravine in the hills, where their galloping was re-echoed by the overhanging volcanic rocks.

Pedro's hasty flight, together with the disappearance of the horse of the unwelcome visitor, who now stormed, and threatened to complain to the nearest alcalde, having excited the suspicion of the host, and a gust of rage in the breast of Hawkshaw, the latter, on hearing of the ponderous and immovable trunk, suggested that it should at once be examined, for, being aware of every species of trick under the sun, he at once suspected that it was full alone of emptiness.

Promptly acting on this alarming suggestion, Fernandez burst it open, and then nothing was seen in it, save the heads of the screws that secured it to the floor. He tore his hair, said many irreverent things of poor San Augustin, the patron of his posada, and leaping on one of his own horses, after a few inquiries, started in pursuit of the runaway along the Santiago road.

His horse being one of those which are imported from San Domingo, was of pure Castilian breeding, and rapidly overtook the Chilian nag ridden by Pedro, whom Fernandez soon recognised in the moonlight, as he jogged along, with his toes turned out and his elbows squared, and whom he summoned to stop, just as they gained the wildest part of the ravine, where the hills overhung it darkly, though at its western end, far down below could be seen white Valparaiso, its deep-blue bay and shipping, its lighted thoroughfares, its spires and convents, spread out like a fairy map in the silver sheen.

"Hollo !" answered Pedro, reining up, "who are you that follow a gentleman thus, shouting on the road like a drunken Indian? What—is it you, Senor Fernandez?"

"Yes, 'tis I," replied the landlord, breathless alike with rage and his hasty ride, yet resolving to dissemble a little; "permit me to expostulate with you, senor, on the double mistake you have committed."

"Mistake—I?"

"Yes, senor!"

"Explain yourself, and quickly too," replied Pedro, fiercely, as he grasped the revolver under his poncho.

"You have taken a stranger's horse from my house, and departed without paying the bill."

"I have left baggage, fellow," Pedro was beginning, with great loftiness.

"Only an empty box," interrupted Fernandez, but with

rather a quavering voice, when remembering with deep mortification that he had come on this errand *unarmed*.

"You know Don Salvador de Moreno?"

"Perfectly."

"I have here a cheque of his for a large sum, sir," said Pedro, producing the old merchant's stamped paper. "What change have you about you?"

"I regret, senor, that I have only twenty pistoles," said the landlord, with sudden affability; "yes—just twenty, and a few dollars."

"All of which I require you to hand over instantly, or I shall send this bullet through your brain!" cried Pedro, with an oath, as he levelled the revolver full at the head of the startled Fernandez.

The latter saw the steel barrel glittering in the moonlight; he saw the caps on the breech; and he saw, too, that there was no misunderstanding the fierce glitter in the eyes of Pedro. The path was lonely, and no aid was nigh.

"*Presto!*" roared Pedro; "I have no time to spare."

With a reluctance that was no way feigned, Fernandez gave his purse, which Pedro thrust into his pocket.

"Now, senor," said Fernandez, "I beseech you to give me the horse, for which I must account to Captain Hawkshaw, as he left it on my premises."

Pedro laughed aloud on hearing this request.

"Harkye, shipmate, he rides seldom who only rides borrowed horses; so I ride seldom, and, being a sailor, don't overlike it. Captain Hawkshaw is an old friend of mine, and may find his horse if he inquires at Quillota." (This was said to mislead the landlord as to his route.) "All my little mistakes are rectified now, I think, eh? *Adios!* I shall always recommend the Posada de San Augustin to my friends. Your cooking is admirable, your wines ditto. Be assured alike of my boundless custom and most distinguished consideration when next I visit your beautiful city of Valparaiso."

And thus bantering, the ruffian rode off, leaving Fernandez, speechless with rage, to retrace his steps or enjoy the moonlight among the mountains, as he chose, on very bad terms, however, with his patron, San Augustin, whom he believed had handed him over to the Evil One.

Pedro's horse, if not swift, had good mettle in him, and trotted steadily eastward up the ascent, towards the higher ranges of hills, and ere long no less than four volcanic peaks were visible, all flaming at once, like the cones of a mighty

natural furnace, and casting from afar off a glow of fire even to the zenith.

At midnight, the moonshine was still glorious. Pedro had ridden more than half-way to Santiago—thirty miles—so he stopped to rest himself, rather than the poor horse, in a little dell amid groves of mimosa trees, where parroquets, flame-coloured and green, chattered amid the branches; where the tall ceibas, or cotton-wood timber, cast their shadows on a deep and reedy lagune, whereon the giant water-flowers of that tropical region floated, and where, for coolness, the picaflor, or little humming-bird, nestled in their cups by day.

Though a South American, Pedro, as a seaman, had been long unused to the saddle. He felt as if all his bones had been mangled; wearily he threw the bridle over the stump of a broken tree, and stretched himself on the grass, while his nag drank of the lagune.

On the whole, Pedro was greatly pleased with himself. He had Don Salvador's bill for a thousand dollars; he had ten dollars yet remaining of the plunder from the brigantine, and he had twenty pistoles and four dollars just taken from Fernandez. Then there was Hawkshaw's horse, which, with its furniture, he valued at five hundred more.

"*Vamas!*" thought he; "at this rate I shall soon realise a fortune."

While Pedro was thus casting up this little sum, gained by his industry, he did not perceive a dark, lithe, and athletic young fellow, who had been lurking among the luxuriant weeds, and who now stole stealthily towards him, with a knife glittering in his hand; and little thought Pedro that the clink of his ill-gotten pistoles had been overheard.

This stealthy personage wore a red baize shirt, a yellow poncho cloak, or *surreppa*, an old-fashioned Spanish hat, much broken and bruised, and long brown leather leggings.

He had a calf-skin girdle, fastened to which by a thong the sheath of his knife was dangling, beside an Indian *bota*, or drinking-flask.

Gliding like a serpent or eel, he was close to Pedro, ere a sound made the latter turn sharply, with instinctive caution.

Each uttered an imprecation—an expletive not to be found in Johnson or Walker—there was a gleam of the lurker's knife, and a flash of Pedro's pistol, as they closed suddenly, and, without harming each other suddenly drew back.

"Pedro!"

"Zuares!"

Such were the exclamations that escaped the lips of these worthies, just in time to prevent a little culpable fratricide.

The brothers now exchanged an account of their adventures since they had scuttled the boat of the brigantine at the harbour of the Almendral, and separated, each to shift for himself.

Those of Zuares were very simple, being merely the breaking of all the commandments, and spending his dollars in such a fashion that the atmosphere of Valparaiso became too hot for his comfort, and he was now travelling inland, to avoid the chance of being legally garotted in a city where there was no Sangrado equalling our friend Heriot in a skill calculated to baffle even Calcraft.

But Pedro's narrative and intentions filled Zuares with genuine admiration and envy of his brother, the part of whose valet he promptly resolved to personate, in the prosecution of their scheme upon the funds and family of Don Salvador de Moreno, the account of whose simplicity, together with the beauty of Donna Ignez, he vowed to be quite delightful.

"Of course. *Corpo Santo!* a rich man's only daughter is always lovely," said Pedro; "but now, Zuares, *hermano mio*, you must remember all I have said, particularly about our—I mean *my* noble relatives."

"I have spelt them all over, I think. There is Serrano, Captain-General of Ciudad Rodrigo, and your cousin, Don Florez, who is *alcalde* of Cuba——"

"No, no, no!" exclaimed Pedro; "at this rate you will play the devil with me. I am Don Pedro Florez de Serrano, cousin to the Captain-General of Cuba; my late uncle was *corregidor* of Ciudad Rodrigo, as rich and as pious as you please."

"And you—you are——"

"A lieutenant of the Southern Navy on parole; which will account for my brown hands, and other shortcomings in the matter of gentility. You——"

"I am a most attached and faithful servant."

"A regular Sancho. You have your cue?"

"*Por vida del demonio*, what a game!"

"*Glorioso! Vamos* (come)!"

And the two rascals laughed heartily as they resumed the road that led to Santiago, chatting, and fraternally riding by turns the horse of Hawkshaw, which now, poor animal, began to droop its head and ears in weariness.

CHAPTER LXVII.

THE ALAMEDA DE LA CANADA.

"THAT Fortune is not nice in her morality," says Maria Edgeworth ; "that she frequently favours those who do not adhere to truth more than those who do, we have early had occasion to observe. But whether fortune may not be in this, as in all the rest, treacherous and capricious—whether she may not by her first smiles and favours, lure her victims to their cost, to their utter undoing at last, remains to be seen."

And so it remains to be seen how far the blind goddess favoured Pedro and his well-beloved brother, Zuares.

Towards the close of the next day, they drew near the great city of Santiago, and meeting a muleteer, who was travelling towards Quillota, with a train of mules, laden with jerked beef and hemp, they further improved their financial resources by selling to him the horse of Hawkshaw, with bridle and saddle, for a hundred dollars, and the muleteer was too well pleased with his bargain to make any particular inquiries respecting it ; but took the precaution, after he left the sellers, to halt in the first peach grove, and shear off the horse's mane, dock his tail and forelock, and otherwise disguise him.

On entering Santiago, to avoid any further mistakes, Pedro proceeded at once to get Don Salvador's cheque turned into hard cash of the Chilian Republic. Then he had the somewhat picturesque costume of Zuares changed for a handsome suit of Spanish livery ; and, thirdly, he betook himself to the Alameda de la Canada, just as the streets were being lighted, in search of the house of the Morenos.

The Alameda of Santiago is, perhaps, the most magnificent promenade in any of the South American cities. It is more than a hundred and fifty years old. Measuring a thousand yards in length, it is divided into three stately walks, on each side of which runs a carriage-way. There are also three canals, which intersect it, and six rows of gigantic poplars.

Here is also the ancient convent of St. Francis, with a church built of pure white stone, having a lofty steeple, from the galleries of which may be seen the fertile vale that stretches to the base of the Andes—the land of gold and of fire.

The stone seats were all occupied by ladies. All were gay, and many of them were beautiful. Their lace mantillas were all thrown back, to float over their shoulders, for the evening was warm, and all their large feather fans were at work.

Gentlemen in sombreros hovered round their seats in hundreds, and the fine band of a Lancer regiment of the Chilian Republic played near the octagon fountain, at the foot of the centre walk, and filled the ambient air with the strains of "Il Trovatore."

The December evening was lovely, as well as warm (the thermometer rises to eighty-five degrees there in January), and the yellow glory of the set sun yet lingered on the giant summits of the snow-clad Andes, shaded off into saffron, purple, and dark blue in the ravines and valleys, through which roll those rivers that mingle their gold-dust with the sand on the shores of the Pacific—the Rio Monte and the Aconcagua, whose banks are bordered by groves of the orange, the fig, the peach, and the pomegranate, for in Chili the land teems with all that can minister to luxury and to wealth.

Accompanied by his valet, who walked at a respectful distance behind, bearing his poncho and umbrella, our acquaintance, Don Pedro Florez, walked along the Alameda, with a cigar in his mouth, his sombrero stuck very much over his right eye, and both hands thrust into his trousers pockets. He peered or leered into the faces of all the ladies with an air of assurance that he might not have adopted had he and Zuares not recently dined. He inquired of a water-carrier for the mansion of Don Salvador, and it was speedily pointed out to him.

"*Demonio !*" thought Pedro, as he ascended the broad flight of marble steps in front ; " it is a regular palace, this ! And what if Donna Ignez should have been too ill to travel after her cold bath ?—she may be still at Valparaiso."

Pedro was somewhat scared, and Zuares was so completely, by the magnitude and magnificent aspect of the mansion, the door of which was open, revealing a lighted vestibule, and lamps were shining through nearly all of its lofty windows. The balconies were richly gilded ; the Venetian blinds were all up, and thus the rich curtains, the draperies, and gilded ceilings of the apartments could be seen from the Alameda.

Don Salvador was at home.

Pedro took his cloak from his valet, whom he told, with great condescension, to amuse himself for the remainder of

the evening at the dancing-rooms, but to be at their hotel before midnight. Zuares touched his hat, with his tongue in his cheek ; while his brother was ushered into the *ante-cámara*, or drawing-room, where Don Salvador, Don Perez, and Padre Eizaguierro (whom he could very well have spared) received him with great politeness ; but the first alone with any cordiality.

Coffee and chocolate were being served round, and Donna Ignez came forward, blushing and smiling, to be presented to her "brave preserver."

She was, evidently, of pure Spanish blood ; her pale brunette complexion showing clearly that there was no native mixture in her blue veins ; while her eyes, and their lashes and brows, were black as night.

As Pedro surveyed the girl's pure loveliness, not her least attractions seemed to be her necklace, her long pendant earrings, her bracelets, and high Spanish comb, all *en suite*—all blood-red rubies, which sparkled all the brighter for the snowy pearls that mingled with them in settings of richly-chased gold, for Pedro Barradas had the eye and heart of a pirate.

Two sisters of the pale and discontented Don Perez were present—Donna Erminia, a tall and magnificent girl (whose broad white shoulders and large proportions made Pedro wish that she had been the merchant's daughter), and little Donna Paula, who was only some ten years old or so, but who seemed a miniature edition of Erminia, with a high comb, fan, and a veil, a demure little face, and calm, black, inquiring eyes. She sat on a velvet hassock near the knee of Don Salvador, with whom she was an especial favourite.

All unused to society such as this, Pedro was sorely abashed for a time, till his natural impudence came to his aid. His past education, and his service as a boy in the cathedral church of Orizaba, he now recalled with success, and the knowledge he had gained of clerical matters, served him in his endeavours to cast "dust in the eyes" of the Padre Eizaguierro as to his real character, and yet, withal, the priest mistrusted him.

He saw that there was something unreal about this Don Pedro—that he was not a gentleman of Spain, or any other place ; and as for the Padre Ugarte, he suspected something worse than mere imposture. Yet, veiling the native ferocity of his character, Pedro was now humble, fawning, and discreet—oh ! exceedingly discreet ! He had a great game to play—a rich end in view.

"We met, senor, once before that accident," said Donna Ignez, looking up with a bright smile in her soft eyes.

"Yes, senora," replied Pedro.

"At the Matriz Church—ah, you remember!"

"Could I ever forget?" was the gallant response.

"And the sermon?"

"It was divine," said Pedro, in a low voice, but yet distinct enough to reach the ear of the padre.

So now they were friends at once, to an extent that cousin Perez could neither understand nor relish.

Though, when inflamed by his potations, a mad ruffian, as we have shown by his proceedings on board the *Hermione*, Pedro was not altogether destitute of the subtle art of winning female favour—the art in which his father excelled so fatally, and which was the only inheritance he had left him—so he exerted every energy to please the fair young Ignez, and to use with industry the time that fortune gave him.

So, after detailing a very bloody engagement between the ships of the Federals and Confederates, in which he alleged he was wounded and left for dead on the enemy's deck, he suddenly affected to discover a new source for deep interest in Donna Ignez—a close and most remarkable resemblance which she bore to "a sister, whom he loved dearly."

"Where does she reside?" asked Donna Erminia; "in Spain?"

"Dear old Spain, of which papa talks so much," added her cousin Ignez.

"Alas! no," said Pedro, beginning to cudgel his invention.

"Is she dead?" asked Ignez, gently.

"No."

"Then she must be married, of course?" said little Donna Paula, fanning herself with all the air of her great-grandmother.

"No—she became a nun, in spite of my advice," said Pedro, sighing: "one of the sisters of Santa Clara."

"Where, senor?" asked Erminia; "we are very curious, you see; but it is the privilege of our sex."

"At Orizaba; and it was long before our good friend, the bishop, who was her godfather——"

"Ah, you know the Bishop of Orizaba, do you, senor?" said the Padre Eizaguerro, coming suddenly forward.

"Perfectly, padre," replied Pedro, wishing his tongue had been bitten off.

"Probably you have heard the story of the miraculous image, which came back to the cathedral in the night?"

"Yes ; but at that time I was on board the *Florida*."

"I have just had a letter from the bishop about it."

"Indeed, padre," stammered Pedro, beginning to feel far from comfortable, as the padre began to search the pockets of his soutan.

"Dear me—dear me—where can I have put it?—he is an old college friend of mine—I have left it in my vestry ; but, senor, you will be glad to learn that they have now distinct traces of the impious thief, who so sacrilegiously stole the thirteen diamond stars and the golden aureole from the holy image of Our Lady."

Pedro, who had hitherto been piling falsehood upon falsehood, winced at this communication, and felt himself grow pale ; but to his infinite relief, the padre turned away to address Don Salvador.

"Talking of thieves, ladies," said Pedro, "I had a robber encounter last night, on the hills above Valparaiso."

"An encounter—*Madre de Dios*—of what nature?"

And, thereupon, Pedro proceeded to detail a very spirited scuffle, in which he must have perished, as he had at least fifteen assailants, but for the unexpected arrival of his servant, the faithful Zuares.

"The man you lost at Valparaiso, senor?" said Moreno.

"Exactly—the same brave fellow."

"Oh, Don Pedro, this is romance upon romance!" exclaimed Ignez, as, with two very white hands, she smoothed back the dark masses of her magnificent hair, evidently greatly pleased with the impostor, to whose rhodomontades she listened as a charming and romantic young lady, whose life has just been saved by a striking, athletic, and imposing dark stranger, may be supposed to do.

Her cousin and *fiancé*, who had clung for life and death to the keel of the pinnace, which he had overset by mismanagement, was fearfully at a discount—even little Donna Paula did not mind him a bit ; and of this state of matters Don Pedro Florez, cousin of the Marshal Duke de Serrano, hastened to make the best use, for he could temper his assurance with vast art when he chose, affecting actually to be timid and shy—he "had always been so, when studying at Salamanca," as he whispered to Ignez, when seated at the piano.

He soon cherished a love (if we may call it so) for this unsuspecting girl ; but, like the love that Hawkshaw bore for Ethel Basset, the lust of lucre was its basis—recklessness and obstinacy did the rest.

On the other hand, a long, weary, and somewhat tame engagement with her cousin—an understood affair, that had lasted all her girlhood—rendered Ignez, perhaps, more open to the advances of a stranger, by the very novelty of his attentions.

After making an appointment to drive with the whole party to the beautiful valley of Mepoocho next day, Pedro returned to his hotel extremely well pleased with himself, and just in time to prevent Zuares, who had been imbibing too freely in the Recoba, or market-place, from being carried off by the horse police, for drawing his knife on the waiters, kissing the chambermaids, and other little eccentricities.

Pedro made such admirable use of the opportunities afforded by that expedition to the valley, and others, in which the young ladies took him to see the Jesuits' Church, the Chapel of Our Lady del Rosario, the great Church of La Campagna, and other public sights, that he had thrice spoken of love to Ignez, who only blushed and smiled, but did not forbid him, or seek to avoid the subject, unless when Perez or her father were within hearing, when a quick warning glance from her charming eyes withheld him. Thus the heedless girl, unfortunately for herself, established with him a species of secret understanding, which made Pedro conceive a very daring scheme indeed—to compel her to become his by a *coup-de-main*, as he dreaded the result of the padre's correspondence with the bishop, and an exposure of his escapade at the Posada de San Augustin.

More than one painful and unpleasant scene ensued between Ignez and her cousin Perez now. She was piqued, and he was furious; hence the coldness that ensued between them favoured the adventurous Pedro. Yet poor Don Perez loved the wilful girl to distraction, as the phrase is.

He was too feeble to compete in bodily strength with such a bulky ruffian as Pedro, and was too honourable to resort to secret means of getting rid of him. Failing with Ignez herself, he disdained to apply for the intervention of her father's authority, and yet he saw daily, yea, hourly, how, misled by her imagination alone, the heart of his beautiful cousin was being corrupted, warped and turned from him.

"Why is this?—how is this?—answer me, Ignez?" he once asked her, imploringly.

"He saved me," said she, with her sweet face half averted from him. "when you left me to perish."

"Ignez!" exclaimed the young man, in a voice of shame and agony.

"It is true, cousin Perez."

"I cannot swim—I have told you so a hundred times."

"Then you should learn, my poor Perez."

"I could but shout for succour."

"And *he* came!" she said, with heaving breast and flashing eyes.

"Unless assisted by Heaven, I could not have saved you, dear, dear Ignez," said he, almost in tears.

"Then you should have perished with me, if you loved me."

"*If I loved you!*" he repeated, in sorrowful reproach; but what need was there for perishing, when I saw succour coming?"

"You saw him—you saw him who saved me," continued the pitiless little beauty, with each reply planting an arrow in the heart of poor Perez.

"He saved you for the bribe of a thousand dollars!" said he, scornfully; "all on the mole heard that plain enough."

"In vain do you enviously seek to detract from him, cousin Perez. He saved me for myself—perhaps for himself too," was the still more cutting rejoinder.

"Enough, Senora de Moreno," said Perez, in a towering passion; "I shall yet unmask this piccaroon—this wretched impostor, if to do so should cost me half my fortune!"

As Perez uttered this threat, and retired by one door of the drawing-room, it chanced that the redoubtable and interesting Don Pedro Florez de Serrano entered by another, and these words, which he heard distinctly enough, made that worthy cavalier feel very much as if in a Californian vapour bath—the hottest of such contrivances: and he felt, moreover, there was no time to be lost in getting rid of Don Perez, and bringing matters to an issue with Ignez de Moreno.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

THE DRESSING-CLOSET OF IGNEZ.

DURING these proceedings, Don Perez had many conferences with the two priests.

Padre Eizaguerro, the confessor of Ignez, suspected much, but Padre Ugarte, a stern and ascetic enthusiast, suspected, and said more; for he openly inveighed against the simplicity of Don Salvador, in believing all the fine things Pedro said about his relations in Spain, and his ample possessions on the table land of Anahuac, as contrasted with his cupidity on the mole, before he would consent to save the drowning girl's life.

"A seaman! he—a Confederate officer! was such the conduct of either?" exclaimed the Nuncio.

"But he refused, my dear padre, he flatly refused to receive the two thousand dollars!" urged Moreno, who was too simple and too full of gratitude to suspect Pedro.

"Refuse—ha! ha!"

"Yes."

"Acting all—acting all!" said Ugarte, a sharp observer of men and things.

"But for him, I should to-night have been a poor old childless man," replied Morena.

Perez and they employed an *escribano*, who had correspondents in various quarters, and ere long he gathered strange tidings of Pedro. The bishop of Orizaba and the *escribano*, who had been robbed in the Barranca Secca, the mate of the otter-hunter, Hawkshaw, and the keeper of the Posada De San Augustin, with others, were all written to—the strands of evidence being untwisted as a lawyer alone could discover and untwist them; telegraph and railway appliances were all at work; and thus, all unknown to Pedro and Zuarez, who were already under the surveillance of the alguazils, a network of evidence was closing round them.

The day had been mild and warm for December—February being the hottest month of the year at Santiago—and Donna Ignez had retired early to her own apartments. All day she had been busy with Donna Erminia, little Donna Paula, and other ladies, in preparing artificial flowers and lanterns for the grand religious festival, which was to be held in the

Church of La Campagnia, wherein the Padre Ugarte and Eizagiuerro, the Nuncio, were to officiate, a festival which was looked forward to with the deepest interest by all in Santiago.

Seated before the mirror, with all her fine dark hair floating in rippling masses upon her smooth white shoulders, the girl was lingering, ere she proceeded further to undress, and seemed disposed to muse, and to gaze at the reflection of her own charming figure, while she repeated, re-acted, and reconsidered with a soft, dreamy smile on her lips and in her eyes, all that had passed of late between herself and Pedro ; and to think, with a sigh, of what her papa's views might be, when he came to hear that their visitor had adopted the character of an avowed lover—that she was on bad terms with cousin Perez, had well-nigh quarrelled with him, and dismissed him !

These thoughts rather agitated the little beauty, and so immersed was she in them that she did not hear a light step on the gilded balcony outside her window, which was yet partly unclosed, nor did she hear the sash pushed open, as a man cautiously entered her apartment, and stood for a minute surveying her with an expression of admiration, that on this occasion was in no way feigned.

This nocturnal visitor was no other than Pedro, who, in the course of casual conversation, had cunningly discovered from Ignez the locality of her sleeping-place, and who, after supping with Don Salvador, had taken an additional bottle of wine at a *taberna* with Zuares, and returned to the house on the Alameda. Then, selecting the window of Ignez, he had cast his lasso over the balcony and swung himself up, hand over hand, in a manner which his past nautical experiences rendered easy enough.

He approached slowly and stealthily, dreading an outcry when she discovered him. He had but two ideas. One was to persuade her to elope with him ; the other was the hope that she might so far compromise herself that marriage alone could save her honour. Cautious in all his proceedings, he had gathered the lasso in his hand, for to leave it dangling into the street might have attracted attention, and caused premature discovery. Behind one of the poplars in the Alameda, Zuares sat crouching on his hams, and watching like a lynx.

Pedro was within a pace of Ignez when she started, and her dark eyes dilated as she saw his form appear behind her own, reflected in the mirror ; but, ere a cry could escape her part-

ing lips, he threw his arms around her, and stifled it with a kiss.

"Pedro—Don Pedro!" she exclaimed, in a voice of agitation and terror.

"Yes, Ignez, 'tis I! *Nina mi alma*—'tis I."

This forecastle phrase, which means literally, "my little honey," by no means reassured her.

"How—what does this mean?" she asked, angrily.

"It means that—that my love, Ignez, can neither tolerate absence nor delay."

"Delay!" she faltered, while gathering up her hair, by which she displayed a very taper waist, and two polished elbows.

"I dread alike the wiles and enmity of your cousin Perez, and that devil of a Padre Eizaguierro, with many others who dislike me, and I have come hither to-night that we may be separated no more."

"What am I to understand by all this, senor?" asked the girl, with increasing agitation.

"Does not your own heart tell you?" asked Pedro, embracing her.

"*O madre de Dios*—what is all this I hear?" she exclaimed, while flushing and palpitating in his arms, and glancing nervously at the door.

"*Demonio*—I forget what I am about!" muttered Pedro, as he hastened to the door, and softly turned the key.

"Leave me—retire as you came. Leave me, if you hope for pardon—if you would not wish to see me die at your feet, Don Pedro," said Ignez, gathering her energies, and gazing at him with a glance which was very loving and imploring, though there was something in Pedro's aspect now, flushed as he was with wine and presumptuous hopes, that almost terrified her; for his features seemed unusually coarse and swollen, and his eyes wore a very wild expression. "Leave me," she repeated, "or I shall be compelled to cry for aid; my father's room is not very far from this."

Pedro laughed.

"Senora," said he, "you forget that your reputation is at stake if you utter an outcry, and I am thus discovered—so kiss me, and be quiet, will you? Were it known that a man was in your bed-room, even for ten minutes, all Santiago would ring with it to-morrow; and think of the fuss there would be about it on the Alameda. How the Padre Eizaguierro would raise his eyebrows, and the Padre Ugarte his his voice; how Donna Erminia would shrug her white

shoulders; and what would old papa Salvador de Moreno say of it? So, my little beauty, my darling Ignez, be quiet pray, for all our sakes. Come, *mi queredita*, sit on my knee, and I shall soon teach you to love me with all your heart."

But Pedro's words—the very picture of shame and exposure which his banter unwittingly portrayed—instead of answering his purpose, fully recalled the young lady to herself, and a sense of her danger.

The regard she bore him in her impulsive breast first filled her eyes with tears of sorrow, that he should dare to act thus, and then they flashed with indignation that Pedro should conceive a scheme so disastrous.

"If you love me, as you say, Don Pedro, I beseech you to retire," she said, sternly.

"It is because I do love you as I say, that I am here," urged Pedro, making another effort to clasp her in his arms.

But she eluded him, and in a voice there was no mistaking—low, subdued, and full of angry determination, she replied:

"Begone, senor, or by the soul of my mother, I shall summon my father, and he always sleeps with fire-arms at hand."

"*Demonio!* what a little spitfire it is."

At that moment there was a loud knock on the chamber-door.

"Who is there?" asked Ignez, growing deadly pale, and sickening with the thought of the false position in which Pedro had placed her.

"Open, Ignez," said the voice of Don Salvador, "'Tis I, your father."

"What is the matter, senor?" asked Ignez, almost sinking with distress.

"A man has been seen to enter the house!"

"A man!"

"So your cousin Perez tells me." At this name Pedro ground his teeth, and felt for his knife.

"We have searched for him everywhere, save here, and we must assure ourselves that your rooms are safe; open."

"In one moment, dearest papa," replied Ignez, pointing to the window, pale and trembling, her dark eyes flashing, her curved nostrils quivering; but instead of retiring as he had entered, Pedro snatched up his lasso, darted into a little closet, the door of which was open, and concealed himself among the cloaks, dresses, and other garments, which hung from pegs upon the wall.

This was the bath-room of Ignez, and a *brazero* of lighted charcoal was smouldering on the floor. This seriously incommoded Pedro, who remained ensconced in the little apartment, bitterly repenting the whole adventure, by which his safety was compromised, and his hopes, perhaps, dashed for ever. So he crouched and listened, with his hand on the haft of his knife, ready to spring forth, and kill Don Salvador—even Ignez herself, if it were necessary—for whenever he was at bay, or caught in his own toils, the cruel impulses of his savage heart gained their fullest sway.

“I have heard or seen nothing to cause alarm, papa,” said Ignez, whose colourless face was closely scanned by Don Perez, as he looked round the apartment and over the balcony.

“It is very odd,” said Don Salvador; “but as Perez passed homeward he saw a man enter the house. “I will report the affair to the alguazil-mayor, for we have searched everywhere, and can find no trace of the fellow. I am sorry we have disturbed you, my child, when weary, as you must be with your day’s work at La Campagnia,” he added, while half-cocking his pistols. “But good-night, darling, and pleasant dreams to you.”

“We have not searched this closet,” said Perez, whose pallor exceeded that of Inez, and her heart seemed to die within her, as he opened the dressing-room door. “Faugh!” he added, “such a smell of charcoal. My dear Ignez, you should be careful with that *brazero*.”

He then *locked* the door.

“Come, Perez,” said old Moreno, “Ignez looks pale.”

“May I speak with her for one minute, my dear senor, and will you wait for me in the billiard-room?”

“Certainly, my dear boy; but don’t stay long,” said the old gentleman, as he smilingly retired.

Ignez gazed anxiously, almost with a haggard aspect, at her cousin, and then her eyes wandered furtively towards the door of the fatal closet.

“Ignez,” said Perez, trembling in spite of himself.

“Cousin!”

“There is a man in that closet.”

Her dismay was now overwhelming, for it was combined with a shame and terror against which even her pure innocence failed to support her.

“Oh, Perez, my cousin, dare you accuse—dare you suspect——”

“I suspect and accuse you of nothing, oh Ignez! God

forbid, though I have suffered much of late. But a villain whom I do suspect has concealed himself for some nefarious purpose in your dressing-closet. On looking in I saw his feet, and he must be got rid of quietly, for not a breath must stain the reputation of you, my dearest Ignez. Leave me to act," continued Perez, as he opened the closet door and cocked a pistol. "Come forth," said he, "you are discovered, Don Pedro. Come forth instantly, and in silence too."

There was no reply, but the body of Pedro was seen extended at length on the floor! He was in a state of exhaustion—overcome by his recent potations at the *taberno*, combined with the noxious fumes of the charcoal from the *brazero*.

Perez kicked him with his foot, and smiled grimly.

"I told you, my dear cousin, to be careful with that *brazero*. Luckily there is no moon, the night is cloudy, and this carrion may recover his senses in the cool Alameda."

Pale as death, bewildered and terrified, Ignez gazed on the prostrate figure, and on those features which seemed to be convulsed by the throes of death.

Don Perez tied the lasso under the arms of Pedro, and dragging his body to the balcony, after carefully ascertaining that there was no one in the street, with no small exertion (for the lad was slight though wiry) he hoisted the bulky intruder over the iron railing, and lowered him to the ground—not very tenderly, perhaps. He then dropped the lasso after its proprietor, carefully closed and secured the window-sashes, kissed his passive cousin, and bidding her good-night, retired.

At that moment the great bell of the church of La Campagna (which was already beginning to be lighted up with its countless lamps, for the great festival of the morrow) tolled the hour of twelve. Every stroke sounded like a knell in the soul of Ignez, and she burst into tears.

She was guiltless, and he had not suspected her; yet in her innocent heart she felt terrified like one who unwittingly has committed a great crime. Oh, that Padre Eizaguierro were here, that she might confide it all to him, and solicit his advice!

Was that the man who had so lately poured his daring love speeches into her ears, and who had striven to embrace her—he whom she had seen Perez dragging forth, with an air of such mingled anger and satisfaction—dying or dead?

She dared not peep forth to satisfy the curiosity that consumed her. Had she done so, about one hour after Pedro

was lowered over the balcony, she might have seen him walking slowly away, leaning on the arm of Zuares.

The cool night breeze in the open Alameda had revived him ; but the fumes of the *brazero* in that little closet were nearly being the means of cutting short the career of Pedro Barradas, and so saving us, and many others, a vast deal of trouble.

On this night, the sleep of Ignez was far from being a peaceful one.

Perez slept like a dormouse. He was happy, and his first thought in the morning was to open sundry letters and telegrams from Valparaiso.

"Oho, Don Pedro Florez de Serrano!" he exclaimed, "lieutenant of the *Florida*, in the naval service of the States, on his parole of honour, cousin of the Captain-General of Cuba, nephew of the Corregidor of Ciudad Rodrigo, student of Salamanca, and the devil only knows all what more, so we have caught you, have we? *Bueno Viva!*"

And the young man, as he drank his coffee and lit a cigar, laughed loudly.

How little could he foresee the awful events of the night that were to follow!

CHAPTER LXIX.

THE GREAT CRIME OF PEDRO BARRADAS.

IN the cool night breeze, that swept through the Alameda de la Canada, Pedro had recovered consciousness, but he had no conception of how he came to be there, nor had he a recollection of anything that had occurred after he darted into the dressing-closet of Ignez. He could remember that an overpowering sleep fell upon him, and that was all.

During the day he was too unwell to visit the house of the Morenos ; but he hoped to meet Donna Ignez, with the rest of her family, at the great festival in the Church of La Campagna, when, doubtless, she would be able to explain all to him.

"You are sure that matters are all right with this girl?" asked Zuares, doubtfully, for he had seen a man lowering what he at first supposed to be his brother's dead body over the balcony.

"Right—of course. *Vamos!* it is a clear case with her now."

"Clear case of what?"

"Of going into consumption, or into a convent, if she does not marry me," replied Pedro, who, however, was not without some unpleasant doubts himself, when remembering the unconcealed anger and vexation exhibited by Ignez last night; "but, Zuares, do you know that this old fellow——"

"Who?"

"Don Salvador de Moreno——"

"Well?"

"Possesses one of the thirty-four gold mines in the Curacy of Colina, with one of the *laverados* on the mountain of Giundo?"

"Is it a bath?" asked Zuares.

"No, you fool!" replied Pedro, angrily.

"'Whoso calleth his brother a fool——'"

"'Is in danger of hell-fire!' Bah! I learnt all that long ago at Orizaba."

"Well—and this *laverado*?"

"Is a place where the gold-dust is washed from the sand. Ignez shall be heiress of as many pistoles as would fill yonder brigantine to the beams."

"*Bueno!* then we shall see what we shall see. I am beginning to tire of this kind of life, and long for salt-water again."

The night of the 8th December drew on, and Pedro, with his brother, were among the first who repaired to the Plazuela de la Campaña. Long before the doors of the vast church were open, hundreds of splendid carriages, rolling from all quarters of the city, deposited ladies in rich summer dresses and ample crinolines—large beyond any that we see in Europe—at the high-arched portal, through which, and through every window of that lofty pile, there glared a marvellous blaze of light, for the edifice had been illuminated with a splendour never seen before. Consequently the excitement in Santiago was great, and great was the competition among the wealthy and well-born to procure admission.

It was the great festival of the Immaculate Conception, and more than twenty thousand lights and lamps, of every brilliant colour, mostly camphine, garlanded the pillars, encircled the arches, lined the cornices, or were festooned across the great church, and so many coloured globes were used on this occasion, that the whole interior resembled a

hall of dazzling fire. All was light and radiance—there could be no shadow anywhere.

The great altar was a veritable pyramid of light, amid which there shone a marvellous image of the Madonna, copied from Murillo's famous picture. Her eyes were turned to heaven, her hands were crossed upon her breast; her feet were placed upon a crescent moon, and clouds of snow-white gauze and muslin seemed to float around her.

Never had such a display been witnessed in this old church of the Jesuits (since the marriage of the Conde de Sierra Bella, whose palace yet stands in the great plaza), for old it was, when compared with other buildings in the city, having been founded in the early part of the seventeenth century.

From the floor the altar rose to the roof of the church, and as it did not reach from wall to wall, on each side were great reliquaries, closed by doors so richly gilded, that they shone like two vast plates of polished gold.

All on their knees before it knelt a congregation composed of two thousand women (and a few hundred men), all richly attired, and many of them young, noble, and beautiful. It was a sight such as never before had been witnessed in Santiago.

Thanks to the favour of the Nuncio, Donna Ignez, with her cousin, Don Perez, and his sisters, Donna Erminia and the little Donna Paula, had procured places close to the glittering rail which surrounded the vast altar, and there they were speedily joined by Pedro, who left his brother among the valets in livery at the church porch, and who, utterly indifferent to, or oblivious of the long stare and steady frown bestowed upon him by Don Perez, presented his hand to Ignez, and—after he had devoutly crossed himself, and smote his breast sundry times—prepared to join in a whispered conversation, for the service had not yet commenced.

During the livelong day an idea that he was dead—that he had been suffocated in the closet—had haunted the mind of Ignez, who felt herself as if an accomplice in a great crime, and thus, when she found him kneeling beside her in church, she gave him her daintily-gloved little hand with a bright smile, that was full of real happiness; for though this man had so nearly destroyed her honour, she was most thankful to Heaven that he had not perished, as her fears predicted.

She felt no love for him now, but sincere gratitude to faithful cousin Perez, and returning love, too; but Pedro construed her smile in his own fashion, and believing that his

fortunes were still in a fair way to prosper, he continued to whisper and kneel by her side, greatly to the rage of Perez, of whose agency in the episode of last night the bold impostor was yet completely ignorant.

Padre Ugarte was to preach, and Padre Eizagiuerro, the Apostolic Nuncio, the friend of Pope Pius IX., and founder of the American College at Rome, was next to address the people.

It had been said all over Santiago, some days before, that in the house of the Morenos, the Nuncio had expressed a regret that too probably the lighting up of the Campagna Church would be inferior to the illuminations of the Romans.

"Rome!" exclaimed Ugarte; "in Colina we have four-and-thirty mines of gold; in Lampa three of silver; the mountains of Caren are full of gold, and gold *laverados* cover all the summit of Calen. Our devotees are rich, Senor Nuncio, and on that holy night I shall shew you *such an illumination as the world has never seen!*"

Fearfully prophetic was the boast of Ugarte!

While the people were still absorbed in prayer, and many a bright eye, and many a young and beautiful face turned in wonder and pleasure to the countless lamps that covered all the church, and ere the choir had struck up, or the procession of ecclesiastics entered, Pedro saw his brother Zuares forcing a passage, without much ceremony, through the kneeling thousands, towards him. What did this portend?

Pedro first felt emotions of annoyance, then of alarm, for the face of Zuares, who beckoned to him, was pale with agitation. Pedro approached him by a few paces.

"We are lost! They have discovered everything!" said Zuares, in a breathless whisper.

"They—who?"

"In the porch of the church I heard our names mentioned, and so concealed myself behind a statue to listen."

"Well, well! Quick, quick!"

"There, now in close consultation about the best mode of seizing you as you leave the church, are Don Salvador de Moreno, Felipe Fernandez, the keeper of the Posada de Augustin, the mate of the brigantine, and that accursed Englishman, Hawkshaw. They have with them the alguazil-mayor, and four horse-police, with their carbines, and I heard them all whispering of sacrilege—robbery."

"What more?" hissed Pedro, through his clenched teeth.

"*Murder!*" whispered Zuares, with pallid lips.

The "trail of the serpent" was complete.

"The door is watched, you say?"

"And the church is surrounded by horse and foot alguazils," replied Zuares, in the same low, hurried whisper.

Pedro glanced hastily about him; there seemed to be no way of escape but by the porch, and that was guarded. Don Perez had seen Zuares approach, and his keen, stern eye was on the brothers. Already he was rising as if to leave the church; some plan for escape must be decided on, and quickly, as if the great fiend had whispered it, a diabolical thought occurred to Pedro Barradas.

He glanced towards the magnificent altar, on which, amid thousands of waxen and feather flowers, there burned several hundred lights. It was a transparent tabernacle, within which were innumerable jets of liquid gas, and it was composed entirely of woodwork with gilded pasteboard and draperies of muslin.

Pedro resolved to create an alarm, and attempt an escape while it lasted.

Just at that moment, when the Nuncio and Ugarte, preceded by boys bearing censers and tapers, were entering, just as the choir struck up, and while a solemn murmur pervaded the vast church, for the crescent moon beneath the feet of the Madonna suddenly flashed forth a silvery splendour, unseen by all, save Don Perez, who was retiring, Pedro threw a lighted cigar match among the draperies of the altar, and in a moment the light festoons and muslin clouds, the whole figure of the Madonna, and the altar, which was seventy feet in height, became a roaring pyramid of fire.

A wild cry from the kneeling congregation burst over the whole church, and the door instantly became blocked by fugitives, who fell, wedged over each other in a hopeless pile, the upper stifling those below, while the spread of the conflagration exceeded in its speed the fear of those who would have fled.

An effect was produced beyond what Pedro had anticipated. He hoped for a mere alarm, he produced a catastrophe beyond all parallel in ancient or modern times.

Maddened, however, by double terror, he was among the first who sought for safety. Trampling women and children under foot and endued with twice his natural strength and activity by sheer desperation, he contrived to reach the sill of a window, by climbing over a tomb, and dashing the lozenge frame to pieces, was preparing to throw himself headlong out, when his foot was seized from below.

He uttered an angry imprecation and looked down.

Donna Ignez and little Donna Paula both clung to him in the wildest terror.

"Save us, Don Pedro—save us, for the love of God!" cried they in despair, for the whole of that fated church was now covered with sheets of flame, its twenty thousand camphine lamps, as their cords and festoons gave way, adding to the terror by descending like a rain of fire, and setting aflame the hair and light summer dresses of those below—that struggling mass of horror-stricken people, who were all hopelessly wreathed and wedged together.

It was fire—fire—fire everywhere—above, below, around—a seething mass of flaming figures, wavering and scorching, a rising and descending sea of red flame, for the church of God had now become a living hell!

"Save me! save me!" gasped Ignez, choking in the heat, as her light summer dress caught fire.

"No use to save her now from fire, as I did from water. Perez, you don't require to swim here," cried the barbarian, as he thrust the shrieking girl and little Paula among the flames with his foot, and, springing into the street without, fled from Santiago.

The public papers have told us how, in less than a quarter of an hour, nearly all who were in that fatal church—that stupendous holocaust—to the number of nearly three thousand perished; how a phalanx of death choked up the porch, and how, in many instances, tender hands and delicate arms were wrenched, yea, literally torn off, in attempts to drag forth the dying; how whole families were reduced to cinders, side by side, and all in the lapse of a few minutes.

They also told us "how the voice of lamentation was heard all over the land, and the bitter weeping of fathers, of husbands, and lovers for those who were the joy and brightness of their life, that refuses to be comforted because they are not. Hundreds of young girls, only yesterday radiant and beautiful, in the luxuriant bloom of the fresh and hopeful spring of life, to-day calcined, hideous corpses, horrible, loathsome to the sight, and impossible to be recognised! Within that quarter of an hour, two thousand souls had passed through the ordeal of fire to the judgment-seat of God!"

Old Don Salvador de Moreno made frenzied efforts to pierce through the pile of maddened and suffocating women, who hopelessly blocked up the door of the church, seeking to see, to save if he could, his daughter—his only child.

The screaming, the wringing of hands, the tearing of hair, and beating of faces, the invocations of the dying, and the

roar of the advancing flames within and beyond, imparting to the church portal an appearance like to the entrance of a vast furnace, seared his heart and his eyeballs.

He saw not his daughter; but, amid this most unearthly blaze, he could distinguish Donna Erminia, and knew that Ignez could not be far off. He could see the tall, fair-skinned, proud, and beautiful Erminia, and little Paula, with her hair dishevelled, like many others near her, undergo a sudden and horrible transformation, as the lurid flame seized upon their skirts and tresses.

The sheet of scorching fire passed over them!

They became blackened, lean, shrunken, rigid, dead, sable statues, in contorted attitudes, and then crumbled away amid the furnace, for such had the church become.

Suddenly a figure rose for an instant amid the mass. It was Perez—Perez with Ignez in his arms, and as he rose, her father saw them—his hair and her dress all ablaze; then both sank back into that red sea of fire, to rise no more!

The old man became senseless, and was borne out of the press by the alguazil-mayor and Cramply Hawkshaw.

The Chilian papers tell us that a horseman threw his lasso into the church where a hundred hands tried to catch it. This man was Felipe Fernandez, of Valparaiso, who by main strength dragged one woman out in flames.

Again he cast his lasso in, but the fire scorched the leather thong away.

Within the time we have stated—a brief quarter of an hour—the roof, the dome, and cupola, descended in flames, with a thundering crash upon the church below, and all was over!

There perished all the family of Moreno, and their remains were never recognised. So poor Perez, whom Ignez had taunted for not saving her when in the water, died by her side in that sea of flame!

* * * * *

The silence of the grave succeeded to the cries of despair that for a time had pierced the calm night air, and, as the flames smouldered and died away on the sloped strata of blackened corpses that lay beneath the fallen dome, those who looked fearfully through the windows could see, by the clear splendour of the tropical moon, those thousands of calcined dead, kneeling, standing, or lying all in their last contorted posture, as the wasting fire, or the agony of their awful end, had left them.

For the remainder of that night, no sounds were heard in Santiago but those of lamentation, and the solemn tolling of

the church bells, as the archbishop summoned all to prayer for the souls that were gone.

Zuares was one of those men who effected an escape by the sacristy-door, before it was blocked up by fugitives, and meeting his brother on the road that led to the mountains, they heard the livelong night the tolling of the city bells in the distance.

Even they were overcome by dread and horror, as they continued their flight in silence and desperation, where they knew not and cared not, so that they left the city of Santiago as far behind them as possible.

For days after this they lurked unseen, unknown, and safely, in a great cane-brake, among the feathery bamboos—the *guádua*—some of which are ninety feet in height.

Ere long they reached the sea-coast, and shipped on board a short-handed brig that lay at the mouth of the Maypo river, laden with guano, and bound for Britain, and they gladly looked forward to face again even the nights of bitter snow and close-reefed foresails off Cape Horn.

This vessel they left, when paid off in the London Docks, and, to the misfortune of all concerned, were shipped on board the *Hermione* by Captain Phillips, who could little foresee the mischief they had in store for him and his friends.

CHAPTER LXX.

COMMITTED TO THE DEEP.

THE *Diaria de Valparaiso*, *El Mercurio del Vapor*, and other papers, but chiefly documents of a private nature belonging to the late Don Salvador de Moreno (for the poor man did not long survive that terrible 8th of December), have assisted us in the compilation of the foregoing narrative of the two brothers, which forms a singular sequel to their father's secret history; but until the fact fell from the baked and faltering lips of Pedro Barradas, in no way were Morley Ashton, Bartelot, Heriot, and others who listened, prepared to hear that he was concerned in bringing about a catastrophe so terrible as that which closes our preceding chapter.

“So that was the great crime of Pedro—the awful deed which he has so frequently referred to in his ravings,” said Morley.

“An awful deed truly,” added Captain Phillips. “Who

would live, even if he could, haunted by such memories? A precious logbook of crime his life presents!"

Death, however, came on Pedro fast. One of his last acts was to examine his wretched pallet for the watch and ring which, as detailed in a previous chapter, he had forcibly taken from Hawkshaw.

His half-fatuous intention was now, probably, to bestow them on some one; but a groan of pity and disgust escaped him on finding that one of his worthless compatriots had already abstracted them, and now, perhaps, would gladly give them both for one drop of water to cool his parched tongue in the drifting quarter-boat.

"The past, the past!" he moaned; "*misericordia! misericordia!* My life—my lost life! Oh! that with my present bitter experience I could live it over once again—even a year of it—how different it should be! How many have been misspent, frittered away and blackened! Oh! for a month—a week—to repent. One day—mother of God—only one day; but it may not be—cannot be! Oh that I might warn Zuares, ere it be too late also for him—no absolution, no hope."

As the life of Pedro ebbed—easily, however, complete mortification having set in—and his senses passed away, he muttered something again and again; and Morley, who was in the fore-castle, held the lamp near—for night had come on—and stooped over him to listen.

He was delirious as well as dying, and his husky and broken ravings were of the cathedral church of Orizaba, and he averred that he saw at the foot of his bed, in that wretched fore-castle bunk, the figure of a woman.

"A figure—what is it like?" asked Morley, glancing round in spite of himself.

"A woman enshrined in light. She is clad in blue, with thirteen stars around her head. *Ave Maria purissima! Ave Maria purissima!*" he cried, and sinking back, closed his eyes, overcome by weakness and excitement.

It was the image so revered in his innocent childhood, when he and Zuares prayed at their mother's knee; and with this shadow before his visionary eye—the same figure that in dreams had hung over his cradle in infancy—the feet of which he and Zuares had been taught to kiss—the same image, with an aureole of light around its placid face, the Madonna of Orizaba, with her feet resting on the sharp, pale crescent moon, before his glazing eyes, whose last expression was fear and ecstasy—the soul of this inscrutable ruffian passed away!

Then Morley Ashton, who was the last lonely watcher, hastened on deck to report that all was over.

This perpetrator of so many crimes was dead! Ferocity, avarice, cruelty, insatiate lust, unavailing remorse, and all the stormy passions which had, in turn, convulsed that lawless heart, that dark and sombre visage, were gone now. The man was dead and gone—gone as if he had never been!

Before the ship's bell had clanged the last half hour of the morning watch, Noah and Morrison had rolled his body up in the blankets in which he died, and had lashed a couple of shot in a canvas-bag to his ankles.

Then they laid him on a grating to leeward, anxious to have the last rites over before the young ladies came on deck.

The red enamelled cross of San Jago, which Morley had brought from the hermit's cell, was tied up with him; indeed, it was found impossible to take it from his hand, in which it was tightly clenched.

There was mental relief to all on board when the burial of Pedro—the last act of a long and gloomy drama—was over, and when his tall and muscular form—herculean and ghastly it looked, rolled up in blankets, and lashed round with spun-yarn—went surging, feet foremost, through the white foam, vanishing for ever, in the deep green sea to leeward, while the ship, as if lightened of a load, flew through the shining waves of the Mozambique.

This was on a Saturday, about 8 A.M., when the golden sun shone in all its beauty on the fresh, cool morning sea.

Ethel could never think of Pedro without a cold shudder, and often said, "Thus is sin its own punishment;" but Rose, her terror past, had imbibed almost a sentimental pity or sympathy for the dead ruffian, who figured so largely in the diary before mentioned), which was now resumed for the benefit of her old gossip and companion, Lucy Page, at Acton-Rennel.

Captain Phillips, however, took a very different view of the matter, and so much had his naturally kind character been soured or warped by recent events, that he could scarcely be prevailed upon to read the burial service over the defunct mutineer; and thus he cut it pretty short, upon the plea that a rough day was before them, that he had few hands, and wished to take in a reef in each of the courses; so never were those words—so solemn and so awful—under the usual circumstances "we thus commit his body to the deep," so irreverently uttered, and yet, worthy old Jack Phillips is the kindest of all good fellows.

The Saturday night came on, calm, clear, and starry, the south-west monsoon blew fresh and steadily, and as close-hauled as a square-rigged craft could be, the *Hermione* was making a long tack towards the southern point of Madagascar. Fortunately, nothing had been seen yet of the three red proas, of which such earnest warning had been given by the officer of Her Majesty's corvette the *Clyde*.

The cheerful glass went round to "sweethearts and wives," and to "all ships at sea." To these weekly toasts, Captain Phillips added a special glass of stiff grog, in honour of his airy friend, "the clerk of the weather," whom Rose, who was writing, supposed to be the late Admiral Fitzroy. Ethel was occupying herself with crochet, Mr. Basset was asleep, and Morley was at the wheel on deck, and already it seemed that Pedro Barradas and the particulars of his terrible history were forgotten. So—

"The wind blows out, the bubble dies,
The spring entombed in autumn lies,
The dew dries up, the star is shot,
The flight is past, and man forgot."

CHAPTER LXXI.

DR. HERIOT'S FEE.

DURING the six preceding chapters, the reader may have been kindly wondering how Mr. Basset's health progressed after the night which succeeded the skilful attempt of Dr. Heriot to rescue him from a death that seemed all but accomplished.

That night he had passed in heavy groans, in nervous startings, and uneasy slumber; but next morning he was able to articulate, and complained to Ethel, in accents faint and weak as those of an ailing child, of pains that spread over all his body; these, however, were only consequent to the severe friction he had undergone, to restore the circulation of the blood.

From Heriot's hands he received some warm milk, mixed with brandy—milk from the stores of soldered tin—and this luxury he swallowed with ease; but yet seemed as one in a dream, and in broken accents, he muttered of pain, and in a dreary and bewildered way, of his "poor dear girls, whom he should never see again."

Then he fell into a sound sleep, with Ethel's soft white arm under his head, and she listened to his heavy respirations, more with fear than any other emotion, lest each long-drawn breath might prove the last.

But Heriot, who patted her kindly and caressingly on the head, sought to smile those fears away, by telling her that "all danger was past now," and so the second day of restoration gradually stole away.

Another night of complete repose "sent Mr. Basset a long way on the voyage of recovery," as Captain Phillips said, when peeping into the little cabin, where the pale, affectionate, and unwearied watcher, though her eyes were bloodshot, and had dark rings under them, yet hung over her charge, and now Rose came to take her place.

"How is dear papa this morning?" she asked, anxiously.

"All well, Rose, darling, if the old boy will only keep up his pluck," was the doctor's unpoetical reply, as he slyly kissed the pretty inquirer, and led away Ethel, who he insisted should take a little repose, with the announcement that she "was quite killing herself; and he would not stand it, as he was accountable to the captain for the health of all on board—and then Morley must not see how ill she was looking."

As for poor Morley, she could see but little of him just then, for he, with Bartelot, Morrison, Gawthrop, and Foster, were never off the deck, where by his skill and activity he won golden opinions from the captain, whose anxieties (when the distance he had yet to run, the size of his crippled ship when compared with the slender crew, the prospect of water running short, and having to keep a look-out for those three proas, are all considered) were certainly not small.

To Rose Basset, our medical friend Leslie Heriot, a good, kind-hearted, sensible, and practical Scotsman, had been at first but a source of lively little flirtation and fun—a dangler, an admirer, and nothing more. At home she always had a dozen such; it was Rose's habit and way; but now, as his earnestness, and the troubles and dangers they shared together, created a deeper emotion in her breast, he gradually became the dream, the *beau-ideal* of a warm-hearted young girl's passionate and often senseless first love; and to the conclusion of her portion of the voyage—when she, Ethel, and papa would land at Port Louis, and when Leslie must sail on to Singapore, a vast distance, of which she had very little conception, save that it was far, far away up the Indian seas—to that period, we say, she looked forward with dismay and alarm.

Long and perilous though the voyage had been, it was not yet long enough for Rose, who was desperately in love with the young Scotch doctor.

And now that Leslie, by his skill, care, and tenderness, had saved her father from death, had restored him to life and to his daughters, he became an idol, whom she felt that she and Ethel should worship with all their hearts ; and Ethel's quiet, earnest, and great gratitude to her sister's lover was only equalled by the sincere regard and esteem she had for him.

On the other hand, the filial love, the tender solicitude, and unwearying attention of these two girls to their suffering father charmed all, but none more than old Captain Phillips, whose experience of the sex was chiefly gained amid the hurly-burly of seaports.

"Aha !" said he, slapping Morley on the back, and winking knowingly to Heriot, "that is the sort of thing I like to see ; that is the kind of discipline that prepares the daughter for the wife, and the wife for being a mother. God bless them all !" he added, uncorking a square case-bottle, to pour forth a libation in honour of his opinions.

"You are right, captain," said the doctor, who, in his shirt-sleeves, was busy preparing breakfast, as Noah came from the galley with a steaming kettle, for they had now to do all things in turn.

"Better to share a crust in a wigwam with a dear good girl like Miss Ethel Basset, than have an heiress with only her dirty acres to recommend her—your health, doctor—them's Jack Phillips's sentiments."

Morley gave an unconscious sigh, for the poor fellow felt bitterly that he had not even "the crust" referred to by the captain.

"Miss Basset has the patience of a vestal in these long and pious vigils of the night," said Heriot, with enthusiasm. "She and Rose have, indeed, hearts formed for tenderness, and for doing all the kind duties of life."

"Yes, doctor, very true ; and I begin to think, if I could change my bachelor ways a bit, and warp close into the matrimonial haven, there is a plump little widow at Gravesend that wouldn't mind changing her name to Mrs. Jack Phillips."

As the captain said this, there was a gratified twinkle in his merry blue eye, and quite a little blush on his brown cheek ; then he added, hastily :

"Now doctor, that ham seems done to a turn. Pour out the coffee, Ashton ; I must be off on deck for the breeze holds

steady, and this is our last tack south-west'ard towards the coast of Africa."

"Our last?" repeated Morley, mechanically.

"Positively for the last time, as the play-bills have it, thank Heaven, and the wind it sends us!"

"Thank Heaven, say I too. I only wish, further, that we were round Cape St. Mary."

"That will come too, all in good time, please God."

Some time elapsed before Mr. Basset knew all he had undergone, and before he became fully aware of the vast service rendered to him by Dr. Heriot. For a time the poor man was awed, and humbled, and overwhelmed by all he had been subjected to.

On the morning he heard all this for the first time, Captain Phillips shook him by the hand, and said, laughing:

"Bailie Nicol Jarvie says, 'My conscience, hang a bailie!' but here we have actually had a judge hanged at the yard-arm, aboard this 'ere ship, and yet never a hair the worse, thanks to Dr. Heriot here."

"Please, captain, don't speak of it," whispered Ethel.

"God bless you, my dear sir," said Mr. Basset, grasping both Heriot's hands in his. "He only can reward you for your kindness and exercise of your skill; but I am *the worse*, Captain Phillips, and never again shall be half the man I was."

"Take courage, sir," said Morley; "we never know what is before us."

"But I feel in every limb and fibre, Morley, that I never shall fully recover the shock my nervous system has sustained."

"You shall, sir—you shall in time," said Heriot. "Only take courage, as Ashton says."

"Oh, how miraculous it seems," murmured the poor gentleman, as his wasted hand played with the rich brown tresses of Rose, who half knelt and half reclined beside his bed, with her eyes beaming smiles alternately on him and on her lover, Heriot; "how miraculous, indeed. Restored to life—restored to life, and to my girls—restored, after enduring, apparently, all the mental and bodily pangs of a shocking and terrible death!"

"Yes, dearest papa; it is, indeed, a debt of gratitude we owe to Dr. Heriot," said Ethel.

"For Heaven's sake, Miss Basset, don't go on this way," said Heriot. "You make a poor fellow quite ashamed of doing his mere duty."

"By what can I ever recompense you, Doctor Heriot?" said Mr. Basset; "what reward can I ever give you?"

"I think I know, sir," said the captain, winking with great mystery; while Rose, who felt a scene impending, grew pale, and trembled.

"You do?" asked Mr. Basset.

"Yes; and so does Miss Ethel—and so do we all."

"Look, papa—I think Dr. Heriot will consider this the most valued fee you can give him," said Ethel, as she playfully put Rose's right hand in that of the doctor, who reddened to the roots of his hair, and, for a brave and sensible fellow, really looked very foolish.

Mr. Basset stared at them all round in perplexity; then, as a sudden light seemed to break in upon him, he smiled, and said:

"Is it so, Ethel?"

"Yes, dear papa."

"And Rose, my little pet, what do you say?"

Rose smiled, and sobbed, and grew pale and red, and wished herself on deck.

"So be it, then. I can't part with her, Heriot; but God bless you both, and keep you ever by me," said Mr. Basset, as he closed his eyes wearily, and lay back to sleep.

Poor Heriot's happiness made him giddy, and he grew as pale as if sentence of death had been passed on him. He could scarcely believe it all; but he kissed Ethel, who had concocted this little tableau; and Rose clasped the fat jolly captain round his short neck, calling him her "dear old thing." He returned her embrace with extreme cordiality, and no doubt wished he was as close to the plump widow of Gravesend.

"How happy I am," said Ethel, blushing with pleasure; "our troubles seem nearly over now."

"And I, too, am happy—oh, so happy!" said Rose; "I would not exchange positions, Leslie, to be Queen of England—or Scotland, if you like it better, Heriot, dear."

"And never was M.D. of my old *Alma Mater* rewarded by a fee so droll and handsome," said Heriot, smiling fondly on the lively and laughing girl, who clung to his arm as they went on deck together.

Thus, as Mrs. Lirriper says, "All true life is gain, and the sorrows that befall us are none other than solemn massive foundation-stones, laid below the unfathomable gloom, that a measureless content may be built upon them."

But there were on board another pair of lovers in whom

we should be equally interested, and whose prospects were not so bright, perhaps, for Heriot had an income, however small, and plenty of "expectations."

When the excitement, consequent to Mr. Basset's illness, if we may term it so, and to Pedro's story, death, and burial were all passed, Morley Ashton and Ethel resumed their usual habit of thought; and again in their communings they began to speculate on their future, and to hope that, on reaching the Isle of France, Mr. Basset, by his legal influence, would be able to procure for him some suitable employment, by means of which he could make an adequate livelihood—the hope that dawned of old at Laurel Lodge—and their engagement might be fulfilled.

But Mr. Basset, to whom Morley had spoken of these things, somewhat dashed their cherished hopes, by frequently shaking his head, and declaring that his health had suffered so much, that he felt himself quite inadequate to assume his place on the bench, and that hence all local and legal influence would be gone.

There were times, too, when he became quite gloomy, and feared, he said that he "might only land to die—land to be laid in a foreign soil, far from that God's acre, where his dear wife lay at Acton-Rennel; and then, what would become of his poor girls without a protector in the world?"

These gloomy forebodings lleffd Ethel with sickening apprehension. This was a probable catastrophe, the anticipation of which also made Morley miserable, and he begged Mr. Basset not to speak thus before his eldest daughter; but he rather liked the luxury of dilating on the chances of his own demise.

However, they little knew what fate or fortune had in store for them at the Isle of France, or whether they should ever see that isle at all; and despite his melancholy forebodings, which were merely the result of his shaken nervous system, Mr. Basset recovered rapidly, and on that day, when the *Hermione* was near the close of her last long tack towards the coast of Africa, he was conveyed on deck, to have a look at Cape Corientes, which is the most eastern portion of the land of Inhambane, and is almost immediately under the Tropic of Capricorn.

Faint and blue the headland rose at the horizon, from a golden-coloured sea, about thirty miles distant, and, through a double-barrelled glass, its outline could be clearly distinguished against the rarefied sky beyond.

"And that is Africa!" said Ethel, regarding the blue

streak with her heart full of great thoughts, and her dark eyes full of intelligence and interest as she remembered all she had heard and read of Park and Livingstone, Speke and Grant.

"Yes, Miss Basset," said Morrison, "and a great river, called the Inhambane, flows into the Mozambique Channel but a few miles north of that promontory."

"How I should like to land—to tread the soil there, were it but for only a minute, Morley."

"Why so, Ethel?" asked Morley, smiling at her enthusiasm.

"I don't know, but I should like to do so, and yet I know not why."

"I think I could tell you, miss," said Morrison.

"Indeed, sir?"

"Yes; that you might say with the Roman of old, 'Ego in Africa,'" replied the Scotch mate, glancing from Ethel to the doctor, who smiled at his countryman's apt allusion.

"Is that your idea, Ethel?" asked Heriot.

"Yes."

But now there was a sudden bustle, when the male inhabitants of this floating speck upon the sea hastened to their various quarters, as she was to be put about, on her last tack in the Mozambique—a long run of many, many miles ere she would sight the isle of Madagascar.

"Ready about, my friends!" cried the captain, as he took his station on the weather side of the quarter-deck; "helm's a lee—tacks and sheets—let go and haul!" followed each other rapidly.

Noah had the wheel, and down went the helm at a signal from Phillips, the fore tack and main sheet were let go, round swung the yards in their iron slings, aft came the main sheet, and then the spanker, eased gradually off, fell away to leeward.

Round came the ship bravely, and with the monsoon filling all her sails, she stood off in the opposite direction to that she had hitherto been pursuing, her starboard tacks on board, and lying almost at a right angle from her long white frothy wake, which could be distinctly traced in the pure green of the sea, and soon after the faint blue outline of Cape Corientes sank into the evening haze upon the lee quarter.

CHAPTER LXXII.

RADAMA PUFFADDER.

IT was a pleasant sunny morning when Ethel was roused by Morley tapping on her cabin-door, and making the cheerful announcement that land was in sight, almost ahead, so she and Rose made a rapid toilette and joined him and the rest of their friends on deck.

The south-west wind held steadily, and its breath rippled all the morning sea in wavelets that seemed tipped with gold. The sunshine, bright and warm, spread a yellow tint over all the western quarter of the sky. In dark outline, as if tinted with indigo, about ten miles distant, rose a mountain, in the form of a sugar-loaf, blending at its base with lesser ones that were near to the sea.

"Madagascar, Ethel," said Morley, with a bright smile, as he pointed to the coast.

"And yonder headland is Cape St. Mary," added Dr. Heriot. "I should know the place pretty well by this time."

"Why, Leslie?" asked Rose.

"Because I see it now for the fourth time."

"Poor Leslie!" said Rose; "and you have gone those long voyages so often, when I knew nothing of them."

"Or—of me, Rose."

"That does seem so strange *now*!"

"However, Rose, I have no intention of voyaging much more, 'for there's a good time coming,' as the song says."

Morrison had the wheel, and the captain desired him to "hug the land, and keep close in shore, as he wanted to procure fresh water."

"I find that the needle varies at times in these waters, sir," said Morrison.

"Aye—but our patent steering compass always holds true."

Though the long and remarkable coast they were approaching is flat and low near the shore, the sea around it is without hidden danger in the form of shoals, rocks, or reefs, and water fifty fathoms deep can be found within four miles of it.

As the ship drew nearer, objects became more distinct—strange trees, gigantic plants and fantastic wigwams, like

bee-hives ; and after breakfast, Ethel and Rose, with their opera-glasses, could see these features plainly, and particularly a headland, covered with tufted palm-trees.

“And that is Cape St. Mary?”

“Yes,” replied Morley, who, to support her, had one arm round Ethel and another round the mizzen-shrouds, for the deck was slippery with the morning dew and the spray that flew over it now and then, for the ship careened well over beneath the breeze, which was now almost abeam.

“Then we are out of the Mozambique Channel?”

“Yes ; or nearly so. By noon we shall be quite out of it.”

“Thank Heaven ! I wish we were only a little nearer Port Louis.”

“We shall soon be so, Ethel, after leaving this shore.”

“Don’t deem me foolish, dearest ; but, after all we have suffered, I always tremble when I think of—of——”

“What, Ethel?”

“Of those three piratical proas which the captain speaks about. I dreamt of them last night, and saw them quite full of wild black fellows, with spears, plumes, and war-paint—just like the pictures we have seen of the savages who killed Captain Cook.”

“The coast hereabout looks wild and solitary indeed.”

“A few miles eastward lies Fort Dauphin,” said the doctor ; “it was an old French settlement, but was deserted and ruined long ago.”

Anxious, we have said, to procure water, the captain stood close in towards one of the little isles that lie about the southwestern extremity of Madagascar ; and now every man on board, except the convalescent Mr. Basset, had to work hard in taking in and stowing some of the fore-and-aft canvas, getting the kedge anchors and warps ready, having the boats clear, and the soundings had to be attended to without intermission.

A curiously-built native boat was now seen approaching swiftly from the shore, having suddenly shot out of a creek. It was very long, very low, and was paddled by two men.

“Hollo, ladies !” cried Noah Gawthrop, who was busy in the remaining quarter-boat, getting the fall-tackles clear ; “look at this swell coming alongside in a cocked hat, like a wice-admiral o’ the fleet ! But I beg parding, marm,” he added, suddenly, as Ethel adjusted the screw of her lorgnette, “you mustn’t look at him, for he ain’t nothin’ on but the cocked hat and a necklace.”

"Sheep 'hoy!" cried a shrill voice, as the boat rose and fell on the waves.

"What do you want, darkey?" asked Noah.

"You savey me?" cried the Malay.

"No, I am blow'd if I do," was the surly reply.

"What for you no savey me!" remonstrated the other; "yam, yam—sell, sell—nice, nice, nice."

Then he held up an inverted bottle, to show that it was empty.

"By Jove! 'tis old Captain Puffadder!" exclaimed Captain Phillips, as the native boat came sheering alongside, and a white-headed Malay, who literally had no other attire than a necklace of crystal beads and an old battered naval cocked hat, which some man-o'-war wag had given him, relinquishing his carved teak-wood paddle, caught with great dexterity a line which was cast to him, and made it fast to a round knob at the prow of his boat, which, as the line became taut, fell at once into the ship's wake astern.

"It is old Radama Puffadder, whom we saw on our two last voyages. He sells vegetables and fruit to any ship that comes close enough in shore," said Heriot, looking round for the young ladies; but when the boat had come nearer, the utter want of attire displayed by the two Malays had fairly driven the Misses Basset and Nance Folgate down the stair of the companion, where the merry but half-stifled laugh of Rose could be heard from time to time.

"A sly old file!" said Mr. Foster, looking over the taff-rail.

"How are you, Puff, my boy?" asked the doctor; "what have you got for us?"

The old Malay, who was hideously ugly, and whose bare, attenuated form was brown as old mahogany, lifted his cocked hat, and replied in what seemed an unintelligible torrent of consonants, and then held up a turtle by one of its hind feet, after which he grinned and yelled.

He and his companion next hauled in the tow-line, hand over hand, till the boat was close to the lee mizzen-chains—the chances of being swamped seemed nothing to Captain Puffadder—and to Morley, who stood on the channel-plate, he handed on board whatever he had to offer, and in a short time there was on deck a goodly pile of the yellow-bellied gourds for boiling and eating, with butter and milk; bananas, to roast like apples; peas, beans, and water-melons; brown-skinned onions, and golden-coloured oranges and lemons; together with a great sprawling turtle, the sight of which

would have made an alderman's eyes twinkle ; and there too, were six brace of wood-pigeons.

For all this seasonable stock, the captain paid him by six bottles of strong alcohol, three boxes of lucifer-matches, and a dollar or two, and these coins, when cut into four, form the circulating medium in the "Great Britain of Africa."

The captain and the doctor, who seemed to understand and amuse themselves with the jargon of "Captain" Puffadder, inquired where fresh water was to be had, and he led them to understand that, under the brow of the cliff to which he pointed, there was a creek in one of the islets ; that there several springs flowed, and safe anchorage would be found.

"This will suit admirably," said Phillips, to Bartelot. "We shall lie there a couple of days, for some of our rigging requires overhauling sorely."

"Won't you come on board, Puff, and pilot us, while we run in?" asked Mr. Foster.

"I no savey *that*—no can do," replied the Malay, as he let his boat drop astern, and, taking a long pull at one of the rum-bottles, he grinned with satisfaction and handed it to his longing companion.

"Won't you remain with us till we have filled our water-tank?" cried the captain over the taffrail.

Again the dingy Malay grinned and shook his white head, which looked as if it had been snowed over, and, pointing shoreward, to indicate that he must return, cast off the tow-line, after which his boat, that bobbed up and down like a cork, was rapidly dropped astern.

The wind was now becoming light, and, with Morley and Heriot stripped to their shirt-sleeves, pulling ahead in the quarter-boat, and Mr. Foster in her bow, sounding carefully every minute with hand-lead, the ship was steered by the captain in person towards the creek, the entrance of which was seen to open plainly enough under the brow of the cliff, at the base of which some breakers were boiling white upon a ridge of rock, "like the devil's own milk," as Noah said, adding :

"I wonder why the deuce that old fellow wouldn't come aboard? I hope it isn't a snare, this kind invitation to anchor in a creek."

"A snare, Noah?" repeated Bartelot.

"'Cause, sir, he has the look of an old wrecker, to my mind."

A dead calm soon fell upon the land and sea, and from the square yards of the *Hermione*, her fore and maincourse, and

a jury main-topsail, hung down straight and motionless, till they were hauled up prior to furling, as she glided slowly, and with almost imperceptible motion, through the narrow gut of the creek.

"Leather strip—ten fathoms; red rag—seven fathoms," seven again; white rag—five fathoms," Foster kept repeating from time to time, as he hove the hand-line from the bow of the leading boat. Bartelot and Morrison were also in it, and pulling with all their strength, for they had the kedge anchors and a couple of strong Manilla warps with them.

Beyond its narrow entrance, which was almost shrouded in mangroves, that brushed the ship's channels, the creek opened out into a tiny bay, or oval-shaped basin, and there, before sunset had beamed its red farewell upon the summit of the rocks, the *Hermione*, with her courses hauled, her jury topsail-yards lowered upon the cap, her spanker brailed up, and her jib and stay-sails stowed away, was moored quietly, as if in the middle of a dock, by two warps, one at the stem and the other at the stern, both being carried ashore to her kedge anchors, which were embedded in the banks, among the mangroves and other luxuriant vegetation that grew down to the water's edge.

"From here to Port Louis we have a run of about seven hundred odd miles," said Captain Phillips; "the season is fine; but we shall fall to our work by daybreak to-morrow—fill the tank—overhaul the fore rigging, have it tarred down and rattled anew in some parts, and then be off with the first breeze of wind, as I don't fancy the Madagascar fever."

"And this creek, with its mangroves dipping in the slimy ooze, seems just the place to catch it," said Tom Bartelot.

"I suppose it was in some such cliff as that, Ethel," said Morley, looking up at the tall rocky brow which overhung the creek, "that old Marco Polo, who, it seems, wrote about Madagascar in the thirteenth century, says the birds called the roc built their nests."

"Were they like Sindbad's roc?" asked Rose.

"Larger, says old Marco, in form resembling an eagle, and so huge that they would soar into the air with the largest elephant in their talons, and let it fall dead on the earth prior to devouring it; and that their wings, which, when outspread, obscured the sunshine like a flying cloud, measured forty-eight feet apart, each pen-feather being twenty-four feet in length."

"There is nothing like telling a good story when one is about it; but I hope the breed is extinct," said Rose.

"Yes ; like the giant wader of Australia, if it ever existed at all."

As the evening closed in, with no thought of local danger or treachery, but enjoying the brief cessation from the constant toil to which they were subjected by the smallness of their number, and thinking only of the termination of their voyage and a happy future, our friends were all grouped under the quarter-deck awning, and Noah was enjoying a quiet pipe at the windlass-bitt, with a can of grog beside him.

Aft, the top of the cabin skylight had been covered with a white cloth and improvised as a table, on which were spread some of the luscious fruits and sliced water-melon bought from the Malay, Puffadder, and a bottle or two of the captain's best wine.

Then, that music might not be wanting, Ethel and Rose, uniting their clear, sweet, happy voices, while Heriot accompanied them on his flute, which he played to perfection, sang one of their favourite duets, waking the echoes of the rocks, and rousing out of the mangroves the stork, the pelican, and the samba, with its plumage red as fire : while the red sunlight died away, and the tropical constellations came out, and while the solemn shadows deepened in that lonely creek, the soft English voices of the two sisters so well attuned together, filled Noah's stern eyes with moisture, and his rough old head with sweet, sad holy thoughts of other times, as he listened, and sat alone, the last occupant of the once crowded and noisy fore-castle-bunks.

That lonely creek was fated to present a very different scene about the same hour on the morrow !

CHAPTER LXXIII.

THE MANGROVE CREEK.

THE secluded creek in which the ship lay moored had a little history of its own, that was better than the misty recollections of old Marco Polo, who, by-the-way, never visited Madagascar at all. It was in this solitary little basin, or natural dock, that the high-pooped and low-waisted caravella of the first discoverer of Madagascar, Lorenzo Almiada (son of Don Francisco Almiada, viceroy of India for Don Emmanuel of Portugal, in 1506), came to anchor, after a voyage that was long and perilous ; and now, as our friends Morley and Heriot gazed on its strange and fantastic cliffs, the former thought of the Serendib of the "Arabian Nights," and the latter, who was better read, recalled the Island of the Moon, and the Cerne of Pliny, with the works of other writers, who averred that Madagascar was an isle divided between two races—one of giants, and another of dwarfs—the Kimos—about three feet high. These were always at war, until the former were victorious, at a place called Itapere, two leagues south-west of Fort Dauphin, where a pyramid of stones attests the alleged slaughter and destruction of the poor dwarfs.

The creek was also known to be the haunt of the famous freebooter, Captain Avery, an Englishman who gained vast plunder by his piracies against the emperors of Mogul and China, and who, about the latter year of Queen Anne's reign, lived in and about Madagascar, with the strange title of King of the Seas.

Not the least remarkable features of this creek were its enormous blocks of rock crystal, that sparkled in the sunshine with a thousand prisms of wonderful light and beauty. Trees surrounded it ; the tall and straight voua-azigne ; the bushy fouraka, distilling its green-coloured balsam ; the wild fig, whose fruit yields a milky juice ; the palm-tree, whose leaves are like feathers, and form roofing for wigwams ; the ancient papyrus, the cotton and the nutmeg trees, all grew on the rocks ; while betel, pepper, and tobacco were the weeds that grew among the jungle, where the puffadder—a reptile about a yard long—and other serpents lurked.

Just as the sun was rising in his tropical splendour from the

sea, and through the opening to the eastward sent a glorious flush of light into the leafy recesses of the creek, Noah caught a couple of gallant turtles, each weighing nearly three hundred pounds.

After bringing them on board, he lowered them into the water by a line, tied, as sailors alone can tie, round them, and left them to paddle about, to swim, duck, or dive as they pleased, till required for the larder.

As for the one brought by Captain Puffadder, he flatly refused to kill it till sunset, on the plea that "a turtle never dies till the sun goes down, that he warn't goin' to be so jolly cruel as to leave it a nole day in a nagony."

From the deck, Ethel and Rose, with their opera-glasses, were never weary of watching all the strange trees, plants, birds, and insects that surrounded them; everything seemed novel, save the turtles, which, of course, were like those they had seen squattering in fish-tubs at home.

Prior to their appearance on deck, with the first peep of dawn, a long hose, water-casks, and so forth, had been put in operation, and thus, before noon, a sufficient supply of pure water had been pumped into the tank from a spring which flowed over a mass of crystal rock, and through the decayed trunk of a fallen tree, which formed a species of natural duct.

Morrison, Foster, and Noah Gawthrop then fell to work upon the starboard side of the fore-rigging; Phillips and Tom Bartelot on the other, and all proceeded to tar down, and in many places to rattle anew the shrouds, and various other repairs went on with rapidity; while the doctor and Morley, with a gun, went ashore, and ascended the rocks towards the summit of the cliff, which overhangs the entrance of the creek.

The ascent proved long and toilsome, for everywhere the matted jungle grew thick; the weedy luxuriance there is wonderful, and so woven that it seems the result, not of a season's rank vegetation, but of ages; and as many little reptiles are always lurking amid it, no small care is requisite for avoiding them.

At last the two explorers reached the plateau, or summit of the cliff, and merrily gave a united shout, which made their friends at work on the fore-rigging pause and look up, and Ethel and Rose, who were seated on the quarter-deck, wave their handkerchiefs in response.

From the elevation of more than three hundred feet, the creek, when viewed, seemed like a pool, the ship a toy.

Beyond the islet Morley and Heriot saw the whole sweep of the southern end of the great island of Madagascar, from Cape St. Mary towards Aïnse des Galiona, with the pale blue and distant summit of Botistmeni, the highest mountain to the southward of that lofty chain which divides the island into two parts.

In many places the coast was flat and low, and by their glasses they could see that the shore looked green and slimy, and here and there were dome-shaped huts of mud and palm-leaves, sheltered by clumps of ebony and raven trees.

North-westward, the ocean they hoped to traverse on the morrow was flashing in its noonday brilliance; but it seemed lonely and void; not a sail was visible on all its vast expanse. Towards the south-west the higher portions of the islet hid the watery path they had pursued from the great channel of the Mozambique.

"We may ascend higher in *that* direction," said Morley, pointing, "and see if a sail is in sight there."

"Stop!" exclaimed Heriot, in an excited tone, as he applied to his eyes his powerful double-barrelled ship-glass, and gazed intently towards the mainland.

"What do you see that interests you?"

"Look, Ashton, look! What is that creeping out from behind that wooded headland?"

"Where?"

"There—about five miles off."

"A boat—a long craft of some kind, without masts."

"Another follows now."

"And another—all painted red!"

"Three!" said Heriot, in a low voice.

"The proas—the three red proas!"

"Down, Ashton, stoop down, lest they see our figures at this distance against the clear sky!" exclaimed the doctor, suiting the action to the word.

Lying at full length among the thick grass that covered all the summit of the cliff, the two friends, resting on their elbows, took a long sight of the strange boats.

"Each is full of men. I could count their heads."

"They are pulling fast, and steering direct for this island!" exclaimed Heriot.

"We have been lured in here and deceived, I doubt not, by that old Malay villain, Puffadder. Old sailors have strange instincts at times, and Noah seemed to suspect as much."

"This is why he would neither come on board nor pilot us

into the creek. But we may do him an injustice ; he may not be in league with these pirates at all."

"Oh, Ethel!" exclaimed Morley, speaking as if to himself, "your forebodings, your dreams are perhaps about to be terribly realised."

"Let us away to the ship, we have not a moment to lose! See how the paddles flash in the sunshine. They are all pulling as if the devil was after them!"

Their mode of rowing was peculiar, for the paddlers all faced the bow of each proa, and scooped the water astern.

Breathless with excitement, heat, and alarm, and with their imaginations picturing visions of cruelty and slaughter, Ashton and Heriot came plunging down the jungle-covered steep with such speed and impetuosity, that their friends in the ship paused again and again to observe them in wonder, though believing that they had some very unusual reason for this sudden display of activity.

Both were young, light, and active ; thus, in less than a quarter of an hour, they had reached the ship by means of the gig, which they had left moored among the mangroves, sprang on deck, and reported what they had observed towards the mainland of Madagascar.

Could they have seen a little way to the south-west they might have observed something more ; but the sight of the three proas proved quite enough for them.

Their tidings produced instant consternation.

"That wily old villain, Puffadder, has recommended us to warp in here, and then betrayed our whereabouts. By Heavens—we are in a precious mess!" exclaimed the captain.

"And Ethel and Rose," said Morley, turning to Heriot, with a voice and face expressive of grief and terror ; "what is to be done now?"

"Done! Why, sir, we must make the best of it," said Noah, energetically, as his old man-o'-war instincts came upon him, and he began to strip to his waist ; "if these eternal warmints get hold o' the ship, they'll pick every copper nail out of her!"

"Captain Phillips," said Morrison, a sharp-witted and resolute Scotchman, and who spoke with more rapidity than his countrymen usually do ; "the ship is moored athwart the creek, with her port side to the mouth of it. Bring over her two starboard carronades, and work the four in battery together. Thus we may knock these proas all to pieces by round shot as they head for the creek in succession."

"You speak like a nangel or a nadmiral, Mr. Morrison!" said Noah.

"Excellent!" cried Phillips; "to work and with a will, my friends." He threw aside his coat, and bouncing about with an agility remarkable for one of his years and fat little figure, added, "Bring on deck all the arms and ammunition we have, doctor; get the powder out of the magazine aft, Mr. Ashton; and take your daughters below, Mr. Basset, please, for the sight of their pale and woe-begone faces flurries me. Look alive, my hearties. Captain Bartelot and Mr. Morrison help me here; bear a hand to cast loose these two starboard guns."

The two carronades were soon clear, their tompions taken out, their touch-holes cleaned, and they were run over to the port or larboard side. Originally the *Hermione* had been pierced for twelve guns, but, as we have stated, she had only four six-pound carronades, and only four shot remaining for each. They were loaded, shotted, and primed with great rapidity by Noah, who used a capstan-bar as a rammer. Then, diving below, he suddenly reappeared from the steerage with a hamper full of empty bottles.

"What are these for?" asked Captain Phillips.

"Grape and canister, sir," replied old Noah, as he proceeded to smash the bottles and fill the carronades with the fragments even to their very muzzles.

Morley was too busy distributing powder, even to speak one farewell word to Ethel, as she was taken below by Heiot, who soon after reappeared with all the arms they had on board: to wit—his own pair of excellent pistols, the captain's two six-barrel revolvers, six old brass-barrelled pistols taken from the mutineers, their sheath-knives, the double-barrelled fowling-piece, a sharp hatchet, and a harpoon.

Thus they had nearly a brace of pistols each, and, fortunately, plenty of ball ammunition made up into cartridge form for the contingencies of the Madagascar coast.

In less than ten minutes all was in readiness; all were certainly silent, pale, and desperate, for all felt that death and utter destruction were awfully close at hand.

The misery of the Bassets and the two lovers was more poignant than any emotion felt by their companions, who were chiefly inspired by the natural impulse of self-preservation, without the paralysing horror that on their lives depended the lives of others who were most dear to them; but the whole affair had come upon them with the sudden-

ness of a thunderclap, and as yet, perhaps, they could scarcely understand the terrors of their situation.

"These cursed proas were about five miles off, you say, doctor?" said the captain, in a low voice, as he looked at his watch.

"Yes, sir; five to leeward of the island."

"The wind is light, though increasing."

"They had neither spars nor sails up, sir, and so may not be here for more than an hour yet, though swiftly paddled."

"They may not come here at all," said Bartelot; "for perhaps they may be quite ignorant that we are lying in the creek."

"If not aware now they will soon be," said Morley; "they were steering directly for the creek, and I don't think these mangroves will hide the ship's spars."

"Still they may pass it," said Tom, hopefully, as he carefully capped his revolver, and slung it by his side.

The others shook their heads despondingly, and Noah put a quid into his cheek, with the nowise cheering reflection that it was "mayhap the last" he would ever put there.

"It was a fortunate proposal of yours to climb the cliff, doctor," said Morley.

"I thank Heaven for the thought," replied Heriot, emphatically; "for had those Malay devils found us unprepared——"

"My blood runs cold at the idea."

"How quietly they might have come upon us in the night," suggested Morrison.

"They are perhaps strong enough to despise stratagem," said Captain Phillips.

"More likely, sir, that old bumboatman, Puff, hadn't time to blow the gaff on us, or we might all have been with Davy Jones last night," said Noah.

All spoke in a species of whisper, and all looked at their watches from time to time, and listened so intently, that an uninformed spectator might have thought they were waiting with impatience, but they heard no sound, save the buzz of insect life in the mangroves and dense jungle, around that slimy creek.

All was equally still below. Secured in the cabin, Ethel and Rose were on their knees, with their old nurse, in an agony of terror, amid which they strove in vain to pray. Mr. Basset, too frail to work at the guns, or be active in the defence of the deck, sat in the companion-way, ready to re-

load the fire-arms when they were discharged, and now Noah got the matches ready.

How the old fellow's eyes lit up! A brightness spread over his storm-beaten and sorely-wrinkled visage, making him seem almost young again, for he felt that it was to him—the old man-o'-war's-man—he who had heard the thunder of Sebastopol, and seen the Russian bombs strewing all the Valley of Death; he who had gone with Peel's Brigade and Havelock's Highlanders to Lucknow and to Delhi—his superiors and shipmates were now looking chiefly for direction and advice.

They all knew well enough how to load and fire, or ram home the charge with a capstan-bar; but skill in adjusting the sight and the quoin under the breech became a different affair.

"Now, gen'lemen shipmates by your leave," said he, "we must fire and reload each gun as fast as possible; but it will be safer if number four don't fire till number *van* is reloaded."

Almost despairing alike of a successful defence, or an ultimate victory, Captain Phillips suggested the idea of putting Mr. Basset and his two daughters into the gig, and sculling her to a secluded place among the mangroves.

"But, if the ship is taken, and we are all destroyed," said Morley, "oh, what in Heaven's name would become of them then? They would die of terror, exposure, and starvation."

"The creek is full of alligators, too!" added Heriot.

"But what may happen to them on board if we are all killed?" asked Captain Phillips.

The contemplation of that result nearly drove Morley and Heriot mad, and they knew not what to reply.

"It might give the poor ladies, at least, one other chance for life if we hid them in the maintop, for we may have to take to the rigging yet, if these warmint capture the deck by boarding, and up there we may have to fight to the last with knives or pistols, or whatever we have."

"And how, Noah, if the Malays cut the mast away?"

"Or fire the ship?"

"No chance of escape, and none of rescue!" groaned Captain Phillips; "there is a fine breeze in the offing, as I can see by the whitening waves; but here, with not hands enough to tow her out, the crippled *Hermione* might as well be on the top of a mountain."

"Ah, if I had that artful savage with the cocked hat within

range of this !” said Morley, through his clenched teeth, as he slapped the butt of his gun.

“Run up the ensign, Noah ; let them look at *that*, whoever they are. We’ll die game under it, anyhow,” said Phillips, as something of a British sailor’s pride and defiant spirit filled his heart.

“Aye,” responded Noah, as he ran the scarlet ensign up to the gaff-peak, where it floated languidly at first on the still air of the sheltered creek, but anon the coming breeze made it stream out boldly ; “many a round shot and Whistling-Dick I’ve seen a bowlin’ under you,” added Noah, as he made fast the halyards, looked up at the colour, and nodded to it as to an old friend.

Anxiously the eyes of the “few but undismayed”—for their courage certainly rose with the desperation of the emergency—were turned to the mouth of the creek, where, between the rocks and mangroves, the deep blue Indian sea, now flecked with white by the breath of a fine steady breeze, was seen stretching in the distance far, far away, until it blended with the sky.

Still nothing was seen and nothing heard !

But ere long, each of the eight men on the deck of the *Hermione* set his teeth, breathed hard, and turned to his companions, eye seeking eye, while all their hearts beat quicker.

For suddenly there was an unmistakable sound of paddling in the air, and then a shrill yell went up to heaven, as the sharp red prow of a proa, full of dark and active figures, shot round the entrance of the creek, and a row of rapidly-worked round paddles, shaped like huge battledores, furrowed up all the slimy water into foam, as they headed her straight for the ship.

CHAPTER LXXIV.

EIGHT AGAINST EIGHTY.

NOAH had the first carronade on the right—that is, abreast of the mainmast. Stooping down, he trained it carefully, elevating and then slightly depressing the muzzle till he covered the object. He then smartly withdrew, lowered the match, and the recoil and report of the gun was followed by a yell from the Malays, whose rowers were seen tumbling from side to side, as if making summersets; for the shot, with its scattering accompaniment of broken bottles, made a complete lane from stem to stern, through the dingy occupants of the proa.

The echoes of the gun, with the cries of the Malays, rung with a thousand reverberations amid the rocks of the creek, startling clouds of wild birds from the mangroves and cane-brake beyond them.

“Fire number two—steady, Captain Phillips, please; here comes the next proa. Blaze away at the blasted warmint! Rake her fore and aft before she forges ahead!”

So shouted old Noah, while adroitly he assisted the recoil of his carronade, ran it back with the aid of Morley, and proceeded to reload and ram home. Captain Phillips, less used to this kind of work than he, levelled his carronade and fired; but he had not trained it properly, for, although the additional charge of broken bottles did some execution among the thick skulls of the Malays, the round shot whistled harmlessly over them all, and was seen ricocheting over the waves, till it made a white water-spout in the offing, far beyond the mouth of the creek.

Noah danced with disappointment and chagrin.

“Now, Mr. Morrison,” he cried; “number three—level low—quick! here comes the next lot, a paddling like so many devils. Sweep the scum into eternity.”

Morrison fired, and carried away the whole line of star-board paddles, and with them, perhaps, the rower’s arms. Then, veering round, she thus fell foul of the first proa, just as the third came sweeping round, and headed towards the creek.

The scene was now terrible; there were some seventy or eighty Malays, many streaming with blood, all waving their

paddles and weapons, and uttering such yells as one might imagine to rise from the infernal regions—yells inspired alike by the hope of plunder and of vengeance.

Then the contents of the third carronade, trained by Heriot and Foster, sped on the errand of death, right through them all, just as the leading proa got clear. Half its starboard side was torn away, and thus all its occupants were left to swim or flounder; the dead to sink and the wounded to drown, amid the slimy ooze of the creek.

While more than twenty were swimming, splashing, and scrambling ashore on each side, the paddlers in the other proas resumed their work, scooping the water astern with preternatural vigour, but to avoid a raking shot, presented more of their broadside to the ship, and hence retarded their own progress; so Noah fired his carronade right through one, just abaft the centre thwart, by this oblique shot killing or disabling three or four.

The yells were now appalling, the scene terrible, and yet withal most picturesque and striking.

The savage rabble in these proas were the woolly-headed Madecasses, who are partly of African descent; but all their leaders—and several appeared in each proa—were olive-skinned men, Hovahs, who are supposed to be of purer blood, and are viewed by the people of Madagascar somewhat as the Normans were by the Anglo-Saxons.

These men wore tunics of scarlet silk, like those of the Chinese, girt by sashes or belts; but their negro followers were naked, a few only having clothes about their middle, or wearing the ordinary garment of the Madecasses, which is made of bark, boiled and beaten, and shaped like a flour-sack, with a hole for the head, and four others for the legs and arms.

All wore chains, ear-rings, and bracelets of crystal cornelian, and even gold, and many were armed with assegais, headed like spears, with long, sharp, iron points; many had bucklers of hard wood, covered with hides. Some had ten or twelve javelins each; a few had clumsy old muskets, fortunately much addicted to hanging fire; and all had the native creese—a long, wavy, double-edged dagger. When we add to this equipment their black, ferocious faces, their shrill yells and diabolical activity, their white, glistening teeth, their glaring eyeballs, and whole *tout ensemble*, the reader may imagine the scene presented at this crisis in the mangrove creek.

The explosion of the first carronade had drawn a simul-

taneous shriek and shudder from the two girls, and their old nurse, in the cabin, and a cheer from their eight devoted friends on deck, while with it, and with every future discharge, the pintados, the black paroquets, the spoonbills, and the turtle-doves flew in screaming coveys out of the jungle.

"Depress your muzzles?" cried Noah, who had, by tacit consent apparently, constituted himself master-gunner; "they're nearing us, mates."

"Another dose of broken bottles; they make first-rate grape and canister," added Morrison.

"Crouch down—crouch down—here's a volley of something coming!" shouted Captain Phillips, from his gun, as four or five musket-bullets crashed through the bulwarks, and a number of arrows or javelins and assegais, whistled harmlessly over their heads, and fell pattering on the starboard side of the deck, as fast as the survivors of the shattered proas scrambled ashore, and began to use their weapons.

"The warp—the starn warp!" shouted Noah, as with muzzle depressed, he fired his carronade again; "pick off some o' those d——d heathen niggers afore they cuts it, some one."

Two savages had already reached the warp, which was carried through the taffrail to the kedge, and were proceeding to slash through the strands of the strong Manilla, hewing with their creeses, and, had they done so, the ship must have swerved round, and gone ashore, broadside on.

Morley snatched up the double-barrelled gun which Mr. Basset had just reloaded. Kneeling down, he levelled it steadily through the taffrail, and shot both down in quick succession—a strange and wild emotion coming over him as he saw them fall, and beat the earth with their hands and feet. This cooled the ardour of five or six others, who followed, for he saw them plunge down among the mangroves, where they lay flat in concealment.

At that moment, a Hovah, in a crimson shirt, who had clambered, all wet and dripping, up the mizzen chains, launched an assegai at Morley, which skinned his right ear, and stuck quivering in the deck, near the coaming of the main-hatch. He then proceeded to scramble on board, with his sharp creese in his teeth, and a savage glitter in his eye, when Morley clubbed the double-barrelled gun, and swinging it aloft at the full stretch of his arms, dealt the Hovah a blow on his hard caput, which tumbled him prone into the water; but the gun was destroyed, as it snapped in two at the small part of the butt.

Morley rushed back to rejoin his friends at the carronades ; but found poor Noah grappling with a gigantic Malay, who had dropped over the bulwark near the starboard quarter, where they were rolling over each other, Noah swearing, and the Malay biting and howling, till the former, grasping the long, tawny ears of the latter, rings and all, dashed his head thrice on the deck, when he stunned, and then flung him overboard.

At that moment an arrow, which all feared might be poisoned—whistled through Noah's cheeks, knocking out a couple of his few remaining teeth ; but with a pistol he shot dead the archer, who was nestling among the mangroves.

So far as the eight unfortunates on the deck of the *Hermione* could judge, they had been attacked by not less than eighty men !

Now the two proas were close alongside ; another moment would have seen the savage Malays swarming in scores up the bulwarks and over the decks ; but just as a groan of dismay simultaneously burst from the few devoted defenders of the *Hermione*, her head warp was slashed through by creeses, and she suddenly fell away round before the south-west breeze, with her bow towards the sea, thus increasing the distance between her assailants and herself by the whole length of her stern warp, at a moment when all the Malays were in the act of standing up to leap on board, and as she so swerved away, she went right ashore, broadside on, amongst the mangroves, with all her four carronades pointed to the land, leaving her starboard side unprotected against the yelling occupants of the two remaining proas.

“ God help us ! ” cried poor Captain Phillips, in despair ;
“ all is over now ! ”

CHAPTER LXXV.

“WE’LL GO TO SEA NO MORE!”

THE despairing exclamation of the worthy captain had a very singular sequel, for scarcely had it left his lips, and just when the paddlers were again scooping away, as, with yells of exulting fury, the Malays proceeded after the *Hermione*; just when those who were ashore were forcing a passage to her through the jungle, and when the full term of another minute would have closed the whole catastrophe—lo! with all the suddenness of a spectral illusion, or of the Flying Dutchman’s famous craft, a noble-looking ship, all a cloud of canvas, white as snow, swept round the verge of the cliff, and lay to, right off the mouth of the creek.

Bending gracefully over beneath the south-west breeze, she had her royals and topsails set, and the scarlet British ensign streamed from her gaff-peak.

Like the work of magic, her lighter sails were taken in, and her head-sails clewed up; then, as she rounded to, under her mizzen-topsail, with her broadside fairly opposed to the creek, a plunge was heard as the great working anchor was let go.

At the same moment, fire and smoke burst from her quarter, and ran like a flashing garland along her whole side, as, with two twelve-pounders, and about twenty short Enfield rifles, her crew opened a destructive discharge on the Malays.

As the well-directed shot plunged through them, the two remaining proas were dashed to pieces, and, amid the fragments of wood, floating assegais, and gouts of blood, their crews were seen making for the mangroves, right and left, scrambling ashore, and taking to flight in every direction.

The great ship had no occasion to discharge her guns again; but the short Enfields of her crew knocked over a number of the Malays, as they became visible at times, while prosecuting their flight inland.

The moment the firing ceased, and before the white smoke had curled away, the yards were manned, and the three topsails disappeared into their bunt at once. From the foretop-gallant-yard down to the stay, came the men, sliding like lightning, to furl and stow the jib in its netting.

The great white courses were furled with equal rapidity,

and with a neatness that drew exclamations of admiration, mingled with those of surprise and joy, from those on the deck of the rescued *Hermione*. Then down came the royal yards from aloft, and, ere long, the great ship was bared of all, save her bright scarlet ensign, which floated out astern.

She was a splendid ship, full-rigged and full-manned, with a clean, white paint-stroke, and gaily-gilded quarter-galleries; she was remarkably straight in the bends, like a Spaniard or a Yankee, with all her rigging and spars in the finest order. Thus she presented a noble appearance, as she rode at her anchor under the brow of the lofty cliff. Then, with the same man-o'-war-like order and rapidity which characterised all her other manœuvres, a boat was hoisted out, lowered away, and its crew carried an anchor astern, to moor her more securely.

From the stern davits, the captain's gig, light and smart as a London wherry, was lowered with a splash into the water. He was seen to descend the rope-ladder rapidly, to seat himself in the stern and to grasp the yoke-lines, while a crew of smart lads, chiefly ship-apprentices, pulled straight through the bloody *débris* of the creek towards the *Hermione*.

The captain, a ruddy-visaged and sandy-haired man, about thirty-five, with plenty of yellow beard and moustache, stood up, as he drew near, and waved his cap.

"You have had some sharp work here, I think," said he; "we heard the sound of the firing as we stood round the island. Glad we have been in time to save you."

"Thanks be to Heaven, you have—and many heartfelt thanks to you, for you have indeed saved all our lives, and my ship also!" exclaimed Captain Phillips.

"*All?* There don't seem to be very many of you," replied the stranger, as his boat came sheering alongside, and the oars were all uplifted and laid in together, while he swung himself up with great agility, and jumped over the bulwarks on deck, when the eight of the *Hermione* gathered round him. "Creeping along the shore in search of fresh water," he resumed, "we were told by an old Malay boatman——"

"Puffadder?" said Bartelot.

"Yes; you know him then—that we should find it here."

"The old scoundrel!" exclaimed Heriot.

"With the same story he snared us into the creek," added Phillips.

"Old Puffadder wasn't to blame, for he begged me to make haste and assist a British ship that some island pirates were

attacking, so we clapped on royals, skysails, gaff-topsail, and everything that would draw, got our small arms up, our guns cast loose and all ready to help you, and we seem just to have been in time."

"You have done well and bravely, sir," said Mr. Basset, with gratitude and enthusiasm.

"And what ship is yours?" asked Phillips.

"The *Duke of Rothesay*, eight hundred tons, hailing from Alloa, and bound for Singapore, Duncan Davidson, master (that is me) at your service; and yours?"

"The *Hermione*, of London, also bound for Singapore, and touching at the Isle of France."

And now various matters, which are already known to the reader, were related and explained to the Scotch skipper, which made him wonder very much; and much more was his wonder excited when, on being invited down to the cabin, he found himself fairly hugged by Rose Basset, who, in fact, was rather in a delirious state, after all the cannonading she had heard and the number of savage brown figures she had seen from the stern-windows skipping among the mangroves.

Ethel threw herself into her father's arms in a passion of tears, and pressed Morley's hand to her heart.

"Saved, Ethel, saved!" said Mr. Basset, caressing her tenderly.

"Yes, Ethel, saved," added Morley, "and except my scratched ear and Noah's cheek, not a man of us the worse of the whole affair."

"By Heaven's mercy and this gallant seaman's safe arrival, we have, indeed, escaped a great—it would have been, indeed, a *last*—peril, Ethel," said Mr. Basset, as she presented her hand to Captain Davidson, who, though a rough, weather-beaten, and rather plain Scotsman, surveyed her soft dark eyes, her pale and thoughtful face, that beamed with soul and feeling, her glossy hair and fine figure, with an admiration that he was too honest or too unsophisticated to conceal. So, while he addressed some words of congratulation and soothing, to the effect that "all danger was now over, as he had knocked the black niggers into the middle of next week," Captain Phillips, acting as his own steward, has wedged his fat figure into a locker, from whence he fished out sundry case-bottles and glasses with nervous rapidity.

And this fine stately ship of Alloa, on the Forth, armed with four twelve-pounders, and having a crew of forty men and boys, coming with all sails crowded before a spanking breeze, from near the cove where old Puffadder's wigwam

stood, was what Morley and Heriot would have seen had they obtained a south-west view of the ocean, but, as we have related, an eminence hid her from them, and the entire islet hid her from the pirates, until, with shotted guns, loaded rifles, and colours flying, she came down full sloop upon them.

The cutting of the warp and the circumstance of the *Hermione* thereby falling away round from the centre of the creek, greatly favoured the fire of this friendly stranger’s cannon and musketry.

So old Radama Puffadder was no traitor, but the means of saving them, after all!

“Those were heavy guns you fired, sir,” remarked Morley to Captain Davidson, who had mixed his grog, and prior to imbibing it drank every one’s health in the Scotch fashion.

“Heavy for a merchantman—yes; twelve-pounders.”

“How came you to be so well armed?” asked Mr. Basset.

“Well, sir,” replied Captain Davidson, laughing, as he tossed off his glass of grog, “whether it is the alleged national caution, or, what is better, the good old national spirit of pugnacity, I don’t know, but our Scottish ships, especially in these seas, are generally well armed, and seldom unprepared for anything—and I have a splendid crew—the pick of Leith and Grangemouth! So now, Captain Phillips, my gig is alongside, and while our carpenters come aboard of you, and put you into a little shape, I hope the young ladies and your other friends will come and dine with me, and see what we can find in the lockers of the *Duke*? Don’t be afraid, ladies—I shall give you something better than sheep’s-head and haggis.”

This invitation was as promptly accepted as it was hospitably given, and all prepared to accompany Captain Davidson, save Mr. Foster and Noah, who were obliged to remain on board; and fortunately, Heriot could now prove that the arrow which pierced the cheeks of the latter was *not* poisoned.

In and around the ships, there was much to make Ethel and her sister shudder.

On the deck, near the taffrail, lay a dead Madecasse, whose head Morrison had cloven with a hatchet. He had the smooth European hair, the Indian complexion, the broad forehead, the thin lips (now pale and ghastly) of his mixed and peculiar race. His right hand held a broken assegai, and his left yet clutched the peak halyards, which he had grasped on gaining the deck.

Many bodies floated about in the creek, many more had sunk, and several places bore unmistakable tinges of blood among the ooze and green slime, while four crocodiles were seen at one time devouring the dead, till fired on by the Scotch sailors.

But all these horrors, and their recent alarm, were gradually forgotten, amid the hospitality and jollity of Captain Davidson, his mates, and the numerous crew of the new ship; and as soon as their water-tank was filled next day, all bore a hand in getting the *Hermione* ready for sea, shipping jury spars on her fore and mizzen topmasts, and warping her out of the creek.

As the *Hermione* was so short of hands, Captain Davidson offered to put three men and one of his apprentices on board, to assist in working her; an offer which Captain Phillips gladly accepted, and they agreed to sail together in company.

On the second day after the conflict with the proas, both ships were ready for sea.

Morning was dawning on the cliffs of that lonely isle, and in great beauty. A long streak of opal-tinted light spread over the horizon; gradually it brightened into amber, and from amber melted into crimson—the deep crimson of sunset, *elsewhere* as the tall Alloa ship weighed anchor, set her canvas, and began to stand off towards the north-east.

A number of her men were still on board the *Hermione*, assisting to warp her out. Her courses hung in the clew-lines ready to be let fall; her three jury-topsails were cast loose, and ready for hoisting, and soon she was ready for sea.

Then Ethel and Rose, as they nestled together on their pillows in the cabin below, heard the cheerful notes of a fiddle, the tramp of feet as the capstan bars were shipped, and the Scotch sailors trod merrily round, to the air of "The Boatie Rows," while one sung a song well known on the banks of the Forth; and louder stamped their feet, and louder swelled their hearty voices at the chorus of each verse, of which there were several, like this:—

" I have seen the waves as blue as air,
I have seen them green as grass;
But I never feared their heaving yet,
Frae Grangemouth to the Bass;
I have seen the sea as black as pitch,
I have seen it white as snow;
But I never feared its foaming yet,
Though winds blew high or low,"

“Now, boys,” shouted Morrison; “chorus — chorus! Heave and rally! Walk away with it! Hurrah!”

Then heavier trod the feet, and louder swelled the fiddle, and all their voices rose together:

“*When squalls capsize our wooden walls,
When the French ride at the Nore,
When Leith meets Aberdeen halfway,
We’ll go to sea no more.
No more,
We’ll go to sea no more.*”*

The cheerful voice of Captain Phillips was soon heard, ordering:

“Let fall, and sheet home.”

“Good morning, Ethel,” said Morley, tapping on her cabin-door; “we are fairly clear of the creek and its crocodiles, and under weigh for the Isle of France.”

It was, indeed, a glorious morning. Under a cloud of canvas, even to her royals and angular sky-sails, the Scottish ship took the lead, and her giant shadow fell far across the ocean.

Red, round, and flashing in his effulgence, up came the god of day, and the tall reedy cane-brakes and solemn drooping palm groves of the shore they were leaving, the sea ahead and the deck beneath their feet, were all red as if aflame. Ruddy gold, edged and gilt every rope, face, and object, the shadows of the two ships falling in purple on the crimson flush, which gradually melted away, as the sun rose upward, and lit all the far horizon of the Indian Sea.

* Book of Scottish Song.

CHAPTER LXXVI.

THE ANCHOR IS LET GO.

OUR story is now drawing to a close, but no sudden or striking *tableau*, no tremendous *dénouement* or poetical rhapsody will attend the fall of the curtain, albeit that truth is stranger than fiction.

The ships sailed in company. They were seldom far apart, and often were so near that those on board could hail each other and converse.

The weather was fine, the trade-wind steady, and the remainder of the voyage proved alike pleasant and prosperous.

Of the Isle of Bourbon they saw only the smoke of its volcano, rising into the clear air of a calm morning, and by sunset of the following day, the colours displayed from the gaff-peak of the *Duke of Rothsay*, which was ten miles ahead, and the discharge of one of her twelve-pounders to windward, announced that the Isle of France was in sight although not visible from the main-top of the *Hermione*; but the report of the gun sent a thrill through the hearts of all on board.

The stormy petrel was tripping around them the same as ever; but they had no fears now, for after sunset the harbour lights of Port Louis were seen to twinkle over the sea; so the cables were roused out of the tier, and rattled cheerily as they were laid in fakes along the deck; they were bent to the anchors; the deep sea lead was in constant requisition, and the hawsers were brought up from between decks.

By daybreak next morning the ships were close in shore, and in the pilot's charge, with a fine breeze, ran in between Fort Blanc and the Isles des Tonneliers, so the spires of the town were right ahead. As the ship, with her courses clewed up, ran under her jury topsails and driver into the fine old harbour of Port Louis, Morley and Ethel were on deck together. Rose was below with Nance Folgate, busy packing, though her more thoughtful sister had done all her own share of that duty long ago.

Morley seemed a prey to unusual sadness, and as she caressed his hand kindly from time to time, and while her gentle eyes filled alternately with pensive tenderness or

sparkling animation, she could barely obtain a response to her inquiries ; for now that the voyage was ended, that their dangers were over, and all excitement had passed away, he felt a melancholy that he could not overcome, and against which he struggled in vain. This emotion was very natural. He knew not what was before him now in this strange land—this half-French colony, where on the morrow he would find himself without a shilling in his pocket.

Hesitatingly, and while his now weather-beaten cheek glowed with honest shame, he said something of this to Ethel ; but she sought to cheer him, and added that his friends, Captain Bartelot, the Scotch mate Morrison, and old Noah were precisely in the same predicament, yet they were all merry as crickets, whistling and singing, while, with the three men of the Scotch ship, they hoisted the great rusty anchors over the bows.

“ Ah, Ethel, do not smile as if you would mock me,” said Morley, with unwonted irritation ; it is our, or rather my, uncertain fortune that haunts and galls me now.”

He knew, beyond a doubt, that the doctor would marry Rose as soon as he could rejoin her, or get quit of the ship ; Morley knew that Heriot had his profession, a moderate competence, and excellent monetary prospects ; but what had he ?

Mr. Basset's health was so hopelessly impaired by all he had undergone as to preclude any chance of his assuming his legal functions, or, indeed, doing more in the matter of his judgeship than simply to resign it on landing.

His local influence would thus be dissipated, and already he spoke of returning to England on the first suitable opportunity, resolving to pass the remainder of his days there, even with his crippled means ; so, after all they had endured, Morley and Ethel, as they gazed mournfully and tenderly into each other's eyes, felt that the course of true love was as unlike a railway as possible.

But now the sails were handed, the anchor let go with a plunge into the seething flood, and exactly three months and fourteen days from the time of her leaving the London Docks, the *Hermione* swung at her moorings in the harbour of Port Louis, distant only a few fathoms from her late companion and protector, the stately ship of Alloa.

Quarantine laws, custom-house harpies, and all such necessary annoyances satisfied, the ship brokers came on board, and one of them brought for Mr. Basset a packet of letters, which had arrived fully a fortnight before, by a passing ship.

There were letters for Ethel and Rose, from Jack and Lucy Page, and other dear friends at Acton-Rennel, full of home gossip, all of vast interest to them now ; and there were some very business-like documents "for papa," who carefully wiped his gold spectacles prior to reading them ; while Morley, who had not a friend in England, felt bitterly there was nothing for him ; so he slunk, as he thought, unnoticed on deck, to watch the bustle of the port and shipping, and to forget even himself, if he could, for a time.

The contents of his two first letters certainly made Mr. Basset stare very much, and wipe his glasses again, ere he read them a second time, and fairly took in the full meaning of their contents.

They were from his old friend, the M.P. for Acton-Rennel, who had procured him the now useless judgeship, and from his solicitor in Westminster, informing him that, by two most unexpected deaths, Ethel and Rose, in right of their deceased mother, had become rich—quite heiresses in fact, of not less than three thousand pounds each, yearly, in government securities and other investments ; full particulars of which would be forwarded by the next mail.

Ethel sat for a time like one bewitched, on hearing this.

Then, after Mr. Basset had explained it all to her, she hurried on deck to where Morley Ashton, with his head between his hands, was gazing moodily and dreamily over the gunwale, at the slime and ooze under the ship's counter ; and caring little whether she were seen or not, she stole one arm tenderly round his neck, and whispered in his ear the story of *their* good fortune, adding that now she could reward him for all his love and faith, and for all he had endured : and more than once she had to repeat all this, ere she was fully understood by the poor bewildered fellow.

Thus, from a state of uncertainty, doubt, utter despondency at times, was Morley Ashton rewarded, indeed, for all he had undergone. The wheel of fortune had revolved completely in his favour, and he felt raised "to the seventh heaven" by Ethel's happy news.

So they were now safe, rich, and happy, with their dearest wishes about to be realised !

All around them seemed to be joyous and sunshiny. All so quiet, so still, and yet such happiness was theirs !

Their double separation, the sorrow of Morley's supposed death, his detention at Rio, and his sufferings on the wreck ; the mutiny, and the piratical Malays ; the entire past, with all its terrible contingencies—where was it now ?

Gone, indeed, and to be forgotten !

The future—oh, they had no fears for it ; the present, the glorious, blissful present, was alone to be considered. And so thought Ethel Basset, as on the last evening they were to spend in the cabin of the *Hermione* she sat hand in hand with Morley, and alone, her head reclined upon his shoulder, and his arm caressingly around her, as they whispered of the arrangements they were to make at home, and how they would have Laurel Lodge again, with papa to care for, and how Rose and Leslie Heriot would have one of those pretty new villas with the green blinds and plate-glass windows at Cherrywood Hill.

Inquiries concerning, or, as the Scots say, “ anent ” the loss of the *Princess*, and the marooning of the crew of the *Hermione* in the Mozambique Channel, were duly conducted by Captain Sir Horace Seymour, of H.M.S. *Clyde*, and the nautical assessor of the Board of Trade at Port Louis, and the decision of the court freed our friends Bartelot and Phillips from all blame, their captains' certificates being returned to them by Sir Horace Seymour, with many complimentary remarks.

Mr. Basset resigned his appointment into the hands of the Governor, and prepared to return to England ; but as there is no true happiness without alloy, Heriot could not procure a substitute or successor, and so, when the *Hermione* was refitted and fully manned, he found himself compelled to sail with her to Singapore.

Morrison went with her as chief mate, and Mr. Foster as second, and she sailed out of Port Louis, dipping adieux with her ensign, and firing her carronades in gallant style, old Captain Phillips and poor Heriot continuing to wave their hats so long as two figures in light dresses were visible on the mole.

Poor little Rose shed abundance of tears. She thought herself Virginia torn from her Paul, and the most ill-used young lady in the world. She moped for a long time, and gave up her diary ; it was no use now, when she was so soon to see Lucy Page again.

We need not detail how, prior to their departure, many a picnic was made to all the places consecrated by the loves of Paul and Virginia, and how many a sketch was made in Ethel's portfolio of the Shaddock Grove, the marvellous Petterbotte, and other places.

Tom Bartelot was to return to England with them, and get another ship.

Noah had been offered a berth on board the *Hermione*, but he declined.

"No more marchantmen for me," said he; "I'm for the Queen's sarvice, so long as I can lift tack or sheet, hand or foot; then Grinnidge arter."

So he shipped on board the *Clyde*, which about this time steamed away towards the mouth of the Mozambique Channel, in search of the pirates, who had again made their appearance in several proas.

Noah acted as a species of guide; but no trace of their presence could be found in that quarter, save the bare, bleached skull of poor old Captain Puffadder, whose agency in our friends' escape had been discovered by the Malays, and who had been buried by them up to his neck in sand on the sea-shore, and left thus to perish under the advancing tide, like the famous Wigton martyrs of the delirious sheriff of Dumfries.

Notices will be found in the various newspapers of that month, stating that, in north latitude 27 deg. 30 min., and east longitute 40 deg. 10 min., near the Europa Rocks, K.M.S. *Clyde* picked up a boat, with two dead bodies in it. One was evidently that of a South American, with rings in his ears; the other was of great stature, and supposed to be a Yankee seaman.

Noah declared them to be Zuares Barradas and Badger, from Cape Cod—the last of the mutineers.

By a curious coincidence, one of these papers paragraphed that the Portuguese at Tristan d'Acunha were building a chapel over the grave of the elder Barradas, who among them had the reputation of such great sanctity, that his island is now the scene of annual summer pilgrimages

CHAPTER LXXVII.

CONCLUSION.

EIGHT months after all this, it was in the drawing-room of Laurel Lodge that those whose adventures we have traced so far were all waiting for the boom of the dinner-gong, for it was the evening of Ethel's birthday ; and she had been a bride four months, while Rose had been wedded but a few weeks—so both were all smiles, white lace, and loveliness.

All that day the familiar chimes of Acton-Rennel (which had rung in honour of their return) had jangled merrily in the square Norman tower, sending their notes over the chase, the mere, the long green English lanes, and kindling joy in many a worthy heart that loved the Bassets, and who now, in home-brewed brown October, drank deep to their healths, and welcome home !

Many of "Papa's household gods," as Ethel named them, which had been bought by old friends, found their way back again to Laurel Lodge. "Mamma's" picture hung in the usual place—even on its old nails ; and Rose's azaleas still bloomed in the conservatory, as on the night when Hawkshaw laughed at them.

Morley and Ethel occupied her old room, and often, when she drew the curtains, she thought of that terrible morning when she looked up to Acton Chine and thought a darkness had fallen on the outer world. How difficult to realise all that had passed since then !

There was present the old rector (papa's friend) ; he had read the last service for Ethel's mamma, and who preached the sermon prior to their departure ; and there, too, were Lucy Page and her brother Jack, who looked not a whit the worse for being jilted by Rose, as all the folks in the village say he was, for the rector's black-eyed daughter has undertaken to console him, while Lucy leans with pleasant confidence on the arm of the young fox-hunting squire of Cherrywood Hill, in out-door sports the rival of Jack, who is a first-class shot, and scores with ease his ninety odd points among the members of the 1st A.R.R.R.V.C., which mysterious letters mean the Acton-Rennel Royal Rifle Volunteer Corps, a distinguished body of men, which our friend Morley has since joined.

The squire of Acton-Rennel had come over in his old

lumbering coach, and sat as of yore in a cosy easy-chair, opposite Mr. Basset, whose hair has become rather gray, for he has been much aged by all he has undergone, though carefully tended by his daughters, by Morley and Heriot (who, though quite independent, is rapidly acquiring a splendid country practice at Acton-Rennel), and by old Nance Folgate, whose voyaging she believes to exceed in marvel all that ever was recorded by Sir John Mandeville or old Richard Hakluyt.

Bluff Captain Phillips (who is about to persuade the plump little widow of Gravesend to change her name to his) was there too, and his presence made them regret the absence of honest Morrison, who had gone home to Scotland, and of jovial Tom Bartelot, who was in London, it was whispered, with certain matrimonial views upon the girl of the Hampton Court memories, in which he indulged when on the wreck, and which views, we hope, he may realise ere long.

Noah Gawthrop, who was then, as he would have phrased it, "a briliⁿ' aboard the *Clyde*," in the Indian Seas, was not forgotten when the cloth was removed after dinner; and we believe he will yet cast anchor in charge of the gate lodge, with its heraldic unicorns, and may yet teach a little Morley Ashton to handle an oar in the skiff on Acton mere, and may become in the bar of the "Basset Arms" a great oracle upon all that appertaineth unto salt water.

On this evening they were all very happy and merry, and the jolly rector, in proposing Ethel's health and prosperity, declared that Mr. Basset's daughters were alike improved in quality and tint, for having been—like good Madeira—twice round the Cape, a species of compliment which the two squires laughed at uproariously, so the hearty good-humour and merriment waxed apace.

"How unlike the past!" thought Morley, as he glanced at his beautiful young wife in diamonds and lace; "here, indeed, 'the world seems a good one to live in, and easy to get on with!'"

Morley felt half in a dream.

It was the last day of October, the sun's declining rays were gilding the shamble-oak, and his brethren of the old Saxon chase, the tower of the village church, and the rocks of the chine. (You remember them, reader? If you don't, we rather think Mr. Ashton does.) A sky of clouds that were white, broken, and dappled, edged with gold, and floating in amber, was over all. Fragrance and verdure, fertility and vegetable life, that they may bud and bloom in all their

strength in spring, were going to sleep for the winter in the coppice and on the uplands.

The nearly-stripped woodlands loomed darkly out of the golden evening haze, and the glorious sun, as he sank, while the village chimes rang out, made Morley feel somehow happy, charitable, and kind to the world in general. And so he thought, as he glanced from Ethel, who was now singing at the piano one of her old familiar songs to Rose, who, though a wedded wife, was seated on a hassock near her father's knee, which had always been her place after dinner, since she cut her first pearly teeth and drank milk out of the sponsorial silver mug, given her by old Mr. Page, Jack's father.

She was rollicking, as of old, with Lucy, a charming specimen of a frank-hearted, fresh-complexioned country girl, and teasing her brother Jack, a young Englishman complete, ruddy-cheeked, with a smart moustache, long whiskers, and a head of close curly brown hair.

Though the prime bowler of the Acton eleven, the crack shot of the Acton Corps, a fellow who could run, leap, or shoot even with a Highlandman, the good wine he had drunk loosed his tongue, and, as Morley and he promenaded in the avenue, he told him rather mysteriously, between the puffs of Latakia, which rose from his meerschaum, that he "*had* been jilted by Rose chiefly because he was a thundering bad dancer, and never knew a note of music in his life." But Jack, we have said, was likely to find consolation.

Though leaving them all happy in their old English home, we feel loath alike to part with them and with the reader, who has accompanied us so far; but we leave them all, we hope, with health, wealth, and young life before them.

The sun has set, and the Acton bells have ceased, so part we must, though, perhaps, for a time.

THE END.

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